

Hummersknott Academy

Edinburgh Drive, Darlington, County Durham, DL3 8AR

Inspection dates 15–16 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The achievement of students is good and continues to improve rapidly because of the successful and relentless drive by governors and senior leaders to increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching. The thirst for excellence that leaders show in all aspects of the academy's work is outstanding.
- Achievement across subjects continues to rise and gap in attainment between those for whom the pupil premium applies and their peers is closing.
- Teaching is mostly good with many instances where it is outstanding. It continues to improve strongly. There are exemplary relationships between students and staff and this helps to build a strong learning environment throughout the academy.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. They feel safe and are very proud of their academy. They speak highly of the support they receive from the staff and state that this is helping them to do well in their studies. They are courteous and respectful of each other and staff and they respond well to the rich and diverse curriculum.
- Academy leaders are constantly looking for ways to improve students' achievement and have a clear plan to drive standards higher. Partnerships have been developed locally and internationally to enrich and expand creativity and understanding by the students.
- The academy's specialism in languages is continuing to contribute to the development of students' confidence and teamwork.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers occasionally do not give work that sufficiently stretches or challenges all groups of students.
- Students do not always have sufficient opportunities to deepen their understanding by having time to reflect or work independently.
- The improvement in the achievement of lower ability groups in mathematics in Key Stage 4 is not yet strong enough to close the gap with the performance of their peers.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 46 lessons taught by 44 teachers and a cover assistant. Two observations were held jointly with the Principal and vice principal.
- The inspectors observed the academy’s work and looked at a wide range of documents and records, including those that relate to safeguarding and child protection, the academy’s view of its own performance, the monitoring of lessons, achievement data and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Students’ progress was confirmed through lesson observations over the two days of inspection and through a separate scrutiny of books carried out on day two.
- Discussions were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, the Principal, senior leadership team, middle leaders, teachers and students.
- Inspectors spoke to many students from a range of abilities across all the year groups at lunchtime on day one and during lessons over the whole inspection.
- Inspectors observed a number of students read in a variety of lessons and also evaluated the quality of support for those students who needed extra help.
- Inspectors analysed 102 responses to staff questionnaires, 79 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and further information from parents that came from one phone call and two letters to the team.

Inspection team

Colin Scott, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Graeme Clarke	Additional Inspector
Heather Scott	Additional Inspector
Kevin Broadfoot	Additional Inspector
Patrick Hargreaves	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this academy

- Hummersknott Academy converted to become an academy school in July 2011. When its predecessor school, Hummersknott School and Language College, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- The academy is part of the Hummersknott Academy Trust which has been in partnership with Skerne Park Primary Academy since February 2013.
- The academy is a larger than the average size 11 to 16 secondary academy and is oversubscribed.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is lower than average. This is funding available for students known to be eligible for free academy meals, students in local authority care and those whose parents are in the armed forces.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The academy specialises in languages which supports learning and understanding of different cultures and the world as a whole.
- Almost all students are White British with very few who are from minority ethnic backgrounds or at an early stage of learning to speak English.
- The academy exceeds the government's current floor standards, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Thirteen Year 10 students currently attend Darlington College to study construction half a day per week and two students attend the Darlington Pupil Referral Unit full time. The Principal of the academy is the chair of the Darlington Behaviour and Attendance Partnership.
- The academy is organised into five distinct colleges acting as the students' family and supporting individual progress, care and guidance with each having their own manager.
- The academy enters some students early for GCSE examinations.

