

Ark Rose Primary School

Tees Grove, Birmingham B38 9DH

Inspection dates	14–15 October 2015
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching is not consistently good enough to make sure that pupils learn well. As a result, too many pupils, particularly boys, are not making as much progress as they should across all subjects.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough, nor do they always set work at the right level of difficulty. Sometimes the most-able pupils find it too easy, while the less able find it too hard.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 in 2015 are not as high as they should be, particularly in English grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Senior leaders have not ensured that the good teaching practice in some areas of the school has been shared sufficiently well between teachers.
- Pupils' progress is not fast enough to make up for some weak learning since the school became an academy.
- Pupils do not always take responsibility for their own behaviour. As a result, this leads to some instances of poor behaviour.
- Senior leaders do not always ensure that staff are applying new policies and improvement strategies consistently.

The school has the following strengths

- Good leadership and management have ensured that the right systems are in place to raise achievement. Consequently, this is an improving school.
- The quality of teaching in early years is good. As a result, children make good progress in the Reception class.
- Pupils feel safe in school and also know how to stay safe.
- The governing body has a secure knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and this contributes well to pupils' improving behaviour and attitudes to learning.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement so that teachers:
 - use information about what pupils' have learned before to plan activities that are set at the correct level for all groups of pupils
 - plan work that enables all pupils, particularly boys and the most-able pupils, so that more achieve higher standards, especially in English grammar, punctuation and spelling
 - provide consistently good-quality advice so that pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve their work, and are given sufficient opportunities to act on the advice given.

- Improve the effectiveness and impact of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all staff consistently apply the new school policies and improvement strategies
 - developing pupils' understanding of the importance of taking responsibility for their own good behaviour at all times
 - sharing the best practice that exists in the school more widely between teachers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Teachers and governors are ambitious for the school to do well. Senior leaders and Ark Schools provide very determined leadership, together with a strong focus on continual improvement. Their clearly articulated vision for the future is shared by staff.
- Senior leaders rigorously monitor the school's performance, including the quality of teaching, pupils' progress and attendance. They are taking decisive action to make improvements where necessary. They have focused on improving pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics and increasing the level of challenge in lessons. However, they realise that this work has not yet had sufficient time to make a full impact on raising standards in all subjects.
- Senior leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well, and have introduced systems to bring about improvements, including those for checking on the quality of teaching. Senior leaders and Ark Schools have provided effective training for staff and this is having a positive impact in improving the quality of teaching. However, where pockets of best teaching practice exist, they are not shared well enough with all staff to bring about rapid improvement.
- The leadership of teaching is good and the school places a high priority on improving teaching through effective training and development. Checks on teachers' performance are rigorous. Leaders use information from lesson observations and pupils' progress to set teachers' targets for improvement. There is a clear understanding that decisions about promotion and pay rates are based on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress.
- A scrutiny of pupils' work and checks by teachers demonstrated that many pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, this high quality of marking and feedback is not consistent in all classes.
- The range of subjects and topics covered in all years is good. The programme of activities takes account of local, regional and global differences, including different cultures and beliefs. As a result, pupils are well able to understand other people's points of view. Effective planning of activities promotes well fundamental British values around democracy, liberty, and respect and tolerance of faiths and beliefs. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Information about what is taught in the school is published on the school website and meets statutory requirements.
- Leaders use the funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively. It has helped, for example, to provide additional staff support and ensure that pupils receive more focused help with their learning. The school evaluates the impact of its expenditure through tracking information showing how well pupils achieve. This shows that disadvantaged pupils are making similar progress to that of their classmates, and in some classes, faster progress.
- The school's leaders ensure that different groups of pupils have an equal chance to succeed, and they tackle effectively any instances of discrimination. Pupils are clear that they do not hear discriminatory or derogatory language in the school, such as homophobic or racist comments, and that they would report any they did hear.
- The school has allocated the primary school sports funding to good effect. The school is participating in a coaching scheme offering fully trained and experienced coaches to deliver sport both during the day and after school. Teachers also attend all sessions, and this is contributing to their training and development. Many pupils talk enthusiastically about sporting activities available to them at lunchtimes and after school. The school's use of this funding is having a positive impact on many pupils' lifestyles and physical well-being.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a wide range of cultural experiences. Moral and social development is strong and pupils have good opportunities to develop a social dimension through considering the needs and feelings of others. The school's ethos emphasises social responsibility and helping others who are less fortunate. For example, the school raises money for various charities locally and nationally and pupils have taken part in an anti-bullying week and a Civil Rights event.
- It was not possible to evaluate the views of parents from the online questionnaire Parent View because too few responded. However, inspectors met with some parents in the morning, bringing their children to school, the majority of whom made positive comments that were supportive of the school and its aims.
- The school effectively commissions the support it needs. The academy trust has provided well-targeted support for school leaders, including the appointment of a regional director.

