

A Forgotten History: A Historical Overview of Kuilsriver Primary School 1908–2023

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Abstract

This article focuses on the history of Kuilsriver Primary School as it is known today. Whilst this specific school has a very interesting, sometimes difficult, but also a very proud background, not many people in Kuilsriver know and understand its history. This year, 2023, the school is 115 years old. It is really a remarkable achievement for an institution which had to endure extreme hardships through its history. Kuilsriver Primary School, as it is known today, was first called Kuilsrivier Laer Kleurling Skool. This name was given to the school long before legalised apartheid came into being in South Africa. Currently there is no publication on the history of the school.

The school opened its doors in January 1908 in Van Riebeeck Road, the main road of Kuilsriver. The placement of the school was a welcome relief to the learners of Brackenfell and Bottelary who had to walk almost six km to the nearest school namely, Sarepta Primary School. After 1948 the country experienced the draconian political system called Apartheid. The area where this school was located was proclaimed as a white area in 1958. The school was therefore removed and relocated to the coloured area of Sarepta. Various attempts were made to disaffirm the existence of the school in the main road. The school also experienced a name change to Jan Bosman Primary School in 1970 but reclaimed the original name in 2011. The old school building structure in the main road of Kuilsriver was demolished in January 1970. The only proof that is left of the school building is a photo of the school.¹

¹ Available at: <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. Accessed on 2 March 2022.

The purpose of this article is to put the school's history into perspective in the Kuilsriver area as well as in the broader South African context as Kuilsrivier was part of the early Cape Colony. This article also refers to a similar situation regarding the relocation of a coloured school in Carnarvon in the Northern Cape.

Keywords: Rhenish; Mission; Kuilsrivier Laer Kleurling Skool; Group Areas Act; Disaffirm; Ceased; Apartheid; Carnarvon; Relocation, Coloured; Primary schools, History of education, Coloured education.

Introduction

In a comprehensive analysis of the current available literature (2022) on the history of Kuilsriver and the schools in the area, it appears that Kuilsriver had no schools for coloured² children from the early 1900s. It is quite clear that very little is written about the history of Kuilsriver and other schools in the area attended by coloured learners from the early 1900s.³ This article attempts to provide a fresh insight into the history of one such school, Kuilsriver Primary. Furthermore, the School Board Act of 1905 made school attendance and education compulsory specifically for white children.⁴ The Act also allowed for school boards to make school compulsory for ‘coloured’ children, but none at that stage chose to do so.⁵

One could legitimately ask the question: Why did the differentiation between schools for white learners and schools for coloured learners occur? This article highlights the contribution to education of one specific school, formerly known as Kuilsrivier Laer Kleurling Skool, to emphasise the significance it played in education since 1908. In order to understand the history of Kuilsrivier Primary it is important to note the development of education in South Africa. Schooling in the Cape Colony was established in the late 17th century by Dutch Reformed missionaries. By 1827 a number of English-language schools operated in the Cape Colony.

One of the issues discussed in this article is whether the exclusion of the contribution of coloured schools to education from the history of Kuilsriver was a deliberate attempt by certain authorities and the historians of Kuilsriver (people such as Dr Visagie and Ms Vermaak) to portray the narrative that Kuilsriver did not have schools for coloured children.⁶ The reason for this assumption could be the fact that the municipality of Kuilsriver tasked the historians in 1994 to record the history with specific reference to schools in the area. The failure to mention and include the details of a coloured school in the early history of Kuilsriver is an example that illustrates the belief at the time that white people were the only people of significance in South Africa. This belief was, during that era, in tune with the ideology of apartheid.⁷ Soudien’s analysis of the South African Schools Act indicates that

2 At that stage the racial classification in South Africa was white, coloured, black, and Indian.

3 ALVermaak, “Die Geskiedenis van Kuilsriver 1652-1905”, (MPhil, US, 1993).

4 Cape of Good Hope, *The Education Gazette* 4(20), 1905.

5 Cape of Good Hope, *The Education Gazette* 4(20), 1905.

6 G Foster interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 21 March 1998.

7 C Soudien, *Making a new South African Learner: An analysis of the South African Schools Act 2019*, pp. 147–157, UFS.

this is one of the most important pieces of post-apartheid legislation. His focus is on South African learners as receivers of education and as people obliged to receive education. He also focuses on the importance of the learners in the new South Africa against the backdrop of the old South Africa in the apartheid era and the struggle of the learners in the past.⁸ According to Smalley, “the Europeans who colonized Africa generally viewed the natives as intellectually and morally inferior, and exploited the labour of the local population.”⁹ South Africa is not the only country to have racial segregation and racial inequality. Even a democratic country like the United States of America had, and still has, racial problems.¹⁰ South Africa is one of many countries which enforced racist segregation in various spheres of society through legislation and the government’s policy. Although apartheid was only legalised in 1948, racial segregation was enforced in the Cape Colony before 1910 and in the Cape Province after 1910 and the Union of South Africa. Government only took control of black education in 1953 and coloured education in the 1960s.¹¹ According to Morrow, “The Apartheid system of racial segregation was made law in South Africa in 1948, when the country was officially divided into four racial groups, White, Black, Indian and Coloureds.”¹² He provides a very clear idea of what apartheid meant. It is against this backdrop that the history of Kuilsriver Primary School will be presented.

The available literature on the history of schools in Kuilsriver as at 2023

At the time of writing this article, no publication on the history of Kuilsriver Primary School could be uncovered. There, however, exists some literature about the white schools

8 C Soudien, *Making a new South African Learner: An analysis of the South African Schools Act 2019*: pp. 147–157.UFS.

9 E Smalley, *Fighting for education*.en. Wikipedia.org? Wiki? Equal Education 2014, Available at: https://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/caseconsortium/casestudied/130/casestudy/www/layout/case_130_id_919.html. (Accessed on 2 March 2022).

10 M Luther King, *Speech at the Lincoln Memorial in America* 28 August 28 1962. Available at: <https://www.npr.org/2010/01/18/122701268/i-have-a-dream-speech-in-its-entirety> (Accessed on 16 March 2022).

11 RS Phalane, (PhD Thesis, University of Pretoria, 2007), p. 1.

12 WE Morrow, 1990 Aims of Education in South Africa, *International review of Education Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft/Revue Internationale de l’Education*, 36, pp. 171–181.

in the area.¹³ There was thus a heavy reliance on research methods that would be effective in exploring social context, as well as the political atmosphere and how education was influenced by those in authority. It would therefore also be important to consider the political ideology in South Africa. For the purpose of this study it was decided to use the history of the Kuilsriver Primary School as a case study.¹⁴ As part of the research design, a range of qualitative research methods were conducted of which interviews were the main one. Information regarding the history of the above-mentioned school was obtained from a number of conversations (interviews) which were conducted over the past two decades with principals, educators, and learners who attended the school.¹⁵ In addition to the interviews, further research was conducted by means of questionnaires and analysing the feedback.

The only written information that is currently available about the school is located on its website.¹⁶ After conducting extensive research and visiting a number of libraries in order to locate literature on the history of Kuilsriver, only a few books could be located. Visagie and Vermaak are of the few academics that wrote extensively on the history of Kuilsriver and provide very interesting reading material. However, it is extremely disappointing to discover how differently they deal with the history of white and coloured schools in Kuilsriver. Vermaak discusses the history of the former white schools in detail, but neglects to mention those attended by coloured learners in any significant detail. His book *Die Geskiedenis, Stigting en Ontwikkelingsgeskiedenis van Kuilsrivier* published in 1994, contains the apartheid perspective on the history of Kuilsriver and the schools situated in and around the area. There is a clear focus on the academic, cultural, and sporting activities of the *white* schools only. The coloured schools are only mentioned incidentally.¹⁷ He clearly makes a distinction between the white and coloured schools by discussing them separately; the white schools in Kuilsriver in section (ii) on page 74 and the coloured schools in section (iii) on page 99.

