



# **DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION REPORT**

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

**URN 102686**

**The Ursuline Preparatory School**

**18 The Downs**

**Wimbledon**

**London**

**SW20 8HR**

**Inspection date: 28 June 2019**

**Chair of Governors: Mr F Bacon**

**Headteacher: Mr Chris McGrath**

**Inspectors: Mr Stephen Beck  
Mrs Penny Rickard**

## **EDUCATION COMMISSION**

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

**Director of Education: Dr Simon Hughes**



## Key for inspection grades

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

## FULL REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Ursuline Preparatory School is an independent Catholic day school for girls. The school has a long history having been founded in Wimbledon in 1892, moving to its current site in 1944. Initially a coeducational school it became a school for girls aged 4 to 11 years with a coeducational nursery in 2002.

The school is situated in the Merton Deanery of the Archdiocese of Southwark. The principal parish which the school serves is the Sacred Heart, Wimbledon, although pupils also come from a number of other parishes. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is approximately 68%. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 10%.

The school takes pupils from Nursery to Year 6. The number of pupils currently on roll is 141. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is generally above average. The school has a large percentage of pupils from international families, although the proportion of pupils from homes where English is spoken as an additional language is below average. There is one pupil with an EHC plan reflecting a low level of pupils with special educational needs.

### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FOR PARENTS AND PUPILS

The Ursuline Preparatory is a good Catholic school because:

- The school recognises the uniqueness of each individual pupil, striving to promote their self-esteem and self-confidence. It is committed to enabling all pupils to reach their full potential socially, personally, academically and spiritually.
- Pupils flourish in a community that lives and celebrates its Catholic faith and witness, as a result of the quality and dedication of the school's Catholic leadership. Leaders and managers are clearly committed to the mission of the Church. They are conscientious in their delivery, providing a strong sense of spiritual purpose, with a focus on improving standards and the fullest personal development of all pupils.
- Religious Education is led effectively by an enthusiastic, knowledgeable and hardworking subject leader, well supported by the headmaster and senior staff, who are all focussed on maintaining the school's strong Catholic ethos.



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

- Establish robust assessment procedures following the full introduction of the adopted 'Come and See' Religious Education scheme of work. As part of these procedures develop, leaders should put in place some cross-school moderation through the deanery to validate teachers' judgements.
- Use the established excellent behaviour for learning strategy across the school to exploit opportunities to broaden the range of activities undertaken by pupils. This should provide greater scope for pupils to initiate engagement in their learning and responses.
- In consultation with the trustees, governors, staff and parents, undertake a review of the school's policy for Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) with reference to diocesan guidance, and with a view to securing a whole school, cross curricular approach.

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## Overall Effectiveness

How effective the school is in providing Catholic Education.

2

### 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

2

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

2

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

2

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

2

### Collective Worship

2

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

1

The quality of provision for Collective Worship.

2

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

2

## CATHOLIC LIFE

1

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

- The Ursuline Preparatory is a good school with some elements that are outstanding, particularly in relation to its Catholic life. As a parent wrote, *'The Catholic ethos of this school is what makes it such a special place'*. The school recognises the uniqueness of each individual pupil striving to promote their self-esteem and self-confidence. It is committed to enabling all pupils to reach their full potential socially, personally, academically and spiritually. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in each key stage. Teaching is never less than good over time. The pastoral care and support the school provides for its pupils is outstanding.
- Positive relationships exist between all members of the school community and have been established by a close working partnership between home, parish and the local community. Staff, governors and pupils work hard to create a warm and welcoming environment. The school has successfully sustained and built on its high levels of academic achievement, which was recognised in the school's recent excellent Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) inspection.
- Pupils are very clear on the Catholic ethos of the school and, as they move up through the school, they increase their understanding of it. They appreciate, value and actively participate in the Catholic Life and mission of the school through daily interaction with their peers and the adults in the school, both in and out of lessons and through Collective Worship, School Masses and Assemblies.
- Pupils show a deep respect for themselves and others as made in the image and likeness of God. They treat each other in the manner in which they would like to be treated. The behaviour of pupils is exemplary. According to their years they show an ability to listen, to give thanks, to forgive and be forgiven. They are quick to congratulate others as evidenced in awards administered during achievement assemblies.
- Pupils flourish in a community that lives and celebrates its Catholic faith and witness. This is the result of the quality of Catholic leadership. parents fully supported and praised the staff in the conversations they held with inspectors.
- The school's foundress, St. Angela Merici, taught the importance of changing with the times: She said, 'If times and circumstances require new rules or alterations to be made, then change things, with prudence and good advice'. It is commendable how the older pupils have reflected on this teaching and inculcated it into their personal philosophy. It helps their approach to day to day living. This is a strength of the school.



