

Harris Academy Falconwood

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135677
Local Authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	363004
Inspection dates	30–31 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Daniel Towl HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	819
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	51
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Beverley Johnston
Headteacher	Terrie Askew
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The Green Welling, Bexley DA16 2PE
Telephone number	020 8304 4916
Fax number	020 8301 9169
Email address	info@harrisfalconwod.org.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 21 lessons taught by 21 teachers, and held meetings with groups of pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at students' written work in a variety of subjects, school policies, monitoring records and other documents. Questionnaires from 118 parents were received by the inspection team.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The team examined the current picture of attainment and whether higher attainers are making enough progress and reaching the levels they should.
- The extent to which the curriculum is meeting the needs of all the students was analysed.
- The team checked the extent to which the academy is managing to raise the aspirations of students.
- Inspectors evaluated the extent to which senior leaders are improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Information about the school

Harris Academy Falconwood is one of the nine Harris Academies. It is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. It opened in September 2008. It took over the buildings of its predecessor school but will move into new premises on the same site later this year. The very large majority of students are from white British backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. The proportion of students identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with statements of special educational needs is below the national average. Fewer than average numbers of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The academy has specialisms in enterprise, science and sport.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding academy because it has successfully and rapidly improved students' future opportunities by:

- helping them to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to gain qualifications at an appropriate level
- engendering greater aspirations for the future.

Under the excellent leadership and management of the principal and senior staff, the level of students' achievements both academically and personally has been driven up so that, in 2010, students reached high levels in their GCSE examinations. When English and mathematics are included in the results, attainment was slightly above average. Senior leaders are very focused on raising the attainment of students and are also very committed to ensuring that the academy's provision enables students' personal development to go hand in hand with good academic development. The great majority of students have responded well. A monitoring visit in May 2010 judged that leaders and managers had made outstanding progress towards raising standards. This has been maintained and built upon. Senior leaders have set very challenging targets. The capacity to improve further is outstanding.

Students enjoy school and are very positive about how it has improved since the academy started. In discussions, they mentioned improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and behaviour, a view supported by inspection evidence. Parents' and carers' responses in their questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive about what is provided for their children. Students' attendance is high. The academy's own surveys show that there is much support from parents, carers and students for what is provided.

Teaching and learning are good and improving as a result of regular monitoring and effective staff training. Senior leaders have set challenging targets for the proportion of good and outstanding lessons they wish to achieve. Lessons are mostly purposeful, and suitably challenging and engaging for students, leading to their good progress in learning. There remains a very small proportion of lessons where activities do not engage students sufficiently and this leads to them becoming easily distracted and learning is impaired. Senior leaders have a very good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning and are now working closely with middle leaders to improve the accuracy of their monitoring.

The curriculum is outstanding because it is responsive to students' needs and has enabled previously low attaining students to achieve highly. All students in 2010 gained qualifications and continued their education or training. Enrichment activities and opportunities provided through the Harris Federation, such as the 'student commission', provide excellent breadth to students' experiences. Sport plays an important part in the

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curriculum and is enjoyed by pupils. The cross-curricular use of literacy is supported effectively by additional dedicated lessons, but the quality and accuracy of students' writing across the curriculum varies too much.

Procedures for safeguarding are outstanding and suitably robust. There is good staff awareness at all levels and appropriate involvement of governors. There are strong partnerships with a variety of support agencies. The academy's provision to support potentially vulnerable students is outstanding. The consistently good systems of care and guidance provide excellent and targeted support to those students who need it.

The governing body is outstanding in its work. It meets its statutory requirements fully. It has a clear focus on further raising the quality of education and rigorously holds school leaders to account.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Use the examples of good and outstanding practice in the academy and Harris Federation to increase the proportion of lessons that are good and outstanding emphasising the role of middle managers by:
 - ensuring that activities in all lessons are managed very effectively to maintain students' interest, and establish a high level of learning and engagement for all abilities
- Ensure that teachers of all subjects take responsibility for the development of students' literacy skills, especially writing.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Attainment and the rate of students' progress have improved rapidly in the two years since the academy opened. The methods used by senior leaders to measure progress and attainment are robust and accurate. There is a legacy of students who started their secondary education with weak literacy and numeracy skills and, despite the considerable overall successes, there is still some low attainment in English and mathematics, although overall attainment is above average. Specific curriculum provision is addressing this matter effectively.

