

Inspection of Ark Kings Academy

Shannon Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham, West Midlands, B38 9DE

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 March 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Inadequate

The executive headteacher of this school is Caz Brasenell. This school is part of Ark Schools, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Lucy Heller, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sir Paul Marshall. There is also a regional director, Gail Peyton, who is responsible for the school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children and pupils are happy, safe and proud to attend this all through school. They understand the high expectations that staff have for them and strive to meet them. Pupils try hard because they have high aspirations, allied to a 'can do' attitude. This positive attitude is fostered by the school's strong focus on developing character from the early years onwards.

Pupils say that if they have any worries there is always someone to talk to and they are very confident that they will receive the help they need. They know the school rules of, 'ready, respectful and safe' and demonstrate these qualities in their behaviour towards each other and their teachers. Behaviour is good in their lessons and pupils appreciate that teachers make learning interesting. As a result, pupils enjoy the challenges they encounter in their learning.

Pupils achieve well in the primary phase and outcomes are improving rapidly in the secondary phase for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils enjoy the extensive range of clubs, trips and visitors to the school, which broaden their experience and help them to understand their own community and its place in the wider world.

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

Leaders and teachers have worked tirelessly to improve the curriculum and pupils' outcomes, particularly in the secondary phase. Subject leaders in all phases plan their curriculums together. This means that there is an ambitious, well-sequenced curriculum from early years to Year 11 in every subject. All pupils, including those with SEND benefit from this co-ordinated approach to their learning. Results in national tests at the end of Year 6 compare very well with national outcomes. However, those at the end of Year 11 do not yet reflect the impact of the current high-quality curriculum now in place.

The school effectively identifies and supports pupils with SEND. Leaders with responsibility for SEND identify critical curriculum knowledge where SEND pupils may need additional support. Teachers are kept well-informed of these needs and the best ways to support the learning of these pupils. As a result, pupils with SEND make good progress alongside their peers.

In all subjects and phases, assessment is used effectively to support the identification of gaps and misconceptions in pupils' learning. However, occasionally, the activities teachers choose to deliver the learning are not well matched to the intended outcomes. In these cases, pupils do not remember as much as they could. Sometimes, teachers do not teach subject-specific language or provide opportunities for pupils to practise this language through discussion. This limits pupils' ability to develop their responses and challenge the opinions of others.

The teaching of reading is a strength in both phases of the school. Early reading is taught well by well-trained staff as soon as children start school. The school takes a 'keep up, not catch up' approach to reading that effectively supports pupils with SEND and those with gaps in their learning. Well-attended workshops help parents to support their children with reading at home. All of this contributes to ensuring that a high proportion of pupils becoming fluent readers.

The planned reading curriculum continues beyond the primary phase. The school has recognised that some secondary phase pupils need additional help to secure reading fluency. Staff make sure these pupils get the help they need. In addition, the school provides regular planned opportunities for pupils to read extensively and develop the skills of inference, analysis and evaluation. This is working well.

Leaders pay serious attention to promoting good attendance. The school has worked hard to ensure that pupils and parents recognise the importance of high attendance. All pupils value the rewards they can earn for attending well. Attendance is high and above the national average in the secondary phase.

Personal development is central to the school's curriculum. It ensures that pupils in this school are well-prepared for the next stages in their lives. In the early years the focus on personal social and emotional development helps children to learn important routines and behaviours to support their learning as they move through the school. All pupils are supported to become responsible citizens who understand the world they live in and respect the many different cultures, faiths, beliefs. There are numerous leadership opportunities, and all pupils take part in fundraising and community projects. Pupils are able to develop their interests through the extensive range of clubs on offer.

Careers education starts in the early years with children learning about different types of jobs. The annual careers fair is now an established event accessed by Year 5 pupils onwards. From Year 7, careers assemblies, workshops, and visits to and from a wide range of providers and employers feature throughout the year. Pupils are very well prepared to make decisions about their futures.

Leaders at all levels have a clear and ambitious vision for this school. They have worked with determination to secure that vision but have no intention of resting on their laurels. Their mantra is that there is always room for more improvement. Staff appreciate leaders' support for their wellbeing.

There has been a sea change in how leaders communicate with the community. Consequently, the vast majority of parents are now solidly behind the school because they understand what it is trying to do for their children.

The local governing body, supported by the trust, has the expertise, knowledge and skills to carry out their duties and do so effectively. They offer support and challenge in suitable measures. They know where the school is and share the vision of ongoing improvement. The trust ensures statutory duties are met and

has provided significant and effective support for leaders to establish the systems, structures and expertise to meet the needs of pupils in this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, teachers do not match learning activities to the intended outcomes well enough. This means that pupils do not always remember what they have learned. Leaders should ensure that all teachers, including those in the early years have the opportunity to fine tune their pedagogical skills so that activity choices support the planned learning in the most effective way.
- Sometimes teachers do not teach subject-specific vocabulary well enough. In addition, they do not always provide pupils with opportunities to practise the use of subject-specific vocabulary. This limits pupils' ability to develop their responses and challenge the opinions of others. The school should ensure that pupils understand and can use core vocabulary as part of their learning.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	137578
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10267299
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	827
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sir Paul Marshall
Executive Headteacher	Caz Brasenell
Website	www.arkkingsacademy.org
Date(s) of previous inspection	10 – 11 May 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Ark Schools.
- The school uses 3 registered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 – 11 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

- Inspectors spoke with the executive headteacher, phase principals, vice principals and assistant principals, members of the local governing body, including the chair of that body, and members of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors also spoke to teachers, welfare leaders, pupils and parents.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: Early reading, English, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors reviewed the whole school reading curriculum as part of the English deep dive.
- Inspectors also spoke to subject leaders from other areas of the curriculum and made brief visits to lessons in a range of other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed the personal development curriculum, spoke with the leader of this aspect of the curriculum and visited personal development lessons in the secondary phase.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including leaders' plans to improve the school and their self-evaluation of the school's work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Mel Ford, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Elaine Haskins	Ofsted Inspector
Jayne Thorpe	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Winzor	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Cladingbowl	Ofsted Inspector

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