This type of writing and research confirms the fact that literature focused mainly on the

13 The history of the white schools in the area can be found at <https://dkps.org.za> (De Kuilen Primary) (Accessed on 10 February 2022); Available at: <https://www.dekuilen.com> (De Kuilen High School) (Accessed on 10 February 2022).

14 A Bryman, 2012, *Social Research Method* 4th edition, (New York: Oxford University Press), p. 66.

15 Conversations were conducted with George Foster, Joel Van Niekerk, Zondelia Swartz, Glende Hamman, Hildegard McCallum, Peter Du Plooy, John Bosman, Japie Ross.

16 Available at: <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 2 March 2022).

17 JHH Visagie, *Die Ontstaan, Stigting en Ontwikkelings geskiedenis van Kuilsrivier, 1683–1993*, (Municipality Kuilsriver, 1994), p. 74.

white schools and minimum references were made to the existence of the coloured schools in the area.¹⁸ Soudien states that there is no question that schooling during apartheid took an everyday racial form.¹⁹

Visagie, in a sense, disaffirms the existence of schools attended by coloured learners in former white areas and stated that a new school was started in 1970.²⁰ He specified that the school for coloureds in the white area ceased to exist and that a new school was opened in Sarepta. This is incorrect as will become evident. Documents in the National Archives of South Africa stated clearly that Kuilsriver Primary ceased to exist.²¹

Vermaak, who wrote on the history of Kuilsriver²² mentions Sarepta Primary School, a coloured school in the area, but she neglects to highlight the fact that it was the first and oldest school in Kuilsriver. The Sarepta Primary School was attended by whites and coloureds, prior to the enactment of the Group Areas Act. She, however, discusses the history of the white schools at length.²³

It is patently obvious that when research was conducted and books published, the focus was predominantly on the former white only schools. Very little is mentioned about the establishment, contribution, and the history of the former disadvantaged coloured schools, specifically in the Kuilsriver area. Both Visagie and Vermaak were tasked by the Kuilsriver Municipality to write the history of Kuilsriver.²⁴ It seems odd that Vermaak's MPhil studies were sponsored by the Kuilsriver municipality. It raises questions about the reasons why the municipality was sponsoring the writing of histories on the eve of a new South Africa. It could be that the focus was to highlight the contribution of the white schools to the general education of pupils in the Kuilsriver area and to emphasise that the coloured contribution was insignificant. One could speculate on the reasons for writing the history of Kuilsriver at that specific time, but one reason could be that the removal of a coloured school from a group area declared white in Kuilsriver should not receive any prominence. It could possibly explain why Vermaak and Visagie only highlighted the history of the white schools and only mentioned the coloured schools very incidentally in their studies. This not only

18 P. Christie, *Decolonising Schools in South Africa, The impossible dream*, 2020.

19 C. Soudien, *Making a new South African Learner: An analysis of the South African Schools Act 2019*, pp. 147–157.

20 JHH Visagie, *Die Ontstaan, Stigting en Ontwikkelings geskiedenis van Kuilsrivier 1683–1993*. (Municipality Kuilsriver 1994), p. 99.

21 National Archives of South Africa: *Daarstelling en sluiting van Kuilsrivier Laerskool, 1963-1969*. *Kus*, 979: Reference 7/2/1/E230. (Accessed on 17 July 2023).

22 ALVermaak, "Die Geskiedenis van Kuilsriver 1652-1905", (MPhil, US, 1993), p. 95.

23 ALVermaak, "Die Geskiedenis van Kuilsriver 1652-1905", (MPhil, US, 1993), pp.143–179.

24 ALVermaak, "Die Geskiedenis van Kuilsriver 1652-1905", (MPhil, US, 1993) p. 9.

occurred in the Kuilsriver area, but also happened in the Carnarvon area as discussed by Christie.²⁵

It appears that more attention is also given to “white schools” in local newspapers in general as more events and pictures of schools in white areas are highlighted while schools in the coloured areas were not even mentioned. This is illustrated by the fact that neither Sarepta Primary School nor Kuilsriver Laer Kleurling Skool are mentioned in a list of the 200 oldest schools in South Africa published in 2018; only the white schools in Kuilsriver were mentioned.²⁶ It seems as if there was a lack of interest in the research and an unwillingness to set the record straight about the interests of coloureds in education. It is reiterated that the history of Kuilsriver Laer Kleurling School challenges this view.

According to Cross

*The nationalist-conservative tradition has dominated historical literature on education both before and after the consolidation of the apartheid system in education. Embedded in the conservative doctrine of Christian National Education (CNE), this historiography tends to glorify traditional Afrikaner values and to promote Afrikaner nationalism, thus developing an excessively “White-centered” view about the history of education in South Africa.*²⁷

There is a paucity of literature available to rectify the white centred view of the history of education in schools. This is one of the main reasons why this research was embarked upon.

The above quotation illustrates the fact that a certain part of the history of South Africa and its schools was written from a white perspective. The available literature on Black and Coloured education was censored at the time. It was mostly in the 1970s, 1980s, and later years that literature focused on the inequality of education of Blacks and Coloureds compared to the education for white learners. The writing of the history primarily aimed to glorify and promote Afrikaner nationalism. A result of this, coloured history was either ignored or neglected as if it never existed.²⁸ This explains why the books written about the history of Kuilsriver and its schools do not include the narrative of its coloured schools. The current available literature offers a peripheral reference to coloured schools, confirming

25 P Christie, *Decolonising Schools in South Africa, The impossible dream*, 2020.

26 www.news24.com/parent/Learn/Primary-school/this-list-with-200-of-south-africas-oldest-school-may-surprise-you-20180409 (Accessed on 12 March 2022).

27 M Cross, A Historical Review of Education in South Africa: towards an assessment. *Comparative Education* 22(1), 1986, pp. 185–200.

28 M Cross, A Historical Review of Education in South Africa: towards an assessment. *Comparative Education* 22(1), 1986, pp. 185– 200.

the narrative that it would seem as if coloureds were not interested in education. The publications of Vermaak and Visagie regarding the history of schools in Kuilsriver reflect the focus on schools for white learners only. The enactment of the Group Areas Act changed the political landscape of South Africa in that it gave further momentum to the phase of passive resistance and the “defiance campaign” by the ANC.²⁹ Adhikari states that the forced classification under the Population Registration Act made the implementation of rigid segregation possible.³⁰ Under the Group Areas Act well over half a million “coloureds” were forcibly relocated to residential and business areas, usually on the periphery of cities and towns.

The Establishment and history of the Kuilsrivier Laer Kleurling Skool

As alluded to previously, the information regarding the history of the above-mentioned school was obtained from a number of interviews which were conducted over the past two decades with principals, educators, and learners who attended the school.³¹

Twenty-five interviews were conducted with 16 participants. Twelve former students of Kuilsriver Primary, two directors of education, two community members and four educators. The 12 learners were very helpful and eager to participate in the interviews about the school they had attended. Six of these learners attended the school in the Kuilsriver main road and are still very proud of the school. They were, however, very sad about the fact that the school was removed and that the buildings were demolished in the process. The eight former learners who became educators at the same school, advised that they consistently remind the new teachers and learners about the history of the old school. The two directors of education who were interviewed were also extremely proud of the fact that they attended the school as learners, later became educators at the school, and was subsequently promoted as directors in the Department of Basic Education. Two of the former students were also appointed as deputy principal and one of them was later appointed as principal of Kuilsriver Primary School. For the community members who were interviewed it was a dream come true when the new school building was completed

²⁹W Esterhuysen & P Nel, *Die ANC*, (Nasionale Boekdrukkery, Kaapstad, 1990), p. 10.

³⁰M Adhikari, God made the White Man, God Made the Black Man... Popular Racial Stereotyping of Coloured People in Apartheid, *South African Historical Journal*, 2006, 55, pp. 142–164.

