

## Catholic Schools Inspectorate inspection report for **The Marist School**

URN: 110152

Carried out on behalf of the Right Rev. Philip Egan, Bishop of Portsmouth on:

Date: 8 - 9 November 2023

### Overall effectiveness

The overall quality of Catholic education provided by the school.....

2

### Catholic life and mission (p.3)

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.....

1

### Religious education (p.5)

The quality of curriculum religious education.....

2

### Collective worship (p.7)

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.....

2

The school is fully compliant with the curriculum requirements laid down by the Bishops' Conference

✓

The school is fully compliant with all requirements of the diocesan bishop

✓

The school has responded to the areas for improvement from the last inspection

N/A

## Summary of key findings

### What the school does well

- Staff, governors, and students contribute to, and benefit from, an unusually powerful and cohesive school ethos, with Christ at the centre of their learning community.
- Students' care for each other, mutual respect and quiet confidence are outstanding. They evidence a high degree of emotional intelligence, together with a fluency of communication.
- Committed, able and passionate leaders and governors, including the inspirational headteacher, are not complacent, but rather are focussed on ensuring continuous improvement to the school's Catholic identity.

- Achievement in religious education is outstanding in the senior school and good, and rapidly improving, in the prep school.
- Student engagement with prayer and liturgy is good and continuing to develop, reflecting a deep understanding of, and reverence for this facet of the school's mission and ethos.

#### What the school needs to improve:

- Leaders need to ensure that religious education, whilst never less than good, is consistent across all year groups. A more strategic monitoring of religious education, particularly in the prep school, needs to be put in place so that any areas for improvement are quickly identified and a clear plan drawn up to rectify them.
- Leaders need to ensure that the school's highly articulate and creative students learn to take a greater role in the design, leadership and evaluation of prayer and liturgy, bringing their own authentic voice to the celebration of faith.

## Catholic life and mission

How faithfully the school responds to the call to live as a Catholic community at the service of the Church's educational mission.

Catholic life and mission key judgement grade:.....

1

### Pupil outcomes

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

1

### Provision

The quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school .....

1

### Leadership

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

1

Students are rightly proud of their remarkable school, its history and all-pervading ethos, which they articulate with passion and persuasion. The school community values, from nursery to sixth form embraces, and actively contributes to the school's Catholic life and mission. This is evidenced by their understanding of what it means to be a Marist student, their recognition of what makes the school distinctive and their contribution to service, in and out of the school. Several students summarised the essence of a Marist girl as confident and articulate, but always rooted in humility. The school community leaves no one behind, wrapping its collective arms around the vulnerable. Recently-arrived students and students from outside the Catholic tradition reported the school as deeply welcoming and respectful of their needs and character. 'The support we receive and the teaching really stand out' said one student. Another, in the prep school said 'teachers are kind and they get to know us. 'Students' behaviour is exemplary, reflected in courtesy and respect to all, and maturity in lessons. Their commitment to service, volunteering and charitable work is impressive, including mini Vinnies and a substantial aid project supporting the building of a school in Ethiopia. They demonstrate an effective understanding of Catholic social teaching and its relevance to them and their school, particularly solidarity and their relationship to their common home. This results in an outward focus, including service in the local parish and the community, as well as a deep concern for their environment reflected in their global awareness.

Students and staff understand and can articulate the mission statement and its impact, with the Chaplain ensuring it is embedded in the life of the school. Students identify an obligation on them to reach out to others, both in school and beyond, as part of being Marist students. This is secured through the formation in faith and ethos which the school delivers through using students and staff as role models and via the chaplaincy. In displays, assemblies and Tutor times, a range of cultures and religious traditions are celebrated, ensuring students of other faiths are able to authentically

grow in their tradition. The quality of interactions between staff and students is exemplary, reflected in the lessons observed as well as corridor conversations. The pastoral team reflects a range of lengths of service, including those recently arrived, yet their shared understanding, pride and collegiate approach again testifies to the powerful ethos at the heart of the school.

