

## National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

### **St Marylebone Church of England Voluntary Aided Secondary School**

64 Marylebone High Street,  
London,  
W1U 5BA

#### **Diocese of London**

Local authority: City of Westminster

Date of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> December 2007

Date of last inspection: December 2001

School's unique reference number: 101152

Headteacher: Mrs Elizabeth Philips

SIAS Inspector: Revd Richard Peers (N.S. 125)

### **School context**

St Marylebone is an oversubscribed girls' school that accepts boys into the sixth form. It serves a community that is subject to significant social deprivation; entitlement to free school meals is about three times the national average. Most students start Year 7 with academic standards that are well above the national average. About half of students speak English as an additional language (EAL); very few of them at the early stages. There are fewer students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) than found nationally. Students come from a wide variety of ethnic and faith backgrounds with a significant number of Muslim students and others of no faith.

### **The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Marylebone School as a Church of England school are outstanding**

St Marylebone is an exceptional school; it is so because of the exceptional Christian leadership of the head teacher. Students are extremely proud of their school and speak happily of 'not being allowed not to do really well'. The Christian faith and values of forgiveness, inclusion and celebration underpin every aspect of the school's life.

### **Established strengths**

- The outstanding Christian leadership of the head teacher
- The commitment of all staff to the culture of praise
- The forgiveness that lies at the heart of the school's life

### **Focus for development**

- To restructure and refocus the chaplaincy to more closely serve the school's aims in achieving excellence in the spiritual development of students

### **The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners**

A culture of excellence pervades the life of the school which has an extraordinary 18 Advanced Skills Teachers and provides co-ordination of this programme for the borough. Students know that through this their teachers are providing support for many other schools; they are proud of the contribution they are making to the wider city.

High levels of support are provided in lessons and the very effective setting of subjects allows small group sizes where it is most needed.

Students know that the culture of the school is one of praise; they know that when they do

something well it is noticed and that they will be rewarded. Staff and students spoke very movingly of the forgiveness that lies at the heart of the school's positive behaviour system. Because of the pursuit and achievement of excellence the most able students fly. They thrive on a rigorous academic culture and in an intellectual climate that is challenging and stimulating. Every opportunity is provided for every pupil to flourish. When behaviour becomes a problem procedures are in place that allow for time for reflection and all procedures are geared to reconciliation, to 'repairing the relationship'. Students recognise that this is 'Christianity in action'. Fundraising for those in need is part of the daily life of the school and students spoke of the very many occasions when they run fundraising stalls and events in school. Students know that this is another way of showing concern for others.

### **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

The school shares a site with the magnificent parish church. Students appreciate the beauty of the church and value the use of it each week for an act of worship. An outstanding act of worship seen was the termly Eucharist which the whole school attended. Students read and led intercessions and the whole school joined in the singing and liturgy. Students were attentive throughout the liturgy and behaved with appropriate reverence. Significant numbers of students received communion. Students recognise the Christian faith of the headteacher as significant in the life of the school and value her presence in distributing communion. There is an exceptionally well planned series of themes for worship and students enjoy the wide variety of worship provided by staff and departments. On days when the whole school does not gather together whole school worship is provided over the school's P.A. system. It always includes music and prayer and often a reading from the bible or another religious text. Students know that this is a time of reflection for them and they explain that it helps them focus on what is important. They are eager and excited to contribute to this and can describe how they work to ensure that the messages delivered are appropriate to students of all ages and to adults. In a superb RE lesson a wide range of art depicting the crucifixion was used to allow students to identify the presence of God 'everywhere' and particularly in the forgiveness that characterises the school. This forgiving love they described as 'passing through teachers through everyone to everyone'. This rightly sums up the school's excellence in enabling young people to engage in the 'spiritual search' and highlighted in the mission statement.

### **The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding**

Standards in RE are extremely high. In 2007 100% of students in Year 10 taking the Full Course gained an A\* - B grade, 89% of whom achieved an A or A\*. On the short course 91% gained an A\*-C and in Year 9 of those entered for the short course 100% gained an A\*-C and 69% an A or A\*. In the sixth form RE is offered through conference days and as an optional A' level. Teaching in RE is consistently outstanding. One RE lesson was meticulously planned and resourced. Superb questioning elicited high level answers from students who used extremely complex religious vocabulary and evaluative skills to examine the phenomena of cults and new religious movements. Another lesson enabled students to make connections between the popular symbols associated with Christmas and the more fundamental truths of Christian belief. The lesson was exceptionally well planned and delivered and provided a very good level of challenge. The RE Subject Leader knows her subject and her department well. The Schemes of Work are outstanding and the aims and objectives well chosen to enable learning and assessment of learning. Tracking of progress is good and use of the national levels is developing well. The Head of RE is also responsible for the Worship programme. This ensures that RE and Worship are well integrated and provide a balanced and intellectually stimulating diet. Students recognise RE as an important and rigorous subject. They describe the lessons as 'exceptionally well taught' and planned. They are amazed that their work is so well marked so quickly and recognise that this

shows the value placed on it.

**The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding**

The leadership of the head teacher, and of the exceptional team she has created, lie at the root of the school's achievements. Students describe her as having 'an amazing presence' around the school and of being an 'exceptional teacher' who is passionate about learning. They are thrilled that she knows everyone's name and something about each of them and this makes them feel valued and cared for.

Parents could not speak more highly of the school and its leadership; they rightly value the happiness of their daughters and the provision for each student to develop as a 'whole person'. Staff give sacrificially of their time and energy. Students spoke very highly of the staff pantomime and described how it showed the commitment of staff to them.

Links with the parish church are outstanding. The church is used every week for worship and often for other events and lessons. Students describe the church building as at the heart of the school. They love its beauty and elegance and see it as a place of holiness and peace. Students of all religions value the worship and the place of the church in the life of the school; they spoke of the moral framework it provides and the sense of belonging that it gives every person of all faiths and none.

The school has a part-time chaplain who supports RE lessons and runs a lunch time club.

Appropriate management structures are not in place for the Chaplaincy and the current provision is not fully meeting the school's needs or expectations.

The assistant priest in the parish provides high profile support to the school and students spoke of him as a strong sign of the church's presence. They value his preaching which they described as intelligent and humorous and recognise that he has real presence when presiding in the liturgy. He provided excellent pastoral care after the death of a student.

Students are given the opportunity to exercise leadership and recognise that they are well listened to and their views taken note of. Sixth-form Faith Ambassadors are a very powerful means by which this includes the religious aspect of students' lives and reflects the many faiths represented in the school.

Governors provide outstanding support for the school and are an eminent group of people ably led by the Chair who knows and understands the school well. They give of their time sacrificially and are particularly important in the school's major development projects.