³¹ Conversations were conducted with George Foster, Joel Van Niekerk, Zondelia Swartz, Glende Hamman, Hildegarde McCallum, Peter Du Plooy, John Bosman.

and the fact that the school reclaimed its name after many years.

It was extremely difficult to find the total numbers of learners and teachers after 1920 due to the fact that the Cape Education Gazette did not have proper records. From the information gathered the article will indicate how the school grew in numbers just before it had to relocate. The available numbers of learners from 1908 to 1970 are as follows: (a) the school started with 41 learners in 1908; (b) in 1912 the school had 59 learners and grew steadily to 68 in 1926 and 59 in 1932; (c) good results and quality of education led to 318 in 1950; (d) from 1964 to 1966 the numbers were between 455 and 589; (e) in 1968 and 1969 the school had 804 learners; and (f) when the school was finally removed from the “white” area in 1970 it had 725 learners.

The school was established in the Main Road of Kuilsriver in 1908. It was for coloured learners³² as the need arose to have a school for children from the Brackenfell and Bottellary area. At that stage the only school where coloured learners could attend was in Sarepta, at that stage a multiracial school. The children had to walk approximately six kilometres every day to attend school at Sarepta.

The missionaries of the churches played a major role in the educational development of coloured learners.³³ Almost all the schools for coloured children in the Cape were run by missionaries in the first half of the 20th century. This was no different in Kuilsriver, as the municipal authorities at that stage were not interested in schooling for coloureds. This is evident by the lack of coloured schools in the area. Although the Cape Education Department paid the salaries of most of the missionary schools, it was a struggle in Kuilsriver and the missionaries requested money from the Netherlands, and had to raise funds in order to pay the salaries of teachers.³⁴ There seemed to have been reluctance from the Cape Education Department to focus on schools for coloureds. As early as 1905— at a church council meeting—the need for another school in Kuilsriver was discussed. In 1906 a member of the Rhenish Mission Church, Jacob Hamman, transferred Plot 248 (a portion of his property) to the church for the establishment of a church building which could also be used as a school.³⁵ This piece of property was situated in the Main Road of Kuilsriver, Van Riebeeck Road, where the area Palm Tree Villas was later developed and 25 houses were built. The first wood and corrugated building had a hall measuring 14m x 7m.

32 Holzapfel, Minutes of Church Council Meeting of Sarepta Church, January 1908.

33 <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/history-Luckhoff-high-school:1932-1969>. (Accessed on 8 March 2022).

34 George Foster interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 21 March, 1998.

35 George Foster interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 21 March, 1998.

For two years this hall was used for church services only.³⁶ According to the records in the Deeds office, Deed no. 6913, JJ Hamman transferred two morgen, Erf 247, formerly Lot A as part of Lot G to the Trustee for Cape Colony of the Rhenish Mission Society of Barmen, Germany.³⁷

In an interview conducted with George Foster, he referred to a church council's decision of the Rynse Gemeente Sarepta on 8 January 1908 concerning the school. Recorded in the neat handwriting of Reverend Holzapfel,³⁸ the following is an extract of the decision in Kaapse–Nederlandse Taal:

*De Leeraar sprekt over de vanschelykheid van in Kuils River eene School te nemen. De Kerkraad stemt dit toe. Besluit word daarop genomen tot het eerste kwartaal van dit jaar in de niewen Kerk te KuilsRiver. Sarah Fredericks, die de School van Sarepta geet verlaten, is gewillig het nieuwe werk te beginning. Het ons innig gebed dat die nieuwe School van zegen mocht word voor vele van de verwaarloosde Kinderen van Kuils River.*³⁹

The above extract refers to the fact that Reverend Holzapfel moved that a decision had to be taken about the school in Kuilsriver. They prayed for the new school in order for the neglected children who could not attend school in Kuilsriver to attend the school. The church council voted in favour of opening a new school.⁴⁰ The decision was that the new school would start from the first term of 1908. Sarah Fredericks, who decided to leave Sarepta Primary, agreed to start the new school as principal.

In January 1908 the church hall became a school building.⁴¹ The school was called Kuilsrivier Laer Kleurling Skool, also affectionately referred to as “Die Hoogte” and had a total of 41 learners when it opened its doors. When JJ Hamman transferred the land to the church, his purpose was for a school to be erected on it.⁴² His intention was for a school to be established which would be in closer proximity to the areas of Brackenfell and Bottellary from where children had to walk long distances to be educated at the already established schools at the time.⁴³

36 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 2 March 2022)

37 Deeds Office Cape Town, Deed no. 6913, Transferring of property to Church. (Accessed on 4 March 2022).

38 George Foster interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 21 March, 1998

39 Holzapfel, Minutes of Church Council Meeting of Sarepta Church, January 1908.

40 This school process was initiated by Reverend Luckhoff in 1842 and the school started in 1843 with the further assistance of Reverend Esselen.

41 Feesbrojure (1843-1993) published by NG Sendinggemeente Sarepta, 1993, p. 16

42 Feesbrojure (1843-1993) published by NG Sendinggemeente Sarepta, 1993, p. 16.

43 George Foster interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 21 March, 1998.

As mentioned above, the first teacher and principal of the school was Sarah Fredericks(1908).⁴⁴ She was previously at the first school established in Kuilsriver—namely, Sarepta Primary School. Sarepta Primary, a multiracial school, grew in terms of learner numbers which necessitated the establishment of another school for coloured learners only. Coloured learners could not attend white schools—coloureds were pushed out of the more lucrative areas and segregation of schooling started long before the National Party took over in 1948. Fredericks was replaced by Freda De Villiers in 1909.⁴⁵ The school’s learner numbers grew from 59 learners in October 1912 to 68 in 1926.⁴⁶ In 1910 Maud Wyngaard took over as principal.⁴⁷ She was replaced by Mary Thomas until 1930 when Mr H Wessels became principal in 1931.⁴⁸

The information regarding the school during 1908 to 1932 is very scarce and could not be uncovered. It seems as if most of the information with regard to the history of the school was destroyed in a fire in 1969. Interestingly, Christie indicates that the archival records for coloured schools in the Cape closed abruptly in November 1989, with no explanations given for such a decision.⁴⁹

In January 1932 James Foster was appointed as the principal of the school.⁵⁰ As a result of their enhanced reputation, the learner numbers steadily increased and it became the biggest primary school in Kuilsriver at the time.⁵¹ It was also referred to as “Die Blik Skooltjie”.⁵² It was called Blik Skooltjie because it was made of tin and wood.

By 1936 the school had four teachers plus the principal. James Foster and his staff struggled with the heat and pleaded with the church to build a more permanent structure for the school to replace the temporary prefab structure. In 1944 the dilapidated building was replaced with a new building, and on 28 October 1944 Kuilsriver Laer Kleurling Skool opened the doors to a new building with 5 classrooms, an office, and a kitchen.⁵³ The school building was extended in 1949, and by 1959 the school had 318 learners.⁵⁴

44 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 9 November 2021).

45 Feesbrojre (1843-1993) published by NG Sendinggemeente Sarepta, 1993, p. 16.

46 Feesbrojre (1843-1993) published by NG Sendinggemeente Sarepta, 1993, p. 16.

47 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 9 November 2021).

48 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 29 November 2021).

49 P Christie, *Decolonising Schools in South Africa, The impossible dream*, 2020.

50 George Foster with whom the interview in 1998 was conducted.

51 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 2 March 2022).

52 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 2 March 2022).

53 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 2 November 2021).

54 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. George Foster interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 21 March 1998.

