

Inspection of Earl Spencer Primary School

Streatfield Road, Spencer Estate, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN5 7DE

Inspection dates:	4 and 5 February 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Earl Spencer pupils are friendly and welcoming. They try hard to live up to the high expectations for their behaviour. They listen attentively to their teachers. They are polite and proudly show off their 'smart walking' in the corridors. They are kind and play respectfully on the playground.

The school provides a very supportive environment for learning. Pupils' mental health and well-being are a priority. 'Wally the Well-being Whale' and the 'well-being warriors' remind everyone how important this is. Pupils choose how they want to be greeted as they arrive at school each day. Staff use this opportunity to check how pupils are feeling. They ensure that pupils receive extra support to feel happy and secure when needed.

Pupils benefit from a range of leadership opportunities. They learn to be responsible and contribute positively to school life. The school council successfully proposed a tuck shop. They ensure that the playground equipment is accessed fairly. Sports ambassadors help organise sporting fixtures. Language ambassadors are proud to welcome new pupils and parents and carers to the country and the school. They support the new arrivals with translation.

The school is ambitious for pupils' achievement. Recent changes to the curriculum are enabling pupils to achieve better outcomes.

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

The ambitious curriculum is under constant review to ensure it meets the needs of pupils, including the curriculum for the early years. The school is particularly mindful of the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on pupils' learning and confidence. Recently, the school has refined the knowledge that pupils need to learn in several subjects. The processes for checking pupils' learning of this knowledge are not fully established yet. This means that sometimes teachers do not have the information they need to identify and address specific gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Reading is a priority in the curriculum. The school recently introduced a new programme for teaching phonics. All staff are trained to teach phonics effectively. They ensure that pupils have sufficient practice when they learn new sounds so they can apply these to their reading. Staff check pupils' learning carefully and identify quickly when pupils need extra support. Pupils are supported well to catch up and become fluent readers. Their achievement in reading is improving as a result. Pupils thoroughly enjoy being read to. Books are selected carefully to instil a love of reading. Pupils are encouraged successfully to independently read more.

The school has made considerable changes in how the curriculum is taught. Children's language development is a priority right from the start in early years. Staff model to children how to take turns in conversation. They enrich what they say to help children learn a wider vocabulary. This continues in later years where, mostly, teachers explain new concepts clearly. The school has developed consistent strategies to help pupils

remember what they have been taught. Nevertheless, some pupils do not have the confidence or language to explain their learning in detail. This is because, over time, pupils have had insufficient opportunities to revisit prior learning. Their knowledge of key concepts in some subjects is variable.

The school has recently improved its processes for identifying pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Extensive support and training are being provided for staff. Learning activities are adapted for pupils but not precisely enough, including in the early years. Adaptions often rely on adult support. However, not all staff have sufficient expertise yet. Consequently, pupils are not supported well to learn with independence.

The supportive school environment helps pupils develop positive attitudes to learning. Pupils work hard in lessons. The school teaches pupils to recognise and manage their emotions. Most pupils attend school regularly. The school works diligently and provides extensive support for families to secure improvements.

The provision for pupils' personal development is well considered. The school has devised an extensive programme for ensuring pupils learn how to stay safe. It also ensures that pupils gain a secure understanding of fundamental British values. Pupils reflect thoughtfully on how these values are important in modern society. Their insightful reflections are supported by their mature understanding of different cultures and faiths. Pupils are proud of their respectful attitudes within their diverse school community.

Governors hold leaders to account and check improvements are made. They carry out their statutory duties effectively. The school also emphasises the importance of staff well-being. When making changes, staff workload is always considered. Staff appreciate the well-considered focus on their professional development. They feel valued and are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some recently reviewed subjects, the processes for checking pupils' learning are not fully established yet. This means gaps in pupils' knowledge are sometimes not identified. The school should ensure the processes for checking pupils' knowledge are clear and the gaps in their knowledge are addressed effectively.
- Recent improvements in teaching the curriculum, including in the early years, are not fully embedded yet. Occasionally, important vocabulary is not emphasised clearly enough, and over time, there have been insufficient opportunities for pupils to revisit

prior learning. There are insecurities in pupils' learning as a result. The school should embed the improvements to ensure the curriculum is taught consistently well.

- Not all staff have sufficient expertise in adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils, particularly for pupils with SEND. Curriculum adaptations largely rely on adult support. This means pupils do not learn with independence or build knowledge as successfully as they could. The school should ensure all staff have the expertise to adapt the curriculum effectively in order to meet the needs of 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	121912
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10347453
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	390
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jenny Daniels
Headteacher	Elisabeth Brear
Website	www.earlspencerprimary.org
Date of previous inspection	6 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the headteacher has become the sole headteacher.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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 is 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.

- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body and spoke to a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders of the school and considered a range of documentation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography, computing and art and design. For each deep dive, the 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 listened as some pupils read to a familiar adult. Inspectors also considered evidence about some other curriculum subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site during breaktime.
- The inspectors spoke with groups of pupils and staff. Inspectors spoke to parents and considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

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