

Ark Kings Academy

Shannon Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham, West Midlands B38 9DE

Inspection dates

4–5 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders' actions have had a positive impact on strategies to improve pupils' progress so that it is now good.
- Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils are well supported. Disadvantaged pupils make similar rates of progress to other pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and achieve well.
- Though subject leadership has improved, some subject leaders are new to the school and the impact of their work is at an early stage. New subject leaders are being effectively supported by senior leaders.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are improving rapidly because of purposeful leadership. However, teaching is not sufficiently challenging across the whole curriculum. This is particularly so for most-able pupils.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are keen to learn from one another.
- Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are improving securely because of well-planned provision to develop these skills in all subject areas.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are good. This reflects pupils' enjoyment of the learning experiences they have in school.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They are punctual to lessons and bring the right equipment. Pupils' work in books is mostly neat and well organised.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are promoted well. The school offers a good range of enrichment activities which help to prepare pupils for later life.
- The school is a well-ordered and calm learning community. Pupils' behaviour around the school is good and their attendance is improving.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural education for pupils is good. This reflects the school's welcoming and caring ethos and promotes pupils' positive attitudes to learning.
- Governors know and understand the school's strengths and the areas that still need more work. They challenge leaders effectively and hold them to account.
- The support of Ark Schools has contributed significantly to improvements at the school and ensures that it has the capacity to continue to drive these forward.
- Careers advice and guidance support pupils well in preparing them for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Pupils are happy at school and are safe. Parents believe that the school serves their children well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve teaching and learning by:
 - making sure that teaching is challenging across all subject areas, especially for the most able pupils
 - strengthening the impact of new subject leadership with the best practice that is already apparent in the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal, senior leaders and governors share a vision to deliver high-quality teaching and learning for all pupils in the school. They are ambitious and aspirational to provide pupils with the best learning opportunities and experiences. They are very experienced, and most staff and parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire agree that the school is well led.
- Changes in leadership since the last inspection have skilfully realigned a knowledgeable, determined and enthusiastic team led by a principal who is totally inclusive and committed to the achievement of the pupils in his care.
- Leaders focus on improving the progress of all groups of pupils and the school has invested heavily in developing teachers' skills, subject leadership and in building capacity across the school to improve pupils' outcomes. This has been very effective and is reflected in the progress that all groups of pupils now make.
- Pupils are progressing more rapidly than in the past because senior leaders check frequently on the quality of teaching and learning. They regularly visit lessons, look at work in pupils' books and have a structured process to identify the strengths of teaching and how it can be improved further.
- Senior leaders have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and what else needs to be done. They know and understand the challenges they face, are undaunted in the task and have taken decisive action to deal with the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. These actions have led to the improved quality of education pupils now receive.
- Subject leadership is now stronger. This has sharpened teaching and learning and enabled all groups of pupils to make good and better progress. Subject leaders share good practice and have a clear focus on improving pupils' progress. Some of these leaders are new to the school and the impact of their work is at an early stage. However, senior leaders support all of them to ensure that their work in subject areas is increasingly effective and contributes to the good progress pupils are now making.
- Subject leaders and pastoral leaders work closely together to make sure that academic progress, behaviour, care and guidance are checked alongside each other, so that any issues are quickly noticed and all pupils have the best chance to do well.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced, and includes a range of academic subjects at key stage 4 that meets the needs of pupils currently at the school. Pupils receive effective guidance so that they choose subjects that interest them and help them to make progress.
- The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is delivered across the curriculum and through the specific 'Virtue' programme. This is very strongly underpinned by the school's vision, ethos and values and the school's ambition to raise the aspirations of pupils and their place within the local community. It is based on fundamental British values and the promotion of equality and opportunity within a culture of diversity. The programme also raises pupils' awareness of the potential dangers of extremism and radicalisation.

- Extra-curricular opportunities in school are plentiful and designed to develop individual character and self-esteem. Participation in these activities is good.
- Extra funding for disadvantaged pupils is being used effectively to improve their outcomes. The support given to disadvantaged pupils is very effective in increasing their rates of progress, which are now in line with or above national levels. The gap in achievement at GCSE between these pupils and others has closed since the last inspection and is closing for those in school now. Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is also used effectively and, as a result, progress is good for this group of pupils.
- All pupils in the school begin their school day with a specific time allocated to reading and developing literacy skills. However, pupils in Year 7 who receive additional funding to catch up to the expected level of literacy and numeracy are also given extra help. Pupils were very enthusiastic about this, and inspectors saw evidence in lessons to show that these pupils make significant gains in improving their reading ability. This work contributes well to the improving progress being made by pupils in Years 7 and 8 now.
- The school promotes strong relationships within its community and this helps to prevent any kind of discriminatory behaviour. The school's behaviour policy has a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes and conduct. Pupils were very clear about the improvement that has happened since the last inspection and parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire agree.

