

Ark Elvin Academy

Cecil Avenue, Wembley, Middlesex, London HA9 7DU

Inspection dates

6–7 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Current pupils in Year 11 have not made good or better progress in a wide range of subjects, including humanities.
- Leaders, including governors, do not evaluate the impact of pupil premium funding with enough rigour. As a result, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly those of middle and higher ability, are not making good progress.
- New leaders have not yet had time to ensure that all staff consistently follow school policies, including assessment and behaviour management policies. The quality of teaching varies across the school.
- The skills and abilities of subject leaders are improving. However, they do not yet take enough responsibility for leading and managing improvement in their subject areas.
- Outcomes on academic courses in the sixth form are too variable.
- The current curriculum, including after-school enrichment, is not ensuring that all pupils' needs, abilities and aspirations are being well supported. Consequently, some groups, including pupils from a Black ethnic origin and the most able pupils, are underachieving.
- Teaching is not typically challenging enough. Activities and strategies being used by teachers are not ensuring that pupils of middle and higher ability make good or better progress.
- Attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those from a Black ethnic origin is below that of their peers.
- Exclusions have fallen sharply over time. However, the proportions of exclusions of disadvantaged pupils and pupils from a Black ethnic origin are still too high.
- Pupils do not have a secure understanding of some safeguarding topics, including female genital mutilation.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed principal has been effective in making rapid improvements; for example, pupils' behaviour is improving quickly.
- As a result of strong teaching, progress in mathematics and modern foreign languages is significantly above the national average.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well.
- Pupils at key stage 3 are making stronger progress in a wide range of subjects including English, mathematics and science.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders and governors have a rigorous approach to evaluating the impact of pupil premium funding, particularly for disadvantaged pupils of middle and higher ability
 - subject leaders have the skills and abilities needed to take more responsibility for raising standards in their subject areas
 - leaders implement the planned changes to the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs, abilities and aspirations of all pupils, and that more pupils engage in the school's enrichment programme
 - all staff consistently apply school policies, particularly in relation to assessment and behaviour management
 - pupils have planned opportunities to learn more deeply about safeguarding topics, particularly female genital mutilation.
- Improve outcomes for pupils by ensuring that:
 - pupils make good or better progress in a wide range of subjects across the school, particularly in history and geography
 - the rate of progress for pupils from a Black ethnic origin rises to match that of other pupils in the school
 - differences between the rate of progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that those of other pupils nationally and in the school diminish more rapidly.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers:
 - use activities and strategies that engage and challenge pupils, including the most able pupils, so that they make good or better progress over time
 - consistently apply the school's behaviour for learning policy so that low-level disruption is eradicated.
- Continue to improve attendance and reduce fixed-term exclusions, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those from a Black ethnic origin.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the academy opened in September 2014, leaders and governors have not ensured that teaching across the school is effective in ensuring that pupils make good or better progress in a wide range of subjects. There is variability in the quality of teaching within and across different subjects, particularly at key stage 4.
- Leaders and governors are not rigorous enough in evaluating their decisions on spending pupil premium funding. Although a plan is in place, it lacks sufficient detail and the targets set to measure whether or not the strategies are working are not specific enough. Although lower ability disadvantaged pupils achieve well, those of middle and higher ability do not. Leaders accept that this is a priority for the school.
- Subject leaders are becoming increasingly effective in their roles. However, the impact of many of the strategies used by senior leaders to improve the quality of subject leaders' work is yet to be established. Some subject leaders are also relatively new to their roles. As a result, they are not collectively fully equipped with the skills and abilities to improve teaching and raise standards.
- Leaders, including subject leaders, have not secured consistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This is particularly the case in how teachers implement policies on guiding pupils to improve their work and how teachers deal with low-level disruptive behaviour. The inconsistency in teaching is preventing some pupils from making the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders have recently implemented a lot of new initiatives. These are moving the school forward quickly. This is evident, for example, in the improving behaviour of pupils during lessons and around the school building. Teachers and pupils report that the new behaviour systems are making a big difference. As a result, the frequency of fixed-term exclusions has fallen sharply.
- The management of teachers' performance has not, historically, been rigorous enough. The principal recognised this and ensured that challenging targets, linked to school improvement priorities, were put in place. The changes made are now holding staff to account more sharply to improve the quality of their work.
- The curriculum has not historically been appropriate for the range of pupils at the school, including students in the sixth form. It has not helped pupils to make good or better progress or helped to improve attainment rapidly enough. After-school enrichment sessions have recently been re-launched to add more choice for pupils. Under the leadership of the new principal, a comprehensive plan for the curriculum for the next academic year and beyond is now in place. This will better meet the needs, abilities and aspirations of all pupils, including the most able, who will be able to study more demanding academic courses.
- Pupils' moral and social development is more effectively promoted than their spiritual

and cultural development. Although pupils learn about other faiths and cultures and have opportunities to take part in visits, including to other countries, leaders acknowledge that further work is needed to improve pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness. Pupils work well together, and they respect each other's views, opinions and differences. Pupils learn about democracy and modern British values. They contribute sensibly and sensitively on 'current affairs' which leaders have decided will form part of the tutor programme. Pupils are aware of the different types of radicalisation and extremist behaviour. Pupils are being effectively prepared for life in modern Britain.

