

Harris Primary Academy Merton

Abbotts Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 1JW

Inspection dates

11–12 July 2017

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
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leaders and governors have created a culture in which pupils can excel. The principal has ensured that there is an uncompromising drive to improve teaching and outcomes for the pupils.
- Senior leaders have trained a very effective team of subject- and year-group leaders. Their contribution to improvement is considerable.
- The challenge and support from governors and the federation have been instrumental in the academy's establishment and rapid improvement.
- The progress of pupils and their attainment have risen sharply since the opening of the academy. This has resulted in pupils making up for underachievement in the past.
- The pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are very respectful and show great consideration towards others.
- Pupils are highly motivated to learn. They are confident learners who persevere when faced with difficulties.
- The curriculum inspires the pupils and encourages them to acquire knowledge, understanding and skills across all subjects in depth.
- Through strong relationships with adults in the early years, children become enthusiastic and engaged learners. The highly effective teaching is leading to children making rapid progress.
- Pupils in the additional resource provision make strong and secure progress towards their targets. This is because adults know and plan carefully to meet their particular needs well.
- Attendance has risen sharply, including for disadvantaged pupils, through a concerted team effort.
- Safeguarding pupils is of the highest priority. Pupils feel very safe and are trained to look after themselves.
- The school's values expressed through its golden rules permeate all aspects of the pupils' lives.
- The strong promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development encourages them to be thoughtful and caring.
- Teachers challenge the thinking of the most able pupils, but do not always encourage them to try things for themselves.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine further the challenge for pupils, particularly the most able, so they can try things out more themselves and understand that they can take risks to learn by their mistakes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The pursuit of excellence is at the heart of the work of leaders and staff. Morale is high. The staff team is fully behind the principal's vision and has helped develop a culture where high expectations of work and behaviour are the norm.
- Senior leaders swiftly identified where action was needed and have successfully stabilised the staff team. They are relentlessly focused on improving teaching and learning. Teachers are set challenging targets and supported to reach these through individual training. This encourages them to be themselves and let their personalities shine through. Teaching assistants continually improve their expertise such as in teaching the phonics programme.
- Leaders and staff have very successfully introduced a new phonics teaching programme. Because of its success, the school has been used as a flagship for demonstrating its practice to headteachers from the United States.
- Subject leaders are taking a major role in driving improvement through their skills and passion for their subjects. Leaders for English and mathematics have been particularly successful in transforming teaching and performance. They are quite clear about what they needed to do and where they need to take the subjects next.
- The curriculum is designed specifically to meet the pupils' needs and also to give depth and breadth to their learning. Examples include the strong focus on language and communication, the very structured phonics programme and changes to the teaching of wider reading skills.
- Subjects other than English and mathematics are taught in depth through topics, individual lessons and themed events. Each topic starts with a launch day to grab the pupils' imagination. For the topic on Egyptians, the classroom was turned into a tomb. Visits, such as those to the British Museum, support learning closely. Each topic ends with a presentation of learning to parents.
- Pupils greatly value the wide range of enrichment available, including in sports and the arts. Curriculum weeks greatly enhance learning and enjoyment. These include science, poetry, and the end-of-year carnival when the school celebrates its different cultures.
- The school's values give pupils a strong moral and social code. This is supported by regularly visiting what it means to be British through assemblies and other events.
- Parents very much support the work of the principal and her team. They are very positive about the changes they have seen. They greatly value the sense of unity by seeing teachers at the gate welcoming them and their children each day.
- The physical education and sport premium is used well to develop the expertise of teachers so they teach skills with greater confidence. It has also broadened the range of sports pupils experience and developed their teamwork through participating in sports competitions.

