

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



10 May 2018

Mr Lee Mallin
Principal
Harris Academy Morden
Lilleshall Road
Morden
Surrey
SM4 6DU

Dear Mr Mallin

Short inspection of Harris Academy Morden

Following my visit to the school on 27 March 2018 with Sophie Cavanagh, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since your school was judged to be good in December 2014.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in certain areas. This may indicate that the school is improving towards being outstanding. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

Your relentless drive to improve the life chances of the school's pupils is motivational. You work seamlessly with your leadership team, the governors, trustees, your staff and parents and carers to implement school initiatives which have improved pupils' outcomes rapidly. Pupils said that they have high expectations for their success because you and your staff ensure that their achievement, safety and well-being are given the highest priority. Pupils enjoy and are proud of their school. Parents and carers who responded to the online survey were positive about all aspects of the school's work.

All these strengths are a recipe for success and are reflected in pupils' exemplary attitudes to learning and their strong desire to reach their aspirational targets. The ambitious attitude of your staff encourages pupils to do their best. Pupils' progress from their starting points shows year-on-year improvement in their progress by the end of Year 11. Your current assessment information also indicates that pupils' progress continues to improve in all year groups and for the different pupil groups. This is strong evidence that you, your leaders, staff and governors are improving the school's effectiveness towards being outstanding.

You have diminished the achievement difference between disadvantaged students and others in the school. The vast majority of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make progress which is significantly above their peers nationally by the end of Year 11. These were two aspects of the school's performance that were identified as areas for improvement at the last inspection. You have successfully addressed these priorities. Furthermore, Year 11 pupils who started the school with high prior attainment made better progress than their peers nationally in 2017.

The majority of pupils engage enthusiastically in a range of challenging experiences and learning that staff provide. Their conduct and interaction with one another around the school remains exemplary as at the last inspection. Furthermore, since the last inspection, teachers have developed their questioning skills and also help pupils to write in more detail. These improvements are supported by your consistent focus on developing the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. You encourage aspirational middle leaders to develop their leadership skills quickly. You have created a collaborative culture where staff are loyal to you and the school. Leaders are committed to achieving the school's aims and vision, which are for all pupils to make excellent progress. You are equally ambitious for the pupils who attend and learn in alternative provision.

There are two areas where further work is needed. The first is to continue to increase the progress made by pupils who start the school with low prior attainment. This is because although the progress made by Year 11 pupils was extremely strong overall in 2017, it varied in different subjects for low-attaining pupils compared with the progress of middle- and high-prior-attaining pupils. For example, pupils who have low prior attainment make stronger progress in science and mathematics than in English. The second is to reduce the absence figures for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities so their attendance matches that of all pupils nationally.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team ensures that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and meet current requirements. Leaders and governors promote a strong culture of safeguarding which permeates the school. As a result, pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they feel safe and well looked after. They also know with whom to speak if they have any concerns. Leaders and trustees make sure that staff and governors are trained and receive regular updates in safeguarding and child protection matters. All parents who responded to the school's survey agree that their children are safe and happy at your school.

The systems in place to check the suitability of all staff to work with children are rigorous. Any concerns about pupils are carefully monitored and comprehensive written child protection records provide evidence of very quick follow-up action. Senior leaders have developed effective partnerships with external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive early help if this is required. Leaders, governors and trustees keep all safeguarding matters under regular review. This is

so that any required improvements can be implemented rapidly.

Inspection findings

- At the start of this short inspection we agreed to focus on four key lines of enquiry. First, we agreed to check the capacity of leaders to sustain pupils' overall very strong progress from their starting points. This was especially for lower-attaining and disadvantaged pupils as well as pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Second, we wanted to consider how effectively leaders track the academic progress, safety and well-being of pupils who learn in alternative provision. Third, we agreed to confirm the effectiveness of the action taken by leaders to maintain pupils' high attendance. We also agreed to check whether absences of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities had reduced. Last, we agreed to evaluate the impact of leaders' work to reduce pupil exclusions and the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- In 2017, Year 11 pupils' progress was very strong and resulted in the overall progress of all pupils being within the highest 10% of schools nationally. This is exceptional. We agreed that all pupils, including those with low attainment, are making strong progress in mathematics and science. However, our scrutiny of pupils' work in English found that the progress of low-attaining pupils over time is not as strong compared with their progress in mathematics and science.
- Teachers use questions to probe pupils' understanding and motivate them to learn. Work in pupils' books shows that they have numerous opportunities to write extensively. The exemplary behaviour of virtually all pupils in lessons means that they learn well. Furthermore, the school's recent assessment of all year groups confirms that pupils' strong progress is sustained. However, in a range of subjects, including English, the progress of pupils who have low starting points is not as strong as others with middle and high prior attainment.
- The school's rigorous procedures to track and check the learning, safety, attendance and behaviour of pupils who study in alternative provisions are supporting these pupils to learn well and stay safe. Your leaders work very closely with the headteachers of these alternative provisions. This results in leaders taking immediate action to resolve any potential issues which could have an impact on pupils' learning.
- Pupils' overall attendance rates are above average and their rates of persistent absence have been lower than the national average since 2015. This is because leaders closely track pupils' attendance patterns and analyse the figures termly. Leaders review and adapt the school's actions to encourage pupils to attend school regularly. However, at the time of this inspection, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and learners who have SEN and/or disabilities remains low compared to all pupils nationally. Furthermore, the persistent absence of these two groups is higher than the national average for all pupils, despite reducing slightly since 2016.
- Leaders and your staff make a concerted effort, and work with parents to maintain high standards of behaviour and improve the school's learning culture. This has reduced the percentage of permanent and fixed-term exclusions rapidly.

These stand well below the national average currently. Furthermore, the percentage of permanent and fixed-term exclusions for disadvantaged pupils and for learners who have SEN and/or disabilities has also reduced rapidly and is below the national average for all pupils.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils with low starting points make strong progress in a wider range of subjects, including English
- the overall attendance and persistent absence rates for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities improves to match or exceed the national average for all pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, chair of the board of trustees and the chief executive of the multi-academy trust, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Merton. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Pamela Fearnley
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

We met with you and the vice-principal and held meetings with various leaders, including the safeguarding leader. I interviewed the chair of the governing body with a trustee and held a telephone conversation with the headteacher of one alternative provision used by the school. Inspectors met with groups of pupils to gain their views of the school and their learning. Short visits were made to a range of classes in a variety of subjects to observe learning and scrutinise pupils' work, some jointly with you or your vice-principal. We spoke to pupils in classes, during break and lunchtimes and visited the student referral centre. We considered a range of documentary evidence, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, and safeguarding records. Recent assessment information showing current pupils' progress, attendance and exclusions was evaluated. We considered the school's own recent surveys to gather the views of parents, staff and pupils and the written comments made by two parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. There were no responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and staff.