

**Tara Doak**

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**From:** 9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Thursday, 17 June 2021 11:24 am  
**To:** Arona Jacob  
**Subject:** FW: Statement of Belief - Bethlehem College  
**Attachments:** Statement of Belief & Statement of Special Character (1).pdf

Hi Arona,

Thanks for your time on the phone this morning. Attached is the document, and below is the email that I will be sending to Larne Edmeades this afternoon.

I look forward to your response.

Regards,

9(2)(a)

Hi Larne,

My name is 9(2)(a) and we are part of the Bethlehem College School community. It has recently been brought to my attention point 13 of the Statement of belief which new parents are required to read and tick each box, confirming each statement is accepted:

*13. In the beginning God created male and female. Marriage is an institution created by God in which one man and one woman enter into an exclusive relationship intended for life, and that marriage is the only form of partnership approved by God for sexual relations.*

This wording indicates that any other sexuality is not accepted at Bethlehem College. Is this correct? Is this the only sexuality taught at the school? How do you manage a child who is gay, transexual or other within the school? How is the LGBTQ community at Bethlehem College made to feel welcome and not discriminated against?

It is my understanding it is a requirement under the Human Rights Act that it is grounds of discrimination for a school to not allow children and their families depending on their sexual orientation.

These documents, when reviewed need to be openly and freely discussed within the Bethlehem College Community to ensure clear, honest discussions. It would also be appreciated that there is an issue date on these documents so we are aware when they have been reviewed.

I look forward to your feedback.

Regards

9(2)(a)

Released under the Official Information Act



## STATEMENT OF SPECIAL CHARACTER

### 1 CONTEXT

- 1.1 The Christian Education Trust founded Bethlehem College in 1988 for parents seeking an evangelical, non-denominational, Bible-based, Christ-centred education for their children. To this end, it has required all staff and the curriculum of the school, to honour the Statement of Belief as set out in its Trust Deed and annexed hereto.
- 1.2 The Christian Education Trust's goal is for quality Christian education from the "cradle to eternity". To date, therefore, the Christian Education Trust has developed an organisation incorporating early childhood centres, a combined primary and secondary school, an English language school and tertiary training to degree level in teaching and counselling.
- 1.3 The Christian Education Trust has established Bethlehem College Limited as Proprietor (as defined in the Private Schools' Conditional Integration Act) to oversee, audit and supervise the maintenance of the Special Character in the school for the age groups from Year 0 to Year 13.
- 1.4 All staff of other entities operated by the Christian Education Trust, are also required to support the Statement of Belief. The supervision of the special character of these entities is monitored by the General Manager of the Trust, on behalf of the Trust.

### 2 SPECIAL CHARACTER OF CAMPUS

- 2.1 The campus and facilities are shared co-operatively between the school and other entities operated by the Christian Education Trust to assist in the development of seamless Christian education. This includes providing Bethlehem Tertiary Institute the right of involvement in the early childhood centres and school to prepare Christian educators and counsellors and to actively and critically engage in research associated with Christian education and family life.

### 3 SPECIAL CHARACTER OF CURRICULUM – Bethlehem College

- 3.1 The curriculum, resources and teaching personnel are always to honour the Statement of Belief.
- 3.2 In honouring the Statement of Belief, the Christian worldview which the school presents helps each student to recognise that:
  - a. God is the author of all creation and that all creation is subordinate to the Will of God as expressed in the scriptures;
  - b. All truth finds its meaning and centre in God;
  - c. God gives purpose and hope to individuals, and to all creation by virtue of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ;
  - d. It is the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, communicated by the Holy Spirit and operating in the human individual that gives substance to intellectual, physical, spiritual, ethical, emotional, social, and aesthetic development of the student.

