

Lift Aylward

URN: 136147 | Inspected: 09 December 2025

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.

Achievement

Expected standard

Many pupils face additional challenges, so, typically, most start at this school from low academic points. Despite this, with a typically effective curriculum and teaching and strong inclusive support, the school enables pupils to progress well in different subjects and across year groups, even if the published national attainment data does not always reflect this. Over time, most pupils attain close to average in grade 4+ GCSE English and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils consistently achieve, sometimes significantly, above national disadvantaged averages and in 2025 this was also true for grade 5+ in English and mathematics. In other progress measures, disadvantaged pupils match or exceed their peers nationally. Pupils' work seen during this inspection was typically of high quality across different subjects and groups. In 2025, all Year 11 pupils progressed to further education.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

The new leadership team has made substantial improvements to the curriculum and to teaching. The curriculum is ambitious for all pupils and is now typically well sequenced. Teachers in most subjects know exactly what knowledge pupils need to master and remember. Subject leaders and staff benefit from professional learning opportunities, including from experts in the trust. This gives them subject-specific expertise and secure pedagogical knowledge, though in a few instances this is still a work in progress. Early career teachers very much appreciate the support they receive to hone their teaching skills. Teaching and support staff are well versed in how to make appropriate adaptations for pupils who experience difficulties with learning. Teaching commonly ensures that pupils have regular opportunities to revise their learning. Typically, teachers give pupils regular feedback on how to improve their work, to which pupils respond well. Leaders have recently introduced daily lessons and interventions at key stage 3 that focus on developing and improving pupils' literacy skills. There are also opportunities to support pupils who need some basic mathematics help. Similarly, older pupils attend daily 'master classes' addressing knowledge gaps across the English Baccalaureate subjects. These changes are having a positive impact in improving all pupils' elementary learning and closing of their knowledge gaps.

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Inclusion

Strong standard

Inclusion leaders and staff are highly skilled. They use well-established strategies to identify and meet pupils' individual needs. Leaders work closely with families and respond swiftly to pupils' changing circumstances. Disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, looked-after children, young carers and pupils known to social care receive strong and effective support. Leaders train all staff on how to meet pupils' individual needs. Teachers adapt lessons to ensure that pupils learn successfully alongside their peers. The school places a clear emphasis on developing pupils' essential skills, such as reading skills developed through a well-structured phonics programme. Leaders use pupil premium funding effectively. For example, to provide extra help for literacy and to improve pupils' attendance and behaviour. Leaders monitor and check pupils' progress with care. They use the information gathered to inform future planning so that individual needs are met effectively. This approach has led to sustained improvement. Pupils who previously found education a challenge make notable progress in engagement with learning and in their academic achievement. Leaders play an active role in local partnerships. Provision for pupils who are at risk of exclusion is highly effective in ensuring that, with support, these pupils continue their studies successfully. Use of alternative provision is carefully considered and only ever used in the best interests of pupils. Expected standard

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

There have been several changes to school leadership since the last inspection. Since autumn 2024, leaders have astutely identified and prioritised actions for improvement. Their carefully considered plans and approaches have had a marked positive impact on pupils' academic education, behaviour and attendance. The trust and school leaders communicate a clear a vision for excellence, seeking to do the best for every pupil. The trust has well-established policies, practices and resources to ensure consistent compliance with statutory guidance. It provides school leaders and all staff, including those at the early stages of their careers, with many opportunities for evidence-based professional learning. There is also well-structured support from the trust for school leaders and rigorous systems for accountability against clear criteria for improvement. Leaders and the trust have invested deeply in providing well-resourced and expertly trained teams. This ensures that all pupils are included and have the support they need to succeed in their learning, and that their safety and wellbeing is promoted. This is particularly well focused on pupils who are disadvantaged, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those known, or previously known, to children's social care and those who face other challenges to learning and/or wellbeing, such as young carers. Many staff feel that leaders are approachable and considerate of their workload and wellbeing. Staff have access to various benefits, and partial flexible hours of worktime have been introduced. Most staff welcome the changes which leaders have made.

