

Inspection of a good school: Ark Greenwich Free School

403 Shooters Hill Road, London SE18 4LH

Inspection dates: 11–12 February 2020

Outcome

Ark Greenwich Free School continues to be a good school.

There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a section 5 inspection now.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at this school exemplify the school's values of ambition, growth, fellowship and scholarship (AGFS). Leaders have high expectations for all pupils to achieve well academically. Equally important is the focus on pupils' personal development. This is to enable them to 'stand shoulder to shoulder' with anyone they meet.

Staff constantly encourage pupils to believe that they will be successful. Pupils are proud of the achievements of those who have gone before them at the school, but they want to do even better themselves.

Pupils are polite, courteous and friendly. They get on with each other. They behave well in school and in the local community. Pupils feel safe in school. They told us that bullying is rare and that, if it does happen, it is dealt with quickly.

All pupils have access to plenty of enrichment opportunities. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have these timetabled into their school day. This is so that everyone benefits from them. Pupils in all year groups enjoy regular 'drop down days' that allow them to participate in experiences outside of the regular curriculum. A range of after-school sports activities, music and drama clubs is also on offer.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged, have equal access to the full range of subjects and opportunities that are on offer. All achieve well.

Leaders have identified the key knowledge and skills that pupils need in each subject. They have designed programmes so that this learning is systematically built over time. For

example, in Year 7 English, pupils learn how to structure and organise written information. In Year 8, they learn how to form an argument using persuasive language techniques.

Lessons are planned to allow pupils to apply what they already know and extend their learning. For example, in physical education (PE), from Year 7, pupils develop their knowledge of human anatomy. They then use this in practical lessons throughout their time at school to understand how physical activity affects their bodies and improves their sports performance.

Teachers are skilled at identifying and correcting pupils' misconceptions, and the reasons behind them. Pupils get specific guidance to help them overcome these difficulties. They are given regular opportunities to practise their skills and apply their knowledge. This enables them to demonstrate how they know more and can do more over time.

Leaders across the school have prioritised reading. Pupils who have fallen behind are identified and supported to catch up quickly. Daily reading sessions also help pupils to improve their skills. They read demanding texts in all subjects to enhance their understanding of topics. Public speaking is also highly valued. Pupils have opportunities to practice these skills in all areas of the curriculum. They are confident and articulate speakers. Pupils carefully consider the contributions made by their peers. They show respect for views that differ from their own.

Recently there have been significant changes in the music department. Religious studies was introduced as a separate subject this academic year. The new leaders in these subjects know where the gaps are in pupils' knowledge. These are being addressed through new programmes of study. Pupils are tackling increasingly demanding work in both music and religious studies.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and during social times is consistently positive. They understand the high expectations that leaders have of them. They know what the consequences will be if these expectations are not met. Staff are also consistent in their approach to behaviour management.

Leaders make sure that all pupils have regular opportunities to enrich their life experiences. This includes visits to museums, galleries, places of worship and universities. Pupils take part in residential trips to other countries, and as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

Teachers understand that they must also meet the high standards expected of them. They welcome the time they get to plan together. They say it helps them to manage their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive training so that they can respond appropriately when pupils are at risk. Leaders work with external agencies to ensure pupils quickly get the right support when it is needed. Record-keeping, including pre-employment checks, is thorough.

Pupils follow a programme that teaches them how to keep physically and emotionally safe. It covers a wide range of potential risks and includes sessions on gang activity, knife crime and online safety. Pupils also learn about consent and the dangers of pornography and sexting as part of the relationships and sex education programme.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In music and in religious studies, new leaders have identified gaps in pupils' knowledge and have planned out what pupils need to learn. School leaders should continue to monitor the impact of these changes to ensure that pupils do as well in these subjects as they do in other areas of the curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Greenwich Free School, to be good in May 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	138245
Local authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	10121558
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	551
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	0
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Marshall
Headteacher	Rhys Spiers
Website	www.arkgreenwichfreeschool.org
Date of previous inspection	17–18 May 2016

Information about this school

- The school joined the Ark Schools multi-academy trust in September 2018.
- The school does not operate a sixth form.
- No pupils were placed in alternative provision at the time of this inspection.

Information about this inspection

- We met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. We also met with representatives from the local governing body and the trustees.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and PE. This involved meeting with leaders, teachers and pupils. We visited lessons in these subjects and looked at pupils' work.
- We spoke with staff and pupils, formally and informally.
- We reviewed safeguarding documentation, including records of recruitment of staff and staff training logs. There was also a review of safeguarding referrals made to the relevant bodies.

- We considered responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View. We also took into account the views of the staff who completed the survey for staff.

Inspection team

Katerina Christodoulou, lead inspector

Seconded Inspector

Lisa Strong

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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