

Valentines High School

Address: Cranbrook Road, Ilford, Essex, IG2 6HX

Unique reference number (URN): 102857

Inspection report: 17 March 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.

Exceptional ●

Achievement

Exceptional ●

Pupils achieve remarkably well across the curriculum. Work in books and pupils' verbal responses demonstrate perceptive thinking and a deep grasp of complex ideas. Pupils explain their learning with confidence, articulating how they have reflected on past errors and used this knowledge to improve in their 'reflect and perfect' lessons.

Attainment in national tests and examinations remains significantly above national averages over time. Most pupils secure high grades in English and mathematics at GCSE. They write with fluency and sophistication, enabling them to access the next stage of their education with confidence.

Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress through the curriculum. Their attainment at the end of Year 11 for disadvantaged pupils exceeds non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. Leaders' actions have a transformational impact on these pupils' futures, ensuring they gain the knowledge, skills and communication needed to thrive in later life.

Attendance and behaviour

Exceptional ●

Pupils understand why attendance matters, and they attend school with enthusiasm. Overall attendance is above national averages and has returned to pre-Covid levels. This includes disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders analyse attendance information closely and act quickly when concerns arise, working constructively with families. Leaders tailor support to individual circumstances, which helps to ensure rapid improvements are made. The school's strong culture helps all pupils flourish.

Pupils behave remarkably well at Valentines High School. Classrooms are calm, collaborative and orderly. Pupils actively listen and show respect to staff and their peers. They take pride in their work and show real commitment to learning. There is no disruption to lessons. Around the school, behaviour is polite and considerate. Any form of bullying or disrespectful behaviour is not tolerated. Older pupils set an excellent example. Sixth-form students play a valuable role in supporting younger pupils. Their mentoring of GCSE pupils is highly effective and contributes to the excellent outcomes that disadvantaged pupils achieve. The school's pastoral system is deliberately designed to create a well-balanced mix of pupils from Years 7 to 11 and to develop trusting relationships. Pupils feel known, valued and part of a cohesive community.

Inclusion

Exceptional ●

The school places inclusion at its core. Leaders' commitment to knowing every pupil well drives their success in removing barriers to learning. As a result, pupils thrive.

Staff provide highly effective personalised support to pupils. Clear and well-embedded processes are in place to ensure that staff gain a deep understanding of pupils' needs. They have the necessary expertise to skilfully adapt teaching so that all pupils access the full

curriculum. Support staff work closely with teachers to ensure support in lessons is precisely targeted and sustained. Leaders work closely and determinedly with parents and carers and pupils, for example through collaborating on pupil profiles that set out successful support strategies. These are reviewed thoroughly and in consultation with external agencies.

The school has well-established systems to support pupils who speak English as an additional language and identify any additional possible vulnerabilities. These pupils receive timely and highly effective support. For example, pupils at the earliest stages of learning English are paired with community mentors who help them develop socially so they can communicate with confidence. This enables them to access the wider curriculum and achieve well. Leaders systematically check the impact of the pupil premium strategy and use this insight to further enhance the experiences of disadvantaged pupils, ensuring maximum benefit.

Leadership and governance

Exceptional ●

School leaders and governors create the conditions for pupils to flourish in every aspect of school life. They are highly effective in fostering a sense of belonging across the school community. Their decisions and actions consistently prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders take a highly collaborative and reflective approach to identify and address areas for improvement accurately. For example, they actively engage in external evaluation and peer reviews of the school. Governors fulfil their statutory duties diligently and provide robust oversight of school leaders' work.

Significant time and resources have been committed to enhance teachers' skills in the classroom and to build future leaders in the school. This work draws on a large selection of research from within and beyond education. This programme is tailored closely to teachers' individual needs, including those at the earliest stage of their careers. Support staff benefit from the well-established culture of ongoing professional development, enabling them to provide highly effective support across the school.

