

Ark Ayrton Primary Academy

Somers Road, Southsea, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO5 4LS

Inspection dates

6–7 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher's strong vision is embraced by staff, governors and trustees. It flows from a deep understanding of the community that the school serves. This drives school improvement effectively.
- Leaders provide staff with useful support and training. Staff welcome the opportunity to develop their skills and expertise. Consequently, the quality of teaching is good and improving across the school.
- The school's curriculum is designed to meet the needs of all pupils. It both engages and motivates them to learn. However, coverage of modern foreign languages and science is not as strong as it is in other subjects.
- Pupils who have been in the school since Reception make good progress. Gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally are closing. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not catching up as quickly.
- A high proportion of pupils start the school after the early years. Although they make good progress during their time at school, they do not achieve as well as their peers.
- Pupils behave well in and around school. They respond well to the school's behaviour policy. Pupils are well mannered and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning.
- The Ark academy trust has an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. With the local governing board, it challenges leaders effectively about standards in the school. It provides useful and appropriate support which has contributed to the school's improvement over time.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. They make strong progress in all areas of their learning, especially those who have low starting points. Leaders ensure that children experience relevant and enjoyable learning, within a safe and nurturing environment.
- Leaders work well with outside agencies to support vulnerable pupils. The school's success and expertise in this area are acknowledged by the local authority. Pupils feel safe and well cared for, which their parents and carers recognise and value.
- Investment in developing wider leadership is increasing the school's capacity for improvement. Some leaders are new to their role, so the impact of their work is not currently evident.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use assessment well to match learning to pupils' starting points. Consequently, most pupils make good progress during lessons.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils who join the school other than at the start of early years achieve as well as others in the school, especially in mathematics.
- Embed recent developments in leadership and the quality of teaching and learning, so that:
 - pupils with SEND make good progress that helps them catch up with other pupils nationally
 - pupils' experiences of the whole of the curriculum, especially in science and modern languages, are of consistently high quality.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is ably supported by her two deputies. Leaders display great passion for their work and the necessary resolve to succeed. Their determination is reflected in their unwavering belief that it is the right of every pupil to attend a 'good school'.
- Since taking up her post, shortly after the last inspection, the headteacher promptly recognised that improvements were urgently needed. Together with her senior leaders, she has worked tirelessly to develop strong systems and processes that support school improvement well. The rigour of the school's monitoring of standards is helping to ensure that pupils make good progress during their time at the school.
- Senior leaders demonstrate a strong understanding of teaching and learning. They use this knowledge to hold teachers to account for the quality of their work and to provide tailored support and training. Leaders encourage teachers to be active participants in their own professional development, learning effectively from each other. This investment contributes to ongoing improvements in the quality of teaching across the school.
- A number of leaders across the school are new to their role. While they are both passionate and committed to school improvement, they are at the early stages of their development. As such, it is too early to assess the impact of their actions.
- Leaders have designed and implemented a curriculum that reflects pupils' needs and those of their community. The curriculum strives to ensure that pupils develop the necessary skills to contribute as effective citizens. During the inspection, for example, Year 6 pupils were involved in setting up a school bank, reflecting the importance of the need to learn how to budget and save. Leaders are working to improve the quality of science and languages within the curriculum, which they know is a relative weakness.
- The school successfully promotes the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding through classes and in assemblies. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of British values and how these relate to their school and community.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding well to support both the learning and pastoral care of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have a strategic and consistent approach to organising additional provision which is personalised to meet pupils' needs. Governors monitor the use of pupil premium well and provide leaders with appropriate challenge to ensure that their work has maximum impact.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is new to her post. Her prompt actions have sharpened the school's work with pupils with SEND, empowering staff to meet pupils' needs more closely. It is currently too soon to see the difference this work is making to pupils' academic outcomes.

