

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Ark Victoria Academy

Talbot Way, Small Heath, Birmingham, West Midlands B10 0HJ

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 October 2024

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The executive principal of this school is Ela McSorley, and the executive headteacher of the primary phase is Victoria Twort. This school is part of Ark Schools multi-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 a regional director, Gail Peyton, who is responsible for this school and four others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at all stages of Ark Victoria Academy. This is because this is a school which lives out its values in full for the benefit of the children in nursery to the pupils in Year 11. As one pupil, whose comment was typical of many, said to inspectors, 'Ark Victoria is a holistic and unique experience of ambition, resilience and kindness.' These values thread through the school, where all aspects of the provision are high quality, and everyone works together to enable pupils to excel.

Pupils behave with very high levels of respect for each other. As the school knows its pupils very well, they are very well supported to engage with the school's ambitious curriculum. This means that pupils invariably show perseverance, even when faced with more challenging tasks. They know that they have learned the key knowledge they need to be successful, and their teachers will support them.

Pupils are proud of the many leadership roles which the school offers. These include roles which focus on well-being as well as leading the school and suggesting improvements to

leaders. Pupils know they have an important contribution to make to the school to ensure its values are lived in all it does.

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

The school has reflected deeply on the key knowledge and skills that the pupils need. To this end, it has extensively reviewed and embedded a highly ambitious curriculum. Starting in the early years, this curriculum has a significant emphasis on the development of pupils' literacy and vocabulary. Whenever pupils join the school, their language needs are accurately assessed, and carefully selected opportunities are created to develop their communication. This means that pupils are very well equipped to read and engage with high-quality and often complex texts throughout the school. They are also supported highly effectively to discuss their learning. This enables them to refine their understanding and deepen their learning. Thanks to highly rigorous and systematic checking for understanding by teachers, any gaps in pupils' knowledge or misconceptions are rapidly picked up and resolved. All this means that pupils learn the ambitious curriculum well and can talk eloquently about their learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs precisely identified, no matter when they join the school. The school makes certain that staff have the guidance and support that they need to support pupils' learning. This means that the curriculum is systematically and appropriately adapted for these pupils, and they achieve very well.

The school has worked in a highly effective manner to ensure that pupils' attendance remains high. Clear plans are in place to ensure that the school has appropriate oversight of this work. Prompt action is taken in case of any concerns. The school reviewed its behaviour policy recently to ensure that there is a focus on a clear understanding of expectations by all. There is absolute clarity around expectations of conduct among pupils, parents and all staff. The few pupils who find it more challenging to meet the school's expectations have highly personalised and effective support. All this means that this is a harmonious and welcoming community where pupils work and play together happily, and difference is celebrated.

The school is rightly proud of its very extensive provision for pupils' broader development. These include a very significant number of clubs, trips and experiences, all of which are carefully mapped against the school's curriculum. The school very carefully tracks the uptake of these opportunities to ensure that all pupils, especially the more vulnerable, benefit from them. There are numerous links with universities, further education providers and different qualification pathways. This means that pupils are very well informed about ambitious destinations or qualifications that they can access.

Leaders at all levels have worked highly effectively to ensure provision is of the highest quality. In this, the school has made reference to best practice to continue to make improvements. The trust has effectively supported leaders in the school in making the improvements they have put in place. The trust also works with the governing body to ensure they supportively hold leaders to account. The trustees have appropriate

oversight, including in relation to safeguarding. Through the staff well-being committee and charter, the school liaises with all employees to ensure that appropriate action is taken regarding matters of workload and well-being. Staff report high levels of pride in working at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in March 2019.

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	141752
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10344047
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,529
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tina Alexandrou
CEO of the trust	Lucy Heller
Executive principal	Ela McSorley
Website	www.arkvictoria.org
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Ark Schools multi-academy trust. There are 39 academies in the trust.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- As part of this inspection, the inspectors met with senior leaders, subject leaders, teaching staff and other employees in the school. Inspectors also talked informally to pupils to gather general information about school life. The lead inspector also met the trust's regional education director and education director. Trustee minutes were scrutinised.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors discussed with leaders and pupils the school's extra-curricular activities, enrichment programme and their careers and personal development programmes.
- The inspectors reviewed the school's behaviour and attendance records with school leaders.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including plans to improve the school.
- The inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils, both formally and informally, at various points in the inspection. They took account of responses to Ofsted surveys for staff and pupils, Ofsted Parent View and the free-text responses, as well as other communication from parents.

Inspection team

Andrew Madden, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Hayley Clarke

Ofsted Inspector

David Buckle

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024