



## SECTION 48 INSPECTION REPORT

Canonical Inspection under Canon 806 on behalf of the  
Archbishop of Southwark and inspection of  
Denominational Education under Section 48  
Of the Education Act 2005  
URN 102683

Ursuline High School  
Crescent Road  
Wimbledon  
SW20 8HA

Inspection date: 24-25 January 2013

Chair of Governors:  
Headteacher:  
Inspectors:

Mr Clive Weeks  
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# SECTION 48

# Introduction

## Description of the school

Ursuline High School is a 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; SS Peter and Paul, Mitcham; St Winefride's, South Wimbledon and St Boniface, Tooting. The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholics is 89%, whilst 50% of pupils come from the Merton Deanery. The average weekly proportion of curriculum time given to Religious Education is 7 % in Key Stage 3, 11% in Key Stage 4, 2.6% for Sixth Form General Religious Education and 20% for Sixth Form AS and A2 courses related to the subject. 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 1314, including 274 in the Sixth Form. The attainment of pupils on entering the school is slightly above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (18.1%) is below the national average (26.7%). The proportions of the pupils supported at School Action Plus (around 6%) or with a Statement of Special Educational needs (around 10%) are below the national average. The majority of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds (63%), with those from African and Asian heritages making up the largest proportion. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is above average (around 30%). 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.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding	Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 2	Good	Grade 4	Inadequate

# Overall effectiveness as a Catholic school

GRADE

1

Ursuline High School for Girls is a welcoming Catholic school community. The distinctive Catholic nature of the school is evident from the religious icons and artefacts around the site, such as the large image, etched in slate, of the founder of the Ursuline Order, St Angela Merici and in the recently refurbished chapel. Within the Mission Statement, the school highlights itself as '... a Christian community, characterised by a spirit of respect, trust and joy...', promoting '...excellence in every aspect of life, thereby fully developing each individual. The school motto, 'Serviam' -'I will serve' ... is at the heart of school life and encourages students to develop their gifts and talents for the benefit of others.' The Mission Statement is truly lived out in the positive relationships and excellent standards evident in this high-performing school. Leadership of the Catholic life of the school is excellent at all levels. Prayer life and collective worship opportunities for all pupils are outstanding. Pupils show inclusive attitudes in their learning and great respect and care for others within the school and the wider community. Additional support for individuals and small groups, supported by exceptional pastoral care, is highly focused to enable pupils involved to progress to high levels of attainment. Regarding the support given to a Year 7 pupil, one of her parents commented, 'This caring attitude was extended throughout the school, from the Student Services staff to the young ladies in the Sixth Form who mentored her.' Outstanding teaching and opportunities for learning contribute to the pupils' excellent progress and attainment. Teachers manage their classes skilfully and sensitively. The Religious Education curriculum provision is outstanding. Combined with the very high standards in teaching and learning, outcomes for pupils are exceptional despite curriculum time in Key Stage 3 and in Sixth Form General Religious Education falling short of the Bishops' Conference and Diocesan requirements. Leadership and management of Religious Education are also outstanding.

Since the last inspection, all four key issues have been successfully addressed. The establishment of the Governors' Ethos Committee ensures that the Catholic ethos of the school is regularly under review, with the Chaplain and Head of Religious Education as advisory members. The programme of retreats has been extended to all year groups. The quality of assemblies has been monitored by the Link Governor, Senior Leadership Team and the Chaplain. Their observations and recommendations have been fed back to the Ethos Committee, which provides the school with a strategic steer with regard to the Catholic life of the school. Lastly, information and communications technology (ICT) has moved on apace. In particular, electronic whiteboards installed in each of the four Religious Education classrooms and laptops being made available to each pupil enhance teaching and learning and provide pupils with many research opportunities, both in school and at home.

## What steps need to be taken to improve further?

Governors, headteacher and staff should:

- Consider ways in which to meet the curriculum time requirements of 10% at Key Stage 3 and 5% in the Sixth Form as stipulated by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
- Ensure the consistent application of self-assessment across all year groups, especially in the Sixth Form

