

The Ursuline Academy Ilford

Address: Morland Road, Ilford, Essex, IG1 4JU

Unique reference number (URN): 137418

Inspection report: 24 February 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	● ●
Expected standard	● ● ● ●
Needs attention	●
Urgent improvement	

✔ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Pupils achieve very well across the breadth of subjects. This includes in their foundational knowledge of communication and language, reading and mathematics. They build strong knowledge over time and talk with precision about what they have learned. Their work shows care and accuracy. In lessons, they recall earlier learning and use it to tackle new ideas confidently. By the end of key stage 4, pupils gain results in public examinations that are well above national averages. Pupils who are disadvantaged achieve in line with their peers. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong progress from their starting points. This supports pupils to be very well prepared for the next stage of their education. Reading improves because leaders check pupils' needs and, where necessary, put support in place quickly. This helps pupils access learning across the curriculum and achieve well. Pupils, regardless of their individual needs, gain the skills they need to be successful.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Pupils benefit from a rich and comprehensive personal development programme. Leaders plan this carefully. It reflects the school's ethos while welcoming pupils from all faiths and cultures. Pupils say they feel included and respected. They learn about different beliefs and values and show maturity when talking about them.

Pupils develop a strong understanding of how to stay safe. They learn about online risks, healthy relationships, mental health and the challenges they may face as they grow older. They talk confidently about issues such as those related to social media, artificial intelligence, finance and personal safety. Leaders respond quickly to any emerging concerns or themes that may be affecting pupils and adapt the curriculum to address them.

The school offers a wide range of clubs, trips and experiences. Many pupils take part in these, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders check this carefully to make sure that all pupils benefit. Pupils enjoy activities such as sports, creative clubs, reading programmes and charity work. They take pride in contributing to the community and understand the impact of their actions on others.

Pupils develop their character and confidence very well. They take on leadership roles with pride, such as ambassadors, mentors and student leaders. Older pupils volunteer in the lower school and support younger pupils with reading and their studies. They learn how to discuss issues respectfully and make informed choices about their futures.

Careers education is of a high quality. Pupils receive clear, impartial advice. They take part in work experience, meet employers and visit universities. Older pupils understand routes into apprenticeships, higher education and employment. Leaders track destinations closely to make sure that pupils move on successfully.

Support for pupils' wellbeing is available and wide-ranging. Staff know the pupils well. They identify when extra help is needed and respond with care. This enables pupils to thrive.

They grow as confident, respectful and responsible young people who understand the world around them and are well prepared for life beyond school.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Pupils' overall attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Leaders have placed a high priority on improving pupil attendance and reducing persistent absence further. Leaders track pupils' attendance closely. The school works with pupils and their families to craft individualised support. This support identifies the specific barriers that individual pupils have that prevent them from attending school. Staff work with parents and outside agencies to remove these barriers. Any use of part-time timetables is appropriate and well managed.

Pupils behave extremely well across the school, at social times and in classrooms. Leaders continually reinforce the school's values, which are well understood by pupils. Staff apply clear rules and follow well-established routines so that pupils understand what is expected of them. Low-level disruption is rare. Pupils show high levels of respect for each other, for example when listening to the views of others expressed during lessons. When pupils need reminders, staff act quickly and fairly. When necessary, the inclusion room is used very effectively to help pupils reset and return to learning. Bullying is not tolerated, and pupils are confident to report any concerns to a member of staff.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders know the strengths of the curriculum and where it needs to improve. They have planned a broad curriculum that builds pupils' knowledge in clear steps. Teachers understand what pupils should learn and when. The curriculum sets out what pupils need to know to achieve leaders' ambitious goals. Subject specialists have ordered learning logically to build pupils' understanding over time effectively.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They explain new ideas clearly. They choose activities that help pupils understand important content. In most teaching, teachers check pupils' understanding and address misconceptions quickly and effectively. The curriculum supports pupils to build secure foundations. Reading is a priority, and pupils enjoy using the well-stocked library. Pupils who need extra help to read fluently receive timely support.

Teachers typically adapt work to meet pupils' needs. Leaders have provided useful training on developing this area of practice. Leaders know that support for a small number of pupils with high levels of special educational needs and/or disabilities varies in quality. This is being addressed. Leaders check the quality of teaching and act when improvement is needed. They provide training that helps staff develop their expertise. Staff value this support. Overall, pupils experience a well-planned curriculum taught with consistency, with a clear focus on building the knowledge pupils need for future study.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders identify pupils' needs quickly and accurately. Staff know which pupils need extra help, including those who are disadvantaged, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to social care. Leaders have high expectations for all pupils. The school follows a clear, step-by-step approach to assessing and meeting pupils' needs. Leaders share timely, helpful information with teachers, who use it to support pupils in lessons. Staff have training on how to adapt their teaching. While there are some pockets of variability, this helps most pupils to access the curriculum well.

The inclusion and pastoral teams work closely with families and outside professionals. They know the pupils well and act quickly when their needs change. Leaders understand the barriers that disadvantaged pupils face. They use additional funding carefully and check that support makes a difference. Staff understand their roles in delivering this support. Most pupils with additional needs make strong progress from their starting points. Leaders are strengthening how they track the impact of interventions over time. Pupils with additional needs are included in all aspects of school life. They receive support that reduces barriers and helps them take part fully in learning and wider school activities.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear view of the school's strengths and the areas that need to improve. They act with purpose and take decisions in pupils' best interests. Since the headteacher's appointment, leaders have sharpened the school's focus on high-quality teaching and stronger curriculum thinking. Staff say this has made a positive difference. They feel supported and listened to. Leaders check the quality of education closely. They provide a peer support programme and carefully tailored professional learning opportunities. This helps staff improve their practice, build expertise and feel valued. Staff workload and wellbeing are considered carefully. Staff explain that leaders listen to their views and act when needed. Early career teachers and support staff feel well supported in their roles.

