

Inspection of Harris City Academy Crystal Palace

Maberley Road, Upper Norwood, London SE19 2JH

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 April 2025
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Samuel Rigby. The school is part of the Harris Federation, which means that other people in the trust have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Sir Daniel Moynihan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Lord Philip Harris of Peckham.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since October 2014. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Harris City Academy Crystal Palace gives pupils and students an education that is second to none. As pupils say, the opportunities for learning are 'endless'. The ambitious curriculum and the impressive array of trips and activities prepare pupils for the next stage of their lives extremely well.

The expertly designed curriculum enables pupils to excel in their learning. Its careful attention to providing an extensive and meaningful set of courses advances pupils' knowledge and skills very successfully. Pupils' and students' personal development contributes equally to their learning. It is part and parcel of preparing them for the next stage of their lives. Pupils are polite and courteous. They speak with maturity about the school's many strengths as well as the things that could be better. Pupils are listened to and their views respected.

Pupils and students behave very responsibly in lessons and around the school. They understand the school's routines and expectations extremely well. Lessons are seldom disrupted. Pupils are confident that the rare occasions of low-level distractions are dealt with quickly by staff. The same is true for bullying. Pupils were clear that bullying rarely, if ever, happened. They noted that the school does not tolerate bullying.

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

One phrase sums up the school's excellence: consistently high quality. Consistency runs through the school like the letters in a stick of rock. Cut that piece of rock anywhere and what you see is the school's unwavering focus on giving pupils and students a consistently high quality experience. Whether it is the aspirational curriculum, pupils' personal development or their readiness for the next stage, pupils' achievements, including for disadvantaged pupils, are consistently excellent.

The highly ambitious curriculum is designed carefully to enable pupils and students to achieve their aspirations, whatever their background or need. It exemplifies the school's principle that 'knowledge is power'. Important subject knowledge and skills are arranged carefully to develop pupils' learning in a logical sequence of ideas and concepts. This enables pupils to learn the essential information that they need to tackle more complex work. It provides opportunities for pupils to connect different bits of knowledge so that they learn not just the 'what' but also the 'how' and 'why'. In history, for example, studying empires through time helps pupils to understand how historical facts influence modern society.

The aspirational curriculum is complemented very successfully by the way it is translated into high-quality teaching and learning. Staff expect the most of pupils. They are experts in their field and know just how to present information in a way that is relevant. Across the school, including in the sixth form, teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to adapt their teaching to take account of pupils' needs, including those of disadvantaged pupils. They use pertinent research to anchor their approach on what works best to promote learning. Teachers check for gaps in learning or misconceptions, using this to

focus their teaching on helping all pupils to achieve well. The strong emphasis on reading means that pupils, including those who need additional support, become increasingly fluent readers as they move through the school. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also well organised and based on the highest of ambitions. Pupils' needs are identified accurately, with effective personalised support put in place.

An extensive range of visits, trips and experiences extends pupils' and students' interests and talents most effectively. Many of the activities are provided free of charge, or at a reduced rate, to help ensure that take-up is consistently high. The trip to China, for example, is open to all. The positive impact of these opportunities on promoting pupils' all-round development is significant. The school excels in sport, with pupils proud of their achievements, including winning many local and national competitions.

The highest priority is placed on pupils' personal development. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is, like subjects, designed and implemented effectively. Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe and healthy, and the importance of respect for others. They recall fundamental British values knowledgeably and speak positively about how PSHE develops their character. They are clear that no acceptance is given to racist or homophobic bullying. Pupils' attitudes to their studies are of the highest calibre.

Careers education is consistently strong. It begins in Year 7 and develops pupils' and students' knowledge of the opportunities available to them when they leave school. Work experience in Years 10 and 12 extends that knowledge, as do careers events where local providers attend. This work prepares pupils and students for the next steps in their lives very effectively. An increasing number of sixth-form students go on to university.

Those responsible for governance bring a great deal of expertise to the role. As a result, they carry out their roles very effectively. Teachers are positive about the school's work to take account of their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	135311
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	10345906
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,258
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	356
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Lord Philip Harris of Peckham
CEO of the trust	Sir Dan Moynihan
Principal	Samuel Rigby
Website	www.harriscrystalpalace.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	16 and 17 October 2014, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Harris City Academy Crystal Palace converted to become an academy in September 2007.
- The school is part of the Harris Federation.
- The school uses three registered alternative provisions.
- The current headteacher took up post in September 2024.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages and music. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers and heads of department. Inspectors also met with teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the local governing board, trustees and the trust's assistant director of secondary schools.
- Inspectors considered responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, including the written comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Kevin Burke	Ofsted Inspector
David Lloyd	Ofsted Inspector
Olivia Page	Ofsted Inspector
Alan Blount	Ofsted Inspector

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