



## **DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD**



### **Inspection Report**

**Name of School:** St Angela's Ursuline Convent School

**LEA:** Newham

**Inspection Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> April 2016

**Reporting Inspectors:** Peter Ward  
Derek Kelly

This Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

**Type of School:** Secondary  
**School Category:** Voluntary Aided  
**Age range of pupils:** 11 - 18  
**Gender of pupils:** Female  
**Number on roll:** 1370  
**Appropriate Authority:** The Governing Body  
**Date of previous inspection:** 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2010

**School Address:**  
St George's Road  
Forest Gate  
London  
E7 8HX

**Tel. No.** 020 8472 6022  
**Headteacher:** Mr M. Johnson  
**Chair of Governors:** Mrs G. Hicks

## Information about the school

St Angela's Ursuline School is an 11-18 Catholic Voluntary Aided girls school with mixed sixth form in the London Borough of Newham in the diocese of Brentwood. There are currently 1370 students aged 11-18 on roll. The school is over-subscribed with 528 applicants for 186 places in Year 7 in 2015. 85.3% of students in Years 7-11 are Catholic and 14.4% are from other Christian traditions. In the sixth form 61.5% are Catholic and 8.6% are from other Christian traditions. There are six Catholic feeder primary schools. The school serves the nine parishes in Newham.

Levels of attainment on entry are significantly above the national average. The predominant cultural heritage is Black African. The school deprivation indicator (IDACI) is 0.47, more than double the national figure of 0.22. Currently, 9.7% of pupils are on the Special Needs Register, below the national average of 20%. This includes 0.3% of pupils with a statement or EHC plan, below the national average of 2%. There are 40.4% of pupils for whom English is not the first language. 39.6% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above average.

There are 95.4 full time equivalent teachers of whom 38% are Catholic. Two teachers hold the CCRS and two have other Catholic qualifications in Theology and Catholic Leadership. There are five teachers of Religious Education

## Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding      2: Good      3: Requires Improvement      4: Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

**Grade 1**

St Angela's Ursuline is an outstanding Catholic learning community focused on serving its neighbourhood community. It recognises and celebrates its Ursuline charism and shares its distinct vision based on Ursuline Serviam with succeeding generations of staff and students, through the focused leadership of the dedicated headteacher and senior leadership team, working in concert with the governing body. Students benefit from the many opportunities to celebrate their faith and increasingly appreciate the importance of living their faith and respecting and dialoguing with those of other faiths and beliefs. During their school career, students experience increasing opportunities for prayer and worship and in these and other areas to take on responsibility which they do willingly and responsibly. Religious Education is a particular strength of this high achieving school, reflecting its position as the core of the core in a Catholic school. St Angela's attention to the Church is exemplified by its prompt and on-going response to the recent Apostolic Exhortation on love in the family 'Amoris Laetitia'.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Celebrate its manifest Ursuline Catholic character with the local Church, together exploring ways to further deepen and embed its distinct character.
- Review the sixth form Core Religious Education programme, increasing its content to enable all sixth form students to deepen their own and others beliefs and practices and to appreciate more fully the Catholic and Ursuline character of the school.
- Increase the curriculum time for Religious Education to meet the requirements of the Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Schools and Colleges 2012.

## **Outcomes for Students**

### **Grade 1**

Attainment and progress of students is outstanding, with very little variation between different groups of students due to pro-active monitoring and intervention by teachers. Over 90% of Year 11 students achieved GCSE Religious Studies grades A\*-C (and 43% A\*/A) in 2015, slightly higher than in recent years and maintaining its position as one of the most successful subjects in the school. Its relative performance indicator is consistently above the national average. Performance at KS3 is equally strong with 15% achieving Level 7 in Year 9. An increasing number of students study GCE AS and A Level, all achieving grades A\*-B in 2015. Throughout their school career students display an increasing grasp of religious literacy as a result of thoughtful teaching including clear and precise explanation of religious terms and language. Lesson observation found that students are generally highly motivated, keen to achieve and engage fully in all key stages. A review of books showed that the standards of students' work is never less than good, with all students making progress from their baseline.