Staff feel incredibly valued and well supported, and the overwhelming majority are proud to work at the school. They are confident that leaders manage workload fairly. Leaders are approachable and responsive to staff concerns, which contributes to a positive and collaborative working culture. Staff feel valued and pupils benefit from leaders' unwavering drive for excellence.

Strong standard ●

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard ●

The curriculum is ambitious, broad and well designed for pupils to gain knowledge and skills incrementally. For example, in English younger pupils learn about what life was like for the poor in Victorian England. This supports them with later learning when they evaluate how context shapes themes such as morality, responsibility and power. This approach is consistent across year groups and subjects. Teachers have expert knowledge of the

national curriculum, examination specifications and A-level programmes. They implement the curriculums in line with intentions. Teaching is highly effective. Teachers focus on the most important knowledge pupils need and present information clearly, often with well-prepared visual resources, which supports pupils further, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers check pupils' understanding systematically. This is especially effective in mathematics.

Leaders analyse information about pupils' progress meticulously to identify those pupils who may have gaps in literacy and numeracy. Pupils who struggle with reading or other basic skills in English and mathematics are helped to develop their confidence and fluency. Lessons consistently develop pupils' vocabulary and spoken and written communication to a high standard. While pupils articulate their ideas confidently, leaders recognise that further strengthening pupils' oracy would help pupils to explain their reasoning with even greater precision.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Pupils benefit from the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, which is well thought through. Pupils are confident about what they have learned and why it is important. This includes the importance of respect for difference. Leaders make sure that the PSHE curriculum is reviewed regularly to ensure that subject content is age-appropriate, responsive to current issues and equips pupils with the knowledge and skills to make informed, responsible choices. In their 'SPHERE' lessons, pupils engage confidently with important themes such as mental health, stereotypes and relationships and life in modern Britain. Pastoral support across the school is highly effective, providing nurturing and responsive care for pupils.

The school offers a vast range of extra-curricular activities, including fully funded self-defence classes, its Aspire programme for girls with 'big dream', and overseas trips to Switzerland and Barcelona. Leaders remove financial and social barriers that might limit access to the extra-curricular offer. Pupils who are disadvantaged contribute extensively to the wider life of the school, such as through prominent leadership roles and high participation rates at school clubs. Pupils receive timely careers advice, which is embedded in the curriculum. Through a vast range of trips, guest speakers, PSHE and form-time activities, pupils are exposed to a well-developed and stable careers programme. They use this to make informed decisions about their next steps in education, employment or training.

Staff use initiatives such as 'Thoughtful Thursdays' to teach pupils effectively about important safeguarding themes, including conspiracy theories and how to recognise misinformation online. 'Mindfulness Monday' provides timely support for issues that affect young people, such as managing anxiety. Carefully tailored workshops, including those that address potential tensions between cultural groups, strengthen pupils' understanding of fundamental British values and promote community cohesion. Together, these experiences help pupils to develop the confidence, character and cultural awareness they need to be successful beyond school.

Leaders ensure that students benefit from a high-quality education during their time here. Leaders have a sharp understanding of the quality and suitability of the programmes on offer. This is reflected in a well-designed pathways model that promotes inclusivity and enables students to select courses that allow them to achieve well. For example, the introduction of the bespoke 'resit' pathway provides an appropriate route for vulnerable students who need additional support. As a result, these students successfully progress to vocational programmes in Year 13. Staff are skilled in supporting students to achieve highly through the post-16 curriculum.

A meticulously thought-through programme of non-qualification activities supplements the taught curriculum effectively. These activities include life-skills education, the 'Future Fridays' careers provision and timetabled Friday enrichment, all of which broaden students' experiences and strengthen their personal development.

Students speak positively about their post-16 experiences. The VESPA (Vision, Effort, Systems, Practice and Attitude) mindset underpins their approach to learning and personal development. For example, Year 12 students demonstrate a responsible attitude when tutoring younger pupils in key GCSE subjects. They take this role seriously and it helps them improve their own learning.