Unfortunately, due to the change in the political landscape of South Africa, further extensions and renovations could not be affected. It is during this period that the staff, learners, and broader community suffered extreme destitution.⁵⁵ Legislation, namely the Group Areas Act, was introduced prohibiting coloureds from living or attending schools in white areas.⁵⁶ These legislative developments impacted directly on the future of the school. As mentioned above, from 1958 onwards the school could not take in any new learners and the school building could not be extended due to the fact that the school was situated in a so-called white area.⁵⁷ The government furthermore wished to move the school to Sarepta, an area designated at that time for coloureds, referred to as the sand dunes of Sarepta.

In 1964 James Foster retired as principal after 32 years.⁵⁸ In order to do justice to the history of Kuilsriver Primary it is imperative to refer to the contribution the Foster family made to the school. James Foster was the longest serving principal of the school. His son George, who later became the vice-principal, was also a learner at the school. Gladys Foster, George's wife, as well as his daughter Rochelle Van Niekerk were also teachers at the school.⁵⁹ There are a number of other families who also played a major role at the school who are not mentioned here.

Albert Nicholls was appointed principal after the retirement of James Foster in 1964. At that stage George Foster was the vice-principal.⁶⁰ Following the appointment of Albert Nicholls as principal the school excelled, but the unforeseeable happened: the school was burned down in 1966.⁶¹ On 5 November 1966 (Guy Fawkes) a bomb was thrown through the window of the school and a large part of the building was destroyed in the fire.⁶² It was generally believed that this was because of growing tension, because a coloured school was situated in a white group area.⁶³ According to George Foster, the bombing was definitely an act of cowardice to force the school out of the white area.⁶⁴ Dr Foster who was the vice-principal of the school during 1966 stated that four white youths burned down the school. Unfortunately, no record of this event could be uncovered and the kids were not charged, therefore, no criminal records were available. This information was not only verified by Dr

55 George Foster, interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 21 March, 1998.

56 Group Areas Act 36 of 1958: Proclaimed by Local Government of Kuilsriver, 1958.

57 George Foster interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 21 March 1998.

58 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 2 February 2022).

59 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 2 February 2022).

60 George Foster interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 21 March 1998.

61 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 29 November 2021).

62 George Foster interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 2 March 1998.

63 George Foster interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 2 March 1998.

64 George Foster interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 2 March 1998.

Foster, but it was confirmed by some of the interviewees as well. Apparently, it was regarded as mischievous conduct by youths and therefore no prosecution for arson took place. This is indicative of how white youths were treated differently from coloured youths during that era. One could imagine if it were coloureds who burned down a white school what would have happened. Sadly, Visagie only mentions that the school was burned down, but neglects to include any other details about the incident.⁶⁵ The bombing of the school was unnecessary, as the Group Areas Act of 1958 made provision for the eventual relocation of the coloured school out of a proclaimed white area. The bombing in a sense accelerated the moving of Kuilsriver Kleurling Primary School to the coloured area of Sarepta. The biggest frustration for the members of the school was that they had to relocate and the old school building was later demolished.

The situation in Kuilsriver has striking similarities to what happened to other schools in the Carnarvon area in the Northern Cape. Christie, who did research on the Karoo town of Carnarvon states that the primary school burnt down in 1989 and that no official investigation was conducted. Not one of the interviewees could conclusively say what happened. The coloured primary school was not rebuilt, and learners were moved to the premises of the secondary school where both schools operated on one premises.⁶⁶ These unsuitable, overcrowded conditions lasted for almost twenty years after the fire that destroyed the school.

The school was started in Kuilsriver to prevent young children to walk six kilometres from Brackenfell to school every morning and back every afternoon. Kuilsrivier Laer Kleurling Skool was situated perfectly—almost in the middle between the Brackenfell and Sarepta areas. It was thus much easier for learners to attend the school in the main road. Unfortunately, because of legislation the school had to be relocated to a plot in Sarepta Road, merely 400m from another school, Sarepta Primary.⁶⁷ It caused a lot of unhappiness and frustration to the students who had to walk from Brackenfell, where FairBridge Mall is situated today, to a school six kilometres away in Sarepta.

It was a senseless act which caused all those learners from the Brackenfell-Bottelary area to be the unlucky ones who could not attend a school in the white area and had to walk to Sarepta every day to attend school. After the fire at the school in 1966, only three classrooms remained unharmed. These classrooms together with the old Sarepta School, the residence

65 JHH Visagie, *Die Ontstaan, Stigting en Ontwikkelings geskiedenis van Kuilsrivier* (Municipality, Kuilsriver, 1994) 1683–1993.

66 P Christie, *Decolonising Schools in South Africa, The impossible dream*, 2020.

67 G Hamman interviewed by author, 17 February 2022.

of the priest, and the Calvinist Protestant Church Hall were used to accommodate all the learners of the school.⁶⁸ This meant that Albert Nicholls was a principal of a school located at 4 different premises.⁶⁹ This situation came to an end in November 1970. In the next part the relocation of the school is discussed.

The relocation of the school to Sarepta

As mentioned previously, this school was relocated in 1970, six kilometres from the Brackenfell and Bottellary area. The school was relocated to Sarepta Road, merely 400 metres from Sarepta Primary.

The move was the result of the enactment of the Group Areas Act of 1950 and an effective way of consolidating the social arrangement of a racially segregated society.⁷⁰ After the bombing of the school in the main road took place, the learners had to move to the 70-year-old school building in Sarepta. As said earlier, some were accommodated in the residence of the reverend of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, as well as the Calvinist church hall. These buildings, accommodating the learners of Kuilsriver Primary, were occupied until the temporary (prefab) building in Sarepta Road was erected.

The learners had to carry benches to the new building. The government succeeded in removing the school out of the white area and thereby also took away the learners' opportunity to attend a school near to their homes.⁷¹ The coloured citizens who lived in the now declared white areas were forcibly removed from the areas of Bottellary and the broader Kuilsriver area. Each and everyone of the so-called coloureds was relocated to the sand dunes of Sarepta. The area where the school had been situated in the main road was declared a whites only area in terms of the Group Areas Act and the Sarepta area as coloured. Ironically, the relocated school was named after a white education inspector. The following information found in the National Archives of South Africa clearly indicates that the new school "Sarepta Primary School no. 2 would now be called Jan Bosman Primary School".⁷²

The official opening of the displaced school took place in April 1971. This school

68 J Van Niekerk interviewed by author, 10 January 2022.

69 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 10 November 2021).

70 JHH Visagie, *Die Ontstaan, Stigting en Ontwikkelings geskiedenis van Kuilsrivier* (Municipality Kuilsriver, 1994) 1683–1993, p. 105.

71 George Foster interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 21 March 1998.

72 National Archives of South Africa: Laerskool vir Kleurlinge 27 Oktober 1970: Reference 7/2/1/E230. (Accessed on 17 July 2023).

building was officially opened by Mr William Bergins, a member of the then Coloured Representative Council.⁷³ The fact that the school was named after a white school inspector added salt to the wounds of the community of Sarepta. The perception existed that the renaming of the school was an attempt by the authorities to treat Jan Bosman Primary as a new school. It was regarded as a deliberate attempt to remove any reference to the existence of Kuilsriver Laer Kleurling Skool. With branding it Jan Bosman Primary, it contained no reference to the Kuilsriver Laer Kleurling Skool situated in the main road and points to possible hope that people would eventually forget about how the coloured school was forced to relocate. Similar relocations of coloured schools occurred throughout the country. The relocation of Luckhoff High in Stellenbosch is an example of another coloured school that was relocated.⁷⁴ Contrary to the Kuilsriver School, however, Luckhoff High in Stellenbosch retained its name.

