



# **DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT**

incorporating Section 48 and Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on  
behalf of the Archbishop of Southwark

**URN 102683**

**Ursuline High School**

**Crescent Road**

**Wimbledon**

**London SW20 8HA**

**Inspection date: 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

**Chair of Governors: Clive Weeks**

**Headteacher: Julia Waters**

**Inspectors: Tom Cahill**

**Eileen Watson**

## **EDUCATION COMMISSION**

St Edward's House, St Paul's Wood Hill, Orpington, Kent BR5 2SR  
Tel 01689 829331

**Interim Director of Education: Mr Stephen Bryan**



## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

## FULL REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ursuline High School is a heavily oversubscribed voluntary aided comprehensive school for girls. The school is situated in the Merton Deanery in the Archdiocese of Southwark. It is maintained by Merton Local Authority. The principal parishes which it serves are Sacred Heart, Wimbledon; St John Fisher, Merton; St Winefride's, South Wimbledon; St Agatha's, Kingston and St Boniface, Tooting. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 95%. The overall average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education at KS3&4 is at least 10%. In the Sixth Form, the school works collaboratively with Wimbledon College, the local Catholic boys' school, to provide a wide range of post-16 examination courses.

The school takes pupils from 11 to 18 years. The number of pupils currently on roll is 1358, including 319 in the Sixth Form. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportions of the pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) are below the national average. The majority of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds the proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is above average. Amongst many awards, the Ursuline holds a Gifted and Talented Lead School status, a Healthy Schools Gold Standard, an International School Award and a Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) Cultural Diversity Gold Standard as well as being a 'Leading Edge' school. The school has recently celebrated 125 years of providing outstanding Catholic education to girls in South West London.

The school takes very seriously its commitment to the 'Common Good' and has supported a range of both primary and secondary schools that have faced serious difficulties especially in the area of attainment of their pupils. This has often been through the model of executive headship with the Headteacher of the Ursuline taking on this role whilst still ensuring excellence at the Ursuline.



## **SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS**

Ursuline High School is an outstanding Catholic school because:

- Teaching in Religious Education is outstanding. The highly positive attitudes of the students to learning has led to outstanding outcomes in this subject.
- Catholic life is outstanding and the spirit of 'Serviam' is at the heart of school life.
- Exceptional pastoral care and support provided by staff allows all students to thrive in a highly inclusive and welcoming community.
- The Headteacher provides inspirational Catholic leadership resulting in a culture of high expectations and continuous school improvement in all areas of school life.

## **WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER**

- Ensure students have the opportunity to visit places of worship for other faiths, as this would deepen their understanding.
- Review the provision of retreat experiences including the opportunity for students to attend residential retreats and days at pilgrimage sites.



## Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

1

### **Catholic Life**

1

The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school.

1

The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

1

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school.

1

### **Religious Education**

1

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.

1

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Religious Education.

1

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

1

### **Collective Worship**

1

How well pupils respond to and participate in the schools' Collective Worship.

1

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

1

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

1



## CATHOLIC LIFE

**The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the school is outstanding.**

- Students benefit hugely from the exceptional levels of care and support provided by the staff. As a result, students thrive in this highly inclusive and welcoming faith community.
- The spirit of 'Serviam' or 'I will serve' permeates every aspect of school life and students readily rise to the challenge and opportunities provided by the school to serve others less fortunate than themselves. Students log all their involvement in 'Serviam' based activities on their 'Serviam' passport. As one parent said "It really fosters a sense of caring for their community and others who are less fortunate whilst encouraging the girls to live their faith".
- The school has a very strong focus on developing women as leaders who will help transform the Church as well as society in general. As part of the school's recent 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a conference was organised by the school in Central London attracting over 400 female students from a number of schools in the South East including other Ursuline schools. The Ursuline High community also supports a school for female students in Sudan through 'The Womens' Education Partnership'. The Headteacher recently visited Sudan to see the school and present them with the funding and resources collected by the Ursuline community.
- Students are able to join a St. Vincent De Paul group, which was introduced by the new chaplain. This group has already established a strong connection between the school and two local homes for the elderly. Students visit the residents on a regular basis to socialise and chat with them.
- Retreat opportunities are provided to all Year groups mainly based in the school or in the local parish centre. Retreat experiences could be further enhanced by the use of voluntary residential retreats and visits to places of pilgrimage such as Aylesford Priory.
- The school's student leadership programme offers a very wide range of activities, which help develop leadership skills of the students, encourages them to take responsibility and makes them resilient learners. The Sports Leaders programme which trains and supports the students to teach sporting skills to pupils in local primary schools is an excellent example of how leadership is being developed.
- Pupil voice plays an important role in the life of the school and students value the fact that the school responds enthusiastically to issues raised by the School Council.
- Students are outstanding ambassadors for their school. They very much appreciate the high-quality education provided by the school, which enables them to become confident and articulate young women with high aspirations for their futures.