- 3.3 Students are encouraged to evaluate critically all experience and viewpoints in the light of such a Christian worldview.
- 3.4 The School outworks the Christian worldview through encouraging students to a personal Christian way of life, based on Biblical answers to contemporary challenges. Through the policies and practices of the School and its staff, Biblical attitudes such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are taught and modeled.
- 3.5 The Christian worldview requires a curriculum that includes opportunities to share the Christian faith, ideals and activities, locally, nationally, and internationally.
- 3.6 The school is a caring, learning community with an environment that is openly Christian. All fields of study and endeavour are permeated with a Biblical perspective. Although the Christian worldview is paramount, students also learn to understand and respect those of differing faiths and creeds as well as those of different abilities, races, and backgrounds.
- 3.7 The school believes that each child has been created in the image of God and as such is the object of God's redemptive work through Christ. This gives hope that students will be able to fulfill God's purpose and plan for their lives. The school desires to see students:
- a. Aspire to excellence in every endeavour, and in particularly in their areas of giftedness.
  - b. Develop a commitment to :
    - God – responding to the Holy Spirit.
    - Others – seeking to serve their fellow man with Christ-like humility.
    - Creation –acting as responsible stewards of their environment.

#### 4 PROTECTION OF SPECIAL CHARACTER

- 4.1 The Proprietor reserves the right to determine from time to time the interpretation of "Special Character" and the safeguards necessary to establish, preserve and maintain it and to audit periodically the implementation of the Special Character within the school.

#### 5 IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIAL CHARACTER

- 5.1 The Bethlehem College Board of Trustees, principals and staff are responsible for implementing the Special Character throughout the school. Because the Christian worldview encompasses and permeates all aspects of school life, it is expected that all staff and members of the Board of Trustees will demonstrate a commitment to the Statement of Belief and to the school's Special Character.
- 5.2 All Bethlehem College students and their families are expected to demonstrate a commitment to the School's Special Character.
- 5.3 All staff employed by other operating entities owned by the Christian Education Trust (including support staff), are required to demonstrate a commitment to the Special Character, and the Statement of Belief.

Please tick the box that is applicable

- I/We **accept** the Statement of Special Character
- I/We are **unable to accept** the Statement of Special Character

Parent/Caregiver signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Caregiver signature \_\_\_\_\_



CHRISTIAN  
EDUCATION  
TRUST

## STATEMENT OF BELIEF

***Please read and tick each box, confirming you accept each statement:***

- 1. The Unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the Godhead.
- 2. The Sovereignty of God in creation, revelation, redemption and final judgement.
- 3. The divine inspiration and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture, as originally given, and its supreme authority in all matters of faith, practice and conduct.
- 4. The universal sinfulness and guilt of human nature since the fall, rendering man subject to God's judgement and condemnation.
- 5. Redemption from the guilt, penalty, pollution and the power of sin only through the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God.
- 6. The working of the Holy Spirit in the individual's life to bring about justification and reconciliation to God by repentance and faith in Christ alone.
- 7. The Deity and Humanity of Jesus Christ; His bodily resurrection from the dead; His ascension; His mediatorial work and His personal return in power and glory.
- 8. The indwelling and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the believer, developing each individual in their personal ministry to the Lord.
- 9. The One, Holy, Universal Church, which is the Body of Christ, to which all true believers belong and in which they are united through the Holy Spirit; and the importance of each local church in the life of the individual.
- 10. The bodily resurrection of the dead and life everlasting.
- 11. Christ's Commission as expressed in Matthew 28: 18-20.
- 12. That God continues to keep His covenant with His chosen people, the Jews, and has made salvation possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus for both Jew and Gentile alike; and that God continues to be faithful to His chosen people, to the land promised to their forefathers. Those who bless God's chosen people will be blessed.
- 13. In the beginning God created male and female. Marriage is an institution created by God in which one man and one woman enter into an exclusive relationship intended for life, and that marriage is the only form of partnership approved by God for sexual relations.

Parent/Caregiver 1: ..... Date: .....

Parent/Caregiver 2: ..... Date: .....

## Tara Doak

---

**From:** 9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 23 June 2021 4:54 pm  
**To:** Arona Jacob  
**Subject:** FW: Statement of Belief - Bethlehem College

Hi there,

I would appreciate your thoughts on this as I still don't believe it is aligned with NZ law? Especially since it is a state integrated school I believe it needs to be reviewed.

