



Our History

In 1893 a group of people, led by the Reverend BP Marchand, decided that a school for girls was necessary in Rondebosch. They obtained transfer of a portion of the Rustenburg Estate where, on the 19th of January 1894, classes began at what was known as Rondebosch Girls' High School, Rustenburg.

The school opened with 76 pupils, including 7 boarders and 11 boys. Despite the efforts of the authorities to channel boys to the newly established Rondebosch Boys' High School, kindergarten classes included boys into the 1940s, just as some girls attended the Boys' school kindergarten classes.

As early as 1921 there was discussion about a possible new site for the High School. It was evident that the school had outgrown the site on the Main Road and that further expansion was inevitable. The move started on 11th July 1932. It was acknowledged that the division of the school was essential, but it was envisaged that they would remain new parts of a whole – an elder and a younger sister of one family. Beautiful new buildings were erected, and 311 pupils in Standards 7 to 10 moved to the new site, leaving behind 400 pupils in the Junior School.

During the decades before the political transformation of the early 1990s, admission to Rustenburg, as with similar schools in South Africa, was limited to white learners. The school was a member of a group called the Open Schools Association, which lobbied for schools to be opened to learners across the entire South African population. Towards the end of the 1980s, Rustenburg indicated to the Department that it would welcome the opportunity to open our school if we were allowed to do so. During 1990 this permission was granted, and in January 1991 Rustenburg opened its doors to girls of all races and nationalities. As the decade of the 1990s wore on, more and more diverse learners were enrolled at Rustenburg.

While the façade of the school has remained unchanged over the years, various new classrooms have been added, a dedicated Music Block built, attached to the hostel, and in 1971, the new school hall, incorporating the old Kemp Hall and a brand new foyer was opened.

The 2000s saw an increase in the technology available for teaching and a big change in the National school curriculum, which in itself brought different challenges to the school.

The last 10 years have brought much change. In 2014, a new Mathematics and Physical Sciences building was opened and a new Astro turf Hockey Field was inaugurated. There has been a raised consciousness in sustainability. As a school we now recycle close to 100% of all our waste and we are self-sustaining as far as our water supply is concerned and we hope to do the same for electricity. We place a strong emphasis on Technology and Innovation in and outside the classroom. iPads were introduced to staff in 2018 and to each Grade 8 class from 2019 onwards.

2016 and 2017 saw the start of our Transformation journey with our staff doing workshops and teacher training on implicit bias, inclusion and belonging. This led to deliberate steps to create opportunities for meaningful conversations for the staff and pupils.

2018 saw our first whole school Dialogue Day and since then we have included Dialogue Days and transformation workshops into the school timetable and calendar, as part of our ongoing mission to create a school where all learners belong. Workshops on Diversity Literacy were held for staff and pupils in 2020 and 2021.

In 2020 the school updated our vision and mission statements in order to foster a more inclusive school environment. "Rustenburg: an innovative, values-driven school, where we strive to create a sense of belonging and empower womxn to become compassionate leaders of change."

The school song was re-written in 2020 and a new melody composed in 2021. The whole school sang the new school song for the first time at the 128th birthday celebrations in February 2022.

We moved to a Vertical tutor system in 2022, making Tutor groups, which are now no larger than 22 learners of mixed ages. This coincided with a change of house names. The whole school was involved in suggesting and choosing the names and a big role was played by the RCL. Our houses are now named after 5 star constellations that can be seen from the Southern Hemisphere. The move to the Vertical Tutor System and new Houses has brought about more meaningful friendships across the grades and a significant increase in school spirit.

In 2023 the process of updating our school badge was started. This robust and inclusive process has included research, a survey, engagements, committee meetings, working with a specialist brand company and working on designs and symbolisms. All stakeholders were involved, including learners, staff and alumnae. The final product of our new school badge, launched in October 2024, is one that we can all relate to and be proud of.

Today, Rustenburg is ranked highly among the top ten schools in the country, and there is no doubt that the foundations laid at the start have contributed to its success. Beyond the prestige of a top-ten ranking, our dedication lies in building a school where every individual finds a genuine sense of belonging.