

Summarised inspection findings

Harris Academy

Dundee City Council

20 May 2025

Key contextual information

School Name: Harris Academy
Council: Dundee City Council
SEED number: 5329531
Roll in September 2023: 1338

Harris Academy is a six-year non-denominational school in Dundee's west end. Harris Academy is associated with Ancrum Road, Blackness, Camperdown, Invergowrie, Tayview and Victoria Park Primary Schools.

The headteacher has been in post for nine years. He is supported by four full-time depute headteachers (DHT)s.

In 2016 the school moved to a new building, and at the same time welcomed the community from the then-closed Menzieshill High School. In 2023 a substantial extension was added, providing an additional six learning spaces.

The curriculum is impacted by staffing difficulties, mainly in home economics and craft, design and technology.

Attendance is generally in line with the national average.

The exclusion rate is generally in line with the national average.

In February 2024 22.2% of pupils were registered for free school meals.

In September 2023 30.9% of pupils live in 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland.

In September 2023 the school reported that 38% of pupils had additional support needs (ASN). Senior leaders now report this to be 53%.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

very good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of teaching
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- In almost all lessons staff and young people demonstrate positive, mutually respectful relationships. This creates a calm, purposeful and supportive learning environment underpinned by the school's values of respect, equality, enjoyment and achievement. Almost all young people settle well into class quickly. Most young people are motivated and eager to engage in their learning. A majority of young people enjoy learning at school. Most young people feel comfortable approaching staff with questions and feel that they are encouraged to do their best.
- Senior leaders and staff worked collaboratively to develop the 'Harris Standard for High Quality Learning, Teaching and Assessment' framework. This sets out agreed features of effective learning and teaching and provides links to resources and examples of good practice. The framework also informs staff professional learning. As a result of this work, young people experience improved consistency in the quality of learning, teaching and assessment across the school.
- In almost all lessons, teachers' explanations are clear. Almost all lessons begin with a relevant starter activity where teachers help young people consider what they have learned before and what they are about to learn. Almost all teachers share the purpose of learning and how young people can evaluate their success in learning. Building on the good practice evident in the school, a few teachers should continue to improve the quality of success criteria so that young people can effectively evaluate their learning. In a majority of lessons, teachers share the skills young people will develop through their learning and in a minority, social goals are also shared. In most lessons, plenaries are used well to review what has been achieved. Teachers should continue to share this good practice across the school.
- In most of their lessons, young people enjoy working in pairs and groups. Young people are keen to have more opportunities to lead their own learning and develop further their independence, responsibility and confidence. Teachers know their learners well and access information on young people's needs from the school database. This enables them to helpfully adapt the learning environment, provide a range of resources or deploy specific strategies to individual young people when required. In most lessons, young people undertake tasks and activities set at the correct level of difficulty for them. A minority of teachers should continue to develop their approaches to differentiation to ensure that all young people receive appropriate support and challenge.
- Almost all teachers use questioning well to check for understanding. In a few lessons teachers use questioning techniques to help young people think deeply about their learning and to use their higher-order thinking skills. This helps challenge young people and encourages them to

have a deeper understanding of their learning. Senior leaders should now ensure that this good practice is shared and developed by all staff.

- Senior leaders and staff worked collaboratively to develop digital technologies to enhance learning and teaching. The 'Harris Standard for Digital Learning' makes clear the expectations of teachers, young people and parents. Staff 'Digital Stars' support colleagues to develop their digital skills. Pupil digital leaders support their peers and help shape the journey of digital learning in Harris Academy. Almost all staff use digital platforms effectively to support learning in class and at home. Young people appreciate how this helps them consolidate their learning, revise for assessments and catch up on work they have missed.
- Most teachers use a range of appropriate formative assessment approaches well. These include 'show me' boards, quizzes and peer assessment. Most teachers regularly check young people's progress in learning effectively through ongoing dialogue with them. Teachers should continue to build on their approaches to formative assessment. This includes using available evidence to plan tasks and activities suitable for all young people more responsively. Almost all teachers use summative assessments confidently to track young people's progress. They use a range of evidence well to provide feedback to young people and support judgements about learners' progress.
- Most young people in the senior phase benefit from regular and ongoing verbal feedback. As a result, most young people in the senior phase speak confidently about their progress in learning. Regular feedback on learning is not yet as prominent a feature from S1 to S3. Teachers should now more fully and consistently offer regular and ongoing feedback to young people across the broad general education (BGE). This will allow young people to reflect more effectively on their progress and next steps in learning.
- Most teachers confidently use a wide range of data and information about young people's needs to inform their planning. Middle and senior leaders have highly effective processes in place that enable them to identify and support young people who would benefit from additional interventions. These include those who face barriers to learning or are at risk of underachieving. Staff provide welcome lunchtime drop-ins, supported study and a wide range of digital resources to support young people in their learning.
- Almost all teachers are confident when making assessment judgements in the senior phase and they have a clear understanding of their learners' progress. Teachers use well-planned assessments which articulate clearly with national course specifications. A minority of teachers across a range of departments undertake Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) duties within their subject area. They helpfully share their expertise with others within their curriculum areas. This, along with other moderation activities, helps almost all teachers to have a clear understanding of, and apply consistently, national assessment standards in the senior phase. Teachers should continue to engage with moderation activities within and outwith the school to ensure consistency of application of national standards across S1 to S3.
- Across the school, departments use a variety of systems to track and monitor young people's progress across the BGE and senior phase. This enables teachers to record and review young people's progress within their subject area well. Teachers make good use of this data to help inform their planning of learning, teaching and assessment. There is strong practice in how teachers use this data to support young people to achieve. For example, by adopting a range of classroom-based strategies such as consolidating work.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

