

St Ursula's Convent School

Address: Crooms Hill, SE10 8HN

Unique reference number (URN): 100193

Inspection report: 18 November 2025

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 across all age groups develop an in-depth knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. This includes disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils consistently produce work of an extremely high quality. They articulate with precision what they have learned and are confident in the use of subject-specific vocabulary.

Pupils achieve to a high standard in national examinations. Pupils' GCSE results are largely above the national average. This supports pupils to be well prepared for the next stage of their education. Disadvantaged pupils achieve highly when compared nationally to their peers. Some pupils join the school with significant gaps in their reading, writing and mathematics knowledge. The swift support these pupils receive ensures that they catch up at pace and go on to achieve very well by the end of key stage 4.

Expected standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard ●

Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is high. This includes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school tracks pupils' individual absences effectively. If leaders identify any pupils who are not attending school regularly, they work closely with parents and carers to ensure this improves rapidly.

Pupils' behaviour has improved significantly since the last inspection. Pupils behave well, both in lessons and around the school site. There is a clear and effective behaviour policy in place, which is consistently applied by staff. Leaders have developed a positive culture in the school. Staff listen carefully to pupils' views and opinions. As a result, pupils are invested in and contribute proactively to the positive behaviour ethos. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. They are aspirational and typically focused and engaged during lessons. Any form of discrimination is extremely rare in the school. Pupils are taught the importance of kindness and tolerance and they display this through their daily interactions with each other, staff and visitors.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard ●

Leaders have a precise understanding of the strengths in curriculum and teaching and where improvements are required. The curriculum is ambitious and broad. It is designed to build pupils' knowledge progressively over time. This ensures pupils develop the knowledge and skills required for their next steps in their education. Staffing in the school has stabilised and leaders have ensured subject experts are in place across the curriculum.

Teachers typically deliver information and explain new concepts clearly. Mostly, teaching checks pupils' understanding and addresses any gaps in knowledge swiftly. Occasionally,

opportunities to identify misconceptions are missed. This means that some minor gaps in learning go unidentified. Although these are often picked up and addressed through the curriculum in the long term, it could be done sooner.

Teachers understand the individual needs of pupils in their groups. They typically use a range of strategies to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to access the curriculum successfully. Leaders swiftly identify pupils who require additional literacy or numeracy support. They put in place a range of effective strategies to support these pupils to quickly develop their understanding and skills.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

The school has put in place effective systems to identify pupils' needs accurately and swiftly. Leaders have high expectations for what all pupils can achieve. Staff clearly understand the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school works proactively with families and a range of other professionals to ensure support is appropriate and high quality. As a result, these pupils are well prepared for their next steps and perform very well in national examinations.

Leaders have developed the expertise of staff to help them reduce pupils' specific barriers to learning. Typically, staff support pupils with SEND effectively to be able to access the curriculum. On occasion, a small number of pupils with SEND are not supported as well as they could be to access the same curriculum as their classmates. This means pupils sometimes develop minor gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Senior leaders in the school closely monitor the progress and the impact of support for these pupils. They recognise other leaders in the school are developing their expertise to be able to contribute to this process.

The school uses pupil premium funding to support literacy and numeracy programmes. Leaders also ensure disadvantaged pupils benefit from access to a broad range of wider opportunities and trips.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and governors are relatively new in their positions. They have made rapid improvements across all aspects of the school in a short space of time. Decisions are taken in the best interests of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have ensured that the changes made have become embedded in staff's daily practice. Although there has been a great deal of change, leaders have been mindful of staff wellbeing and workload. Staff are very positive about how leaders support them.

Leaders have an in-depth and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas that require additional focus. They have a systematic and well-considered approach to improving the school. There is an appropriate focus on ensuring that leaders at all levels have the right knowledge and skills required to contribute to whole school improvements. This is being supported by effective professional learning for staff. Teachers at the start of

their careers benefit from the guidance and training that is put in place for them by leaders. This helps them to further develop their expertise.

Governors understand and meet their statutory duties. They ensure the school is moving in the right strategic direction and provide support and challenge to leaders. This ensures the school continues to make swift and embedded improvements.

