



# FREE REFORMED SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

*My heart I offer to You Lord - **promptly and sincerely***

## Reformed Schooling

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# 1. Introduction

The John Calvin Schools, as operated by the Free Reformed School Association (Inc), are Christian schools founded on God's Word, as contained in the Holy Bible and summarized in the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort (the Three Forms of Unity). The brand of education practised at these schools is known as Reformed education or Reformed schooling.

This document outlines the vision, mission and beliefs of Reformed schooling with a view to establishing clear links between Reformed theology and the practice of a Reformed school.

The purpose of this document is threefold:

- To serve as a teaching resource for inducting staff into the specific practices of Reformed schooling
- To serve as guide for schools to establish themselves as truly Reformed in their practice.
- To provide insight to the wider community in terms of the character of Reformed schooling.

The greater desire for this document is that it will be lived out in the schools and that God will bless its use, for his children, for his church and for his kingdom.



## 2. The Reformed School

### 2.1 Definition

The Reformed school is where Reformed theology and the science around schooling come together for the high outcome of equipping students for lives of service to God and their neighbour.

At the Reformed school key participants engage a variety of processes to bring about learning and growth, under the blessing of almighty God.

### 2.2 Rationale

Reformed schools are established with a view to acting consistently in the teaching of children born to parents who uphold the Christian faith, as reflected in God's command to Israel, as recorded in [Deuteronomy 6: 4–9](#) where Moses instructs God's people as follows:

*"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words which I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your hearts."*

God acts consistently in every aspect of his working; he calls believers to act with the same consistency and alignment in their lives and to train their children to do so as well.

### 2.3 Key Participants

In Reformed schools, the following are deemed to be key participants:

- Students
- Teachers / Education Assistants
- Parents / Carers
- School Community
- Church

Reformed schools function within the context of the society of the country within which it functions.

## 2.4 Key Processes

The key processes of Reformed schooling we identify as being:

- Reformed School Culture
- Reformed Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Reformed Curriculum



## 3. Foundation

Reformed schooling is built on the foundation of the Word of God, the doctrine of which is summarised in the Three Forms of Unity. Key elements of this doctrine, which are worked out in the practice of Reformed schooling, are described below.

### 3.1 Knowing God

We know God by two means:

First by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe ...

Second by his holy and divine Word ...

We refer to this as God's work and God's Word.

*Bible references:* [Romans 1:20](#), [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#), [2 Peter 1:20-21](#)

*Confessional references:*

*Belgic Confession of Faith:* [Article 2](#)

### 3.2 The Word of God

The Word of God in its entirety is seen as being authoritative in all aspects of life.

*Bible references:* [Psalm 93:5](#), [Psalm 119:9](#), [105](#), [133](#), [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#), [2 Peter 1:20-21](#)

*Confessional references:*

*Belgic Confession of Faith:* [Articles 3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#)

### 3.3 Creation

God created the world and everything in it. He reveals himself in the creation. He created people, male and female, with differing strengths and abilities. He gave the mandate to explore and develop his creation to his honour and his glory. He calls for the best use of talents and gifts in relation to the mandate he has given.

*Bible references:* [Genesis 1](#), [Genesis 4:2](#), [Genesis 5:20-22](#), [1 Corinthians 10:31](#)

*Confessional references:*

*Belgic Confession of Faith:* [Articles 12-14](#)

*Heidelberg Catechism:* [Lord's Day 9](#), [10](#)



### 3.4 God is sovereign

God is sovereign LORD and King. He established his sovereignty from eternity, in creation and he maintains his authority in his rule over all things. People are called to submit to him in obedience and to extend honour and praise to him in all their being.

“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine! (Abraham Kuyper)

*Bible references:* [Genesis 1](#), [Psalm 24](#), [Psalm 99](#), [Psalm 110](#), [John 13:13](#), [1 Corinthians 15:20–28](#), [Ephesians 1:9–11](#), [1 Timothy 6:15](#), [Revelation 1, 4–21](#)

*Confessional references:*

*Belgic Confession of Faith:* [Articles 8, 10, 12](#)

*Heidelberg Catechism:* [Lord's Day 9, 12, 13 \(Q and A 34\)](#)

### 3.5 The image of God

Adam and Eve were created in the image of God. This means that they were endowed with a true understanding of God and his works, a propensity coupled with the ability to serve him in obedience, in true righteousness and holiness. This image was shattered when mankind fell into sin; only remnants remained, sufficient for life on earth to continue and to render people inexcusable. God continues to hold people to account, on how he originally created them. Scripture urges deep respect for fellow human beings, based on how they were originally created in the image of God. In Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit, believers are being restored in the image of God. Reformed education is focused on supporting that process of renewal by providing a scriptural understanding of God and his works, as revealed in his Word, and continual inducement to serve him in obedience.