very good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

BGE

- Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy is very good in the BGE. Attainment improved in all literacy and numeracy measures across third and fourth levels in 2023/24. Almost all young people attain their expected CfE levels in reading, listening and talking, and numeracy. Most attain their expected levels in writing. The percentage of young people attaining reading, and listening and talking at fourth level, and numeracy at both third and fourth levels are now above national averages.
- Teachers work closely with colleagues across the school, in their associated primary schools, their partnership school and across the local authority to help moderate their professional judgements of achievement of a CfE level from S1 to S3 in literacy and numeracy. As a result of the range of moderation activities, teachers' professional judgements of achievement of CfE levels are reliable and robust.

Senior phase

Leavers

Literacy

- Between 2019/20 and 2022/23, almost all young people who left school achieved Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 4 or better in literacy, in line with the virtual comparator (VC). The majority of young people leaving school in this period achieved SCQF level 5 or better in literacy, in line with the VC. A minority achieved this at SCQF level 6. This shows a decline in recent years.

Numeracy

- Between 2018/19 and 2022/23, most young people who left school achieved SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy, consistently significantly higher the VC. The majority of young people leaving school between 2019/20 and 2022/23 achieved SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy, consistently significantly higher the VC, other than in 2021/22 when this figure was significantly much higher than the VC. A minority of young people achieved SCQF level 6 in numeracy from 2018/19 to 2022/23 in line with the VC.
- This year, staff have worked very well together to ensure that no young person will leave the school without an appropriate level of qualification in literacy and in numeracy. In each of the last five years, from 2018/19 to 2022/23, very few young people left school without a literacy or numeracy qualification at SCQF level 3.

ASN

- Overall, most young people who required additional support who left school from 2019/20 to 2022/23 attained literacy SCQF level 4 or better. Almost all attained SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy. A majority of young people who left school from 2019/20 to 2022/23 who require additional support with their learning, attained SCQF level 5, above the national averages.

Cohorts

Literacy

- At S4 the majority of young people attain SCQF level 5 or better literacy from 2019/20 to 2023/24.
- By S5, and by S6, based on the S4 roll, the majority of young people attain SCQF level 5 or better literacy from 2019/20 to 2023/24 in line with the VC. Just under half attain SCQF level 6 over the same time period. This is generally in line with the VC from 2019/20 to 2023/24.

Numeracy

- At S4, the majority of young people attain SCQF level 5 or better numeracy from 2019/20 to 2023/24.
- By S5, based on the S4 roll, the majority of young people attain SCQF level 5 or better in numeracy from 2019/20 to 2023/24. This is in line with the VC in 2023/24 having been significantly higher than the VC for the preceding three years. A few young people attain SCQF level 6 in numeracy in 2022/23 and 2023/24.
- By S6, based on the S4 roll, a minority of young people attain SCQF level 6 or better in numeracy from 2019/20 to 2022/23, in line with the VC.
- At SCQF level 5 or better, there is a notable difference between the percentage of young people who achieve numeracy through units compared to course awards. As planned senior leaders should ensure young people achieve the highest level of numeracy qualification.
- The percentage of young people in S4 presented for N5 applications of mathematics is lower than the national average in 2023/24 but the percentage attaining at this level is above the national average. The percentage of young people presented for N5 mathematics, and attaining at this level at S4 in 2023/24 is in line with the national average. The percentage of young people presented for Higher mathematics in S5 and S6 in 2023/24 is in line with the national average, however the percentage attaining at this level is lower than the national average. As planned, staff should explore how to improve young people's attainment at SCQF level 6, in particular.

