

Aldercar High School

Address: Daltons Close, Langley Mill, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, NG16 4HL

Unique reference number (URN): 149364

Inspection report: 21 April 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 

Leaders have identified the patterns and trends associated with poor attendance and are working, at pace, to address the barriers to attending that some pupils face. Provisions, such as a breakfast club and 'soft starts', are encouraging more pupils into school. Pupils facing additional vulnerabilities, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), receive expert guidance from well-trained staff to resolve any severe attendance issues that they may have. Consequently, pupils' attendance has improved and is broadly in line with national averages. The number of pupils who are persistently absent from school, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, has reduced.

Leaders have been successful in their endeavours to make the school more inclusive for pupils who find it challenging to manage their behaviour. Pupil suspensions, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, have reduced. Pupils are well mannered, show self-discipline and conduct themselves admirably at social times and in many of their lessons. They are a pleasure to be around. Lessons are calm and are rarely disrupted.

Pupils do not believe that bullying or harassment is an issue for them in the school. They trust staff to swiftly resolve any problems that they may have.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Many pupils who attend the school are disadvantaged, are pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or are pupils facing additional vulnerabilities. Some pupils have highly complex needs. Leaders are working hard to ensure that suitable in-school provisions, including post 16, meet the learning needs of their school community. They have established an inclusive culture in which all pupils are known well and thoughtfully supported.

Additional funding is spent wisely and has a positive impact, reflected in the improvements seen in disadvantaged pupils' behaviour and attendance.

Inclusion leaders are highly knowledgeable about pupils with SEND, including those within the specially resourced provision for pupils who are deaf or hearing-impaired or with physical disabilities. Leaders are strong advocates for pupils' success. They work effectively with staff, families and a range of external agencies to identify and assess needs and remove barriers to learning and participation. As a result, pupils feel that their needs are met, and they engage fully in the life of the school.

Leaders work closely with relevant professionals and services, including the local authority, to ensure that pupils who need it receive appropriate academic and pastoral support. This collaborative approach helps pupils to feel safe, valued and able to engage positively with school life.

Leaders have ensured a well-planned and delivered personal, social and health education curriculum that is highly relevant to pupils' needs and context. The curriculum is carefully adapted to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, in consideration of the many additional challenges they may face. Pupils say that this is an important part of their curriculum. They value how it helps them to develop a sense of right and wrong and how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

Pupils are knowledgeable about issues of equality and are keen to share their views on fundamental British values, the importance of diversity and of being fair and kind to each other. They recognise that we live in an increasingly diverse society and embrace the knowledge they receive about different cultures and religions.

The school offers a range of additional activities at lunchtime and after school to broaden pupils' experiences and interests. Pupils enjoy trips to the theatre and celebration events led by the trust. Leaders absolutely encourage and support pupils facing the most challenges and vulnerabilities to take part in as many additional activities as possible, including foreign travel and residential stays. They see this as part of their mission to ensure social justice.

Pupils receive effective careers advice and guidance. The school has strengthened links with local employers, and this has enhanced the provision. More pupils now move to suitable destinations when they leave school than previously.

Pupils' pastoral care is an absolute strength of the school. It permeates everything. Pupils can regularly be seen enjoying a chat with their teachers at social times. They appreciate the care they receive from the staff serving food during breakfast club. Pupils said that they are extremely grateful to staff for their kindness and the way in which they help shape them to be the people they want to be.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

The attainment of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils, is not as good as needed at the end of key stages 4 and 5 over time. Attainment in national tests is below national averages across most measures. While leaders have taken appropriate action to improve this situation, it is too soon to see the impact of this work on pupils' achievement. Pupil destination information has improved, and more pupils are moving on to appropriate next steps when they leave the school.

Although improving, some pupils still have gaps in the foundations they need for future learning. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should across the range of subjects that they study.

Pupils and students with significant SEND receive expert support to make progress across the curriculum. Many achieve ambitious next steps.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention ●

Leaders are determined for pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils, to experience an ambitious curriculum. They have started this work, but it is at an early stage. The curriculum is broad and reflects the demands of the national curriculum. However, it is inconsistently planned and taught.

Leaders have established clear expectations for teaching. Although it is early days, these expectations are becoming increasingly well embedded. However, checks of pupils' learning are not as precise as needed. This has impacted on pupils' acquisition of the foundations they need for their learning. Errors in spelling, grammar and letter formation are sometimes not addressed quickly enough, and so learning gaps remain for some pupils.

Leaders are proud of the school's reading strategy. Pupils' reading confidence and fluency are encouraged, as is their knowledge of different authors and genres of books. Leaders acknowledge that there is still more to do to embed the specialist phonics support for the weakest readers.

The curriculum is inclusive. Staff know the needs of pupils with SEND extremely well. Curriculum adaptations are skilfully matched to pupils' needs and ensure that these pupils make progress.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention ●

There has been a period of leadership turbulence. The school has been without a substantive headteacher until very recently. Leaders, with support from the trust, have stepped up to lead the school and have steadied the ship. They have established clear expectations and created a more positive and productive learning culture. Their work has improved aspects of the school, including pupils' behaviour and attendance. A substantive headteacher has been appointed and has very recently joined the school. He has brought experience, energy and a much-needed sense of optimism for the school's future. The work to drive improvement across all key stages and areas of the school's work has begun but is at an early stage.

There are appropriate governance structures in place. Governors have appropriate oversight of the school and make sure that resources are used effectively. They know the school well and provide suitable challenge and support.

Staff have been through a difficult time, and this has impacted negatively on some staff's workload. Even so, staff are incredibly proud to work at the school and show great commitment. They have valued the recent stability in leadership and are very positive about the impact the substantive headteacher has had in a very brief amount of time.