# The Catholic life of the school

## Leadership and management

GRADE 1

Leadership and management of the Catholic life of the school are outstanding. Leaders at all levels are empowered to develop and flourish in the context of a Catholic ethos which takes account of the gifts and talents of all individuals. This is because of the clear direction and vision of the Headteacher. Staff and parents acknowledge the Headteacher as a creative and divergent thinker, who ensures that strategies and planning embrace the most current educational philosophies for the benefit of the whole school community. Her high expectations are skilfully articulated and realised in the high quality outcomes that are accurately documented in the school's rigorous self-evaluation of its Catholic life and Religious Education provision. The Headteacher's vision is ably supported and implemented by the governors and senior leaders. Since the last inspection, the governing body has established an Ethos Committee to monitor and evaluate the Catholic life of the school and Religious Education. Since its inception six years ago, the Committee has had a significant impact on the growth and quality of the areas under its remit. The Catholic ethos and Religious Education both have a prominent place in the school development plan. The governing body very successfully fulfils its role in upholding the school's Catholic foundation through overseeing its strategic direction and through close monitoring of the Catholic life of the school and the Religious Education provision. Leadership at all levels throughout the school is supported by targeted professional development and succession planning is a high priority for the school. For example, middle leaders have been given opportunities to undertake senior leader projects as part of their professional development. Pupils are given opportunities to develop as leaders under the 'Student Leaders' umbrella as members, for example of the Chaplaincy team. The pastoral system is extremely well led by the acting Deputy Headteacher with responsibility for inclusion, integrating the work of several teams within the school. For example, special emphasis is placed on parents being able to support vulnerable pupils through a rigorous network of mentors and advisors. As a result of the skilful oversight of this area, wide-ranging pupil data show that these pupils' levels of achievement in Religious Education have risen significantly year-on-year over the last three years. The provision for continuing professional development is outstanding and skilfully coordinated by the Assistant Headteacher responsible for staff development, school ethos and student leadership. The Mission Statement and the vision for Ursuline schools are prominently displayed in the classrooms and foyer. Pupils are able to articulate the meaning of the Mission Statement and strive to live out the motto 'Serviam', as witnessed, for example, in the work they do as peer mentors, charity fundraisers and helpers in the local and international communities. The Sixth Form Student Council is one of many forums for the pupil voice. The refurbishing of the gymnasium, as a result of their discussion with senior leaders, following research and surveys amongst the pupil population is one of many examples of the Council's contribution. Parents are kept well informed of the Catholic life of the school and Religious Education through high quality newsletters, through letters to parents and the attractive and highly informative website, which contains sections for all members of the community, including a virtual learning environment. The overwhelming majority of parents are supportive of the school. One parent wrote that Ursuline High was 'an excellent school with dedicated, professional staff who motivate and inspire!'

## Quality of provision for personal and collective worship

GRADE 1

The quality of provision for personal and collective worship is outstanding. Chaplaincy is a great strength of the school. The lay Chaplain is recognised by the school leadership and the school community as an outstanding spiritual leader. Owing to her skilful coordination of school-parish liaison, pupils benefit from a rich programme of Masses, liturgies and sacramental preparation support. This has been highlighted by the Dean and other priests within the Deanery. The

celebration of the Eucharist marking significant feast days, the Sacrament of Reconciliation during the Lenten penitential service for each year group, carol singing by the school choir in the local parish and the Advent service led by the Chaplain are examples of a great number of entitlements for pupils in the school. The Chaplain supports pupils who are preparing to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation and joins them in their parishes on the day they receive this sacrament. She also attends other parish Masses throughout the year. As a result, priests of the Deanery are happy to accept invitations from the Chaplain to visit the school where they are welcomed visitors. Special whole school liturgies for Christmas and Easter, together with retreats for each year group to venues such as Aylesford form part of the extensive opportunities pupils have to develop their faith. The chaplaincy team, comprised of Student Prefects and other pupils from each year group is supported by the Chaplain. They work in teams to prepare and to lead liturgies and assemblies as readers, musicians, dancers and singers and, in the Sixth Form, as Ministers of the Eucharist during school Masses. The school provides a spiritual focus for each week of the academic year. Reflection forms an integral part in acts of collective worship as observed in the assemblies, morning prayer gathering and tutor group by the inspectors. The majority of these acts of worship were outstanding with pupil-led activities and active participation from the year or tutor groups. Where pupil involvement was passive, the act of worship was too teacher-led. However, in all four observed the content was strong, linked to the theme for the week of 'Peace', and pupils were exceptionally well behaved. The newly refurbished chapel is well used throughout the week. For example, during the inspection, three tutor groups took part in Morning Prayer. The charisms of the founder of the Ursuline order, St Angela Merici, are well embedded and lived out in the prayer life of the school community. During the inspection, pupils attested to the impact that prayer and collective worship had in influencing their spiritual growth. As a result of the above, personal and collective worship makes an excellent contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils and cements the positive relationships within the school community.

