



Covenant Christian School
Association
All knowledge through Christ

Membership Information

Membership of Covenant Christian School

Vision:

To faithfully serve in God's plan to restore all things under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Mission:

To assist parents in the nurture of their children, by providing a Christ-centred, biblically grounded, culturally engaging and academically rigorous education to equip the children to live for God's glory.

We hope that you don't have to look too closely at Covenant Christian School to see that it is a 'distinctive' school - that there are some significant differences between our School and most other public and private schools.

Some of these 'distinctives' can be summed up in a phrase we use in describing our School - a phrase which really outlines the fundamental values we operate under. That phrase is...

Christian parent-controlled¹

The meanings of the two parts of that phrase are worth brief reflection:

'Christian' means (at least) that the School:

- proclaims the Christian message in a way that calls upon all who hear it to submit to Jesus Christ as their Lord and trust him as their Saviour;
- undertakes the education of students with a Christian worldview as its underlying and fundamental presupposition - a worldview which treats the Bible as the authoritative Word of God and the final authority in all matters of faith and conduct; and
- performs the task in a 'Christian' manner, that is, as Jesus Christ conducted himself - self-sacrificially serving others in love.

¹ In fact, we are not completely on our own. We are part of a wider organisation called 'Christian Education National', and there are around 80 other schools with a very similar approach or philosophy.

'Parent controlled' means that the School:

- acknowledges and assumes parental responsibility for the nurture of their children in the Lord (Eph 6:4);
- cultivates and empowers parental involvement; and
- preserves its Christian distinctives over time.

Fundamentally, 'parent-control' means parents taking responsibility and being active in that responsibility. Whilst there is an element of 'governance' and leadership that is part of 'parent control', it is *not* primarily about structures, Boards and committees. *Parent-control or responsibility is something in which all parents participate.*

Who are the important decision-makers in our School? Who makes the really big and important decisions? Is it just the Board members? The staff?

Parent-control is about taking responsibility for godly decision-making at all levels, not just at the level of Boards and committees. *All* the decisions we make to serve the Lord faithfully - whether big or small in 'worldly' terms - are important decisions.

Nonetheless, parental-control *does* include the concept of parental governance of the School, and that is the focus of this booklet - the structure of the School and how it is governed.

The School Structure

Our School is actually a company. But we more often refer to it as an Association (Covenant Christian School Association); and it doesn't have shareholders, it has 'members'. It has a Constitution - a legal document stating what the company has been set up to do, and how the founders want it to be run².

The Constitution states how the School is to be governed. It is a democratic government, but it is a 'closed democracy', if we can describe it that way. Here's how it works...

² Copies are available from the website or the Association Coordinator.

Membership of the Association

Firstly, there is a community of people - the Covenant Christian School community of parents, students, staff and other friends of the School. However, being part of that community - even being a fee-paying parent - does not automatically make you a 'member' of the Association. The members of the Association are, according to the Constitution, the people who are to take the formal role in governing the School, and, as such, it is important that they understand and fully agree with the fundamental goals of the Association - they have to 'share the vision' of the School.

Because of the nature of our School and its vision, the main thing they have to share with the School is a commitment to Jesus Christ. That is, members of the School must be professing Christians. But they must also agree with the basic theological and educational directions that the School has as its basis, which are set out in the Constitution (particularly the 'Educational Creed'). That common commitment is currently assessed through completing an application form, and attending an interview with two current Board directors.

There are actually two types of members of the CCS Association: 'full' members and 'associate' members. The table below outlines the differences:

	Associate Members	Full Members
Professing Christian	✓	✓
Subscribes to Educational Creed	✓	✓
Subscribes to the Covenant Christian School Association Summary Statement of Belief	✗	✓
Eligibility	Immediate	After 12 months as Associate
Able to serve on Board	✗	✓
Able to serve on Board Sub-Committees	✗	✓
Able to serve on other committees	✓	✓
Able to vote at General Meetings	✓	✓
Able to vote on changes to Constitution	✗	✓

There is a more detailed explanation of the table's third item ('subscribing to' the CCS Association Summary Statement of Belief) in the Appendix. Suffice to say at this point that the intent of the Constitution is to place even greater doctrinal prerequisites upon those members who may have the responsibility of exercising leadership in the School - the Full Members - and this reflects the eldership qualifications that the New Testament imposes on Church leaders (eg Titus 1:9, 1 Tim 3:9, 2 Tim 2:2). Applications for admission to Full Membership are assessed by an (friendly!) interview process.

The Board

At the Annual General Meeting each year, the members elect a Board of Directors of up to nine full members, and a rotation system ensures that new Directors come onto the Board regularly. The Board currently meets for its main meetings on the fourth Wednesday evening of each month (during School term).

The Board's role is really to act as the interface between the staff who make the day-to-day operational decisions, and the parents, who are the ones who set the directions and policies they wish to see implemented in the School so as to further the vision they have for the Association. Some of the key roles for the Board in this are: the appointment of the Principal of the school, financial stewardship and other legal responsibilities, and strategic planning in conjunction with the Executive. The Board also serves as the place of final appeal against decisions of the Principal.

Why become a member?

