

Ursuline Education Community



“United in Mission” Peer Review Ursuline High School Wimbledon

April 2023





This magnificent statue of St Angela, specially commissioned by the Head, stands at the front of the school.

In the pleats of her dress are the words of her clarion call:

“Do something, get moving; be confident, risk new things, stick with it. Get on your knees and then be ready for big surprises.”

Foreword

Most reports on schools are written by external agencies, making judgements against empirical evidence standards, primarily (although not exclusively) for internal consumption.

This report is different in its nature. It is not written by an external agency, but rather by people who share the same mission as the school visited and who in visiting, represent other Ursuline schools who are “United in Mission” in their pursuit of the Ursuline Ethos & Values in education.

Moreover, although initially for one school, it is written in the fervent hope that it will be useful for the other Ursuline Schools, so that ideas and practices can be shared

United in Mission

Thursday 20th April 2023

Visiting Team

- Caroline Molina, Headteacher Ursuline Prep School, Wimbledon; Danni Lancefield, Headteacher Ursuline College, Westgate; Fiona Stone Head of Ilford Ursuline Academy; Richard Wilkin Brentwood Ursuline; Fidelma Boyd, Chair UEC

Meetings – staff

- Julia Waters, Headteacher
- Eoin Kelly, Associate Headteacher
- Michelle Alexander, Acting Deputy DSL Safeguarding
- Kerry Connor, AHT Catholic Life and Mission UEN
- Dominic Cunliffe, Chaplain
- Owen Nichols, AHT Curriculum Equity Diversity and Inclusion
- Paul Williams, AHT CPD and induction of staff into our Ursuline Ethos
- Tom Galvina, AHT HAF Programme and students

Meetings: students

- **Year 12** Virtue from the Spring Term 'Attentive' with a focus on Ursuline Links and the Serviam enrichment programme
- **Year 8** Virtue from the Spring Term 'Compassion' with focus on Philanthropy Project
- **Year 7** Virtue from the Autumn Term 'Insieme' and Spring term 'Loving' with focus on becoming Ursuline
- **Chaplaincy team** with a focus on Prayer, Liturgy and Faith in Action

Meetings with staff over lunch

- Ellen Byrne Head of English, Dr Sr Elizabeth RE teacher, Malgosia Lasocka Head of EAL, Jason Ching KS3 Music ECT, Alison Silke Business Manager, Jo Wilde Student Well Being Coordinator, Danielle Boateng Student Care Coordinator, Sylvia Brown Pastoral Support Worker KS4

Outline of the day

- Welcome, followed by prayer & assembly in the Chapel with Year 8 students

Period 1

- Overarching virtue of Serviam & tour of the school

Period 2

- Focus on Virtues

Period 3

- Pastoral Care & Wellbeing
- Chaplaincy

Period 4

- Curriculum Equity Diversity and Inclusion
- CPD and induction of staff into our Ursuline Ethos

Period 5

- HAF, Supporting our most vulnerable students and innovation at UHS

Period 6

- Prayer of thanksgiving
- Discussion: Head, Associate Head and AHT Catholic Ethos & visiting team

KEY STRENGTHS

THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

It is very clear that the Ursuline ethos is firmly embedded in everyone and everywhere, it runs through the school from top to bottom, as integral as a spine.

- The history, ethos and mission of the school is brilliantly captured on the wonderful panoramic wall mural: the Ursuline mission for students to achieve their absolute best spiritually and academically is unmissable.
- The Chapel with the six virtues of Joy, Hope, Humility, Justice, Wisdom, Unity, with Serviam at the centre on the beautiful stained-glass window is the spiritual heart of the school. From the Ursa Minor carved on the student designed lectern, to the Insieme tree on the prayer wall, from the church inspired cupboard doors to the beautiful Serviam badges on the glass entrance, this is a beautiful, sacred space.
- The Ursuline charism echoes in the names of the buildings: the Dorothy Kazel building – named after the Ursuline Sister martyred in El Salvador in 1980 and the Sr Ann building, named after the late Sr Ann Benyon OSU, a former Headteacher, at whose recent funeral Mass the school choir performed.
- There is a strong visual emphasis on the Ursuline values evident across the school: banners, display, images, quotations from St Angela, the Insieme tree sayings cover the walls.

