

THE DIOCESAN SCHOOL FOR GIRLS STATEMENT OF FAITH



1) PREAMBLE

According to the school's foundational Trust Deed, the Diocesan School for Girls was established in 1874 by the Bishop of the Diocese of Grahamstown. It was to be a church school, the purpose of which was to offer a 'liberal' education to girls. At that time, a 'liberal education' referred to a far wider curriculum than was traditionally offered girls.

Accordingly, the Trust Deed declares that the mandate of the school is to:

- Create a stimulating and challenging environment to enable and encourage pupils to realise their full potential
- Nurture independent thought and action within the bounds of interdependence and companionship
- Develop confident pupils who are eager to meet the challenges of a changing world and to serve the society in which they live
- Create an environment that encourages the professional and personal growth of our staff.

2) PURPOSE OF THIS STATEMENT

This statement is a declaration of the overarching tenets of the school. Our policies and practices are built on and are informed by our values and beliefs, which are rooted in the Christian faith, and pertain to all those who identify with the DSG community – past, present and future – in whatsoever capacity.

3) DECLARATION OF FAITH

We declare that DSG ascribes to the Christian faith, practiced according to the Anglican tradition

The school is part of the Anglican Diocese of Grahamstown, under the authority of its Bishop. The Diocese of Grahamstown falls under the authority and guidance of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa. We subscribe to the founding principles and 'Signs of God's presence' of the Anglican Board of Education in Southern Africa. (Annexure A)

As per the creed of the Anglican Church, we declare that we believe in:

- One God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth, all things visible and invisible, and all people in His own image.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ, God revealed in person, his virgin birth, his sinless human life, his divine miracles, his death on the cross to reconcile us to our Father and forgive our sins, his miraculous resurrection, ascension to heaven and eventual return to earth in power and glory.
- Jesus as the way, the truth and the life and that no one comes to the Father except through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour

- The Holy Spirit, who lives in us and helps us to live a holy life, to love and serve others, and to be a witness for Jesus Christ our Lord.
- The Bible as originally given by God, which is divinely inspired, infallible, entirely trustworthy, and is the supreme authority in all matters of our faith and behaviour.

We declare that the values and virtues we endorse, encourage and aim to develop among all members of the DSG community are in accordance with the teachings and example of Jesus Christ, the teachings of the Bible, and the precepts of the Anglican church.

In a world where values are deemed to be subjective and relative, the Christian faith offers a plumbline against which behaviour can be judged. We recognise that in our pluralistic society, because there is little consensus about our ultimate beliefs and values, the development of pupils' spiritual and moral knowledge should be as fundamental as their academic development and that the values of the school need to be strongly reinforced. As an Anglican church school, the DSG will seek to provide a coherent Biblical worldview which will enable each girl to make courageous and principled decisions about her lifestyle and values, encouraging service to the community.

We are first and foremost called to love God and love our neighbour. Jesus extends the requirement of love for one's neighbour by telling us that he expects us to love our enemies as well. We are also called to obey the instruction of Jesus: "So in everything, do to others as you would have them do to you" (Matt 7:12). These commandments encompass the values of truth and justice, service and duty, kindness and generosity, respect, trust and forgiveness for all people.

We commit to demonstrating our faith in Christ and the gospel message through living out our faith in active service to the community around us, using the time, talents, and resources that we have been blessed with. Each girl is encouraged to discover her capacity to be an ethical and moral leader in the world in which she lives. **We are further committed to:**

- the continuous transformation of our organisation, guided by our Christian ethos. The school is committed to embodying Jesus' love for all and will at all times seek to respect and understand the rich and vibrant diversity of its community. It will endeavour to ensure that all within its community experience a sense of belonging.
- recognising that Christ's ministry consistently showed preference for the poor and his refusal to treat as 'other' those whom the society marginalised. As such, DSG will strive to facilitate access to education at the school via its bursary and scholarship programmes, prioritise the school's commitment to its community engagement programme, and fully support relationships with neighbouring schools and with the broader community.
- seeking to be good stewards of God's creation in the way we utilise natural resources and care for the environment.

4) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATEMENT OF FAITH

4.1 DSG AS A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

The Bishop of Grahamstown: According to the Trust Deed, the Bishop of Grahamstown is the 'Visitor' to the school. The role of the Bishop is to give input regarding the spiritual affairs of the school and its religious education. The school Council and the Head are obliged to take careful heed of the advice and input of the Bishop. The Bishop will be given all minutes of Council meetings.

The Council: It is the obligation of the school Council to ensure that the Christian ethos of the school according to the Anglican tradition is maintained. According to the Trust Deed, at least six of the Council members should be communicant members of the Anglican Church.

The Chaplain: is appointed by the Head. He/she must be an ordained Anglican priest and licensed by the Bishop of the Diocese. The Chaplain reports to the Head and together they are responsible for the spiritual life of the school and for keeping the school accountable to the Statement of Faith. The Chaplain falls under the authority of the Bishop in diocesan matters.

All staff members and pupils, irrespective of their faith, are required to participate in the spiritual life of the school and to respect, support and uphold the Christian practices, values and ethos of the DSG.

Old Girls, parents, and friends of the school: The DSG values the continued support of the community and seeks to involve them in the spiritual life of the school.

St Andrew's College and St Andrew's Prep School: The DSG is part of a family of schools with a shared Christian faith as practiced according to the Anglican tradition.

Makhanda: DSG recognises that it is part of the broader community of the town and shares in the spiritual life of all those who identify as Christians.

4.1.1 THE CHAPLAIN

The Chaplain is the spiritual leader of the school and is the custodian of the spiritual identity and ethos of the school. He/she is the gate-keeper, guarding and protecting the school's Christian faith from external and internal threats and providing Christian teaching, counsel, guidance and pastoral care to the DSG community. The Head and the Chaplain together are responsible for upholding the values of the Christian faith in the school and therefore, the relationship between them needs to be one of mutuality and a shared vision.

Within the overall structure of the school and working in partnership with the Head, the Chaplain's specific responsibilities include:

- regularly liaising with the Head on spiritual matters
- developing and supervising the liturgical, devotional and Christian teaching programmes in the school
- ensuring that the worship in the Chapel is relevant and encourages the girls and staff to grow in spiritual maturity
- serving on the leadership team and ensuring the decisions of the team align with Christian values in the day-to-day management of the school
- collaborating with the Wellness Team in supporting the vulnerable in the community
- offering guidance and support to those involved in disciplinary proceedings
- regularly liaising with the St Andrew's College Chaplain and establishing mutual understanding of how spirituality in the schools is promoted
- maintaining relationships with the local Christian community

4.1.2 THE SACRISTANS

Sacristans serve in the Chapel under the guidance and authority of the Chaplain.

Sacristans are required to:

- have been baptised into the Christian faith
- confess to believing in one God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)
- believe in the Bible as the inspired word of God
- actively and openly live out their Christian faith and values.

4.1.3 THE CHAPEL CHOIR

The Chapel choir plays an important role in worship services. Members of the choir are encouraged to recognise their role in advancing worship and their contribution to the spiritual life of the school.

4.2 ACTS OF WORSHIP IN THE SCHOOL

The Chapel, which is physically and spiritually at the centre of the campus, is the heart of the school. It is where our values and ethos are fully expressed and fellowship shared in the worship services. Chapel services are conducted according to the tradition of the Anglican Church. While girls of all faiths and denominations are accepted at DSG and their way of worship respected, the formal and public practice of other faiths and rituals is not permitted on the DSG campus.

4.2.1 ROUTINE EXPRESSIONS OF THE SCHOOL'S CHRISTIAN ETHOS

In the Chapel

The Chapel is open daily from 07:00 to 20:00. When not in use, members of the school community are welcome to use it for personal reflection and prayer.