The first and primary reason to become a member is to express your commitment to the Vision & Mission of the School (i.e. to assist parents in the nurture of their children, providing a Bible-based, Christ-centred education that enables them to live for God's glory). That is, to indicate that this is a vision which you believe in, and wish to support and promote.

By joining the School association as a member, you are making a public declaration of commitment to the School community and its vision. To put it another way, rather than just being a 'consumer' of educational services, you are committing to being a loyal contributor to, and even leader of, a community vision. We trust that the decision will therefore be taken after due thought and prayer.

Secondly, there is the obvious membership privilege of being able to have a formal say in the direction and policies of the School, if not by actually serving on some of the committees or Board, by at least having a say in who represents you on those committees.

Furthermore, ten percent of the voting members acting together have the right to call a General Meeting to raise any matter in relation to the life of the School, including the possibility of overturning a decision of the Board.

How to become a member

The first step in becoming a member is to apply for 'Associate membership'. This is done by completing an application form (enclosed in this pack). You will need to obtain a reference from the pastor/minister of the church you attend to verify to us that you are in fact a practising Christian in regular fellowship.

The Association Coordinator will then contact you to arrange a meeting for the purpose of discussing membership with you and what it involves and how you wish to participate as a member (whether just by praying and supporting, or in some other way). This is a very casual meeting, and is an opportunity for you to ask questions and give feedback.

The Board will then vote at its next meeting as to whether your application will be accepted, and you will be notified by email of the result.

Twelve months after becoming an Associate Member, you are eligible to apply for Full Membership. Again, this process is commenced by completing an application form. You will also need to read through parts of the School's Constitution and the CCS Summary Statement of Belief document. (Again, copies are available from the website and the Association Coordinator).

An interview will be arranged with you, conducted by two current Board members or other Full Members to whom the Board may delegate.

As indicated earlier, the purpose of this interview is to discuss your understanding of the CCS Summary Statement of Belief document and ensure that you have a clear appreciation of the central theology of the School, and that there is no barrier to you in subscribing to this. It is, however, a continuation of the 'getting to know you' that began with the Associate Membership process, and is again very casual and not at all threatening.

As with Associate Membership, the Board then votes at its next meeting on whether to accept your application.

If you have any questions about anything to do with Association membership, please do not hesitate to contact the current Association Coordinator

Appendix

Membership of the School Association: the difference between Full Membership and Associate Membership

The School's Constitution provides for two different categories of Membership: Full Members and Associate Members (6. Membership)

An Associate Member must:

- be a confessing Christian, and
- subscribe to the Objects of the Association as stated in clauses 2, the Principles and Covenants of the Association as set out in Schedule 1, and the Educational Creed as set out in Schedule 2.

Full Members, however, must fulfill the following additional requirements:

- have been an Associate Member for 12 months, and
- subscribe to the objects and principles including reference to the Creeds through the Covenant Christian School Association Summary Statement of Belief.

The reference to the Creeds is as follows: Christian education and instruction “is to be based upon the inerrant Word of God as interpreted by” the Three forms of Unity and/or Westminster Catechism and/or the Baptist Confession AND the Educational Creed set out in Clause 4.

The Board considers that it is the intent of the School's Constitution to place even greater doctrinal requirements upon those members who may exercise the formal leadership in the School (i.e. the Full Members), and this reflects, in a sense, the eldership qualifications that the New Testament imposes on leadership in the church (eg Titus 1:9, 1 Tim 3:9, 2 Tim 2:2). In other words, closer conformity with the doctrinal basis of the School is more important for Full Membership applicants than with Associate Membership applicants; hence the requirement to subscribe to the more detailed document.

However, the Board is not of the view that applicants for Full Membership are required to agree with *every clause* of one of the three Creeds above. Rather, the Board's view is that the natural reading of the Constitution could perhaps be paraphrased as follows:

Instruction is to be based on God's Word, and, if there is any doubt or disagreement about what God's Word says on a particular doctrinal issue, in our School we will adopt the interpretation outlined in the creeds.

Full members are therefore required to commit to this approach within the School. If there is any disagreement and we cannot, by prayerful discussion, come to a common mind of what Scripture says on a given issue, there can be no other position than that we all willingly agree to adopt, within the School context, the view that is contained in the Summary Statement of Belief. If this offends someone's conscience, then they have no alternative but to resign as Full Members. They must not stay and cause disunity and trouble, nor work to have another view adopted.

In the end, this approach means that there must be nothing in the Summary Statement of Belief that so offends an applicant's conscience that, if required to, they cannot support the School in teaching on the basis of that document. On core gospel issues as best described in the great slogans of the Reformation, Christ alone, faith alone, grace alone and scripture alone - it is expected that there would be close uniformity within the Association.

Whilst it may seem strange to suggest that people can 'subscribe' to a set of doctrinal statements with which they do not necessarily personally agree in all their detail, as a matter of practice it is a view which:

- allows some liberty on non-gospel issues
- should prevent those who take a different view on central/Gospel issues from being able to honestly 'subscribe' as a matter of conscience, and
- gives a firm, non-negotiable foundation for the School to build upon and for teachers to know the School will support them.