- Leaders use additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities very effectively. This leads to these pupils making very strong progress, including in the additional resource provision. The needs of disadvantaged pupils are also carefully identified. The school has a clear strategy that is leading to their rapid and improved progress.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is highly effective in questioning school leaders about the school's performance and supporting its development. Governors are experienced and have a wide range of expertise to help them gain insights into the school and hold leaders to account. Several have been through similar journeys of turning schools around. They are very clear about what was needed and what is needed next.
- The trust regularly evaluates the school's performance and provides challenge and strategic guidance. It uses its team of consultants to support leaders and teachers in tackling areas identified from their monitoring.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding training is very thorough and has helped to generate a culture where all staff fully recognise their responsibilities. Regular testing checks staff's understanding of particular features. Leaders make sure that all staff are vigilant in spotting concerns such as those over neglect, possible exploitation or where radicalisation might pose a danger.
- Leaders are fully aware of the vulnerabilities of families and their children. They swiftly call in specialist help when concerns arise. This includes working with the welfare service to make sure the whereabouts of absent pupils are known immediately.
- The governing body is very knowledgeable about safeguarding. Governors have taken action to tighten procedures, such as by separating vehicle and pedestrian access and putting in secure perimeter fencing.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- A consistent feature of teaching is high expectations and the pupils' eager responses to the challenges teachers set. Teachers make learning exciting. They use imaginative methods for putting across new ideas and provide interesting activities for pupils to practise their new skills and deepen their understanding.
- Teachers probe the pupils' understanding of new ideas through skilled questioning. The 'no hands up' rule means that teachers can target questions and so challenge the most able further. They expect pupils to be able to explain the reasons behind their answers.
- The aim is that even the less able pupils will reach expectations for their age. Teachers identify carefully where this target is not being met so they can respond swiftly to pupils' learning and adapt their teaching. Work is set around common objectives but with additional challenge for the most able.

- The skilled team of additional adults supports the learning of individuals and groups of pupils very well. They work closely in tandem with teachers and often take the initiative if they spot that extra help or challenge is needed.
- The teaching of writing is highly effective. Pupils develop their skills in a wide range of styles including in topics. Their imagination is stimulated by videos and pictures. Guidance from adults helps them to edit, adapt and improve their work. This gives the less able pupils, in particular, the confidence to write at length.
- Teachers regularly provide opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills to puzzles, problems and investigations. This helps them to deepen and secure their understanding of new ideas. Teachers also make sure that less able pupils practise new skills through practical activities using well-chosen resources.
- Adults in the additional resource provision maintain well-established routines in which pupils feel comfortable. Imaginative resources stimulate their learning, such as making short animations with added sound using tablet computers.
- The most able pupils are challenged in their thinking through extension tasks. However, they are not always encouraged to try things for themselves so they can learn from their mistakes. One example is using pre-printed sheets in science. This can limit the scope for pupils to work out how to record results from investigations.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils show that they fully understand and follow the school's golden rules of 'Show respect', 'Take responsibility' and 'Always make the right choice'. They are very caring and show great respect for adults and others around them.
- Pupils are very proud of their work and take great care over its presentation. They write neatly in a joined script. They show great stamina and enthusiasm for writing at length.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and that any concerns they have are dealt with swiftly. Their parents are very happy with the care adults in the school give their children. They see this as being a major improvement since the start of the school.
- The activities during 'safety week' help pupils to learn how to keep safe in different situations. Pupils learn how to spot risks and what to do to stay safe. Examples include understanding how to use privacy settings when using social media.
- Pupils learn from the early years the importance of being kind to each other and how hurtful some language can be. Pupils say that bullying is not tolerated. Incidents are now very rare and dealt with swiftly. School records and parents' views support this.
- Pupils take on positions of responsibility maturely such as when being 'playground pals'. Student governors elected by their peers meet to share their views with the chair of governors. They have led on new playground equipment and suggested an 'international food evening' during carnival week.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils respond usually instantaneously to their teachers' signal to stop what they are doing and pay attention. They follow other instructions immediately. This means that there are very rarely disruptions to their learning. Pupils readily discuss ideas and share resources very sensibly when working on tasks together.
- Pupils show great respect such as through their awareness and acceptance of the needs of others. They are unfailingly kind including towards those who have learning needs who might struggle at times to fulfil expectations of their behaviour.
- Pupils across the school work and play very happily together. They say behaviour outside has been transformed and playtimes are happy and constructive times.
- Attendance has improved and is now above average. Few pupils are persistently absent. Leaders meet regularly with parents where a child's attendance is causing concern. They firmly emphasise that learning is missed and parents are letting their children down by condoning casual absence.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils are prepared well for success at secondary school. Most have reached the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Many pupils who had previously not reached expectations for their age are doing so now. Significant numbers are now exceeding these expectations.
- Pupils currently in Year 6 have made very strong progress across key stage 2. This is similar whatever their prior attainment or ethnic background. Pupils learning English as an additional language have also made very strong progress.
- Pupils make strong progress in grammar, punctuation and spelling. The majority of Year 6 pupils have exceeded expectations for their age this year. Pupils apply these skills to make their writing accurate.
- Teaching of the structured programme for phonics is very effective and attainment is high and rising by the end of Year 1. Pupils automatically use their skills when faced with unfamiliar words. This contributes to the fluency with which they read.
- The new format for teaching wider reading skills is leading to pupils making strong progress in the development of comprehension, inference and deduction. As a result, many more pupils are working beyond expectations for their age across the school.
- Consequently, the proportion exceeding expectations for their age has increased and was above average in Year 6 this year.
- Pupils' progress is also strong in writing. Ambitious vocabulary and sentence structure make their writing engaging to the reader. In an extensive recall of a narrative, a Year 2 pupil began, 'Feeling desperate, Daisy wept endlessly and finally slumped to the ground.'
- Pupils develop very secure calculating skills when using formal methods and have a speedy recall of number facts. They tackle problems and mathematical investigations

