

Harris Aspire Academy

Lennard Road, Beckenham, Bromley, Kent BR3 1QR

Inspection dates	17–18 May 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school is very effective in what it sets out to do. All leaders, governors and staff are passionately committed to raising the aspirations of pupils who have fallen behind or been unable to engage with their learning elsewhere.
- School leaders, governors and leaders from within the federation have a clear vision for the future and have developed ambitious plans to expand the provision further from 2018. The school is continually improving.
- Pupils are well supported to make up for any lost time and be successful when they leave.
- Leaders and governors have ensured that teaching and learning is of the highest quality across all subjects. As a result, nearly all pupils make rapid progress from their different starting points.
- As pupils settle into the school there is a marked improvement in their behaviour and they become more positive about their learning. Pupils respond to the carefully targeted pastoral and academic support and start to be successful, perhaps for the first time in their lives.
- Pupils, including those who are most able and those who have special educational needs or disability, achieve GCSE passes in English, mathematics and science that are as good as or better, than their peers in other schools nationally.
- Year 12 students attend for a full-time provision and all make improvements on their existing GCSE results. Some improve by up to three grades and successfully complete higher-level courses at other sixth forms when they leave.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some pupils do not attend as regularly as they should. Despite some notable successes with individuals, the overall number of pupils who are still persistently absent has risen this year, particularly in Year 11.
- The number of accreditation opportunities offered to pupils is restricted by the constraints of the current building. This may limit what some pupils can choose to study when they leave.
- Although the number of exclusions has fallen this year, the overall rate is still above average and some groups, such as girls and those who are disadvantaged, are excluded more frequently than others.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Widen GCSE accreditation opportunities for those pupils who may wish to study other subjects at a higher level when they leave the academy.

Ensure that rates of attendance and exclusion are brought closer to the national average, particularly for groups of pupils who are persistently absent, disadvantaged or in a minority.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- Federation leaders and governors have not allowed unexpected changes in the school's leadership to slow the pace of improvement. The principal of the federation sixth form assumed the leadership of the school at the start of this academic year and has ensured that standards have continued to rise.
- Leaders and governors have successfully created a culture of high aspirations which has been effectively communicated to all staff and pupils. There is a shared sense of purpose. Staff know what is expected of them and pupils understand why they have been referred to the school. Everyone is working together to ensure that pupils are successful in higher-level courses when they leave at the end of the year.
- Leaders are not prepared to compromise on maintaining the highest standards and have refined the provision to take account of the limitations of the current building, while they wait to move to new premises. For example, they quickly recognised that the constraints of the existing building limited what could be offered to key stage 3 pupils from other schools. They have therefore suspended any further short-term placements offered to younger pupils until the new building is ready.
- The curriculum is specifically designed to provide pupils with the chance to achieve passes at grades A* to C in English, English literature, mathematics and science GCSE examinations. All pupils are entered for examinations in all four subjects at the end of the year, together with an accreditation in information technology. Some pupils elect to take an additional science GCSE or vocational qualifications in business studies, health and social care and sport. A very few pupils are entered for a modern foreign language GCSE in their home language. There is also a wide range of non-examination enrichment activities that pupils study for one afternoon a week. This includes creative, cultural and sporting options to allow pupils to widen their interests and improve their confidence and self-esteem. Opportunities to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are carefully planned and reinforced in all lessons and tutor sessions. Additional counselling, mentoring and therapeutic support ensures that pupils are prepared well for their adult lives within modern Britain.
- Leaders have recognised that the existing curriculum is constrained by the limitations of the building and some pupils could study a wider range of subjects. For example, there are no facilities to study any design technology courses. This may limit what pupils can go on to study when they leave. Leaders are planning to offer a wider range of subjects and courses at different levels at the new site.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding. Leaders and managers monitor the quality of teaching and learning methodically and take effective action when it is needed. They draw on the expertise and support of other teachers and leaders across the federation to ensure that all teaching is consistently good and often outstanding. An extensive range of professional development opportunities are delivered to new or developing teachers. This has led to a very high standard of teaching across all subjects and classes. Teachers recognise the strong support provided by leaders and staff turnover is relatively low.
- Leaders track pupils' progress and attainment precisely. They are constantly checking to see if they are on track to reach their targets and arrange further support if they start to slip behind. They monitor the performance of all groups to eliminate any potential inequalities and arrange for targeted interventions as necessary. This has led to disadvantaged pupils achieving as well as or better than their peers within school and nationally.
- The monitoring of attendance and behaviour is equally robust. Leaders are aware of where gaps still remain and are working hard to close them. They are determined to overcome all barriers to learning and are developing some creative solutions to improve the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent.
- Leaders are approachable and highly visible during the school day, responding quickly to any worries or concerns. Staff, parents and pupils agree that leaders are extremely effective.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors provide strong support and challenge to school leaders. They have carefully planned for leadership succession and have appointed a new principal from within the federation, who will take up his duties in September. To ensure a smooth transition they have arranged for him to work at the school for three days every week this term. They are also seeking to recruit further governing body members with the skills and expertise to offer increasing support to school leaders as the school grows.
 - Governors make regular visits to talk to leaders, staff and pupils. They therefore know the school well and hold leaders strongly to account. They undergo appropriate training to help them to fulfil their

