

Inspection of a good school: Harris Aspire Academy

11 Oliver Grove, South Norwood, London SE25 6EJ

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 November 2021

Outcome

Harris Aspire Academy continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a section 5 inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils join this school for a range of reasons. Many have not previously enjoyed school. Leaders and staff make sure that this school gives pupils a fresh start. All are determined for pupils to succeed. Over time, staff help pupils to have high expectations for themselves. Pupils take pride in their achievement. They become more positive about education and their plans for the future.

Pupils work alongside students at a sixth-form college within the same trust. They benefit from the facilities and teacher expertise that this partnership offers. Pupils are able to pursue a range of interests and qualifications, from construction to additional GCSEs. Leaders and staff do their utmost to understand and meet pupils' individual needs.

Leaders and staff work closely with pupils, parents and carers, as well as pupils' mainstream schools. Together, they agree what success would be for each individual pupil. Leaders then design a curriculum for each pupil to meet their academic and pastoral needs. Pupils learn to behave well. They said that bullying is not a problem at the school. Pupils feel safe and have confidence in staff to help them. Staff manage any concerns that arise well.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have created an ethos focused on inclusion and achievement. Irrespective of their starting points or individual needs, pupils receive the support they need to be successful learners. Pupils build up both their knowledge and self-confidence effectively. This is because each pupil benefits from a carefully planned curriculum that supports them towards success. Pupils are very well prepared to move on to the next stage of their education.

In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum is designed to be both broad and tailored to each pupil's needs and aspirations. This works exceptionally well in practice. As well as continuing to develop their knowledge in English, mathematics and science, pupils study towards GCSEs and accredited qualifications in a range of other subjects. Close partnership working with pupils' mainstream schools enables pupils to continue and build upon previous learning.

Some pupils join on short-term placements lasting up to three weeks. Staff make sure that these pupils continue to learn the curriculum of their mainstream schools. Pupils also receive well-targeted pastoral support, including mentoring. This prepares them to return successfully to their mainstream school.

Teaching is ambitious and learning is sequenced appropriately. Staff check pupils' understanding and go over subject content again when they find gaps in pupils' knowledge. Pupils appreciate this and grow in confidence.

Leaders plan thoroughly for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This work is based on careful identification of pupils' needs. Where appropriate, leaders organise further assessments of pupils' barriers to learning. Leaders and staff use this information well to plan and put in place effective support, for instance in reading and literacy.

The curriculum supports pupils' literacy well. Language development and vocabulary are prioritised. This means pupils get better at reading and writing. Some pupils find it particularly hard to communicate confidently. Leaders are making sure that the curriculum continues to prioritise the development of pupils' spoken language.

Leaders and staff have thought carefully about how to support pupils' wider development. Careers education is a strength. Year 11 pupils all achieve qualifications and go on to further study or training, including apprenticeships. Staff involve families closely in planning for pupils' next steps. Personal, social, health and economic education also contributes to pupils' readiness for their future lives. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe as well as how and where they should seek support. Respecting others is a theme that runs through the curriculum. The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that the provision for extra-curricular learning has been interrupted. Leaders are redeveloping the enrichment activities on offer, and ensuring that all pupils are able to access them.

Staff know all pupils well and address challenging behaviour calmly. Pupils are taught to discuss their strengths as well as how they can manage their own behaviour.

Leaders nurture staff as well as pupils. They focus on developing teachers' subject knowledge and teaching expertise. Staff appreciate this and are committed members of the school community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise the safety of pupils. They thoroughly assess pupils' needs before and on arrival. Leaders support pupils well through close partnership working with external agencies and pupils' mainstream schools. They follow up any concerns and make sure that pupils get the help they need.

Leaders ensure that staff are well trained and know about different safeguarding risks. This helps to create a culture of vigilance. Leaders refer concerns to external agencies when necessary.

Governors, leaders and staff are knowledgeable about how to identify and support pupils' needs. Pupils learn about how to keep safe and develop resilience through a comprehensive curriculum.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders make sure that pupils continue to develop their reading, speaking and writing. Many pupils join the school with low levels of confidence in using spoken English. Leaders' work to support these pupils is successful. Leaders should build on the existing strengths and ensure that pupils continue to practise and build up their confidence in using spoken language.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	139829
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	10201302
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	14
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Dan Moynihan
Principal	Andrew Barr
Website	www.harrisaspire.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 and 18 May 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school provides full-time placements for pupils in Years 10 and 11. It has capacity for 65 pupils. The school also offers short-term respite placements for pupils in Years 7 to 11 for up to three weeks.
- Since the last inspection, there has been a new headteacher and the school has moved to new premises.
- This school shares the site with a vocational sixth-form within the same multi-academy trust. The principal of Harris Aspire is also the principal of the sixth-form college.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the principal, executive principal, chief executive officer of the trust, vice principals and senior leaders in charge of safeguarding, behaviour and inclusion. Inspectors also spoke with the chair of governors.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and personal, social and health education. They also considered pupils' learning in other subjects, including construction, physical education, media, business and art. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke to leaders and staff. They reviewed the single central record and spoke to staff about their work to identify and support pupils.
- Inspectors also considered the responses to surveys from staff. There were no responses from parents or pupils.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about safeguarding, their well-being and learning.

Inspection team

Alice Clay, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Francis Gonzalez

Ofsted Inspector

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