

Inspection of Ark Acton Academy

Gunnersbury Lane, Acton, London W3 8EY

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 February 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's leaders are determined to make sure that all pupils, whatever their starting point, succeed academically. Leaders have established strong routines that prepare all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), for success. Pupils know and aspire to model the school's values of honesty, hard work and kindness.

Leaders have established a calm school environment where pupils behave sensibly. Teachers expect pupils to try their best and they do. Students in Year 13 spoke with enthusiasm about noticeable improvements in pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning across the school in recent years. Pupils are safe. If bullying happens, staff deal with it effectively.

Leaders organise a range of personal development and leadership opportunities for pupils, including the school council, and regular chances to debate different points of view. In addition to compulsory weekly clubs, pupils can choose to take part in additional activities including music, sport and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

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

Leaders have constructed a curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils at the school. Subject leaders have thought carefully about how pupils build up knowledge and understanding from Year 7 through to Year 13. This includes pupils with SEND and in the sixth form.

Leaders ensure that pupils accumulate knowledge within and across subjects. For example, in science, teaching about graphs takes account of what pupils learn about graphs in mathematics. Leaders ensure that pupils build their knowledge over time. The proportion of pupils who study the GCSE subjects of the English Baccalaureate is increasing year on year. This is because leaders have taken steps to increase the proportion of pupils who study modern foreign languages at GCSE.

Leaders have implemented a robust approach to assessment across the school. This enables leaders to see how much pupils have learned over time. In most classes, teachers check that pupils understand what they have been taught and that they can recall prior knowledge. Typically, teachers identify and address any gaps in pupils' learning. However, in a few subjects, curriculum teaching moves on before pupils have learned and memorised subject content securely. As a consequence, sometimes pupils struggle to understand what they are taught next.

Teachers provide students in the sixth form with appropriate resources to complete their studies, including laptop computers where necessary. Teachers also support students in Years 12 and 13 to organise their work clearly to help them to revise. All of this prepares sixth-form students to become independent learners by the end of Year 13.

Leaders have made reading a top priority at the school. They have carefully planned an array of different interventions for all pupils that require support with reading. Leaders organise daily reading support for pupils who need it including those at the early stages of reading and those who need to build reading fluency. As a result, pupils develop reading fluency and confidence, catch up with their peers and can access the curriculum.

Teachers support pupils with SEND to achieve the best possible outcomes. Leaders help staff to do so by providing clear and concise information about how to support pupils with SEND effectively in class and beyond.

Typically, pupils learn without disruption in class. Leaders ensure that instances of disruptive behaviour are identified and addressed. Between classes, staff are vigilant and ensure that pupils move around the school calmly. Leaders continue to focus sharply on improving pupils' attendance. Leaders work hard to support pupils to be in school every day.

Leaders have ensured that all pupils take part in an expanding and well-designed personal development programme. Leaders also make sure that pupils receive unbiased careers advice and that all pupils have equal access to work experience opportunities. Teachers provide students in the sixth form with valuable support with applying to university. Students said that they found this guidance very helpful.

The governing body has supported leaders to implement and sustain rapid improvement across the school. Leaders provide clarity and consistency for pupils and staff across the school's work. Staff said that senior leaders are approachable, responsive to feedback, considerate of their well-being and help to reduce workload. Teachers valued the professional development opportunities arranged by leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding team is well organised. Leaders have set out detailed procedures to report concerns and all staff know how to use these. All staff are aware of the risks that pupils may face. They report any concerns to leaders quickly and accurately. When needed, leaders take swift and effective action to support pupils who may need it. This includes working with external agencies when appropriate. Leaders record carefully decisions that they take. Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of circumstances through personal, social and health education classes and assemblies.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, teaching does not consistently identify and address gaps in

pupils' knowledge. When this happens, pupils' understanding of key concepts is less secure and pupils struggle to build on their knowledge over time. Leaders should ensure that teachers check pupils' grasp and recall of key component knowledge before moving on to new learning or more complex ideas.

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	146318
Local authority	Ealing
Inspection number	10255266
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	865
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	137
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Marshall
Principal	Oliver Knight
Website	arkacton.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Ark Schools multi-academy trust. It became a part of the trust in September 2018.
- The school uses two alternative provisions.
- 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 inspectors carried out this graded 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 held meetings with the principal and other senior leaders. Inspectors met with leaders with responsibility for pupils with SEND, careers education, personal, social and health education, behaviour, early reading and pupils' wider development.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, religious education, history, modern foreign languages and physical education.
- 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 spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding. Inspectors looked at documentation related to safeguarding, including the school's record of pre-employment checks.
- Inspectors met with representatives from the local governing body and the trust.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents, staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Guy Forbat, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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David Radomsky	His Majesty's Inspector
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