

## ● featured member

# Shaping students who “will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character” at The Vine School

BY SUSAN KEEGAN

Since its inception, The Vine School has been strongly committed to playing a role in South Africa's transformation journey.

Many factors contributed to our sense of calling for racial reconciliation. The school grew out of a pre-existing school that was founded in 1988 by a group of parents – white and coloured – who wanted a Christian school for their children. Under the tricameral system of the day,<sup>1</sup> only the “coloured” Department of Education was willing to register the school. The daughter of one of the founders was the first white child to be registered by the DoE of the House of Representatives.<sup>2</sup> That school eventually closed in 2012, and The Vine School took over its resources, staff and pupils, as well as a parent body who had developed true friendships between families of diverse backgrounds.

Another factor was the history of our premises. Built in 1939 to serve the local coloured community, the original school was forced to close when the suburb was declared white under the Group Areas Act.<sup>3</sup> Today, the school is ideally placed to redeem that history. Situated in Lansdowne, a suburb in Cape Town in



the Western Cape that is once again home to a predominantly coloured population, the school is close to the “leafy suburbs” of Rondebosch and Claremont, and a block away from a major bus and taxi route serving the townships of Nyanga, Gugulethu and Khayelitsha. It is accessible to rich and poor, black and white, those from far and those from near. It is a joy to see this diversity reflected in our student body.

### A binding commitment

Like the founders of the school that closed in 2012, the directors of The Vine School were a racially diverse group. As they had learnt to love and respect people of different cultures, they wanted pupils at their school to learn the same. They expressed this in the appointment of teaching staff, the enrolment of school families, and in the policies and practices that regulate school life.

Their commitment is expressed in the Parent Manual, as follows:

The Vine School [is] committed to more than non-discrimination, in that we actively pursue diversity as an essential good. We affirm that there is nothing wrong with the powerful bonds that we share with our own “tribe”, where we can hear things in our home language and are familiar with cultural references. However, there is more opportunity for growth when we engage with people of diverse backgrounds, affirm traditions different from our own and seek to appreciate the beauty that God has chosen to express in others. Such engagement promotes deeper sensitivity, broader understanding and greater enlargement of heart and mind. These qualities