

Lift Maltings

Address: Spinks Lane, Witham, Essex, CM8 1EP

Unique reference number (URN): 135653

Inspection report: 24 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.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Most pupils attend school regularly. Leaders work relentlessly with families to ensure that pupils with lower rates of attendance, including some disadvantaged pupils, are supported to improve. These successful strategies include, for example, daily checks and supportive interventions. Consequently, these pupils improve their attendance over time. While overall attendance remains below the national average, it continues to improve.

Pupils know how they are expected to behave. Leaders' high expectations help to create a calm environment during lessons and at social times. Staff apply the school's clear and effective systems consistently well. Typically, pupils behave responsibly, resulting in fewer suspensions. Pupils enjoy positive relationships with each other and with staff. Leaders know their pupils well. They understand the individual challenges that some pupils face. As a result, pupils who need help to improve their behaviour get well-focused, effective support.

Bullying is not tolerated and is dealt with appropriately if it happens. Pupils and staff are trained as anti-bullying ambassadors. This contributes to the school's positive culture. Pupils feel safe. They are taught how to manage risks, including safe and respectful use of online devices.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum is ambitious and thoughtfully designed. It is generally well taught. Teachers typically follow the expectations set out in 'The Maltings Way'. This focuses appropriately on raising aspirations, and the quality of teaching and learning continue to improve. Teachers' secure subject knowledge means that, on the whole, they present subject content clearly and effectively. Staff know pupils well and want the best for them. Vulnerable pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), gain confidence to learn alongside their peers.

Typically, teachers check what pupils know and can do carefully. This enables them to move pupils' learning on appropriately. When pupils need help to catch up with their reading, effective support is put in place quickly. Work is underway to develop support for pupils who need help with their writing. Occasionally, gaps in learning are missed. In these cases, pupils do not build securely on what they already know.

Leaders understand the quality of the curriculum and teaching and where it needs to improve. They focus staff's professional learning accurately when changes are necessary. The impact of recent training is evident where teaching is most effective. In some cases, more time is needed for teachers to build their skills and confidence, for example in adapting learning precisely to meet pupils' individual needs.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have acted promptly to continue to improve the quality of the school's offer following a period of turbulence. The school's ambitious vision, clear routines and positive

relationships are at the heart of leaders' actions. Pupils, as well as many parents and carers, speak positively of leaders' work. Staff are praised for their support. Working together, school leaders, the academy council and the trust continue to build on the positive relationships they have established in the community.

Leaders are clear about what is working well and what needs to improve. They take appropriate action when something falls short of their expectations. Leaders have ensured the curriculum is well designed. Most pupils, including vulnerable pupils, build the skills and confidence they need during their time in the school. Teaching is improving. In some subjects, recent changes are still embedding. Leaders' actions are rightly focused on continuing to secure consistency in pupils' learning experiences, so that all pupils achieve as well as they can. For example, improving pupils' attendance sensibly remains a priority.

Staff appreciate the readily accessible support from leaders for their workload and wellbeing. They benefit from wide-ranging, carefully targeted professional development opportunities in school and through the trust. Early career teachers build confidence in the welcoming school community. Leaders, including the academy council, ensure that changes are celebrated and well communicated.

Those responsible for governance fulfil their statutory duties, for example, overseeing the school's safeguarding systems. The trust provides effective challenge and support so that the school continues to improve.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's well-planned personal development programme makes a positive difference to daily life in school. Leaders' ambitious intentions weave successfully across all aspects of pupils' learning. For example, form-time activities prompt thoughtful discussions on important themes such as respectful relationships and internet safety. Contributions from external professionals help to raise pupils' awareness of safeguarding concerns, such as the dangers of gangs and knife crime. The typically well-taught personal, social and health education curriculum builds age-appropriate awareness from Year 7. For example, pupils learn about consent and individual differences. Pupil-led assemblies reinforce key themes linked to this learning, such as respect for same-sex relationships and for people with disabilities.

Pupils value the wide range of pastoral and wellbeing support available in school. Staff regularly check on pupils' emotional and mental health so that they get the support they need. Appropriate staff training underpins the quality of this support. Wider personal development opportunities, informed by the pupil leadership team, build on pupils' needs and interests. Opportunities include well-attended clubs, for example, in art, sports, music, mathematics and science. Whole-school productions celebrate success through performance. Vulnerable pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, thrive in the sense of belonging that these events create.

Pupils know their school is a place where individuals are supported to be themselves. They experience fundamental British values first hand. For example, pupils democratically vote for the student council. A wide range of leadership roles includes house captains, sports leaders and pupil librarians. These pupil leaders are effective role models for their peers.

Thoughtfully implemented careers education means that pupils know the options open to them when they leave school. Visits from employers and training providers enrich pupils' understanding, including of apprenticeships. Overall, the curriculum helps to ensure that pupils are prepared well to face the challenges of their next steps in life.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Over time, pupils' attainment and progress in GCSE examinations at the end of key stage 4 have been low. Some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and skills. Improved teaching is now making a difference, for example in English, mathematics and science. This includes for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, wider improvements are still embedding. Some pupils struggle to write clearly and accurately. Support for pupils to improve their writing is developing, including for those pupils new to the school.

