



Introduction

St Mary's School Ascot is a leading Roman Catholic girls' boarding school set in 55 acres of beautiful grounds in the heart of Berkshire. We are a friendly, stable and caring community, proud of our academic and sporting achievements and dedicated to bringing out the full potential of each of our pupils. We are committed to full boarding, with spaces for a few day pupils living nearby. We offer a stimulating range of co-curricular activities, as well as a full programme of music, drama and sport events which take place in the evenings and throughout the weekends.

History of St Mary's School Ascot

St Mary's was founded in 1885 by members of the English Province of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM). This Institute had itself been founded in the early 17th century by Mary Ward, an English woman born in Yorkshire during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

It was Mary Ward's intention to found a religious congregation for women who could be actively involved in the apostolate serving the Church when and where needed for the greater honour and glory of God. Her aim was to persuade the Church authorities to allow her congregation to adopt the constitutions and rule of the Jesuits as far as possible.

In the 1620s Mary Ward established schools in Rome, Naples and Perugia, and in 1639 she wrote from London expressing her wish that "we may have common schools in the Great City of London which will never be without a miracle . . ." Mary Ward died near York in January 1645 having failed to get her Institute recognised and confirmed by Rome. This confirmation was not given until 1877 just a few years before Reverend Mother Joseph Edwards founded St Mary's in Ascot.

CJ (Congregation of Jesus) schools, as they are now recognised, are to be found in Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, Eastern Europe, Latin America, India, Korea, Zimbabwe and Israel. In England the former IBVM schools in York, Hampstead, Cambridge and Shaftesbury have been handed over to Catholic lay trusts.

The original St Mary's Convent in Ascot started with only eight nuns and seven pupils. Gradually over the years, numbers, both in the religious community and in the School grew and the size of the buildings expanded. By the mid-1950s, when Reverend Mother Cecilia Marshall was Provincial Superior, the community at Ascot reached 60 and the School had 200 pupils. The School has continued to grow to its present size of about 390 pupils with an age span of 11-18. As the members of the community have aged, they have retired, or moved elsewhere.

In the 1980s, as the members of the community diminished in number, a separate trust was established for the School with a Board of Governors responsible to the Trustees. In 1995 the School trust purchased the Ascot property from the IBVM in order to ensure the long term security of the School.

Of the pupils in the School, approximately 30% are members of the sixth form, about 5% are day boarders and the remainder are full termly boarders. All sixth form pupils follow A level courses and are expected to continue into higher education. The Headmistress is a member of the GSA and the School is a member of the GBGSA (Governing Body of Girls Schools Association), ISIS (Independent Schools Information Service), ISCO (Independent Schools Careers Organisation), CISC (Catholic Independent Schools Conference), the BSA (Boarding Schools Association) and the HMC (Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference).

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