

Inspection of a good school: Hilton Spencer Academy

Peacroft Lane, Hilton, Derby, Derbyshire DE65 5GH

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 January 2023

Outcome

Hilton Spencer Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Hilton Spencer Academy is a joyful and welcoming place. Pupils aim to follow the school's motto of 'one school – one rule: Respect yourself, others and our school'. A common view expressed by pupils is that 'people are kind and respectful at this school'.

Pupils report that they enjoy school. They say that they are happy and feel safe.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are extremely polite and welcoming to visitors. They are proud of their school. They said that they would 'definitely' recommend the school to another child. Most parents said the same. The pupils spoken to said that bullying rarely happens.

Pupils can take on leadership roles. For example, they can be a house captain, be on the school council or represent the school through the 'pupil parliament'. Pupils take pride in holding these roles and in representing their peers. A common view was that they want their ideas to make the school even better.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. The school is very inclusive. Staff are determined that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), receive the support they need to flourish and achieve well.

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

Leaders have recently designed a curriculum that is logically ordered. This means that pupils' new learning builds on what they already know. Leaders want pupils to be subject specialists, such as mathematicians in maths and historians in history. This is exemplified by the mathematics curriculum, which is a strength of the school. Children in the early years begin by developing a secure understanding of number. Activities are carefully planned to enable mathematics to be incorporated into as many activities as possible. As children move through the school, there are daily mathematics booster sessions which are used to revisit past and recent learning.

Teachers assess pupils' knowledge and understanding frequently. This information helps teachers to identify where pupils might have gaps in their knowledge. They use it to inform their planning. However, assessment procedures are not fully embedded or consistent across all foundation subjects. Some subjects are at earlier stages of implementation than others.

Staff know pupils with SEND very well. They identify pupils' needs and use appropriate strategies to support pupils' learning. Teaching assistants support pupils well in all aspects of school life. Leaders work well with parents and external agencies to make sure that pupils get extra help when they need it.

Leaders have thought carefully about the teaching of phonics and early reading. There is a consistent approach that starts with the children in the early years. Daily phonics sessions help pupils to learn sounds quickly. Pupils read books that match the sounds they know. Pupils have positive attitudes to reading. Teachers encourage pupils to read often. They are quick to spot any pupils who may need extra help to keep up.

Children get off to a flying start in the early years. The environment is well planned and welcoming. Children settle well and develop their understanding of routines and expectations. Staff form strong relationships with the children and care for them well. Teachers provide children with interesting activities. These engage children, allowing them to practise the skills they have learned and promote their development. The outdoor space is used well to promote children's learning and development. Adults know what children should be able to do at each stage of the Reception Year. Anyone who begins to fall behind gets help to catch up.

Pupils are friendly and polite to visitors. They behave well in lessons and work hard. Staff use the school's behaviour system consistently well.

Leaders provide a range of experiences to enhance pupils' personal development. Pupils understand diversity. They respect difference. Pupils told inspectors that 'all are welcome here'. Pupils learn how to be resilient and confident. Pupils speak with respect when discussing different faiths and families. One pupil, typical of many, told an inspector, 'We are all different. It is good to be unique.' There is a range of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities available at the school. However, some parents have concerns that the school's wider extra-curricular offer is too narrow.

Leaders are focusing on the right areas of the school to improve. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and development areas. Leaders engage well with staff. They provide regular training and consider staff's well-being and workload. Staff are extremely proud to work at Hilton Spencer Academy.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know pupils and their families very well. Leaders take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. There is a strong culture of safeguarding, and effective systems are in place to keep pupils safe. Leaders take prompt action in response to any concerns. Staff receive regular and appropriate training. Records are well maintained.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. This includes when they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Assessment of the curriculum is not yet fully embedded throughout the school's foundation subjects. Some teachers do not consistently check pupils' responses to tasks, which could lead to misconceptions and mistakes not being quickly identified. Leaders should establish a clear structure for the assessment of pupils' knowledge and understanding of the curriculum to inform planning.
- Some aspects of the curriculum have been introduced relatively recently. Leaders do not yet know definitively the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning. They need to monitor the implementation of the curriculum carefully and rigorously, making adjustments as necessary, to assure themselves that all groups of pupils are achieving as well as they can.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Hilton Primary School, to be good in July 2014.

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](#)' 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	146211
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10254885
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	650
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Donna Kinderman
Principal	Mr Gary Staddon
Website	www.hilton.derbyshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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 carried out deep dives into the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with curriculum leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the range of documents that the school keeps with regard to safeguarding. They spoke with pupils, staff and governors about safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors met with governors and members of the board of trustees.
- The inspectors spoke with groups of pupils and staff. The lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the staff survey.

- Inspectors spoke with groups of staff.

Inspection team

Dawn Ashbolt, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Claire Stylianides

Ofsted Inspector

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