Students progress to high-quality destinations, including an increasing number of university places and apprenticeships. This is supported by a thorough and well-structured application programme that prepares them effectively for their next steps in education, employment or training.

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

Pupils enjoy attending this happy, welcoming and inclusive school. Pupils understand the importance of equality of opportunity and the richness that comes from diversity. They learn to value difference, treat others with dignity and contribute to a vibrant, multicultural community. These values shape pupils' sense of belonging and their evident love of school. The 'Valentine's Way' is consistently evident, with core values such as resilience and aspiration clearly reflected in pupils' behaviour and attitudes. Leaders ensure that pupils are extremely well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils' behaviour and attendance are exemplary. They appreciate the 'community coalition' between themselves and staff, which motivates them to make academic progress and develop social skills. Pupils are highly committed to their learning and demonstrate relentlessly positive attitudes. For example, during collaborative tasks, they mentor peers who may need support while maintaining respectful relationships. Pupils feel safe in this calm and considerate environment. They treat each other, and staff, with high levels of care and consideration. On the rare occasions when bullying occurs, staff deal with it swiftly and effectively. Many older pupils act as mentors to younger peers, helping to create an environment where all pupils can thrive.

Beyond academic study, pupils benefit from a rich programme of clubs, trips and activities, ranging from sports and music to visits to the House of Commons. Most recently, the school's 'Aspire Programme' provides disadvantaged pupils with meaningful opportunities for growth and achievement. An inclusive approach is central to the school's work. Staff provide tailored support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are otherwise disadvantaged. Through the comprehensive 'Proactive Passport', sixth-form students receive well-coordinated academic, pastoral and personal support. This approach ensures that students' individual needs are understood and met, enabling them to participate fully in school life and achieve well.

Valentines High School is a community where pupils flourish academically, socially and personally. The school's values influence a culture in which every pupil is known, nurtured and empowered to succeed.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to refine and fully embed oracy practice across subjects to further strengthen pupils' spoken language skills.
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About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school, as recorded on Get Information About Schools, is Simon Midlane. At the time of the inspection or during the inspection, there was an acting chair of governors, Sandy Kaur.

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

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

Inspection activities:

Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, curriculum leaders and other staff.

Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

Inspectors examined a range of documents provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.

Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff as well as speaking to staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

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 school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Richard Laws

Lead inspector:

Lisa Smith, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Jeff Cole, Ofsted Inspector

Shaun Dodds, Ofsted Inspector

Terry Millar, Ofsted Inspector

Gareth Cross, 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 17 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,329

Above 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

1,288

Close to 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)

25.08%

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

4.06%

Close to 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

5.19%

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

Close to 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)	75.3%	45.4%	Above
2023/24 (final)	68.8%	45.9%	Above
2022/23 (final)	70.4%	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)	58.6	46.0	Above
2023/24 (final)	59.0	45.9	Above
2022/23 (final)	57.1	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)	0.91	-0.03	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.98	-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)	68.2%	25.8%	Above
2023/24 (final)	58.1%	25.8%	Above
2022/23 (final)	52.5%	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)	60.5	34.9	Above
2023/24 (final)	56.9	34.6	Above
2022/23 (final)	50.6	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 (final)	0.91	-0.57	Above
2022/23 (final)	0.61	-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)	68.2%	53.1%	15.0 pp
2023/24 (final)	58.1%	53.1%	5.0 pp
2022/23 (final)	52.5%	52.4%	0.1 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)	60.5	50.4	10.1
2023/24 (final)	56.9	50.0	6.9

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	50.6	50.3	0.3

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 (final)	0.91	0.16	0.75
2022/23 (final)	0.61	0.17	0.45

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%	Above
2021 leavers (revised)	96%	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)	36.24	34.99	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	35.97	34.38	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	35.71	34.16	Close to average

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)	0.1	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	0.1	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)	5.8%	8.1%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	5.6%	8.9%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	7.3%	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 (2 term)	15.4%	21.9%	Below

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (3 term)	15.1%	25.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	24.6%	26.5%	Close to average

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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