Students make good progress overall, although a lower than average proportion of students reached the higher level A* and A grades in English, mathematics and science in 2010, despite having made good or outstanding progress from their starting points. Senior leaders are very aware of this and plans are already in place to raise the number of students gaining the highest grades. The current higher-attaining students in Year 11, many of whom have already gained at least a C grade in English and mathematics, are making good and sometimes outstanding progress. The mostly good progress is exemplified in lessons by students' good learning behaviours such as concentrating well; listening to, sharing and developing views; and working productively and collaboratively across a wide range of subjects. Currently, there are no patterns of underachievement in any particular group of students because rigorous monitoring of performance alerts school leaders quickly to where progress may be slower than expected. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the good and well organised support programmes they receive. The well tailored support has enabled students with widely differing physical, emotional and mental health needs not only to

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develop their academic skills but also to contribute very effectively to the academy's community through participation in the wide range of enrichment activities.

The presentation and accuracy of students' written work across the curriculum is not always as good as it could be and belies students' overall good progress and their understanding of the subjects they are learning. Reading, speaking and listening skills develop well because there are good opportunities in many lessons to ask and answer questions and to work in collaborative groups where tasks can be discussed.

Student's behaviour is mostly good and improving. Students say that behaviour is better now than it used to be. There is consistency in the way staff manage behaviour. The vast majority of parents and students who returned their questionnaires responded that they were content with the academy's approach to managing behaviour. Students know that sanctions are rigorously applied.

Students say that they feel safe. They are confident that any issues that they raise will be dealt with promptly and effectively by the academy. There is good participation in sporting activities. Students value their school community and its enterprise designation. They take on responsibilities well and participate enthusiastically in local and national events. They hold confident views about their learning and show a collective interest in developing the new site and environment.

The academy has healthy school status. Staff have worked with students to increase healthy food options and students participate energetically in a considerable amount of sporting activity, both in physical education lessons and during enrichment activities. The curriculum also offers opportunities to learn about these matters. In discussions, students said that the academy had helped them to adopt healthier lifestyles.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The majority of teaching is good and some is outstanding and, consequently, learning is good. Teachers often encourage good quality discussion and use questioning very effectively to check students' understanding and to allow them to put forward their views and ideas. Teachers maintain pace by using time targets for completion of work and also by bringing the class together at various points in the lesson to check understanding. Excellent probing questions and good use of students' self assessment, particularly in Key Stage 4, characterise the better lessons. Teachers are well prepared and this gives clear purpose and direction to most lessons. There are a few lessons where learning is not as effective as it should be, because tasks and activities are not managed well or there is too much teacher direction. This can lead to students not productively engaging with their work and occasionally using behaviours that interrupt the flow of the lesson.

The curriculum provision is meeting the needs of all students extremely well, especially during this early period as the academy establishes itself. This has resulted in students achieving well despite their overall low attainment when they started their secondary schooling. The academy benefits from being part of the Harris Federation, receiving support in English, mathematics and science. Intra-academy competitions, numeracy and enterprise days, local sports and post-16 partnerships all very effectively enrich the academy's curriculum provision. The federation's 'student commission' is successful in bringing teachers and students together in collaborative partnerships to review the design

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and delivery of the curriculum. Students welcome the daily enrichment activities which offer a very wide range of academic, practical and sporting opportunities. There is a growing programme of activities for students identified as gifted and talented. The before- and after-school activities provide for a very wide range of interests and also effectively support aspects of students' social and emotional development. Practical woodworking, cooking, drama productions, care for free-range chickens and physical activity all contribute to students' development and personal interests. They also help to promote a sense of community, which is strong. Enterprise events are an important part of students' experiences. They support development of both academic and personal skills which have had a positive impact on students' attainment and confidence.

Senior and subject leaders and governors are forward looking. They are alert to the need to ensure that they continue to adapt and develop the curriculum to meet students' needs and already have a successful track record in this. Changes are being made to enable students to attain the English Baccalaureate and, once the new buildings are available later this year, there will be increased facilities which will substantially broaden the sixth-form provision.

All students, including those with special educational and/or disabilities, are entitled to the academy's full curriculum. There are effective, additional well-tailored programmes for lower attaining students in Key Stages 3 and 4 which are helping to raise students' attainment in English. All students in Key Stage 3 also have a dedicated literacy lesson in addition to English lessons.

The academy's work with families, students and a range of agencies sustains the development of many students' skills and well-being to a high level. Links with local primary schools, support from external specialists, specific arrangements for information and communication technology (ICT) links, peer mentoring and a strong pastoral system all contribute to outstanding care, guidance and support. Teaching assistants have developed partnerships with teachers to increasingly improve their effectiveness in meeting additional needs and providing support to maintain good student inclusion.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders, including governors, have a very strong focus on improvement. This culture is embedded well within the academy with staff and students alike. Governance is outstanding.

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The academy has a highly positive relationship with most groups of parents and carers. The school shows perseverance in communicating its core values of high aspiration and the need to promote students' learning, through both ICT links and regular liaison. There are clear and accessible channels for parents and carers to communicate with the academy. These include the Student Information Centre as a first point of contact and the scheduling of regular teacher-parents' meetings. All parents and carers receive six-weekly reports about their children's progress. The academy is careful to consult parents and carers regularly and collect their views on its provision.