Attainment over time

BGE

- Teachers use a well-considered range of standardised and formative assessments to inform their judgements of a CfE level across all curriculum areas. This currently indicates that most young people achieved expected CfE levels in the majority of curriculum areas by the end of S3 in 2023/24. Teachers in different departments currently track and monitor the progress and attainment of young people in different ways. Senior leaders should continue to implement whole school tracking procedures. This will enable staff to more easily use data to inform their planning of learning for individuals, groups and cohorts of young people across the BGE.

Senior phase

Leavers

- Between 2019/20 and 2022/23, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of young people leaving school has broadly been similar to the VC when using complementary tariff scores. Attainment for the middle attaining 60% increased from 2021/22 to 2022/23. Attainment for the highest attaining 20% of young people increased in 2022/23 to significantly much higher than the VC.

Cohorts

- At S4, by S5 and by S6, based on the S4 roll, over the last five years, the attainment of the lowest attaining 20%, middle attaining 60% and highest attaining 20% of young people has been in line with the VC from 2019/20 to 2023/24. The school has maintained levels of performance.
- Young people who require additional support attained above than the ASN VC from 2021/22 to 2022/23 when looking at average complementary tariff scores.

Breadth and depth

- At S4, between 2019/20 and 2023/24, the majority of young people achieved one or more to three or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better, in line with the VC. A minority of young people achieve one or more to four or more awards at SCQF level 5A or better, in line with the VC.
- By S5, a minority of young people achieve one or more to four or more awards at SCQF 6C or better, in line with the VC. A few achieve one or more to five or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better.
- By S6, a minority of young people achieve one or more to six or more awards at SCQF level 6C or better between 2019/20 to 2023/24, in line with the VC. A few young people achieve one or more to six or more awards at SCQF level 6A or better between 2019/20 to 2023/24. This was significantly higher than the VC in 2021/22 and 2022/23, otherwise in line with the VC. By S6 a few young people achieve one or more to three or more awards at SCQF level 7C or better and 7A between 2019/20 and 2023/24. This was significantly higher than the VC in 2022/23.
- A few young people successfully achieve qualifications equivalent to SCQF level 6 such as achieving excellence in sport, award in religion, beliefs and values and cybersecurity. Young people benefit from a wide range of courses offered across curriculum areas such as business, digital media and travel and tourism. In addition, Dundee and Angus College support the delivery of courses such as criminology at SCQF level 7, the foundation apprenticeship in social services at SCQF level 6 and construction skills at SCQF level 5. These additional qualifications help young people remain purposefully engaged in formal education for longer.
- Senior leaders increased the number of courses that young people are presented for at S4 from August 2024. Current tracking data indicates that this is leading to improvements in attainment for this group of young people. Additionally, staff reviewed and strengthened processes for young people considering changing levels of courses throughout the school session. This has led to more young people attaining at a higher level.
- Senior leaders have developed a very comprehensive tracking and monitoring system across the senior phase. This well-developed and effectively implemented tool enables all staff to track and monitor very well the progress of individuals, groups and cohorts across the school. Staff's effective use of this tool is leading to earlier identification of young people who require

interventions such as over-teaching, additional resources or different approaches to their learning to enable them to make appropriate progress. The tracking tool also enables staff to look across young people's attainment which helps them further identify areas where greater support or challenge are required.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- The overall quality of achievements is a major strength of the school. Most young people are developing a broad range of skills by participating in the school's well-established wider achievement programme, a key element of the 'Harris pledge'. The pledge is a non-negotiable commitment to equity, opportunity, and holistic development, complementing young people's academic achievements and ensuring every young person is supported in reaching their full potential. By fostering ambition, leadership, and employability skills, the pledge lays the foundation for successful futures, equipping young people with the confidence and experience needed for life beyond school. The shared vision of the 'Harris pledge' is embedded in every aspect of the school and is clearly understood by young people, parents, and staff. Through a wide range of out-of-class activities, leadership roles, and career focused experiences, young people are developing essential life skills that are preparing them well for their future.
- Young people are supported to identify areas of interest and staff support the majority of young people's involvement in the wider curriculum. A particular focus is young people who may not have access to a wide range of opportunities beyond school and are at risk of not participating. This commitment to improving the experience of all young people is improving their levels of confidence and wellbeing and impacting positively on their sense of purpose and belonging at the school.
- Volunteering is central to the pledge, with a focus on increasing participation, particularly for those under 16. Partnerships with organisations such as Barnardo's provide meaningful experiences, and achievements are recognised through awards such as the Saltire Award. Alongside this, young people access a wide variety of clubs, sports, and creative opportunities, with the wider achievement fair and annual S1-S3 programme ensuring full participation, regardless of financial barriers.
- A majority of young people develop meta-skills through a wide range of leadership positions linked to music and theatre, pupil voice, dance, sports, P7 transition and other curriculum achievements. Young people lead a number of the wider curriculum clubs and activities. This impacts positively on peer relationships and the wider school ethos.
- Staff capture and collate young people's achievements very effectively through a tracking system linked to post-16 destinations. This provides staff with helpful data on young people's interests and achievements within and outwith school. This contributes well to staff's understanding of young people and impacts positively on their learning experiences. Staff should continue to consider a wider range of skills-based achievement opportunities with accreditation linked to the SCQF framework.
- Almost all young people feel valued and appreciate the extent to which their achievements are celebrated by staff through the weekly newsletter, social media and award ceremonies. Parents recognise and appreciate that staff celebrate their child's success and as a result young people develop their confidence and self-esteem.