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Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Character development and values are at the heart of school life. Pupils understand and live by the values of excellence, integrity, kindness and self control. These values are evident in their approach to learning, their social interactions with others in this diverse school and their contributions as student leaders. The school provides a comprehensive personal development programme. The personal, social and health education curriculum includes all statutory content and builds on prior learning, helping pupils develop a strong understanding of topics such as democracy, healthy lifestyles and teamwork. Pupils can explain these ideas clearly and confidently, together with other key themes they learn about, like building healthy relationships and consent. Leaders keep the curriculum relevant by responding to new challenges. They ensure that they are aware of any new issues that pupils may face. This allows them to adapt the curriculum and experiences that all pupils receive. For example, recent pupil surveys identified a wish to deepen pupils' understanding of online safety and laws related to its use, such as about sharing of inappropriate material on social media. Leaders rapidly made appropriate changes to the curriculum to include detailed information about these topics. Impartial careers guidance is effective and highly valued. Pupils benefit from practical experiences, such as working with a building firm to redesign the school playground. This helps them make appropriate choices for the next stages of their education, training or work. All pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have access to enrichment opportunities. These include overseas residential trips, museum visits and inter-school sports competitions. Uptake of school clubs is not as high as it could be. However, leaders have carefully planned and booked a set of experiences for the summer, in which all pupils will participate. These are intended to broaden pupils' cultural horizons.

Post 16 provision Expected standard Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the post-16 provision. The study programme takes account of the school's context, offering a balance of academic and vocational options. Leaders are flexible about admitting students, such as when they show high aptitude but may have narrowly missed the entry requirements. The well-sequenced curriculum is generally taught well. Disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive the support they need to succeed. In the vocational courses, students make significantly positive progress from their low starting points and achieved in line with students nationally in 2025. At A level, although published data shows attainment below the national averages, students' progression from their average GCSE starting points is high. However, students with higher starting points do not progress as well. With the effective programme of impartial careers guidance and work experience, students leave the school well prepared for their next steps

. Students benefit from a full personal development and non-examination programme delivered through form time and weekly assemblies, visiting speakers, workshops and trips. Students are involved in volunteering and charitable activities, as well as helping at school events. There are a few opportunities for enrichment, for example weekly sports sessions. Students would welcome some other options.

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

Pupils are warmly welcomed each day as they arrive at school. The safeguarding and welfare teams are proactive

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in identifying pupils who may need help. Pupils know that they can speak with a trusted adult if they have a worry. Leaders ensure that pupils get the safeguarding and welfare support that they need. Pupils are encouraged to live up to the school's values of integrity, kindness, self-control and excellence. This leads to a calm, caring and purposeful atmosphere, where pupils get on well with each other and with staff. Pupils new to the school are assigned buddies who help them settle into school life. Students in the sixth form act as reading mentors for younger pupils and some support GCSE pupils who need subject-specific additional help. The school takes a prompt yet measured approach to addressing occasional incidents of bullying. Pupils attend well. They enjoy learning and take pride in their work. This is reflected in how quickly they arrive to class and settle down to tasks. Pupils take care in recording their work in their 'beautiful books'. These display clearly how they deepen their knowledge and extend their skills through the well-sequenced curriculum journey. Inclusion is at the heart of the school's work. Pupils who are disadvantaged, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those known, or previously known, to children's social care and those who face challenges to their learning and/or wellbeing, like young carers, receive well-targeted and timely support. Pupils benefit from effective teaching and learning that address their knowledge gaps well. They generally progress steadily from their typically low starting points enabling them to continue into further education. The well-considered personal development programme benefits pupils across the school. They leave well prepared for adulthood.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that highly effective teaching is embedded across all subjects and year groups so that all pupils consistently achieve excellent outcomes, developing detailed knowledge and skills.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Leaders work closely with pupils, parents and carers and external agencies to support regular attendance. Overall, attendance is consistently close to the national average.

Notably, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. Persistent absence has fallen significantly. Leaders have revamped their approach to behaviour management. There is now a shared understanding of the high expectations for behaviour. These expectations are clear and understood by everyone. Consistent routines typically create a calm, purposeful environment where lessons largely run smoothly and learning is uninterrupted. Social times are inclusive, and pupils generally get on well together. The safeguarding and welfare team responds quickly to any concerns, including bullying, harassment, abuse or violence should they occur. Staff promote positive behaviour and success through daily recognition of pupils who uphold the school's values. At the same time, effective support is prioritised for pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour. The school's internal exclusion centre and 'reset' rooms provide quiet, well-staffed spaces for reflection and continued study. This approach avoids suspensions. It helps pupils return quickly to their regular classes and continue with their learning.

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For detailed performance data including disadvantage gap analysis, historical trends, and comparison tables, visit the school's profile on WhatSchool:

<https://whatschool.ai/en/school/lift-aylward-london>