LEADERSHIP

The Head has superbly built upon and further developed the Ursuline ethos and values of the school and the legacy of her service, her headship and her stewardship is indeed a tremendous gift to the future of Wimbledon Ursuline High School and its students.

- The Head's recruitment, training and leadership of her staff is clearly extremely skilful and enables her commitment to the Ursuline ethos to be reflected in each of her colleagues, who add tremendous value to the Ursuline mission by their own contribution. The very high quality of leadership and management in the school was very evident from the leaders the team met.
- The rich liturgical life of the school is driven by the Head, supported by a full time Chaplain and an AHT Catholic Ethos. All liturgies, assemblies, events, themes of the week etc are strategically planned and are at the very core of the life of school.
- Students confidently articulate the importance and the centrality of the faith life of the school as exemplified in the core Ursuline value of Serviam and the three additional Ursuline virtues, one per term, explored by each year group
- The leadership of the school is outward looking, driven by the Head's conviction that outside sources, external challenges, conferences, links with other schools are all essential as these experiences refresh and reinvigorate for the enormous and ever shifting challenges of educational leadership
- The school's work on equality, diversity and inclusion is brave and very admirable: it really matters, there is a real sense of the school being on an important journey

- The school is at the forefront of curriculum innovation, as evidenced by the recent opening of the superbly resourced & equipped T-Level block
- The Head's imaginative use of the parent supported Governors' Fund, has ensured innovation in the deployment of staff in student focused support roles, extending and enriching their educational experiences
- The leadership briefing meetings rota certainly explains and underpins the sense of everyone in the school "touching base" very frequently and the power of consistent and shared information is palpable in the culture of the school.

CHAPLAINCY: HOW DO WE LIVE OUT OUR URSULINE ETHOS?

- "Serviam & the spirit of Ursuline are all pervasive in our school." The faith life of the school is punctuated each week by a theme, "God provides abundantly" was the theme of the visit week. The weekly theme is explored using the Examen model, which helps the exploration be much more faith-based
- Chaplain's responsibilities include the obvious organising of the various masses and other liturgies, but as importantly being able to seize upon organic moments, whether they be spiritual or pastoral, when the needs of the students manifest themselves: the vital importance of the question "How is the spirit moving this group?" is paramount
- This approach is very St Angela, it's organic in its synthesis "less working for but working with"
- "Retreats are important. They are the golden thread leading the students through their seven years at Ursuline"
- 15/20 students in Chaplaincy team are growing as a *faith* community, not only events based but "being in the midst of doing"
- Ursuline global perspective is vitally important, as the recent fund raising for computers for a girls' school in Sierra Leone demonstrates

Year 8 Assembly

- Form delivered; each form (rota organised in pairs of forms) presents and receives one assembly once a year and the presenting form chooses the theme
- As it was the feast of Saint Bernadette on the day beforehand (Wednesday April 19th) the students chose as their theme three pen portraits of child Saints: "Youth is no barrier to Sainthood - many children become Saints"
- Six individual students then presented and explored further the lives of the three saints, and through them their summer term virtue of "faith-filled"

Serviam award

- The highest award the school can bestow is presented at the end of the year; students must constantly update their Serviam passport online, complete a minimum of two Serviam actions per half term and include a summary of these actions and a reflection on what they have gained and what they have given in terms of service

- The data collected on the passports is analysed on a half termly basis; there are Serviam assemblies in all year groups, where certificates are awarded to honour the contribution to the life of the school of both individuals and forms
- The online data is very useful indeed it's very easy to pick up what students are *not* engaged and how they can then be directed, for example, to the chaplaincy team, in order to make sure that they are involved in the life of the school

STUDENT FEEDBACK, YEAR 7 – BECOMING URSULINE

The students were very happy to articulate just how much they love their school and to show how joyful, their virtue of the term, they were in their appreciation

