

Harris Invictus Academy Croydon

London Road, Croydon CR0 2TB

Inspection dates

29–30 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Senior leaders, staff and governors have built a highly successful school by focusing squarely on pupils' academic and personal development. As a result, the school provides an excellent education for all its pupils.
- The school's leaders set very high expectations that staff and pupils alike work successfully to achieve. The culture of high aspirations pervades the school.
- Disadvantaged pupils make very strong progress from their different starting points. The most able pupils also do very well but sometimes they are not stretched quite enough in lessons.
- Those who speak English as an additional language, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make very brisk progress. Their achievements are often better than others'.
- The quality of teaching has a very strong impact on pupils' achievements. High expectations, well-structured learning and the effective use of good resources mean that pupils receive high-quality lessons.
- Teachers are skilled at nipping potential misbehaviour in the bud. As a result, there is very little disruption in lessons and pupils are able to learn without interruption.
- Pupils are extremely well turned out and have first-rate manners. They are very proud of their school and of their achievements. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and to school.
- Pupils behave very well around the school and in the playground, despite the temporary classrooms and the cramped outside space.
- Safeguarding procedures are excellent. The attention to detail results in a very positive climate in which pupils' academic achievement, care and welfare are highly valued.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the way questioning is used to extend learning so that the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make consistently good progress in all of their subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Senior leaders, governors and the federation are aspirational for the school and its pupils. They have established a clear vision based on academic excellence and high-quality care and welfare. As a result, the school is a vibrant place in which all pupils are enabled to achieve their potential.
- Leaders' attention to detail in their planning ensures that strategies meet pupils' needs effectively. For example, detailed case studies of vulnerable pupils show how staff work tenaciously with external support agencies to ensure that the right support is provided. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make very strong progress and many achieve better than their peers.
- Leaders know their school well and are relentless in ensuring that all pupils achieve their potential. They are quick to pick up discrepancies in learning and put in place successful strategies to help pupils overcome difficulties. For example, pupils who speak English as an additional language make very strong progress to catch up with, and often exceed, other pupils' performance. As pupils noted, 'our teachers always help us if we don't understand'.
- Despite the absence of the principal during the inspection, the school continued to run smoothly. This is because the systems and protocols that have been put in place are very strong and understood by everyone. This indicates the way the school's values and culture permeate down through to all staff from the example set by the federation head office.
- The school provides a broad curriculum for its pupils that covers the range of academic, creative, physical and practical experiences. While the emphasis is on academic and scholarly excellence, pupils also study enterprise, art, drama, physical education, computer studies, and design and food technology. As a result, the needs and interests of the pupils are met effectively.
- The curriculum is extended very effectively by a rich variety of clubs and after-school activities. Pupils can study French or Spanish if they want to go on to take GCSEs in modern languages. They can join the reading club, the applied mathematics club or the young app designers club to learn new skills and extend their learning. This wealth of experiences caters extremely well for the most able pupils who want to excel in particular areas as well as for others who wish to pursue their interests.
- The school has robust procedures to evaluate its work. Consequently, leaders have an accurate view of its strengths and areas for improvement, and have identified clearly the priorities for further improvement. For example, leaders at all levels have identified the need to extend even further the achievements of the most able, including those who are disadvantaged, by challenging them to excel.
- Leaders recognise that making sure that teaching is of a consistently high quality is essential. They evaluate teachers' practice and provide effective professional development opportunities, including for those who are newly qualified.

- The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, and for those who need to catch up with their literacy or numeracy skills, is used effectively. The funding is used for a wide range of interventions to enrich and enhance pupils' learning. For example, pupils in Years 7 and 8 are provided with additional tuition after school, at weekends and in the holidays. There is support for phonics and literacy and one-to-one tutoring.
- The school's procedures for checking pupils' progress are extremely thorough. As well as regular teacher assessment, the school tests pupils each term to identify progress and any gaps in their learning. These tests are externally moderated to ensure reliability and accuracy. As a result, staff are able to pinpoint accurately where interventions are needed and how well each pupil is performing.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is catered for very successfully by the school. Assemblies and tutor time are used to provide a programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) that includes a range of topics such as democracy and the monarchy, drug and alcohol abuse and healthy eating. Work in religious studies lessons covers the main religious traditions represented in Britain and concepts such as morals, love and atheism. As a result, pupils have a clear understanding of British values and develop their personal skills very effectively.