- The principal took up the post in January 2017. She has quickly identified the right priorities and taken effective steps to improve the school. The principal makes no excuses and is accurate in her self-evaluation of the school. Staff and pupils comment positively about the difference her leadership is making to the work of the school.
- The school has faced significant challenges, including with staffing. Leaders have made further appointments to add support at senior and subject level. There are a large number of teachers who are new to the profession at the school, including those in training roles. They welcome the new changes and feel well supported at the school. The professional development they receive is helping them to develop their confidence in the classroom and in developing their teaching skills.
- The provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language is increasingly effective. Leaders use appropriate methods to identify the English proficiency of pupils new to the school. They have put in place a range of educational support to help them. As a result, pupils who speak English as an additional language make strong progress. Pupils who have a low level of English proficiency are well supported in developing their reading and writing skills. Year 7 catch-up funding is also having a strong impact in helping pupils improve their reading skills. Leaders manage this funding well.
- Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used appropriately. Leadership in this area is effectively identifying learning needs, for example in securing education, health and care plans for pupils who need support. The interventions used to support pupils are also making a difference. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress in line with that of their peers in a range of subjects across the curriculum.
- The school is a member of the Ark academy group. Support from Ark is now much stronger than previously. An executive headteacher provides strategic support and challenge to the principal. The 'network leads' are having more impact in improving subject planning, teaching and assessment, including in the sixth form. As a result, the school's assessment information is reliable and helping leaders and teachers make effective decisions about how to improve teaching and learning.

Governance of the school

- Governors have an effective mix of skills and knowledge. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They talk confidently about the school, different subjects, the sixth form and the progress being made by different groups of pupils.
- Governors acknowledge that the quality of education provided by the school is not

good. However, their disappointment in the 2016 examination outcomes meant that they significantly changed how they challenged school leaders. Minutes of the local governing body meetings show that they ask challenging questions to leaders about the school. However, there is still insufficient focus on how governors hold leaders to account for the impact of pupil premium funding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have effective systems and processes in place to ensure that pupils are safe. This includes dealing quickly with any safeguarding concerns that are reported by staff. Leaders ensure that detailed records are kept of any child protection concerns and will challenge external agencies when they do not feel that the response received is adequate. School leaders carefully monitor pupils who leave the school at different times during the academic year or who undertake their education in alternative settings to ensure that they are safe.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors and those who completed Ofsted’s pupil survey feel safe at school. They have learned effectively about how to stay safe outside school, including when online. They are aware of the dangers of knife crime and how to stay safe. One pupil, whose view reflected that of others, commented that they learn about ‘the bad things in the world, not just games and happiness’.
- Many pupils join the school at different times of the academic year. They told inspectors that they are well supported in settling into the life of the school. Most parents who replied to Parent View, Ofsted’s questionnaire for parents, say that their child is safe and well looked after.
- Although pupils learn about a range of safeguarding topics, they have not yet had planned opportunities to learn about some topical risks, including female genital mutilation or child sexual exploitation. Leaders have plans in place to address this.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable across the school. Although there is highly effective teaching in some subjects, it is not consistent. This is the main reason why pupils’ outcomes over time, particularly at key stage 4 and in the sixth form, also require improvement.
- Teaching is not consistently challenging. The activities and strategies used by teachers do not engage and make pupils think deeply enough about what they are learning. This is particularly the case for middle and higher ability pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Teachers do not sufficiently check how well pupils have understood what they have been learning. In some cases, teachers move on too quickly to the next activity when pupils have not demonstrated a deep enough understanding of the topic.
- Homework is not embedded into school routines in line with the policy. Leaders have already identified this and have appropriate plans in place to address this issue.