systematically and can explain clearly the reasoning behind their answers.

- Pupils in mainstream classes who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress as others in their classes. This is because resources and staff support are well targeted to meet their individual needs.
- The rapid progress made by disadvantaged pupils has eliminated differences in attainment with that of other pupils nationally.
- Pupils also make strong progress across other subjects such as science, geography, history and religious education. They develop a deep understanding of key knowledge and concepts in each. They also develop refined research and enquiry skills.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Attainment is above average by the end of Reception. Children are prepared well for key stage 1. They make particularly strong progress in developing early reading skills.
- Provision for the youngest children in the pre-school and in Nursery has improved. This means that more than previously are entering Reception having reached the expectations for their age. In addition, more children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are reaching the expectations for their age.
- Adults across the setting work very closely as a team. They understand what is appropriate at each stage of a child's development. Resources are carefully adapted as the children become older. Adults manage learning through their interactions while understanding when to give the children the freedom to explore ideas themselves.
- The children's language development is a key priority. Adults talk with and question children to show how they should speak, always expecting full sentence responses. Children can express their ideas and thoughts clearly. They talk openly about their feelings and the importance of being kind to each other.
- The strong school ethos about making the right choices starts here. Children display caring behaviour because activities encourage them to work and explore ideas together. Children are highly motivated and listen to each other well.
- Early years leadership has a clear understanding of issues and has helped staff through developing continuous provision. Adults have worked successfully as a team to increase progress for boys, particularly in writing. Overall attainment for boys has risen and is also above average.

School details

Unique reference number	141143
Local authority	Merton
Inspection number	10031686

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	523
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Morley
Principal	Victoria Forbes
Telephone number	020 8679 3707
Website	www.harrisprimarymerton.org.uk
Email address	info@harrisprimarymerton.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is well above average in size.
- Most pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Half of the pupils speak English as an additional language. This figure is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The school has a resourced provision for 20 pupils who have been diagnosed as having autism spectrum disorder. Each of these pupils has an education, health and care plan.
- One third of pupils are supported by additional government funding. This figure is above average.
- Children in the early years provision attend the pre-school and Nursery part time and the two Reception classes full time.

- The school became an academy within the Harris Federation in September 2014. The governing body was reconstituted at this time.
- The principal and vice-principal were appointed from September 2014. The considerable staffing instability at the time has fallen very considerably.
- The school provides childcare before and after school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards. These set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 32 lessons. Senior leaders accompanied inspectors to 15 of these. They looked at work in pupils' books, and listened to key stage 1 pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff, and three governors, including the chair, and the chief executive and primary director of the academy trust board.
- Inspectors took account of the 10 responses this year to Parent View and written contributions from six parents. Inspectors also considered the 201 responses from last year. Inspectors also talked with parents as they brought their children to school at the start of the day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records related to behaviour and attendance, and documents related to safeguarding.
- Inspectors also took into consideration the 38 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Lou Anderson	Ofsted Inspector

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