

History and Heritage

The Marist Order

The Marist Order is a Catholic international Congregation which was founded in France 1816. They are a Catholic order which includes Priests, Brothers, Sisters, and a lay fraternity.

In 1805 two young French women, Jean Marie Chavoin and Marie Jotillon began to habitually sit under the shade of a pear tree in the backyard of Jean Marie's home in Coutouvre, France. Under the tree with its many branches, they enjoyed a spiritual sharing of thoughts and dreams. They prayed for God's guidance to help them in their mission to establish a new and independent Society of the Blessed Virgin. Eventually after many challenges and setbacks and with the love, prayers and support from others, The Marist Sisters, a branch of the Marist enterprise, was successfully founded in October 1817. Their work takes place in many areas such as schools, hospitals, parishes, and children's homes, and education has always been central to their mission.



The Marist School, Ascot began its life in Richmond, Surrey in 1870 by a group of Marist sisters who travelled from France to England to begin a foundation here. Alongside their teaching, they provided pastoral care to poor and orphaned children. Their kindness and service to others is instilled in our curriculum and pastoral care system today.

By the 1900s, The Marist Sisters had established two additional London convents in Tottenham and Peckham. After the devastation which left the Convent and School in Richmond little more than a shell, temporary residence was taken in Fife Street, East Sheen until the purchase of the present property, then the Froggnal Estate, in 1947, following months of searching.

By the beginning of August 1947, The Rosary was home to a community of 12 Sisters. By October, following months of preparation, The Marist school year began in its new setting with 48 weekly boarders and 8 students who made the journey daily from Richmond.



Since its erection in 1876 at the request of a Miss Polly Fairman, an artist, Frognal has passed through a varied succession of owners. In 1904, Frognal was acquired by Sir Walter Palmer, Chairman of University College, Reading and later Liberal MP for Kennington. Sir Walter and Lady Palmer entertained an eclectic circle of writers and artists at the turn of the 20th century, including Oscar Wilde who is said to have visited during those years, as well as violinist Fritz Kreisler and soprano singer Madame Emma Albani who performed before Royalty and local gentry in the conservatory. Recently retired from the Malayan Civil Service, Dr and Mrs Trotter purchased the property in 1907. Keen botanists, their selective planting of shrubs and trees can still be enjoyed in [our grounds today](#).

Immediately prior to the Marist Sisters' purchase in 1947, the site had been rented by the American High Command and was a base for General Dwight Eisenhower and his military advisors. The American President's autograph now hangs proudly in The Rosary Reception, a reminder of this site's role during the Second World War, which could be compared to the resilience of the Marist Sisters throughout their relocation.



As pupil numbers increased, our facilities grew and evolved, most notably with the construction of the Senior block extension in 1962 and the purpose-built Prep School which opened in 1970.

Shortly after, in 1972, the Swimming Pool was completed after successful fundraising efforts by a committee of parents. In 1991, Marcellin Science block was completed, replacing temporary classrooms which had been the first additions made following the Sisters' move to the site 1947. The 40th anniversary of The Marist in Sunninghill in 2017 saw the addition of the Sports Hall, named Fourvière, and 2023 saw the opening of our brand new VI Form Centre in the original estate building.

In 2022, with the same commitment to the school and its students which had brought the Marist Sisters to Sunninghill after the upheaval of the war, the Marist Sisters handed over stewardship to Concept Education to secure a strong future for the school. Concept Education, which was set up in response to the changing demands of independent education, oversees our continued successes and ensure that our faith, traditions, and values remain at the heart of the school.