Visagie wrote the following regarding the relocation of the school:

*Die Leerlingtal het vanaf 59 in 1932 toegeneem tot 318 in 1959. Vanwee die toepassing van die Groepsgebiedewet na 1958 kon daar in die 1960's by hierdie skool wat in die Blanke gebied geleë was, nie addisionele akkommodasie voorsien word nie. Gevolglik moes 'n ander primêre skool in Sarepta opgerig word waarheen die leerlinge van die primêre skool op die Bult (ook Hoogte) genoem oorgeplaas word. Mr J Foster het op 30 Junie 1964 uit die diens van die Onderwys Departement getree en vanaf Julie 1964 het Mr A.H. Nicholls hom as skoolhoof opgevolg 'n betrekking wat hy bekleë het tot die skool aan die einde van 1970 gesluit het.*⁷⁵ (Visagie refers to the fact that after the Group Areas Act was promulgated, coloureds could no longer attend the school in the main road and that another school had to be built in Sarepta, the coloured area).

The above extract confirms the mistaken narrative that the Kuilsrivier Laer Kleurling Skool ceased to exist and that a new school opened in November 1970. He further comments that most of the learners together with the teachers were transferred to the new school.⁷⁶ It is difficult to comprehend the reasoning of Visagie in making such statements, because his book was written during the dawn of a new South Africa. The only assumption

73 DY Saks, D Y (Master's thesis, Rhodes University, 1991). Available at: <https://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/archive-files3/the19911100.009.000.pdf>. (Accessed on 28 June 2023).

74 <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/history-luckhoff-high-school-1932-1969>. (Accessed on 7 March 2022).

75 JHH Visagie, *Die Ontstaan, Stigting en Ontwikkelings geskiedenis van Kuilsrivier* (Municipality Kuilsriver, 1994) 1683–1993, p. 109.

76 JHH Visagie, *Die Ontstaan, Stigting en Ontwikkelings geskiedenis van Kuilsrivier* (Municipality Kuilsriver, 1994) 1683–1993, p. 105.

that can be made is that Visagie in collaboration with the municipality wanted to negate the existence of the coloured school in the main road. He was tasked by the municipality to write the history of Kuilsriver.⁷⁷ What Visagie described as a wonderful day for Albert Nicholls and his school community was far from the truth. The school and the larger community felt the pain, anger, disappointment, and frustration to relocate from their premises in the Kuilsriver main road to Sarepta Road.⁷⁸ They moved from a school with a brick building to a prefabricated school because they were not white.⁷⁹ The document in the National Archive of South Africa (referenced in footnote 81) states clearly that the Coloured school in the main road was vacated and the coloured learners were relocated to a coloured area on 26 October 1970.⁸⁰

At the time of the relocation of the school some learners were reportedly too young to comprehend the gravity of what was happening and consequently even felt excited about moving to a new school.⁸¹ According to John Bosman, a student at the time of the relocation, he remembers how all the learners were called to an assembly, where the principal Mr Nicholls and a school inspector addressed them and informed them that they are now moving to a new school and that the school's name would be Jan Bosman Laerskool.⁸²

The same teachers with the same learners entered the new school building and were meant to believe that this was a new school. Even Visagie wrote in his book that the school in the main road ceased to exist and that they started a new school.⁸³ It is submitted that the mistake that most people made was to equate a school to only a building. Surely if the teachers, learners, and the principal had moved over to new premises, it should remain the same school as in the case of Bellville High School when it relocated.⁸⁴ The only explanation is that it was politically motivated. It was a deliberated decision to erase any reference to the fact that a coloured school was situated in a white area for decades. That might also be one

77 JHH Visagie, *Die Ontstaan, Stigting en Ontwikkelings geskiedenis van Kuilsrivier* (Municipality Kuilsriver, 1994) 1683–1993, (Voorwoord).

78 George Foster interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 21 March 1998.

79 George Foster interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 21 March 1998.

80 National Archives of South Africa: Sluiting van Kuilsrivier Laerskool en opening van Sarepta Laerskool no.2 (Later genoem Jan Bosman Laerskool). Source Kus, Reference 3/184/6. (Accessed on 17 July 2023).

81 <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/history-luckhoff-high-school-1932-1969>. (Accessed 7 March 2022).

82 Interview with John Bosman: A former learner of the school. 8 February 2021.

83 JHH Visagie, *Die Ontstaan, Stigting en Ontwikkelings geskiedenis van Kuilsrivier* (Municipality Kuilsriver, 1994) 1683–1993.

84 <https://www.hsbellville.co.za> 2012. (Accessed on 29 November 2021).

of the reasons why the building was flattened. It is quite curious that a school building was being separated from the school community.

What happened in the Kuilsriver area is not unique. There are examples of forced removals—especially the destruction, renaming, and erasing of schools’ history during apartheid.

Christie, in discussing the history of schools, confirms that the community of Carnarvon also struggled with schooling under apartheid.⁸⁵ Carnarvon in the Northern Cape has a colourful history with stories of different groups of people (Coloured, whites, blacks, Indians, etc.) competing for land resources, basic rights, dignity, and more. These groups lived in relative harmony, but in the early colonial period fighting broke out once the trek Boers (Dutch settler farmers) started moving northward from the Dutch East Indian Company settlement of the eighteenth century.⁸⁶ Adhikari shows that the farming practices of the trek Boers would seize land, resources, and even livestock. The Khoekhoe society rapidly disintegrated as a result of this disruption. Some resorted to hunter-gathering, others joined in raiding the trekboers stock, and others became trusted servants of farmers.⁸⁷ According to Christie, the people became very poor and were forced to sell their properties to white land owners: “A domino-effect of Xhosa and Bastaard dispossession followed”.⁸⁸ Thus, a parallel could be drawn between events that occurred in Kuilsriver and Carnarvon.

During the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910, discriminatory regulations were the order of the day. The dispossession of land in Carnarvon caused extreme tension between white farmers and coloured residents.⁸⁹ The same issues which occurred in Kuilsriver brought extreme unhappiness in Carnarvon. As in Kuilsriver the Rhenish Mission society established churches and schools in Carnarvon. Christie states that with the start of the Sendingkerk in Carnarvon also, things changed dramatically for the Black/Coloured school. The NG Church granted a loan for a new school to be built, but unfortunately it burned down in the 1960s.⁹⁰ This mission school was relocated across town and renamed Laerskool Carel van Zyl. In 1984 a secondary school was built in the Coloured township of Bonteheuwel. Sadly the primary school burnt down at the end of

85 P Christie, *Decolonising Schools in South Africa, The impossible dream*, 2020.

86 M Adhikari, *God made the White Man, God Made the Black Man... Popular Racial Stereotyping of Coloured People in Apartheid*, *South African Historical Journal*, 2006, 55, pp. 142–164.

87 P Christie, *Decolonising Schools in South Africa, The impossible dream*, 2020, p14.

88 P Christie, *Decolonising Schools in South Africa, The impossible dream*, 2020, p.14.

89 P Christie, *Decolonising Schools in South Africa, The impossible dream*, 2020.

90 P Christie, *Decolonising Schools in South Africa, The impossible dream*, 2020.

1989 again. The fire was never investigated, and rumours circulate about possible causes: an electrical fault, naughty schoolchildren playing or smoking on the site, and even politically motivated arson. Some interviewees for this study were certain that they could identify the errant young men who might have destroyed the school without intending to; several white interviewees blamed the politicisation of youth at the time. Why was the fire not investigated, Christie asked?⁹¹

After various court battles and petitions coloured learners were accommodated in Carnarvon High School to the dismay of the white community. During the post-apartheid era, the schools were opened to all racial groups, but a number of white parents chose to send their kids to other white and private schools in the district.⁹² The divisions in Carnarvon are still visible today as they are in the case of Kuilsriver.

