

# Hummersknott Academy

Edinburgh Drive, Darlington, County Durham DL3 8AR

## Inspection dates

5–6 December 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- The progress pupils make from their above-average starting points in Year 7 to Year 11 is not good enough. Over time some pupils have underachieved. This is especially true for disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders have an over-ambitious view of the quality of education in the school. They focus too much on pupils' attainment and not the progress they make in their learning. Progress overall, and particularly in mathematics and science, requires improvement.
- Teaching requires improvement because teachers do not always use information about pupils' current abilities to plan learning activities effectively. Too often, teaching does not meet the needs of individual pupils and lacks challenge for the most able.
- Too many pupils are absent or persistently absent from school. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities do not attend school as often as they should.
- Leaders' and governors' strategies to improve pupils' attendance and progress lack focus. Consequently, the pupils who need the most support do not always receive it.
- Pupils' literacy skills are underdeveloped. They often make the same mistakes as they progress through topics because errors often remain unchallenged by teachers.
- Pupils' reading skills are underdeveloped. This is because leaders have not established clear routines or expectations in this area.

### The school has the following strengths

- Overall, pupils' conduct in and out of lessons is good. Life-skills lessons are successful in helping pupils develop effective relationships.
- Leaders prepare pupils for life after school successfully. Consequently, the proportion of pupils who go on to further education, employment or training is high.
- Stronger leadership of, and support for, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is beginning to improve the progress this group of pupils make in their learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have many opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities and to work together.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - using information about pupils' current skills and abilities to meet the varying needs of pupils more effectively, including the most able
  - establishing a consistent approach to helping pupils who are returning from absence to catch up on the work that they have missed
  - establishing clear routines and expectations linked to reading so that pupils understand their strengths and weaknesses in this area and can improve progress more effectively
  - reducing the variability in the quality of teaching across and within departments by sharing widely the good practice that does exist in school
  - developing the teaching of literacy so that pupils learn quickly from their mistakes.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management to ensure that all pupils, but particularly those who are disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, make at least good progress from their starting points by:
  - evaluating the impact of the spending of additional funds for disadvantaged pupils more effectively so that leaders know what works and the next steps to take to improve outcomes for this group of pupils
  - ensuring that all leaders and teachers focus on pupils' progress alongside their attainment so that underachievement can be identified quickly and addressed
  - ensuring that teachers apply the school's policies consistently, particularly those for assessment, behaviour and homework
  - continuing to address the underachievement in some subjects, including in mathematics and science
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, so that pupils receive work that supports and challenges them to make good progress.
- Improve pupils' attendance by:
  - decreasing persistent absenteeism, particularly for pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities
  - refining the analysis of attendance information so that leaders can identify the most appropriate actions, and then act swiftly, when attendance declines.

An external review of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Upon his appointment in September 2015, the new principal undertook a restructure of leadership at all levels in order to tackle weaknesses in the school's effectiveness. Despite the actions he has taken, pupils' progress and the attendance rates of some groups of pupils have not improved sufficiently. In addition, inspection evidence unequivocally demonstrates that the impact of leadership and management over time requires improvement.
- Leaders do not have high enough expectations of all pupils. This is partly due to the above-average attainment of most pupils at the end of key stage 4. However, pupils arrive in school in Year 7 having already attained highly in their primary schools. Leaders associate high attainment with good progress, meaning that not all pupils are pushed to achieve the best they can when set against their already high starting points.
- Leaders and subject leaders have not secured consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the curriculum. There are pockets of more effective teaching in subjects such as English and modern foreign languages. However, leaders agree that this is not consistently the case in other subjects, particularly in science and mathematics.
- Governors and leaders do not ensure that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent effectively. Strategies are not as successful as they should be because leaders do not review them in a timely manner or in sufficient detail. The progress and attendance of disadvantaged pupils is not good and improvement plans for this group lack focus.
- Leaders do not insist that teachers apply school policies in the same way. For example, some pupils, parents and staff say that there is too much variability in the application of the behaviour and homework policies.
- Historically, instability in the leadership of the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has had a detrimental impact on pupils' progress. Recent staff appointments are enabling leaders to deliver bespoke training to teachers so that they are better equipped to support pupils in class. Progress is beginning to improve for this group of pupils.
- Leaders are now taking steps to improve the accountability of other leaders and staff in school. They formally evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in departments every 12 weeks. An analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in each department is shared with subject leaders and interventions introduced when needed.
- Leaders provide a broad and balanced curriculum that is accessible to all pupils regardless of their prior attainment. Pupils receive individual guidance interviews which support their option choices at key stage 4 and inform the design of the curriculum. The curriculum is enriched effectively by a wide range of extra-curricular activities which pupils say help to develop their skills in areas such as leadership and sport.
- Pupils value the opportunities for learning about the values that lie at the heart of

