

Inspection of a good school: Sparken Hill Academy

Sparken Hill, Worksop, Nottinghamshire S80 1AW

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 March 2023

Outcome

Sparken Hill Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Sparken Hill Academy is an inclusive school. Everyone is welcomed with open arms. Leaders are highly aspirational for pupils. They want pupils to believe that their futures are full of possibilities. Pupils have ambitions to become teachers, artists, accountants and fashion designers.

Pupils appreciate the school's warm and welcoming environment. They speak fondly of their teachers and leaders. They say they feel happy and safe. They know that bullying is not acceptable. Pupils believe their teachers will do all they can to make sure that any bullying is stopped.

Pupils love the wide range of clubs they can attend, from craft club to roller skating. They are keen to apply for one of the school jobs that are advertised for librarians, play leaders or sports coaches. Pupils are also appointed as 'young farmers' so that they can look after the goats and chickens that live on the school farm.

Parents and carers cherish the care and support their children receive at Sparken Hill Academy. Almost every parent, who expressed a view, referred to how their children are well looked after by staff. One parent summed it up by saying: 'The team at this school are amazing and supportive in every area.'

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

Leaders have designed a well-organised curriculum that sets out what pupils need to learn, and when. Plans start in the early years. Leaders have thought carefully about how pupils' learning will extend over time. For example, in physical education (PE), children in the early years learn how to do static jumps forwards, sideways and backwards. In Year 5, pupils learn about the tactics and passes they need to know to play netball.

Leaders ensure that staff have the expertise they need to teach well. Typically, teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. They present new learning clearly and plan

appropriate activities that engage pupils in their learning. Teachers make regular checks to ensure that pupils remember prior learning. They use this information to plan the next steps in pupils' learning and to support pupils who may have gaps in their knowledge.

Subject leaders are passionate about their roles. They have a clear overview of the subjects they lead. Their leadership is effective in subjects where the curriculum has been in place for some time. In some subjects, the agreed approach to the curriculum is relatively new. In mathematics and phonics, for example, there is more to do to ensure that the curriculum in these subjects is delivered effectively and is making a positive difference to what pupils know and remember. This is particularly true for pupils in key stage 1. Not enough of these pupils reach the standard expected in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.

Leaders prioritise the teaching of reading. Pupils are surrounded by books. The school's library is placed in the centre of the school and is known as 'The heart'. Story time is an important part of every day. Pupils can talk about the books their teachers are reading to them, including 'Stig of the Dump' in Year 3 and 'Secrets of a Sun King' in Year 6.

Children in the early years start to learn the sounds that letters represent without delay. Teachers introduce new sounds to pupils in a logical order. If pupils fall behind, they receive extra help to catch up quickly. Teachers match the books that pupils read to the sounds that they know. This means that all pupils, including those who find reading more difficult, learn to read with confidence.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified as early as possible. Teachers adapt lessons carefully to make sure that these pupils can access the curriculum. Pupils with SEND are fully included in all aspects of school life.

Pupils behave well in lessons. At lunchtime, they can participate in a wide range of activities, supported by adults and pupil play leaders. Pupils have positive relationships with each other and with the adults in school. Pupils know that if any pupil finds it difficult to reach the expected standards of behaviour, staff support them to get it right.

Some pupils are persistently absent from school. These pupils are often from vulnerable groups. They miss too much learning and are at risk of falling behind their peers.

A very large majority of staff say they feel well supported by leaders. They agree that leaders and governors consider their workload. There is an acute awareness of the need to balance the drive for school improvement with staff well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong safeguarding team in school. The team ensures that every member of staff keeps a close eye on pupils' safety. Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They recognise the signs that a pupil may need help. Designated safeguarding leads step in swiftly when a pupil is identified as being at risk of potential harm. The community team

works closely with families to provide help. Leaders draw on the expertise of external organisations at the right time.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They know how important it is to report their concerns to a trusted adult.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have made some relatively recent changes to how phonics and mathematics are taught across the school. The impact of these changes is not yet fully realised. Not enough pupils in key stage 1 are prepared sufficiently well for the next stage in their education. Leaders must monitor closely both the implementation and the impact of these new approaches. They must ensure that the changes they have made make a positive difference to pupils' outcomes, particularly for those in key stage 1.
- Leaders have taken significant action to improve historic low attendance. However, the persistent absence of some pupils remains stubbornly high. These pupils miss out on vital learning when they are not in school. Leaders should continue to work closely with parents to ensure that these pupils attend school on every possible day.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Ryton Park Primary School, to be good in December 2010.

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	141541
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10254811
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	560
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Philip Gawthorpe
Principal	Richard Lilley
Website	www.sparkenhillacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	3 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The governing body manages before- and after-school childcare provision.
- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the principal, the vice-principal and other members of the senior leadership team. She met with four governors, including the chair of governors, and one member.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and PE. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to pupils and teachers about the lessons visited and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also reviewed curriculum plans for science and geography.
- The inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to a familiar adult.

- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector met with the safeguarding team and considered safeguarding documents and records. She also spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding and considered how pupils learn to keep themselves safe.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, in assembly, around the school and at lunchtime. She spoke with staff about what it was like to work at the school and spoke with pupils about their experiences of the school.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff questionnaires. She spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school.

Inspection team

Caroline Poole, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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