Governors are passionate about upholding and strengthening the school's Catholic identity, reflected in their responses to questions, policies and investment in the chaplaincy. They are actively supporting the Bishop's vision and can speak articulately of this, together with their work with the parish. Their support for parents as the first educators is reflected in the Headteacher's weekly communication, invitation of parents to a range of events and communication of the significance of the liturgical calendar on the life of the school. Parents interviewed commented favourably of being kept informed and included. Governors and leaders are aware of their responsibility for the dignity of employees. Staff spoken to reported senior staff as approachable and understanding, one saying 'This is more like a family and we all look out for each other.' The governors are supportive of the headteacher and keep under review her wellbeing, reflected in the experience of the headteacher. Governors also review fees, scholarships and bursaries to provide the best opportunities to support the less well off, as evidenced in a meeting with the school business manager.

## Religious education

The quality of curriculum religious education

Religious education key judgement grade:.....

2

### Pupil outcomes

How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in religious education.....

2

### Provision

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in religious education.....

2

### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for religious education.....

2

In religious education, students respond well to good, and often, outstanding teaching, which they enthusiastically report as being enjoyable and interesting. Students, particularly in the senior school can engage in sophisticated forms of debate, employing technical vocabulary and forming cohesive arguments. Their fluency and confidence are striking, including where they work interdependently. Prep students enjoy their lessons, and feel religious education reminds them of the importance of kindness. A Year 4 pupil said that Catholic social teaching taught her to be selfless, 'not just caring about myself.' A new Year 5 pupil said, 'Studying Jesus teaches us what we should and shouldn't do.' In one Year 7 class a student said 'I like how my teacher explains the more difficult ideas to us'. For another 'I like to learn about other religions. It's what makes up our world, even though we are a Catholic school.' In a Year 8 lesson on Prophecy of Promise, students demonstrated excellent engagement and worked interdependently to develop their understanding. Excellent standards at key stages three to five are evident over time in students' books, their response to questioning and in the outstanding quality of outcomes. In the prep school, excellent teaching and outcomes are frequently apparent but not yet consistent everywhere, such instances therefore require greater strategic monitoring and a clear plan. Also, particularly in the prep school, the school should ensure a range of activities are used that allow pupils to demonstrate individuality and creativity.

The senior school curriculum allows for progression. Lessons provide a range of appropriate activities to cement learning. Expert questioning is frequently in evidence, reflecting both good subject knowledge and a knowledge of the students and their needs. Recall is used effectively, as is space for deeper thought. Assessment is clear and meaningful, with some good feedback and evidence that it leads to improvement. Typicality was evident across the lessons observed. 'Yes. This is like all our lessons', said one student. For another, the cross-referencing to moral issues was her favourite: 'I love debating and this subject helps me to do that.' In the prep school, teachers

demonstrated sound subject knowledge. Many, though not all books evidenced high expectations and excellent progress in many cases. This needs to be embedded across all year groups, ensuring that planning is appropriate to pupils' current assessment.

Excellent leadership in the senior school results in quality outcomes and a very high level of consistency. The senior school religious education leader is systematically working to appropriately implement the *Religious Education Directory* and she has clearly devoted much time and resources to ensure her team can work together to develop an exciting programme for the students. She is well supported by senior staff, with religious education enjoying a high status in the school. She is outward looking, engaging with the Diocese and with best practice. She has a vision for her team, which they support. The curriculum offered across the school is now fully compliant with the Bishop's requirements, and offers appropriate challenge. The head of religious education in the prep school is newly appointed and has a sound vision for religious education as a subject. She is ably supported by the head of PSHE and the chaplain. She is ambitious for her subject and pupils, and the quality of education is good and often outstanding. She is now engaged in ensuring that the good practice becomes outstanding overall, and ensuring strategic monitoring and clear planning are in place to address any areas for improvement in all year groups. The role of the highly experienced link governor is valued by staff, who find it an appropriate blend of challenge and support.

## Collective worship

The quality and range of liturgy and prayer provided by the school.

Collective worship key judgement grade:.....

2

### Pupil outcomes

How well pupils participate in and respond to the school's collective worship .....

2

### Provision

The quality of collective worship provided by the school .....

