

# Inspection of Ark Academy

Forty Avenue, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 9JR

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Inspection dates: 22 and 23 February 2022

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b> | <b>Outstanding</b> |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| The quality of education     | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Behaviour and attitudes      | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Personal development         | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Leadership and management    | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Early years provision        | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Sixth-form provision         | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Previous inspection grade    | Outstanding        |

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils relish coming to this school. From Nursery through to the sixth form, pupils are taught to be caring, polite, hard-working and motivated members of society. This culture runs like a golden thread throughout this large school. Staff are ambitious for pupils to excel. Pupils strive to meet these expectations, knowing that staff are there to support them every step of the way. Pupils are happy and kept safe.

Ensuring that all pupils achieve their full potential is a goal shared by all who work here. Leaders provide a broad range of subjects for pupils to study. Expert teachers make sure that pupils remember the key ideas that they need to know. A deep-rooted sense of equality underpins leaders' aims. All pupils, regardless of starting point, have the same access to a rich and demanding curriculum. Pupils achieve exceptionally well and are inspired to be successful. For example, younger pupils are keen to achieve the 'megastars' award, while older students aspire to study at top universities.

Leaders have high expectations for behaviour. Pupils know what is expected of them and lessons are calm and studious. Pupils manage their own behaviour well, including in corridors and on the playground. Bullying rarely happens, but if it does teachers deal with it effectively.

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

Leaders have a clear vision to provide pupils with an excellent education. This vision is shared by staff, who are proud to make a difference to pupils' lives. Leaders have designed a curriculum that is broad and rich in knowledge. This starts in the early years and continues all the way through to the sixth form. In all subjects, pupils are equipped with the knowledge and skills that they will need to be successful in the future.

Teachers are experts in their subjects. They apply their expertise to make sure that pupils remember key knowledge with fluency. Pupils increase their understanding in logical, manageable steps. This is because teaching routinely breaks down complex ideas into smaller chunks. Understanding and using subject-specific vocabulary is an expectation in all curriculum areas. In science, for example, pupils learned and practised using the correct terminology to explain how vaccinations work. Pupils applied their understanding to debate how accurately the media depicts information about vaccinations.

Staff use assessment well to support them teach the curriculum. Beginning in the early years, staff focus on finding out what children know and can do, and what they need to learn next. This approach continues in the primary and secondary phases, where staff pinpoint gaps in pupils' knowledge and then focus their teaching on filling these gaps. For instance, in the sixth form, regular quizzes provide

teachers with helpful information on students' misconceptions, which are then promptly addressed.

Reading is a priority throughout this school. No time is wasted when children join the early years. Children benefit from plentiful opportunities to both practise reading and listen to stories. Staff's expertise in teaching early reading means that the ambitious phonics programme is followed consistently. This includes making sure that pupils practise reading with books that match the sounds they know. Pupils quickly become fluent, confident readers. Leaders also encourage a love of reading and pupils were keen to talk about their favourite books and authors.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities access the full curriculum. This is because, in all phases of the school, these pupils receive excellent support. Staff know pupils and their individual needs well. They tailor lessons to meet pupils' specific needs, with additional well-targeted support from teaching assistants when needed.

Excellent professional relationships between pupils and staff underpin the calm environment around the school. Pupils have a really positive attitude to their learning. Their determination to succeed shines through. Leaders support pupils to manage their own behaviour well. This means that they, and their peers, can focus on their learning. This is in no small part due to leaders' consistent approach to teaching what positive behaviour looks like, right from the start of early years. Using consistent language and strategies, staff help children to understand boundaries, recognise feelings and resolve disagreements. Children quickly learn to follow routines and regulate their own behaviour themselves. This provides an excellent basis for leaders' work to promote high standards of behaviour throughout the school.

The provision for personal development aims to embody the school's 'civitas' motto of working hard and being kind. Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is carefully planned and comprehensive at each stage of the school. Pupils learn about healthy friendships and relationships. They learn to respect people with beliefs and backgrounds different to their own. Democracy is not only taught, but pupils are encouraged to put it into practice, for instance by electing school council members. Sixth-form students lead year-group briefings, and are encouraged to volunteer around the school. Leaders also seek and act on pupils' views on how the PSHE curriculum could be strengthened further. A comprehensive careers programme means that pupils receive impartial advice about life beyond school.

Staff know that leaders listen to their views and consider their workload. Staff appreciate training opportunities within school and from the trust. They also enjoy opportunities to develop their expertise by working in and leading on trust-wide network groups.

Leadership throughout the school is focused on achieving the best outcomes for pupils. Governance too is a strength. Governors and trustees are knowledgeable. They offer leaders support, but also are ready to challenge when necessary.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training. They are aware of local issues that may affect pupils and they are alert to signs that pupils may have problems. Staff know how to report their concerns and leaders record these accurately. Leaders monitor individual cases carefully, and when needed make timely referrals to outside agencies. Leaders have effective procedures in place to deal with situations involving peer-on-peer abuse.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, both physically and online. Pupils know who to speak to if they have concerns and they trust staff to respond appropriately.

## 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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

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|---|--|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>                    | 135600   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                            | Brent  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                          | 10212897   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                             | All-through  |
| <b>School category</b>                            | Academy sponsor-led  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                        | 3 to 18  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                           | Mixed  |
| <b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>        | 1,649  |
| <b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b> | 307  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>                      | Board of trustees  |
| <b>Chair of trust</b>                             | Paul Marshall  |
| <b>Principal</b>                                  | Delia Smith  |
| <b>Website</b>                                    | <a href="http://www.arkacademy.org">www.arkacademy.org</a>         |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>                | 24 and 25 November 2010, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

## Information about this school

- The school uses three registered alternative providers.
- Careers guidance meets the requirement of the Baker Clause. This means that pupils in Years 8 to 13 receive information about the full range of education and training options open to them. This includes opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, the primary headteacher and other senior leaders. Inspectors met with the director of secondary education of the trust and the chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics, science, history, design and technology, and art. Inspectors visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning and hear them read and met with subject leaders and teachers. Inspectors also considered pupils' learning in other subjects, including geography, Spanish, French, psychology and religious education.
- Through discussions with leaders, governors, pupils and staff, inspectors considered how effectively pupils are safeguarded. Inspectors also looked at records related to safeguarding, including records of pre-employment checks carried out before staff are appointed.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from both the primary and secondary phases of the school. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at playtimes was observed.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff about safeguarding, behaviour and their workload. Inspectors looked at staff, parent and pupil responses to Ofsted's surveys.

### **Inspection team**

|                            |                         |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Mark Smith, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Alice Clay                 | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Amy Jackson                | Ofsted Inspector        |
| Bob Hamlyn                 | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Umbar Sharif               | Ofsted Inspector        |

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