

ARK Oval Primary Academy

98 Cherry Orchard Road, Croydon CR0 6BA

Inspection dates 5–6 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- It is improving rapidly. The headteacher's determined leadership is driving up standards and improving the quality of education for pupils.
- The ARK Oval Academy's values of scholarship, perseverance and respect underpin every aspect of the school's work. All members of the school community are encouraged to strive for excellence.
- School leaders check the progress of every pupil to ensure that nobody falls behind. Most pupils now make good progress.
- Teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is often good and occasionally outstanding. Teachers plan learning carefully so that pupils achieve well in lessons.
- The school helps teachers to improve their practice and provides very well for their training needs.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and move around the school in a calm and orderly fashion. They are respectful to adults and each other.
- Pupils are proud of their new school. They enjoy their lessons and attend regularly.
- Governors from the local governing body and from the ARK Schools network know the school well, give good support and work closely with the headteacher to plan improvements.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The school has been through a period of significant change. Many of the changes to the way that subjects such as mathematics and science are taught are recent and are not fully embedded.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not consistently good. Teachers miss opportunities to develop children's language skills through play.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 26 lessons taught by 16 teachers. Seven lessons were observed jointly with senior staff. An inspector also visited several small group support sessions.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' workbooks in lessons and spoke to pupils about their work. They talked to pupils informally at break times and met with two groups of pupils. They attended a class assembly.
- Inspectors considered the 35 responses to Parent View and talked informally to parents as they arrived to drop off their children. They also considered the 33 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors met with the Chair of the Local Governing Body and the ARK Schools Director of Education. They also met with individual teachers and senior staff.
- The school's records of attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour were examined. Inspectors also considered improvement planning and the school's summary of self-evaluation, the school's records of monitoring, key policies and minutes of governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Melanie Knowles, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kate Robertson	Additional Inspector
Gianni Bianchi	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- ARK Oval Primary Academy is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school converted to academy status in September 2011 and is part of the ARK Schools network. At its last inspection, the predecessor school was judged to require special measures.
- Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Almost half speak English as an additional language. Many pupils join the school at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional government funding) is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is above the national average.
- The proportions of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are slightly higher than those seen nationally.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club for pupils. Inspectors visited the breakfast club as part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that they are consistently good or outstanding by:
 - ensuring that the information gained from observing and working alongside children is used to plan activities that meet the needs of all children
 - developing the role of the Early Years Foundation Stage leader
 - making sure that role play areas provide imaginative opportunities for children to develop their speaking and listening skills
 - developing the inside and outside areas so that children experience a broad and rich range of activities.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Academic excellence is valued and all pupils are encouraged to aim high. All classes are named after universities and pupils talk about going to study at university when they get older. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils, who work hard in lessons.
- Standards across the school are rising. This year, the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 was in line with that found nationally. Older pupils, who previously experienced weaker teaching and had fallen behind, are catching up. As a result, standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 are closer to national averages.
- The school has been particularly successful in raising standards in reading in the last year. Reading has a high profile in the school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught letter sounds (phonics) each day and quickly learn to blend the sounds to read and write simple words.
- School leaders ensure that all pupils make progress. They review the progress of every pupil each half term and identify any pupil at risk of underachievement. They agree with teachers what actions will be taken. Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who are at an early stage of learning English are all well supported by teaching programmes that are carefully designed to meet their needs. They make good progress.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes generally make good progress from their starting points, but they do not have enough opportunities to develop their speaking, listening and writing skills through play. Writing areas are uninviting. 'Role play areas' do not provide imaginative experiences for children to explore language and storytelling. Outside areas are quite well resourced with play equipment, but they do not provide an exciting, language-rich environment for children.
- The regular 'challenge weeks' that are planned for each class enable older pupils to work together in pairs or groups and apply their skills across a wide range of subjects, including science, mathematics and art.
- The additional funding from the pupil premium is carefully targeted and is pivotal to the improvements seen in achievement. Pupils eligible for this support make good progress. As a result, the gaps between what they and other pupils achieve are closing fast in reading, writing and mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have worked hard to improve their practice and develop their skills. They have responded well to the fast pace of change and have adapted quickly to new ways of working. Teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is mainly good and work in pupils' books in Years 1 to 6 shows that many pupils now make good progress in English and mathematics. However, there has not yet been time for teachers to become fully accustomed to recent changes to the teaching of mathematics and science in the school.
- Teachers in Key Stages 1 and 2 plan activities that meet the needs of different groups of pupils and they target questions carefully to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to contribute to class discussions. Pupils are confident to 'have a go'.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation stage is not consistently good. Teachers do not make enough use of the information they gather when observing children at work and play to plan next steps in learning.
- Teaching assistants support pupils effectively. They sit alongside individual pupils when the teacher works with the whole class and lead small group support sessions confidently.
- Teachers mark pupils' written work carefully and give pupils good guidance on how they can improve. In some classes, pupils are given time to assess their own work before the teacher