Personal development and well-being

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed a comprehensive personal development programme. Although this has been relatively recently introduced, pupils have developed a secure understanding of how to stay healthy and safe, including online. All pupils receive age-appropriate relationships and sex education. As a result, pupils know the importance of healthy relationships. Pupils develop an understanding of fundamental British values, including democracy and tolerance. These are closely linked to the values of the school.

The school offers a range of wider opportunities, which help to develop pupils' character, interests and broader cultural understanding. Pupils benefit from a variety of trips, including visits to museums, residential activity centres and a ski trip. A range of well-attended clubs also contribute to this offer, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, choir and chess lessons. The school uses pupil premium funding to ensure disadvantaged pupils fully access the wider opportunities that the school offers.

The school's careers programme ensures that pupils have a secure understanding of a range of future options at post-16 and beyond. This includes a variety of external speakers, workshops and visits to careers fairs.

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

The school is ambitious for what pupils can achieve. Pupils rise to the high expectations that the school has for them. As a result, pupils achieve very well and are prepared for the next steps in their education. Pupils demonstrate passion, enthusiasm and enjoyment in their learning. Teachers have the right subject knowledge to develop pupils' understanding across the curriculum effectively.

Staff know individual pupils. A large pastoral and inclusion team supports pupils and ensures their barriers to learning are reduced. This means that pupils who are disadvantaged, and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve highly.

Pupils feel an immense sense of pride and belonging in the school. They are proud 'Ursulines'. The school carefully considers pupils' opinions. Pupils feel listened to, cared for and valued. Despite many members of staff being new to the school, they have quickly built positive relationships with pupils. Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. They benefit from a broad range of trips and clubs that help to develop their talents and interests. Pupils can extend their organisational and communication skills through the 'JLT' student leadership team, who have a prominent role and voice in the school.

Pupils' behaviour is highly positive during lessons and around the school site. They are polite, confident and friendly. Many pupils expressed a feeling of 'sisterhood' with their peers. This supports pupils to feel safe and well cared for in the school. Bullying and discrimination are extremely infrequent. This is addressed swiftly by staff on the rare occasion that it may happen. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They embody the school motto, 'I shall serve' in their commitment to the school and wider community.

Next steps

- Across the curriculum, leaders should ensure that gaps in pupils' knowledge are identified and addressed by staff in a timely manner.
 - Leaders should ensure that staff are consistently using the most effective adaptations and strategies during lessons to ensure barriers for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are routinely reduced across all areas of the curriculum.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Pat Barber.

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 the headteacher, governors and a range of other leaders, teachers and pupils during the inspection.

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.

The school has undergone significant change since the last inspection with a new headteacher and large numbers of other new leaders and staff.

The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Mark O'Shaughnessy

Lead inspector:

Simon Conway, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

David Radomsky, His Majesty's Inspector

Sam Johnson, His Majesty's Inspector

Lisa Smith, His Majesty's 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 18 November 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

549

Well 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

675

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: 1,152

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

30.24%

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

2.00%

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

12.39%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Below 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	62.1%	45.2%	Above
2023/24	62.8%	45.9%	Above
2022/23	69.7%	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	54.8	45.9	Above
2023/24	50.9	45.9	Above
2022/23	57.3	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	0.09	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23	0.60	-0.03	Above
2021/22	0.56	-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	43.5%	25.6%	Above
2023/24	50.0%	25.8%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23	65.4%	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	48.8	34.9	Above
2023/24	46.1	34.6	Above
2022/23	54.6	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	-0.42	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23	0.96	-0.57	Above
2021/22	0.03	-0.55	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	43.5%	52.8%	-9.4 pp
2023/24	50.0%	53.1%	-3.1 pp
2022/23	65.4%	52.4%	13.0 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	48.8	50.3	-1.5
2023/24	46.1	50.0	-3.9
2022/23	54.6	50.3	4.3

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	-0.42	0.16	-0.58
2022/23	0.96	0.17	0.80
2021/22	0.03	0.15	-0.13

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
2022 leavers	98%	93%	Above
2021 leavers	100%	94%	Above
2020 leavers	99%	94%	Above

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 (1 term)	5.3%	7.7%	Below
2023/24	7.1%	8.9%	Below
2022/23	7.2%	9.0%	Below

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 (1 term)	15.7%	21.1%	Below
2023/24	17.9%	25.6%	Below
2022/23	20.4%	26.5%	Below

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 standards expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standards 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.

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