

Inspection of Ark Kings Academy

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

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils in the primary phase enjoy coming to school. They are confident, curious and eager to learn. They feel safe and are well cared for. Teachers and leaders expect all pupils to achieve well and to behave well. Pupils meet these expectations. Pupils and adults get on well and they work together in a culture of respect and kindness.

Pupils in the secondary phase say that they do not feel safe. Bullying, derogatory language and homophobic behaviours are commonplace. They have no confidence that staff will support them when they raise concerns. Leaders say they have high expectations of every pupil. However, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not receive the support they need and so they do not achieve well. They are more likely to receive sanctions than their peers. The number of suspensions for pupils with SEND is high and increasing.

Leaders in the secondary phase do not make adequate checks when pupils are absent from school. This means that they do not know whether pupils are safe. Too many pupils are truant from lessons, and leaders have not taken effective action to address this.

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

The curriculum across the whole school is well sequenced. Leaders have thought carefully about what pupils need to learn and how this knowledge is developed over time. In the early years, the curriculum is implemented well. Children get off to a good start and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy creating and telling their own stories. They learn to make choices about their learning, and this helps develop their independence.

In the secondary phase, teachers do not consistently choose activities that help pupils to learn important information. Pupils' understanding is not checked often enough and so teachers do not spot gaps in their learning. Leaders and teachers in the secondary phase do not support pupils with SEND well enough in lessons. As a result, they do not make the progress that they should.

Pupils at the early stages of reading in the primary phase are supported well. Leaders' plans identify the letter sounds that children should learn and when they should learn them. Teachers monitor children's progress in reading closely, supporting them swiftly if they fall behind. The books that children read match the letter sounds that they are learning. As a result, children read confidently. Leaders have not placed the same emphasis on pupils reading for pleasure, and this limits pupils' enjoyment of reading. Pupils in the secondary phase who are not yet fluent readers do not receive the help they need to learn to read. This stops them from learning well across the curriculum.

Pupils in the primary phase behave well. There are clear routines in place, and pupils know what is expected of them. Leaders act quickly to work with parents to resolve any issues that may arise. As a result, the primary part of the school is a calm, productive environment where pupils learn well.

In the secondary phase, pupils' learning is often disrupted by poor behaviour. Many pupils receive repeated sanctions. Both detentions and suspensions are used very frequently, and leaders cannot demonstrate the impact of these strategies. Pupils report high levels of bullying and prejudiced behaviour. These are not recorded. Leaders in the secondary phase make extensive use of alternative provision. They do not monitor routinely or systematically the attendance of pupils who are educated off site, so do not know if or when they are absent from the provision. Leaders have not taken care to make sure that they mark pupils' attendance accurately. As a result, too many pupils are missing education, and leaders do not know this.

From the beginning of nursery, pupils in the primary phase are taught how to look after themselves and to understand their feelings and those of other people. They support one another and are happy to embrace new challenges. They are responsible and respectful. Pupils in the secondary phase learn about relationships, sex and health education in 'Learning for Life' lessons. However, pupils feel that they have to tolerate the frequent sexual harassment towards them. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) pupils experience repeated discriminatory behaviour against them. Leaders have not recognised these issues, and so cannot take the right steps to stop them from happening. Pupils receive an appropriate careers education.

Leadership across the school is too variable. Many leaders are new in post and new leaders in the secondary phase are not getting the help they need to improve the school. Leadership in the early years is good, resulting in children receiving a good quality of education. However, there are key areas of the school, particularly in key stages 3 and 4, that need improving. Some aspects of the school's work, such as monitoring and recording secondary pupils' attendance and ensuring that all pupils feel safe, need urgent action. The trust has recognised some of the failings of the school and taken steps to address these. However, this action has been too slow to address what needs to be done, and pupils in the secondary phase continue to be let down.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

There is not a culture of safeguarding in the secondary phase of the school. Teachers do not take responsibility for reporting safeguarding concerns. They are not aware of the extent of the issues that pupils face in or outside school. Leaders have not been diligent in identifying risks and so do not keep pupils safe through regular attendance checks or by keeping them safe from bullying or harassment.

Safeguarding leaders are knowledgeable and experienced. They support individual pupils and families well and work with a range of agencies to ensure that pupils get the help that they need. However, their skills have not been used well to support and train their colleagues in the secondary phase.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils with SEND, including those with social, emotional and mental health needs, do not have their needs met and do not experience a good enough education. They do not achieve well, and they receive frequent sanctions and suspensions from school. Leaders should improve all aspects of the provision for pupils with SEND in the secondary phase of the school.
- Leaders use detentions, suspensions and alternative provision extensively to manage behaviour. There is a culture of sanctions, and good behaviour is not recognised. Pupils who need help to improve their behaviour do not get the support that they need. Leaders should review their approach to behaviour management so that it leads to improvements in pupils' behaviour and reduces the number of suspensions and the use of alternative provision in the secondary phase.
- Pupils in the secondary phase of the school do not treat each other with respect. Some pupils, particularly those who identify as LGBT, experience repeated name-calling and prejudiced behaviour. This means that pupils do not feel safe in the school. Leaders should support all staff to extend the positive culture established in the primary phase into the secondary phase so that pupils know how to behave and treat each other with respect.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance have not identified the failings in the secondary phase of the school quickly enough. As a result, pupils are not receiving a satisfactory standard of education and too many behave badly and are suspended. Those responsible for governance should provide targeted support for new leaders so that they can take decisive action to tackle the significant issues across the secondary phase of the school.

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

Unique reference number	137578
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10211651
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	914
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Marshall
Principal	Roger Punton
Website	http://arkkingsacademy.org/
Date of previous inspection	4 and 5 October 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The principal was not in school during the time of the inspection.
- The school is part of Ark Schools.
- The school uses five registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the interim executive principal, other senior leaders and curriculum and pastoral leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors held discussions with teachers and representatives of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, English, mathematics, science, history and languages. For each of these subjects, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with members of staff individually and in groups and spoke to pupils at various points during the inspection. Inspectors took account of the response to the pupil and staff surveys, as well as Ofsted Parent View.
- An inspector visited the school isolation room and spent time talking to pupils in there.
- Inspectors looked at records relating to behaviour, bullying, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff's recruitment, scrutinising policy documents and meeting with the designated safeguarding lead.

Inspection team

Claire Price, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tracy Stone	Ofsted Inspector
Karen O'Keefe	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Tustian	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mike Onyon	Ofsted Inspector

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