

Inspection of a good school: Ark Little Ridge Primary Academy

Little Ridge Avenue, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex TN37 7LR

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 July 2022

Outcome

Ark Little Ridge Primary Academy continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if the inspector were to carry out a section 5 inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Everyone strives for the very best at Ark Little Ridge Academy. Expectations are always high. Pupils respond very well. They model the school's values of rigour, integrity, determination, generosity and enthusiasm, which they say 'come automatically'.

Pupils take pride in their exemplary behaviour. They are gratified when they are complimented on their behaviour by staff or by members of the public on a trip. Throughout the school pupils are respectful and polite. The school is an orderly and purposeful environment.

Pupils are inspired by each other's successes. They hold roles such as the Year 6 prefects in high regard, explaining that they are role models. Pupils are kind and caring towards each other. They are awarded ribbons for demonstrating 'one kind word' and appreciate the positive impact such behaviour can have.

Pupils feel safe. They explain that school is 'like having another family'. Pupils recognise that 'we have our ups and downs' and that sometimes people can get 'snappy', or over competitive at football for example, but that teachers help them 'figure it out'. Staff respond swiftly to any hint of bullying.

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

School leaders, governors and the trust work highly effectively together to drive the school forwards. Staff are energised and positive about being part of a school which strives for the very best. They have a high degree of confidence in leaders. Everyone works well together as a high-performing and unified team. Staff have equally ambitious expectations for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The curriculum is ambitious and clearly sequenced to build knowledge. Subject leaders are well trained. They use their expertise to support others so that everyone delivers the curriculum effectively. This is especially strong in English and mathematics. Leaders in other subjects are rightly developing their knowledge of the curriculum in early years and the speech and language centre further. They are aiming to make links even stronger and ensure that pupils are supported even more effectively at times of transition.

Reading is firmly at the centre of the curriculum. Pupils absorb the joy of reading. They are supported into becoming informed, confident and passionate readers. Pupils are introduced to a wide range of texts and authors. These have been carefully selected to interest and inspire them. Pupils engage keenly with the texts they are introduced to. They use the skills they have been taught to find meaning and explore characters and situations in depth and with insight.

Children learn to read quickly and well when they join the school in Reception Year. Regular and carefully structured teaching from staff who are experts helps children to rapidly master their phonics skills. Those who struggle or start to fall behind are swiftly identified and given the help they need to catch up quickly.

The mathematics curriculum ensures pupils learn mathematical facts. Methods are taught clearly. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to apply their knowledge and stretch their skills. Staff provide exactly the right support to ensure that pupils with SEND achieve as well as they can. A focus on vocabulary helps all pupils to explain their thinking. Pupils have a keen appetite for mathematics. The take-up of extra-curricular mathematics-based activities at home and school is high.

Pupils' learning across the curriculum is broad and deep. Knowledge is sequenced and woven across subjects so that pupils develop well-informed opinions about the world. Pupils are inspired by their learning. They talk excitedly about what is yet to come on the curriculum. Pupils remember previous learning and use this to produce work of high quality. For example, pupils preparing for a print activity in art explained the importance of using just the right amount of paint, which they learned in a previous activity.

Pupils are interested in different cultures and people's experiences. They understand the need to understand these, and how this promotes acceptance and tolerance. They learn about and demonstrate fundamental British values.

Pupils' highly developed personal skills support their learning exceptionally well. They routinely build on each other's thinking and work highly productively in pairs or groups. They readily take responsibility for their learning and work hard. Pupils become well-rounded, self-aware and confident individuals. They develop both the academic base and personal attributes they need for future success. They are very well prepared for the next stages of their education and beyond.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils' welfare is a priority. The whole team is trained and skilled in helping to keep pupils safe. Staff are ever vigilant, explaining 'we know what to keep an eye out for', and they do. Where needs are identified, leaders take swift and decisive action to ensure pupils are kept safe. Leaders aspire to developing digitally confident pupils. They ensure that learning about online safety is an important part of school life. The curriculum, assemblies and information for parents all help to make sure that pupils have a secure understanding of e-safety.

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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2017.

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	141022
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10227914
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	431
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Marshall
Headteacher	Kate Woolley
Website	www.arklittleridgeprimary.org
Date of previous inspection	9 and 10 May 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school became a member of the Ark academy trust in September 2014.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils who have an education, health and care plan relating to speech and/or language difficulties. There are currently 11 pupils enrolled.
- There have been changes in the leadership team since the previous inspection. The previous executive headteacher now oversees the school as part of a regional director role. The current headteacher worked alongside an executive teacher for a period of time before recently taking on sole responsibility for the school.
- The school does not use alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

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

- During the inspection, the inspector met regularly with school leaders. The inspector also met with a representative from the trust and members of the local governing board.
- The inspector conducted deep dives into reading, mathematics, computing and art. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed curriculum planning with the subject leader, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector listened to some pupils reading.
- Records associated with safeguarding were reviewed, including the single central record and appointment procedures. The inspector spoke to staff about their safeguarding training and spoke to pupils about the support they have in understanding how to keep safe.
- The inspector reviewed responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff questionnaires. The inspector met with groups of staff to discuss their views about the school, including about their workload and well-being. The inspector met with several groups of pupils, as well as speaking to pupils during lessons and around the school.

Inspection team

Deborah Gordon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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