

Inspection of Millside Spencer Academy

53 Evans Road, East Leake, Loughborough, Nottinghamshire LE12 6AS

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 June 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The principal of this school is Sophia Thorne. This school is part of Spencer Academies Trust which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Paul West, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Donna Kinderman.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at this school thrive in a nurturing and inclusive environment. They feel, safe, cared for and proud to belong. Pupils speak warmly about their teachers, describing them as kind, approachable and always ready to help. Relationships between staff and pupils are a defining strength of the school. Pupils explain the school is, 'just a happy place to be'. This culture is reflected in the calm, purposeful atmosphere across classrooms and shared spaces.

Expectations for all pupils are high, and these are consistently realised. Pupils are motivated, curious and engaged. Current learning shows that pupils achieve well. Pupils understand what is expected of them. They respond positively to the clear routines and values that underpin school life. The 'Millside Way' and 'SHINE' values are modelled by staff and lived out by pupils. As a result, behaviour is exemplary.

Pupils take on a variety of roles such as being a school councillor or librarian. They take these responsibilities very seriously. Pupils recognise their role in helping others and giving back to the community. What makes this school distinctive is its strong sense of belonging and its inclusive ethos. Leaders explain, 'happy children learn best' - and here, they do.

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

Pupils benefit from a curriculum that is broad and ambitious. Children start their journey at the school in a well-resourced early years provision. Communication between staff and parents and carers is prioritised. Strong home and school relationships are quickly established. Children's reading journey starts straight away in the early years. Books are at the heart of all learning.

Reading is a clear priority. Pupils enjoy reading and speak positively about the school library and various reading initiatives, including the book vending machine. Staff are all trained to deliver the phonics programme. It is taught well. Pupils learn to blend sounds to decode unfamiliar words. Pupils access high quality texts from the school's reading spine. Books have been carefully chosen to expose pupils to a diverse range of authors, cultures and life experiences. Reading every day in a variety of contexts supports pupils to become confident and fluent readers.

Across the curriculum, tasks regularly revisit previous learning. Important vocabulary and questions to promote pupils' thinking are displayed in classrooms. These approaches help pupils to recall what they have learned and to embed knowledge into their long-term memory. However, in some of the wider curriculum areas, pupils' knowledge is less secure. This is because in these areas, learning does not consistently build upon what pupils already know.

The school has not established a clear understanding of the effectiveness of teaching some aspects of the curriculum. In the early years, for example, when children are learning through play, learning does not always show clear progression from Nursery to

the Reception Year. Similarly, in music, learning does not always provide pupils with the knowledge and skills they will need to access future learning.

Pupils respond well to the high expectations consistently set by staff. Pupils show mature attitudes to their learning. They really want to do their best. Pupils answer and ask questions and enjoy working collaboratively to discuss their learning. Pupils are intrinsically motivated to do well. Where pupils struggle, the school provides intelligent, fair, and highly effective support to help them succeed.

The school quickly identifies pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders work proactively with a range of external professionals to ensure that the correct advice and support is obtained. Pupils with SEND access the full curriculum using carefully adapted learning resources. They achieve well.

The school's personal development offer is exceptional. The curriculum extends far beyond the academic and is a real strength of the school. Pupils are offered a wide range of opportunities to develop their interests and talents. They take part in sports clubs, talent competitions and community events. Visits to places such as the holocaust centre and the local military hospital help pupils to develop empathy, cultural awareness and a sense of social responsibility. Pupils learn to reflect on their character, aspirations and role in the wider world. The school celebrates pupils' achievement and character through a range of initiatives like the 'shine book' parade.

Leaders know the school's strengths and areas for development well. Governors and trust representatives provide leaders with effective support and challenge. Leaders consider staff workload in all decision making. Staff well-being is prioritised. Staff are proud to work at the school. They access regular training and value the opportunity to network across the trust. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's work to refine the curriculum as the school grows is ongoing. Pupils' knowledge in some subject areas does not consistently build incrementally and therefore some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. The school must ensure that curriculum refinements, including in the early years, ensure that pupils knowledge builds consistently over time so that they know and remember more of the curriculum.
- Some of the school's approaches to measuring the impact of the curriculum lack precision to provide a full and detailed understanding of how well the curriculum is taught. Precise monitoring of the curriculum is therefore not fully established. The school should ensure that there are clear approaches in place to measure the impact of

the curriculum so that it has an accurate view of how well the curriculum is taught in all areas, including in the early years.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	149105
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10379603
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	171
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Donna Kinderman
CEO of the trust	Paul West
Principal	Sophia Thorne
Website	millsidespencer.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 June 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school opened on 1 September 2022.
- The school is part of Spencer Academies Trust.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, geography and music. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils, and reviewed samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for behaviour, attendance, personal development, early years and the provision for pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan. The inspector met with members of the local governing body and the trust board.
- The inspector met with the director of primary education, director of inclusion and the director of quality and standards from the trust.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including any free-text comments, as well as the results of Ofsted's survey for school staff.

Inspection team

Luella Dhoore, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

George Huthart

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025