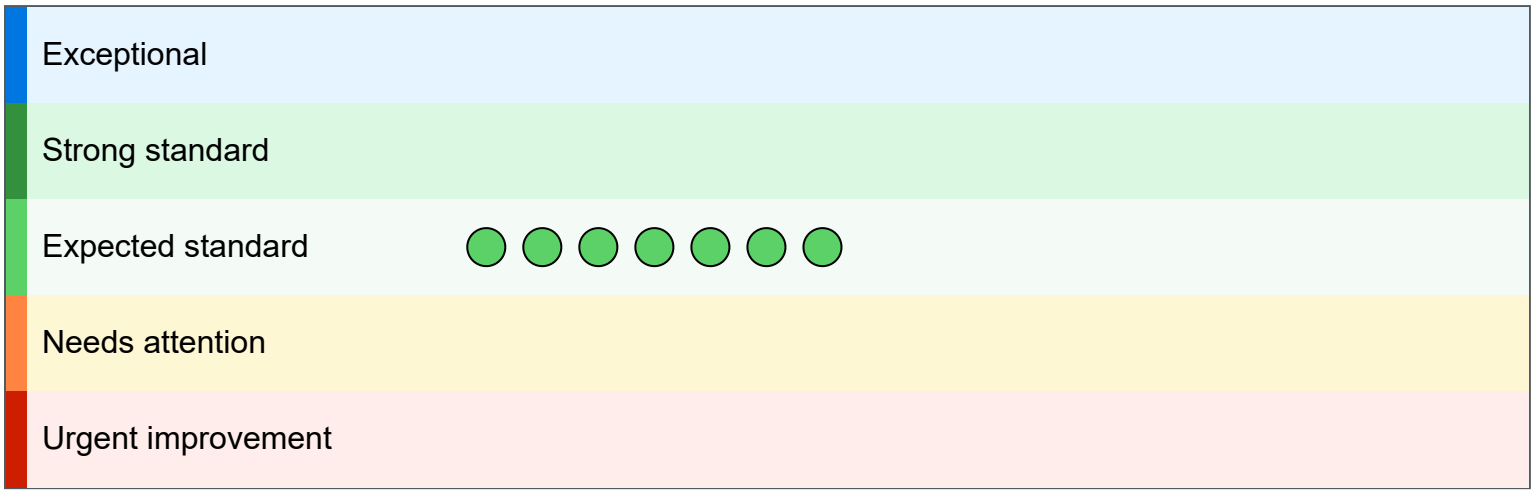
Inkersall Spencer Academy

Address: Inkersall Green Road, Inkersall, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S43 3SE

Unique reference number (URN): 142043

Inspection report: 9 June 2026



Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- Not met: The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Overall, the school prepares pupils well for future learning. Generally, pupils' attainment in national assessments aligns with national averages, including for disadvantaged pupils. There is some variation, but leaders are securing improvements, such as in writing. However, gaps in handwriting, punctuation and spelling persist for some older pupils. Leaders are working to address a decline in pupils' knowledge of multiplication. Daily arithmetic practice is making an impact and closing gaps for most pupils. Pupils' attainment in phonics is broadly average. Effective additional support helps to close gaps quickly in this knowledge. Pupils continue to develop this skill and their comprehension to become fluent readers. Pupils' recall and understanding of their learning across the breadth of the curriculum is generally secure. Occasionally, their understanding of current learning is insecure. Largely, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make positive progress. Due to imprecise adaptations, some pupils with SEND make slower progress.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Most pupils attend school regularly, arriving on time. Leaders continually promote the importance of attendance and monitor it closely. They intervene quickly with bespoke and sensitive support for pupils and families when needed. Consequently, pupils improve their attendance. Absence rates are typically lower than national averages, including for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Leaders work strategically to maintain a calm and safe environment that supports learning. Leaders and staff have high expectations which pupils understand well. Pupils are friendly and polite and behave well overall. Staff follow the school's approaches consistently and provide supportive routines. They highlight and reward pupils' positive actions, while discretely prompting pupils to address any misbehaviour. Mostly, pupils try hard in lessons and show positive attitudes to learning. Pupils benefit from staff caring deeply about them and knowing them well. Staff consistently and successfully support a small number of older pupils who find it difficult to follow the school's expectations. They enable pupils, including those with SEND, to manage their emotions and improve their behaviour. Pupils understand the school's key value of 'respect' well. They play cooperatively and considerately at social times. Instances of bullying, discrimination or harassment are rare and dealt with effectively.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

The curriculum makes clear the key knowledge pupils will learn in all subjects on their journey through school. Leaders ensure that the curriculum design is suitable for pupils and builds knowledge logically, with an emphasis on the important foundations of reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders have a clear understanding of what is working well and what can improve. Teaching of reading and phonics is effective overall. Leaders have improved the curriculum and developed staff expertise for teaching mathematics and writing. The improvements are evident. However, leaders know more work is needed to improve the

consistency in addressing pupils' gaps in handwriting, spelling and punctuation in all their writing.