There are weekly times of worship and the Eucharist is celebrated regularly. Chapel services are held on Sundays and also during the week.

All girls, irrespective of their faith, are expected to attend Chapel services and Chaplain's lessons. The Head may grant permission for pupils of different denominations or faiths to attend worship and prayers at their own places of worship where this does not disrupt the school programme.

Academic staff are expected to attend Chapel services held during the week and at the start of each term. They are also encouraged to attend Sunday services.

Members of the wider DSG community are welcome to attend Chapel services and are encouraged to support the Christian life of the school.

The Student Christian Association (SCA) is encouraged as an integral part of the school.

Girls and staff participate in routine acts of worship such as ***morning devotions, grace at meals and daily prayers***. The school has developed a culture of starting and ending the day in public prayer. At the start of the day, short devotions are held within Tutor groups and at the end of the day, devotions/reflections/scripture/prayers/hymns are conducted in various Houses. Being a public act of worship, only Christian prayers will be practiced at these events.

Assemblies include the reading of scripture, prayer and a hymn.

Formal school meetings and gatherings are opened with prayer.

4.2.2 SACRAMENTS

Baptism

Any girl may request to be baptised. The Chaplain will prepare a candidate for the sacrament.

Admission to First Communion

Girls in Grades 4 to 9 may, if they so wish, receive Holy Communion. The Chaplain will prepare the candidate.

Confirmation

Girls in Grades 10 to 12 and any members of staff who wish to confirm their Christian faith are invited to partake of the sacrament of Confirmation. The Chaplain will prepare the candidates in a confirmation course which culminates in a special Confirmation service presided over by the Bishop.

Private ceremonies (baptism/funerals/weddings)

Subject to approval by the Head and the Chaplain, the Chapel may be used by Old Girls, and members of staff and their immediate families for ceremonies such as baptisms, weddings and, only in special circumstances, memorial services and funerals. However, the school believes that funerals and memorial services should preferably take place in family's parish.

4.3 THE PRACTICE OF OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH BEYOND THE CHAPEL

At the DSG, the practice of our faith is not restricted to the Chapel. All aspects of our organisation are immersed in our values as expressed in truth and justice, service and duty, kindness and generosity, respect, trust and forgiveness for all people.

In the management and running of the school

The Head together with the Senior Management Team will ensure that all decisions, policies, structures and strategic planning are based on the beliefs, attitudes and values that are aligned with our Statement of Faith.

In our relationships

- Our understood Christian values are to be demonstrated in all relationships, both formal and informal.
- The overall development of each girl is grounded in the school's Christian ethos.
- We are committed to the transformation process and endeavor to accept and include those who find themselves on the margins of society.

In recruitment

- Advertisements for new positions include the information that DSG is an Anglican church school and that all appointed staff are expected to support and uphold the school's Christian ethos.
- The Chaplain forms part of the interview panel.

In our teaching, coaching and caring

- Where educators have discretion regarding topics, content and discussions, they will ensure that these align with our Statement of Faith.
- No activities that detract from or contravene the Statement of Faith should take place on campus.

In our care of the environment

We actively engage in caring for the environment through workshops, awareness programmes and projects.

5 CONCLUSION

The Diocesan School is committed to being a Christ-centered, bible-based and Spirit-led community in everything we do, while being sensitive to the diversity of people and faiths present on our campus and surrounding communities

One of the difficulties we face in the 21st century has to do with how we define moral communities. "We face a crisis about the common good because there are powerful forces at work among us to resist the common good, to violate community solidarity and to deny a common destiny"¹. Further, postmodernism rejects "objective standards, universal norms and authoritative judgements"²

This Statement of Faith declares the kind of people we in the DSG community aspire to be and the sort of community we would like to construct. Following the example of Jesus Christ, we are called to be people who seek justice and compassion because of God's love for us and because our God is a God of justice. The way we treat others and the world is inextricably linked to our worship of God.