The well-judged and very effective induction of all students into the Ursuline understanding of 'Serviam' underpins a strong understanding and commitment to Catholic life and practice. A survey in January 2016 found that 94% of student respondents felt that they were a tangible part of the Catholic ethos of the school. This takes many forms including good relations among and between students and staff and a strong commitment to the underprivileged both locally and globally. For example, there is an annual Christmas collection for the local parish and this year fundraising for the Nepalese earthquake and the migrant refugee camp at Calais; a cheque for over £4000 was presented to Cafod at an assembly during the inspection. Many students recall recently funding the provision of running water and toilets at an Ursuline school in Ethiopia. Some students also give of their own time in such projects as a local food bank and hospital visiting, while many others are altar servers in their parish.

The extensive programme of opportunities for prayer and worship enables students both to participate as well as engage in preparing and leading such events. As members of the school community, students participate in daily collective worship, often student-led, in tutor groups and assemblies; this includes the Ursuline prayer which is also said by students in every lesson. Students are engaged by thoughtful weekly assembly themes developed by the chaplain and liturgy group, presented by students in age-appropriate ways to each assembly and subsequently

reflected upon in tutor time with aid of resources on the school's IT network. During the inspection the main school assembly on the Year of Mercy captured the attention of students with an explanation and display of a Lampedusa Cross and images of Pope Francis visiting refugees in Greece. Meanwhile a Year 10 tutor group that had attended assembly the previous day reflected on the plight of refugees and wrote thoughtful and empathetic 'letters of hope' to sustain migrants and refugees that would be displayed in the chapel which already boasts a 'Door of Mercy' decorated with very many student representations of mercy. Weekly Friday Mass involves every tutor group in turn with liturgy group representatives playing an active part and promoting participation by other students. The liturgy group consisting of two students from every tutor group meets the chaplain weekly to plan forthcoming celebrations. These involve significant student participation, particularly the end of year liturgies which are devised by the group and often including dance, drama, reading and music. Students say that they enjoy and appreciate these liturgies. In addition to the regular monitoring and reviews undertaken by the liturgy group, school leaders and governors use the Companions in Mission programme to independently monitor the Catholic and Ursuline nature of the school and share ideas between Ursuline schools. The overall impact may be judged by the fact that the local parish priest noted the numbers of former students who return to parish Mass when they come down from university and by a Year 13 student who spoke eloquently of how she was able to share her faith: "be tolerant of other beliefs but bold; speak with compassion and love, not forceful but with respect".

## **Leaders, Governors and Managers**

## **Grade 1**

A strong commitment to the Ursuline vision of education is evident among leaders and managers at all levels. The aspirational headteacher has a very clear strategic vision for and excellent understanding of the school, demonstrated by the accurate Denominational self-evaluation with realistic targets. He works collaboratively with the senior leadership team to develop the Catholic life of the school and the academic achievement of all. Pastoral care is a particular strength of the school. The Governing Body undertakes regular training and informs itself of school life through Governor link days as well as receiving regular reports, enabling it to contribute significantly as an effective critical friend of the school. New staff are introduced to the Ursuline Catholic vision of education with two training days in July from the headteacher and head of Religious Education, supplemented by a further presentation in September. In addition there is an annual professional development day addressing Catholic ethos to supporting the on-going understanding of all staff. The PREVENT agenda has a distinct religious dimension, 70 students having enlisted in a bespoke project in connection with Ursuline Links, the Quwwat-ul-Islam Girls' School and community religious leaders.

