

## CHRISTIAN STUDIES POLICY

### GUIDING SCRIPTURE

<sup>14</sup>But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, <sup>15</sup>and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>so that the servant of God[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

### LUTHERAN EDUCATION ETHOS

Lutheran schools aim to encourage and support students, informed and sustained by the Word of God, to develop their God-given talents so that they may serve, shape and enrich their world (Lutheran Education Australia Strategic Direction 2021-2024).

As central to their mission and ministry, St John's Lutheran School sees each student as a unique person created by God who made them and loves them and provides each of them with dignity and worth. All students have their own talents and needs as well as the potential to live useful and fulfilled lives in the world (LEA – *What is so special about Lutheran Education?* 2021).

### CONTEXT

The Christ-centred nature of Lutheran schools and early childhood services encompasses devotions, worship and Christian Studies. Christian Studies is a learning area and belongs to the formal curricular program of the school and as such should operate within the same parameters as other key learning areas with appropriate assessment and reporting, timetabling, budget, staffing and resourcing.

Christian Studies is an essential and distinctive part of the overarching Christian education program which is the total life of the school and which is expressed through the culture of the school, all teaching and learning activities, the worship program, pastoral care for students and staff, behaviour management policies and practices, voluntary Christian groups and activities that address the personal spirituality of staff and students. The students who participate in Christian Studies bring a wide range of faith, life and spiritual understandings and experiences embodied in differing worldviews. This diversity has implications for the planning and teaching of school-based Christian Studies programs and the need to accommodate varying levels of biblical literacy and engagement. Faith responses or commitment to Christ cannot be a general expectation in the formal curriculum, though there will be areas of the broader framework of Christian education where these can be actively nurtured and expressed.

(BLEA Policy, *Christian Studies in the Lutheran School*, 2012)

## PURPOSE

Christian Studies provides a safe and supportive context in which students can reflect on their experiences of the world and on their own beliefs and spirituality as they attempt to make sense of their rapidly changing and complex global environment, and as they develop their identity as individuals. They do this on the basis of their study of Christianity and their increasing awareness of how the Christian faith relates to all aspects of lived reality.

Christian Studies orients students into biblical literacy and the teachings, culture and history of the Christian church in general, and the Lutheran Church in particular. It provides the opportunity to examine Christian insights, teachings, practices, challenges and responses to issues of justice and ethics in light of other major world religions and philosophical thinking.

Christian Studies is a forum for reflecting on, engaging with and responding to the extent of human need, the servant role of the Christian church in society, stewardship for the world, and to the biblical call and challenge to be in relationship with God.

For many students, Christian Studies also provides the opportunity for them to grow in their Christian faith and in the expression of that faith in their lives.

(BLEA Policy, *Christian Studies in the Lutheran School*, 2012)

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff teaching Christian Studies and all students at St John's Lutheran School.

## POLICY STATEMENT

St John's Lutheran School will ensure that the teaching of Christian Studies is an essential and distinctive part of our Christian education program which is expressed through the culture of the school and is grounded in Lutheran Education Australia statement *Christian Studies in the Lutheran School*.

When implementing Christian Studies Key Learning Area, St John's Lutheran School will:

- Allocate 90 minutes per week for Christian Studies on the timetable, excluding worship and Pastoral Care time (p. 10 Christian Studies Curriculum Framework - CSCF)
- Use the LEA publications Christian Studies Curriculum Framework (Curriculum Statements) and the Christian Studies Curriculum Framework (Theological Notes) (or equivalent) as the basis for all planning, assessing and reporting of Christian Studies (p. 10 – 13 CSCF)
- Provide training and up-skilling for all teachers of Christian Studies that builds teachers theological and pedagogical understanding (p. 56 CSCF)
- Provide initial 'Connect' training required by all teachers to teach Christian Studies. 'Equip' training is also provided for those teachers identified as required to teach Christian Studies
- Collaboratively develop and review school-based Christian Studies work programs and/or CS scopes and sequences as part of an auditing cycle of school curriculum documents (p. 56 CSCF)
- Provide resources to support the implementation of Christian Studies (p. 56 CSCF)
- Identify and support Christian Studies Key Teachers/Leaders as part of the school's leadership structure (p. 55, 56 CSCF).

## PEDAGOGY

The Christian Studies Curriculum Framework is supported by the following pedagogical principles, in which both teaching and learning:

- Are characterised by authenticity, imagination, flexibility and high intellectual quality
- Are learner centred and future focused
- Reflect beliefs about learners, learning and learning communities as expressed in the Lutheran Education Australia Lifelong Qualities for Learners
- Are grounded in the theological understanding of the worth and giftedness of each person and the nature of relationship with self, others, the environment, and God
- Are engaging, dynamic and unfolding
- Are inclusive of the diverse needs, backgrounds and worldviews of students and teachers
- Reflect the classroom learning environment set within the rich context of Christian education provided in Lutheran schools and early childhood services
- Create quality relationships between all learners – teachers and students
- Create connections between the mysteries, rituals, languages, and practices of the Christian faith and with other learning and other communities
- Invite, challenge, support and empower students to construct meaning, grow in spiritual maturity and be transformed in their relationships with self, others, the environment, and God
- These principles are now developed further and applied to the context of the learning environment.

