

Inspection of Hollis Academy

Saltersgill Avenue, Middlesbrough TS4 3JS

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Hollis Academy is an improving school. Senior leaders have raised expectations as to how well pupils can achieve. The staff work hard to provide a good quality of education. Leaders offer a range of pathways designed to meet the needs of pupils who have not been suited to mainstream education. Over time, most pupils improve their attendance and attitude because of the care they receive.

Pupils are taught in small groups, so get lots of individual attention. Teachers expect them to concentrate and apply themselves. At times, some pupils struggle and there are occasional outbursts. There are always plenty of adults on hand to help pupils calm down. Pupils are always supervised carefully. The staff build strong and positive relationships with pupils. This helps many pupils to re-build their self-esteem. Some pupils cannot cope with full-time schooling, so receive home tuition or education at other providers for part of the week.

A fifth of the timetable is dedicated to supporting pupils' personal development. Pupils have opportunities each week to go off site and pursue their talents and interests. Opportunities such as kayaking help to build pupils' social skills and character. Because of this, bullying rarely happens. If it does, the staff deal with it quickly.

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

The curriculum the school offers is improving. Curriculum planning in most subjects is now more detailed and ambitious. There is more to do in some subjects and work is underway to refine curriculum plans in readiness for the next academic year. Teachers use assessment well to identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge. They make sure they teach the knowledge pupils have missed before moving on. In most subjects, knowledge is taught in a well-planned sequence. In key stage 4, pupils now study more meaningful qualifications. All pupils now work towards qualifications in English and mathematics. Leaders' ambition is for pupils to study GCSE qualifications wherever possible.

Around one third of pupils follow pathways delivered partly or wholly off site. The success of these pathways is more variable. Some pupils re-engage well. However, leaders are too slow to build on this and integrate pupils more fully into the life of the school.

Recent staff training has helped to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers now use strategies to help pupils remember more important knowledge. Lessons have more structure. Helpful resources support pupils to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills. Most pupils take pride in their work and complete most activities. They use the feedback they get to improve their work.

The curriculum in each subject includes topics designed to help pupils develop employability skills. This, coupled with a well-developed careers programme, helps almost all pupils find places in further education, employment or training when they leave the school.

Senior leaders are doing more to improve the standard of behaviour. The strategies they have introduced are effective. Behaviour is improving strongly. Policies introduced this year now prevent pupils using mobile phones during the day. Smoking and vaping materials are now confiscated. There are better routines in place as pupils arrive which ensure a calm and purposeful start to the day. The appointment of a new vice principal to lead on behaviour signals the trust's determination to improve behaviour even further.

Most pupils behave appropriately in the classroom. However, some show more negative attitudes. Occasionally, pupils struggle to cope and need help to calm down. Some staff feel more needs to be done to ensure that behaviour is managed more consistently. Leaders know that pupils are not attending school as well as they should. Some have found it hard to get back to education after the disruption of the pandemic. The attendance of pupils who are placed with alternative education providers is of most concern. Notably though, many pupils attend better at Hollis Academy than at their previous schools.

Senior leaders and the staff are determined to rebuild pupils' self-esteem. They provide a thorough education in personal, social and health education. Within this, pupils are taught about sex and relationships. On occasions, the school suspends the normal timetable to cover topics such as discrimination. Consequently, pupils have a secure awareness of British values and different forms of injustice.

Members of the academy council provide effective oversight. Their purposeful visits have challenged leaders to increase the pace of improvement. Action from the trust to strengthen leadership capacity when it was needed has helped to improve the school. The trust's ongoing commitment is clear to see. Their new staffing structure and commitment to recruitment demonstrates trustees know what is needed to sustain the progress being made.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The trust's safeguarding lead provides excellent support for the school's safeguarding team. Together, they ensure that safeguarding is a high priority. The staff are well trained and are therefore vigilant for the signs of exploitation, abuse and neglect. As part of their training, the staff practise the procedure for raising concerns. The safeguarding team work closely with a wide range of external agencies. As the school has several pupils in care, there are well-developed links with social care.

The curriculum makes sure pupils are aware of risks when online and within the community. For example, pupils learned a lot from a workshop given by a former drug dealer and user. Many activities within the curriculum have been carefully designed to help pupils stay safe from known risks in the locality.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum is not sufficiently well planned and sequenced in some subjects. However, it is clear from leaders' actions that they are in the process of bringing this about. Leaders need to complete the process of reviewing the curriculum in all subjects within coming months. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.
- The school offers a wide range of bespoke pathways designed to re-engage learners with a range of different needs. The progress of pupils on these pathways, such as those attending alternative provision or receiving home tuition, should be reviewed more systematically and regularly, with the aim of integrating pupils into on-site education as soon as possible.
- Attendance of pupils has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. Leaders should make better use of attendance data and intervene faster when pupils' attendance drops off. Leaders need to work more closely with families to find solutions for pupils who persistently miss school.
- Although the bar has been raised and behaviour has improved, some staff feel that behaviour is not always managed well. Leaders should use staff training time to build a shared understanding of expectations and ensure that behaviour is managed consistently.

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

Unique reference number	143519
Local authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	10242982
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Walker
Principal	Karl Fenton
Website	www.hollis.horizonstrust.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 and 25 September 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Hollis Academy caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. From September 2022, the school will also begin to cater for some pupils with autism spectrum disorder.
- Pupils travel from several local authority areas to attend the school.
- An executive principal has added additional leadership capacity to the school since February 2022.
- The school places pupils in a range of alternative education providers. At the time of the inspection, these were Unicorn Centre, Phoenix, Lingfield Choosing Pathways, Redcar and Cleveland Training, Evolve Sports, Right Trax and Educ8.

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 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive principal, the principal, and other senior leaders.
- An inspector also met with trustees, including the chair of the trust board and members of the local academy council.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in mathematics, English, science and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector also looked at curriculum planning and a sample of pupils' books from food technology.
- Inspectors met different groups of pupils to discuss safety, personal development, well-being and behaviour.
- Inspectors met with leaders for safeguarding and reviewed records of the school's work to protect vulnerable pupils. An inspector looked at the record of vetting checks made on adults who work in the school.
- An inspector made telephone calls to several alternative education providers used by the school.
- Inspectors considered responses to the staff survey and responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jill Bowe

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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