■ The governance of the school

- The governing body is effective and is well supported by Ark Schools. As a result, governors are able to understand and analyse information about the school in a way that ensures that they maintain an accurate view of its performance. By using this information they are able to accurately gauge the school's strengths and weaknesses, including the need to raise further pupils' achievement in English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Governors strongly support the school and its leaders, they have a good insight into the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning. They manage the performance of staff well, ensure that any underperformance in teaching is tackled rigorously and check that staff pay rises and promotion are justified by the pupils' achievement.
- Governors manage the finances of the school well. They look closely at how additional government funding is spent and have a good overview of the impact this has on the achievement of eligible pupils. They are rigorous in making sure that the school gets best value when purchasing goods and services.
- The governing body rigorously checks safeguarding practice and, as a result, safeguarding procedures meet current legal requirements thoroughly and effectively.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is inconsistent across the school and is limiting the progress pupils make.
- Until recently, too many teachers have not had high enough expectations of what pupils can, and should, achieve. They do not always use information about what pupils already know to set work at the right level for their different abilities. Boys and the most-able pupils are not always challenged enough, because work is too easy for them, while others are held back because work is too hard.
- Teachers provide constructive verbal feedback to pupils but written feedback, in the form of marking, is too variable. In the best practice, mathematics for example, teachers' written comments explain to pupils what they need to do to improve their work, and contribute well to the progress that pupils make. Pupils make better progress when they are given the opportunity to reflect and act upon teacher' comments. However, this practice is not consistent across the school.
- The school has introduced whole-school policies for literacy and numeracy, beginning with a focus on pupils improving their reasoning skills in English and mathematics. Early indications show that whole-school policies are beginning to have a positive impact on raising standards.
- Pupils receive good encouragement to read, both in and out of school, and this is helping them to improve their reading skills in all years. The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is effective, and there are arrangements to give additional support to pupils who are identified as not having made sufficiently good progress.
- Teaching assistants, and other adult classroom support provided by Ark Schools, are well deployed. They play a key role in supporting disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium funding. As a result of recent improvements in more accurate targeting, the pupils they help are making similar progress to their peers
- Teaching is improving and is having an increasingly positive effect on pupils' achievement. In some lessons, teachers plan demanding and interesting work, which fully engages pupils' interest. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson, pupils were focusing on calculations involving two- and three-digit numbers. Here the teacher gave pupils the opportunity to investigate and discuss their calculations and provided additional support when necessary. The pupils responded well to the teacher's high expectations and probing questioning, and as a result, pupils made good progress.
- Well-chosen homework tasks prepare pupils well for the following lesson. Pupils are very supportive and say that homework helps them to make further progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare require improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is good.
- Many pupils speak confidently about the benefits of healthy eating and exercise and regularly attend lunchtime and after school sport clubs.

- Pupils feel safe and are aware of how to keep safe and secure. For example, they understand the potential dangers when using the internet or when talking to strangers. They also report, and records show, that staff deal with bullying effectively. Where bullying does occur, pupils say that it is mostly related to minor disagreements.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- In the past, poor behaviour has concerned staff and pupils. There are good relationships between staff and pupils, and teachers now manage behaviour well. As a result, behaviour is improving. However, there are still occasional occurrences of inappropriate behaviour. For example, there are instances of play fighting during breaktime or lunchtime, although these are dealt with quickly by adults in the playground. Occasionally, pupils do not always take responsibility for their own behaviour and do not always remain focused on their learning in class. Others, however, are keen to learn, well-motivated and happy to share their learning in discussions with their partners.
- Some parents expressed concerns about poor pupil behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes when talking to inspectors, but others acknowledged there had been an improvement more recently.
- Some pupils' work is not always neatly presented, but many pupils do take pride in themselves, their school uniform and their school.