- “I am the only student from small primary but have felt very welcomed since open day!”
- “I’m really excited about being here, I can't wait for the rest of my school days at Ursuline”
- “Serviam means ‘being our best selves’ which I love”
- “I attended a non-Catholic primary school but immediately felt at home here at Ursuline, being introduced to Saint Angela and St Ursula. Marvellously inspiring as there was no gender equality at the time when those Saints were alive but both women were committed to education, were very forward-looking.”
- “The commissioning service was absolutely wonderful, it made you feel part of a real community immediately and you felt very proud that you were going to represent Ursuline”
- “Being given the badge and being told to put your hand on your heart, over the badge and to do so in front of your parents was superb”
- “The PGL residential was absolutely wonderful at making us a real Year 7 community”.
- Year 7 students were very knowledgeable about the student support systems including the PSAs, and the counselling available for students “Year 7 have a HOY and a full time PSA – it really works well” “The staff were very supportive for me when I was doing my dyslexic tests.”
- They feel very safe at school and love for example, that only Year 7 are allowed into the library on Wednesday lunchtimes.
- The right to cap a subject’s homework at either 30 minutes or 45 minutes is something they very much appreciate, as it means the school is looking after them and managing their stress levels

STUDENT FEEDBACK ON THE CURRICULUM

- Students in Years 7 & 8 have two lessons of RE and one lesson of Religious literacy (delivered by English teachers) per week – the students love these lessons, where they are encouraged to express their views

- English texts, poems, poets, and also poetry writing, are all used to explore and deepen their growing faith
- They recognise that EDI is integrated into their curriculum: in Art textiles, for example, Year 7 design tote bags and embroider them with multi-cultural symbols; they talked about Black History Month & the celebration of women of colour; diversity is constantly mentioned in their assemblies and there are frequent discussions about racial inequality.
- They loved the recent diversity evening when various nationalities, Venezuelan, Polish, and Nigerian were celebrated.
- Sixth formers love their compulsory core RE lessons: no books, no writing, no marking - assessment in the form of a Microsoft review at the end of each topic; the aim is the development of critical thinking, growing discernment and nurturing the development of religious maturity
- They feel very supported by step by step guidance the school offers for both GCSE and A level choices; they are given very good advice on career options which interlock.
- Work experience: year 11 do two weeks WE after the summer exams; Year 12 do one week's work experience, except Year 12 Biology students who have a lab week instead
- Early closing on Friday afternoon for all students, except Year 11 they do a weekly GCSE mock
- The students expressed great appreciation of how the school coped with covid: the provision of laptops for all & dongles where required; the liturgical life on the school continued online; there was excellent support from the PSAs, constant support of student well-being; students appreciated the valuable idea of wearing uniform for their at-home lessons, as that very familiar routine was of great help in the maintenance of their mental well-being

STUDENT FEEDBACK ON ENRICHMENT/EXTRA CURRICULAR/CLUBS

The students were very enthusiastic and appreciative of the extensive provision the school has to offer

- Great range of clubs such as sign language, politics, English literature reading group, sports. Art, charcoal drawing, creative writing, Irish and other languages
- Big sister scheme with year 11 and 10 girl volunteers: younger students can talk to them about any problems, any work etc. "These weekly talking groups are great!"
- 6th formers explained ACAS- Afro Caribbean Asian Society: students responsible for a PowerPoint presentation at the weekly meeting on a particular topic so the content is formalised, but the debate is open to all
- Volunteering is very important in the school, from involvement Ursuline links etc. 6th form students have to commit to two sessions of outreach charity work per term, for example the Homeless centre in Wimbledon charity fund raising. "Faith in action"

- Student outreach also involves helping in primary schools and special schools in a variety of activities from reading to teaching younger students how to ride a bike.

Year 8 have a very particular philanthropic project called “First Give”

- Each form chooses a local charity, which is involved with a social justice issue.
- Two-pronged approach: raising awareness and raising funds. Students prepare a presentation explaining how the charity would use the money they have raised, including the additional £1000 top up awarded to the best presentation from the Mayor – the Mayor is part of the judging audience
- Marvellous example of developing a social conscience in the students which has a direct impact on the local area and residents – Royal Marsden, SVP, YSVP etc.

PASTORAL CARE PROVISION & IMPACT

The school has very impressive systems and structures in place in this vital area

- The strategic team works in a tiered structure: PSA /EWP (Education Wellbeing Practitioners) / Merton mental health clinic triage system: SEM (social, emotional, health) psychologists /Willow Room
- The approach adopted is very much “team around the child and team around the family” and “trauma informed need rather than sanction and punishment”
- Core belief: imperative always that the duality of the care of the child and the observation of the Equality Act guides any action taken
- The school currently has identified 200 “key vulnerables”, out of an overall roll of 1250; there are 13 students currently identified as Tier 3 CAMHS
- PSA- one in Year 7, one in Year8 one shared between Years 9 & 10 , one in Year 11;
- Strong link between the safeguarding team and SEND
- Attendance concerns- Safe School Officer or PSA goes out to get the students in
- There is no facility in the school for the isolating of students

T&L, CURRICULUM & EDI (EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION)

One of the main priorities in the school is to ensure that the disparity between what is taught in the school/public examination curriculum and the reality of the student’s life experience is constantly challenged.