Governance of the school

- Governors are very knowledgeable about the school and its priorities. This is because they are provided with good-quality information about the school's performance and receive effective training to meet their responsibilities. For example, the range of assessment information they receive from the school is clear and accessible. As a result, governors have a sharp understanding of the school's priorities and areas for improvement. This enables them to challenge leaders where necessary but also to balance this with effective support.
- Governors have a wide range of expertise that they use effectively to understand how well the school is performing. They make informed decisions based on regular visits to the school. Performance management is rigorous and linked well to salary. In collaboration with the federation, governors have ensured that there is proper financial accountability, including of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. One of the key strengths of these arrangements is the high-quality record-keeping that enables staff to focus closely on individual pupils. As a result, no pupil is allowed to fall through the net or is left without the support they need to thrive at school.
- The school responds to changes in the guidance for safeguarding and child protection quickly and sensibly. For example, all staff have received and signed for the relevant documentation about keeping pupils safe and all have been trained in how to spot the signs of abuse and know about local gangs. Leaders are vigilant in identifying any signs of behaviour that might indicate a pupil is susceptible to radicalisation or extremism. Leaders have good links with outside agencies and are persistent in following up the specific needs of individual pupils. As a result, staff, pupils and parents agree that there is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Typically, teaching is highly effective in ensuring that pupils make very strong progress with their learning. This is because all teachers have high expectations of pupils and plan their lessons carefully to ensure that all are suitably challenged.
- Teachers explain the work carefully to pupils, giving them clear instructions. As a result, pupils are rarely unsure of what to do or what is expected of them. On the very few occasions when this does happen, teachers are quick to intervene and provide extra help and support.
- In most subjects, especially in English, mathematics and science, teachers use their good subject knowledge to give pupils interesting work that engages them well. For example, in a science lesson pupils were fascinated about an experiment to determine the effect of cigarette smoke on the lungs. They listened very attentively to the teacher's explanation and answered questions excitedly.
- Teachers are very accomplished at managing pupils' behaviour effectively. A few pupils can be quite challenging at times but teachers are experts at settling them down or bringing them back to their learning without fuss. As a result, learning is rarely disrupted. As pupils noted, classrooms 'are tranquil.' This is because all staff expect the best from pupils all of the time and simply do not accept poor behaviour.
- Teachers are skilled at using the learning from previous lessons to build and develop pupils' skills and understanding. For example, in a Spanish lesson, pupils' prior learning of vocabulary was used successfully to get them to put phrases in the right order.
- The support provided for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is first rate. Staff know their pupils very well and detailed planning ensures that their needs are met very well indeed. As a result, pupils make excellent progress, often achieving better standards than their peers.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language also make rapid progress, as do disadvantaged pupils and the most able. This is because staff have detailed information about the achievements of individual pupils and are able to identify those who are falling behind. Regular meetings enable staff to intervene by providing extra help or inviting pupils to the after-school activities. As a result, pupils quickly make up for lost time.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy is very effective. In all classrooms, literacy has a very strong presence with the week's literacy target displayed prominently. For example, in science lessons great care is taken to ensure that pupils understand the technical vocabulary used. Similarly, numeracy concepts such as graphs and tables are taught effectively.
- In most lessons, questioning is used well to probe and deepen pupils' understanding. Occasionally, where questioning is not used as effectively, the most able pupils are not pushed enough to extend their learning, and their progress wanes a little.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. This is because leaders give detailed attention to the care and welfare of all pupils, and ensure that personal well-being is a strong part of the school's provision. For example, a charity provides a mentor during the morning so that pupils have someone other than a teacher to talk to if they have a problem.
- The school's curriculum provides very effectively for pupils' personal development. Pupils said they are taught to value differences and that one of the things they like about school is its diversity. They have a strong understanding of what it means to treat everyone equally. Pupils are very respectful of others and tolerant of different ideas and people.
- Pupils were very clear that bullying is rare. They said that one of the reasons for this is that, on the odd occasions that it does happen, staff deal with it very efficiently. Pupils also explained that there are pupil anti-bullying ambassadors who work with teachers to eliminate any bullying. They said that there is very little bullying because 'we try and stamp it out before it gets out of hand'.