Governance of the school

- Governors and the Ark Schools board are very effective and challenge the school to constantly improve. Governors provide effective oversight. They are well trained and informed, and visit the school regularly. They bring a good range of experience and skills to strengthen the leadership of the school.
- Governors ensure that outcomes for pupils are a central focus for their work and inform their decision making. Link governors report frequently on the school's progress.
- The governing body has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and makes sure that improvement priorities are acted upon quickly.
- Governors take their statutory duties seriously and put in place rigorous processes to review the principal's performance.
- Governors know how the pupil premium funding is spent and have rightly challenged leaders on the impact it has on eligible pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff and governors are aware of the published requirements for keeping children safe in education and the culture of safeguarding is promoted throughout the curriculum, with issues covered also in religious education and the 'Virtue' programme of study.
- Procedures for checking visitors to the school and staff recruitment are robust. School leaders quickly identify any pupil at risk of harm.
- Training to keep pupils safe is effective, including in safer recruitment and the 'Prevent' duty, and has been received by staff and governors.

- The school engages appropriately with partners, agencies and parents as necessary within the school and the local community.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders' work to strengthen teaching is having a positive impact on its quality. The evidence secured from the inspection, information on the progress pupils make and the quality of work in pupils' books since the last inspection all show that teaching has improved and is now good.
- Teachers show strong subject knowledge and enthusiasm. As a result, pupils are interested and engaged in their learning activities.
- Leaders have successfully introduced a new assessment system to monitor pupils' progress from their starting points. The use of the system is contributing to pupils securing good or better rates of progress.
- Teachers use a range of activities to check that all pupils have mastered their previous learning in order to make sure that no pupils are left behind. For example, the use of 'mastery quizzes' in subject areas is very effective in checking how well pupils have understood the work.
- In lessons where pupils achieve well, pupils of all abilities, including the most able, are encouraged to question, discuss and debate and, as a result, their learning is deeper. For example, in an English lesson, pupils were making strong connections between characters in the play 'An Inspector Calls' with the social and political issues of the day. They discussed these with enthusiasm and maturity and, as a result, they were motivated to build on their success further. The most able pupils also make better than average progress as a result of better teaching. However, this attention to detail in challenging pupils and putting right pupils' understanding is inconsistent.
- Teaching makes a very positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This helps pupils to reflect, work well together and listen carefully to the opinions of others. For example, in a religious education lesson, where learning was really successful, pupils had to reflect on moral perspectives widely held about contraception. Pupils' evaluations were insightful and sensitive and extended to considering different cultural viewpoints of the topic. Pupils showed that they were taking responsibility for their own learning.
- Pupils who underachieve are supported effectively and this results in the good progress pupils now make. Work seen in pupils' books shows that all groups of pupils in school now make good progress in their learning.
- In most lessons, behaviour is positive and pupils make good progress. Teachers establish good working relationships with pupils and they help pupils to overcome any barriers to learning they might have.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons and in the extra opportunities that they are given to learn. Sometimes, external specialist support has to be deployed because of specific needs pupils have, and the school is proactive in securing that support as required. This contributes well to the good progress that this group of pupils makes in school and their stronger attainment at the end of key stage 4.
- Pupils have the opportunity to read widely and this happens daily for all pupils. Pupils read to an inspector with confidence and shared their enjoyment of reading both in the

school and at home. The gains that pupils now make in their reading ages helps them to make rapid progress.

- Teachers are helped to improve their skills through a variety of training opportunities made available by senior leaders. These are also facilitated through the Ark quality network where teachers are able to share and benefit from the exchange of ideas and effective practice.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The supportive culture in the school promotes pupils' well-being, including their emotional and physical welfare.
- The school's focus on British values through the 'Virtue' programme means that pupils appreciate their diverse community in which they are valued and respected. A number of pupils, particularly those who had come from other schools, were able to give important examples of how they had been helped and supported, not only in their learning, but also in developing as young adults.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe. They understand risk and have a very good understanding of the different forms of bullying, including bullying done through social media, the internet and mobile phone technology. They say that there is very little bullying in school and express great confidence that should any happen, it would be dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils know to whom they should go if they have any worries or concerns.
- The school anticipates and manages any risk that pupils may be exposed to, including radicalisation or extremism, and monitors this carefully.
- There are opportunities in the school for pupils to take on responsibilities. Pupils also benefit from a range of other character-building activities such as drama, band musicianship, sport and toy-making. Pupils take part in Ark national events and this helps to promote skills of teamwork and communication as well as performance.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are helpful, polite and courteous to staff, visitors and to each other. The atmosphere in school is one of tolerance, sharing and learning together.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school and the atmosphere is calm and orderly, both during and between lessons, and at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good across all years and all subjects. Pupils are punctual to lessons, bring the right equipment with them, settle quickly and approach their work with enthusiasm. They look smart and the presentation of their work in books is mostly neat and tidy.
- Pupils know how to behave safely in practical subjects such as science, technology and physical education lessons.
- The use of exclusion for poor behaviour is reducing. Pupils spoken to during the inspection talked confidently about the improvements in teaching and learning as well as behaviour which have happened at the school since the last inspection.

