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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
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Executive Principal and Principal
Harris Academy South Norwood
Cumberlow Avenue
London
SE25 6AE

Dear Mr Williamson and Mr Hitch

No formal designation inspection of Harris Academy South Norwood

Following my visit to your school on 19–20 November 2019 with Ogugua Okolo-Angus, Jeff Cole, Philippa Nunn and Sophie Welch, Ofsted Inspectors, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and the time you took to discuss behaviour and safeguarding in your school.

The inspection was carried out in accordance with the no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills was concerned about standards, behaviour and safeguarding at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors considered evidence that included:

- observations of pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of pupils' behaviour throughout the day, including discussion with pupils
- documentary evidence around pupils leaving the school and those pupils attending alternative provision
- documentary evidence around safeguarding procedures and processes
- discussions with school leaders and staff
- deep dives into English, music, mathematics, science, humanities, modern foreign languages and computing.

Having evaluated the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers have taken effective action to maintain the high standards of achievement and behaviour identified at the school's previous inspection. Safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Context

Harris Academy South Norwood is a very large secondary school with pupils aged between 11 and 19. It is based on two separate sites, approximately a ten-minute drive apart. The school is part of the Harris Federation. The new principal and new executive principal started in September 2019. There is a new designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and a new coordinator for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SENCo). Almost a third of pupils speak English as an additional language. Almost a tenth of pupils receive special educational needs (SEN) support, with a much smaller proportion having an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Nearly half of the pupils are eligible to receive free school meals. The school had been identified as having high levels of pupil movement from Year 10 to Year 11 for the past few years. There have been three qualifying complaints since the last inspection.

Behaviour and attitudes

The new principals have only been in post a short time. They have already reviewed procedures for managing and recording behaviour. Leaders have focused staff's attention on re-establishing routines and raising expectations still further. They have enhanced systems to improve behaviour management. Leaders monitor pupils whose behaviour has been problematic and are proactive in offering appropriate support and guidance. Leaders know that the two sites provide specific challenges. For instance, teachers and post-16 students often travel back and forth between the sites. The principals want to minimise any disruption this might cause and ensure that both sites have a complementary, but distinct, ethos.

There is a calm and productive start to the school day. High staff supervision, both out on the street before school and during breaktimes, ensures that pupils are kept safe. Lesson changeovers are generally orderly, and pupils arrive to class promptly. Overall attendance has risen, and persistent absence reduced. During lessons, the school is a calm and productive place to learn. Pupils aspire to earn 'golden tickets' for hard work and good behaviour. They said that any sanctions are given out fairly. Pupils are polite to staff and visitors. Sixth-form students mix well with younger pupils. Some communal areas, however, could be quieter and calmer. Some staff need further confidence and training to intervene when pupils' conduct becomes lively, or when pupils talk when the teacher is talking.

Leaders' vision for pupils' 'personal growth' and 'the pursuit of truth' permeates throughout the school. The majority of curriculum leaders can articulate what they

want pupils to know and why. Teachers regularly check what pupils have learned through the 'connect now' activities, and they then build on this knowledge sequentially. Many teachers are subject experts and use meeting times to share pedagogy and 'train'. The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects are particularly strong, with two-thirds of pupils being entered for the EBacc in 2019. Ambition for all pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), is high. The SENCo and SEN team have pledged a 'guarantee' to work proactively with parents and carers. They regularly communicate with parents and focus on meeting the needs of pupils. In subjects where there is strong teaching, pupils are engaged and active, showing genuine interest in what they are learning. Leaders are clear where the curriculum is not being implemented as well as it should be by teachers. In these lessons, pupils' enthusiasm can wane.

Leaders are keen for pupils and students in the sixth form to become active citizens, scholars and ambassadors for the school. Pupils receive regular training so that they can keep safe and look after each other. Pupils are mostly kind and considerate. They were genuinely surprised when asked about incidences of bullying as they said that this is extremely rare. The 'FLICKS' (faith, lifestyle, inclusion, careers, knowledge and society) programme is comprehensive and is delivered through assemblies and tutor time. Staff have recently listened to the views of pupils and introduced economic well-being as a result. There is an extensive list of extra-curricular opportunities, including choir, dance, sculpture, Chinese, Duke of Edinburgh, and a scholars' club. However, leaders have only recently started to check participation in these activities. Consequently, it is not clear which pupils, including those with SEND, benefit.

Pupil mobility both into and out of the school is high. According to the school's records, most of these pupils leave the school due to relocation, in other London boroughs, across the United Kingdom or overseas. Until recently, paperwork relating to these pupils has not been as precise as it should be. A small number of pupils attend suitable alternative provision. Leaders ensure that these pupils study relevant courses and they track their progress, behaviour and attendance carefully.

The safeguarding team works collegiately and effectively together across both sites. The team members are experienced and clear about their statutory responsibility to keep pupils and staff safe. They know the prevalent risks to pupils in the community, such as gang affiliation, criminal activity, domestic violence and mental health issues. The team are proactive in ensuring early identification, so that timely support and help can be given to pupils and their families. They ensure that pupils have access to relevant services, many of which are on site. Pupils were particularly positive about the available mentoring and counselling services. Staff are well trained and vigilant. They know how to pass on concerns. The safeguarding team uses an electronic system to ensure that information is quickly shared across both sites.

Priorities for further improvement

- Leaders should sharpen processes and procedures around behaviour management.
- Leaders should ensure that all pupils, including those with SEND, have access to the full range of opportunities and experiences.
- Leaders should ensure that the high standards seen in some subjects are replicated consistently across all curriculum areas.

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

Yours sincerely

Helen Matthews
Her Majesty's Inspector