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Sonia Rutherford
Primary Principal
Ark Oval Primary Academy
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Dear Ms Rutherford

Short inspection of Ark Oval Primary Academy

Following my visit to the school on 17 May 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in December 2012.

This school continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Both you and the chair of the governing body expressed disappointment at the key stage 2 test results in 2015, which were below the floor standards. However, your exceptional analysis of pupils' progress and attainment in all year groups illustrated the significant challenges for Year 6 pupils reaching the standards in that particular year. A typical feature of the school is the much higher than average numbers of pupils who join and leave the school at unexpected times during the school year. In addition, many of the new arrivals speak English as an additional language and in some cases are unfamiliar with school routines and expectations. Your accurate analysis of the 2015 results has been moderated by both the ARK group and the local authority. The analysis demonstrates that those pupils who stayed at the school longer than six terms made securely strong progress and their attainment at the end of key stage 2 was above average. The school's analysis of the progress of different groups of pupils currently in the school, and the work seen during this inspection, demonstrates an even more secure rate of progress towards meeting or exceeding the end of Year 6 targets in 2016 and 2017.

Highly effective use of the pupil premium funding enables the school to organise a range of additional lessons and activities that provide support for disadvantaged and new pupils who are at risk of not making the progress they

are capable of. You and your senior leadership team lead by example. In addition to checking the progress pupils make and monitoring the quality of teaching, the very able assistant headteachers regularly teach groups of pupils who have been identified as needing additional support to catch up with their peers.

The effective training and support teachers and teaching assistants receive has ensured that after the high number of changes of teachers in the past, there is a more settled picture.

The area for improvement from the previous inspection has been thoroughly dealt with. The leadership and quality of provision in the early years ensures that children have a good start and make rapid progress. The assessments of children's areas of learning at the end of Reception illustrate quite clearly that they are ready for Year 1.

The gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers at the end of Year 2 in 2015 has been closed during their time in Year 3.

The movement of pupils in and out of the school during the school year has a significantly negative impact on the overall results. However, your accurate and precise analysis of this data shows clearly that those children who remain at the school for a sustained period of time make better than expected progress across the school. The no excuses culture in the school means that you and your team work closely and effectively with all agencies including the UK Border Agency and local authority education welfare service to make sure that families and their children have a good start to school life and are able to start learning as quickly as possible.

Additional effective characteristics of the school include:

- effective 'in-house' training, resulting in staff providing consistently high-quality learning environments and feedback to pupils in line with the school's assessment policy
- senior and middle leaders providing innovative coaching and feedback techniques to staff alongside detailed support and guidance
- a governing body that is very well aware of what the school does well and what actions should be taken next to improve. Leaders are held to account for their actions and plans.

Safeguarding is effective.

Safeguarding is taken very seriously and the appropriate checking of staff and visitors to the school is very well managed.

The inclusion and safeguarding managers provide effective support, guidance and advice for the higher than usual number of vulnerable families and pupils.

The single central register is completed in line with current government

guidance and checked routinely by senior leaders including the safeguarding governor. The governing body has a secure oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements.

Inspection findings

- Senior leaders and managers are committed and dedicated to ensuring that pupils receive the best education provision possible. Leaders have developed a highly personalised approach to training and developing the teaching staff. Extremely able teaching assistants are encouraged to train to become qualified teachers. All teachers have training, advice and support which match their needs. Consequently, teaching across the school is consistent and effective.
- The disappointment of the school not reaching the floor standards at the end of key stage 2 in 2015 spurred leaders on to find even more effective strategies for ensuring pupils' progress, especially from Years 3 to 6. The school applies a detailed and precisely targeted analysis to each pupil's learning and adjusts the teaching and resources accordingly using pupil premium funding to its best effect. This is especially so for the very high number of pupils who arrive and depart at short notice and at different times in the school year. New arrivals often have very little previous experience of school.
- The gaps in pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are closing in key stage 2. Rates of progress are secure in the early years and key stage 1. Consequently, the school's analysis of pupil information and work indicates a high proportion of pupils whose attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above average.
- Although the gaps in pupils' attainment are narrowing, and progress is continuing to increase, leaders, including the governing body, are not complacent. Each pupil's progress is regularly monitored and teachers are routinely held to account for that progress. Leaders are aware that progress, especially writing in some year groups, and in particular disadvantaged pupils' writing, is not consistent enough. This diligence and relentlessness of the headteacher and senior leaders was recognised in a letter following a visit by the regional schools commissioner during the autumn term of 2015.
- The early years are led and managed well. Parents spoke of the warm welcome both they and their children receive. As a result of this positive start, children make strong progress from very low starting points. By the time they leave Reception, they are very well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes towards learning are impressive. They told inspectors how much they enjoy school. A calm and purposeful atmosphere exists around the school. Pupils play well together and respond to adults' instructions at breaktimes.

- Attendance has risen and is now above average. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is decreasing. The principal's reports to the governing body illustrate the very low instances of bullying and rates of exclusions.
- The above-average proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language receive effective support to speak and write fluently. One Year 4 pupil spoke confidently with inspectors about how he was unable to speak English less than a year ago and now he can.
- The curriculum provides pupils with rich and interesting experiences. Some subjects are taught through themes. Others, such as science, are covered in topics such as 'electricity'. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their Spanish lessons and the educational visits. The curriculum is enhanced with music, dance and drama lessons.
- Pupils have a range of opportunities to develop their understanding of fundamental British values. Recently the local mayor visited the school. Pupils elect their classmates onto the school council, which has helped design different areas of the school environment.
- The school has highly positive relationships with parents. They spoke warmly about the work of the staff who provide high levels of care in addition to educating their children.
- The school provides well-managed, high-quality support for the above-average numbers of pupils who have special educational needs or disability and other complex needs. Vulnerable pupils and their families are embraced by the school. They receive high-quality support from school staff who work effectively with external agencies, for example the innovative work taking place with trainee social workers from Greenwich University.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the rates of progress in key stage 2 continue to increase, particularly in disadvantaged pupils' writing.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Croydon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Seal
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

I met with you and the senior leadership team. Meetings were also held with representatives of the governing body and the academy sponsor, ARK, and the school's local authority link person. The information looked at during the inspection included the school's safeguarding records, policies and procedures and the single central register. I looked at the school's assessment of its performance, minutes of meetings and information about pupils' progress. A group of pupils were interviewed and I spoke informally to many pupils during lessons and in the playground. I met formally with a small number of parents and informally with others before school started. Lessons were visited, including phonics, writing and mathematics. I took account of 17 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.