

# Inspection of Ark Blake Academy

6 Morland Road, Croydon CR0 6NA

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Inspection dates: 22 and 23 February 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Good**

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The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5  
of the Education Act 2005

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

Leaders provide a high-quality education at this growing school. Pupils understand the school's values of bravery, leadership, aspiration, kindness and endeavour, and why they matter. They know that leaders are ambitious for all pupils. Pupils learn a challenging and engaging curriculum. They value the opportunities to develop their artistic and creative talents in drama, music and art.

Leaders have high expectations for behaviour and in most lessons, pupils work hard and want to do well. However, this is not as consistent as it should be. Pupils say that behaviour varies depending on the class they are in, and this is affecting learning in some subjects. Pupils find this frustrating.

Pupils benefit from a well-planned 'Character' curriculum. They understand their rights and responsibilities and value diversity. Pupils feel cared for and know who they can speak to if they have any concerns. They say that bullying is rare, and they trust that leaders will take action when it is reported. While other pupils' behaviour creates some anxiety, pupils are safe at this school.

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

Ark Blake Academy has an aspirational curriculum. All staff share the vision of pupils 'seizing greatness'. Pupils learn all the national curriculum subjects, as well as drama. Content is laid out in a clear way and teachers carefully check that pupils are learning what leaders want them to learn.

Teachers have strong knowledge of the subjects they teach. They use their expertise to ensure the curriculum is right for their pupils. For example, in English, pupils read texts from the classics as well as those closer to their lived experience. In music, pupils study classical and modern music, including music production. Where pupils are taught by their regular teachers, they enjoy learning and typically develop secure knowledge over time.

In many subjects, teachers make sure pupils have appropriate opportunities to apply learning to different contexts. For example, in drama, pupils apply their knowledge of masks to different theatrical styles. In mathematics, pupils apply their algebraic skills and thinking to different problems.

Leaders have improved the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils are supported to learn the same curriculum as their peers. There is a high-quality reading programme. Leaders have taken very effective steps to ensure that pupils become fluent readers. Skilled staff support weaker readers to catch up with their classmates. Pupils benefit from a whole-class reading programme. They are exposed to a range of fiction and non-fiction texts. Pupils enjoy learning new vocabulary and say they can feel their knowledge and confidence grow.

Staff benefit from high-quality training and support from colleagues across the Ark Schools Trust, which they value greatly. This is helping leaders to overcome some of the challenges they face in recruiting teachers to some subjects. Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and are supported by the trust to make changes where needed. Leaders consult with pupils and staff before they make changes to ensure they are the right ones for the school. Leaders value pupils' views and are mindful of staff workload.

Some pupils' behaviour does not yet meet leaders' high expectations. In lessons, pupils behave well where teachers apply the school behaviour policy consistently and fairly. However, sometimes, this is not the case. Where there are disruptions to staffing, some pupils do not behave well. This is having a negative impact on other pupils' learning in these lessons.

Pupils' behaviour around the school is calm and orderly most of the time. Pupils are taught how to be polite, courteous, and respectful. Leaders have made sure staff are highly visible around the school, and pupils value this. However, there are still too many incidences of poor behaviour outside of lessons. A small number of pupils do not behave with respect towards other pupils and some staff. Leaders are clear about what they need to do. Their actions are leading to improvement.

This is an inclusive school where diversity is celebrated. Pupils learn about discrimination in relation to the protected characteristics and are taught how to be active citizens who can make a difference. They are taught to be 'leaders, not followers'. Pupils learn about careers options as part of 'Character' lessons, including learning about entrepreneurship. They know that they can succeed when they try hard and are proud of school productions and performances. Pupils are supported to develop independence, including in managing their own behaviour.

All year groups benefit from enriching experiences outside the classroom. These include trips to the theatre and museums, as well as visits from historians and artists. Many pupils have instrumental lessons that are provided at low cost. Pupils take part in the after-school enrichment programme where they are encouraged to make 'brave' choices and learn something new.

The trust supports leaders to bring about improvements in the school. However, leaders have not consistently communicated their plans for improvement to parents and carers successfully. This has resulted in some parents and pupils lacking an understanding of leaders' vision, and their confidence in the school has declined.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have regular and highly relevant training on safeguarding matters. They are clear about how to report concerns, and use the electronic systems in place to do so

promptly. Leaders monitor concerns and take swift action. They ensure that staff suitability checks are completed.

Pupils learn about keeping safe and there is a strong culture of reporting. Some younger pupils feel unsettled around the school site and say they do not always feel safe in the local area. Leaders have taken robust action to address behaviour incidents outside the school. They continue to work with local agencies to ensure pupils' safety.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

- Sometimes, the behaviour policy is not applied fairly or consistently both in lessons and around the school. When this happens, pupils' behaviour deteriorates. This causes frustration for pupils and affects learning. Leaders should ensure that all staff, including temporary staff, are trained and supported to implement the behaviour policy consistently.
- Leaders have not consistently communicated their vision and the changes they are making clearly enough to parents and carers. This means some parents do not feel informed about what is happening in the school. Some express concerns about the approach leaders are taking. Leaders should ensure parents are kept up to date so that parents understand what leaders are doing and why.

## **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.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147832
<b>Local authority</b>	Croydon
<b>Inspection number</b>	10255293
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	523
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trustees</b>	Paul Marshall
<b>Principal</b>	Peter Shaw
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.arkblake.org">www.arkblake.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Ark Blake Academy is part of Ark Schools multi-academy trust. The school opened in 2020. The principal has been in post since the school opened in 2020.
- At the time of this inspection, the school provided education for pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Some vacancies in the teaching staff remained at the time of inspection.
- School leaders currently make use of one registered alternative provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection of the school since it opened in 2020. The school opened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, the executive principal and members of the trust and school leadership team. They also spoke with the chair of the local governing board.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, music, history and drama. For each deep dive, 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 also considered the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with safeguarding leaders and spoke with groups of pupils to explore how effectively pupils are safeguarded. They also spoke with teachers and the chair of governors. Inspectors reviewed records of pre-employment checks and examined safeguarding records.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses of 58 parents and carers to Ofsted's survey. They also considered responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

## Inspection team

Polly Haste, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Olivia Page	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Raeside	Ofsted Inspector

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