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**From:** Larne Edmeades <Larne.Edmeades@beth.school.nz>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 23 June 2021 1:59 PM  
**To:** 9(2)(a)  
**Cc:** Arona.jacob@education.govt.nz  
**Subject:** RE: Statement of Belief - Bethlehem College

Dear 9(2)(a)

Thank you for taking the time to email me directly and raise your questions. From the start can I affirm that we are committed to upholding the well-being of all our students in a safe, positive, values-based learning environment that respects the dignity of all. Further, as a Christian learning community our heart is to work alongside children and families with genuine love and compassion.

It might be helpful to outline some of the parameters that guide the College Board and the Proprietor Board (Bethlehem College Limited - BCL);

Bethlehem College is a State Integrated School of Special Character and our Special Character is detailed in our Integration Deed with the Crown. It is a legal requirement that we (the College Board and the Proprietor Board) ensure the Special Character is preserved and safeguarded through all our teaching and conduct, as a College. The Special Character of Bethlehem College is Christian; Biblically Based and Christ Centred.

The Statement of Belief details the position of the College based on our Biblically-Based, Christ-Centred Special Character. The Statement of Belief has always been part of the enrolment process. For clarity, an aspect of the enrolment process was changed recently to allow applicants to acknowledge acceptance (or not) of each statement rather than have to accept (or not) the entire Statement of Belief. To my knowledge, the Statement itself has not been revised for a number of years, apart from clarifying the wording on clause 12, as requested by staff and board members. We accept that not every family or student within the Bethlehem College community will align with all the beliefs of the College, and this is to be expected.

It is our obligation and indeed our desire, to provide a healthy and safe environment for all our students. As I trust you will have sensed, we take this very seriously by loving and caring for all students regardless of their position on such things as gender or religion.

We acknowledge that in rare circumstances there may be occasions where decisions made to ensure we preserve and safeguard the Special Character of the College are potentially in conflict with other legislation such as the Human Rights Act. For State Integrated schools, these situations are covered by Schedule 6 of the Education and Training Act 2020. Currently, State Integrated schools are actively and constructively working with the Ministry of Education in an effort to gain further clarity on what this practically looks like.

9(2)(a) I genuinely trust that this is of help. Given the complexity of the matter, can I suggest that it might be helpful to meet.

Again, my thanks for taking the time to email me and for your care for the community of Bethlehem College.

Larne

Ma te Atua tātou e manaaki – God bless



**Larne Edmeades**

**Principal**

P 07 579 1800

E [Larne.Edmeades@beth.school.nz](mailto:Larne.Edmeades@beth.school.nz)

[www.beth.school.nz](http://www.beth.school.nz)

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**From:** 9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Monday, 21 June 2021 1:51 pm  
**To:** Larne Edmeades <[Larne.Edmeades@beth.school.nz](mailto:Larne.Edmeades@beth.school.nz)>  
**Cc:** [Arona.jacob@education.govt.nz](mailto:Arona.jacob@education.govt.nz)  
**Subject:** RE: Statement of Belief - Bethlehem College

Thanks Larne,

I look forward to a response in due course.

Regards

9(2)(a)

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**From:** Larne Edmeades <[Larne.Edmeades@beth.school.nz](mailto:Larne.Edmeades@beth.school.nz)>  
**Sent:** Monday, 21 June 2021 1:31 PM  
**To:** 9(2)(a)  
**Cc:** [Arona.jacob@education.govt.nz](mailto:Arona.jacob@education.govt.nz)  
**Subject:** RE: Statement of Belief - Bethlehem College

Dear 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email.

I have given the matters you raised some thought and prayer. Further, given the nature of the matters raised, I have circulated my thoughts amongst our two Chairs (Paul Shakes and Margaret Canter).

Once I have their final comments, I will form up a full response and come back to you.

