

Inspection of Ark Charter Academy

Hyde Park Road, Southsea, Hampshire PO5 4HL

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 July 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils benefit from a broad curriculum and a wide choice of options in key stage 4. The well-planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme encourages their personal development. Religious education supports their knowledge of Christian values. The careers programme raises pupils' aspirations and highlights the benefits of further and higher education.

Pupils say that they generally feel happy and safe. However, some pupils are rightly worried about the frequent use of discriminatory language. A small number of pupils think bullying is not always dealt with effectively. When pupils do talk to adults about their worries and concerns, they always act quickly and decisively.

Pupils access an extensive range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. They are proud of the opportunities to compete in sporting competitions. They enjoy visits to the outdoor learning area, taking part in school productions and attending the many clubs on offer. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are active participants in these additional opportunities.

There are many indications of recent initiatives and obvious signs of sustainable progress. The principal is having a positive impact on school improvement. Leaders have extremely high expectations for behaviour in the school. They recognise that some pupils find it difficult to meet these exacting standards.

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

Leaders have made significant enhancements to the content of the curriculum. Subject leaders have looked carefully at their curriculum plans. Content is suitably linked to the national curriculum. It builds progressively on the primary curriculum. Teachers are clearer about what they want their pupils to learn.

Literacy and subject-specific vocabulary are well supported across all subjects. In addition, there are well-considered whole-school approaches to reading across the curriculum. Reading is well supported in English, and the library is a joyful place to visit. Pupils whose reading is not so secure are suitably supported by a dedicated reading team.

Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are well known and sensitively supported. They do not always achieve as well as their peers because of their sporadic attendance. Higher prior attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged. The curriculum does not offer enough opportunities to develop and extend their knowledge.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. This expertise supports their delivery of the curriculum. In some subjects, it is used well to deepen pupils' knowledge and identify gaps. However, assessment practice is variable. In the best subjects,

assessment includes feedback to help pupils address misunderstandings. In other lessons, pupils are unclear exactly what they need to do to improve.

The PSHE programme is well planned. It delivers units on healthy lifestyles, economic education, citizenship and relationships. The intent is clear, but the implementation is haphazard. Opportunities to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding are too often missed. Pupils lack confidence to call out bullying and discrimination. Opportunities for them to take on leadership roles are still being developed.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are variable. In subjects such as art and history they are engaged and enthusiastic. In subjects such as languages pupils lack engagement and motivation. Low-level disruption is evident, and learning is interrupted. Pupils confirm that the behaviour policy is not consistently implemented.

Attendance is broadly in line with that in other schools, but persistent absence is higher. The school is working extremely hard to address this and works well with outside agencies. Leaders accept there is more to do, and they aim to further develop their work with parents and carers. They know that attendance improves significantly where the school and parents collaborate.

Staff are positive about the leadership of the school. They agree that the school has improved. They say their workload is suitably managed through working cooperatively and sharing resources. Their professional needs are suitably considered but training does not always match the school's priorities. The trust collaborates with school leaders in delivering training and supporting staff. Governors and trustees hold school leaders to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The welfare, well-being and safety of all pupils is a high priority for school leaders. Safeguarding checks, safer recruitment and the single central record are effective. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and frequent updates. They know how to identify risks and what to do if they have any concerns.

The school has strong links with the local authority and other external agencies. Staff ensure that vulnerable pupils are identified, and actions are put in place to support them. The online recording system allows the school to log and track concerns and actions appropriately.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not yet consistent and fully implemented. Assessment practice is too variable. As a result, pupils do not always build upon their prior learning,

deepen their knowledge and appreciate what to do to improve. Leaders should ensure that curriculum intent and implementation, as well as assessment practice, are fully and consistently embedded using the best existing practice.

- The behaviour of a small minority of pupils does not match leaders' high expectations. As a result, learning is occasionally interrupted and curriculum time is lost. Leaders should ensure that the behaviour policy is commonly understood and consistently implemented. They should ensure that pupils' behaviour does not disrupt lessons and the life of the school.
- While the PSHE curriculum has been thoughtfully designed and carefully sequenced, it does not sufficiently promote respect and tolerance for those who are different. As a result, pupils are not all confident to stand up against discrimination and bullying. Leaders should continue to prioritise the provision of PSHE and ensure that it is promoted and supported across the whole curriculum.

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	135965
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	10200430
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	772
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Marshall
Principal	Fiona Chapman
Website	www.charteracademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 November – 1 December 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Ark Charter Academy is a smaller-than-average 11 to 16 mixed comprehensive school. It is part of the Ark Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school is designated as having a religious character. The school had a Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools in June 2017.
- The school makes use of one Ofsted-registered alternative education provider. A small number of pupils undertake vocational courses at a local further education college on a part-time basis.
- 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 educational 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors conducted deep dives in English, mathematics, history, languages and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, talked to teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at their work.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, staff and pupils. They reviewed the single central record and checked the school's safeguarding procedures. Inspectors looked at school documentation, behaviour logs, attendance records and destination statistics. The lead inspector met with trustees and members of the local governing board remotely and face to face. He also spoke to a group of parents.
- Inspectors considered 59 responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire and 20 additional written comments from parents. They looked at the survey returns completed by 89 staff and 15 pupils. They considered survey results conducted by the school, reviewed email correspondence from parents and spoke to staff at alternative placement schools.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Paul James	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Marande	Ofsted Inspector
Stuart Edwards	Ofsted Inspector

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