What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise the achievement of lower ability students in mathematics so that the gap between their performance and other students is closed by the end of Key Stage 4 by:
 - extending effective practice that has already resulted in strong improvements at Key Stage 3
 - supporting understanding by applying mathematics in real-life situations.
- Further improve the quality of teaching overall in order to further reduce the numbers of lessons requiring improvement by:
 - ensuring consistent approaches to the use of assessment that informs students about how to improve their skills and understanding in subjects
 - setting work that is closely matched to the abilities of learners, particularly in lower attaining groups within mathematics
 - sharing more widely the outstanding practice in teaching that already exists within the academy.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the academy with attainment that is usually above average and leave Year 11 with attainment that is securely above average and continuing to rise. The proportion of students leaving the academy with five A*-C grades in English and mathematics is higher than the national average and the progress made by students exceeding expected progress compares favourably with the national average. This represents good progress in their achievement overall. However, despite improvement, lower-ability students are still not making the same good progress in mathematics as their peers at Key Stage 4. This is why achievement is not yet outstanding.
- Students achieve well in a broad range of subjects because they are keen to do well and the support for them is good. Students' attainment in English and science is consistently strong and in mathematics it is improving steadily over time. In other subject areas, such as design and technology, students also do very well.
- In the few subjects where progress has been less good in the past, leaders have been swift to take action to remedy the causes and improvements in those subjects can already be seen.
- The Principal of the academy and leader of mathematics have been quick to identify the area of weakness and have already implemented systems of intervention and support to correct this, with early results showing an improving trend in this group at Key Stage 3.
- Students who are entered early for GCSE English and mathematics achieve well. Leaders consider carefully who they enter for early examinations and the reasons for doing so in order to ensure that students are able to reach their potential in the subjects.
- Students targeted for the Year 7 catch up programme are making rapid progress to attain as well as their peers, as shown by the academy's own data.
- Students who are supported by the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, broadly make faster progress than similar students nationally. The gap between their attainment and that of other students in the academy is narrow and continues to close. This additional funding is exceptionally well used to impact positively on the achievement of these students.
- The academy has become increasingly successful in reducing any gaps in achievement between groups of students, including that between boys and girls.
- Staff know their students' individual needs well and those identified as having a special educational need make broadly the same progress as their peers.
- Progress in reading is clear across a wide range of subjects. Students read widely and often. Their communication skills and their confidence in reading and interpreting meaning are benefitting greatly due to this.
- Students who receive some of their education off-site enjoy their learning, attend regularly and achieve well.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across the academy is usually good and at times is outstanding. In the vast majority of lessons observed during the inspection, the quality of teaching was at least good.
- Teachers know their subject well and are enthusiastic in their approach to lessons. In the few instances where teachers are not teaching their specialist subject they are conscientious in ensuring that they gather the required knowledge in order to teach the lesson well. For example, in one outstanding Year 8 art lesson a non-specialist teacher was able to inspire and enthuse students to learn quickly and with excitement due to enthusiasm, good planning and rigorous research of the topic to be taught.
- Good teaching is evident across all subject areas of the academy and this has ensured that

attainment is continuing to rise steadily. There is still a need in some mathematics lessons for teachers to set work that appropriately stretches some lower-ability students.

- Achievement is at its best for students when teachers:
 - use information about the progress of students to plan lessons which appropriately challenge and stretch individuals
 - have consistently high expectations of their students, challenge and excite them to do well
 - constantly check students' progress through the lessons and ask questions that have several possible answers to encourage students to think deeply and critically.
- In the best lessons, students receive high quality assessment which informs them about how to improve and of the next stages in their learning, and they are given time to reflect on this advice. This was exemplified in an outstanding Year 11 English lesson where informative marking had been used to support high expectations, clearly indicated how students could improve their work and allowed them to reflect on how to do this.
- In the few lessons that required improvement, this was mainly due to:
 - assessment which did not clearly show what students needed to do to improve their understanding
 - activities that were not properly matched to the needs of different groups of students with different levels of ability.
- Many lessons support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by allowing them to reflect on the subject within the context of real-world experiences. For example, in an outstanding Year 8 music lesson students expertly interpreted how music pieces can stir emotions.
- Responses from Parent View, from two letters received from parents and from staff questionnaires showed that there is very positive affirmation of the quality of teaching received by students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' behaviour around the academy and in classrooms is exemplary. They are respectful and courteous individuals who are happy and keen to do well. Social areas around the academy are calm and classrooms purposeful.
- There is an abundance of opportunities for students to participate in extra-curricular activities outside academy hours, and inspectors observed many instances of students in several locations across the academy after school continuing to enjoy learning new skills.
- In the best lessons, students have a real excitement for their learning. For example, in an outstanding Year 9 food studies lesson a student was asked what he thought of the lesson and responded by saying, 'I love it, I really love it! I can see how I've progressed from Year 7.'
- During the inspection, there were many examples of students helping their peers in their learning through a variety of methods including peer assessment and group work. In one practical lesson a student, who was paired with another student using crutches, sympathetically enabled the student to carry out tasks which they would otherwise have found difficult.
- Students have an obvious and very strong desire to learn and are confident in asking for support and guidance from their teachers which they receive with excitement and relish.
- The vast majority of responses on Parent View and from staff questionnaires support the belief that students behave well and bullying is rare.
- Attendance in the academy has risen steadily over the last three years and is above the national average for similar schools. Students who are supported by the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, attend the academy as well as their peers and there are no distinct groups who attend less well than others.
- The academy has reduced the number of fixed-term exclusions overall and persistent absenteeism is reducing. There have been no permanent exclusions in the last three years.
- Students feel safe and have an acute understanding of how to keep safe, in practical lessons,

