

Harris Federation



‘The greatest issue facing teachers everywhere is how to improve student engagement and their motivation to learn.’

Dan Moynihan, Chief Executive of the Harris Federation

Graph 19: Harris Federation results

	Average KS2 points 2004	Top row = Percent five or more A*-C including English and maths. Bottom row = Percent five or more A*-C					Jesson est. 2009	JVA
		2005	2006	2007	2008	2009		
Harris Academy at Peckham	23.8	18	23	24	29	26	24	2
		22	30	38	50	60	40	12
Harris Academy Bermondsey	24.7	12	26	32	40	50	33	17
		41	47	58	58	78	59	19
Harris Girls' Academy East Dulwich	25.1	29	31	32	42	38	36	2
		34	39	38	52	69	62	7
Harris Academy Falconwood	25.7	16	17	21	17	42	36	6
		37	34	32	47	92	61	31
Harris Academy South Norwood	25.1	23	24	23	31	43	32	11
		32	39	33	57	93	54	39
Harris Academy Crystal Palace	28.2	79	75	80	78	82	57	25
		91	88	91	92	99	76	23
Harris Academy Merton	25.5	24	23	28	38	48	38	10
		31	29	40	74	95	60	35
National average for all maintained schools	27.1	43	44	46	48	51		
		55	57	60	64	70		

Harris Academy Purley and Harris Boys' Academy East Dulwich opened in September 2009 and as newly opened academies have not been included in this publication.

Introduction

The Harris Federation of South London Schools is a group of nine academies, planned to grow to 20 or more academies. There are also seven Harris specialist schools, and four pilot specialist primary schools, adding up to a total of around 20,000 pupils in south London.

All Harris Academies are in challenging urban areas of south London where underachievement has been endemic and the education on offer has failed many young people. The Harris Federation aims to transform the life chances of young people by bringing about rapid improvement in education. GCSE results with English and maths have improved by 8% in each of the last two years and four of the six academies inspected have been judged to be outstanding by Ofsted. Valued added scores of 25 JVA English and maths and 23 JVA place Harris City Academy Crystal Palace the second out of all academies for value added, and 10th in the nation. Four of the federation academies are in the top 10% of schools nationally for Jesson value added.

Leadership

The Harris Federation is governed by the main board, the chairman of which is the sponsor, Lord Harris of Peckham. Every academy has its own Principal and Academy Governing Body. The Federation is overseen by the chief executive officer Dr Daniel Moynihan with the overall aim of being able to derive the maximum possible educational, financial and personnel benefits from working in a group of cooperating schools, rather than working in isolation. The intention is to reduce bureaucracy, share best practice, cooperate in course planning and professional development. Higher quality ICT, financial and premises support than would be available to any single school working alone is also provided.

The Federation aims to create an internal market for promotion so that staff recruitment and retention is as attractive as possible. Evidence of the value put on staff is given through the myriad opportunities for induction and continuing professional development.

Dan Moynihan explains that each new academy founded by the Federation is not run as 'an experiment' but is brought into a tried and tested structure. The support of the Harris Federation guarantees a traditional ethos of order, discipline and respect alongside a commitment to excellence in the very best of contemporary practice. All academies follow a distinctive curriculum and behavioural policy modelled on the academy in Crystal Palace which opened in 2003, converting from the original Harris City Technology College. Schools within the Federation which have been open the least amount of time are the most similar to the central model. As they become established and achieve results they are able to develop aspects which have grown and are unique to their school.

But the things which are always the same are:

- the fusion of pastoral and academic, with no heads of year
- data and tracking of pupils
- monitoring and evaluation of teachers
- a common sixth form
- a culture of aspiration
- the specialism – enterprise and sport, with a culture of 'beat your personal best'.

'As an employer and a father, I strongly believe that a good education is the best start you can give a child.'

At the Harris Federation of South London Schools we promote hard work, curiosity of mind, friendship and ambition.'

**Lord Harris of Peckham,
Sponsor and chairman of the federation main board,
Chairman and Chief Executive of Carpetright plc.**

There are many strands which build the unique capacity of these schools to transform aspiration and academic success but we will focus here on just one major emphasis of the Federation.

Harris Student Commission on Learning

Dan Moynihan explains 'The Harris Student Commission on Learning was created to give students a real voice and stake in how we work and in particular, how we might better organise their learning. It goes much deeper than the traditional student council work. Our Commission is about students and teachers working side by side to investigate what makes for the most effective learning and then testing out these approaches to see what works.'

Set up in September 2008, the ongoing aim of the Commission is to investigate the most powerful teaching and learning practices from the UK and abroad, and to share, adapt and embed them across the Harris Federation in order to secure improved life opportunities for all.

The Commission is a whole Federation programme of work which is actively engaging hundreds of pupils in the study and application of powerful approaches to learning and teaching. It places enquiry about learning, both within the academies and from external experts and sites of excellent practice, in the hands of young people. Seventy student leaders, selected from each academy through a formal application process and supported by teachers and other adults, form the Commission. Hundreds of others get involved through in-school research and by testing out new approaches.

In just 18 months, Student Commissioners have taken a lead in the research, application, delivery and evaluation of numerous innovative teaching practices. Through this, relationships have developed between learners and teachers, with increasing mutual trust and understanding underpinning new partnerships in the academies.

Two major external events have been the interviewing of 11 expert witnesses at sessions held by NESTA, and the Big Learover where commissioners from all academies took part in online video discussions with students all over the world to share ideas about how learning is approached in their schools.



Student commissioners reported about their work:

'One of the groups at Harris Crystal Palace is focussing on the Personal Extended Study (PXS) that was introduced into our schools this year. We researched why people responded to it differently by either failing to complete it or exceeding expectations. As a result of our findings, Mentors will be a new wave of Student Commissioners at our academy.'

Points that students made time and again in the newsletters, blogs and publications about the Commission's findings were:

- students have to take responsibility for their own learning
- opportunities to be creative and active are effective measures
- teachers should display that they continue to learn
- the curriculum must be relevant to life, not trivial facts simply for school exercises
- use students to prepare and deliver learning
- find out why some peers learn well and conversely why some are disruptive. What can be learned and what measures can be put in place.

Challenges facing the commission are how to get greater numbers of teachers and learners actively involved, finding ways to involve the most disengaged pupils and most sceptical teachers; keeping the focus on enquiry and not moving to implementation too early; maintaining a dialogue with senior leaders to ensure the recommendations have active support; learning the lessons of delivery so that other schools could set up their own student commissions.

Employability, the economics

Harris Academies are focussed on ensuring every student leaves with a broad range of skills that equips them for the demands of the modern world. All subject areas actively develop the skills of self presentation, initiative taking, creative problem solving, decision making, team working and interpersonal skills in a variety of contexts. The aim of the Federation is to develop in all students and staff versatile skills and attitudes required of lifelong learning in a rapidly changing world.

With ever greater numbers of students achieving five good GCSEs including English and maths, and with 90% going on to university from the Federation post-16 provision, Harris Academies are clearly giving their students the capacity to build a rewarding career and the likelihood of being able to contribute to the nation's future economic success.

'The commission has made me think more about what I'm doing. I've taken a closer look at what I'm learning in lessons and I'm taking a closer look at what I'm doing in general.'

Year 9 student, Harris Academy Merton

'I firmly believe that the success of the Student Commission project rests with us working in partnership; students and staff together having new and different conversations.'

Jane Fletcher, Principal, Harris Girls' Academy East Dulwich