Equity for all learners

- Senior leaders and staff have a strong understanding of young people and their families' individual circumstances. Key staff have focused on addressing attainment gaps in literacy and

numeracy, engaging young people in their learning and improving attendance across the school.

- Senior leaders have effective and systematic methods of tracking and monitoring the attendance of young people. This has led to improved attendance over the last two sessions. A minority of young people have an attendance rate of below 90%. Staff are currently improving attendance for identified groups of young people through a variety of well-considered whole school and targeted approaches. The attendance for young people who reside in SIMD one and two has improved since 2021/22. A few young people have an agreed part-time timetable. This is helping to improve their engagement and attendance at school.
- Senior leaders have robust approaches to identifying and targeting young people who face potential barriers to learning, including those affected by poverty. Teachers are aware of their responsibility to support the attainment of young people in the targeted intervention group. This approach has resulted in a few young people achieving more qualifications and improving their overall attainment. This session senior leaders extended the curricular offer in S4. As a result, most young people in S4 who reside in SIMD 1 are on track to significantly improve their attainment at both SCQF level 4 and level 5 when compared with the performance of young people in SIMD 1 in previous years.
- Senior leaders consult with stakeholders on how the Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is allocated. Staff funded by PEF work in a range of ways to improve the attendance, participation and attainment of a few young people in S1-3. Almost all young people involved in the 'Adapt' group have improved their engagement and motivation, and most have improved attendance at school. Staff work well with a few young people in S3 to ensure these young people achieve at least five awards at SCQF level 3 or better, including in literacy and numeracy, and that they are supported into a positive post-school destination. A few young people have been prioritised discretely within the school's wider experience programme. As a result, a majority of these young people are successful in leadership, sporting and cultural activities.
- Almost all young people leave to a positive post-school destination. This was significantly higher than the VC in 2021/22 and has been improving over recent years. The majority of young people leave school to go to higher or further education and a minority leave to training or employment.

Other relevant evidence

- A few young people attend the enhanced support area (ESA) of the school and are supported very well by teaching and support staff. Within the ESA provision young people experience success through appropriate curriculum pathways and achieve their individual milestones. Young people in ESA are fully included in the life of the school and most benefit from taking part in selected subjects. In the senior phase, this supports a few young people to develop their confidence and important skills, and also to achieve national qualifications.
- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and young people. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of young people through food in school. Minor areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.
- Young people experience their entitlement to two periods of high-quality PE from S1 to S4. Senior leaders should reflect on the delivery of religious and moral education to ensure compliance with the statutory requirement of a coherent programme from S1 to S6. Similarly senior leaders should ensure young people in the BGE access their full entitlement to study modern languages in line with the Scottish Government's 1+2 languages policy.
- Young people benefit from access to the well-stocked library. Staff use the available digital and paper-based resources to supplement teaching and learning in a variety of topics effectively. The library provides a welcoming, nurturing place to study and attend a variety of clubs at break and lunchtimes. Young people feel included as they are consulted about new texts. Pupils, as library assistants, then select and purchase texts. These young people are working towards attaining a Saltire Award, as well as developing valuable skills for life.

Practice worth sharing more widely

The Harris Pledge

The Harris pledge is a non-negotiable commitment to equity, opportunity, and holistic development, complementing young people's academic achievements and ensuring every young person is supported in reaching their full potential. Most young people are developing a broad range of skills by participating in the school's wider achievement programme, a key element of the 'Harris pledge'. By fostering ambition, leadership, and employability skills, the pledge lays the foundation for successful futures, equipping young people with the confidence and experience needed for life beyond school. The shared vision of the Harris pledge is embedded in every aspect of the school and is clearly understood by young people, parents, and staff. Through a wide range of extracurricular activities, leadership roles, and career focused experiences, young people are developing essential life skills that are preparing them for their future.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.