

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25 JUNE 2025
REPORT ON: EDUCATION SCOTLAND VISIT – HARRIS ACADEMY
REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE
REPORT NO: 203 - 2025

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to report on the findings of the Education Scotland, His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMI) visit to Harris Academy in February 2025.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee notes the contents of this report.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4 BACKGROUND

4.1 Harris Academy was inspected by Education Scotland (HMI) in February 2025. This was a short model inspection, focused on two quality indicators as well as a focus on safeguarding. Education Scotland published a report of their findings on Tuesday 20 May 2025.

4.2 Harris Academy is a non-denominational secondary school which serves the Lochee and West End wards of Dundee. At the time of inspection, the school roll was 1381 young people across S1 – S6.

4.3 The school's current Head Teacher has been there for 9 years. The Head Teacher is supported by four full time Depute Head Teachers, two part time Depute Head Teachers (Pupil Equity Fund funded) and a Business Manager.

4.4 Approximately 31% of young people who attend the school live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1 and 2. At the time of inspection, the school reported 53% of young people on the roll as having additional support needs. Approximately 23% of young people are registered for free school meals. The school's Pupil Equity Fund allocation is £186,000.

5 KEY INSPECTION FINDINGS

Key Strengths

The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work.

5.1 The Head Teacher's aspirational and authentic leadership, ably supported by his Senior Leadership Team is resulting in consistently high-quality learning, teaching and assessment across the school.

5.2 Staff provide calm, purposeful environments, conducive to learning and provide effective support for young people in and out of classrooms. Staff and young people enjoy trusting relationships which help young people to progress very well in their learning.

5.3 Young people are very proud of their school, kind to each other and eager to learn. They enjoy a wide range of experiences across the school. They feel valued and listened to. Young people are empowered to lead in a wide range of areas. They achieve very well, particularly from S1 to S3 in literacy and numeracy.

5.4 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 school activities, leadership

roles and career focused experiences, young people are developing essential life skills that prepare them well for their future.

5.5 Areas for Improvement

The following areas for improvement were identified.

5.6 Continue to develop approaches to give regular feedback on their learning to young people from S1 to S3. This will allow young people to reflect more effectively on their progress and next steps in learning.

5.7 Continue to improve attainment, particularly at S4 in the senior phase.

5.8 Appendix 1 provides a synopsis of the Summary of Inspection Findings.

6 INSPECTION EVALUATIONS

6.1 During inspections HM Inspectors gather evidence to enable them to evaluate the school and/or nursery's work using quality indicators from How good is our school? (4th edition).

6.2 Education Scotland (HMI) reports using a six-point scale for reporting performance:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

6.3 Here are Education Scotland's (HMI) evaluations for this inspection:

Quality Indicator	Harris Academy
2.3 Learning, teaching, and assessment	Very Good
3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	Very Good

6.4 An evaluation of very good means that "there are major strengths in this aspect of the school's work. There are very few areas for improvement and any that do exist do not significantly diminish learners' experiences. An evaluation of very good represents a high standard of provision for all children and young people and is a standard that should be achievable by all. There is an expectation that the school will make continued use of self-evaluation to plan further improvements and will work towards improving provision and performance to excellent."

6.5 Education Scotland wrote to parents and carers to confirm that, as a result of the inspection findings, HM Inspectors are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. Dundee City Council will inform parents and carers about the school's progress through Harris Academy's annual School Improvement Report.

6.6 Harris Academy's Improvement Plans (2025/26 and beyond) will reflect Education Scotland's findings and recommendations from the Summarised Inspection Findings. Improvement Plans will be regularly reviewed, monitored, and evaluated in line with quality improvement procedures.

- 6.7 As part of the Children and Families Service School Improvement Framework, visits are made to the school by the school's link Quality Improvement Education Officers to ensure the very positive improvement journey continues and monitor progress towards the action points raised in the inspection. Furthermore, as part of the Service's 'Every Dundee Learner Matters' (EDLM) collaborative improvement strategy Harris Academy's School Improvement Partnership will continue to support and challenge school improvement. The Headteacher, who is also an Education Scotland Associate Assessor, is on the EDLM strategy group and will support improvement across the service/

7 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This report has been subject to the Pre-IIA Screening Tool and does not make any recommendations for change to strategy, policy, procedures, services or funding and so has not been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate Senior Manager has reviewed and agreed with this assessment.

8 CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The Council Leadership Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement with its content.

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 None.

Audrey May
Executive Director

Paul Fleming
Chief Education Officer
Head of Education, Learning and Inclusion

June 2025

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APPENDIX 1

Dundee City Council
Children and Families Service
Scrutiny Committee Report Summary Notes
Inspection and Reporting

Inspection Agency	HMI
Report Publication Date	20 May 2025
Name of Establishment	Harris Academy
Sector	Secondary
Name of Head Teacher	Mr Barry Millar
Roll	1381

Inspection Outcomes 2025

Quality Indicator	
2.3 Learning, teaching, and assessment	Very Good
3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	Very Good

The report uses the following word scale:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

Inspection Outcomes February 2025

Key Strengths

- The Head Teacher's aspirational and authentic leadership, ably supported by his Senior Leadership Team is resulting in consistently high-quality learning, teaching and assessment across the school.
- Staff provide calm, purposeful environments, conducive to learning and provide effective support for young people in and out of classrooms. Staff and young people enjoy trusting relationships which help young people to progress very well in their learning.
- Young people are very proud of their school, kind to each other and eager to learn. They enjoy a wide range of experiences across the school. They feel valued and listened to. Young people are empowered to lead in a wide range of areas. They achieve very well, particularly from S1 to S3 in literacy and numeracy.
- 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-school activities, leadership roles and career focused experiences, young people are developing essential life skills that prepare them well for their future.