- Attendance is improving and is now at the national average. This reflects pupils' enjoyment in coming to the school and the work leaders have done to reinforce the importance of attendance and its impact on good progress. The attendance of pupils who attend the alternative provision is also improving. This is monitored carefully by senior staff.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The school has worked hard and successfully to improve pupils' progress since the last inspection. Changes to senior and subject leadership, developing new assessment processes and an emphasis on improving teachers' classroom skills have all resulted in good progress for pupils.
- Teachers use the Ark Schools assessment system to monitor pupils' progress from their starting points. Pupils enter the school with low attainment levels, but now leave at the end of key stage 4 having made good or better progress.
- The most able pupils make progress which is in line with or better than that made, on average, by similar pupils nationally. Most-able pupils, who are also disadvantaged, make better progress too, although occasionally, their progress is held back because the work given lacks challenge in some subjects.
- In 2016, the progress made by pupils from key stage 2 to key stage 4 (that is, throughout their time in the school) was above the national average. This represents good progress overall. Pupils achieved particularly well in English, and better than previously in mathematics and science. Pupils' progress in subjects previously identified as weaker, such as languages, is now better and attainment is rising.
- The proportion of pupils making at least expected progress in English and mathematics was high in 2016, continuing the improvement made in 2015. Information provided by the school for pupils currently in Year 10 and Year 11 indicates that this improvement will continue.
- Since the last inspection, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils has improved and is now good. In both 2015 and 2016, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils making and exceeding expected progress in English and mathematics was similar to that of other pupils nationally. This is because specific strategies are identified carefully with pupils' individual needs in mind and additional funding is used appropriately. This is monitored carefully by senior leaders and governors.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress. In 2015 and 2016, this group of pupils made progress which was above the national average. Pupils currently in school continue to make this good progress.
- Pupils at the school enter with lower than average literacy or numeracy skills and receive well-structured and organised support which enables them to improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills quickly. Year 7 catch-up funding is used well. Pupils are also given opportunities to enjoy reading for pleasure. As a result, pupils in school now are given strong foundations for the good progress they make at key stage 3.

- Senior leaders check regularly on the better progress being made by pupils at the alternative provision and this is reported formally to parents.
- Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment and now leave school with better qualifications and also higher aspirations for their future chances. They are given good-quality and impartial guidance, support and mentoring opportunities.

School details

Unique reference number	137578
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10020037

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Sponsored academy
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	383
Appropriate authority	Ark Schools
Chair	Gail Peyton
Principal	Roger Punton
Telephone number	0121 4594451
Website	http://arkkingsacademy.org/
Email address	info@arkkingsacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	24–25 September 2014

Information about this school

- Ark Kings Academy is sponsored by Ark Schools.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school, although the number of pupils at the school has increased by almost one third since the last inspection.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through a statement of special educational needs or with an education, health and care plan is almost twice the national average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also above average.
- A small number of pupils attend placements at alternative educational provision with City of Birmingham School, Kings Norton Boys' School, Kings Norton Girls' School, Moseley School, Reach School and Swanshurst School.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum

expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education (DfE) guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a range of lessons in order to evaluate the quality of pupils' learning and the use of assessment. Many of these lessons were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Pupils' work was sampled in lessons and through formal reviews of work in various subjects at key stage 3 and key stage 4.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's own information on the progress of current pupils, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to keeping pupils safe. Inspectors also looked at the minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Meetings were held with pupils across Years 7 to 11, as well as contact at breaktime and lunchtime. An inspector also met with members of the Ark Schools board and the local governing body.
- Discussions took place with senior leaders, subject leaders and staff responsible for the pastoral care and guidance of pupils.
- Inspectors listened to groups of pupils reading in Years 7 and 8 as part of their lessons and separately.
- Inspectors evaluated the small number of parental responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and the free-text facility. They took account of the views of pupils through formal and informal conversations and the responses of staff that completed the Ofsted online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Huw Bishop, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
David Hermitt	Ofsted Inspector
Sara Arkle	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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