The difference between Carnarvon and Kuilsriver is that the primary school in Carnarvon was relocated to the premises of the Secondary School and the coloured learners attended the Carnarvon High School. In Kuilsriver the school was relocated and the intention was clearly was to erase any reference to the fact that a coloured school existed in a white area. This rationale was perpetuated for many years, and it might be that although the staff did not agree with this reasoning, they could not resist the establishment. It really troubled many in the school community, as well as the community at large. Albert Nicholls, who moved to the new premises as principal when the relocation took place, retired in 1993.⁹³ Andrew Davis took over as principal in 1994.⁹⁴ After Andrew Davis retired, John Alexander took over as principal (1995–2011).⁹⁵

On Sunday 28 April 1996, the school, then named Jan Bosman, had a service in the Dutch Reformed Church in Sarepta where George Foster informed the school that this function cannot be a 25 years celebration function, because the school was in effect 88 years old.⁹⁶ It was the same school which originated in 1908 in Van Riebeeck Road. In reality the school consisted of learners and the teachers. In this case the school only moved to a new building, but it was the same school. A large number of community members as well as staff members was extremely unhappy about the school's name and voiced their opinion to reclaim their previous school name.⁹⁷

91 P Christie, *Decolonising Schools in South Africa, The impossible dream*, 2020.

92 P Christie, *Decolonising Schools in South Africa, The impossible dream*, 2020.

93 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 2 November 2021).

94 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 2 November 2021).

95 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 2 November 2021).

96 G Foster. Speech on 28 April 1996 in the Dutch Reformed Church Sarepta.

97 G Foster interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 21 March 1998.

Reclaiming the name of the school and a new building

Under the leadership of John Alexander and his deputy Leonard Adams the name of the school was reclaimed to Kuilsriver Primary School and the motto changed to “Grow to Greatness”.⁹⁸

Eventually the school reclaimed her name back in 2011. The school took back the original name it had in Kuilsriver main road and called itself Kuilsriver Primary School to the delight of the whole school community. The school in the Main Road was called Kuilsrivier Laer Kleurling Skool, with an apartheid connotation to the name, for that reason the new school was called Kuilsriver Primary School. John Alexander retired in 2011 and Peter Du Plooy, also a former learner, became the principal.⁹⁹ Du Plooy’s uncle, Norman Du Plooy was also a teacher for several years at the school.¹⁰⁰ Peter Du Plooy retired from teaching in 2016 and the first female principal after 85 years, Zondelia Lombard-Swartz, was appointed in 2017.¹⁰¹ In January 2017 Zondelia Lombard-Swartz became the 11th Principal of the school. She was also the fifth female Principal of the school. Zondelia took charge of the school with vibrancy, energy, vision, and tenacity. She took her job very seriously and with her in charge the school excelled even further. The school started in the new building with Mrs Zondelia Lombard-Swartz as principal. After 47 years it was a dream come true for many educators and the community as a whole.

It might be regarded as speculative and that assumptions are being made by certain individuals, however, the belief is that the discriminatory practices of the apartheid government are evident in the fact that white schools would not be housed in prefab buildings. If indeed some of them did, it would not be for 47 years as Kuilsriver Primary had. As second grade citizens, it was probably regarded as good enough for coloured people. Coloureds had no option but to use such facilities. However, for the Kuilsriver Primary, their history was extremely important. While the school used the prefab classes for 47 years, they always strived to do their best. On the academic side they excelled with good results: this is one of the reasons why parents look at Kuilsriver as their first choice when deciding where their children should receive their education.

Kuilsriver Primary did not only excel in the academic field, but they have also done

98 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 2 November 2021).

99 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 2 November 2021).

100 Peter Du Plooy interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 11 March 2019.

101 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 2 November 2021).

the community proud on the sporting field, cultural competitions, singing, and dancing.¹⁰² The political situation in the country did not dampen the spirit of the school community, and the school went from strength to strength. The school not only prepared learners for the schools in Kuilsriver, but for any school learners wished to attend. Over the past 114 years Kuilsriver Primary has produced engineers, architects, doctors, professors, lawyers, educators, sports stars, and more.

With the opening of the new school building and school hall in 2017, Zondelia Lombard-Swartz was the inspiration to name the school hall the JJ Hamman Hall. This was a fitting tribute to the person with the vision to further the education of our learners. It can be assumed that JJ Hamman also knew that education is the most powerful weapon through which you can change society (the words of Nelson Mandela). At the formal opening of the school and hall, Zondelia Lombard-Swartz said that Kuilsriver Primary is a good school but she wants it to grow into a great school.¹⁰³ This sentiment was echoed by the MEC of Education in the Western Cape.¹⁰⁴ The school's history was focused on in the speeches by members of the school's former learners, as well as community members. Heart Radio Station had an outside broadcast from the school premises where the principal, as well as former learners and current students were interviewed.¹⁰⁵ The event was also covered by The Tygerburger newspaper.

Due to severe illness Zondelia Lombard-Swartz passed away in 2019. Stanley Townsend was acting principal for a short period until the current principal Hildegarde McCallum was appointed by the Western Cape Education Department in 2020.¹⁰⁶ It is important to mention that Hildegarde McCallum had been acting principal since the start of 2019.¹⁰⁷ Ms McCallum is someone with a strong personality, as well as a strong work ethic. She is a no-nonsense person but someone who treats others with respect. The learner total for Kuilsriver Primary was 1 340 in 2021. The principal and the staff of Kuilsriver Primary School are widely respected, experienced, and well qualified. For the current year (2023) the school has a learner total of 1 326.

102 Glende Hamman interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 17 February 2022.

103 Zondelia Lombard-Swartz interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 20 February 2017.

104 Debbie Shaver, MEC of Education in her speech at the opening of the new School building 20 February 2017.

105 See report on Heart Radio station at: https://web.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=1995817097117531 (Accessed on 28 June 2023).

106 <https://www.kuilsriverprimary.co.za/about>. (Accessed on 9 January 2022)

107 Hildegarde McCallum interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 3 June 2019.

Other schools in the Kuilsriver area

Although the focus of this article is primarily on the Kuilsriver Primary School, it is also important to refer to other schools in the greater Kuilsriver area. Prior to 1994 schools in the area existed or operated along racial lines. Only after 1994 schools were opened to all racial groups. Interestingly, the coloureds now attend the previous Model C schools, but white learners do not attend schools in the previously coloured areas.

In Kuilsriver the local government was very successful with the implementation of apartheid and was to a certain extent successful with regard to the division of racial groups. Up until today the demographics of a town like Kuilsriver have not changed much. The majority of coloureds remain in the so-called coloured areas. The difference is that a group of coloured people who could afford to buy and relocate to the former white areas. Learners of Kuilsriver Primary still come from the neighbourhood, but some coloureds who live in the former white area also attend the coloured schools due to financial issues. For those parents who cannot afford the former white schools, their learners cannot attend the schools. It is just surprising that it is still evident that some writers researching the history of Kuilsriver and its schools write from a white perspective as if coloured schools do not exist or are inferior to the white schools.¹⁰⁸ It will be difficult to erase the inequality of the past regarding the development in Kuilsriver. Even today the service delivery in the former white areas is much better than in the so-called coloured and black areas. The difference in facilities of the different schools is remarkably disconcerting.

Sarepta Primary School

Sarepta Primary School, the oldest school in the area, also does not get the credit it deserves.¹⁰⁹ This school started in 1843 and needs to be commended for its hard work during all these years.¹¹⁰ The name of the school has a very interesting meaning. The word *Sarepta* is the Aramaic form of the Hebrew word *Sarfat* or *Tsorfat*. The word Sarfat (Sarepta) means to melt, refine or test; it means melting pot or place or testing site. Zarephath is a biblical city and was a place where God sent the prophet Elijah. At Zarephath God instructed a widow to take care of the prophet¹¹¹ (1Kings 17: 8–16). The narrative states that this

108 AL Vermaak, “Die Geskiedenis van Kuilsriver 1652-1905” (Mphil, US, 1993), pp. 143–179.

109 The current principal of the school is Jerome R. Solomons.

110 NGSK Feesbundel 1843-1993, Kerkraad van Sarepta Komitee, p. 13.

111 Holy Bible: Good News Edition, (Cape Town, National Book Printers, 1983).

woman had very little food, and should she run out of food, she and her child would die of starvation. However, she provided the prophet Elijah with food and God blessed her generously. Her food did not diminish, and when her son became ill and died, Elijah prayed to God and God healed her son.