Extract taken from LEA: [The Pedagogy of Christian Studies](#).

## PROCEDURES

### 1. The Christian Studies Classroom

The Board for Lutheran Education Australia (BLEA) policy is that schools have a minimum of 90 minutes of formal Christian Studies per week. This does not include the time allocated to class or school worship. The manner in which the allocated time for Christian Studies is organised on the weekly timetable is to reflect the high status of the subject implicit in the Christian Studies Curriculum Framework, as well as the nature of the subject as a legitimate discipline of academic study.

As for learning environments in other areas of the curriculum, Christian Studies is based on current learning theories and their associated strategies for delivering quality learning programs. Given the earlier comments in 'Context' about the diversity of learners in a typical class, Christian Studies teachers are to use flexible teaching methods. In broad terms, they are to foster a supportive, inclusive and safe learning climate in the classroom. The strategies used are to reflect a respect for the diversity of students' knowledge and faith backgrounds and are to be inclusive of different learning styles and mindsets.

In the Christian Studies classroom, learners are to be engaged in intellectually challenging experiences that actively involve them in constructing their own meanings. Students pose their own questions, gather, analyse and reflect on information and use it in meaningful ways. Teachers are to be aware of the balance to be struck between core understandings in the Christian faith and how learners construct their own meanings related to those central concepts.

## 2. Whole of School Overview of Christian Studies Framework Outcomes Allocations

		Christian Beliefs			Christian Church			Christian Living			Christianity in the World		
		K1	K2	K3	K1	K2	K3	K1	K2	K3	K1	K2	K3
Beg.	Prep	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
	1			✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
A	2		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓
	3	✓	✓				✓	✓		✓		✓	
B	4	✓			✓			✓			✓		
	5			✓			✓		✓		✓		
C	6		✓	✓	✓					✓		✓	
	7	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
D	8		✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓	
	9	✓				✓		✓	✓		✓		✓

## 3. Whole of School Overview of Unit Topics, Outlines, CSCF Outcomes, Deep Understandings, Essential Questions, Key Assessment (by year level)

All Subject Overviews, exemplar units of work, and teacher's unit plans have been stored on the school curriculum documents website on SharePoint for easy access.

Primary School Curriculum Plans can be accessed via:

<https://stjohnskroy.sharepoint.com/Curriculum%20Documents/SitePages/Primary%20School%20Curriculum%20Plans.aspx>

Secondary School Plans can be accessed via:

<https://stjohnskroy.sharepoint.com/Curriculum%20Documents/SitePages/Middle%20School%20Curriculum%20Plans.aspx>

## 4. Christian Studies Teachers' Training Plans

All staff are encouraged to participate in regular bible study sessions each week and school devotional life which foster the spiritual growth of our staff.

New staff who teach Christian Studies are organised to attend EQUIP sessions in Brisbane and the data is to be recorded in Lexicon (LEA staff data base).

## 5. The Christian Studies Teacher

As outlined in *LEA Christian Studies: Roles and Responsibilities*, the Christian Studies teacher:

- Commits to professional requirements and has a sound understanding of the learning area and has completed relevant requirements of the accreditation program, as specified by Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) *Staffing Policy for Lutheran Schools*; grows and develops professionally and spiritually through collaboration with peers, professional reading, ongoing study, attendance at seminars, workshops, retreats

- Leadership encourages staff to grown in their own personal faith journey by role modelling the Christian faith in their own lives
- Develops an inclusive learning environment: creates and fosters an atmosphere of respect, care and openness where students have freedom to explore Christianity, their own questions, faith and personal response; accepts that students and teachers in Christian Studies are critical inquirers; uses a range of stimulating resources such as print, multi-media, guest speakers, the arts; provides learning experiences that cater for a range of learning styles and for students to work both collaboratively and individually
- Embraces teaching and learning that: makes explicit the relevance and purpose of what students are learning; builds on students' prior knowledge and understanding; actively engages students in sharing, discussing, researching, collating, analysing, critically reflecting and using their learning in meaningful ways; provides opportunities for students to think and reflect on important contemporary spiritual, moral and ethical issues.

## 6. The Christian Studies Coordinator Role

As outlined in *LEA Christian Studies: Roles and Responsibilities*, the Christian Studies Coordinator is the key contact person for Christian studies. The Christian Studies Coordinator is responsible to and reports to the Principal on all matters relating to Christian Studies. The Christian Studies Coordinator is responsible for:

- Working with the Principal to develop a vision and plan for the ongoing development and support of Christian Studies across the school community for Christian Studies
- Developing common understandings of the nature and purpose of Christian Studies
- Developing and facilitating the school's overall Christian Studies program and school plan
- Identifying the needs of Christian Studies teachers in the school and plan and co-ordinate a professional development program
- Sharing information with staff related to all professional development courses or events related to Christian Studies
- Providing induction and mentoring for new Christian Studies teachers
- Skilling teachers with strategies to write units of work and to teach Christian Studies
- Co-ordinating the selection, purchase and distribution of materials to support the Christian Studies curriculum
- Managing the Christian Studies budget
- Liaising with Christian Studies Co-ordinators in other schools and with regional and national support personal.