- There is highly effective teaching in the school. Where it is stronger, teachers use their subject knowledge to help pupils develop a deep understanding. This is seen in different subjects across the school. In a mathematics lesson, the teacher used a range of effective questioning to check that pupils had a deep understanding of what they were learning. In modern foreign languages, teachers routinely identify where pupils make errors in their speaking and writing. This is helping pupils to quickly develop a secure understanding of what they are learning and ensuring that they speak and write more confidently.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported by school leaders. This includes either by additional adults in the classroom, targeted intervention outside the classroom or by specialist support. As a result, these two groups of pupils are making progress in line with or above that of other groups of pupils in the school.
- Assessment practices, including in the sixth form, are much improved. Leaders have decided to use unseen assessments from the Ark central network team in different subject areas. These are then moderated within the Ark group to ensure that assessment is accurate. Teachers and leaders now have access to accurate information about the progress pupils are making. This is being used increasingly effectively to help make decisions about teaching and learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Some pupils have not yet developed the maturity to take responsibility for their own learning and to avoid disrupting the learning of others. At the beginning of the school year, exclusions were high. Similarly, the number of detentions set by teachers was also high.
- The range of content and ways that pupils learn to stay safe are secure. Pupils learn about mental health and well-being, drugs and alcohol misuse and the 'Prevent' duty. However, some aspects of staying safe have not been covered either in full or in sufficient detail. This includes female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation.
- Year 11 pupils and students in the sixth form are well supported in developing their understanding of careers and their possible next steps after school. Leaders have ensured that Year 11 pupils have received mock interviews and been given a range of impartial information and advice. In the sixth form, students have benefited from a range of guest speakers and work-experience opportunities. However, careers education, although being delivered to pupils in lower year groups, is not sufficiently embedded across the school.
- Pupils report that bullying is rare and when it occurs, is taken seriously and dealt with effectively. Individual cases of bullying are managed well by staff. Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying and what to do if they have concerns. However, leaders

have only recently devised a scheme where they can analyse incidents of bullying, for example to look for any trends in relation to different types of bullying.

- Most of the small number of parents who replied to Parent View, Ofsted’s questionnaire for parents, said that their child was safe and well looked after at school. Pupils who spoke to inspectors and those who replied to the pupil questionnaire agreed that they were safe in school and that there were adults at the school they could turn to for support when they needed it.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Exclusions, including permanent and fixed-term exclusions, are above the national average. Leaders knew behaviour was not good and decided to take firm action. Owing to the impact of the new behaviour systems, the frequency of exclusions and sanctions is falling. Pupils and staff say that behaviour is improving. However, although the number of exclusions is falling overall, the exclusion rates for disadvantaged pupils and those from a Black ethnic origin are high compared with those for other groups of pupils.
- Attendance overall is just below the national average. Rates of persistent absence are falling. However, persistent absence for disadvantaged pupils and those from a Black ethnic origin is not falling quickly enough. This is also one of the main reasons why the progress of these two groups is below that of other groups of pupils.
- Classroom behaviour is improving. However, when pupils have an adult other than their normal class teacher, behaviour worsens. Also, when teaching is not challenging, low-level disruption commonly occurs. Some teachers are inconsistently applying the school’s behaviour policy.
- Pupils are developing more positive attitudes to learning. This is seen in the quality of their work and how they take care of their books and their uniform. Leaders decided to introduce ‘line ups’ at three different times of the day. These are taken seriously by pupils. This is helping to improve pupils’ movement around the building and punctuality to lessons. Pupils told inspectors that this was typical.
- Leaders’ work, including in the use of alternative education, has significantly reduced the number of pupils at risk of not being in education, training or employment. Pupils who attend alternative provision are well supported. Their attendance and behaviour are improving. New schemes such as mentoring for targeted pupils, including those from a Black ethnic origin, are having an impact, for example in reducing the rate of exclusions.
- Pupils are behaving more sensibly when they have free time. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, were polite and friendly to the inspection team. Pupils clean up after themselves and treat their surroundings with respect.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes in 2016 were not good. Attainment was well below the national average, for

example in the proportion of pupils who attained an A* to C grade in GCSE English and mathematics. Pupils' progress overall was significantly below the national average.