Outcomes for pupils

requires improvement

- Children start the school with skills, knowledge and understanding below those typical for their age, particularly in communication and language, literacy and mathematics skills. Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress has started to improve. Consequently, the school has been able to reduce the gap in attainment between its pupils and pupils nationally, in both writing and mathematics. However, pupils still have some catching up to do to reach average standards, particularly in English grammar, punctuation and spelling. In 2015, pupils left Year 6 approximately six months behind their peers nationally.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 is average in reading and mathematics and below in writing. Improving writing is a priority for the school. Performance information and the work seen indicate that current pupils are making good progress, with some working at levels above those expected for their age.
- Boys and the most-able pupils have not achieved well because the school has not provided additional challenge or set high enough expectations for what they can achieve. This has meant these pupils have not attained the higher standards of which they are capable. Although there is still a great deal of catching up to do, the school is now addressing this and there is evidence in pupils' books of improved progress at both key stages.
- In 2015, the achievement in English of pupils supported by the pupil premium was roughly one term behind that of their own classmates and other pupils nationally. In mathematics, the gap was two terms. However, the progress of pupils supported by the pupil premium is improving. This is due to increased staffing levels. Current information indicates that the gap in attainment is narrowing across all year groups between those eligible for pupil premium and other pupils in the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have made similar progress to their classmates. Senior leaders have taken action to improve their progress by appointing a new member of staff to oversee the learning for these pupils. These pupils' specific learning needs have been identified and the close support they receive is well directed. However, it is too soon to judge the full impact of these actions.
- Pupils benefit from effective teaching of phonics and use their developing skills to read unfamiliar words. The proportion of pupils in Year 1 who reached the expected standard in the national phonics screening check was above average in 2015.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective. Pupils enjoy mathematics and develop their numeracy skills as they progress through the school. Pupils also gain confidence using their reading skills. For example, in a Year 5 class pupils were confidently explaining their understanding of new vocabulary introduced to them in their reading. The teacher and teaching assistants were asking probing questions allowing pupils to explain their understanding of new words and the overwhelming majority arrived at the correct definitions.

Early years provision

is good

- Children start the early years provision with levels below those typical for their age, particularly in the areas of communication and language, literacy and mathematics.
- Good teaching focuses on these basic skills, ensuring that children gain a firm foundation to learn more effectively. As a result, children make good progress, including the most able, and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Leadership of the early years is good. Staff work effectively together. They have a good understanding of strengths and areas for development and use this knowledge to plan for improvement.
- Children are given opportunities to demonstrate their developing confidence and enthusiasm in the classrooms and in the outside area. When left alone to explore, many make their own discoveries and solve problems. For example, when working outside 'counting toy frogs jumping into a pond' children were prepared to persevere using their mathematical skills until they arrived at the correct answers.
- The early years' classroom is attractive and stimulates children's interest and enjoyment of learning. However, outdoor provision is limited and although it is well used, play and learning opportunities are limited.
- There is a positive partnership with many parents, who are encouraged to contribute to their children's learning, for example by attending afternoon literacy and numeracy 'Inspire' workshops. This close partnership is also ensuring that children form secure bonds and develop confidence. They learn to share, take turns and care for one another's feelings.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs are identified early so that they are given appropriate support to make similar progress to that of their classmates.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide extra one-to-one support for disadvantaged pupils. As a result, the gap between these children and their classmates closed in 2015.
- Arrangements for keeping children safe are highly effective because teachers and teaching assistants are extremely conscientious in their monitoring at all times to ensure that children are kept safe.

School details

Unique reference number	138371
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10001646

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Walton
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Penelope Webb
Telephone number	0121 458 5380
Website	www.arkroseprimary.org.uk
Email address	info@arkroseprimary.org
Date of previous inspection	13–14 May 2014

Information about this school

- Ark Rose Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Children in the early years are taught in one Nursery and one Reception class. Children in the Nursery attend part time.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are eligible for additional government funding, known as the pupil premium. The funding is used to support students who are eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for primary schools, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There have been changes to the staffing recently, with the addition of several new members of staff starting in September 2015.
- A breakfast club and after-school clubs are provided by the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 14 lessons, including several joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at samples of their recent work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, teachers and members of the governing body. Inspectors met with the academy's regional director. Discussions took place with groups of pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, behaviour records, governing body minutes and information relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- There was an insufficient response to the online questionnaire, Parent View. However, inspectors did speak to some parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors also considered the views expressed in the 21 questionnaires returned by school staff and one Parent View free-text response.

Inspection team

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