

Harris Academy Bermondsey

55 Southwark Park Road, London, SE16 3TZ

Inspection dates 18–19 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Standards have been above average for some years. In 2014, students in Year 11 achieved broadly average results in the key measure of five or more good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, but still made good or better progress.
- Students' progress in English exceeds that expected nationally and continues to improve. Progress in mathematics and science is improving rapidly and now matches that seen in English.
- Students in all year groups are currently making better than the expected progress and their attainment is above average.
- The most-able students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs make excellent progress.
- Disadvantaged students do exceptionally well. Their attainment and progress matches and in some cases exceeds that of others in the academy. It is markedly better than that of disadvantaged students in other schools.
- Teaching is highly effective. Work set captures students' interest and matches their needs precisely. Teachers do not always give students enough time to think about their answers before responding to questions.
- The vast majority of teaching staff are swift to respond to the needs of any student who shows the slightest sign of falling behind.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Students are eager learners who are keen to do their best. The academy works effectively to keep students safe.
- Students' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. This gives them the confidence to thrive academically.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders' promotion of improvements to teaching is exceptional. Governors are knowledgeable about all aspects of provision and are great advocates for the academy's work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students learning during 45 lessons and looked at the work in their books. Nineteen of the observations were conducted jointly with the Principal, a member of the leadership team or a consultant from the Harris Federation.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Principal, senior and middle leaders, groups of teachers, groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Chief Executive of the Harris Federation.
- Inspectors scrutinised the academy’s data about students’ attainment and progress, their behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors also considered documents evaluating the academy’s performance, its plans for improvement, notes about the work of the governing body and policies concerning the safeguarding of students.
- The results of the academy’s most recent survey of parents' and carers' views were also taken into account, along with the 38 responses to Ofsted’s on-line survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

Godfrey Bancroft, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Martyn Ashmead	Additional Inspector
Brenda Watson	Additional Inspector
Patrick Walsh	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This academy for girls is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It is part of the Harris Federation.
- The proportion of students entitled to the pupil premium (additional government funding to support students who are in the care of the local authority or who are known to be eligible for free school meals) is well above average.
- The majority of students come from minority ethnic groups, the largest of these being from African backgrounds. The percentage who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The proportion of students who join or leave the academy at other than the usual times is high.
- The academy currently has a very small number of students who are taught off site at Phoenix Place, Treasure House and YESS.
- The academy closed its sixth form in 2014. This aspect of provision is being re-structured. It is planned to open again in September 2015
- The academy meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all students are clear about what they need to do to improve their work and that all teachers check to make sure that students respond to the advice given when their work is marked.
- Make sure that all teachers, when posing questions, give students enough time to gather their thoughts, reflect on their ideas and prepare their responses.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Under the leadership of the Principal, senior leaders and governors are working very successfully to drive up standards and improve students' progress. Their track record in doing this provides a strong indication that improvements will be sustained in the future.
- Staff are committed to making sure that every student has the opportunity to do their best. Everything possible is done to eliminate all forms of discrimination. Students demonstrate the same passion as academy leaders and staff to this commitment.
- Academy leaders, with the support of teachers and other staff, are committed to improving teaching. They work together closely to analyse what is working well. They share good practice and are swift to respond to any practice that does not meet their high expectations. For example, improvements in teaching are resulting in better progress and higher standards in mathematics and science.
- Staff with responsibility for leading subjects and driving up standards fulfil their duties exceptionally well. They are accountable to school leaders and to the governing body for explaining the quality of teaching and students' performance in the subjects they manage. They all have detailed plans to sustain improvements and are rigorous in checking that these plans are having a positive effect.
- The academy's evaluation of its performance and of what can be improved further is detailed and accurate. The Harris Federation provides the academy with external support to validate the evaluation and to check that plans to improve are focused on the most important areas for development.
- Staff morale is high. They appreciate the wide range of support and training opportunities available to enhance their practice. These opportunities are thoughtfully designed to underpin the academy's priorities for improvement and to help staff to achieve their ambitions. Arrangements for the performance management of staff are linked closely to the success of the teaching in improving students' progress.
- Parents' opinions are predominantly positive. Parents are pleased with their children's progress. The academy works effectively to keep parents fully aware of how well their children are doing. The vast majority of parents attend the frequent consultation evenings and days that provide helpful insights into their children's learning and to the academy's activities.
- The curriculum caters exceptionally well for students' personal needs and for their academic progress. The academy, in partnership with the Harris Federation, has fully embraced the changes to the National Curriculum. Updated schemes of work are in place for all subjects. Procedures for assessing students' progress have also been fully revised. The procedures include termly standardised examinations. The accuracy of these assessments is validated by external consultants.
- Arrangements to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to prepare them for life in modern day British society are excellent. Students have a comprehensive insight into judicial systems and the processes of government. Students particularly value the additional provision such as the academy's business mentoring programme. This programme enables students to attend weekly meetings with representatives of national and local businesses. These and other meetings help them to be fully prepared for the next stages of the education and for employment.
- Last year every student who left the academy at the end of Year 11 either continued their education or entered the world of work. During the temporary closure of the sixth form, the academy liaised closely with others in the federation and with a wide range of partners to ensure that every student could pursue their chosen pathway.
- Additional funding, such as the Year 7 catch-up fund and the pupil premium, is used wisely. The impact of this funding on students' progress is checked closely. The funding is having a very positive effect on students' progress.