### Community cohesion

GRADE 1

The promotion and achieving of community cohesion in the school is outstanding. The school motto, 'Serviam', underpins the inclusive nature of the school. Pupils speak highly of the school as welcoming and inclusive. In particular, two Year 12 pupils from other religious backgrounds testified to their views being sought, ever since they joined the school in Year 7, in the context of Religious Education when studying issues relating to Christianity and to other world faiths. The Student Council felt that the friendly atmosphere and being part of the school community meant that racist incidents were extremely rare. Should any such incident occur, they stated that these were dealt with swiftly and successfully by members of staff and, in some cases, trained Year 12 peer mentors. As part of the school's anti-bullying strategy, Student Council pupils affirmed that student leaders organised a week focusing on relationships. They produced materials which supported and informed pupils on dealing with bullying effectively. The school's outreach to the local community includes the Silver Surfers club where senior pupils support local senior citizens to enhance their ICT skills, fundraising for Merton Mencap via the Social Philanthropy Project in Year 8 which continues into Year 9 and also support of the Passage charity for homeless people. It also included the very essence of 'Serviam' by helping a local Catholic primary school out of difficulties, where the Headteacher acted as Executive Head over both schools for two years. National charities supported include Help the Aged and the Alzheimer's Association. The international dimension is realised

through the Ursuline network student exchange where reciprocal visits are arranged between pupils from a range of Ursuline schools abroad, such as France, Hungary, the USA and the school in Wimbledon. Other international outreaches include three Sixth Form students raising funds and travelling to New Orleans to help rebuild and refurbish properties damaged, following the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, and the Lunchbowl Network project where schools in the local authority have supported orphaned and vulnerable pupils in Kibera in Nairobi. As a result of all this outstanding work, pupils recognise the importance of the contribution they make to communities locally, nationally and worldwide.

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# Religious Education

GRADE 1

## Achievement and standards in Religious Education

Attainment in Religious Education significantly exceeds the high standards achieved in English. Pupils starting points are slightly above average when they arrive in Year 7. At Key Stage 3, a significant number (95.7%) of Year 9 pupils obtained attainment level 6 or above in Religious Education whilst 55% gained attainment level 7 or above. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils' attainment for the top eight subjects takes the school into the top 4% in the country. Evidence from RAISEonline data for 2012 indicates that Religious Education is one of the top performing subjects in the school at GCSE and that results in the subject are well above the national average. Moreover, 72% of pupils were awarded A\*/A grades whilst 98% gained grades A\* to C. In 2011, Religious Education was the top performing subject at GCSE level and was second out of twenty-six subjects at A level. Hence attainment of the pupils in Religious Education is outstanding across all key stages. Outstanding attainment was also evident in the proportion of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) gaining A\*/A grades, matching the proportion of the overall cohort. Furthermore, the proportion of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) gaining grades A\* to C in the same year was 89%, which is well above the national level of 79% for all girls. Pupils work in their books is well presented. The standard of religious literacy is high. For example, during a Year 9 lesson a pupil spoke of the transcendent nature of God and was able to explain the meaning. Almost all learners, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make at least good progress and many make excellent progress as reflected in value added measures. Learners are gaining knowledge, skills and understanding at a very good rate across all key stages. Performance is outstanding in all key stages in Religious Education, and there are no unsatisfactory areas. Very few learners underperform. The overwhelming majority of pupils sampled during the inspection said they enjoyed the subject.

## Teaching and learning in Religious Education

GRADE 1

Overall, teaching and learning in Religious Education is outstanding. Clear learning objectives are shared with pupils, who are able to judge how they have been achieved at the end of the lesson. Teachers take account of the wide range of interests and learning styles in the class and differentiate the lessons, so that those of all abilities can take part. Peer evaluation was witnessed in some of the lessons observed and features alongside peer and self-assessment in the school's assessment policy and schemes of work. Teachers challenge pupils to think spiritually, ethically and theologically, and to become aware of the demands of religious commitment in everyday life. For example, in an outstanding Year 11 lesson on 'Short Term and Long Term Aid', interdependent group research, using laptops, led to pupils formulating their own questions during discussion leading to an excellent example of CAFOD anticipating the needs of communities in the Philippines in the wake of a typhoon striking the islands. In an outstanding Year 10 lesson on 'Places of Worship', the teacher employed peer-assessment as a tool to encourage higher order questioning and hence deep learning took place. Work observed in pupils' books covered the requirements of the revised Bishops' Conference Curriculum Directory. Teachers marked books in line with the whole school marking policy and there were numerous examples of high quality formative marking which inform pupils of the steps required to improve. Pupils make good progress within lessons and over time. Written work is mostly of a high standard and pupils take care with it. The pace of lessons is brisk and challenge is evident for all abilities. Pupils know the level at which they are working and know how to move on from this. Pupils' self-assessments were observed in a number of books, although these should be applied more consistently, especially in the Sixth Form. The school's virtual learning environment is used to great effect with materials posted by staff to aid pupils' progress. Parents and carers are kept fully informed of pupil progress, in line with school policy, through parents' evenings and information evenings and the

transparent electronic marking system. A notable innovation by the department is the encouraging of parents and carers to engage with their daughters' learning by signing their books to confirm that they have acted on teachers' feedback using their green pen. This excellent practice is being cascaded to other departments in the school. One parent wrote, 'The RE teaching and debating at GCSE level was excellent. My daughter discussed it at home with lively interest.'

