

MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS PRIMARY SCHOOL

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020

1. Overview of our mission

1.1 – Brief History

In February 1966, in response to the request from Archbishop Hugh Boyle, Salesian Sisters: Sr. Maria Luisa Gombini and Sr. Margaret Walsh arrived in Cape Town and then travelled to Johannesburg to start a new Salesian community in BooySENS, Johannesburg.

The Salesians based at the Don Bosco Provincial office in BooySENS sold the property across the road from Ozabam House to the Salesian Sisters. The property had an existing house which became the sister's convent. The Sisters converted a section of the house into a Pre-school

On the 2nd April 1966 the Pre-School opened as a Day Nursery and the sisters welcomed their first six enrolment. By the end of that year there were 15 children enrolled.

In the Chronicle of the Salesian Sisters' community we read that when the new school year started (1967), the number of children registered increased 30.

Geographically, the Community belonged to the West Turffontein area, therefore Holy Family Parish Turffontein until 24 May 1967. Bishop Hugh Boyle very kindly offered the Sisters to belong to Robertsham Parish as it was established as a Salesian Parish. (St John Bosco Parish).

Our community chapel was used for Mass and other religious services for the people of the area until 1969 when the Salesians built a beautiful chapel on their premises.

The aim of the nursery school was to assist working mothers/parents with an educative and safe place where to leave their children while they are at work.

In keeping with the 'Group Areas Act' established by the Apartheid regime, BooySENS was classified as a "**white area**". Many children from Lebanese, Italian, Portuguese and also working class South African families were enrolled in the school.

The school was registered as "private school on private property" with the Transvaal Education Department on the 30 December 1971, with EMIS number: 700 400 317.

In October 1976 construction operations for a school building began and the new building was completed early in 1977. The new building consisted of a kitchen, three classrooms, a toilet session, school office, sickbay and a store room. On 1 March 1977 lessons started in the new building. This section of the building houses our present Grade R classrooms.

The school now consisted of three sections in the house as well as the three new classrooms accommodating a Junior, Middle and Pre-school section.

In May 1980 a new addition to the school building was completed. Three more classrooms, a new toilet section for children and staff were built. The Nursery School moved completely from the Sister's Convent to the new building.

It is important to highlight that in 1982 the first "**African child**", brought by Fr. Graham Rose (now Bishop of Dundee Diocese) was accepted in the school. (to accept African Learners in a so called 'white school' was against the ruling of the Apartheid Government, however, this brave move was initiated by Catholic, Anglican and also Methodist Schools,) The following years saw quiet a number of African children, mainly from the black township of Soweto enrolled in our school. A big breakthrough came when one of the African Parents accepted to be a member of the PTA (Parent Teacher Association) her personality and leadership skills were appreciated, this helped to break down racial barriers among the parents.

From 1994, when South Africa began to be a democratic country, the racial demographic composition of BooySENS changed drastically. Due to low cost housing in the BooySENS area, many African and Coloured families moved in. Thus, in Mary Help of Christian School, as the white families moved out we were soon catering for a majority of African and coloured children.

The school functioned as a Day Care and Crèche until 2009 when the idea of extending the capacity of the school was implemented.

During 2009 the Salesian Sisters submitted an application for permission to open a Primary School as an extension to the existing Pre-School. We decided to concentrate on the Foundation Phase (Grade R-Grade 3). The reason for this option was that the present facilities are only sufficient to accommodate up to grade 3. It is important to highlight that the school is registered as Primary School (from Grade R to Grade 7).

In January 2010 the Salesian Sisters started the first Grade 1 class and thereafter moved up a grade each year.

By January 2012 it was fully operational as a Foundation Phase Primary School from Grade R to Grade Three. A prefabricated classroom had to be erected in 2011 to accommodate the growing number of learners applying to the school.

Sr. Helen Hartnett was the last FMA as Principal of Mary Help of Christian Primary School. Since 2015 we have had a lay person in the leadership of the school. In 2019 we had again a Salesian Sister, Sr. Maria Isabel Vieira as Principal, and in 2020 we continue again with laity leadership.

Since 11 September 2018, the Mary Help of Christians Primary School is registered with the Department of Social Development – NPO no: 215-083.

As the Primary School was set up and functioning well, there was a growing need for Crèche space as more and more parents wanted their children enrolled at the school. In answer to prayers, the house next door to the convent house came up for sale and the owners gave first option of purchasing the property to the Sisters.

