

Vision and Mission of Grace Primary

1. Grace Primary Mission Statement

Grace Primary School exists to serve children as whole people, providing them with a rich and inspiring curriculum and nurturing them in wholesome and respectful habits to the end that they would develop meaningful relationships with all spheres of learning and learn to live well in all aspects of their lives.

2. Grace Primary Vision

Grace Primary is committed to the implementation of the educational thought and practice of Charlotte Mason, a British educational reformer, whose vision of a “living education” is just as needed and relevant in the twenty-first century across all sectors of society as it was over a hundred years ago. Rooted in the Christian view of the dignity and inherent value of each child and the redemptive purposes of God in Christ, this educational philosophy breathes fresh life into the purpose of education, striving for healthy growth in all aspects of learning and behaviour. Growth in learning is fostered as children are nurtured in rich relationships with the knowledge of God, man, and the universe and are encouraged to observe and attend to the world around them in art, music, literature and nature. Growth in character is encouraged through purposeful training in good habits and inspiring children through story and example to pursue lives of moral virtue. Our hope is that the children attending our school would become persons who would think deeply, cultivate a rich intellectual life, love others and give back meaningfully to culture and society.

3. Core Values

The following core values are embraced in our teaching and learning:

- 3.1. A Christian Ethos: The Christian faith shapes our understanding of the human person, and of healthy human development. It encourages us to place the highest priority upon considerate relationships and to work for a culture marked by kindness. Our Christian beliefs and values are explored in assemblies and daily Bible reading is part of our curriculum. While the school culture is informed by Christian ideals, we are always respectful of the fact that children must form their own considered perspectives. We welcome children from all backgrounds and would encourage them to explore the big questions of human existence.
- 3.2. Self-education: Children enter school full of curiosity and wonder and this natural interest can be sustained and honed by means of a stimulating curriculum which is its own reward. We therefore encourage children to be proactive in the process of engaging with knowledge and to take ownership for their own learning, rather than artificially motivating them through merit systems. The importance of self-education

also has implications for the teacher's role. He or she is not the showman, or the fount of knowledge, but a mentor or guide whose role is to help pupils engage with the curriculum for themselves.

- 3.3. A knowledge-rich curriculum emphasizing the importance of books: Our curriculum aims to be "broad and rich" meaning that both broadness of focus and stimulating content is required to develop children in their interests and competencies. We believe that good school books are core to a rich curriculum as provide a medium for ideas to be transferred from one generation to the next across all disciplines. Children should learn to enjoy whole books, not just extracts, as this develops the patience to engage with a sustained argument or narrative, allowing them to become reasoned and careful thinkers.
- 3.4. Training in Habits: We believe that healthy personal development includes helping children develop their powers of self-management, or self-discipline. We recognize that it is possible to be well educated but lack virtue or moral courage and are therefore proactive in our approach to discipline, encouraging the formation of good habits in all areas of life, be they moral, physical or intellectual.
- 3.5. A Nurturing School Environment: A child learns best and develops a love of learning when he or she is happy, stimulated, and supported. We provide a safe environment where mutual respect, consideration and cooperation prevail. Our relatively small size as a whole and our class sizes mean each child is noticed and belongs. It also allows teachers to focus, with far fewer interruptions, upon teaching, and pupils upon learning.

4. History of Grace Primary School

Grace Primary School was established in January 2014 to provide high quality, affordable private schooling, based on Christian foundations, to Pinelands and the surrounding community. It was founded by three Pinelands couples whose eldest children all joined the first class at the school. They were motivated by a desire for a richer, more stimulating and less assessment-driven education than the South Africa CAPS curriculum offered and one which upheld biblical truth and values. Their educational research led them to the writings of Charlotte Mason (1842-1923), a British Christian educational reformer who founded the Parents National Education Union (PNEU). She developed an educational approach that cultivated an optimal learning atmosphere; developed balanced relationships and habits; and provided her students with a rich, stimulating and living curriculum. She anticipated that children educated in this way would give back helpfully into society and culture. Grace Primary has sought to build itself on the principles that Charlotte Mason espoused.

The school began in rented church facilities with one mixed-grade class of 14 children, one teacher and one administrator. The founding parents were integrally involved in managerial responsibilities and have continued to be involved on the School Board as it has grown. The church premises were only able to accommodate the school for the first few years and therefore from the start, the School Board was actively involved in investigating possible permanent premises for the school. In 2015, the school was successful in purchasing 8 Protea Close, one of the last plots of land zoned for community use in the Pinelands area, originally having been earmarked for an Afrikaans school in the 1950's. The plot itself is

roughly 2,400m², ideal for a family-scale school with single grades and a maximum of 18 children in each class. An adjacent public park provides additional recreation space. Building plans were approved by Council at the beginning of April 2016, with construction beginning shortly thereafter so as to have the first phase of the school building project completed in time for the 2017 school year.

In January 2016, the Board of Governors appointed the first Principal of the school, Ms Mabel Laubscher. She came to the school with nearly 4 decades of diverse teaching and managerial experience gained in four different countries around the world. She brought helpful expertise to the areas of curriculum development, the development of school management systems and the healthy growth of the school as a whole. After she retired at the end of 2019, Mrs Karen Wood took over as school Principal. In addition to her depth of teaching experience, she came with prior experience of leading a Charlotte Mason school. The school currently has 7 classes (Grades 1-7) with a maximum of 18 children per class. We hope to add a Grade R class once space allows. In 2017 we moved into Phase 1 of our beautiful new building in Protea Close, Pinelands, and aim to complete Phase 2 in the first half of 2022.

Grace Primary is a non-profit (NPC) and public benefit organisation (PBO) and tries to keep fees as affordable as possible to serve a diversity of children. Whilst many children are Pinelands-based, the school also has children from as far afield as Khayelitsha, Strandfontein, the CBD, Goodwood and Ottery. Many Cape Town families are eager for their children to have a better educational experience than is made possible by their local under-funded, over-stretched government schools. The school has been privileged to have a genuine diversity of children as part of the school family and to be one of a growing number of independent schools seeking to make a difference to the struggling educational scene in this country.

Grace Primary has been privileged from its earliest beginnings to receive expertise and help from other independent schools, both local and abroad. Invaluable help was received from The Vine School in Lansdowne and the leadership of Trinity Children's Centre in Mitchells Plain. In addition, we have been privileged to be informally linked to Heritage School in Cambridge, who are seasoned thinkers in the educational philosophy of Charlotte Mason and how to apply her principles to 21st century schooling. They have shared their expertise with us on a variety of levels, from curriculum development to teacher training and have enabled our Principal and other Board members to visit their school and learn "in action". The school has steadily built relationships with other schools in our local community and in 2017 we were pleased to become an ISASA school.

Over the past two years, Grace Primary has seen the first graduate classes move on into various local High Schools. We have been proud to hear feedback on how well they have done academically, many of them achieving top marks in their grade. However, our biggest hope for them is that the seeds of character and love of learning sown in their lives at Grace Primary would continue to flourish and bear fruit in these secondary school settings and that they would indeed give back meaningfully into society and culture.