- Pupils feel safe at school. They reported that their teachers are very good at making sure that they are kept safe. As an example, they described a recent incident where teachers ensured that pupils were not intimidated by a local gang. The school has provided workshops about gangs and cyber bullying and pupils noted that last year they did work on sexual bullying. As a result, pupils know how to keep themselves safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are especially good at talking and playing together in the very cramped playground. Their conduct around the building is well ordered and they show great maturity in dealing with the temporary accommodation. They are well mannered and were very keen to engage with inspectors and talk about their school. Pupils are proud of their school and take a great deal of pride in their appearance. Attendance is above average and persistent absence low.
- Typically, pupils behave very well in lessons. They have excellent attitudes and are keen, highly motivated and excited by their learning. They are punctual – arriving to lessons on time. Although a few pupils can be challenging, there is very little disruption in lessons. This is partly the result of teachers' skilful management but also because pupils learn self-discipline quickly.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a positive culture that sets very clear standards of behaviour and expects all pupils to follow the rules, which they do.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress from their individual starting points. This is the result of carefully planned teaching, high expectations and an unwavering focus on excellence and academic achievement. As a result, achievement in English and mathematics is high and is similarly strong across the other subjects of the curriculum.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make especially swift progress, as do those who speak English as an additional language. This is particularly so for those who join the school with little or no English. Pupils are provided with very strong support in lessons and through additional interventions such as after-school clubs and Saturday classes.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is very strong. The school's assessment and test information shows clearly that disadvantaged pupils achieve at least as well as others nationally and often better.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, achieve very well. Again, the rigorous use of the test and assessment information ensures that pupils who are falling behind are picked up quickly by leaders and teachers. However, occasionally they are not challenged as much as they could be, especially when questions are not searching enough.
- Pupils enjoy reading a great deal and read a wide range of books. The most able readers have well-developed reading skills and are able to tackle increasingly difficult texts as they move up the school. The least able readers are fluent and although they sometimes stumble on difficult words they use their knowledge of phonics to read them without help. Inspectors were impressed with pupils' ability to predict what might happen next in the story.
- The school's assessment information indicates that pupils will achieve very strong outcomes at GCSE. Although it is too early to say whether the school will achieve this in the future, the progress of current pupils suggests that they are being prepared very effectively for their examinations at the end of Year 11. Careers guidance is strong and provides pupils with practical opportunities to experience the world of work.

School details

Unique reference number	140952
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	10022996

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	480
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Palmer
Executive Principal	Carol-Anne Alcock
Principal	Edward Evans
Telephone number	020 33713002
Website	www.harrisinvictus.org.uk
Email address	a.alcock@harrisinvictus.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets the requirements on the publication of specified information on its website. The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is a member of the Harris Federation.
- Currently, the school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It is growing each year and will move into purpose-built accommodation next September.
- The principal was not in school during the inspection due to illness. The executive headteacher took his place for the duration of the inspection.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below that of other schools.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in each class in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils' work in a range of subjects was looked at.
- Inspectors listened to pupils from Year 8 reading.
- Inspectors looked at behaviour at break and lunchtime.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, including governors, subject leaders, new staff and pupils.
- A range of documentation and policies were scrutinised which included the school's self-evaluation, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, meetings of the governing body and assessment information.
- Inspectors scrutinised records relating to the quality of teaching, and checked the school's website, including its information about extra-curricular activities, trips and visits.
- Records, policies and procedures relating to safeguarding were reviewed.
- Inspectors took account of the 11 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and of 17 responses to the survey of staff.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Ofsted Inspector
David Daniels	Ofsted Inspector

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