*Bible references:* [Genesis 1:26–27](#), [Genesis 5:1–3](#), [Genesis 9:6](#), [Ephesians 4:23–24](#), [Colossians 3:9–10](#), [James 3:9–10](#)

*Confessional references:*

*Belgic Confession of Faith:* [Article 14](#)

*Heidelberg Catechism:* [Lord's Day 3](#)

### 3.6 The cultural mandate

God created the world; he also created mankind and gave him the task to work in the world that he made, to fill it, to learn about it, to develop it, to use the resources within it, to his glory.

*Bible references:* [Genesis 1:28](#)

*Confessional references:*

*Heidelberg Catechism:* [Lord's Day 3](#)

### 3.7 The fall into sin

The fall into sin impacted on the condition of people in such a way that they have become incapable of themselves to do any good and are inclined to all evil.

*Bible references:* [Genesis 3:6](#), [Genesis 6:5](#), [Jeremiah 2:11–13](#), [Romans 3:9–18](#)

*Confessional references:*

*Belgic Confession of Faith:* [Articles 14, 15](#)



Heidelberg Catechism: [Lord's Day 2, 3](#)

Canons of Dort: [Chapter 1 Article 1](#); [Chapters 3 & 4 Articles 1-5](#)

### 3.8 Salvation/Regeneration

God established the way to salvation by establishing enmity between those who follow God in faithful obedience and those who follow Satan and by providing a Saviour, his own son, Jesus Christ. God's people are called to live their lives, as prophets, priests, and kings, in thankful obedience to his law of love. Through the Holy Spirit of God, God's people are enabled to put off the old nature and put on the new nature and so be renewed in the image of God.

*Bible references:* [Genesis 3:15](#), [Isaiah 11:1-5](#), [Romans 8:9-17](#), [Colossians 3:1-17](#)

*Confessional references:*

Belgic Confession of Faith: [Article 17, 18, 24](#)

Heidelberg Catechism: [Lord's Day 1, 5, 6, 12, 33, 34, 45](#)

Canons of Dort: [Chapter 1 Article 2](#); [Chapter 2 Article 8](#), [Chapters 3 & 4 Articles 12 & 13](#), [Chapter 5 Articles 2, 8](#)

### 3.9 Covenant

To establish his work of salvation and regeneration the LORD established a special covenant with believers and their children. In the covenant the LORD nurtures, teaches and disciplines his children for their good and for the realisation of his purpose. He calls them to fight their sworn enemies, "the devil, the world and our own flesh", and so to live in faithful obedience in accordance with his law and he calls them to show the works (fruit) of the Spirit.

*Bible references:* [Genesis 17:7](#), [Acts 2:39](#), [Exodus 20:1-17](#), [Galatians 5:22-23](#)

*Confessional references:*

Belgic Confession of Faith: [Article 34](#)

Heidelberg Catechism: [Lord's Day 26, 27, 52](#)

### 3.10 God's law

God's law reflects God himself; all the commandments reflect his character, outside of which there is no life. God gave his law to show people their sin and point them to Jesus Christ who, not only saves them from their sin but also sets them free from the devil's vice grip, enabling people to serve him again. It gives direction to how to live lives in thankfulness to God, for the great salvation that he has wrought and to be restored in his image.

*Bible references:* [Exodus 20:1-17](#), [Deuteronomy 5:6-21](#), [Psalm 19:7-8](#), [Psalm 119](#), [Matthew 5:17-48](#), [Matthew 22:34-40](#), [Galatians 5:19-24](#), [Ephesians 4:25-32](#), [Ephesians 5:1-5](#)

*Confessional references:*

Belgic Confession of Faith: [Article 25, 36](#)

Heidelberg Catechism: [Lord's Days 32 - 44](#)

### 3.11 The church

The church is "a holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers, who expect their entire salvation in Jesus Christ, are washed by his blood and are sanctified and sealed

by the Holy Spirit" ([BC of Faith Art 27](#)). In the church we identify and see God's work of "gathering, defending, and preserving for himself, a church, chosen to everlasting life" ([LD 21, Q&A 54 Heidelberg Catechism](#)). In the church believers (and their children) may richly experience the communion of saints. The church has office bearers charged to extend care as shepherds of the flock.

*Bible references:* [1 Corinthians 12:12–31](#), [Ephesians 4:11–16](#), [Acts 20:17, 28–31](#)

*Confessional references:*

*Belgic Confession of Faith:* [Articles 27, 28, 29](#)

*Heidelberg Catechism:* [Lord's Day 21](#)

### 3.12 The kingdom of heaven

In Christ, God is establishing his kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is about being ruled by God's Word and Spirit, the preservation of God's church, and the destruction and defeat of the devil, every power that raises itself against God and every conspiracy against God's holy Word.

