

# Inspection of Hummersknott Academy

Edinburgh Drive, Darlington, County Durham, DL3 8AR

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Inspection dates: 28 and 29 September 2021

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Hummersknott Academy is a happy, inclusive school. Each of the school's five 'colleges' has its own strong sense of community. Year 11 mentors help younger pupils settle into life at the school. Pupils feel safe in school. Bullying is rare and pupils know that adults will sort it out when it does occur. Parents and pupils value the high-quality pastoral care provided by college managers.

Pupils appreciate the wider opportunities in school. They enjoy using the swimming pool and are pleased that football training has restarted. Visits to local sixth forms and colleges give pupils the information that they need to take the right next step in their education.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils and staff. A broad range of academic and vocational subjects are available to pupils. Leaders ensure there is equal opportunity for everyone. Pupils appreciate the freedom to choose what they want to study in Year 10 and 11. Life skills lessons teach pupils how to look after their own mental well-being. Pupils talk maturely about healthy relationships.

Pupils generally behave well. However, a small number of pupils find it difficult to meet the school's high behaviour expectations.

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

Hummersknott Academy has improved since its previous inspection. Leaders have a clear vision and staff are on board to support them. A strong sense of moral purpose is shared by staff throughout the school. Pupils' personal development is at the heart of the school's ethos. The curriculum supports pupils to achieve academic success as well as to prepare them for life in modern Britain.

The curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. This includes disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum has been carefully designed. It is organised so that pupils build on their prior learning. Pupils are given time to practise new learning before moving on. Leaders have identified the most important knowledge that pupils need to know and remember. Pupils revisit this content regularly. This helps them to learn and remember more.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has ensured that all the needs of pupils with SEND have been carefully identified. Pupils with SEND receive excellent pastoral care. Teachers are well informed about how to best support pupils with SEND. The curriculum is very well adapted for many pupils, including those with physical or sensory needs. However, the curriculum is not consistently well adapted for some pupils with cognition and learning needs. It is clear from leaders' actions that this is a key priority for them and that it is being addressed.

Leaders place great importance on pupils reading across the curriculum and for pleasure. Faculties find opportunities for pupils to read more widely about their subjects. There is effective help for pupils who need support with their reading, including small group reading sessions.

Teachers are enthusiastic about the training and professional development that leaders arrange for them. Staff appreciate the time available to share good practice. Teaching has strengthened as a result. However, there remains some variability in the effectiveness of teachers' use of assessment. In some lessons, teachers do not check pupils' prior knowledge as thoroughly as they should. As a result, they do not spot gaps in prior learning which makes it more difficult for some pupils to learn new content.

Leaders have high standards for behaviour. Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons. The atmosphere in and around school is generally calm and purposeful. However, a very small minority of pupils do not behave consistently well around school and consequently are subject to repeat suspensions. While support is in place for these pupils, further work is needed to ensure that they behave consistently well.

A wealth of personal development opportunities are available to pupils. They learn about diverse cultures and the importance of democracy. The wide range of extra-curricular activities are resuming after being disrupted by the pandemic. Careers education is a strength. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. Leaders place great emphasis on preparing pupils for when they leave the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Everyone in school understands that safeguarding is their responsibility. Staff know how to report concerns about pupils who may be at risk of harm. Leaders work tenaciously to ensure that those pupils who need help get the support that they need. There is effective liaison with agencies to secure support for the most vulnerable pupils. The designated safeguarding lead regularly reviews safeguarding information so that trends can be identified. This ensures that staff training and assemblies focus on the local safeguarding issues that pupils might face.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- There is variability in the extent to which the curriculum is adapted to support pupils whose primary special educational needs are cognition and learning. It is clear that leaders have identified this issue and are taking steps to address it, but their progress has been hampered by the impact of the pandemic. The SENCo is working closely with faculty leads and providing training for staff. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.

- Some teachers do not check pupils' prior knowledge consistently well to inform their teaching. This includes pupils with SEND. As a result, teachers do not consistently identify gaps in some pupils' learning and take the right steps to address them. Leaders should ensure that teachers are supported to use assessment well in order to adapt their teaching to help pupils learn and remember more.
- A small minority of pupils display challenging behaviour. This has resulted in these pupils receiving repeated suspensions from school and missing lessons. Leaders should work to reduce the incidents of poor behaviour that are leading to suspensions.

## 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136838
<b>Local authority</b>	Darlington
<b>Inspection number</b>	10200648
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,241
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	David Liddle
<b>Principal</b>	James Keating
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hummersknott.org.uk/">http://www.hummersknott.org.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5–6 December 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is a larger-than-average-sized secondary school.
- The school is one of two schools in the Hummersknott Academy Trust. The other school in the trust is Skerne Park Primary.
- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Rise Carr College, Horizon School and Open Arms Ltd.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the principal and other members of the senior leadership team, faculty leaders, the SENCo and subject leaders. Inspectors also held meetings with leaders responsible for attendance, behaviour, personal development, careers, and reading and the designated safeguarding lead.

- An inspector spoke on the telephone to the school's improvement partner.
- Meetings were held with the chair of the board of trustees and one trustee as well as the chair and members of the local governing body. Inspectors also reviewed a sample of minutes from local governing body meetings.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography, modern foreign languages and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors met with faculty leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- An inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead. The single central record was also scrutinised. Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding records.
- Inspectors spoke with teachers and support staff. Inspectors also held meetings with pupils and listened to some pupils reading.
- A range of school documentation was scrutinised, including school improvement plans.
- Inspectors considered the views given in Ofsted's online surveys by 158 pupils and 61 members of staff. The 206 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey were also considered, including 148 free-text responses. An inspector spoke to one parent on the phone during the inspection.

## Inspection team

Graham Findlay, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Catherine Beard	Ofsted Inspector
Julie McGrane	Ofsted Inspector
Joanne Owens	Ofsted Inspector
Toni Spoons	Ofsted Inspector

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