

St Mary's School, Waverley

Statement

on

The Christian identity and ethos of St Mary's

*Lord Jesus, Child of Bethlehem, bless our school
and all its members, past and present.
Be with us in our worship, in our work and in our play.
Inspire the hearts of those who teach and those who learn.
Train those who rule, and those who obey,
that all may offer Thee the perfect service
which is worthy of Thy Love.
Who livest and reignest, with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
ever one God, world without end.*

AMEN

The mission of St Mary's School

1. St Mary's is an independent Anglican school for girls. We believe that each girl is important and we provide a balanced education in a caring, friendly environment. St Mary's offers a wide and challenging curriculum to prepare our girls to be responsible members of society, able to pursue their chosen careers with success, to think and act independently and to be adaptable. We endeavour to instil in them a sense of self-worth and responsibility, encourage the development of their talents and help them to achieve their full potential as individuals.

Our history establishes a spiritual foundation

2. St Mary's was founded in 1888 by the Reverend John Darragh at the request of Bishop Bousfield, the first Anglican Bishop of Pretoria, with the express intention of providing a Christian education for girls. Originally in Jeppestown and then Belgravia, the school moved to Waverley in 1934. From the very beginning there was a close connection between church and school. At the time of its incorporation as an association not for profit in 1924, the school was under the management of the Sisters of St Margaret (East Grinstead). From 1946 to 1963 the Sisters of the Community of St Mary the Virgin (the Wantage Sisters) took over the running of the school. St Mary's identity as an Anglican Church school carries through to the present day.

A Christian and Anglican community

3. The chapel stands physically at the heart of the school. Worship will always be at the heart of St Mary's. There will be a daily time of worship and the Eucharist will be celebrated regularly. It is in this corporate worship that the school's foundational principles, values and ethos are expressed.

4. Because this is a time and place where the school gathers from time to time as a body to express its foundational principles, values and ethos, attendance is compulsory for all girls.
5. At St Mary's, education is not restricted to the classroom. The essence of the school, expressed in corporate worship, imbues every aspect of the educational offering at St Mary's. Thus, it is through consistent immersion in the St Mary's community in its every aspect that the St Mary's aim of holistic formation of each pupil may be realised. Immersion in the St Mary's community includes attendance at school assemblies, chapel assemblies and Eucharists, observance of the daily Angelus bell and prayers, and commitment to and involvement in both the curricular and co-curricular programmes.
6. Parents or guardians and their girls who choose to seek an education at St Mary's, do so freely and despite other choices which they could make, in the belief, common to the rest of the community, that the faith based nature of the education offered by the school, and its foundational principles, values and ethos, is what they wish for their daughters. Accordingly, they must uphold and respect the Christian and Anglican faith as being at the heart of the character and life of the school. They must accept that a child is admitted to the total school programme, which includes curricular, co-curricular and programmes and activities of the school, and not some of them only.
7. Members of staff who choose to work at St Mary's will be required, whatever their faith, to acknowledge and respect the Christian faith, to uphold the foundational principles, values and ethos of the school and, according to their conscience, to contribute professionally and personally to the spiritual life of the school.
8. It is acknowledged that not all staff or pupils will be of the Christian or Anglican faith. Whilst being committed to its identity as a Christian and Anglican school, the school will seek to value diversity by ensuring that other views, denominations and faiths are respected among staff as well as pupils. Care will be taken to ensure that no pressure is brought to bear on those who do not identify as Christian or Anglican, nor will any attempt be made to convert them or to influence them in any way to abandon their own faiths.
9. The school will not allow or provide for the formal practice of other faiths at St Mary's. However, permission will be given for girls to take time off to celebrate their especially important or special official religious festivals.
10. St Mary's is both an educational and a gospel community. As such, the school is committed to living out as well as teaching the Christian faith.

A revelatory faith and education at St Mary's School

11. All that is said and done in the school will seek to represent -
 - the God who reveals the truth about God's self and humanity through creation, the giving of the law, God's action in history and through the prophets
 - the God who reveals God's self in Jesus God's Son, living among us and dying and rising for us
 - the God who reveals God's self in God's Spirit working in the living faith of the Church experienced through scripture, tradition, reason and context
12. At St Mary's, the girls are encouraged to fulfil their potential through participation in all the curricular and co-curricular programmes of the school. Through all such programmes, the school seeks to contribute implicitly and explicitly to the girls' spiritual development.

13. The overall development of each girl will be based on the values and virtues of the school's Christian tradition, summed up in the first two Biblical commandments: to love God and to love thy neighbour. These commandments encompass the values of truth and justice, service and duty, respect, trust and forgiveness.
14. Girls are exposed to powerful secular and material influences. As an Anglican church school, St Mary's will seek to provide a coherent, alternative world view which will enable each girl to make courageous and principled decisions about lifestyle and values, encouraging service to the community. Each girl will be encouraged to discover her capacity to be a leader, and especially an ethical and moral leader in the world in which she lives.
15. Christ's ministry consistently illustrates Christ's preferential option for the poor and the marginalised. Jesus' example in this regard underpins St Mary's School's striving to increase the ease of access to education at the school via its bursary and scholarship programmes; the school's commitment to its community affairs programmes; its relationship with neighbouring schools and with the broader community.
16. The school is committed to embodying Jesus' love for all and his refusal to treat as "other" those whom the society of his day marginalised. Thus, and in line with the school's commitment to be a South African school, St Mary's seeks to encourage respect for and understanding of a rich and vibrant diversity within its community, on the part of girls, parents and staff.