- There is variability in the attainment and progress being made in a range of subjects across the school. In 2016, disadvantaged pupils from middle and higher ability starting points and pupils from a Black ethnic origin significantly underachieved. One reason for this is the lower rates of attendance and higher rates of exclusion for these groups. The higher ability pupils from non-disadvantaged backgrounds made progress in line with that of other pupils nationally.
- The attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils from their different starting points are improving. This includes when comparing their outcomes with those of other pupils nationally. However, when comparing the progress of current disadvantaged pupils with that of other pupils in the school, differences are not diminishing quickly enough, particularly for the higher ability pupils. This is because governors and senior and subject leaders do not systematically and rigorously evaluate the impact of pupil premium funding in order to change spending plans when needed.
- Teaching is not sufficiently challenging higher ability pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. As a result, the progress of this group varies between different subjects and in different year groups.
- Outcomes in history and geography for current pupils are typically weaker than for other subjects.
- In 2016, pupils' progress in mathematics and modern foreign languages was significantly above the national average. Lower ability pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, achieved well in a range of subjects. Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieved in line with the national average.
- Attainment and progress are quickly improving for current pupils, particularly those in key stage 3. Girls are making more rapid progress than they were previously. Inspectors undertook detailed reviews of pupils' work, including of assessments, to check on the rigour of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in a range of subjects. Inspectors' work scrutiny and observations of learning supported the assessment information provided by the school. In English, for example, the most able pupils in Year 7 were confidently writing detailed and convincing assessments in relation to 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.
- Owing to the effective in- and out-of-classroom support being provided, pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making strong progress from their starting points in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- In 2016, the number of students moving from Year 12 into Year 13 was well below the national average. This was because the courses that students were studying were not

well matched to their different abilities. In 2016, no students were entered for any work-related courses.

- Leaders have made the decision to temporarily close the sixth form and students in the current Year 12 are being effectively supported in moving to two other local schools in the Ark academy group. Leaders have taken care to support students, and pupils in Year 11, in preparing for the move to new schools.
- Although results for students who were entered for examinations on AS-level courses were above the national average last year, outcomes on A-level courses were in line with the national average. Some groups of students, such as girls and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, did not achieve as well as other students nationally.
- Leadership in the sixth form has been quick to address the variability in outcomes from 2016. Leaders have improved the quality of teaching in the sixth form. Subject leaders and teachers are sharing more resources with subject areas in other Ark schools. Leaders use external information to compare their outcomes with those of other students nationally. This is showing that current students, on academic and work-related courses, are making better progress. Students report that teaching has improved and that they feel well supported.
- Students who are re-taking GCSE mathematics and/or English are making strong progress in moving to a higher level of learning. For example, in English, all students moved to a higher GCSE grade and most attained a C grade or higher.
- Students learn to stay safe in a range of age-appropriate ways. This includes the local police coming to talk to them about knife crime and street safety. Students say that their tutor time is well organised and structured. They feel safe in school.
- Leaders have ensured that students have a range of effective ways of developing their personal and employability skills. This includes learning from a variety of guest speakers and work-experience opportunities. Students receive well-structured and purposeful careers information and guidance. They learn about a wide range of opportunities, including apprenticeships. The proportion of students who move on to higher education is above the national average.
- Students behave well in the sixth form and they are effective role models for younger pupils. Attendance in the sixth form is high and above that of the other year groups in the school.

School details

Unique reference number	141019
Local authority	Brent
Inspection number	10031693

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	901
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	59
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Sophy Blakeway
Principal	Rebecca Curtis
Telephone number	020 8902 6362
Website	http://arkelvinacademy.org/
Email address	info@arkelvinacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about its curriculum offer, the impact of the Year 7 catch-up funding (not just how it is spent) and some attainment information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school opened as an academy in September 2014. It is a member of the Ark academy group. The new school building is currently under construction and is due for completion in December 2017.

- The principal joined the school in January 2017.
- The school is of average size, with a small number of students in the sixth form. The sixth form is temporarily closing, with most students moving to other Ark academies.
- The proportion of pupils who join and leave the school at different times of the year is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average but rising.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average. Most pupils are of an Asian ethnic origin.
- Pupils who attend the school have well below average prior attainment from their primary school education.
- Leaders make use of off-site education at the Bright Education Centre as required.
- The school currently meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the time they leave school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited lessons in a range of subjects, including guided reading and tutor time. All of the visits to classrooms were undertaken jointly with school leaders. Inspectors also scrutinised a wide range of books and assessments to look at the quality of pupils' learning over time.
- The inspection team held a range of meetings with senior and subject leaders to evaluate the impact of their work. Meetings were also held with governors, an Ark director of education, the executive headteacher, newly qualified teachers, a group of staff and different groups of pupils, including students in the sixth form.
- Inspectors evaluated 11 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents, 53 replies to the staff survey and 29 replies to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of documentation provided by leaders, including: internal assessment information for pupils in all year groups; leaders' self-evaluation; the improvement plan; minutes of governing body meetings; attendance and behaviour information; a variety of school policies; the single central record of recruitment checks; resources and teaching materials for pupils on how to stay safe; and a wide range of other information relating to the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Sam Hainey, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Geoff Butler	Ofsted Inspector
Yvonne Chisholm	Ofsted Inspector
James Whiting	Ofsted Inspector

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