- Students decide which charities they wish to support each year and raise significant sums of money to help these charities deliver help to those in need. In the last academic year over £18,000 was raised by the school for many charities such as CAFOD, Save the Children, Merton's Faith in Action homeless project and the Trinity Hospice.
- The school places a strong emphasis on equality for all including LBGQTQI issues ensuring all students are fully supported and this provision is further enhanced by the impressive range of enrichment opportunities provided by the school.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and this was reflected in the very high number of inspection questionnaires returned to the school. As one parent wrote "The school has a very strong Catholic ethos which nurtures the education and self-worth of each individual. Once an Ursuline girl, always an Ursuline girl." Another wrote "Ursuline is a fantastic school that nurtures education and above all cares for the wellbeing of its students."
- Students of other faiths are welcomed in this highly inclusive community. As another parent wrote "We are a Muslim family but the values taught by the school through the Catholic faith provides the roots for all faiths and establish the basis of all religions. The grounding the school provides helps supplement the Muslim faith of my daughter."
- Transition arrangements for students joining the school in Year 7 are impressive and ensure students are carefully inducted into the distinctive Catholic ethos.

### **The quality of provision of the Catholic life of the school is outstanding**

- Ursuline High School is a distinctly Catholic school founded on the charism of the Ursulines as well as the vision of St Angela Merici. Prayer and service is at the heart of school life.
- The school has a beautiful chapel which has recently been renovated and it makes a significant contribution to developing the spirituality of the students. The school has many beautiful religious icons and artefacts, which contribute to the strong Catholic ethos that permeates every part of the school.
- Although only in post since September 2017, the chaplain provides outstanding support to students and staff and she is having a significant impact on the provision for Catholic life at the school.
- Last year's Sion Mission was a great success and students were keen to share their experiences of the week with inspectors.
- Students spoke to inspectors enthusiastically of the philanthropy project developed by the school for students in Year 8. Students are encouraged to think independently but also work as part of a team to develop ways of supporting others in need and putting their ideas into practice.



- The school has built strong links with local priests who give generously of their time to ensure students are able to participate in Masses, the Sacrament of Reconciliation and other liturgical services both in school and the local parish church.

**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the school is outstanding.**

- The Headteacher provides inspirational Catholic leadership resulting in a culture of high expectations and continuous school improvement in all aspects of life at the school. She is ably supported by all teachers and support staff who are highly effective role models for the students.
- Leaders and governors have an excellent understanding of the purpose of Catholic education. They ensure all staff, including support staff, receive training so all contribute to the Catholic life of the school. A senior leader has a designated responsibility for monitoring the impact of the Catholic ethos on the students.
- Governors provide a very powerful blend of challenge and support to senior leaders to ensure the Catholic life of the school is continuously developed and remains true to the charism of the Ursulines.
- Governors are regular visitors to the school and attend the many celebrations, liturgies and Masses that take place throughout the year.
- Governors have committed significant resources to promoting the Catholic life of the school as seen by the appointment of a full-time chaplain as well as the refurbishment of the school chapel and providing financial support for retreats.
- Leaders and governors have ensured the recommendations made in the previous inspection report have been successfully addressed.
- The school has developed excellent systems for obtaining feedback from students and parents regarding all aspects of school life as well as the impact on the students of the many opportunities given to the students. As a result, self evaluation by the school is both rigorous and accurate.



## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

1

### **How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education is outstanding.**

- Students enjoy their Religious Education lessons and their very positive attitudes to learning ensure they make outstanding progress in the subject.
- Teachers go the extra mile in providing support and guidance in preparing students for their public examinations. This approach, together with outstanding teaching has resulted in outstanding outcomes in Religious Education at GCSE and 'A' Level. Results in Religious Education at least match those of other core subjects and are often better.
- Students gain an excellent understanding of their own faith as well as well as other faiths. Students told inspectors they very much enjoyed learning about other world faiths in their Religious Education lessons. This understanding could be further deepened through visits to places of worship of other faiths such as the local synagogue and mosque.
- Students particularly enjoy lessons where there is group discussions and debates as well as paired work and where students can learn from one another.