Both the Religious Education Head of Department and school Chaplain are line managed very effectively by deputy headteachers with whom they meet weekly. Religious Education is very well led and managed: an excellent department handbook, supplemented by a weekly subject bulletin with key actions, liturgical calendar provided by the chaplain and relevant news, informs a well-qualified team of committed Religious Education teachers. Teaching standards are promoted by regular formal lesson observations and frequent informal monitoring and support. The clear development plan draws on a good knowledge of students and staff

informed by accurate tracking and monitoring, together with student evaluations. The department is well resourced and the three dedicated classrooms are well equipped with inter-active whiteboards. Students' work and key learning information is well displayed, making for attractive classrooms with a carefully arranged prayer focus.

Planning and evaluation of chaplaincy activities are a particular strength, ensuring that the extensive range of provision remains engaging to students. Form representatives play an important role in planning and participating, with fellow students, in form, year and whole school liturgical celebrations. The chaplain is a member of the Religious Education department, thus promoting good links between the two, but with a reduced teaching timetable to enable her to fulfil her role, working closely with her line manager to ensure smooth integration of chaplaincy activities into the daily life of the school. For example each unit of Religious Education entails a chapel period, demonstrating that the Religious Education curriculum contributes to and complements a personal faith. There is a useful chaplaincy handbook. The chaplain presents a comprehensive annual report which is discussed by the governing body.

## **Provision**

## **Grade 1**

The quality of teaching is generally good and often outstanding. The best teaching is based on detailed lesson planning with high expectations of students with many opportunities for participation, often with differentiated learning tasks. Embedded routines enable a good pace with a variety of activities supported by good teacher questioning and assessment for learning, often undertaken by fellow students to develop an understanding of assessment criteria. In a Year 12 GCE scripture lesson, the teacher's excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject was matched by the students' determination to apply prior learning in order to answer mock exam questions, conducted in an engaging way so that all students irrespective of ability made progress and grew in confidence. In nearly all lessons behavior is outstanding, teachers modelling respect which was shared by the students: where it fell a little short it reflected some weakness in planning and delivery of the lesson. The marking of books is consistent with regular assessments using the departmental marking grid providing feedback and targets to students.

On entry in Year 7, students are banded using Key Stage 2 data and sit a baseline test using the WJEC Entry Level exam. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is based on Icons and includes consideration of Hinduism, Islam and Judaism but has been redrafted in 2015/16 ahead of the new GCSE Religious Studies specifications to be introduced in September. The precise specification is yet to be selected but will follow the requirement of the bishop to include 50% Catholic Christianity and 25% Judaism. Similarly the new GCE specifications have yet to be selected because no one specification contains all the elements that have proved so attractive to students in recent years. In the sixth form Core Religious Education followed by all students is part of a larger programme including the relationships and sex programme 'Journey in Love', community service days and retreats at Aylesford Priory and Our Lady of Lourdes, Wanstead. The school is actively reviewing this programme, recognising the need to increase the Religious Education content and addressing the needs of a significant number of students joining the school in Year 12 who are not Catholic. Currently sixth form Religious Education is less than the 5% of curriculum time

required by the Religious Education Curriculum Directory in Years 12-13 and is 8% and not 10% as required in Years 7-11.

Assessment uses Levels in Years 7-9, in line with the Curriculum Directory, but adapted to the school's own assessment system. Each unit of work ends with an assessment and each Year ends with an annual assessment; consideration is being given to increasing this from 60 to 90 minutes. GCSE marking is regularly moderated in department meetings. There is a good range of teaching resources, including lesson plans, regularly updated and available to all teachers on the department's IT drive.

Prayer and worship are at the heart of the community life of the school with the school chapel and reservation of the Blessed Sacrament at its core. Students spontaneously spoke of the significance of the chapel, where Mass is celebrated weekly and which students can use daily for private prayer. Prayer punctuates the day, the school prayer being said at the beginning of the day and in every lesson. Collective worship and school liturgies reflects the liturgical year and engage groups of students in their planning and participating. Thoughtful attention is given to including students who are not Catholic in the community life of the school as well as its religious education and worship. An extensive range of opportunities to practice Serviam in the local and wider community as well as within the school is also a particular feature.