marks it.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- There is a strong culture of respect in the school. Teachers show consideration for their pupils, who are well mannered and courteous in return.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is consistently good. Pupils and parents confirm that behaviour has greatly improved since the school became an academy. High standards of behaviour are taught, modelled by adults and reinforced by displays around the school. Teachers apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and fairly.
- Skilled learning mentors work alongside those pupils who have difficulty managing their behaviour and ensure that they can cope in lessons. Disruption to lessons is uncommon and exclusions are now rare.
- Pupils are keen to learn in lessons. Teachers encourage pupils to respond positively to challenges and praise those who do not give up easily.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school. A film about bullying, made by the school's film club and shown to the whole school, has ensured that all pupils know about different forms of bullying. They are confident that any problems will be dealt with quickly by their teachers.
- Attendance has improved and is now above average. Attendance rates for every class are reported to parents in the weekly newsletters and pupils whose attendance is consistently good receive awards.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a passionate belief in the potential of every pupil to succeed and a clear vision for how that will be achieved. She ensures that all staff feel valued and well supported. There is a very happy and purposeful atmosphere in the school.
- School leaders, local governors and the ARK Schools network look carefully at the strengths and weaknesses of the school and focus on what needs to be improved. They draw up clear academy development plans and check regularly to see if the changes made are bringing about improved outcomes for pupils.
- The headteacher has a strong leadership team to support her. The deputy headteacher and the leader for teaching and learning both took up their posts in September 2012. They have settled quickly into their new roles and have already made a difference.
- The manager responsible for the Early Years Foundation Stage is receiving help to develop her leadership skills so that she can make a full contribution to driving improvements in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Teachers are eager to improve their practice and respond well to the feedback they get after school leaders visit lessons or look at pupils' work. The new leader for teaching and learning draws up a personalised support plan for any teacher whose teaching is not consistently good. There is clear evidence that this tailored support has already helped some teachers to improve.
- The headteacher makes sure that all staff have appropriate targets for improvement and procedures to review teachers' performance are robust. The headteacher ensures that the strongest teachers are given additional responsibilities.
- The school works very well with outside agencies to support families in challenging circumstances. There are also good opportunities for staff to work with other schools in the ARK Schools network. For example, teachers have worked with colleagues in other ARK academies to compare their assessments of pupils' work and check that their judgements are accurate.
- Relationships with parents are positive. Parents spoken to during the inspection all reported that

they had seen significant improvement in the school. Almost all parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire agreed that their children make good progress and are taught well. They said that the school keeps them well informed.

- Pupils study a good range of subjects and this curriculum enriches their spiritual and cultural appreciation. Pupils say they really enjoy studying a book in detail each term and like the way that teachers link work in other subjects to the book's theme. For example, in Year 5, the class reading book, *Treason*, is linked to a history topic on 'The Tudors'.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The local governing body and the ARK Schools network (staff and trustees) work closely together. They challenge the headteacher effectively and hold the school to account. Procedures to appraise the headteacher's performance are rigorous. Salary progression and promotion systems for teachers are appropriate. The Chair of the Local Governing Body and the ARK Schools Director of Education visit the school regularly to assess progress and observe teaching with the headteacher. They know what is being done to improve teaching and how the school compares to others. Governors manage the school's finances well so that the school provides good value for money. They know how funding from the pupil premium has been spent, but they have not reviewed the impact of this funding on pupils' achievement. The local governing body supports the ARK Schools network (staff and trustees) to ensure that the safeguarding of pupils has a high priority and that all statutory duties are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137114
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	399856

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

Type of school	Academy convertor
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	455
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Ewing
Headteacher	Sonia Rutherford
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	020 86883000
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