Gaps between differing groups are closing rapidly. Senior leaders are responsive to identified needs of groups and individuals that emerge from its regular monitoring. Reporting on performance of different groups is robust. There is awareness that literacy is not supported sufficiently in all subject areas and that more needs to be done to ensure that the highest attainers reach their fullest potential, across a wider range of subject areas. Students said in discussion that there was respect between students and they believed racism and bullying were not matters which caused concern. They know that senior leaders and all staff deal with any racist incidents and bullying very quickly. Students know that it is not tolerated.

The academy is a highly cohesive community. Students from different backgrounds get on noticeably well together. The academy and the Harris Federation make a strong contribution to transforming the working environment for students so as to promote local community links, which extend out to national and international levels. They can identify the impact of these initiatives which are based on prior knowledge of the school's religious, ethnic and social contexts. The school's leadership team and governing body maintain good oversight of these matters.

Senior leaders and managers have paid particular attention to the safety of students during its major re-building programme. This reflects the diligence of both the governors and leaders in establishing excellent procedures, practices and partnerships to keep pupils safe.

The academy has many strong partnerships, particularly supported by the Harris Federation, which contribute particularly well to staff development, support for school leaders and providing additional opportunities for students.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Students make good progress from their starting points. There are no variations between the progress made by different groups and no particular underachievement. Students develop skills that enable them to learn independently and collaboratively. The skills they gain successfully improve their employability and financial and economic understanding. Students attend well and are generally punctual to lessons.

The academy is successfully raising their expectation and encouraging them to aim higher by applying to universities. Students feel safe and they contribute to a safe learning environment. Staying-on rates are good. There are significant roles for the head boy and girl representing the academy within the Harris Foundation, for example sitting in on interviews for a recent appointment of an assistant principal.

Good teaching enables students to learn well. Good support is given through the external monitoring of the 'careers academy' and students' own tutors. Students receive constructive feedback on how to improve their performance. The current students are served well by the curriculum, and the academy has plans to broaden the range of subjects considerably in 2011 in the new premises. Enrichment activities provide good support for personal development. Students cite work experience and the 'careers academy' as highlights of their experiences. There is effective support for underachievers and students welcome the rigour of the monitoring.

The ambitions of the well-motivated sixth-form leaders match those of senior leaders. There is a strong focus on improving outcomes for students as well as improving their own efficiency. Students and parents have opportunities to share their views and have been involved in determining curriculum choices and provision in the new building. Sixth-form leaders extend their own partnerships by meeting with the Harris Federation and Bexley sixth-form groups.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who returned questionnaires were very positive in their responses. A small minority of parents and carers made additional comments and most of these were very positive. In the questionnaires, a few parents and carers were concerned about the school helping their children to keep a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors found that the academy does well in promoting healthy lifestyles. A very few parents and carers commented about the lack of communication with the school. Inspectors found that there were good channels of communication open to parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Harris Academy Falconwood to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 118 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 819 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	29	78	66	4	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	39	33	77	65	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	54	46	61	52	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	51	43	61	52	6	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	33	75	64	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	28	76	64	4	3	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	18	79	67	14	12	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	29	25	73	62	4	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	36	68	58	5	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	43	61	52	4	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	19	79	67	7	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	50	42	62	53	2	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	56	47	57	48	3	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



1 April 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Harris Academy Falconwood, DA16 2PE

Thank you for your welcome and talking with us when we inspected your academy. We could see that you were coping very well with some difficult premises but this is not distracting you from your learning. You must be looking forward to moving to your new buildings later this year.

We judged that your school is outstanding. This is because Ms Askew and all the staff have done exceptionally well to start the academy so successfully and because you are working hard and making good progress in your learning. We were impressed by the range of activities you take part in, not just in lessons but also in the enrichment time and other projects. The academy takes good care of you and gives excellent additional support to those who need it. There is a strong sense of community within the academy.

Even though the academy is outstanding we have asked the principal to consider some areas to improve. We could see that in lessons you often gave good answers to questions, took part willingly in discussions and worked together well. However, we saw some of the presentation of work in your books was not always as good as it could be. We have asked Ms Askew to check that teachers in all subjects make sure that your writing is of a high standard.

Some of you told us that you felt that lessons were better. We agree with you. Teaching and learning is good at the academy. There are few times when lessons are less effective because the activities planned do not ensure that everyone is following and learning effectively. In these lessons, some of you become distracted and learn less well. We have asked the principal to ensure that all lessons have the sort of activities that will interest and engage you. You can do your part by making sure that you involve yourselves fully in the tasks given to you.

We hope you enjoy being in the new buildings.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Towl

Her Majesty's Inspector

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