The role of the school chaplain

17. For many years, the rector of St Luke's Anglican Church, Orchards served as part-time chaplain to St Mary's. In 1992, when the Anglican Church in South Africa allowed women to be put forward for ordination, members of the teaching staff at the school were ordained and served as assistant chaplains. In 2010, the school appointed its first full-time chaplain, an ordained priest of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa.
18. The chaplain is employed by the school and is appointed by the executive head of the school in consultation with the Board and with the approval of the Bishop of Johannesburg, who licenses the chaplain to the school. The appointment of the chaplain may only be terminated by the executive head after consultation with the Bishop.
19. Within the overall structure of the school, and working in partnership with the executive head, the chaplain has special responsibility for:
 - the oversight of the spiritual identity and ethos of the school
 - the pastoral care of all members of the school community, the girls and the staff
 - the liturgical and devotional life of the school
 - Christian nurture and formation within the school
 - development, implementation and supervision of teaching programmes in the Christian life and faith
 - service to the surrounding community

Governance structures

20. St Mary's recognises the authority of the Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg in all matters relating to its Christian identity and ethos.
21. The Board of Directors of the school, led by the Chairperson, has the responsibility to ensure that the mission and purpose for which St Mary's School was established is implemented and developed. The preservation and development of the Christian character of the school in the Anglican tradition is a responsibility of the Board as custodians of the foundational principles, values and ethos of St Mary's.
22. The Bishop is a member of the Board of Directors of the school and the "Visitor" to the school. The Bishop must be consulted by the Board if or when the necessity arises for the appointment of an executive head of the school. The Bishop's ruling as to the character of the religious instruction to be given in the school and in all matters spiritual and pastoral is final. The heads are installed in their positions by the Bishop at a formal ceremony at the beginning of their tenures.
23. The executive head of St Mary's School is the spiritual head of the school and, with the chaplain, is responsible for leading and upholding the ethos and Christian values of the school.
24. The heads of school will be practising Christians. Before appointment, they will be expected to show how they would be able to contribute to the protection and promotion of the foundational principles, values and ethos of St Mary's.
25. The Christian faith is central to the life of the school. It is a fundamental and guiding principle and not an additional or incidental feature. It will therefore be expressed in all aspects of the school, its character and mission statements, in the school prospectus, its aims and objectives and its policies.
26. As the school is a diocesan institution, declared as such by the Bishop under the Rules of the Diocese of Johannesburg, the school is summoned to elect a lay representative to attend Diocesan Synods. The chaplain, holding the Bishop's licence, is also summoned to attend Diocesan Synods. The school is part of the wider Anglican community in the Johannesburg Diocese.

The teaching of Divinity

27. Every girl in the Junior School is required to attend Divinity lessons on a weekly basis. The focus of these lessons will be to teach the Christian faith and morality. The lessons are based on the Bible as the Word of God. Lessons will be conducted in such a way that respect is shown to the diversity of belief and background of the pupils. Divinity lessons will be taken by the chaplain or other suitable members of staff under the chaplain's supervision.
28. In the Senior School, there are no Divinity lessons. Life Orientation lessons will be grounded in the Christian faith. Various religions will be studied. The chaplain will contribute to the content of these lessons.
29. In the school's teaching on the Christian faith, care will be taken to educate girls about other faiths and to teach respect for the values and principles of those faiths.

Worship in the school chapel

30. The school is subject to the Rules of the Anglican Diocese of Johannesburg and the Canons of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA) as to how worship is conducted and sacraments are administered. Services are therefore presided over by an Anglican priest licensed under the Diocese of Johannesburg or with the permission of the Bishop of the Diocese of Johannesburg. As an Anglican school, St Mary's seeks to maintain relationships of respect and mutual understanding with the surrounding Anglican parishes.
31. The school chapel is not merely a meeting place or venue. It is an Anglican chapel and the chaplain a licensed priest in the Diocese of Johannesburg. The chapel is not a parish, but a school chapel functioning within a community the primary function of which is the education of the St Mary's girls.
32. St Mary's upholds the sacraments of the Anglican Church: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion, Ordination, Marriage, Reconciliation and Anointing of the sick. Sacraments administered in the chapel will be administered according to the Anglican order of service, facilitated by the chaplain or, with the permission of the chaplain and the executive head, by another Anglican priest.
33. The administration of sacraments occurs in the context of a worshipping community (such as a parish) of which the person receiving the sacrament is a committed member. All girls currently enrolled as pupils at St Mary's School are expected to attend and respect all religious observances within the school (chapel assemblies, Eucharists, Divinity lessons and the daily ringing of the Angelus). For these girls, St Mary's School serves as a worshipping community. Should girls and their parents or caregivers so choose and following appropriate preparation under the supervision of the chaplain, girls may receive the sacraments available to them within this community.
34. As an educational institution, St Mary's does not serve as a worshipping community for Old Girls or for family members of pupils. Thus:
 - 34.1 Where appropriate the baptism of children of staff members or of Old Girls may take place after a period of instruction and in the context of a school Eucharist. However, baptism of such persons should ordinarily take place within the context of their primary worshipping community.
 - 34.2 Weddings of Old Girls, staff members or family members of girls should ordinarily take place within the couple's home church, or in a wedding venue that caters for wedding functions.
35. The school chapel may be used by Old Girls, members of staff and pupils or parents for funerals or memorial services only after consultation with the executive head and the chaplain and with their permission. Such services must be according to the Anglican order of service, facilitated by the chaplain or, with the permission of the chaplain and the executive head, by another Anglican priest. Funerals or memorial services should take place in the parish in which one is a member.

Conclusion

Throughout its long history, St Mary's School has retained its close ties with the Anglican Church. Its Christian ethos and values undergird all that is said and done. The chapel is central to the life of all who work or study at the school.

REVISED AND ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE SCHOOL AT JOHANNESBURG ON
13 NOVEMBER 2018 AND AMENDED ON 19 MAY 2026