

# Inspection of Hermitage Academy

Waldridge Lane, Chester le Street, County Durham DH2 3AD

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Inspection dates: 12 and 13 March 2024

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Lindsay Maughan. This school is part of North East Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Lesley Powell, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Margaret Saxton.

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

There have been significant improvements at this school. The school has high expectations of how pupils should behave and what they can achieve. Pupils behave well in lessons and understand the school's behaviour policy clearly. Pupils earn rewards that are exchanged for items such as stationery. They find this motivating. The school is calm and orderly.

The curriculum is well designed and is delivered effectively. Published examination outcomes do not reflect the current quality of education that pupils receive. Pupils in key stages 3 and 4, and students in the sixth form, receive clear careers advice and guidance to enable them to move on to positive destinations.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils' personal development. Pupils participate in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. For example, they take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, sporting activities, debate club and drama club. The enthusiasm of pupils in choir rehearsal is palpable. Enrichment activities help to develop pupils' character and social skills. Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. For example, both the main school and sixth form have head pupils. Some pupils, such as the sports leaders, help to run extra-curricular activities. Other pupils support their peers well. These include the reading ambassadors, who use their training well to develop their younger peers' reading fluency.

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

The school is ambitious that all pupils access a broad curriculum. Recently, the number of pupils studying the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects has increased. The school offers a range of sixth-form courses. The trust has supported the school in its curriculum design. All subjects have clearly sequenced and progressive curriculums in place, including in the sixth form. Many subjects have seven-year-long curriculums. There has been thought about how knowledge and skills build throughout each key stage. Concepts and important vocabulary are frequently returned to in lessons. All lessons begin with recall work on previously learned content. This helps pupils to remember their previous learning. The impact of the teacher's implementation of the curriculum is demonstrated through pupils' knowledge, skills and vocabulary. However, published outcomes are lower than the school's ambition. Some pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Assessment is used consistently by staff. Frequent questioning and knowledge checks take place in lessons in addition to more formal termly assessments. Pupils receive clear feedback. In some curriculum areas, pupils revisit their work following feedback. Their misconceptions are addressed and progress is secured.

Reading is prioritised. Pupils read high-quality texts throughout the curriculum. The school ensures pupils' areas of weakness are identified precisely. Staff deliver a

range of interventions to address these areas well. The impact of the interventions is checked. Pupils are making demonstrable progress in their reading skills.

Leaders are ambitious that all pupils will be successful. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in the school. Their needs are identified and staff are made aware of and use strategies to support pupils in lessons. Pupils with SEND access the same education as their peers. Staff make reasonable adaptations to enable pupils with SEND to access their work.

Students in the sixth form benefit from an ambitious curriculum. Teachers in the sixth form have secure subject knowledge. They support students well in lessons. Students are well prepared for their next steps and the range of post-18 options are made clear to them.

There are high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Staff apply the behaviour policy consistently. The number of suspensions has reduced of late. Suspensions are used appropriately. The vast majority of pupils respond well to the school's clear routines. Lessons are purposeful and pupils engage in their learning well.

The school has implemented an effective personal development programme. Pupils develop a clear understanding of important issues, such as supportive relationships and individual differences. Pupils discuss fundamental British values and protected characteristics confidently. The social, moral, spiritual, and cultural education of pupils is enhanced through the assembly programme. Pupils develop an understanding of current issues and debates. The curriculum educates pupils from Year 7 to 13 well about their career options.

Governors and trustees have the knowledge and skills they need for their roles. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school thoroughly. They challenge and support leaders as they should. They visit the school to see first hand what pupils' educational experiences are like. The school is developing its work on stakeholder engagement, including improving communication with parents and carers. The trust has supported staff with high-quality training. Most staff are positive about the support they receive from school leaders. The vast majority 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)

- Historically, pupils have not performed as well as they could in external outcomes. This is because previously the curriculum has not been embedded or implemented sufficiently well. The school should continue to enhance and further embed its curriculum plans to ensure that all pupils achieve the results of which they are capable.
- Some parents within the school community are not as well informed about some of the changes that have taken place at the school. This means that relationships between the school and the community are not as strong as they should be. The school should continue its work to communicate effectively with all stakeholders.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147531
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10297490
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	996
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	97
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>CEO</b>	Lesley Powell
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Margaret Saxton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lindsay Maughan
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hermitageacademy.co.uk/">http://www.hermitageacademy.co.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The Hermitage Academy converted to become an academy in September 2019. When its predecessor school, also named The Hermitage Academy, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- The school is part of North East Learning Trust.
- The school uses two registered alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

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

Inspections are a point-of-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This is the first inspection since the predecessor school, also called The Hermitage Academy, joined the North East Learning Trust (NELT).
- 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 spoke to the head of school and other senior leaders. They also met with the members of the local academy council, including the chair. Inspectors met with members of the board of trustees. Inspectors also spoke with the chief executive officer of NELT.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, geography, science, music and art. They met with subject leaders to discuss curriculum planning. Inspectors talked with pupils about what they had learned in these lessons. Inspectors visited lessons, talked with teachers and looked at pupils' work. Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at plans to support those at the early stages of reading. Inspectors also reviewed the mathematics curriculum and looked at mathematics exercise books.
- Inspectors met with leaders for behaviour and attendance; sixth form; personal, social and health education and careers.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and scrutinised the information teachers receive about pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors observed social times and visited spaces allocated to sixth-form pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils, including sixth-form pupils, both formally and informally, including single-sex groups of pupils.

- Inspectors spoke to the registered alternative providers used.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school, priorities for improvement and minutes of governors' meetings.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 views of pupils, parents and staff were considered through discussions and a review of Ofsted's surveys, including Ofsted Parent View. The inspection team also considered telephone calls that were had with parents during the inspection.

### **Inspection team**

Jessica McKay, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Steve Lewis	Ofsted Inspector
Pali Dhesi	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Gammack	Ofsted Inspector

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