

# St Ursula's Convent School

## Our place in the world

St Ursula's Convent School is a voluntary aided, all ability, Catholic school for girls. The school forms part of a worldwide community of Ursuline schools and was founded over 130 years ago. We are very proud of our heritage as we continue to live out St. Angela Merici's vision of empowering young women when she founded her Ursuline company in Italy at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

As an Ursuline school we continue the approach to ministry which draws its life and vision from St Angela's spirit and philosophy. Challenged by the needs of our time, we, like Angela, ground our mission in the following core values:

- Spiritual formation and faith development
- Respect for the uniqueness of the individual
- Development of the whole person
- Development of a nurturing community spirit
- Commitment of peace-making
- Serviam (I will serve) as a lived reality
- Development of leadership skills

## Our Spirituality

Our school motto is "**Serviam**" meaning "**I will serve**". We are a testament to this in that our school community bears witness to God's love whereby each one is encouraged to serve and love one another.

Our school Mission:

- to ensure that every individual achieves their potential through the pursuit of academic excellence and the nurturing of their gifts and talents.
- to create a caring Catholic community allowing everyone to develop and share in the love of Christ serving the world of today and tomorrow through the relationships we make and the service we provide to others.

## Our Faith Journey

St Ursula's has a distinctly Catholic nature where prayer is an integral part of our school day. There is an expectation at St Ursula's for all students and staff to be active in the liturgical and spiritual life of the school. For each person that may have a different meaning as everyone's life-pilgrimage is slightly different, but we believe that our Catholic ethos and strong Christian values allows everyone to develop spiritually, emotionally and physically in this ever-demanding world.

Our strong community spirit creates an environment where everyone feels valued and they are encouraged to use their talents to live out “**Serviam**”.

We have an impressive programme of sacramental and non-sacramental services throughout the year, which reflect both the Church’s liturgical calendar and the school’s academic year. Our links with nearby parishes are strong, especially with our local parish, Our Ladye Star of the Sea in Greenwich. Students attend class Masses in the parish church. The Eucharist is celebrated on Holy Days of Obligation, on Ash Wednesday, at the start of the new academic year and for Year 11 Examinations. In addition, there is a Welcome Mass for Year 7 as well as Masses to celebrate the richness of the cultures in our school and to ask God’s blessing on our staff.

### **Our History**

The Ursuline convent at Greenwich was founded from Duderstadt, Germany in the autumn of 1877. The Ursuline sisters had lived in Duderstadt since 1700 but were expelled from their convent by the German Chancellor Bismarck who wanted the state to control all educational establishments.

After some searching the sisters found a suitable property, 70 Crooms Hill, Greenwich, formerly a boys' orphanage. They took the house on a 50-year lease at £80 a year. The 21 sisters opened their school on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1877 with 25 pupils.

From such modest beginnings the school grew. In time the situation in Germany improved; a number of the sisters were anxious to return home. However, those who did not return to Germany set off to Australia to found Ursuline schools in Sydney.

Around this time the government in France had become very anti-Catholic, so the Ursulines in Gravelines, Northern France were pleased to be offered a refuge in Greenwich where they continued the work of the German sisters.

From this point the school went from strength to strength, purchasing more land for school buildings as the pupil numbers increased. In 1950 the school stopped taking boarders and in 1977 became a three-form comprehensive school. It continues to be a hugely popular school.

Whatever the ability of the learner, rigour in the classroom and high expectations for the achievement of the individual are the norm. These goals are reflected year on year in the outstanding public examination results achieved by our students at St Ursula’s. For well over 130 years, St Ursula’s has been at the forefront of catholic education.