### **The Religious Education curriculum**

**GRADE 1**

The quality of the Religious Education curriculum is excellent. The content of the curriculum meets the requirements of the revised Bishops' Conference Catholic Directory. It is well planned for progression of knowledge, skills and understanding. At Key Stage 3, schemes of work are based on the 'Way, the Truth, and the Life' and 'Icons' Religious Education programmes and supplemented by online materials which enhance the curriculum at this key stage. Outcomes for pupils are exceptional, even though curriculum time in Key Stage 3 at 7% and in Sixth Form General Religious Education at 2.6% falls short of the Bishops' Conference and Diocesan requirements of 10% and 5% respectively. The school's leadership recognises that this is the case and acknowledges that the delivery of some Curriculum Directory Religious Education takes place in other timetabled subjects such as Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship (PSHCE), History, Geography and Art. The inspectors suggest that this issue could be explored further through, for example, a curriculum audit and mapping of Religious Education themes delivered through these subjects. An excellent example of cross-curricular themes between Religious Education and Art was the impressive artwork where pupils produced pebbles and glazed tiles representing aspects of reconciliation. Other world faiths are particularly well supported by visits to different places of worship, such as the local synagogue and a local mosque. Schemes of work are robust and used effectively to heighten pupils' learning experiences. They include very good use of ICT. Members of the department feel confident in preparing lessons, using these as a resource which is extremely fit for purpose. Excellent examples of ICT being used for research and presentation were observed across the school. At Key Stage 4, the school follows the Joint Welsh Education Committee GCSE Catholic and Judaism syllabus. In the Sixth Form, the General Religious Education curriculum comprises five 'Faith Development Days'. At A level, pupils study the OCR Philosophy and Ethics syllabus. Human relationships education (HRE) and sex and relationships education (SRE) are well integrated into the Religious Education curriculum, have strong links with PSHCE and anti-bullying policies and are in line with the teaching of the Catholic Church.

### **Leadership and management of Religious Education**

**GRADE 1**

Leadership and management of Religious Education are outstanding. Senior leaders and the Head of Department monitor planning, assessment and standards in a systematic and effective way. The Head of Department is line managed by the Assistant Headteacher responsible for the curriculum. There is a programme of lesson observations which enables teachers to address any further developments required to continue to raise standards in the quality of teaching and learning. Appropriate professional development is provided for leaders and department members, with the Headteacher and Head of Department attending Diocesan meetings and training. All four members of the department are well qualified and are committed to teaching Religious Education and supporting the Catholic ethos of the school. Standards in Religious Education are monitored through the governors' Ethos Committee. There is a link governor who supports and monitors the development of the Catholic ethos and Religious Education and is a Chair of this committee. She is a regular visitor to the school and attends departmental meetings. She reports to the governing body the progress the department is making and on the Catholic life of the school. The governors are well informed and

support the school in making its provision in Religious Education effective.

Pupil progress is tracked extremely well, using a commercially licensed educational software package. Together with other systems such as Fisher Family Trust and ALPS, high quality analysis of data trends by additional educational needs and demographic background is used to refine planning and address underachievement. For example, through mentoring and additional revision opportunities, the rapidly closing gap between the attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals meant that GCSE results in 2012 were almost in line with those of the overall cohort. In its quest for a continued raising of standards in Religious Education, the school's leadership has identified from its data analysis EAL pupils at Key Stage 3 as a group at risk and has prioritised this group for additional targeted interventions. The improvement plan for Religious Education is fit for purpose. It is very detailed and is a working, interactive document which can be easily accessed and updated by staff and governors via the school's virtual learning environment. It is constantly under review and has a direct effect on raising standards. Accommodation and resources are good. There are four dedicated classrooms, all of which have an interactive white board and storage for textbooks. They also have notice boards with good displays of current pupil work. Every pupil has access to a text book and a Bible. Although not currently at the same levels as the other core subjects, Religious Education is viewed by the school's leadership as a core subject and the department is well resourced as a consequence.

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