Staff and governors access a range of suitable training. Safeguarding training and support are particularly effective, as are the subject networks. The capacity of the trust to provide expert secondary support has very recently improved and should continue.

Post 16 provision

Needs attention 

There has been a great deal of change to the leadership of the sixth form. Historically, level 3 achievement has been below average. The decision has been made to close the provision for level 2 and level 3 learners. Despite this, leaders are appropriately ambitious for the remaining Year 13 students. Students receive a consistently secure quality of education. They are taught well. Their achievement is beginning to improve. However, some students do not engage in other wider activities that have been offered to them, some of which encourage their personal development and extend their wider opportunities. This limits their learning and their experience of sixth-form study. Even so, these students feel that staff have their best interests at the heart of what they do and help to keep their welfare safeguarded.

The school also has a post-16 level 1 provision. Pupils within this provision have a very positive learning experience that is closely aligned to their needs. These students, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities, take part in a wide and well-adapted curriculum. They are very well taught. They take part in a residential event and experience a wide variety of activities that widen their experiences and help to keep them safe. They are particularly well supported for their next learning steps.

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

Pupils are beginning to enjoy their learning much more than they have previously, particularly pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged pupils and pupils with additional vulnerabilities. They appreciate the support and care they receive from their teachers. They have a genuine thirst for knowledge and to succeed. However, although improving, the quality of teaching is inconsistent. Pupils do not always gain the knowledge and skills they need across all the subjects that they study. They do not yet achieve at the levels that they should.

This is a caring and inclusive school. Pupils benefit from warm and positive relationships with their teachers. Staff know pupils' needs extremely well. This is particularly the case for pupils with SEND. Every effort is made to reduce any barriers to learning that they may face. All pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, are encouraged to take part in wider opportunities to broaden their experiences and interests. The school prefects and members of the student council play an active role in the school and are extremely positive role models for the whole community.

Pupils are welcomed to school by teachers who care about them. Attendance has really improved. Pupils feel safe and know that there are many members of staff to turn to if they need help. Staff are vigilant. They make sure that pupils, particularly those known to social care, receive the expert support that they need to thrive.

Pupils' behaviour has improved significantly. The school is a calm place in which pupils can learn. Bullying is rare and staff deal with it swiftly and effectively if it occurs. Pupils say that the school is one where harassment and discrimination would not be tolerated. Sixth-form students describe a school where equality is important and is 'lived'.

Next steps

- Leaders should make sure that there is a well-planned curriculum across all subjects and key stages that suitably builds on pupils' starting points and that also ensures that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and students in the sixth form, develop the foundations of learning needed to successfully progress to their appropriate next steps.
 - Leaders should ensure that they embed highly effective teaching and assessment across the school so that all groups of pupils, including those with SEND, make clear and sustained progress across the curriculum.
 - Leaders should continue their work to analyse closely the performance of different groups of vulnerable pupils, to identify priorities accurately and to continue to improve their attendance and achievement.
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About this inspection

This school is part of Embark Multi-Academy 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), Matt Crawford, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David King.

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 met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They met with the director of secondary school improvement, who acted as the nominee during the inspection, and other trust representatives, including the trust's lead for safeguarding. The lead inspector met with the CEO of the trust, the chair of trustees, members of the trust and the local governing boards.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. The headteacher took up the post 6 days before the inspection commenced in April 2026. Prior to this appointment, a current deputy headteacher provided interim leadership as head of school.

Leaders have taken the decision to suspend the sixth form to level 2 and level 3 learners. From September 2025, the school offers level 1 qualifications post 16 for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Currently, 16 students with SEND are

studying level 1 qualifications. In Year 13, 27 students are studying level 2 and level 3 qualifications.

The school makes use of 4 unregistered alternative provisions.

The school includes specially resourced provision for 7 pupils who are deaf or hearing-impaired or have physical disabilities.

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.

Headteacher: Phil Smith

Lead inspector:

Jayne Ashman, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:


Alison Davies, Ofsted Inspector

Sally Wicken, Ofsted Inspector

Teresa Roche, 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 21 April 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

690

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

750

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: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

43.00%

Above 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

6.52%

Well above 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

15.07%

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

Above 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)

Resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

Type of specialist provision (if applicable)

HI - Hearing Impairment, PD - Physical Disability

What does this mean?

The type of Special Educational Needs provision provided at the school (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)	22.2%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	32.8%	45.9%	Below
2022/23		45.3%	

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)	33.9	46.0	Below
2023/24 (final)	37.9	45.9	Below
2022/23		46.3	

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)	-0.39	-0.03	Below
2022/23		-0.03	

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)	16.2%	25.8%	Below
2023/24 (final)	19.5%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23		25.2%	

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)	27.4	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	30.2	34.6	Close to average
2022/23		35.0	

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)	-0.57	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23		-0.57	

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)	16.2%	53.1%	-36.9 pp
2023/24 (final)	19.5%	53.1%	-33.6 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23		52.4%	

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)	27.4	50.4	-23.0
2023/24 (final)	30.2	50.0	-19.9
2022/23		50.3	

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)	-0.57	0.16	-0.73
2022/23		0.17	

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 (revised)	83%	93%	Below

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)	17.61	34.99	Below
2023/24 (final)	10.82	34.38	Below

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)	-0.8	0.0	Below
2023/24 (revised)	-0.9	0.0	Below

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)	10.4%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	11.5%	8.9%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2022/23 (3 term)	10.2%	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)	27.5%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	30.5%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	32.1%	26.5%	Above

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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