

# 2020

## VULEKA ST MARTIN'S ANNUAL REPORT



*“ Be strong and of good courage, do not fear, nor be afraid.., for the Lord your God,  
He is the one who goes with you..” Deuteronomy 31:6*

As I reflect on the past year, I am reminded of the words of Winston Churchill: “Success is not final; failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts.”

2020 was a year of few “large” successes; many of the activities we love to participate in, could not take place. It was rather a year of small daily or even weekly victories and a constant reminder to choose Faith over Fear. It took courage to sustainably deliver on our mandate to Vuleka parents – to deliver holistic, affordable and quality education to the children in our care.



### **PUPIL DEVELOPMENT:**

Our pupil numbers hovered around 190 for the whole of 2020. A few families withdrew their children due to loss of income, or having to move away as a result of Covid. However, we also had a few children join our school when parents realised that we continued to teach and deliver solid education, even during the peak of the pandemic.

We were fortunate enough to still hold the annual Senior Gala on 7 March at the Rosebank Primary Pool, and our swimmers had a successful morning. The staff, children and parents were wonderful spectators from the stands and St. Martins and Jellicoe once again won the Spirit Cup. Our coach, Lebo Lwana, is doing a great job of teaching our children to swim. Unfortunately, we had to suspend all other sporting activities for the rest of the year.

The Covid 19 Pandemic changed the educational landscape in so many ways. Our teachers, who mostly draw their energy from engaging and interacting with children, had to learn to teach in a whole new world. We refer to a blended learning approach, comprised of face-to-face lessons some of the time, whilst at other times, on-line lessons or other forms of remote learning are the order of the day. The staff had to learn very quickly how to use Zoom and Microsoft Teams to connect with parents and children. Children had to learn to wear masks, maintain a safe social distance from friends and follow all the health protocols as prescribed by the professionals. We are thankful that teaching and learning continued for most of the year, and we were able to successfully complete the entire curriculum in all subjects and grades.

Church services and assemblies were not possible from the second week of March, and activities such as sports and music had to be cancelled. Breaktime was a quiet affair as



children were not allowed to enjoy playing on the jungle gyms or participate in a game of soccer or touches. However, we managed to come up with creative ideas to make school enjoyable while keeping everyone safe. Our children were very fortunate that they were able to go on a few outings in a safe and socially distanced fashion. The Foundation Phase had so much fun at Acrobranch, where they were challenged to show courage and resilience. Some of the Intersen Phase children went on outings to the Museum and Planetarium. The Grade 7's had a great farewell at Zoo Lake to end off their primary school career.



Our values of Respect, Responsibility, Integrity, Compassion and Honesty continued to permeate and underpin everything we did at the school.

We are thankful to report that we only had one teacher contract Covid during 2020 and she recovered fully. Some of our families were affected, but none of our children got sick.



## STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Vuleka St Martin's and Jellicoe are both blessed with dedicated staff members and we are thankful for their commitment to, and love for, the children in our school. We said a sad goodbye to Ms Benita Carels, our Afrikaans teacher at Jellicoe, as she was asked to move to Vuleka St Mark's to take on a more senior role. We will miss her calm demeanor, her sense of humour and her impeccable work ethic and we are glad that she is still part of the greater Vuleka family.

My sincerest thanks to Ms Gladys Munyorovi and Nicky van Wyk, the phase coordinators for the Intersen and Foundation Phases. Without their support and dedication, we would not have had such success under these most difficult circumstances. Ms Janet Gibbins, our school counsellor, played a vital role in offering emotional support to families and staff in need, and Vuyiswa Halana, the Educational Psychologist, provided much needed academic support.

Thank you to all our teachers, trainee teachers, administrative staff, and assistants for being flexible and prepared to go the extra mile during a year where change was the only certainty. They are indeed a team to be proud of.



## PARENT PARTNERSHIP

Our parents continue to be a great asset to our school. Their unwavering support for us during 2020 was heartwarming. It made our task easier knowing that our parents believed in Vuleka and trusted our teachers to do what was best for the children.

Many of our parents had to become the assistant teacher at home, helping with schoolwork, downloading and printing materials sent by the teachers, helping with reading, spelling and Maths; they did so with grace and style.

They also continue to support all our fundraising activities to help us get the 'nice-to-have' items at our school.