*Bible references:* [Daniel 2:44](#), [Matthew 3:2](#), [Matthew 4:17](#), [Revelation 21:1–8](#)

*Confessional References:*

*Belgic Confession of Faith:* [Article 37](#)

*Heidelberg Catechism:* [Lord's Day 21, 48](#)

### 3.13 Prayer

Prayer is the act of speaking with God. It is an act of thankfulness for God's excellent gifts and an opportunity to express such thankfulness in the form of praise as well as to place before the LORD the many needs that exist as organisation and as individuals functioning within that organisation. It is based on the belief and understanding that our activity depends in its entirety on God, his active involvement, his care, his guidance, his direction, and his blessing.

*Bible references:* [Psalm 116:12–14](#), [Matthew 6:5–14](#), [Matthew 7:7–11](#), [1 Thessalonians 5:16–18](#), [James 1:17](#)

*Confessional references:*

*Heidelberg Catechism:* [Lord's Day 45–52](#)

### 3.14 Government

God has ordained government. Believers are called to honour those in authority and to be obedient to their ordinances unless they contradict God's express command. Believers are also called to pray for the government.

*Bible references:* [Exodus 20:12](#), [Matthew 22:21](#), [Romans 13:1–5](#), [1 Timothy 2:2](#)

*Confessional references:*

*Belgic Confession of Faith:* [Article 36](#)

*Heidelberg Catechism:* [Lord's Day 39](#)



## 4. Vision ... *what the Reformed school wants to be, and more and more become*

The Reformed school is a godly institution of learning for covenant children, to be educated for a life of love and service to God and their neighbour.

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*"Show me Your ways, O Lord;  
Teach me Your paths.  
Lead me in Your truth and teach me,  
For You are the God of my salvation;  
On You I wait all the day."*

*- Psalm 25:4-5*

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## 5. Mission ... what the Reformed school does and for whom

5.1 The Reformed school **extends high nurture** to the children of the covenant.

As God nurtures in the covenant, so the school is an institution where high nurture is extended, as a platform from which to launch its teaching.

5.2 The Reformed school **provides expert teaching** to children of the covenant.

God extends teaching to his people, and he calls parents and other adults to engage with his covenant children to teach them in the best manner possible.

5.3 The Reformed school **calls for a faithful response** from children of the covenant.

Covenant children are called to show love and obedience to God in their service of him and to their neighbour.




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*"We will not hide them from their children,  
Telling to the generation to come the  
praises of the Lord...*

*That they may set their hope in God,  
And not forget the works of God,  
But keep His commandments."*

*- Psalm 78:4, 7*

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## 6. Beliefs

Activity at the Reformed school is based on fundamental beliefs relating to participants and processes.

### 6.1 Participants in the Reformed school

#### 6.1.1 Students

Every student is a precious child of God:

- a) originally created in the image of God;
- b) conceived and born in sin;
- c) incorporated in a covenant with God;
- d) a subject of God's promises;
- e) being restored in the image of Christ.

Every student is called to:

- a) be thankful and obedient;
- b) engage in the spiritual battle;
- c) use and develop the talents they have received;
- d) engage positively with others.

Every student is subject to:

- a) God and his Word;
- b) the authority of his/her parents;
- c) the authority of staff of the school;

#### 6.1.2 Teachers and Education Assistants

Every teacher and education assistant is:

- a) a child of God, in the same way as students are;
- b) a brother or sister (in the faith) to the students they work with;
- c) a living member of (one of) the church(es) associated with the Reformed school;
- d) subject to God and his Word in all aspects of his/her personal and professional activity.

Every teacher and education assistant:

- a) recognises and respects that their students are precious in the eyes of the LORD;
- b) has a shared responsibility (as a member of a team) for the learning of all students in the school;

Every teacher and education assistant is called to:

- a) strive for excellence in their teaching, engaging in practice that will support the optimal learning of the student(s);
- b) reflect the joy of faith that lives in them and exhibit in all their conduct, the fruit of the Spirit;
- c) set high personal and professional standards for themselves and will require that students meet the highest possible standard that they are capable of;
- d) establish a positive relationship with students, parents, and colleagues as a basis for promoting student learning and a positive school culture;
- e) exercise authority, mindful of own dependence on grace, and mindful of the boundaries placed on the exercise of authority by Scripture;
- f) engage in personal and professional activity leading to growth as a teacher, firmly grounded in the Word of God.