- The Harris Federation provides the academy with excellent support. It provides experienced consultants to check on the academy's performance, to support improvements in teaching and support innovations, such as the academy's response to the changes in the National Curriculum and assessment arrangements.
- Arrangements to ensure that students are safe meet current requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have considerable expertise in a wide range of areas, such as ensuring that students are safe. The governing body plays a key role in overseeing the quality of provision and in checking the academy is driving up standards.
 - Governors liaise closely with key personnel from the Harris Federation to validate the quality of the academy's work.
 - The governing body has a comprehensive insight into the data about students' attainment and progress. Governors are well placed to challenge school leaders if they have any concerns and do so if the need arises.
 - Members of the governing body are very knowledgeable about the quality of teaching. They know what needs to be improved and check closely to see how the expected improvements are going. They are also involved fully in arrangements for the performance management of staff, awarding pay increases only where these are fully justified.
 - Governors are very knowledgeable about the positive effects that result from the academy's wise use of additional targeted resources, such as the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students are spirited, energetic, courteous and well mannered. They are also very caring and supportive towards each other.
- Students participate with great enthusiasm in activities such as dance, drama, music and sport. They are particularly proud of their contribution as part of the Commonwealth Festival Choir.
- Academy leaders are working very effectively in reducing incidents of inappropriate behaviour and the number of exclusions, to the extent that such events are now very rare. Teachers and other staff manage students' behaviour well. Expectations of how well students will work and behave are high. Students are supportive of the academy's mantra of, 'Uncompromising, but caring.'
- Students are enthusiastic learners who willingly take responsibility. They work hard during lessons and are eager to do their best. They always contribute well to discussions and often provide detailed and sophisticated answers to questions. Students are rightly proud of their achievements and celebrate those of their classmates. Very occasionally a small number of students switch off and have to be reminded to focus on the task in hand. Low-level disruption to learning during lessons is extremely rare.
- Attendance is improving dramatically, to the extent that it now matches the national average. School leaders are working effectively to reach out and support any students who do not attend as regularly as they should. This group includes a small number of disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- Students embrace modern British values. They know about democracy through the elections that are held to vote for representatives on their student voice group. They have a strong sense of justice. Students are aware of local services and, during the inspection, suggested the academy could contribute more to recycling. Students show great respect and support for each other regardless of background, cultural heritage or ethnic origin. The academy is an excellent example of a harmonious learning community.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students and their parents agree that this is the case. Parents greatly appreciate the care that is provided for their children.