The school’s T&L 4 Cs pedagogy has become the 5 Cs

- Context
- Challenge
- Checking
- Consolidation
- ***Cultures of Encounter***

- The school’s approach summarised as: changing resources, changing mindsets

- Vital to know the students and to integrate this knowledge into teaching; surveys are conducted twice a year to garner students' responses and perspectives and the data shows that solid progress has been made to date.
- "Integrity Coaching" with Viv Grant & the Up Learn Training Programme have been seismic in the school's shift of approach
- Working with "The Black Curriculum" has also been fundamental in the examination and analysis of the school's teaching resources & approaches
- The work of Professor Paul Miller, Professor of Educational Leadership & Social Justice – has also made an essential contribution of the development of the School Improvement Plan

CPD & INDUCTION TO URSULINE ETHOS

A very comprehensive & in-depth induction into Ursuline ethos & Catholic Social Teaching

- A full half term is devoted to the process of inducting new member of staff to all important aspects of Ursuline ethos & Catholic Social Teaching. The aspects are introduced and then re-visited; a survey is completed at the end of the induction period
- There are two distinct induction routes for support staff & teaching staff
- Mini retreat for all new staff takes place on a Friday afternoon during first half term
- Serviam & sustainability: every two years, all staff revisit their questionnaire and review their responses
- Catholic social teaching is mapped across the curriculum
- Vital importance of retrieval practice, raising the challenge, deepening the learning
- Anyone employed for a September start is paid £250 to complete the National College online training before they start; they also have access to the online staff handbook which is very comprehensive, both operational and practical etc
- Member of staff starting mid-year has a tailored induction programme. One for a new member of staff who started at the school on 17th April 2023 was shared.

HAF & INNOVATION

HAF, the government's "Holiday Activities and Food Programme" provides support to children in receipt of FSM/PP in the holidays, via the local authority.

- The school runs the programme and displays a passionate commitment to the importance of the project for the students involved and their families, another powerful example of the Ursuline ethos in action.
- Parent(s)/carer(s) of pupil premium students, in most cases for reasons not within their control, are often the hardest to reach, but the school's attitude is determined and missionary in approach. These families need to be reached and the stigma of FSM/PP needs to be challenged, and the school's approach is admirably direct: "You deserve this, it is your entitlement."

- The programme normally consists of three days of activity, the first two days being school-based where staff help students prepare / cook their own meals, the final day is a trip to London which includes a visit to an art gallery, a tourist attraction, a theatrical production; students must attend all three days, they cannot just “rock up” for the trip day.
- The power of social, beyond-my-local-area, cultural capital can never be underestimated, as was powerfully demonstrated by the testimonies of students who had been involved in the most recent activities during the Easter holidays.
- They had been to see “Sylvia” at the Old Vic – which is indicative of the fact that the school often chooses shows of cultural importance; they also visited Tate Britain where they saw “things that happened in the past that were once literally hidden from view were now in art galleries, so racism can be analysed and discussed” – which is very reflective of the school’s emphasis on the importance of EDI.

LUNCH

- What a treat! Year 10 students cooked and served a delicious lime curry followed by delicious profiteroles with a chocolate sauce.
- The visiting team dined with some members of staff who are leaving the school at the end of the academic year, and some PSAs, Student Wellbeing Co-ordinator, Student Care Co-ordinator, Finance Manager etc.

ONGOING CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY THE SCHOOL:

- Constant refining and development of the EDI policy & practices
- Being open and outward looking, to new ideas, new practices
- Further embed the virtues and evaluate their impact
- Design and implement a specific Ursuline Leadership programme based on Angela’s counsels for Ks3, Years7/8
- Consider a pilgrimage to Desenzano to trace the life of St Angela as part of UHS fest week.

With grateful thanks to all the staff & students of the wonderful Ursuline High School, Wimbledon

United in Mission Visiting Team,
April 2023