- The school's Serviam badge bears a cross reminding of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus was committed to serving the dignity and worth of all. Pupils are able to articulate that the wearing of the school badge serves to remind them to strive to follow His example. They do this through giving generous service to others, most especially those who need their help most. As a result, pupils are passionate about the welfare of each other and those in the wider world. This generates great enthusiasm for the charity work they undertake. This has recently included, putting together shoe boxes for 'Operation Christmas Child', Cabrini orphanages, The Lunchbowl Appeal, Trailblazers and the Good Shepherd Appeal and at Christmas, as part of a 'Kindness Challenge Week' food was collected and delivered to the Wimbledon Food Bank.

**The quality of provision of the Catholic Life of the school is outstanding.**

- Since its last Canonical inspection the school has been on a journey of development that has included changes in leadership at headship level and subject leadership. There is a sustained commitment to build on the school's many strengths including its strong Catholic family ethos. A parent remarked on their questionnaire return, *'The headmaster since arriving has done an absolutely exceptional job of making the Ursuline an outstanding Catholic school which it now explicitly demonstrates it is'*.
- It is commendable that in a relatively short space of time this has seen a revitalised focus on the Religious Education curriculum through the strong partnership between the headmaster and subject leader. Collectively they are driving the impetus to provide pupils with the very best Religious Education, commensurate with other core subjects.
- This has seen the introduction of the 'Come and See' Religious Education scheme. A clear development plan for Religious Education has been formulated that identifies the school's strengths and areas for development. As a result a number of initiatives are underway including the embedding of assessment. It is planned to link this to the use of data to plan lessons to fully meet the needs of all pupils.
- Ursuline Preparatory School is an inclusive school that welcomes pupils of all nationalities and faiths. Staff, parents, pupils and governors help to create a welcoming, caring and secure learning environment. Relationships within school are excellent and are based on gospel values and the mission statement of St Angela, foundress of the Ursuline Order, to show concern and consideration towards others. The school strongly reinforces her maxim of 'serviam', which is understood by the pupils and reflected in their care and concern for each other. This aspect of the school is clearly exemplified in its delightful 'Student Profile' summary document that has been compiled to reflect Ursuline schools and their philosophy. In the document pupils are described as not only being members of the Ursuline community in England but also the worldwide network of Ursuline schools and provides a positive context of their place in the wider world and links to role of the Ursuline community.



- The school's mission statement is at the centre of all that the school does and it encapsulates what the school is about. It inspires both adults and pupils to follow the maxim of St Angela in all areas of the school community. All are reminded of St Angela's teachings when reading her quotes which are clearly visible on the walls of the central areas of the school. Through these quotes, all visitors to the school can witness the beliefs of its community.
- Leaders and managers are clearly committed to the mission of the Church. They are conscientious in their delivery, providing a strong sense of spiritual purpose, with a focus on improving standards and the fullest personal development of all pupils. This strong promotion of Catholic values is shared by the whole community who demonstrate great pride in their school.
- Governors discharge their statutory and canonical duties well. They work effectively with the coordinator and headmaster and are committed to upholding the strong caring ethos that exists.

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

- The headmaster has a very clear vision for the Catholic ethos of the school and ensures Religious Education is given a high profile in the school. He has perceptibly and skilfully managed a transition in school leadership and provided great clarity of vision regarding the ethos of the school and its future development. As a parent commented, *"The school gives the children a great sense of community and faith, led by an excellent headteacher"*.
- The subject coordinator who is relatively new in post, has a clear sense of purpose and has identified through good self-evaluation an action plan with key priorities appropriately timetabled. Her enthusiasm and drive reflect the school's strong capacity for ongoing improvement. She is proving to be very proactive in promoting the Catholicity of the school and oversees a strong programme of development for staff and pupils. She assists staff in the management of the scheme of work and regularly imparts information to staff. Systems to monitor and evaluate the Catholic Life of the school are currently being introduced but have not yet had the time to have full impact.
- The Governors commitment to the school is a major element in upholding the Catholic character of the school. They understand and accept their special responsibility to do this. There are two named Governors, who are responsible for monitoring the provision for Religious Education throughout the school, which also involves them viewing lessons.