designated roles and responsibilities effectively. They are working closely with officers from the federation to drive forward expansion plans, whilst ensuring that standards remain high.

- Governors have an excellent understanding of the assessment information they are provided with and ask probing questions when they identify any area for further improvement. For example, they correctly identified that the success and retention rates of leavers should be tracked more closely by the school next year to determine how well they have been prepared for their next steps.
- Governors know how the pupil premium and special education needs funds are spent to provide additional support to eligible pupils. They regularly check to make sure that funded interventions are leading to better outcomes.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and regularly monitored. Drawing on federation resources as necessary, systems for making pre-employment checks on staff and carrying out risk assessments are extremely robust. Leaders have ensured that staff are trained and regularly updated about how to keep pupils safe. Staff are well aware of the risks faced by some pupils and the dangers posed by radicalisation and extremism. They all know what to do if they have any concerns. Leaders are persistent in following up any referrals until they are satisfied that appropriate actions have been taken. Regular tutorials, assemblies, visits and guest speakers ensure that pupils are aware of potential dangers and know how to keep safe both inside and outside school. Records that detail the work done to support vulnerable pupils and those who are potentially at risk are methodically documented. They demonstrate that staff liaise effectively with a wide range of professionals to ensure that pupils and their families get the help that they need.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding because teachers use their strong subject knowledge to keep pupils interested and engaged. They know their pupils well and have a detailed understanding of their needs and preferred learning styles. They tailor learning activities to allow nearly all pupils to make excellent progress towards the challenging targets set.
- Teachers will not accept less than the best that pupils are capable of. This is reflected in the care that pupils take in presenting their work and the high standards of dress and personal conduct that are expected in lessons.
- Individual progress is closely monitored and teachers provide helpful advice to pupils about how to improve further. They are encouraged to respond to this and to set themselves further targets to work towards. Effective mentoring, counselling and the support of additional adults ensures that nearly everyone achieves well.
- Staff develop very positive relationships with their pupils. Disruptions to learning are rare and dealt with effectively when they do occur. Pupils recognise that teachers go the extra mile and appreciate how they are helped to catch up quickly and close any gaps in their understanding. As a result, many pupils start to develop increasingly good attitudes towards their learning.
- Teachers continually reinforce the development of good literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils are given opportunities to practise these skills in all subjects and classes, and encouraged to apply them in different contexts. They have become increasingly confident and competent in these skills by the time that they leave.
- To improve their oracy skills and promote wider debates, pupils are regularly required to 'drop everything and discuss' (DEAD). Teachers use effective questioning skills to check their understanding and identify any misconceptions. Pupils are encouraged to express their ideas and ask questions when they do not understand.
- Teachers formally assess how much progress pupils are making every half term. They use this information to move learning on as quickly as possible. All staff work closely with each other and other professionals to ensure that everyone can use strategies that are successful for individual pupils. As a result, pupils start to make accelerated progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote student's personal development and welfare is good. The majority of pupils are well motivated, purposeful and determined to succeed.

