Inspection of Fountaindale School

Nottingham Road, Mansfield NG18 5BA

Inspection dates:	13 and 14 May 2025
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Early years provision	**Good**
Sixth-form provision	**Good**
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected

The headteacher of this school is Christopher Evans. This school is part of Nexus Multi-Academy 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), Warren Carratt, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Rachel Potts.

What is it like to attend this school?

Fountaindale provides a kind and caring environment. Pupils are treated with dignity and respect. They are supported by a highly skilled staff team that shows them care and compassion. The school has high aspirations for pupils and works closely with parents and carers, and a range of health professionals, to ensure that pupils receive a high-quality education. As a result, pupils achieve well, within the context of their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They are happy to come to school and enter the building with smiles.

Pupils know that staff are there to help if they are worried or upset. The support from staff makes them feel safe and appreciated. Pupils enjoy communicating with those around them through a variety of systems. They build positive relationships with their friends and, where possible, share their learning. Pupils are proud of their achievements. They enjoy the praise they receive from staff and their classmates.

Pupils enjoy opportunities to explore the world around them. Teachers bring the outside world into the classroom. They use visual aids, props and sensory activities to create new environments for pupils to explore. Pupils enjoy the walks in the woodland that is part of the school grounds. They are particularly keen to find out about the wildlife that shares this space.

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

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum that sets out what pupils will learn in each of the three 'pathways' available. Staff use these 'pathways', as well as pupils' education, health and care plans (EHC plans), to adapt their teaching to meet each pupil's specific needs. The curriculum 'pathways' are well designed. They provide teachers with a clear framework so that they can deliver a tailored experience to meet each pupil's development needs. Pupils' health requirements are also well supported by a range of expert staff, including physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists. As a result, pupils experience success.

Class teams work together closely to ensure that pupils' needs are fulfilled. EHC plans include meaningful and achievable targets for each pupil's learning. These plans are tracked carefully, and staff provide further support swiftly when required.

Children in the early years follow a curriculum that supports their development, as well as working towards highly individualised targets. There are plenty of opportunities for children to explore the world around them. This prepares them well for their future learning.

The development of communication is a strength throughout the school. Pupils learn ways to communicate and share their thoughts. A variety of communication systems are available, often tailored to the needs of each pupil. Providing pupils with a 'voice' results in their increased resilience, confidence and independence. Pupils are encouraged to develop a love of books. For some, this is through sensory stories. When appropriate,

pupils are taught phonics in a fun and meaningful way. Staff deliver the school's reading programme skilfully, increasing pupils' reading ability and enjoyment.

Behaviour in the school is positive. Pupils are supported to communicate their needs, helping them to avoid any frustration and focus on their learning. Teachers develop positive routines so that pupils know what to expect and what is expected of them. Generally, pupils across the school learn and play beside each other well. Occasionally, classroom activities do not engage pupils well enough, resulting in some pupils disengaging from their learning.

Pupils' personal development is well promoted. The school focuses attention on the rights of all pupils, providing systems for them to advocate for themselves and each other. As part of this, the school has achieved the UNICEF 'Rights Respecting School Award'. The 'pupil parliament' is important to pupils. It allows them to share their thoughts about the school's work. Pupils learn about fundamental British values and embrace difference. There are a variety of clubs on offer that are well attended by pupils, especially the 'inclusive choir'. Enterprise activities take place throughout the year, and class groups love to produce craft items to sell at the Christmas and summer fairs.

Secondary-age pupils and students in the sixth form benefit from a range of opportunities to explore the world of work. They access important careers advice and support regarding future options. From the early years to the sixth form, there is a focus on ensuring that pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

The trust and academy council assist the school well. They provide close support and challenge so that the school continues to develop. The school has established systems to monitor its work, but sometimes it does not evaluate its provision as effectively as it could.

School leaders carefully consider the impact of their decisions on the workload of staff. They ensure that appropriate training is available for all staff. As a result, staff feel well supported and valued. However, some staff are less confident in meeting the complex needs of new pupils joining the school. This impacts on the well-being of these staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, the school does not ensure that all staff make the best use of learning time so that pupils remain fully engaged. This means that some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. The school should ensure that all staff have knowledge and expertise needed to enhance and develop pupils' learning so that no time is lost.

- On occasion, the school does not ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills necessary to support the needs of some pupils. This results in some inconsistencies in the quality of the provision received by some pupils and impacts on the well-being of some staff. The school should ensure that all staff have the skills and understanding to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Sometimes, the school does not develop enough understanding of trends and patterns linked to pupils' outcomes. This means that, at times, it is not able to evaluate fully the impact of its work to improve pupils' achievements. The school should ensure that it evaluates its work effectively, so that it knows what is working well and what needs to be improved, for the benefit of all pupils.

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	149430
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10379616
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	96
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	7
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Rachel Potts
CEO of the trust	Warren Carratt
Headteacher	Christopher Evans
Website	www.fountaindaleschool.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Fountaindale is a special school, catering for pupils aged between three and 18 years with severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, autism and a range of other needs. Many pupils require complex medical care. Some pupils have life-limiting conditions. All pupils have EHC plans.
- The school has developed its curriculum to follow one of three 'pathways'. Each 'pathway' includes three key areas: communication and literacy, cognition and numeracy, and physical. When pupils join the school, their needs are checked to make sure that they follow an appropriate pathway.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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.
- 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.
- 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 held meetings with trust leaders, members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior leaders, other school leaders and staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading and communication, mathematics and physical development. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including records linked to attendance and behaviour, school development plans, school self-evaluation documents and records of governing board meetings.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at social times.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils to gather their views about school.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and discussions with staff. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Nyree Parker, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lea Mason	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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