Overall, teachers deliver the breadth of the curriculum effectively, although there is some variation in quality. This is mainly where staff do not check thoroughly enough that pupils secure the intended learning in activities. On some occasions, therefore, they do not adapt their teaching or activities when pupils are confused or develop misconceptions. Largely, teachers make suitable adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Sometimes however, adaptations do not align fully to some of these pupils' underlying barriers to learning. This hinders these pupils' longer-term success with learning.

Early years

Expected standard

Leaders strengthened the early years provision and recent improvements are impacting positively on children's preparation for their next stages. Children achieve typically and increasingly well by the end of the Reception Year. They mostly secure a firm foundation in phonics and number skills and are improving the accuracy of their pencil hold and letter formation. From the moment they join in the nursery, staff focus on children's readiness for learning. Suitable arrangements and routines are in place to support their wellbeing. The positive relationships children have with nurturing staff help them gain confidence and independence quickly.

The curriculum and learning activities are thoughtfully designed, covering all aspects and the different stages of children's learning. Well-chosen topics and stories provide an engaging context for learning, but staff equally respond flexibly to children's interests. For example, staff may have planned to talk about dinosaurs but if children suddenly develop a fascination in firefighters, staff adapt their teaching skilfully. This increases the opportunities to develop children's speech, language and communication, which staff do effectively through purposeful conversations with children. As speech development is a barrier for some children, leaders recently introduced an extra programme of support which shows early signs of success.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Recognising a significant increase to very high numbers of vulnerable pupils, leaders strengthened their systems around inclusion. Leaders identify these pupils quickly and are deeply committed to ensure they receive the right support. They work with relevant external agencies, in addition to parents and carers, to ascertain pupils' barriers to learning and wellbeing precisely.

Staff know pupils well and produce support plans with clear targets for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Focused training, including from specialists, helps staff adapt teaching and provide appropriate support. The bespoke support for pupils with more complex emotional needs and those with education, health and care plans is especially effective. Sometimes however, leaders do not identify barriers to learning for some pupils with SEND precisely enough. Consequently, the support staff provide is sometimes less effective in securing longer-term success for these pupils.

Leaders make effective use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those known to social care. They align pupil premium funding with the challenges these pupils may encounter and with school improvement priorities to make greater impact. Leaders focus on pupils' academic and personal development. Consequently, these pupils can achieve and thrive as well as their peers.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders, at all levels, have an insightful understanding of the school's community. They recognise the increasing barriers to pupils' wellbeing and learning and take decisive action to overcome these. Leaders understand the school's strengths and its areas for development. They take the right actions to make improvements, in pupils' best interests.

Staff share in and commit fully to leaders' vision for the school. Leaders and the trust consider the professional development programme carefully so that it aligns to the school's priorities while strengthening staff confidence and expertise. Staff feel empowered to take a greater role in leading different aspects of the school's work. At the same time, leaders consider their workload and wellbeing. They ensure that staff have the time and support needed to fulfil their roles.

Those responsible for governance fulfil their statutory duties effectively. Trustees and members of the local governance committee have clear processes to understand different aspects of the school's work and the experiences of pupils and staff. They work with trust leaders to monitor the impact of improvements carefully, particularly on vulnerable pupils. Local governors take pride in helping keep the school very much at the heart of the Inkersall community.

Leaders and staff foster highly positive relationships with parents and carers. They have established a supportive culture in which parents feel valued and confident to seek help. Parents speak highly of the school, appreciating both the care their children receive, and the support provided to families.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

The school provides a thorough and well-considered programme to support pupils' personal development and wellbeing. Through assemblies, for example, pupils develop a secure moral understanding and embrace their spiritual development. Pupils sing heartily together and reflect thoughtfully on their learning and actions. Leaders use playtimes strategically to develop pupils' social skills. In addition to being physically active, pupils play purposefully, collaborate with peers of different ages and develop their independence.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn about healthy relationships and how to look after their physical and mental health. They learn how to recognise risks and stay safe in the community. Pupils talk with confidence about online risks and how to avoid them. They understand the importance of seeking support when they are worried and know how to get help when needed. Comprehensive pastoral support from skilled staff is a strength of the school.