Areas for Improvement

- Continue to develop approaches to give regular feedback on their learning to young people from S1 to S3. This will allow young people to reflect more effectively on their progress and next steps in learning.
- Continue to improve attainment, particularly at S4 in the senior phase.

Synopsis – Summary of Inspection Findings

Following publication of the inspection report and Summarised Inspection Findings, the School's next Improvement Plan 2025/26 will reflect the areas for improvement identified by HMI and provide a clear strategic focus for related school improvement.

The Summarised Inspection Findings highlighted the following strengths and areas for improvement within each of the quality indicators.

QI 2.3 – Learning, teaching and assessment

Strengths identified:

- 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.
- 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. As a result of this work, young people experience improved consistency in the quality of learning, teaching and assessment across the school.
- 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.

- 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. There is strong practice in how teachers use data to support young people to achieve.

Area for Improvement:

- 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.

QI 3.2 – Raising attainment and achievement

Strengths:

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall attainment in literacy and numeracy is very good in the BGE. The percentage of young people attaining reading, listening and talking at fourth level, and numeracy at both third and fourth levels are now above national averages.
- Between 2019/20 and 2022/23, most young people who left school achieved Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 4 or better in numeracy, consistently significantly higher than the Virtual Comparator (VC).

Attainment over time

- In the BGE, teachers use a well-considered range of standardised and formative assessments to inform their judgements of a Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) level across all curriculum areas.
- 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 complimentary 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.
- Young people who require additional support attained above the ASN VC from 2021/22 to 2022/23 when looking at average complementary tariff scores.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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 2 academic sessions. The attendance for young people who reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) one and two has improved since 2021/22.
- 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.

Areas for Improvement:

- Increase the number of young people who achieve SCQF level 6 in literacy.
- Increase the number of young people who achieve SCQF level 5 in numeracy through a full course award in Maths, Application of Maths or Personal Finance, rather than by achieving the standalone numeracy unit.
- Implement a whole school tracking process in the BGE that will replicate the success of the Senior Phase version.

Key activity to date has included the following:

- The headteacher has led a whole staff development session to ensure full understanding of the inspection findings, including strengths and identified areas for improvement.
- Headteacher and senior leaders have shared the findings of the inspection in detail with the parent/carer voice group.
- Senior and middle leaders have used the report to formulate next academic session's improvement priorities. These will be further consulted on with young people, parents/carers. other staff and partners.
- Senior leaders have engaged with the pedagogy team with the view to become early adopters of a newly procured tracking system. The aim of this being to address one of the key areas for improvement as identified in the inspection report.

Please note that The 'Harris Pledge' has been reported on as being Nationally recognized practice worth sharing more widely.

Full details of the Summary of Inspection Findings are available at:

[harris-academy-sif-200525.pdf](#)

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%

Audrey May
Executive Director

Paul Fleming
Chief Education Officer

Signed




Audrey May, Executive Director of Children and Families Service

Paul Fleming, Head of Service (Chief Education Officer)

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APPENDIX 2



20 May 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In February 2025, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland visited Harris Academy. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and young people and worked closely with the headteacher and staff.

The inspection team found the following strengths in the school's work.

- The headteacher's aspirational and authentic leadership, ably supported by his senior leadership team, is resulting in consistently high-quality learning, teaching and assessment across the school.
- Staff provide calm, purposeful environments, conducive to learning and provide effective support for young people in and out of classrooms. Staff and young people enjoy trusting relationships which help young people to progress very well in their learning.
- Young people are very proud of their school, kind to each other and eager to learn. They enjoy a wide range of experiences across the school. They feel valued and listened to. Young people are empowered to lead in a wide range of areas. They achieve very well, particularly from S1 to S3 in literacy and numeracy.
- 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 school activities, leadership roles and career focused experiences, young people are developing essential life skills that prepare them well for their future.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the headteacher and a representative from Dundee City Council.

- Continue to develop approaches to giving regular feedback on their learning to young people from S1 to S3. This will allow young people to reflect more effectively on their progress and next steps in learning.
- Continue to improve attainment, particularly at S4 in the senior phase.



We gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the school's work using quality indicators from [How good is our school? \(4th edition\)](#). Quality indicators help schools, local authorities and inspectors to judge what is working well and what needs to be improved. Following the inspection of each school, the Scottish Government gathers details of our evaluations to keep track of how well Scottish schools are doing.

Here are Education Scotland's evaluations for Harris Academy

Quality indicators	Evaluation
Learning, teaching and assessment	very good
Raising attainment and achievement	very good
Descriptions of the evaluations are available from: How good is our school? (4th edition), Appendix 3: The six-point scale.	

A more detailed document called Summarised Inspection Findings (SIF) will be available on the Education Scotland website at:

[Harris Academy | Inspection Report | Education Scotland.](#)

What happens next?

We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. Dundee City Council will inform parents/carers about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Frances E. Graham
HM Inspector