online and in potentially dangerous situations outside school. They are aware of how to seek support when they are in need and spoke highly to inspectors about the care staff give them.

- The academy has extremely effective routines to support students' behaviour in the classroom and to increase attendance. Some pupil premium funding has also been used effectively to assist those groups of students who are no longer able to access free school transport from the local authority due to financial constraints. This is supporting the learning of those students well.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- In the highly successful pursuit of continued and rapid improvement, the Principal has led the academy with tenacity, humility, purpose and a passion for success. He has been able to secure sustained improvement due to diligently introducing rigorous checks on teaching and learning across the academy and by distributing leadership across all levels with a high degree of success.
- The Principal has been unwavering in his pursuit to eradicate poor subject leadership and some staff have, as a result, subsequently left the academy. He is never content for standards to 'stand still' and has the very strong support of senior and middle leadership teams to go even further and strive for every lesson to be outstanding.
- The high aspirations and high expectations demonstrated by leaders and managers, including the governors and the Principal, ensure that staff and students are positively challenged to succeed.
- The academy is inclusive and leaders actively seek students from across the town including from areas of economic disadvantage.
- The academy's procedures for checking the progress of individuals and groups of students and the performance of teachers are rigorous. The senior leadership team has a very thorough knowledge of the quality of the teaching workforce and have implemented a strong programme of training to successfully develop teachers' skills.
- Leaders continue to develop the curriculum offered at the academy to ensure that it is enriched, matches the interests of students well and supports their future career aspirations.
- Leaders have developed strong systems to monitor and tackle any forms of discrimination and bullying and these have resulted in students and parents being confident that the academy will immediately deal with any concerns. The academy's commitment to equality of opportunity is exemplified by its active recruitment of students from areas with diverse social and economic circumstances.
- Responses in Parent View, letters to the inspection team and staff questionnaires were overwhelming in their support for the academy's leadership.
- Where subject areas have not been as effective as others, the academy has already identified areas for improvement. Inspection evidence confirms that the academy's view of its performance as regards to what it needs to do to improve provision and further raise students' achievement is correct, for example, lower ability students in mathematics.
- Support for newly-qualified teachers is very strong. Many are now teaching outstanding lessons after only a short time in the profession and are given opportunities to share their practice with more experienced teachers.
- Safeguarding arrangements are met, and child protection procedures are exemplary. The academy takes all reasonable steps to ensure students are safe in school, in any alternative provision and in any transport necessary.
- **The governance of the academy:**
 - The governing body is very knowledgeable about the academy's performance, its strengths and areas for further development. They understand data well, ensuring that they have the skills necessary to accurately hold academy leaders to account for the performance of students and staff. To support this, they have commissioned an independent evaluation of the academy's performance and recommendations for improvement. The Chair of the Governing Body is thorough in carrying out her responsibilities and is determined to seek further

opportunities for the whole governing body to be even more involved with checking on the academy's work.

- Governors ensure that the training and the performance of teachers are well managed so that salaries and promotion reflect their impact on students' achievement. Governors have a good knowledge of how the pupil premium funding is being spent to bring about positive outcomes for students.

What inspection judgements mean

Academy		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good academy, but it is not inadequate. This academy will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This academy will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the academy is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the academy's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the academy. This academy will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

Academy details

Unique reference number	136838
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	425966

This inspection of the academy was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of academy	Secondary
Academy category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the academy roll	1,228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Penny Jones
Principal	Pat Howarth
Date of previous academy inspection	12 November 2008
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