- There is very effective support for the social, emotional and mental health needs of pupils. A team of therapists and counsellors work with school staff, including the special educational needs coordinator, to ensure that pupils get the support they need. Staff also work closely with other professionals from the local authority, health, police and social work agencies to support more-vulnerable pupils and their families.
- Pupils are provided with plentiful hot and cold food and chances to exercise using the extensive sports facilities. They abide by the no smoking policy and understand the need to adopt healthy lifestyles.
- Most pupils have no concerns about bullying and this view is supported by the very low number of incidents that have been reported. However, a few pupils expressed irritation about the occasional inappropriate behaviour of some individuals.
- The majority of pupils feel that they benefit from taking fewer examination subjects as this provides them with additional time to close any gaps in their understanding and improves their chances of success. However, a few pupils expressed a desire to study a wider range of GCSE subjects.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Many plan to return to a mainstream sixth form within the wider federation. They know that this will only be possible if they acquire the entry grades for their chosen courses. As the year goes on they become increasingly focused on their learning because they understand what they need to do in order to achieve this. Most appreciate the second chance they have been given and make considerable improvements in their behaviours and attitudes.
- The vast majority of pupils move around the building in an orderly manner and are considerate of others. They keep the site free from litter or graffiti and tidy up after themselves in the dining area. At the end of break or lunchtimes, pupils quickly return to classrooms and require minimal staff supervision.
- Overall attendance rates have risen slightly every year and are drawing closer to the national average for all schools. However, persistent absence rates remain high and have increased for pupils in Year 11 this year, including for those who are disadvantaged.
- Some pupils take longer to settle than others and are excluded for persistently disruptive behaviour for a fixed number of days. The number of exclusions has declined this term but are above the national average for the year. Some groups of pupils, including girls and those who are disadvantaged, are excluded more frequently than their peers.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- The proportion of pupils who achieve five GCSE passes at A* to C, including in English and mathematics, and the number of A* to C passes in all subjects, has increased every year since the school opened. All groups of pupils make rapid progress from their different starting points because they are extremely well supported to catch up with any learning that they may have missed. Some pupils improve by up to three grades by the end of the year.
- Pupils achieve equally well in all subjects and there are very few gaps between different groups or classes. The proportions making expected progress and better than expected progress in English and mathematics are well above the national average. Pupils make the same high rates of progress in science.
- Pupils who choose to study vocational courses in business studies, health and social care or sport achieve equally well. The current cohort will complete the two-year course in only one year, with most pupils on target to achieve level 2 passes.
- Disadvantaged pupils do as well as or better than their peers within school and other pupils nationally. There are very few gaps across subjects and those that do exist are tiny. The proportions making expected and better than expected progress in English and mathematics are high compared to other schools.
- Pupils at the early stages of learning English are well supported by specialist staff to make rapid gains. Some are extremely able and have caught up or overtaken their peers by the end of the year.
- Many pupils who have special educational needs or disability make outstanding progress from their starting points because teachers are provided with effective support and training to address their identified needs. Some make sufficient progress to be removed from the special educational needs register by the time that they leave.
- Those pupils who are most able are supported well to achieve their full potential. They make significant

gains from their relatively low starting points on entry and rapidly make up for any lost learning. As a result, a significant number are on target to get A* to A grades in English and mathematics this year.

- Due to highly effective teaching, support and encouragement, many pupils make rapid progress in their social, emotional and personal development. The success of all interventions is calculated to ensure that they have made a difference and pupils have made at least expected progress towards their targets.
- Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education, training or employment. They appreciate the high-quality careers advice and guidance they receive. This includes individual support to select appropriate courses, employment or apprenticeship options when they leave. As a result, no pupils were not in education, employment or training (NEET) when they left the school last year.