### 6.1.3 Parents

Parents of students at the school are:

- a) responsible to God for the nurture and growth of their children in accordance with the baptism vows;
- b) equally children of the LORD called to thankful obedience, subject to God and the authority of his Word;
- c) responsible for engaging with the school, being aware of its activity;
- d) responsible for establishing a godly home culture in accordance with the teachings of Scripture.

Parents of students at the school are called to:

- a) be invested in the Reformed school and in the education their child receives;
- b) support the staff generally and the teachers of their children specifically, speaking positively about them and holding them in the highest esteem and supporting them in their authority, as per the fifth commandment;
- c) communicate with the school and the teachers of their children in relation to the children's schooling;
- d) remember the school in their prayers before the LORD.

### 6.1.4 School community

Members of the school community are called to support the school:

- a) by way of prayer;
- b) by way of showing interest and involvement;
- c) by means of offering financial gifts.

### 6.1.5 Church

The church as institution:

- a) is supported by the school in its ministry;
- b) Is, in accordance with Article 53 of the Church Order, called to support the activity of the school towards common goals.
- c) has a calling to cooperate with the school in areas of common interest;

### 6.1.6 Society

The Reformed school functions within the society of the land in which it operates. In relation to the society the Reformed school:

- a) is active in upholding government legislation relating to the school and schooling in Australia, in as much as this does not conflict with the Word of God;
- b) is conscious of its students finding their place in society and works to prepare them for that;
- c) respectfully and cautiously interacts with those elements of society that are helpful in relation to its educational charter;
- d) filters or rejects those influences that arise out of society which are contrary to its foundation, with a view to promoting understanding and discernment, within the context of the battle between Christ and his followers and the devil and those who follow him ([Genesis 3:15](#); [Ephesians 6:10-12](#)).

## 6.2 Processes of schooling

### 6.2.1 School Culture

The culture of the Reformed school is marked by:

- a) a shared covenantal relationship where staff and students see each other as subjects of God's love and grace in Christ;
- b) a spiritually, physically, and emotionally safe environment for students to function within;
- c) positive and encouraging approaches, aimed at nurture towards a God centred goal;
- d) heartfelt godliness in conduct, relationships and response to teaching and learning requirements;
- e) discipline that is aimed at the heart and focused on repentance and correction;
- f) a focus on learning and growth.

### 6.2.2 Curriculum

The Reformed school is mindful of developing a curriculum that:

- a) encompasses God's Word and God's work;
- b) is developed, reviewed, and delivered in a systematic way in accordance with recognised learning area divisions;
- c) incorporates a focus on the sovereignty of God and the authority of Scriptures in all areas of learning;
- d) adheres to and maintains the standards as set by recognised authorities;
- e) incorporates skills that promote the growth of students as learners;
- f) draws on resources, which are:
  - i) engaging and supportive of learning, designed to interest students and stimulate their curiosity for deeper understanding;
  - ii) as much as possible, reflective of scriptural positions and values and used to promote scriptural understandings and perspectives (where resources used do not positively reflect scriptural positions and understanding, teachers will need to make appropriate adjustments to the delivery of such content).



### 6.2.3 Teaching and Learning

The Reformed school is mindful that its teaching and learning programs and practices must:

- a) accord with the wider principles of the kingdom of God, as it is expressed in Christian classrooms;
- b) be delivered in accordance with year level syllabi and agreed lesson plan structures;
- c) be so delivered that all students are able to reasonably engage with and learn the content and make progress in learning;
- d) be mindful of differences between students and differentiate for students with varying abilities and dispositions;
- e) engage multiple approaches with an emphasis on sound communication and creative methods of delivery and production;
- f) be delivered with a view to stimulating interest and engagement with the topic and a desire to achieve high levels of mastery;
- g) enable students to achieve success in learning with a view to growing in knowledge, understanding and skills and developing a deeper appreciation of God's sovereignty and the place of learning in life;
- h) give expression to sovereignty of God and the authority of Scriptures in all areas of learning.

### 6.2.4 Assessment

The Reformed school is mindful of the need for assessment practices to:

- a) function seamlessly within the broader directions and aims of Reformed schooling;
- b) conducted fairly and equitably and in accordance with the agreed arrangements surrounding assessment;
- c) incorporate processes surrounding self-evaluation and self-assessment;
- d) provide appropriate and helpful feedback to students and their parents in relation to their learning;
- e) assist teachers in gaining specific knowledge about the students and the classes, with a view to better targeting their teaching programmes to the needs of each student;
- f) be used to come to a summative grade of the student's performance against a standard.

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*"If you cry out for discernment,  
And lift up your voice for understanding,  
If you seek her as silver,  
And search for her as for hidden treasures;  
Then you will understand the fear of the Lord,  
And find the knowledge of God."*

*- Proverbs 2:3-5*

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