

Inspection of a good school: Heanor Gate Spencer Academy

Kirkley Drive, Heanor, Derbyshire DE75 7RA

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 May 2022

Outcome

Heanor Gate Spencer Academy continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a section 5 inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is a strong learning community where all are on a mission to 'aspire, learn and achieve'. This ethos unites staff, pupils and their families as 'team Heanor'. Pupils said that they are happy and feel safe here. Pupils want to learn and they behave very well. They have warm, respectful relationships with staff and each other. Bullying is not tolerated.

The school provides an ambitious curriculum and delivers it well. Staff have high expectations of pupils. They have planned every moment of the school day to support pupils to be successful learners. The school challenges pupils to aim for excellence, and pupils are proud of their achievements.

Pupils learn to become responsible and respectful members of their community. They know that it is important to learn about people and cultures that are different from their own. They are well prepared to take their place in modern Britain.

Pupils take part in a variety of activities, including bands, basketball, Side by Side (the school's lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans peer support group), and the Combined Cadet Force. These give pupils the chance to discover and develop their talents and character. Parents and carers appreciate that the school wants the best for each child.

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

Leaders and staff are determined to enhance the lives and life chances of all pupils in this school. They have designed a curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum is challenging. For example, all pupils learn computer science in key stage 3. Leaders encourage pupils to study a wide range of subjects, including humanities and languages at key stage 4. In the sixth form, students can choose from a wide range of academic and vocational courses.

Leaders have worked hard to improve the quality of the curriculum in each subject from Year 7 to Year 13. Leaders make sure that staff have thought carefully about the important knowledge and concepts they want pupils to learn. Teachers plan learning to build on what pupils already know towards ambitious learning goals.

Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They know their pupils and their individual needs well. They present information clearly and they teach pupils the vocabulary that they need to succeed in each subject. Staff ask pupils the right questions in the right way to check their understanding. Each lesson begins with 'long-term retrieval'. Pupils value this as it helps them to remember more. Leaders insist that teachers break down content into chunks and then put these together to build knowledge over time. Staff expertly support pupils with SEND to learn well. As a result, pupils' learning is secure before they move on to the next step.

The school has planned a highly effective tutor-time programme that includes spelling, vocabulary building and numeracy. Leaders make sure that this programme meets the needs of all learners, based on their starting points. The school is focused on supporting all pupils to be better readers. Pupils who need extra help with reading receive it. In science, the teaching of literacy is particularly strong. Leaders have clear plans to make the teaching of literacy even better.

Pupils' work shows that they achieve highly. Teachers help pupils to understand how to transfer their knowledge to their written work. Pupils are proud of their work. They learn to be independent and they know what to do to learn more. The quality of work and discussion in lessons from Year 7 to Year 13 is high. The school makes highly effective use of assessment to check what pupils know and can do. Teachers identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and plan effectively to fill them.

Pupils' behaviour is very good. Lessons are calm and pupils work with focus. They listen respectfully and respond positively to staff and each other. They are equally respectful at break- and lunchtime. When pupils do misbehave, staff deal with it firmly and fairly.

The school has a strong programme of personal development. Pupils learn about other cultures and beliefs. They learn how to be a responsible citizen. Students in the sixth form give back to the school, for example by helping younger pupils with their reading. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to contribute to the school community. Careers education is effective, and pupils know what choices they have.

Leaders and staff want the very best for each pupil and they work hard to achieve it. They are supported by governors and the multi-academy trust very well. Leaders manage staff's workload carefully. They provide a programme of high-quality professional development. Staff are proud to work here.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They know how to report concerns about pupils and what signs to look out for. The safeguarding team manages concerns carefully and keeps accurate records. The team has set up systems to support pupils and families. It works effectively with outside agencies to make sure that pupils get expert help when they need it.

Pupils learn to keep themselves and others safe. They know how to get help if they need it. Pupils learn about healthy, respectful relationships. The use of derogatory language is rare, and when it does occur, staff respond swiftly.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2017.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	137606
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10227837
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,321
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	274
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Donna Kinderman
Principal	Stephen Huntington
Website	www.heanorgatespencer.com
Date of previous inspection	15 and 16 March 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses three alternative providers for a small number of pupils. One is registered and two are unregistered.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school has a large sixth form.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with senior leaders, representatives of the multi-academy trust and members of the local governing board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science and languages. Inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work in other subjects. They visited the resource base for pupils with SEND and observed pupils' learning. They visited tutor time and assemblies.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders to discuss the school's safeguarding arrangements. They scrutinised a range of records relating to safeguarding and behaviour, including bullying.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives of the alternative providers used by the school.
- Inspectors observed pupils at different times of the school day, including the start and the end of the day, and at lunchtime and breaktime.
- Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils during the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, pupils and staff through their respective Ofsted surveys.

Inspection team

Aoife Galletly, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Janis Warren

Ofsted Inspector

Julian Scholefield

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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