The parallel between this biblical city and Sarepta is astonishing to say the least. The history of the place Sarepta in the Kuilsriver area is closely linked to the life of a widow named Jana Van Den Berg. Her cottage was situated on the site where the Uniting Reformed Church of Sarepta is located today (currently in Mission Road). According to the history of the church, the parallel between Zarephath and Sarepta is the fact that a Dutch missionary, Reverend Daniel Luckhoff, visited the widow Jana Van Den Berg and she availed her house as a place where church services could take place. The fact is that the oldest church in Kuilsriver had its origin in the house of this widow. The community of Kuilsriver saw this as a godly intervention and drew a comparison between Reverend Luckhoff and the prophet Elijah and also the life of Jana Van Den Berg and the widow with whom the prophet stayed in Zarephath ¹¹²(1 Kings 17:8–16.).

It needs to be emphasised that Sarepta is not only the first and oldest school in Kuilsriver, it was also the first multiracial school in Kuilsriver and surrounding areas.¹¹³ As far as could be established, no publication on the history of Sarepta Primary School is available at the time of writing this article. Unfortunately, earlier history was not recorded and one must rely on the oral tradition, through which information (history) was told to the younger generations by word of mouth. According to the information found in the history of the church in Sarepta, the first school building was very small, namely, 50 feet by 15 feet.¹¹⁴ The first school building was erected on the place where the current Jana Van Den Berg Hall is situated.¹¹⁵ From generation to generation it was said that the first school started in a horse stable. The first teacher of the school was Hendrik January who was trained by Rev. Esselen to become a teacher. The motto of this school was and still is “Always Aim High” (Mik Altyd Hoog). Although much effort was spent in trying to locate the history of schools in Kuilsriver, this was without success. Although Visagie and Vermaak refer to Sarepta Primary it was also done from a white centred view. The history of Sarepta Primary was just focused on the school’s total number of learners, while schools for white learners would be discussed in detail from the staff, academic achievements, sporting

112 Holy Bible: Good News Edition, (Cape Town, National Book Printers, 1983).

113 NGSK Feesbundel 1843–2003, Kerkraad van Sarepta, p. 47.

114 NGSK Feesbundel 1843–1993, Kerkraad van Sarepta Komitee.

115 NGSK Feesbundel 1843–1993, Kerkraad van Sarepta Komitee.

facilities, and other events.¹¹⁶

Although the Schools Act of 1905 made no provision to segregate schools in the Cape Colony, from around 1870 strong efforts were made in this direction by the CED who increased funding to establish schools for poor white children were living in mixed-race missionary schools. This illustrates the discrimination that happened even prior to 1905 where more money was allocated to white schools than coloured schools.

There were no other schools from 1843 until 1874 when De Kuilen primary school was established.¹¹⁷ The Kuilsriver municipality clearly distinguished between racial groups long before 1905 and whites were treated differently than coloureds. Unfortunately, when articles are written about schools in Kuilsriver the tendency is to focus on the former white schools. Vermaak refers to Sarepta Primary and gives some information on the school.¹¹⁸ Sadly, she writes about Sarepta but with a white perspective, and gives much more detail about white education and schools in Kuilsriver.¹¹⁹ The learner total for Sarepta Primary is currently (2023) 1 203 learners.¹²⁰

Sarepta High School

The community of Kuilsriver and Sarepta pleaded for a number of years with the government of the time for a high school for learners of the specific area but to no avail. Coloured students had to travel long distances in order to attend high school. Many learners were unable to attend high school, and they had to seek employment without a proper high school education. Only those parents who could afford the travelling expenses could send their children to schools in other areas such as Bellville, Cape Town, and Stellenbosch.

Although the first school for coloureds started in 1843, it is difficult to comprehend that the first high school for coloured learners in Kuilsriver only opened its doors in January 1987.¹²¹ The interesting fact is that De Kuilen High (school for white learners) opened its doors in 1874. Sarepta High School for coloured learners opened its doors almost more than 100 years later under the leadership of AJR Cornelissen.¹²² For years coloured learners

116 ALVermaak, "Die Geskiedenis van Kuilsriver 1652-1905" (Mphil, US, 1993), pp. 143–179.

117 <https://dkps.org.za> (Accessed 10 February 2022).

118 ALVermaak, "Die Geskiedenis van Kuilsriver 1652-1905", (Mphil, US, 1993), pp. 143–179.

119 ALVermaak, "Die Geskiedenis van Kuilsriver 1652-1905", (Mphil, US, 1993), pp. 143–179.

120 <https://wcedonline.westerncape.gov.za> (Accessed on 9 November 2021).

121 Sarepta High School, Prospectus 2021, p. 1.

122 JHH Visagie, *Die Ontstaan, Stigting en Ontwikkelings geskiedenis van Kuilsrivier* (Municipality Kuilsriver, 1994) 1683-1993, p. 100.

had to travel miles outside of the area if they wanted to attend high school. This fact clearly indicates the inequality of education between white and coloured learners. It was also in line with the policy of apartheid that coloureds were considered inferior to whites, and it was felt that they did not need further education. The jobs they would do merited no further education.

De Kuilen Primary

The white population group struggled to open a whites-only school in Kuilsriver. According to the history of De Kuilen Primary, in March 1861 the superintendent general of education Dr Dale was displeased that there was no school in Kuilsriver for white learners.¹²³ It is interesting to note that he referred to the fact that there were no “white schools” in Kuilsriver. Since 1862 there were quite a few attempts to start a school for white learners only, to no avail. It was only in 1874 that a school was opened with Mr Jan van Veersen as principal and in 1881 Charles Villet was appointed as principal.¹²⁴

A new school building was added in 1897 next to the present Shoprite Centre in the main road of Kuilsriver. By 1937 the school committee started negotiations to have the school moved to bigger premises.¹²⁵ The summary of the history of De Kuilen Primary states the following:

In February 1939, the school moved to the location where De Kuilen Primary is currently situated. This new building was mainly for the high school learners, while the primary school learners remained in the old building. On 1 March 1943, the new school building was officially recognised as a school.¹²⁶

In January 1952 the school was granted status as a high school.¹²⁷ This meant that the building housed both the primary and the high school. J Visagie was the principal for both the primary and the high school in Kuilsriver for two-and-a-half years. In August 1961 the building complex of the present De Kuilen High was occupied by high school learners.¹²⁸ The two schools were officially separated in January 1964 and could operate as independent schools.¹²⁹ Since the separation of the two schools both entities excelled in education.

123 <https://dkps.org.za> (Accessed 10 February 2022).

124 <https://dkps.org.za> (Accessed 10 February 2022).

125 <https://dkps.org.za> (Accessed 10 February 2022).

126 <https://dkps.org.za> (Accessed 10 February 2022).

127 <https://dkps.org.za> (Accessed 10 February 2022).

128 <https://www.dekuilen.com> (Accessed 10 February 2022).

129 <https://www.dekuilen.com> (Accessed 10 February 2022)

During the moving of these schools to different buildings there were no discussions or mention from Visagie and others that the school closed and a new school was started. It seems as if there were double standards with regard to the handling of white schools and coloured schools. The focus on the De Kuilen schools might be a human factor if you consider that Dr JHH Visagie was the principal of both the Primary and the De Kuilen High School in 1959.¹³⁰

In a similar scenario, if you take a look at the history of Bellville High School, there is a parallel with the history of the De Kuilen schools. In January 1937 the Bellville High School opened its doors on the corner of Durban and Voortrekker Road in Bellville. Three years later the first phase in the Voortrekker Main Road was completed. The area is now occupied by Protea College in Bellville. In June 1994 Bellville High School relocated to De la Haye Avenue and learners had to carry their desks from Voortrekker Road to De la Haye. Strangely enough no mention is made of the fact that the school ceased to exist as in the case of Kuilsrivier Laer Kleurling Skool in Kuilsriver.¹³¹

It is inexplicable that when a list of the 200 oldest schools in South Africa was published on 9 April 2018, De Kuilen Primary and High School which opened in 1874 were included, but Sarepta Primary which opened in 1843¹³² and Kuilsriver Primary (1908) were omitted.¹³³ This list ends with Glenwood High in Durban which started in 1910. It is imperative to note that according to the prospectus of De Kuilen High, the school only received high school status in January 1952.¹³⁴ There surely must be a reason why the coloured schools in Kuilsriver are not mentioned, only the white schools.