British society and say they feel a strong sense of community within their school.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors and the trust do not provide sufficient challenge to leaders about the spending of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who need to catch up with literacy and numeracy skills. Governors are therefore unable to say how leaders use these funds or whether they are effective in improving outcomes and attendance for these pupils.
- Governors work with school leaders to identify areas in which the school needs to improve. However, too much focus on pupils' attainment is leading to governors having an over-optimistic view of the quality of education in the school.
- Governors are passionate and highly committed to achieving the best outcomes for pupils at the school. They are well informed about performance management and pay progression of staff and are stringent in their review of performance management objectives. Governors also ensure that they receive appropriate training for safer recruitment and child protection.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that all staff receive appropriate training to enable them to keep pupils safe. Staff are knowledgeable about procedures and policies and leaders keep them up to date with changes and the latest government guidance.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. They say that if they have a problem, they have staff to turn to for help. Pupils are particularly confident that college managers will support them and listen to them if they have a worry or concern.
- Leaders ensure that safeguarding records are kept appropriately. They engage particularly well with external agencies to ensure a coordinated approach to help vulnerable pupils. Effective liaison with parents contributes to keeping pupils safe.
- Through an extensive personal, social, health and economic education programme, pupils learn about physical and mental health and how to stay safe. Pupils were able to talk to inspectors about how the school helps them to be aware of the potential problems/dangers they may face when using social media.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

## **Requires improvement**

- The impact of teaching and assessment on pupils' learning and progress is inconsistent.
- Analysis of pupil assessment information is improving. However, teachers do not use this information to meet the needs of all learners consistently. Too often, pupils at different stages in their learning receive the same tasks to complete. This 'broad brush'

approach to teaching is slowing pupil progress because pupils who need support do not always receive it. Similarly, some pupils find the work too easy when teachers do not challenge them appropriately.

- Teachers' use of questioning is variable. When used effectively, teachers deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding by investigating and extending pupils' responses. However, sometimes questioning is superficial and attempts to extract 'the desired word' with little regard to the intended learning intention.
- Insufficient opportunities exist for pupils to practise numeracy skills beyond their mathematics lessons. As a result, this area is underdeveloped for most pupils and reflected in the weaker progress made by all pupils in this subject, including those who are disadvantaged.
- Strategies to develop pupils' reading and literacy exist but teachers do not apply them consistently. During reading time teachers do not guide pupils to select a reading book that is appropriate to their age or stage, nor do they assess pupils' comprehension when they finish the book. As a result, pupils do not make as much progress in their reading as they should.
- Teachers' use of the school's marking and presentation policy is inconsistent. Teachers rarely identify mistakes in grammar and punctuation in pupils' written work in subjects other than English. Teachers do not always check common errors and misunderstandings, so they remain as weaknesses in pupils' work.
- Stronger teaching does exist in the school. Some lessons in English, modern foreign languages and technology are characterised by higher pupil expectations, effective planning and skilful teacher-questioning.
- When directed, most pupils are able to contribute ideas in an enthusiastic and purposeful manner. For example, in a Year 8 drama lesson pupils were rehearsing a 'Bugsy Malone' play. Pupils were confident and working well together by evaluating elements of each other's work.
- The vast majority of staff suggest that continuing professional development is helping them to improve in their role. For example, college managers spoke highly of recent child protection training and they now feel better equipped to support pupils in this regard.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils and parents appreciate the many opportunities for pupils to attend after-school clubs. Pupils attend these sessions in large numbers and the range of activities on offer ensures that they match pupils' interests and develop their skills.
- Instances of bullying are rare and pupils are aware of the different types of bullying that may occur. New systems to record and track concerns allow leaders to deal with issues promptly. Teachers give pupils the opportunity to take part in restorative meetings to resolve minor disagreements.