It is our prayer and hope that all who come to DSG may encounter the living God through any if not all of the various ways we express Jesus' love at DSG.

ANNEXURE A

ABESA: "Signs of God's Presence"

Appraising the distinctive character of an Anglican school

The school's educational philosophy is fundamentally Christian

If we were to ask ourselves the question: "What is the soul of our school?" some pointers would be that life is considered a gift of God and therefore we should live it with generosity and gratitude. Every child is beloved and belongs and is a child of God. The pursuit of knowledge is seen as an exploration of God's truth about God's created world, and is embarked upon in that intellectual framework. We have an incarnational and sacramental understanding of life. We make Christ the centre of our life at school and at the same time we are welcoming and sensitive to the diversity of faith found in Anglican schools.

There is regular worship

God is acknowledged daily as the Creator and source of our life and strength. As humans we have been created as spiritual beings with the desire to discover God's meaning and purpose in our lives, and endless horizons beyond ourselves. There is a rhythm of worship in the life of the school that allows for times of thanksgiving, devotion, prayer and reflection. There are times of celebration and sorrow.

The Christian faith is taught

This is essentially about teaching a Christian worldview so that children can explore this understanding of life and are free to identify with it. Without dogmatism, we seek to make known our understanding of 'God's world and God's truth' together with its relational and moral consequences. Children need to understand that they have an inherent spirituality; we need to be talking about the mystery of God and how to be hopeful, loving, trustworthy and patient, and how to pray. Children need to have their eyes opened to the will and work of God and the seeds need to be sown so that they will be able to put their hope and trust in God. This should happen in the classroom through lessons and in the Chapel through services as well as through confirmation classes. The school community, parents and teachers must also be educated in the Christian world view of the school.

The school's daily life reflects the beauty, truth and goodness of God

Because an Anglican Church school operates out of God's truth in God's world, it will reflect the truth, beauty and goodness of God in the fabric of its life - and seek to grow in reflecting all of them. Therefore, it will serve its community with a quality curriculum, disciplined teaching and learning, supportive and loving pastoral care, committed and hardworking teachers, children who are engaged and participating in the learning environment and sound governance structures. Self-assessment and quality assurance is part of an Anglican Church school. An Anglican Church school is a "good" school in every sense, and is able to reflect critically on its progress.

There is a generosity of spirit

One of the hallmarks of an Anglican Church school is a spirit of kindness, compassion and respect for all people. This expresses itself in healthy relationships in the school and toward the wider community. Concern for the common good is shown through community service and support of charity, and in healthy relationships with those of other faiths. The school is a welcoming and safe place. The school quickly identifies and responds appropriately to any member of the school community who is in need and who needs healing and wholeness.

¹ (Brueggemann 2010: 1) | ² (Braaten & Seitz 2005: ix).

The school's Christian character is reflected in its governance and leadership

The difference between a broadly Christian school and a specifically Anglican one, is that the latter are connected formally to the Anglican Church through the provisions of the school's constitution, whether founded by the Church or formally agreed to between school and Church. This may be expressed in a variety of ways.

There needs to be a commitment from the school board and the leadership of the school to ensuring that the school maintains its Christian character and its formal relationship with the Anglican Church, as is essential to the mission of the school. This would be reflected in vision and policy statements and in the branding of the school. The authority of the Church needs to be acknowledged through the Bishop and Chaplain.

Anglican school constitutions generally provide that the school reports to the Diocesan Synod and Council and the Church acknowledges the school as an Anglican Church school. The authority of the Church is integrated into the governance of the school, and the school legitimately expects the support and guidance of the Church through the Diocese in which it stands. This would include but is not confined to the Bishop's personal interest and presence, diocesan representation in the governance of the school, the ministry of a Chaplain, and accountability through regular reporting to the diocese.

