

# Inspection of Castleward Spencer Academy

Canal Street, Derby DE1 2RJ

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Inspection dates: 9 and 10 July 2024

## Overall effectiveness

## Outstanding

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Early years provision

**Outstanding**

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The principal of this school is Lindsay Trail. This school is part of The Spencer Academies Trust, which means 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?**

Castleward Spencer Academy is a haven for all pupils. As soon as the doors open each morning they start to learn. Leaders are passionate that each and every pupil will experience success. They have crafted their curriculum with exceptional care because of the diverse nature of the school. They respond intelligently to the ever-changing needs of the pupils that this new school serves.

The school's expectations for pupils' behaviour are second to none. Leaders take time to understand how pupils are feeling. Pupils learn to describe their emotions and have a range of strategies at their fingertips to help them when they do not feel ready to learn. Pupils trust the adults in school because they show high levels of care for them. They are happy, safe and secure. Respectful relationships are prioritised and are the firm foundation on which the school's success is built.

The school plays a vital role in the local community. Staff know that by helping families, they help pupils. Parents and carers appreciate the kindness and practical help the school offers to them and their children. One parent summarised these views when they said: 'I love the atmosphere that this school has created and couldn't be happier that my child is attending this wonderful school.'

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

Leaders have a strong moral purpose to provide the best education they can for pupils. They have designed a broad and rich curriculum. It sets out precisely what pupils will learn. Pupils develop their knowledge step by step resulting in a deeper understanding of each subject over time. For example, in art and design, Year 1 pupils learn to mix secondary colours with paint before using these skills to produce eye-catching plates in the style of the artist Clarice Cliff.

The school prioritises communication and personal and social development. They know that many pupils have poor speech and language skills and find it hard to interact with their peers. This is addressed from the first day in school. Children in the early years get off to a fantastic start. Adults in the nursery class model language and play well. Children repeat what they have seen the adults doing. They pretend to wave a magic wand, tell each other to be lions and then shout, 'freeze!' Children in the early years make remarkable progress from their starting points.

Across the school highly trained staff deliver the curriculum with expertise. They provide clear explanations and design well-thought out learning activities. They use assessment exceptionally well to identify where pupils have gaps in their learning. They provide swift and targeted support. Pupils love learning and routinely acquire the intended knowledge.

The school has robust systems in place to identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It has an excellent understanding of the best way

to support these pupils. Carefully designed and bespoke adaptations are made so that pupils with SEND can access the curriculum. Pupils with SEND make strong progress and do well.

The school wants to give every pupil 'the gift of reading'. In nursery, children are provided with a firm foundation for the early stages of learning to read. From the Reception Year phonics lessons are effectively delivered. Pupils acquire the sounds they need to read and write well. This is reflected in the above average attainment score that the pupils who undertook the Year 1 phonics screen check achieved in published outcomes. If pupils need more help to remember new sounds, this is given without delay. Pupils learn to read with increasing accuracy and confidence. The school is full of carefully chosen books. There is an inviting school library. Pupils enjoy books and can talk about the stories they love. One pupil said: 'Cinderella is my all-time favourite book.'

The school draws on its diverse nature to support its fantastic personal development offer. Pupils show curiosity about the lives and beliefs of others. They develop empathy and show high levels of respect for everyone. The school provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils. Pupils visit a local library and museum. They meet with local businesses and learn about the world of work. They are aspirational for their futures. They want to be bakers, builders, engineers and train drivers when they leave school. They visit the theatre, a restaurant, perform on a stage and participate in sporting events. Pupils benefit highly from these experiences. They become determined and resilient when they face challenge. On sports day everyone participates with a smile on their face. They wait patiently for their turn. If they fall down, they get up and keep on running. They win and lose well.

Staff say that leaders provide them with the time and support they need to do their job as well as they can. They are proud of the way in which the school helps pupils and the wider community. The trust provides effective support and challenge. Governors use their skills well to hold leaders to account. Everyone agrees that Castleward Spencer Academy is the 'best' of the best.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	148585
<b>Local authority</b>	Derby
<b>Inspection number</b>	10298562
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	122
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Donna Kinderman
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Paul West
<b>Principal</b>	Lindsay Trail
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.castlewardspencer.org.uk">www.castlewardspencer.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2021 and is part of The Spencer Academies Trust.
- The headteacher also leads Chellaston Fields Spencer Academy.
- Currently the school has is open to children in Nursery and the Reception Year and pupils in Year 1 and Year 2.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met the principal and two vice-principals. The lead inspector met with the chair and vice-chair of the board of trustees, the chair of the local governing body, the CEO of the trust and further representatives of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector observed pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 read to a member of staff.
- The lead inspector reviewed further curriculum planning for science, design technology, art and design, and religious education (RE). She also reviewed examples of pupil's work in these subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around the school. Inspectors spoke with pupils formally and informally.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the staff survey. They also spoke to staff to gather their views about the school.
- The views of parents and carers were considered through their responses to Ofsted Parent View and free-text messages.

## Inspection team

Caroline Poole, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sarah Sadler

Ofsted Inspector

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