Leaders recognise that recent work on attendance will need continued focus to ensure these improvements are sustained. Governors know the school well. They ask challenging questions and check the impact of leaders' work. They understand the school's context and support leaders in making improvements. Governors use a range of information to assure themselves of the school's progress. However, the governing body knows it needs to develop a more rounded picture in some areas, such as post-16 provision. Leaders are open and reflective. They respond to any issues that arise with transparency and care. They work constructively with staff, parents and the diocese. Leaders' actions have brought greater clarity, stronger systems and a renewed drive for improvement.

Needs attention

Post 16 provision

Needs attention 

The quality of the curriculum and teaching is not consistent across all subjects in the sixth form. This means that students' achievement is not as high as it could be. Leaders know this and have taken steps to improve it. They check lessons closely and provide targeted training. This work is recent, so the full impact is still developing. Students' outcomes in public examinations have been below the national average for some time. Leaders understand the reasons for this and have recently introduced new courses, clearer entry guidance and stronger study support. The school intends to monitor these changes with rigour to ensure that achievement in the sixth form is in line with the rest of the school.

Students enjoy being part of the caring and inclusive environment of the sixth form. They feel safe and welcome. They value the ethos and say staff support them well. Teachers in many subjects use strong subject knowledge and clear routines that help students learn effectively. Students benefit from many positive wider opportunities. For example, they receive high-quality careers guidance. They take part in work experience and hear from employers, universities and apprenticeship providers. They talk confidently about next steps and feel supported to plan for the future. Students also take part in wider activities, including volunteering, mentoring and leadership roles.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Leaders have created a kind and ambitious school community where pupils work hard and feel valued. Pupils feel safe at this school. They know who to speak to if they are worried. Pupils say there is no tolerance of bullying, discrimination or harassment. When incidents happen, staff deal with them quickly and fairly.

Pupils behave very well. Classrooms are calm and orderly. This helps pupils to focus on their learning. Pupils treat each other with respect. They value the school's inclusive ethos, which welcomes pupils from many different backgrounds and beliefs. Pupils truly embody the 'Ursuline virtues', which develop their character and are celebrated at every opportunity.

Pupils enjoy their learning. They work hard in lessons and take pride in their work. Teachers explain ideas clearly and build on what pupils already know. Pupils talk confidently about what they have learned and how new knowledge links to earlier learning. The school is rightly proud of the consistently high outcomes that pupils achieve at key stage 4, which are well above the national average. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities learn well because staff understand their needs and support them effectively. However, post-16 students have not historically achieved outcomes that are close to national averages. Leaders have increased expectations, improved teaching and provided clearer support and guidance for staff to address this.

Attendance is close to national averages. Leaders monitor pupils' attendance and follow up on concerns. For a small number of pupils, absence remains high despite staff taking many steps to help them return to school. Pupils take part in a wide range of clubs, trips and

experiences. These include opportunities to volunteer and contribute to the community. Pupils learn how to stay safe online and in the local area. They learn about mental health, healthy relationships and the risks they may face as they grow older.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that their strategies to improve how well students learn and achieve in the post-16 provision become embedded. Leaders and governors must maintain their robust oversight and ensure that improvements are enacted swiftly where needed.
 - Leaders should continue to refine and strengthen inclusive approaches to teaching so that support is consistently well matched to the needs of all pupils.
 - Leaders should build on current strategies so that their actions lead to rapid and notable improvements in attendance and persistent absence for all groups of pupils.
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About this inspection

This school is a single academy trust, The Ursuline Academy Ilford, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The school is overseen by a board of governors chaired by Ingrid Doves.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with school leaders, staff and pupils during the inspection. They also held discussions with representatives from the governing body and the diocese.

Inspectors considered the responses of parents to Ofsted's survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

This school is registered as having a Roman Catholic religious character and is within the Diocese of Brentwood. The most recent section 48 inspection was carried out in March 2025.

The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Lead inspector:

Robert Grice, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Joanna Jones, Ofsted Inspector

Gareth Cross, Ofsted Inspector

Jennifer Ashe, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 24 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

748

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

760

Well below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

24.42%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

1.34%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

4.95%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	61.5%	45.4%	Above
2023/24 (final)	71.1%	45.9%	Above
2022/23 (final)	65.9%	45.3%	Above

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	56.1	46.0	Above
2023/24 (final)	61.4	45.9	Above
2022/23 (final)	57.4	46.3	Above

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.75	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.71	-0.03	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	50.0%	25.8%	Above
2023/24 (final)	52.4%	25.8%	Above
2022/23 (final)	61.1%	25.2%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	50.3	34.9	Above
2023/24 (final)	54.5	34.6	Above
2022/23 (final)	48.4	35.0	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.94	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.32	-0.57	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	50.0%	53.1%	-3.1 pp
2023/24 (final)	52.4%	53.1%	-0.7 pp
2022/23 (final)	61.1%	52.4%	8.7 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (revised)	50.3	50.4	-0.1
2023/24 (final)	54.5	50.0	4.5
2022/23 (final)	48.4	50.3	-1.9

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	0.94	0.16	0.77
2022/23 (final)	0.32	0.17	0.15

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	97%	91%	Above
2022 leavers (revised)	97%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	98%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	28.28	34.99	Below
2023/24 (final)	30.64	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	29.67	34.16	Below

A-level value added

A score showing students' progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	-0.6	0.0	Below
2023/24 (revised)	-0.2	0.0	Close to average

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	7.5%	8.1%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	8.6%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	8.8%	9.0%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	23.7%	21.9%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	35.1%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	34.5%	26.5%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard ●

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard ●

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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