- The School works very closely in partnership with parents, the school governors, trustees and the parish community to develop the moral faith and spiritual life of the pupils. As a result, girls have an excellent understanding of and commitment to the Catholic faith and its values and develop an empathy with and knowledge of other faiths and value systems. As a parent wrote on their questionnaire, *'We are very impressed with the religious and spiritual ethos of the school. We are confident that the school is instilling an excellent moral compass in our child'*.

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## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

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

- Pupils report that they enjoy Religious Education and this was clearly illustrated during the inspection where pupils were engaged and motivated during the lessons observed.
- Pupils have good subject knowledge in Religious Education as evidenced in the lessons observed. They have a good understanding of Church teaching. Scripture is well used during lessons and often the pupils use Bibles appropriate to their age.
- Religious Education lessons occupy two lessons a week in a twenty three lesson curriculum in the Pre-Prep department and two lessons a week in a twenty four lesson curriculum in the Prep department. After Assembly on Monday mornings, additional time for Religious Education has been created. The school is seeking to improve this to ensure that the Bishop's Conference requirement that 10% of teaching time is given to Religious Education is consistently met across the school.
- Pupils generally enter the school at above average levels expected for their age and this is successfully built on in the early years. As pupils progress through the school they are encouraged and supported to maximise their potential.
- All lessons observed at the time of the inspection were never less than good with a number having outstanding elements. As a result, pupils make good progress. There is consistency across the school in regard to: classroom management, teachers high expectations, good use of ICT and scripture, pupil's presentation of work, religious vocabulary development, use of talk partners, teachers questioning skills and their affirmation of pupils. Significantly less consistency was observed in regard to: utilisation of varying teaching styles, development of cross curricular opportunities, the use of data to plan for pupils' individual needs, differentiation of work or opportunities for older pupils to initiate engagement in their work and to undertake research.

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

- The school introduced a new Religious Education scheme, 'Come and See', in September 2018. The quality of teaching has improved as teachers become more confident with the 'Come and See' Religious Education programme and is becoming more effective in ensuring that pupils are engaged with their learning.
- Teachers are developing good subject knowledge and are taking advantage of professional development opportunities offered by the diocese and in-school training.

- The quality of teaching is supported by a range of teaching strategies deployed in lessons, including individual and collaborative work, and pupils stated how much they enjoyed the latter.
- There is use of stimuli such as images and video clips relating to scripture which prompt meaningful discussions in class. Targeted questions then enable pupils' responses to be extended and elaborated.
- Teachers communicate high expectations in Religious Education to their pupils, most of whom respond positively when engaged in classwork, complete their tasks and explain their work to their peers. They are beginning to involve pupils in evaluating their classwork and this will inform them on how to further improve their work and make better progress, although this is not yet consistent and needs further development.
- Although planning is in place with clear learning intentions, this could further be improved by taking into account pupils' prior achievements and attainment and include more differentiated tasks in order for pupils to make increased progress.
- Work scrutiny and Religious Education assessments have been undertaken but judgements will be strengthened through in-school and cross-school moderation with other partner schools.
- As the 'Come and See' curriculum is further embedded, lesson planning should be further refined to maximise the impact of the excellent teaching assistant provision on pupil progress. The contribution that other adults make in supporting the quality of teaching is valued, but could be deployed even more consistently and effectively to further enhance and optimise learning opportunities.
- Classroom management is of a high order and staff have created excellent behaviour for learning across the whole school. This reflects a strong consistency with regard to high expectations both behaviourally and academically. It would be opportune now to review the pace and approaches to the teaching of Religious Education to provide pupils with opportunities to develop research skills through elements of pupil initiated learning.

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

- The subject co-ordinator was appointed in January 2019 and is working hard to ensure that Religious Education is a core subject and that it is given a high profile in the school. She has almost finished doing an audit of resources in the school and the next step will be to review resources and action plans to create resource boxes for the teaching of other faiths.



- In order to make the learning of other faiths more meaningful there are plans for different year groups to visit different places of worship. For example Year 3 will visit a Mosque, Year 4 will visit a Hindu Temple, Year 5 will visit a Jewish Synagogue and Year 6 will visit a Sikh Temple.
- The Religious Education co-ordinator along with the School Chaplain, give valuable support to teachers and they have an open door policy which means they are always ready and willing to assist the them in the delivery of the curriculum.

