

Inspection of Ark Greenwich Free School

403 Shooters Hill Road, London SE18 4LH

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 April 2023

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Ark Greenwich Free School receive an excellent education and excel in their learning. Pupils, who are referred to as 'scholars', embody the school's values of ambition, growth, fellowship, and scholarship. Leaders place a strong emphasis on character development. This is because they want pupils to be able to stand 'shoulder to shoulder' with anyone they meet. Pupils are encouraged to be 'loud and proud', to 'articulate clearly' and to 'show respect' for one another. They are supported very well to become confident, articulate, and respectful members of the community.

Leaders have developed an extensive personal development offer. As one pupil said, 'Personal development is the heartbeat of the school.' The school offers a broad range of rich opportunities, and all pupils participate. Pupil leaders play an active role in the school community and act as mentors to younger peers, helping them with their academic studies and well-being.

Leaders and staff have exceptionally high expectations of behaviour. Pupils understand, appreciate, and rise to meet these. Embedded, clear routines mean that classrooms are calm and orderly. Pupils' behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, is exemplary. Incidents of bullying are rare. If it does happen, pupils know who to tell, and leaders deal with it quickly. Pupils are kept safe.

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

Leaders have constructed an ambitious curriculum, which matches, and in many cases exceeds, the scope of the national curriculum. The proportion of pupils studying the English Baccalaureate is high, and pupils achieve very well. Leaders are equally ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), who have access to the same curriculum and achieve equally well.

Teachers work together every week to review and refine how the curriculum is taught. They precisely plan and sequence series of lessons to ensure that pupils learn the intended curriculum and develop in-depth knowledge in a subject. Helping pupils to acquire new knowledge is balanced carefully with making sure that pupils apply and deepen prior learning. This approach ensures that pupils embed the content they have been taught into their long-term memory. They use what they know to understand increasingly complex concepts. Teachers use a range of precisely selected strategies to ensure that pupils with SEND are also exceptionally well supported.

Leaders have created a culture of reading. The curriculum for reading is meticulously planned to ensure that all pupils benefit from high-quality opportunities to read every day. For example, pupils participate in bespoke reading workshops during their morning tutor time, and most lessons start with a 'read now' activity. Leaders use assessment information well to make sure that pupils get the right support with

reading at the right time. For example, pupils at an early stage of reading are provided with high-quality phonics sessions led by specialist staff. Other pupils benefit from the school's 'reading reconsidered' programme, which supports them to read a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts.

Pupils demonstrate the school's agreed scholarly behaviours in lessons. They waste no time in settling down and engaging in their learning. Low-level disruption is rarely seen. When it does occur, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively.

The school's provision for personal development is exemplary. Pupils have access to an extensive range of sporting, artistic, academic and community activities. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 take part in the school's compulsory enrichment programme, which includes activities related to the school's values. For example, pupils in Year 7 complete a 'careers enrichment club' and a 'Russell Group university club' related to the school's 'ambition' value. In addition, nearly all pupils participate in at least one other enrichment activity, which includes the Mandarin excellence programme, various choirs, mathmagicians, and a community outreach club. Pupils enjoy the enrichment programme and understand how it aims to help them become well-rounded individuals.

Personal, social, health and economic education is carefully woven into the school's curriculum. There is a clear focus on celebrating difference and diversity. Pupils discuss the importance of these topics with maturity. From Year 7, pupils receive suitable careers information, and leaders ensure that all pupils are well supported with their next steps after Year 11.

Leaders are conscious of staff workload and well-being and are committed to achieving excellence in a sustainable way. Staff appreciate the dedicated department time to build their curriculum and teaching expertise. Staff report exceptionally high levels of professional satisfaction, and as one teacher said, 'This school pushes me to be the best teacher I can be.'

Governors and trustees have a strong understanding of the school's work and use their knowledge to provide timely and effective support and challenge. They are committed to delivering a high-quality experience for all pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are trained to identify potential risks and report their concerns, no matter how small. Staff receive regular training and reminders about safeguarding through weekly staff briefing sessions. The safeguarding team treats all concerns seriously and takes swift action. The team works with outside agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support they need.

Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe, including online and in the local community. They receive age-appropriate lessons on issues like consent and sexual

harassment. Pupils know who to speak to if they have concerns about themselves or their friends.

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

Unique reference number	138245
Local authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	10255315
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	596
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Marshall
Headteacher	Rhys Spiers
Website	www.arkgreenwichfreeschool.org/
Date of previous inspection	17 and 18 November 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The school is part of the Ark Trust.
- The school does not currently operate a sixth form.
- Leaders select from a small group of registered alternative education providers. At the time of the inspection, only one registered alternative educational provider was being accessed.
- 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 educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors met with the principal and senior leaders. They also met with the chair of governors and a representative from the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in history, mathematics, religious studies, and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of their work.
- Other subjects, including art and photography, computer science and geography, were also considered as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors held meeting with leaders responsible for the school's safeguarding arrangements. They also looked at safeguarding records, including pre-employment checks for staff.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, parents and staff through both discussions and their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Joseph Sparks, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Terry Millar	Ofsted Inspector
Russell Bennett	His Majesty's Inspector

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