The Salesian Sisters were able to buy the house thanks to donations of private benefactors, particularly Bishop Graham Rose and his mother.

In August 2012 the Sisters received the keys to the property.

Renovations took place during the month of September to December and in January 2013 we were able to open the doors of the renovated house which consisted of three rooms used for classrooms, a kitchen, toilets and office.

A strong, active Fund Raising Committee, numerous benefactors and parents over the years are among the people who helped Mary Help of Christians School to become what it is today; a fully functional Pre-School & Junior Primary School with the principles and values of the Salesian Charism of St. John Bosco and St. Mary Mazzarello, serving an underprivileged community.

1.2 – Current profile and work of the Mission

Boysens today have many foreign nationals from other African countries. Mary Help of Christian's school has played a major role in assisting those families affected by xenophobia violence. The school caters for low working-class family.

The presence of the Salesian Sisters had been constant in the school, overseeing the financial administration, in pastoral coordination and as members of the Board of Management. Unfortunately, this year (2020) due to lack of personnel we have no sister present full time in the Primary School. The enrolment is 183, our capacity is 210.

The school counts with the following staff: Principal, one secretary, one financial administrator, seven class teachers (one of them is the Head Teacher), one part-time teacher for the remedial class, one assistant for the After-Care, one cook, two cleaning staff and two gardeners.

Since 2018 the intake for the Crèche has decreased considerably. The house can cater for 75 children (25 per group); now the enrolment is approximately 35 children. This is partly due to the increase of "House Crèches" in the area, some on both sides of the school.

1.3 - Operating Environment

MHC belongs to the Salesian Sisters, and is run for over 50 years, therefore, the present community takes an active role in the educational ministry of the school and upholding the Salesian and Catholic ethos of the school.

One Salesian Sister, Sr. Patricia Finn, is the Chairperson of the Board of Management, Sr. Helen Hartnett is the Co-ordinator of the school and Sr. Antonia de Oliveira supervises the Creche. Unfortunately, this year (2020) there is not a full time Salesian Sister for the pastoral animation.

There are regular staff meetings to plan and to evaluate the daily running of the school.

Teachers are encouraged to upgrade their qualification in order to render a more professional service to the children and the community at large. They attend regular workshops organized by the GDE (Gauteng Department of Education).

Outreach programmes to the poor are also encouraged, having the children as the main protagonists, with the animation from the staff.

Religious Education is not only a subject of the curriculum but it is also strengthened by church services, weekly visit to the Church. The Salesian Priests play an active role in the Christian animation of the school.

The Salesian feasts are special moments in the life of the children and the staff. They are planned and celebrated with joy in a very Salesian Spirit. These are excellent moments to pass on the Salesian ethos to the staff and the children with their families.

All staff are trained to implement the Child Protection Policy and it is followed up very seriously.

Problems with parents are responded immediately and in a proper and professional manner, and, when necessary it involves the Board of Management and the expertise of the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) for advice.

When financial and school problems arise, personal interviews between parents and the Principal are arranged.

1.4 – Strategic Planning process

The elaboration of the Strategic Plan is consequence of the constant exchange of ideas with parents and school staff, through personal encounters and meetings on a regular basis.

The Board of Management is a source of valid information concerning the planning, decision-making and evaluation.

The close networking with Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) is a very valid contribution in the elaboration of the strategic plan.

The Salesian Sisters community's input is vital in discerning and planning for the future development of the school.

2. Mission SWOT Analysis

a) Strengths:

- The presence of the children, who are the reason for our mission.
- The financial self-sufficiency of the school, which allow also give great contribution to alleviate the financial situation of the Province Our Lady of Peace.
- Lay staff: very dedicated and by now all of them are fully qualified
- The accessibility of our school fees for low-income working families. Among the Catholic school functioning in Johannesburg we are among the lower school fees.
- Catholic Institute of Education (CIE): exist strong networking between them and our school.
- The Salesian of Don Bosco (SDB) across the road: they make available the property for our children for Physical education, parents' meetings and chapel. Their spiritual service is also important to highlight.
- The fact of being a Catholic School in a Salesian Parish.
- The strategic situation of the school: just off the high way: parents working in the Johannesburg CBD, drop their children on the way to work and collect them on their way back.
- After Care Facility: a safe and educative environment for the children to stay while the parents are at work.