- Assembly themes, the personal, social, health and economic curriculum and life-skills lessons ensure that pupils study a wide range of topics linked to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school also incorporates a number of 'drop down' days allowing external speakers to visit the school to talk about important issues such as child sexual exploitation. Additionally, leaders provide useful project-based opportunities for pupils consolidating the work they complete in Year 9 linked to power and politics.
- The small minority of pupils who attend alternative provision are well looked after. The courses they study are appropriate and leaders make regular checks on pupils' attendance and progress. Pupils in alternative provision are taught how to stay safe and are motivated to do well.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The attendance of pupils requires improvement. Leaders have not been successful in reducing the persistent absence rates of pupils who are disadvantaged or those who have SEN and/or disabilities over time. Absence rates remain too high for these groups.
- Low-level disruption in lessons is rare. However, a significant minority of parents and staff have concerns linked to teachers' inconsistent approaches to behaviour. In 2016, leaders chose to remove the whole-school approach to behaviour management and pupils report that they experience varying standards and degrees of tolerance from staff because of this.
- Over time, the number of pupils receiving fixed term exclusions has been too high. Although reducing, disadvantaged pupils receive fixed term exclusions more frequently than their peers. This invariably increases absence rates for this group and slows rates of progress. Leaders do not have a consistent approach for pupils to catch up missed work when they do return.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Published performance information for pupils at the end of key stage 4, and provisional information for 2017, shows that, over time, pupils' progress has been below average in a range of subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make less progress than others. This is because teacher expectations are often too low or additional funding intended to accelerate progress is not used effectively by leaders.
- Leaders acknowledge that inconsistency in teaching is leading to varying rates of pupil progress. In books, pupils' work shows variable attitudes to learning and in many lessons the quality of written work is not good enough.
- The systems for assessing and checking pupil progress are appropriate and could, if used effectively and consistently, support improving rates of progress by helping teachers to identify and then meet the needs of all pupils. However, the school's own analysis of current pupils' progress indicates that progress gaps remain between

disadvantaged pupils and their peers in most year groups and across a range of subjects.

- Pupils' progress is beginning to improve. Leaders describe the outcomes in 2016 as a 'blip' but overall progress in 2017 and progress of current pupils remain well below average in mathematics and for pupils with average attainment on entry.
- When they attend school, disadvantaged pupils are capable of making progress at or greater than the rate of other groups. However, because disadvantaged pupils are more likely to be absent from school they miss large parts of their learning.
- Pupils achieve above-average levels of attainment at the end of key stage 4. This is partly due to their higher attainment on entry to the school in Year 7.
- The pupil-centred curriculum design is well matched to pupils' future progression routes and employment. As a result, the proportion of pupils who go on to further education, employment or training is high. The school works closely with local employers and colleges so that pupils receive effective, independent careers advice and guidance.
- Leadership of special educational needs provision is now stable where previously it was not. The progress made by pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is improving from their often low starting points because teachers are now receiving the support and training they need.

## School details

Unique reference number	136838
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10037747

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1213
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Penny Jones
Principal	James Keating
Telephone number	01325 241 191
Website	<a href="http://www.hummersknott.org.uk/">http://www.hummersknott.org.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiries@hummersknott.org.uk">enquiries@hummersknott.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	15 October 2013

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is a larger than an average-sized secondary school. It converted to academy status in July 2011 and is the only secondary school in the Hummersknott Academy Trust, established in February 2013.
- The other school in the trust is Skerne Park Primary. The trust operates with a board of directors and a local governing body for each school.
- A new principal was appointed in September 2015.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is below the national average.
- Alternative provision used by the school includes Rise Carr and Bishop Auckland



colleges.

- The school receives school improvement support from a neighbouring local authority.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a wide range of lessons across the school. Some of the observations in lessons were carried out with senior leaders from the school.
- Meetings were held with senior and subject leaders, teachers, non-teaching staff, governors and trustees.
- The inspectors held informal and formal discussions with pupils and observed registration, assembly and pupil interactions during social times.
- Inspectors listened to two groups of key stage 3 pupils read.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and scrutinised a wide range of evidence including the school's self-evaluation, analysis of performance data, action plans and evaluations, attendance and behaviour records, safeguarding files, recruitment checks and pupils' work.
- Inspectors took into account the 137 responses from parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Ofsted's online staff survey was completed by 91 members of staff. No pupils responded to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Lee Elliott, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Debbie Redshaw	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alexandra Hook	Ofsted Inspector
Garry Stout	Ofsted Inspector
Wendy Bradford	Ofsted Inspector

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