Ignoring the contribution of coloured education

It is evident that the history of coloured schools did not receive the same prominence that was given to previously white schools in South Africa. It is in line with Cross' view that history and education was written from a white-centred view and a white perspective. This could be a deliberate attempt to ignore the contribution that the coloured schools, teachers, and learners made to education. Therefore, only the history of the white schools

130 <https://www.dekuilen.com> (Accessed 10 February 2022).

131 <https://www.hsbellville.co.za> 2012. (Accessed on 29 November 2021)

132 JHH Visagie, *Die Ontstaan, Stigting en Ontwikkelings geskiedenis van Kuilsrivier* (Municipality Kuilsriver, 1994) 1683-1993, p. 106.

133 www.news24.com/parent/Learn/Primary-school/this-list-with-200-of-south-africas-oldest-school-may-surprise-you-20180409 (Accessed on 12 March 2022).

134 <https://www.dekuilen.com> (Accessed 10 February 2022).

was recorded as if coloured schools did not exist. The Kuilsriver municipality requested on at least two occasions that authors such as Visagie and Vermaak write the history of Kuilsriver.

These two histories were written in close succession to each other almost 30 years ago. It is submitted that it speaks to the interest of the municipality at that time. It could be that on the verge of a new political dispensation the idea was to emphasise the contribution of whites to the education in the Kuilsriver area only. According to Visagie, specifically the school in the main road, Kuilsriver Laer Kleurling Skool ceased to exist in 1970.¹³⁵ The history which suited the municipality was focused on. Karlson states that for four decades between 1948 and 1990 the white minority National Party government organised South African society and public institutions, including schools, to accord with their apartheid legislation.¹³⁶

Looking at the bigger picture, the exclusion can only be politically motivated. It is astonishing that most of the residents in Kuilsriver cannot even remember the school in the main road or did not even know that this school was originally in Van Riebeeck Road. A further reason might be the constraints people had with regard to funding to do research. It needs to be remembered that a huge part of the school burned down, especially with regard to the administration department where information with regard to the school was kept. The fire destroyed a large part of the “written” history.¹³⁷ People had to rely on the oral tradition with regard to the history of the school.¹³⁸

It needs to be emphasised that racial segregation in Kuilsriver started long before the apartheid legislation. The introduction of the Group Areas Act was welcomed by the Kuilsriver authorities, because they could implement segregation with regard to schools, declare white areas as they saw fit, remove people “legally” from white allocated areas, and expropriate land and farms without compensation. Although the coloured community in Carnarvon resisted relocation and students were eventually accommodated in the white high school, the whites withheld funds from all the coloured institutions and decided to withdraw their kids from the High School Carnarvon. The reason for this was the fact that they did not want their kids to associate with coloured students.¹³⁹

135 JHH Visagie, *Die Ontstaan, Stigting en Ontwikkelings geskiedenis van Kuilsrivier* (Municipality Kuilsriver, 1994) 1683-1993, p. 108.

136 J Karlson J, Schooling space: Where South Africans learnt to position themselves within the hierarchy of Apartheid society, *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 12(3), 2004, pp. 327–343.

137 George Foster, Speech on 28 April 1996 in the Dutch Reformed Church Sarepta.

138 John Bosman interviewed by author, Kuilsriver, 11 February 2022.

139 P Christie, *Decolonising Schools in South Africa, The impossible dream*, 2020.

The writer of this article attended the school in 1969 and has resided in Kuilsriver for almost 60 years and has witnessed how coloured property was alienated. The disrespectful manner in which coloured school history is treated, should be changed. Surely in the 21st century there should not be a focus on the history and contribution made by white education only. It is therefore imperative that those in possession of and with access to information should make it available and record it. This is applicable not only in the Kuilsriver area, but in many other areas and communities in South Africa, where the history of coloured schools, educators, and communities have been excluded by a white-centred view of recording history. This will ensure that the history of Kuilsriver and its coloured schools are properly documented. It is important to record the proper history of Kuilsriver for the generations to come. We owe this to our children to secure that our descendants know their heritage.

Conclusion

Although the Kuilsriver area is well-respected for its schools, this article highlights the fact that the traditionally white schools are recorded with more emphasis than that of the coloured schools.

If the National Party did not win the elections of 1948¹⁴⁰ and did not adopt apartheid and the Group Areas Act,¹⁴¹ history would have been different. Ironically the National Party won the elections with the help of the Coloured vote.¹⁴² Kuilsriver Primary would have been a proud beacon for all to see when entering Kuilsriver from the side of Stikland. Kuilsriver Primary would still have been in the main road, Van Riebeeck Road in the “white area”. Unfortunately, it was coloured learners—it was a non-white school in a so-called white area.¹⁴³ According to events long before 1950, apartheid was already in the hearts and minds of the minority white population group. In 1950 it was legitimised. South Africa is the only country which adopted apartheid as its race-based legal political system.

This study was undertaken specifically to rectify the perception and to put into context that Kuilsriver Primary School, a school for coloureds, had its origin early in the twentieth

140 C Brand, *Doing life with Mandela*, (Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2014), p. 8.

141 JHH Visagie, *Die Ontstaan, Stigting en Ontwikkelings geskiedenis van Kuilsrivier* (Municipality Kuilsriver, 1994) 1683-1993 p. 105.

142 <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/history-luckhoff-high-school-1932-1969>. (Accessed on 12 March 2022).

143 TRH Davenport, *South Africa: A Modern History* (Southern Book Publishers, 1988), p. 251.

century. This school is much older than some of the white schools in Kuilsriver. This article is an attempt to put into perspective how the history was manipulated to neglect and minimise the contribution of coloureds to education. Their contribution is regarded as being almost negligible compared to that of white people.

Kuilsriver Primary is one of the many coloured schools that were removed from a so-called white area. If this was not enough, the Kuilsriver authority wanted to erase any reference to the existence of Kuilsriver Primary from the history of the town. With this article about our forgotten history, it is hoped that others will be encouraged to also research their school's history. We should learn from the past not to repeat the same mistakes. There is a vast difference in recording the history of a school such as Luckhoff High School and Kuilsriver Primary School. The University of Stellenbosch at least acknowledged their contribution to the relocation of Luckhoff, but the Kuilsriver authorities seem to ignore the injustices of the past.¹⁴⁴ There is also no recognition for the people who attended Kuilsriver Laer Kleurling Skool and later became prominent role players in the South African society.

Education is the most powerful weapon through which you can change society.¹⁴⁵ We need to live together in peace and harmony, but the people who were part of the actions mentioned need to accept their responsibility and should strive not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

It is therefore long overdue to not only acknowledge the injustices of the past but to also address it in an active display of restoration. The proper recording of an almost forgotten history is an attempt to achieve just that.

It will surely still take a number of years to change the schooling system in Cape Town, as well as the broader South Africa. For the author, who has been in education for more than 30 years, it is clear that decolonising schools in South Africa has not been achieved and that it will take a long time to realise that dream.

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/history-luckhoff-high-school-1932-1969>. (Accessed on 12 March 2022).

¹⁴⁵ R Stengel, *Long Walk to Freedom* (Little Brown & Co, 1994).