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## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

2

**How well pupils respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship and Prayer Life is outstanding.**

- Collective Worship is central to the life of the school and is celebratory. All members of the community feel valued, included and engaged in this aspect of school life.
- Pupils at The Ursuline Preparatory School act with reverence and respect during Acts of Collective Worship and participate in communal prayers appropriately, with reverence, positivity and attentiveness.
- Pupils often pray together, with every class having a prayer focus that reflects the liturgical year and the chaplain has provided prayer cards for all classes. They participate in a range of liturgical worship. When talking about the opportunities to engage in worship, they are keen to share their experiences and indicated that they would like to plan and lead acts of Collective Worship themselves.
- Whole school assemblies may be led by the headmaster, the girls as a class, groups of pupils or by visiting persons. Whole school Masses take place regularly throughout the year, in school or at church, on Saints' Days, at the beginning or end of term and on feast days.
- Girls respond thoughtfully to questions posed and issues raised. They show their engagement, interest and understanding through their responses. Singing, praise and prayer are key aspects of collective worship in the school. The pupils are respectful listeners, thoughtful participants and leaders of worship.
- Parents and parishioners are invited to attend acts of Collective Worship in school and Church and appreciate the opportunity of doing so. They and are made to feel very welcome.
- Pupils are introduced to prayer in a variety of ways including formal prayers and their own prayers within class. They pray in class and as a whole school community, coming together during assemblies and liturgies. Pupils value the contribution that prayer provides in their daily lives and say that they appreciate the opportunity to pray.
- The school has appointed an excellent part time Chaplain. She has developed a broad range of initiatives that have greatly enhanced the ethos and spiritual life of the school, for example, Year 6 pupils taking on the Faith in Action programme. She has laid a firm foundation for her successor, who takes up the post in September. It is to the school's great credit that in this time of financial constraint they have continued this provision.

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

- Pupils engage in a daily act of worship, in an assembly or during form time. Collective Worship creates opportunities for the pupils to reflect on God and to deepen their faith with Him by enabling them to grow spiritually and morally. Each class has their own very reflective and well-presented prayer book where the pupils in the class write their own prayers and can say them at morning class prayer.
- The pupils enjoy going into the prayer garden at lunchtime, to have some quiet time away from the busy schedule of their day and to reflect on God. The pupils receive the 'Wednesday Word' newsletter each week and teachers go over it in class and they are then sent home, so that the parents can be involved with the faith formation of their child. It also helps the pupils to know and understand the Gospel reading for the Sunday Mass.
- During Lent, the Stations of the Cross are positioned around the school fence and children are given the opportunity as individuals and as classes to reflect on them. The month of May saw a lovely reflective May procession, and the adorning by pupils, of Mary's statue in the prayer garden with flowers they had bought into school.
- Although Collective Worship is informally monitored the school recognises that it would benefit from being monitored on a more formal basis as part of the school's schedule of monitoring and evaluation. It is planned to develop this for the next academic year.
- In a Year 1 Act of Collective worship, pupils actively participated in the celebration on the topic of friendship. They were enthusiastic, read with confidence, understanding and intonation and sang beautifully unaccompanied.
- Each day begins with a short class based prayer session that is well used to emphasise a religious theme using scripture prayer and music. On the day of the inspection this focussed on the following days feast day of SS Peter and Paul.

**How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship and Prayer Life is good.**

- The headmaster, leadership team and Religious Education lead teacher continually seek to improve the Collective Worship and prayer life of the school. During the past year, innovations include year group prayer services, led by the chaplain, Mass response sheets, hymn practices, Insieme activities, (based on St Angela's main themes of working together), a prayer garden and new prayer tree and a variety of speakers in assemblies.
- At the current time, the school is working with the Governors to ensure they become more actively involved in monitoring and evaluating the provision for collective worship in the school.



- With over 50% of parental questionnaires being returned, of which the vast majority were 100% positive, it was clear that parental satisfaction levels are very high. Comments on the questionnaires included, *'We are extremely pleased with the Religious Education and pastoral care offered by Ursuline Prep', 'The school successfully instils in the children the key values of kindness and thoughtfulness towards others', 'My daughter is deepening her understanding and appreciation of not just Catholicism but also other faiths. Serving others and acts of kindness are very important. Our daughter has built healthy and happy relationships with her peers and the Ursuline staff. The school is doing a fantastic job'*. These sentiments were further emphasised at a meeting the inspectors had with parents.

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