Pupils benefit from consistently well-considered approaches to promote reading across the curriculum. Effective support for pupils still learning to read means that they catch up with their peers.

In recent years, a growing number of pupils secure places in education, employment or training successfully when they leave at the end of Year 11. They are prepared appropriately and are increasingly ambitious as they plan their next steps.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

Some pupils have mixed experiences in their learning. At times, the support that teachers provide for pupils' learning is not matched precisely enough to pupils' needs. When this happens, pupils do not achieve as well as they could over time.

The school's revised systems ensure that pupils' needs are identified quickly and accurately. The information gathered guides staff in how to support pupils. This includes disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the increasing number of pupils who join later in their secondary education. Focused staff training is in place. However, the impact of this is not fully evident. Some adaptations are at an early stage as staff build their confidence in implementing leaders' expectations.

Overall, pupils settle well in the school's caring environment. Thoughtfully considered pastoral systems support their wellbeing. Leaders consider parents' and pupils' views when they review pupils' learning plans. On the whole, parents' trust in the school's offer is increasing. However, some parents still lack confidence in the support that the school provides.

Leaders use additional funding appropriately to support disadvantaged pupils, for example, to continue to improve pupils' attendance and access to learning. They plan alternative

provision thoughtfully in the best interests of the pupils concerned. Keeping these pupils safe is a closely monitored priority.

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

Pupils are increasingly proud of their school. They value the positive relationships and calm environment. Overall, they get on well together and welcome others into their school community. Some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), join the school at a later stage than others. Together with their peers, these pupils receive effective pastoral support to help keep them safe.

Most pupils are keen to learn. Typically, they respond well to the school's high expectations of their conduct in lessons and around school. Any barriers to pupils' learning are identified quickly and managed by staff.

Although pupils' achievement is improving, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Occasionally, support for pupils with SEND is not precise enough. When this happens, pupils do not engage in their learning as well as they could. Sometimes, pupils fall behind because they are regularly absent, and so they struggle to catch up. Frequent absentees do not benefit fully from the school's well-planned personal development opportunities. Overall, pupils with SEND and those who have previously disrupted educational experiences grow in confidence as they build readiness to learn.

Pupils are polite and typically respectful in their interactions with others. If any pupils misbehave, support is put in place quickly. Bullying is not tolerated. Pupils know that staff will act to prevent it. Pupil anti-bullying ambassadors take their roles seriously. In these and other pupil leadership roles, many pupils become positive role models for their peers.

Pupils learn about the fundamental British values, such as democracy and the rule of law. They appreciate individual differences and recognise the dangers of misinformation and social media. A well-considered careers education programme means that pupils understand their post-16 options. They leave well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training and for life in modern Britain.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that consistently high-quality teaching leads to improved standards of achievement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders should ensure they continue to support staff in implementing reasonable adjustments and adaptations to the curriculum, so that pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged consistently receive the precise support they need.
- Leaders should continue to embed the school's approaches to teaching, including ensuring all teachers use their checks on learning consistently well to address any gaps in pupils' knowledge.

- Leaders and the trust should continue to work closely with families to strengthen their systems for identifying and removing barriers to pupils' attendance, so that more pupils attend school regularly.
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About this inspection

The school is part of Lift Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Rebecca Boomer-Clark, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alastair Da Costa.

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 pupils, leaders and staff during the inspection. They also spoke with the chair of the academy council, the CEO and other trust leaders. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative of the local authority.

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 also confirmed the following information about the school:

The school makes use of 2 alternative providers, one of which is unregistered.

Principal: Leanne Abbott-Jones

Lead inspector:

Christine Dick, Ofsted Inspector

Team inspectors:

Elizabeth Shapland, Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Celano, Ofsted Inspector

Jennifer Brassington, Ofsted Inspector

Robert James, 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 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

841

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

1,100

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)

25.80%

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

3.09%

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

11.89%

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

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)	42.2%	45.4%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	36.8%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	39.4%	45.3%	Close to average

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)	39.9	46.0	Below
2023/24 (final)	39.0	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	43.3	46.3	Close to average

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)	-0.64	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.36	-0.03	Below

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)	20.0%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	16.7%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	21.4%	25.2%	Close to average

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)	28.7	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	26.5	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	30.9	35.0	Close to average

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)	-1.32	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.96	-0.57	Below

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)	20.0%	53.1%	-33.1 pp
2023/24 (final)	16.7%	53.1%	-36.5 pp
2022/23 (final)	21.4%	52.4%	-31.0 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 (revised)	28.7	50.4	-21.7
2023/24 (final)	26.5	50.0	-23.5
2022/23 (final)	30.9	50.3	-19.4

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)	-1.32	0.16	-1.49
2022/23 (final)	-0.96	0.17	-1.12

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)	88%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	87%	93%	Below
2021 leavers (revised)	93%	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
2022/23 (final)	S	34.16	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

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)	12.2%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	12.8%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	10.3%	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)	30.8%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	35.5%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	30.0%	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.

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