

SCHOOL BACKGROUND

IN DETAIL

Brescia House School, situated in the heart of Bryanston, within easy access of the Western Bypass, was established in January 1966 with 196 learners. Today, with an enrolment of 850 learners, it is one of the leading girls' schools in the country and has developed an outstanding reputation for the development of girls who, benefiting from a well-rounded and balanced education, are able easily to access places at top universities and to make a meaningful contribution to society in many fields of endeavour.

Brescia House School is an independent Catholic day school for girls from grade 0 (5 years old) to grade 12 (18/19 years old) and takes its name from the city of Brescia in Lombardy, Northern Italy, where St. Angela Merici founded the first teaching order of nuns in 1535.

St. Angela, living in troubled times, was a woman of great foresight and vision and believed firmly in the education of young women. She believed they would have the wisdom to influence and guide their families and communities and thus society as a whole. She placed her order under the banner of St. Ursula, patroness of education - thus the name Ursuline Sisters.

With a distinctive Catholic ethos, grounded in the Ursuline commitment to selfless and loving service of God and the community, Brescia House School is owned by the Ursuline Sisters of the Province of Southern Africa and is proud to be a part of a worldwide Ursuline network of schools, which educates thousands of learners annually. These young people grow up not only to serve, but also to transform their communities in unique and visionary ways.

While remaining true to the vision of our founders, we strive to

- promote the integrity in growth and learning in the classroom and outside of it through comprehensive religious, cultural, sporting and community service programmes
- meet the unique needs of children passing from childhood through puberty to adolescence
- maintain enthusiasm for learning from grade 0 to grade 12, providing the greatest continuity from one educational phase to the next
- offer flexible learning programmes, which advance the concepts of exploration and experimentation, allowing independent thought and risk taking even when this means making mistakes

Even as we strive for excellence and promote the potential of each individual pupil, we are also educating young South Africans who must be ready not only to take up the challenges of living in a non-racial democratic South Africa, but also of transforming it into a truly peaceful and productive nation.

Brescia House School is directed by a Board of Governors, guided by the Ursuline Provincial Prioress and her Council and administered by an Executive Headmistress, a Headmistress in the secondary school and a Headmistress in the primary school.

The school is a full service educational facility offering a variety of curricular and co-curricular educational programmes and child care facilities. Through specialist training of its staff, Brescia House School is a leader in education and child development. This quality, coupled with a custom designed facility for each educational phase (Foundation, Intermediate, Senior and FET) set in beautiful grounds and with a very favourable teacher/learner ratio of 1:12, ensures exceptional service for the learner and her parents.

The reception classes (grade 0) prepare little girls in a caring yet stimulating environment for the more formal education of the foundation phase. Activities are varied, promote enjoyment in learning and emphasize the development of perceptual skills essential for later learning.

The foundation phase block, set in tranquil gardens with an exceptional view of the surrounding suburbs, is where the learners from grade 1 to grade 3 work on many topical projects. Language, mathematics and environmental skills receive considerable attention in this phase and regular computer lessons ensure that the girls are computer literate by grade 3. In this phase girls are encouraged to participate in co-curricular activities, which include a computer club, art club, crafts, music and choir, swimming and netball.

An extensive learner support structure exists with Occupational, Remedial and Speech Therapists available on the campus. A resident Counselling Social Worker is available to help with trauma and emotional support counselling throughout the School and to co-ordinate learner support services.

Specialist subject teaching, preparing learners academically, socially and emotionally for secondary school, begins in the intermediate phase. All work and projects are completed on the computer and research through the Internet is vigorously promoted. Learners in this phase are required to participate in at least two co-curricular activities, one of which should be a sport and another chosen from the wide variety of cultural activities and clubs.

The senior and F.E.T. phases pride themselves on the individual attention given to learners as classes are small and personal, seldom exceeding 18 to 20 learners per class. While girls are gently encouraged and challenged to achieve their full potential, they are also prepared to sit the G.E.T.C. and N.S.C. examinations set and administered by the Independent Examination Board.

Pervasive in this environment is Religious Education. An important element of the girls' schooling, it offers them the opportunity to develop in the knowledge and understanding of self, their relationships with God, all human beings and the environment. The school prepares Catholic learners in grade 4 for their First Holy Communion and in the grade 11 year Catholic and other Christian learners prepare together for Confirmation into their respective faith communities. Learners of all religious denominations are welcomed.

In keeping with the motto "**Serviam**", meaning **I shall serve**, all learners are encouraged, throughout their school life, to render community service through the Serviam and WISH clubs, through service of their parish/religious community in preparation for Confirmation or other relevant religious rites and through major fundraising and community service initiatives.

Emphasis is placed on sporting activities as a way of encouraging social interaction, co-operation, sharing and teamwork. With two hockey fields, a full aquatic complex with heated pools and a hotpot, eight tennis courts, netball courts and good relationships with the Bryanston Country Club and the

Randburg Sports facility, Brescia House School boasts not only wide participation in sporting activities, but also top achievers in diving, swimming, squash, tennis, hockey, netball, indoor hockey, indoor netball, girls' soccer and athletics. An agreement with a chain of gyms gives learners very affordable access to spinning, circuit training and aerobics classes. Many learners, present and past, have achieved provincial, national and international recognition in different sporting disciplines.

Cultural activities provide learners with another opportunity to excel. Each year senior girls take part in Physical Science, Mathematics and English Olympiads as well as Art, Music, entrepreneurial and environmental projects and competitions. Field trips, often entailing a few days away, are a regular feature of school life. Public speaking and debating develops confident, articulate and critical young women. Brescia House School prides itself on its excellent reputation for public speaking, having won several Guild of Speech and Drama competitions over the years. The school's team regularly reaches the finals of the United Nations Debating competition run by the Department of International Relations at the University of the Witwatersrand. Drama productions, presented annually by both primary and secondary learners, generate much excitement. Music is also a vital part of school life, both in worship and in recreation: the school has four active choirs and several instrumental ensembles. The fledgling chess club enjoys support from primary and secondary learners alike and promotes inter-grade interaction.

The environment of Brescia House School is a caring one, where the primary need of each child to belong is met, where pupils are accepted and appreciated for who they are, and are respected and valued as important individuals. This is achieved through the dedication of all staff members.

The School, which is affiliated to the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE), the Johannesburg/Pretoria Catholic Schools Board (CSB) and the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa (ISASA), celebrated the 40th Anniversary of its founding in 2006, having over the years encouraged parents to become involved in the educating process, aiming at building home and school into a purposeful and dynamic partnership.