

Inspection of a good school: Ark Ayrton Primary Academy

Somers Road, Southsea, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO5 4LS

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 July 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Sophie Bennett-Acres. This school is part of The Ark Academy Trust, 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 Tina Alexandrou. There is also an executive headteacher, Anne Hibberd-Chapman, who is responsible for this school and one other.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school brimming with high aspirations. The culture and ethos, which exudes from the school's lighthouse theme, really does allow all pupils to shine brightly. Pupils achieve extremely well and are very well prepared for their next educational steps.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. They live up to the school's high expectations in the way they are polite, considerate and respectful. They move calmly around the school, holding doors open for each other and greeting staff warmly. Pupils are highly attentive and enthusiastic in their lessons. They are confident learners because of the way staff nurture and encourage them. Pupils talk clearly about their learning and listen carefully to others.

Pupils are extremely proud of their welcoming school. They value and appreciate its diversity in a way that goes far beyond tolerance. Pupils show high levels of empathy for others and an appreciation of difference. The many opportunities for leadership and positions of responsibility benefit pupils greatly. Those on the school council are proud of the voice they have when representing their classmates. Their decisions have helped to shape aspects of school life, such as play equipment and the lunch menu. Strong relationships are created across age groups through the buddy system.

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

This school skilfully weaves pupils' broader personal development through their academic learning. In every subject, the curriculum content, and how it sequentially builds from

early years to Year 6, is absolutely clear. At the same time, the strong emphasis on the school values builds pupils' learning behaviours extremely well. As a result, they show resilience and perseverance in abundance. This school-wide focus provides all pupils with the knowledge and skills they need for their next educational steps.

All pupils excel with their learning. This success is due to the high quality of staff training and their professional development. Pupils who require extra help receive the targeted support they need to access the full curriculum. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language. The school invests in its pastoral care for pupils. The 'Beacon' provision offers important support for pupils who need additional care and nurture.

Reading and the development of pupils' language and communication skills lie at the heart of the curriculum. From the start of school in early years, teaching staff promote and model high-quality conversation. In all subjects, pupils learn to use language precisely, incorporating subject-specific vocabulary with confidence when explaining their learning. Teachers are well trained in the delivery of the school's phonics reading programme. Across the curriculum, pupils explore and analyse a diverse and interesting range of books and texts. As a result, they become fluent and confident readers. Pupils enjoy sharing books with their friends. They appreciate their access to the well-resourced school library over breaktimes and lunchtimes.

Pupils show exceptional levels of recall about their prior learning. Consistent use of a 'do now' approach addresses any previous misconceptions swiftly and prepares pupils successfully for what they will learn next. Pupils confidently apply their accumulated knowledge and skills within lessons and across the curriculum. Lesson outcomes and pupils' learning journeys are drawn together through purposeful assessment processes, such as 'exit tickets'. Every moment for learning is seized and any gaps in pupils' learning are addressed swiftly and effectively.

The school's approach to personal development helps pupils to develop their character. It opens their eyes to future opportunities and nurtures their talents and interests. The character development programme, as a routine part of the curriculum, encompasses themes such as 'enterprise and careers' and 'citizenship and community'. Pupils develop links with their community when they deliver their cooking outcomes to local businesses and services. They celebrate and mark local events, such as the city's recent football success. Pupils gain an understanding about local, national and global issues through their creative and innovative fundraising work.

The school offers a rich and extensive range of trips and other additional opportunities for pupils. These are embedded in their learning as well as presenting exciting new experiences. This means that pupils know explicitly how every experience builds their knowledge. For example, pupils who recently visited the 'Seacity Museum' in Southampton have developed an in-depth understanding about the events and experiences of people on board RMS Titanic.

Leaders across the school and trust are unrelenting in their high ambition for all pupils. This also applies to their investment in staff who fully engage in their extensive

professional development and embrace the school's outward-looking culture. Staff appreciate the consideration given to their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2018.

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 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	139713
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	10321979
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	418
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tina Alexandrou
CEO of trust	Lucy Heller
Headteacher	Sophie Bennett-Acres
Website	www.arkayrtonprimary.org
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 November 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Ark Academy Trust.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school has an above-average number of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- At this school, the number of pupils who qualify for pupil premium funding is well above the national average.
- The school has an above-average number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- There is pre-school provision on the site which, from September 2024, will become part of the school.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, executive headteacher and regional director. She also had meetings with representatives from the trust and the governing body.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector also discussed English, science and the wider curriculum with leaders, looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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.
- The inspector evaluated responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and spoke to pupils to gather their views.
- The inspector analysed responses to the staff survey and spoke to staff about their views of the school.
- The inspector took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and the additional free-text responses. She also spoke with parents in the morning on the second day of the inspection.

Inspection team

Kate Fripp, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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