

Inspection of The Spencer Academies Trust

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 May 2025

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Apprenticeships

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

The Spencer Academies Trust is a multi-academy trust of schools across the East Midlands. At the time of the inspection 55 apprentices were studying the level 3 teaching assistant apprenticeship, and eight apprentices were studying the level 4 early intervention practitioner. Most apprentices work for the trust. Around three quarters of apprentices are adults.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Apprentices enjoy their courses. They have very positive attitudes and demonstrate high levels of commitment to their studies. They develop respectful relationships with staff and peers. They value highly the professional networks they develop while studying their apprenticeship. They relish learning from their peers and discussing their varied workplace experiences.

Apprentices highly value the support they receive from staff to help them keep on track with their studies. Staff frequently check in with apprentices. They swiftly identify apprentices who are falling behind and meet with them to provide support to help them to catch up. Tutor assessors use progress reviews and one-to-ones effectively to monitor apprentices' progress and set apprentices helpful targets. Apprentices make good progress.

Apprentices develop the professional behaviours they need to be successful in their job roles. Rates of attendance at training sessions are high. Apprentices demonstrate professional curiosity. They become more confident exploring a range of different approaches to their everyday work and are adaptable when needed. At the end of their courses, apprentices remain in their roles and a few obtain promotion.

Apprentices feel safe in learning and in their workplaces. They do not experience any bullying or harassment.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders are highly ambitious for their apprentices. Leaders draw on the wider experience of staff within the trust and their research network to ensure that staff teaching sessions include the latest academic research and thinking. Leaders have designed courses that extend well beyond the apprenticeship standards. Teaching assistant apprentices learn about phonics, early reading and oracy. This helps to ensure apprentices can support pupils effectively to develop their literacy skills.

Leaders continually listen to the apprentices' workplace managers and leaders and quickly respond to the needs that they identify. As a result of this feedback, apprentices working in secondary schools with key stage 3 pupils have received effective specialist training on literacy intervention. This helps them to be better prepared to support these young people.

Leaders and managers have ensured that their courses are effectively ordered to develop apprentices' skills and knowledge over time. Early intervention practitioner apprentices first explore fundamental concepts about supporting young people and their families. They explore the reasons behind difficult family situations. They then move on to more complex topics, using these basic principles, such as writing individualised safeguarding assessments. This enables apprentices to increasingly apply the theory that they have learned to practical contexts.

Facilitators have considerable expertise and experience. They use this knowledge effectively in lessons to help apprentices gain a solid understanding of topics. They provide apprentices with interesting workplace examples and different approaches that they can try themselves.

Facilitators skilfully make links with prior and future learning to help apprentices to remember and retain information. They use helpful diagrams and images to help explain key concepts, such as models regarding the principles of instruction. They use scenarios effectively to assist apprentices in exploring different situations such as safeguarding incidents.

Facilitators and tutor assessors use assessment effectively. Facilitators check apprentices' understanding of concepts successfully. Tutor assessors provide effective feedback on written work. Apprentices develop their report writing and referencing skills. Their work improves over time and is of a good standard.

Apprentices with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive the support that they need to be successful on their courses. These apprentices make progress in line with their peers. Apprentices studying English and mathematics receive individualised support. However, too few apprentices achieve their functional skills mathematics qualifications on the first attempt.

Apprentices who complete their courses achieve their apprenticeships, many with distinction grades. However, too few teaching assistant apprentices who start in the mid-year cohorts remain in learning. Leaders and managers identify that this is due to apprentices struggling with the workload and apprentices leaving due to personal challenges. Leaders have implemented a range of well-considered actions to rectify this. It is too early to say if this will lead to an increase in the proportion of these apprentices who remain on their course.

Apprentices develop considerable new knowledge, skills and understanding. Teaching assistant apprentices understand the importance of scaffolding learning and of preventing cognitive overload. This helps apprentices to recognise their pupils' needs and to try different methods to support them. Workplace managers value that apprentices quickly develop the knowledge and skills they need to work with limited direction.

Leaders have designed an effective personal development programme that includes a separate pathway for younger apprentices. Staff ensure that apprentices receive comprehensive and impartial guidance about potential career pathways. Apprentices value the immersion days that staff include as part of their courses. These provide apprentices with a broader understanding of different settings, such as specialist SEND schools.

Those responsible for governance have an excellent understanding of the provider's strengths and weaknesses. They provide considerable challenge to leaders. They have challenged leaders over the number of apprentices who leave their courses

before they are complete, and they carefully monitor the actions that leaders are taking to make improvements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that a higher proportion of teaching assistant apprentices complete their programmes and do not leave early.
- Ensure that higher proportions of apprentices pass their functional skills mathematics examinations at their first attempt.

Provider details

Unique reference number	2701046
Address	Portland Spencer Conference Centre Birchover Rd Nottingham Nottinghamshire NG8 4BW
Contact number	0115 646 4200
Website	www.spencertrust.org.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Paul West
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the director of the Spencer Teaching School Hub, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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