2

### Leadership

How well leaders and governors promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for collective worship .....

2

Students' responses to, and participation in prayer and liturgy are good, and now need to develop to outstanding by their taking a leading role in the design, implementation, and evaluation of prayer and liturgy in the school. Some students are already engaged in this, and the capacity of this student body to take this forward as a whole is very strong. Music is frequently deployed at the service of liturgy, where it is welcomed by the students who enthusiastically join in. One Year 10 student said, 'I enjoy our assemblies and events where we come together.' Students' behaviour in prayer and liturgy is exceptional in its courtesy, reverence and willingness to interact. Students know certain traditional prayers and some evidence a wider repertoire. They are involved in some liturgical ministries, and the chaplain is seeking this to be developed further. In tutor prayers, students discussed the day's themes and responded maturely, reporting this as typical. While students were asked to read prayers from the pre-prepared slides online, the school chaplain recognises these prayer times offer scope for greater student involvement in the co-creation of prayers, spontaneous prayer and its evaluation. Where this is already happening, it is effective such as in a Year 6 celebration of the word, where pupils created their own prayers to powerful effect. In a well-constructed upper school assembly, further student leadership and co-construction would have taken a good experience to outstanding. In a prep school worship, this was linked to the liturgical year, included moments of reflection and was set in a calm and reverential atmosphere, suggesting typicality. In a Bible journaling session, young pupils were able to access scripture through a creative approach employed by an experienced member of staff.

The school's traditions, begun by the Marist Sisters whose impact is palpable notwithstanding their departure some years ago, are deeply loved and revered by all the community. 'It is what makes us who we are' said one student in the Sixth Form. The facilitation of prayer and worship is typically never less than good, employing a high degree of creativity. Liturgical opportunities exist to welcome families, which parents reported on very favourably. The headteacher informs parents of the liturgical elements of the year in her weekly letters. Scope now exists for the website to better

capture this rich landscape of prayer and faith. The chapel, which is at the heart of the school, is a wonderful resource whose impact the chaplain is keen to maximise further. The liturgical life of the school is greatly enhanced by the dynamic and very visible local clergy who give of their time generously and speak highly of the school. Staff benefit from the excellent chaplain, who brings to the role a vast experience of the school and working with young people, as well as a freshness as she eagerly develops her new role in a way that is already having impact. Provision now must focus on developing student leadership and co-construction of liturgical and prayer resources, including leading their delivery.

The development of prayer and liturgy is led from the inspirational headteacher, together with her chaplain, who ensures a programme of formation for staff, including newly-appointed colleagues. Liturgical events are well thought through and impactful. Mass is celebrated regularly, as are a range of other non-eucharistic liturgies. The sacrament of reconciliation is available at suitable times during the year with students being appropriately prepared. Governors visit the school, attending whole school Masses and visiting key staff to triangulate the information provided to them by senior leadership. Through their prayer and liturgy policy, they help mould the student experience in keeping with the mission of the school and the Marist provenance and they are fully committed to the next stage which is the development of student leadership in prayer.



## Information about the school

Full name of school	The Marist School
School unique reference number (URN)	110152
Full postal address of the school	Kings Road, Sunninghill, Ascot SL5 7PS
School phone number	01344 624291
Name of head teacher or principal	Joanne Smith
Chair of governing board	Dr Martin Stephen
School Website	www.themarist.com
Multi-academy trust or company (if applicable)	The Marist School (Sunninghill) Limited
Type of school	All-through
School category	Independent
Age-range of pupils	2 - 18
Trustees	The Marist School (Sunninghill) Limited
Gender of pupils	Girls
Date of last denominational inspection	n/a
Previous denominational inspection grade	n/a

## The inspection team

Dr Simon Uttley	Lead Inspector
Tara Sharp	Team inspector
Daniel Gibbons	Team Inspector

## Key to grade judgements

Grade	England	Wales
<b>1</b>	Outstanding	Excellent
<b>2</b>	Good	Good
<b>3</b>	Requires improvement	Adequate and requires improvement
<b>4</b>	Inadequate	Unsatisfactory and in need of urgent improvement