Leaders ensure pupils develop a suitable understanding of life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about fundamental British values, equality and discrimination. Leaders recognise the importance of pupils having experience of cultural diversity. They provide opportunities, such as visits to different places of worship, to broaden pupils' perspectives. While pupils respect others from different backgrounds, their knowledge of different faiths and cultures and depth of understanding around British values is slightly limited.

Pupils thrive on a broad range of opportunities, such as residential visits and careers week, to develop their character and ambition. A range of sport, gymnastics, gardening, arts and musical clubs and activities enable pupils to develop talents. Pupils look forward to showing these off in the school talent contest. Leaders ensure that the personal development offer includes vulnerable pupils. For example, they organise specialist swimming lessons for some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, ensuring they learn this important life skill.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Inkersall Spencer Academy is a happy and very nurturing school. Pupils feel secure due to the caring relationships they have with staff. They attend well and staff greet them warmly each morning, with a breakfast snack and drink. This helps pupils be ready to learn and they settle quickly to their morning tasks. If there are any worries, parents and carers typically praise staff for how they go above and beyond to support pupils and their families.

Pupils feel safe because staff support them effectively with their behaviour too. Pupils understand the school's high expectations to follow the 'Inkersall Way' and 'be ready, respectful and safe'. When pupils find following the expectations a challenge, staff support them sensitively. Staff help pupils understand and respect each other's needs. Pupils get on well with one another and enjoy active playtimes together. Disagreements are uncommon and pupils rarely encounter unkind behaviour like bullying. They are confident that adults will resolve this quickly and effectively if it happens.

Pupils enjoy school and learning. Children have a great start to their education in the early years, including the nursery. Pupils benefit from increasingly effective support when they have any barriers to learning or their wellbeing. As a result, pupils progress generally well through the school's ambitious curriculum. Overall, pupils achieve well over their time at Inkersall, preparing them well for moving on to secondary school.

Pupils' broader development is positive too. Pupils develop the confidence and resilience they need for their future lives. Through a range of well-considered experiences, pupils' ambitions are increasing and they learn to be responsible members of their communities. Pupils are keen to hold roles such as school councillors, playtime leaders, eco warriors, safety and 'truly trusted' values ambassadors. They take pride in their achievements and in supporting others.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure teaching is consistently effective, particularly by ensuring that teachers check pupils' learning robustly and adapt teaching and activities to address their misconceptions. This includes gaps in handwriting, spelling and punctuation.
- Leaders should ensure that the barriers to learning for all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified precisely. They should ensure that the adaptations staff make consistently support pupils to overcome barriers to learning and support their longer-term success.

About this inspection

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 interim chief executive officer (CEO), Kate Green, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Malcolm Batchelor.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.
Inspectors spoke with the principal and school leaders. They also spoke with leaders about their oversight of the school's work in a particular aspect, such as inclusion.
The lead inspector met with members of the board of trustees, including the chair, and representatives of the local governing body. The lead inspector also met with the interim CEO and other trust leaders.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:
The school offers nursery provision for 3- and 4-year-old children.
The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Principal: Sarah Allison

Lead inspector:

Claire Stylianides, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Kate Mann, Ofsted Inspector

Jeremy Spencer, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

This data is from 9 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

377
Above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

420
Above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

44.61%
Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.98%
Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

25.46%
Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	61%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	66%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	49%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	65%	60%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	74%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	77%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	60%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	81%	73%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	71%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	77%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	58%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	75%	71%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	71%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	73%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	70%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	70%	73%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	50%	46%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	58%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	30%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	59%	44%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	61%	62%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	73%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	35%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	70%	60%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	63%	59%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	73%	59%	Above
2023/24 (final)	48%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	67%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	58%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (final)	62%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	48%	59%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	63%	59%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference

between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	50%	68%	-18 pp
2024/25 (final)	58%	69%	-12 pp
2023/24 (final)	30%	67%	-37 pp
2022/23 (final)	59%	66%	-7 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	61%	80%	-19 pp
2024/25 (final)	73%	81%	-8 pp
2023/24 (final)	35%	80%	-45 pp
2022/23 (final)	70%	78%	-8 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	63%	78%	-15 pp
2024/25 (final)	73%	78%	-5 pp
2023/24 (final)	48%	78%	-30 pp
2022/23 (final)	67%	77%	-11 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	58%	80%	-22 pp
2024/25 (final)	62%	81%	-19 pp
2023/24 (final)	48%	79%	-32 pp
2022/23 (final)	63%	79%	-16 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	4.8%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	4.7%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.5%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	9.7%	13.0%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	9.6%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	11.0%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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