- Safeguarding meets all the nationally expected requirements. Arrangements to check, prior to their employment, that adults are suitable to work with young people are detailed and thorough.
- The academy takes care to check on the well-being and progress of the very small number of students who are taught at alternative venues.
- Significant emphasis is placed on supporting students' personal development. This provides them with the confidence to thrive academically. Students are confident that, should they experience any difficulties, staff will do their best to help them to find a resolution.
- Bullying in any form is rare. When instances do occur, help is on hand to tackle and resolve the problem. Students have a good understanding of bullying and its impact. This helps to keep incidents to a minimum. Students are also very aware of the potential risks attached to misuse of the internet and social media websites.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The academy's leaders have worked very effectively to eradicate, however minor, weaknesses in teaching and continue to work to bring about rapid improvements. As a result, students' progress in all subjects is at least good and often outstanding. In many subjects, students' progress is well ahead of national expectations.
- Teachers provide work that captures students' interest. They take great care to ensure that work is matched closely to the stage that students have reached and to cover any gaps in their learning.
- The vast majority of students are well motivated. They join in lessons readily and ensure their work is presented neatly. Students are eager to respond to questions and contribute to debates. Teachers use questions very skilfully to challenge students' thinking and to extend their learning. In a minority of instances, however, teachers do not give students enough time to reflect, gather their thoughts and to plan their replies. This means students are not always able to show how good they are at explaining what is going through their mind and at articulating their proposed solution to a problem.
- The basic skills of reading, literacy, and numeracy are taught exceptionally well. This underpins the increasing proportion of students whose progress is exceptional. Teachers provide highly effective opportunities for students to apply these skills, including their speaking and listening, in all subjects. Teachers in all subjects ensure that students fully understand the key vocabulary that is needed.
- Teaching and other support meets the needs of the full range of pupil groups exceptionally well. Teachers and teaching assistants are very aware of students' needs. They are very skilful at spotting any gaps in students' learning and in identifying why, for any reason, students' progress might have slowed. When this occurs, precisely tailored plans are put into place to tackle the identified shortfall.
- Teachers are currently overseeing a programme of individual learning activities to help the most-able students to attain the higher grades of which they are capable. Students are very appreciative of the benefits this highly effective programme is bringing to their learning and progress.
- Support for disadvantaged students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs is equally effective. Teachers are very aware of what needs to be done to provide support to students with special educational needs. No matter what the subject, teachers check to make sure that what they plan is making a contribution to overcoming any barriers to learning.
- Assessment and tracking of students' progress are accurate and frequent. Students are very aware of their targets for attainment, but a small number are not entirely clear about precisely what they need to do to improve their work. The advice that teachers provide for students when they mark their work is also very helpful. However, not all teachers check to make sure that students have responded to the good advice the marking provides for them.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- In the years up to and including 2013, the academy sustained a pattern of above average standards and exceptional progress, although progress in mathematics was not always as good as that for English. Progress remained above average in 2014 but attainment in the key measure of five or more good GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was broadly average.
- Students attaining GCSE results in 2014 began from even lower starting points than those in previous years. Nevertheless students' excellent progress in English was sustained. The proportion of students making the expected progress in mathematics compared favourably with the national average, but the proportion making more than the expected progress was lower than the national figure.
- The Year 11 group in 2014 contained a fifth of students who did not start at the academy in Year 7. Almost all these students arrived with no record of their previous attainment because they joined from overseas or had not previously attended school. The academy has externally verified assessments to show these students made at least the expected progress, with many doing even better. Taking this into account, the progress measures for English are better than found nationally and those for mathematics compare very favourably with the national averages.
- Students who are currently in Year 11 are on course to attain above-average standards in English, mathematics and science. The proportion of students making expected progress and the proportion exceeding the expected progress will be considerably higher than those shown by last year's national data. The work in students' books and that seen during lessons shows that excellent progress in English has been sustained and is being replicated in mathematics and science.
- Students join Year 7 with attainment that is often below or well below that expected for their age. They settle in quickly and soon make rapid progress. Academy examination data and the work in students' books show that, in all year groups, the proportion of students making expected progress and the proportion exceeding the expected progress are better than found nationally. Academy leaders are rightly confident that the restored pattern of above-average standards and excellent progress will be sustained.
- Reading is promoted well and excellent progress is evident. Many students are increasingly avid readers. They are regular users of the well-stocked library. Younger students like to read using electronic devices. This successful approach is a direct result of the wise use of the Year 7 catch-up funding. It is also a key factor in the excellent progress made by students who benefit from this funding.
- Students from all groups are making excellent gains in their basic skills and knowledge in literacy and numeracy. This is due in part to the excellent opportunities they get to apply these skills in the full range of subjects.
- The most-able students are doing increasingly well. Recent underachievement in mathematics has been overcome. The proportion on course to attain grades A* or A in English, mathematics and science GCSE examinations is higher than last year's national results. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are also making exceptionally good progress.
- The progress made by disadvantaged students is one of the academy's success stories. The gap between these students and others in the academy and nationally has narrowed significantly over a number of years. These students are now doing every bit as well and in many cases better than other groups in the academy, to the extent that there is no gap in either their attainment or their progress. In 2014, disadvantaged students reached the same standards as other students in the academy in English and mathematics. They were very close to the attainment of other students nationally in English and half a grade behind them in mathematics.
- The academy keeps a close check on the progress of students who attend alternative provision. They too are doing well.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	131747
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	453336

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	799
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robin Jones
Principal	Alan Dane
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2009
Telephone number	020 7237 9316
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