16 to 19 study programmes

are outstanding

- All students in Years 11 and 12 are taught together and receive the same curriculum offer. Year 12 students receive an intensive, full-time provision to help them to start a full 16 to 19 study programme elsewhere when they leave at the end of the year. Some failed to complete Year 11 at another school or did not achieve the examination results they were capable of. A small number are new to the country and are taking examinations for the first time.
- Year 12 students generally outperform their Year 11 peers. They attend more regularly, are excluded less often and are more successful in their examinations. This is because they have recognised that they need to work hard to achieve their aims and are increasingly motivated to do well. As a result, all make significant progress in developing their English, mathematics and science skills. Some complete additional vocational courses that they continue to study at a higher level when they leave and which lead to future careers.
- Due to the detailed information, advice and guidance they receive when they apply to join the school, students know what they are signing up for. Consequently, very few leave the course once it has started and retention rates are high.

Students who successfully complete their courses are guaranteed a placement at a sixth form within the Harris federation. Approximately one third of students take up this offer while others elect to continue their education at colleges of further education. They are provided with highly effective careers advice to help them make this decision.

- The success rate of students who remain within the federation is high. The majority who left last year have sustained their placements on level 3 courses and are on track to complete further accreditation.
- The school does not offer work placements unless they are an integral part of a vocational course. For example, some students who study health and social care do undertake planned placements. Most students will not complete work experience or work-related learning until they leave the school and begin a new 16 to 19 study programme elsewhere.

School details

Unique reference number	139829
Local authority	Bromley
Inspection number	10011704

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

Type of school	Other secondary
School category	Academy alternative provision sponsor-led free school
Age range of pupils	15–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	96
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	57
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Saunders
Principal	Sandra Miles
Telephone number	020 3370 9238
Website	www.harrisaspire.org.uk
Email address	sandra.miles@harrisfederation.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	n/a

Information about this school

- Harris Aspire Academy is an alternative provision (AP) free school established in September 2013. It is a member of the Harris federation of academies. The school currently offers a one-year personalised learning programme to Year 11 and Year 12 pupils who have struggled to maintain their placements within a mainstream school setting or wish to improve their existing GCSE outcomes. It aims to support them to move onto level 3 courses, an apprenticeship or a work placement when they leave by ensuring that they successfully gain GCSE passes at A* to C in English, mathematics and science.
- The school offers level 2 courses to sixth-form students from other academies within the federation and to those transferring from other schools at the end of Year 11. Students commute to the school from within Bromley and from a number of other London boroughs.
- Students are admitted to Year 11 or Year 12 following a referral from their home school or the local authority. Most start at the beginning of the academic year. The school also offered temporary placements to pupils from key stage 3 until September 2015 but have suspended this provision until a new site is developed to accommodate them.
- The majority of pupils are designated as needing special educational needs support when they arrive. Some have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. There are a small number who are looked after by the local authority or are living independently, having previously been looked after. Around half the number of pupils joining the school are disadvantaged and eligible for the pupil premium funding. An increasing number of pupils who are new to the country and at the early stages of speaking English are being referred by local authorities.
- The school does not use any other alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This is the first inspection since the school was established.
- During this inspection all Year 11 and Year 12 pupils were taking examinations and were only attending revision classes. Inspectors were only able to directly observe a limited range of activities, some accompanied by school leaders. A wider evaluation of teaching and learning over time was carried out using examples of pupils' work, teachers' assessment information and detailed records of observations carried out by leaders from the school and the federation.
- Meetings were held with school leaders and with representatives from the governing body and the Harris federation.
- Inspectors took account of 12 responses from the online survey completed by staff.
- Discussions were held with a group of pupils and informally throughout the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the 32 responses to the online pupil questionnaire.
- There were no parental responses from the online Parent View survey. Inspectors considered the school's surveys of parental views and checked the comments made by parents in meeting notes and student's education, health and care plans.
- Documents detailing the school's work were evaluated by inspectors. They reviewed the school's self-evaluation and action plan, progress tracking information, behaviour and attendance records and safeguarding arrangements.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Inspection team

Lesley Cox, lead inspector

Dr Lady Kanwaljit Singh

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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