

Inspection of a good school: The Ursuline Academy Ilford

Morland Road, Ilford, Essex IG1 4JU

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 October 2021

Outcome

The Ursuline Academy Ilford continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel happy and secure here. Pupils and parents and carers used words such as 'family' and 'community' to describe this school. Leaders set the example of kind behaviour through the way they talk to pupils. Pupils are polite to staff and visitors. They display tolerance and understanding towards each other, regardless of similarities or difference. All like the school's 'close-knit' feel and how this helps everyone to feel included.

Pupils are very positive about their learning. Teachers have high expectations in all subjects. Pupils feel well supported by teachers and appreciate the help that they are given in class.

Pupils feel safe at this school. Rare incidents of bullying are handled effectively. Pupils appreciate this. They feel able to speak to staff if they have a problem or are worried about a friend. They trust their form tutors, heads of year and the safeguarding team. The headteacher and leadership team are very visible in the school and know the pupils well.

Leaders and staff work hard to ensure that pupils are well looked after. Pupils' well-being continued to be a priority through periods of remote learning. For example, leaders planned in 'no screen days' with a focus on positive emotional and mental health.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Since the previous inspection, leaders have worked effectively to further develop the curriculum. They have made sure that subject plans are ambitious for all pupils, including for students in the sixth form. They have also prioritised staff training so that staff have the expertise to teach the curriculum well. Lessons are sequenced so that pupils gain deep knowledge. Pupils achieve well and enjoy their learning. They study a broad range of subjects in Years 7, 8 and 9 before choosing GCSE options. Subject plans reflect the ambition of the national curriculum.

In lessons, pupils respond to the high expectations of staff. They appreciate how teachers help them to understand and remember subject content. In science, for instance, the curriculum enables pupils to grasp important ideas securely. Because their knowledge is secure, pupils use and apply their learning confidently. In English too, subject planning enables pupils to develop extensive knowledge of different authors. Pupils learn about the wider context of the books they study, for instance about how society at the time influenced the author's writing. This gives pupils the knowledge they need to compare and evaluate the work of different authors.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported to enjoy the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Their needs are quickly identified and reviewed regularly. Teachers have the same high expectations for pupils with SEND as they do for other pupils.

Assessment of pupils' learning is threaded through teaching in all subjects. Teachers find out what pupils remember. They adapt teaching and go over knowledge that pupils do not understand securely. Pupils know how to improve their learning and what they need to practise. For example, in drama, pupils know which techniques contribute to an effective performance. They are able to use this knowledge to improve their work. This builds pupils' confidence. The curriculum gives clear emphasis to developing pupils' ability to speak clearly and convey ideas confidently. However, in a few instances, teaching does not put this focus into practice. While most pupils enjoy talking about learning and sharing their ideas, some pupils are less confident in doing so.

All pupils progress to further study after Year 11. Pupils benefit from an impartial careers programme to guide their choices. Leaders encourage pupils to choose subjects that reflect their interests. However, some pupils have not received specific guidance on how their decisions can fully support their aspirations for their future careers or university choices. This was primarily linked to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders are working effectively to address this.

Leaders have developed an ethos that encourages all to recognise and value individuality. Pupils' wider development is prioritised through the curriculum in all year groups. Pupils learn about a range of relevant topics, including staying safe and consent. The well-planned programme of assemblies, together with discussions in tutor time, enable pupils to reflect on these topics in more depth. For example, pupils learn about unfairness in society and how they can play their part in calling out discrimination and intolerance. Leaders actively seek pupils' views on how the school can be improved further. Pupils spoke warmly about this. For example, leaders acted on pupils' suggestions for improving the school uniform. Pupils' learning is enhanced through extra-curricular activities. For example, the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) club is popular and attended by many pupils.

Leaders treat staff considerately, and aim to minimise unnecessary workload. Teaching staff greatly appreciate this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have clear systems in place to identify risks to pupils and to support them effectively. Where necessary, leaders make referrals to external agencies in a timely and appropriate way. Leaders also work closely with families so that they understand pupils' needs and what help they might need.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding. They understand risks to pupils' welfare and are vigilant. Staff make leaders aware of any concerns they might have quickly.

Pupils learn to keep themselves safe. They understand healthy relationships, consent and how to stay safe online. Leaders and staff provide a range of well-planned support to promote pupils' well-being.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is planned well to enable pupils to build up their spoken language. Occasionally, however, the delivery of the curriculum does not fully support leaders' ambitious and clear aims. Some pupils lack confidence in expressing their ideas during lessons. Leaders should ensure that this aspect of the curriculum is implemented consistently well.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	137418
Local authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	10200134
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of students in sixth-form provision	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	752
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	134
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	John Anthony
Headteacher	Keran Reilly
Website	www.uai.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 October 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The Ursuline Academy Ilford is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school is a Roman Catholic school for girls. Its most recent section 48 inspection to evaluate its distinctiveness and effectiveness as a Catholic school was in May 2018.
- The school does not make use of alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders. They also met with the chair and vice-chair of governors.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: science, English, geography and computing. Inspectors visited lessons (including in the sixth form), reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning, and met with subject leaders and teachers. Other subjects were also considered through speaking to leaders and visiting lessons.
- Through discussions with leaders, governors, pupils and staff, inspectors considered how effectively pupils are safeguarded. Inspectors also looked at records related to safeguarding, including records of checks carried out before staff are appointed.
- Inspectors met with pupils from all year groups and spoke to pupils during lesson visits. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in school and at breaktimes. The inspection team spoke to staff about behaviour and about their workload in the school. The 130 pupil responses, 47 staff responses and 25 parent responses to Ofsted's surveys were also considered.

Inspection team

Alice Clay, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Terry Millar

Ofsted Inspector

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