There are Signs and Symbols

In the school there will be signs and symbols of the Christian faith which remind the community of their faith heritage and challenge them to continue to live by faith. An obvious example is a chapel which is used for worship or a simple cross on the wall of every teaching venue would be another. Appropriate posters pointing to our common faith and how to live can also be helpful. There are many ways to show the school's commitment to the faith, one needs to be creative and intentional. It would be natural for the name or symbols of the Diocese or the Anglican Church of Southern Africa to be displayed in any diocesan school and on its letterhead.

ANNEXURE B

Vision Statement for Anglican Schools (ABESA)

As learning communities of excellence, Anglican Schools are called to share the mission of the church to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God through:

Faith

Promoting faith in Jesus Christ among students, staff and families. Offering opportunity for students, staff and family to worship God and experience Christian community in the Anglican way.

Vocation

Educating students to value themselves and each other as gifted parts of God's creation with a vocation to explore, understand, nurture and serve that creation. Helping students to develop their God given gifts, talents and opportunities to live out that vocation.

Service

Enabling students to develop skills and values to live in peace and harmony, seeking justice for all with a priority for the poor, powerless and persecuted and marginalised.

ANNEXURE C

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended to heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Amen

ANNEXURE D

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
begotten from the Father before all ages,
God from God,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made;
of the same essence as the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation

he came down from heaven;

he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made human.

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried.

The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures. He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory
to judge the living and the dead.

His kingdom will never end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit,

the Lord, the giver of life.

He proceeds from the Father and the Son,

and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified. He spoke through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and to life in the world to come.
Amen

ANNEXURE E

The DSG School Prayer

Almighty God, the fountain of all true knowledge and wisdom,
by whose grace the foundation of our school was laid by Bishop Merriman,
we give thanks that we have prospered in your blessings of grace and life.
May the vision and the purpose of our school continue to bring
new depths of wisdom and knowledge
to all the young women who pass by here.
Work in our lives that whatsoever things are true, noble, right,
pure, lovely admirable, excellent or praiseworthy
that these things may issue forth in our lives for all eternity.
May this school be loved and honoured by all who learn,
all who teach and all who work here.
May your blessing be upon us today and forever.
In Jesus name we pray,
Amen

ANNEXURE F

The school hymn: For all the saints

For all the saints, who from their labours rest,
who thee by faith before the world confessed,
thy name O Jesus, be forever blest.
Alleluia. Alleluia.

Thou wast their rock, their fortress and their might;
thou, Lord, their Captain in the well-fought fight;
thou in the darkness, still their one true Light
Alleluia. Alleluia.

But lo, there breaks, a yet more glorious day;
the saints triumphant rise in bright array:
the King of Glory passes on his way.
Alleluia. Alleluia.

CHOIR ONLY

*O blest communion fellowship divine
We feebly struggle they in glory shine
Yet all are one in Thee for all are Thine
Alleluia. Alleluia.*

From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
singing to Father, Son and Holy Ghost
Alleluia. Alleluia.

ANNEXURE G

Adopted school hymn

We have a dream: this nation will arise,
and truly live according to its creed,
that all are equal in their maker's eyes,
and none shall suffer through another's greed

We have a dream: that one day we shall see
a world of justice, truth, and equity,
where sons of slaves and daughters of the free
will share the banquet of community

We have a dream: our children shall be free
from judgements based on colour or on race;
free to become whatever they may be,
of their own choosing in the light of grace

We have a dream: that truth will overcome
the fear and anger of our present day;
that black and white, will share a common home,
and hand in hand will walk the pilgrim way.

We have a dream: each valley will be raised,
and ev'ry mountain, ev'ry hill brought down,
then shall creation echo perfect praise
and share God's glory under freedom's crown!

ANNEXURE H

School Verse

John 14:6

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

ANNEXURE G

Vision

A growing, sustainable, Christ-centred, Bible-based church school.

Mission

To proclaim and live the good news of Christ's saving grace to all as Jesus commissioned us to make disciples of all nations