We continue to engage our parents through regular communication using Newsletters, emails and Whatsapp groups. Our Newsletters were given a whole new look, and we encouraged parents to read the newsletter by running a competition bi-weekly.



## DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

The year 2020 stretched the whole Vuleka family in so many ways, but most of all around digital citizenship. Every staff member and child in our school received a Vuleka email address to be used for Microsoft Teams meetings. Our teachers were trained on how to conduct Teams meetings and teach online, how to upload work onto various platforms, and also how to connect with their classes on the many other platforms available like Zoom and Whatsapp. We are acutely aware that we are raising our children to live in a world where communication through technology will be the norm. Information is available at the click of a button, and we need to prepare our children to be discerning in what they access, to distinguish between truth and opinion, and to learn to apply the knowledge that they gain through these online platforms. The 21st Century skills: communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity will be essential to ensure that our children become successful adults, able to meet the needs of society and ultimately the country.



## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

As Vuleka Schools, we have so much to be thankful for. Our faithful donors, big and small, continued to support our school. Many parents were still able to meet their financial obligations to the school, and we managed to remain sustainable.

We hosted our first virtual open day, and I was so proud to show off the beautiful St Martin's In-the-Veld premises. We had several parents applying for a place at our school after this successful venture.

**Peggy Kernick** from the **St Martin's-In-the-Veld Church** and a group of ladies provided us with hundreds of masks to distribute to the school community. We received generous donations of food and essential goods from families in the church, from our own school community and our donors to assist families in need.

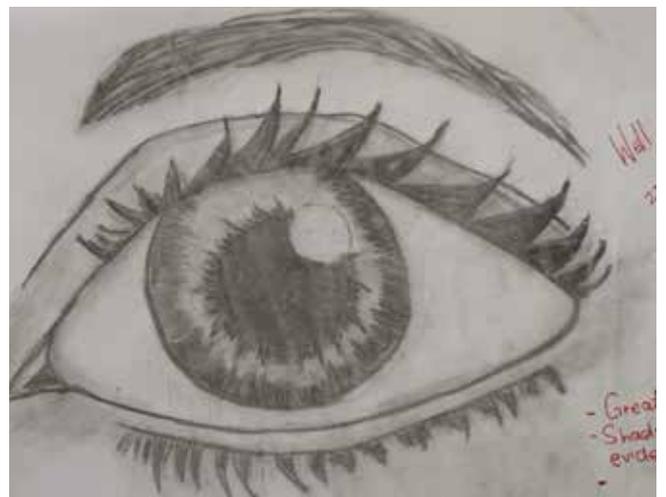
The **St Stithians** boys were unable to visit our school as is the custom, but they continued to support us in various ways, also donating cash, food parcels and much needed personal protection equipment. They even arranged the annual Christmas Party for our Foundation Phase children at our venue, as we were unable to take the children to St Stithians. The "Man-in-Red" himself made an appearance, and every child received a book, some stationery and lovely treats. The highlight was receiving a Christmas mask!



### In closing:

Thank you to Mrs Karin Backwell and all the members of the Vuleka Council, Mr Sanele Majola and the staff at Vuleka Central Office for their continuing assistance and support. Thank you for keeping our school sustainable and providing guidance and advice whenever we faced difficulties. We could not have done this without you. Thank you to the Rector, Canon Mark Spyker, who is always available to provide support, practical advice, and spiritual guidance. We also want to thank the staff at St Martin's-In-the-Veld for their willingness to assist whenever we need help, and for being so accommodating. We cherish the wonderful relationship we have with the whole team. The generosity of the parishioners towards our school remains heartwarming. We often receive anonymous donations of financial nature, books and other useful items. Vuleka's OVC Fund supported 8 children during 2020. I would also like to thank Cathrine du Toit and her team of donors and mentors from Bokamoso for offering bursaries for 13 children at our venue.

I am also happy to report that St Martin's and Jellicoe have been awarded **continued full accreditation with Umalusi** after submission of a progress report. This is a great achievement and confirms that we are indeed a school of excellence.



*I would like to conclude with these powerful words from the inimitable Nelson Mandela:  
"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."*

**LIZETTE BAKER  
HEADMISTRESS**

# SCHOOL ARTWORK