### **The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education is outstanding.**

- Overall, teaching in Religious Education lessons is outstanding. Lessons are well planned and resourced leading to high levels of students engaged
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use a wide range of teaching styles to engage and motivate the students. They are developing effective questioning strategies to challenge and stretch the students to think more deeply about the topics covered. Teachers ensure tasks set are differentiated to ensure all students are challenged and can make appropriate progress.
- Student progress is monitored carefully and the tracking and use of assessments to promote progress is a real strength of the school. Assessment is used effectively to inform teaching and enables extra support to be provided to students who might struggle.
- The specialist classrooms used for teaching Religious Education are well equipped and displays are of a high quality. Each classroom has recently been provided with a 'Prayer Table' with a range of religious artefacts for the students to focus on during prayers, which are said each lesson.



**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education is outstanding.**

- Leaders and governors have ensured that overall, 10% curriculum time is allocated to the teaching of Religious Education at KS3 and KS4. This was a recommendation from the previous inspection report, which has been addressed by changes to the timetable and careful mapping of the curriculum offer relating to Religious Education. The content of all courses offered by the department are in line with the requirements of the curriculum directory.
- KS3 is now 2 years in length and provides a very good foundation for the new 3 year GCSE courses which now start in Year 9. The school has opted for the AQA – Syllabus B course which includes the study of Judaism.
- A comprehensive programme covering general Religious Education is provided to all students in the Sixth Form through a series of well-planned ‘Faith Development Days’ often involving high profile speakers. ‘A’Level Religious Education is a very popular and success option and a significant number of students go on to study the subject at university.
- The subject leader for Religious Education was appointed in September 2016. He provides clear and effective leadership to his team of teachers where he is developing a more collegiate approach allowing the sharing of good practice as well as resources. He has managed very well the changes in the curriculum especially at GCSE and tracking data suggests results at GCSE will continue to be some of the best in the school. He has also developed links with other schools to ensure the accurate moderation of assessments as well as the sharing of good practice.
- Leaders and governors have ensured that Religious Education is very well resourced and the school has been successful in recruiting specialist Religious Education teachers despite the growing national shortage as well as providing teachers through its in-house teacher training programme.
- Governors have appointed an experienced Religious Education link governor who also chairs the Ethos subcommittee. As a result, governors have an excellent overview of the strengths of the Religious Education department and the few areas, which require further improvement.
- Leaders and governors are not afraid to gain external validation of the work of the school and welcome advice and support from Diocesan Advisers and other professional advisers.



## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

**How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's collective worship and prayer life is outstanding.**

- Students respond very positively to the many opportunities for collective worship and prayer provided to on a daily basis. Daily collective worship takes place in form groups each morning using excellent resources provided by the Chaplain. Students are actively encouraged to lead prayers as well as writing their own prayers.
- Assemblies are very well planned and follow the weekly themes planned by the chaplain. Assemblies are often related to the key values promoted by the school of respect, tolerance and service to others. The use of whiteboards by all students during assemblies is a notable feature of the school and ensures students are engaged and able to give feedback to those leading assemblies.
- Students who are members of the chaplaincy team take a leading role in designing liturgies to engage all students and giving feedback to staff. A number of students in the Sixth Form have been commissioned as Eucharistic Ministers.

**The quality of provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.**

- Although only appointed in September 2017, the Chaplain provides outstanding support to both students and staff to ensure that provision for collective worship and prayer is outstanding and further improved where possible.
- Form tutors are provided with high quality resources to use during collective worship.
- Music, as well as art and drama makes a very significant contribution to the quality of provision for prayer and collective worship. The school has a number of choirs covering all year groups, which lead the singing of hymns at Masses and other liturgical services. The choirs involve over 200 students from the school.

**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship and prayer life is outstanding.**

- Leaders meet with the Chaplain on a regular basis to plan high quality Collective Worship, which meets the needs to all students.
- Governors are regular visitors to the school and attend assemblies and other liturgical celebrations and Masses.



- The Chaplain provides a written report to the governors' Ethos Committee and key issues are reported back to the full governing body.
- The school has excellent systems to provide feedback from students on both the quality and impact of assemblies and other forms of liturgy.
- A regular Chaplaincy new letter is sent to all parents keeping them informed of past events as well as up and coming events to which parents are often invited if possible.