Sincerely,  
Larne

Ma te Atua tātou e manaaki – God bless



Larne Edmeades

Principal

P 07 579 1800

E [Larne.Edmeades@beth.school.nz](mailto:Larne.Edmeades@beth.school.nz)

[www.beth.school.nz](http://www.beth.school.nz)

**From:** 9(2)(a)

**Sent:** Thursday, 17 June 2021 11:46 am

**To:** Larne Edmeades <[Larne.Edmeades@beth.school.nz](mailto:Larne.Edmeades@beth.school.nz)>

**Cc:** [Arona.jacob@education.govt.nz](mailto:Arona.jacob@education.govt.nz)

**Subject:** Statement of Belief - Bethlehem College

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*13. In the beginning God created male and female. Marriage is an institution created by God in which one man and one woman enter into an exclusive relationship intended for life, and that marriage is the only form of partnership approved by God for sexual relations.*

This wording indicates that any other sexuality is not accepted at Bethlehem College. Is this correct? How do you manage a child who is gay, transsexual or other within the school? How is the LGBTQ community at Bethlehem College made to feel welcome and not discriminated against? This wording and statement requiring acceptance from parents is not reflective of the world our children live in and concerns me greatly.

It is my understanding, that under the Human Rights Act it is grounds of discrimination for a school to not allow children and their families depending on their sexual orientation.

These documents, when reviewed need to be openly and freely discussed within the Bethlehem College Community to ensure clear, honest discussions. It would also be appreciated that there is an issue date on these documents so we are aware when they have been reviewed.

I look forward to your prompt reply.

Regards

9(2)(a)

P.S. I have discussed with Education New Zealand and have cc'ed the relevant person in on our correspondence

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## Tara Doak

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**From:** Arona Jacob  
**Sent:** Monday, 12 July 2021 11:14 am  
**To:** 9(2)(a)  
**Subject:** RE: Statement of Belief - Bethlehem College

Kia ora 9(2)(a)

As you've noted, the Education and Training Act 2020 sets out a range of obligations and provisions for state and state-integrated schools.

We(the Ministry) are working through the interpretation of the legislation. This is a complex matter and my colleagues at the Ministry of Education's national office are working with the school and others to discuss this.

If you are not satisfied with the response from the principal – this might include following your meeting – I suggest you follow the school complaint process. This generally involves putting your complaint in writing to the board of trustees.

Don't hesitate to contact me at ph. 07 5717826 if you have further questions.

Nāku iti nei  
Arona

Arona Jacob | Senior Advisor | Bay of Plenty-Wairariki  
DDI +6475717826 | Mobile 9(2)(a)

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**From:** 9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Thursday, 8 July 2021 12:12 PM  
**To:** Arona Jacob <Arona.Jacob@education.govt.nz>  
**Subject:** RE: Statement of Belief - Bethlehem College

Hi Arona,

Has there been any update on this? I am conscious I haven't yet responded to Larne's last email.

Thanks and regards

9(2)(a)

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**From:** Arona Jacob <[Arona.Jacob@education.govt.nz](mailto:Arona.Jacob@education.govt.nz)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 1 July 2021 4:29 PM  
**To:** 9(2)(a)  
**Subject:** RE: Statement of Belief - Bethlehem College

Kia ora 9(2)(a)

Apologies for not responding earlier and thanks to you and the school principal, Larne Edmeades, for including me in your correspondence.

I have referred the matter to my colleagues in national office and await a response. I'll be in touch.

Nāku iti nei  
Arona

**Arona Jacob** | Senior Advisor | Bay of Plenty-Waiariki  
DDI +6475717826 | Mobile 9(2)(a)

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**From:** 9(2)(a)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 30 June 2021 3:42 PM  
**To:** Arona Jacob <[Arona.Jacob@education.govt.nz](mailto:Arona.Jacob@education.govt.nz)>  
**Subject:** FW: Statement of Belief - Bethlehem College

Hi Arona,

Before I respond to Larne I would be interested to understand how you are working with schools such as Bethlehem College regarding their special character given the Education and Training and Act specifically around the Human Rights Act and the following provision:

[https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2020/0038/latest/LMS274508.html?search=sw\\_096be8ed81ae676c\\_discrimination\\_25\\_se&p=1&sr=0](https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2020/0038/latest/LMS274508.html?search=sw_096be8ed81ae676c_discrimination_25_se&p=1&sr=0)

I do want to meet with him however will be requesting a support person or similar. Happy to discuss further.

Thanks

9(2)(a)

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**Larne Edmeades**

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