➤ The building is property of the Salesian Sisters.

b) Weakness:

- Lack of space to extend the Primary School up to Grade 7.
- Lack of responsible commitment from the parents to paying the school fees.
- Lack of proper follow up from the side of the school to get the school fees paid.
- The board of management: more competent people in different professions.
- Code of Conduct Policy: more specific in certain points, especially when problems arise between parents and the school management.
- Not much involvement of the parents in the education of their children (extra-murals activities)
- Not enough formation and information given to the parents about the Child Protection Policy of the school.
- Absence of a Salesian Sisters full-time in the school
- Instability of personnel in the community which brings constant change of the Salesian Sisters' presence in the school.

c) Opportunities

- Appointment of a younger sister for the Pastoral animation of the school.

d) Threats & Limitations:

- Security: because of the area in which we operate
- Increase of House-Crèches in the area: decrease the number in our Crèche.
- Financial consequence of the Pandemic.

3. Vision for our mission: Our vision is to produce learners who will be an asset to their school and society, on an spiritual, academic, sporting, life skills and philanthropic level, through committed, motivated and well-trained staff members who are kept abreast of the latest teaching methods and a strong partnership with the parents, the Gauteng Education Department, the schooling systems, feeder schools, sponsors and the community.

4. Guiding Image for 2023 + 2026

It is our aim to continue offering to the children of the community and other areas of Johannesburg the best education with a holistic approach, serving the low-working class parents giving them the opportunity to be assured of a good Foundation Phase Education for their children, while they are at work.

The children leave our school at Grade 3, well equipped with a good academics spiritual and human development programme. From the Senior Primary Schools we have received very positive feedback; the children leave us well disciplined and eager to learn.

It is our dream to extend the Mary Help of Christian School towards the senior primary school. In this case, more children and families will benefit from the holistic education offered by the school. Due to the age span of our recipients, which will be from 3 to 6 in the crèche with the possibility of continuing from 7 to 14 in the primary school, the impact of the values and education received will have more rooted and profound effect in the life of the children and families. They will be more equipped to face the challenges of their teenage years and be an agent of positive influence among their peers.

In order to continue improving our educational mission we need to face and solve our weaknesses looking at our way forward.

For 2023 we are committed to:

- a) To improve the professional quality of our Board of Management: to look for expertise in Law, education and financial matters.
- b) To receive the Government subsidy from the Gauteng Education Department.

- c) To carry out an overall review of the Crèche: upgrading it, improving the number of the children attending it. The optimum functioning of the Crèche is essentially important because it is a feeder Crèche for Grade R and then Primary School.
- d) To motivate the involvement of the parents in the education of their children and in extra mural activities (formation of a fundraising committee).
- e) To workshop the parents on Child Safeguarding Policy.
- f) To start looking for who would be a competent and more stable Principal (at least for five years)

For 2026 we are committed to:

- a) To extend the school up to Grade 7
- b) To look for sale opportunities of neighbouring houses.

5. Goals and Objectives:

- 1) **By 2021** (new school year) to have a more competent Board of Management.
 - a) Objective: To approach individual candidates
- 2) **By 2021** to have applied for the subsidy from the Gauteng Education Department.
 - a) Objective: To finalize the financial statements from 2015 up to date in order to be audited by external Auditor. (This is a required document by the Government in order to grant the subsidy).
- 3) **By 2021** it is an urgent matter to form a good and efficient Fundraising Committee with parent and staff, as a sub-committee under the Board of Management.
 - a) Objective: Through the School Principal and class teachers to approach the suitable parents.
- 4) **By 2021:** To offer workshops on Child Safeguarding Policy to the parents and staff.
 - a) Objective: To network with the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) in order to see possible dates for the workshop.
 - b) To notify parents and staff with enough notice in order to facilitate the attendance of most of them.
- 5) **By 2023:** To finalize the process of appointment of a qualified and permanent Principal for the Primary School.
 - a) Objective: To keep in communication with people of the education field who can know the suitable candidate.
 - b) Objective: The Board of Management will carry out the necessary interviews for selection.
- 6) **By 2023:** To carry out an overall review of the Crèche.
 - a) Objective: To select and work with an independent body to do a professional/independent research to discover the reasons why the number of children attending the Crèche have decreased.
 - b) Objective: To work towards having the funding for the professional/independent research.
- 7) **By 2026:** to start phasing in the junior primary school up to Grade Seven
 - a) To carry on the necessary procedures with Government departments and with the Salesian Sisters Provincial Leadership.
 - b) To search for possibilities of neighbouring houses on sale.
 - c) To work towards the funding in order to have the necessary financial means for the purchase of a house.