Governance of the school

- Governors and trustees share the headteacher's vision and drive to deliver improvements. They work closely with leaders to understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. They keep a careful check on leaders' work to raise standards, challenging them confidently when needed.
- Ark academy trust ensures that members of the local governing board are suitably skilled and knowledgeable. Governors receive suitable training and support that equip them for the role delegated to them by the trust. This supports effective governance that contributes successfully to school improvement.
- Leaders are held rigorously to account by governors and the trust for the effective use of additional funds, such as those available through the pupil premium. However, their oversight of some aspects, for example the school's use of sports funding, is less thorough.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Comprehensive training ensures that staff have a good knowledge of safeguarding policies and procedures. This enables them to be alert to issues of a safeguarding nature and to communicate any concerns to leaders promptly. Leaders maintain thorough and detailed records, and make referral to outside agencies as appropriate.
- Ark academy trust ensures that all aspects of safeguarding are in place. Its checks on the school's arrangements are comprehensive, identifying clear priorities for action as they arise. The trust's involvement in staff recruitment ensures that safe and vigilant approaches are adopted.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They told inspectors that they feel well looked after and able to talk to an adult if they have any concerns. Staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire agreed that pupils are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers plan lessons which are based on an accurate and thorough assessment of pupils' needs and successfully instil a desire to learn. Subsequently, almost all pupils commit to learning well and settle to work quickly during lessons.
- In lessons, activities harness pupils' natural thirst for learning and help them develop their wider knowledge. In a Year 6 English lesson, where pupils were actively engaged in their learning linked to remembrance, one pupil told an inspector that: 'It is important that we learn about remembrance because we owe our freedom to the likes of James Nicholson', a pilot who died during the war to protect our country.
- Teachers use assessment carefully to plan learning activities precisely. Additional adults are deployed effectively to ensure that pupils with specific needs are supported well and fully engaged in lessons. On occasion, challenge for the most able is not targeted as effectively. As a result, these pupils do not always make as much progress as they could.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and a clear understanding of how pupils learn. This enables them to break learning down into manageable steps, ensuring that pupils have the appropriate skills to apply to their work. This was evident in a Year 2 mathematics lesson, where pupils were using the bar method to solve simple calculations. Pupils learned successfully because learning activities and resource use were carefully planned, based on the teacher's deep understanding of the concept and of pupils' needs.
- Phonics is taught well and this enables pupils to develop their early reading skills. Teachers ensure that pupils across the school have a wide range of opportunities to improve and practise their reading skills, even by taking the library outside, so that pupils can access books when outside of the classroom. As a result, pupils develop good reading habits and read for pleasure. Pupils talk enthusiastically about reading every day, both in school and at home.
- Precise, specific teaching in music, based on strong subject knowledge, ensures that pupils achieve very well in this subject, as seen in both music lessons and whole-school singing sessions. This contributes to the fostering of a love of music and helps pupils to develop their musical skills, knowledge and understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils enjoy school and are motivated to try to do their best. They are happy, confident and supportive of one another.
- Pupils are eager to play their part in school. They participate in opportunities to represent their peers on the school council and take part in community events, for example. Pupils welcome these experiences and feel that, 'The school lets us give our opinions – our voice matters.'
- Pupils who have emotional difficulties are supported well. Staff work effectively with outside agencies to ensure that these pupils receive the right help and guidance. The local authority recognises this as a strength of the school, using it as a model of good practice to other schools.
- The parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, expressed high levels of satisfaction with the school. The majority of parents agree that their children are cared for well, feel safe and are happy at school. As one parent commented: 'My child started this school as a shy Year 1 child. He is now a confident, independent and motivated boy, who looks forward to coming to school every morning.'
- A small number of pupils have their needs met through alternative provision. Leaders keep in close contact with schools where these pupils are placed, checking on their welfare and progress. This helps pupils to be reintegrated successfully back into the school or to a more suitable permanent placement, where appropriate.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite and courteous towards each other and adults in the school. They behave well at break and lunchtimes, showing consideration towards others. For example, one inspector saw some boys check on the well-being of a girl who had been inadvertently hit by a ball. Their approach was both kind and sympathetic.
- In the majority of classes, pupils' behaviour is extremely positive. They listen attentively to the class teacher and to each other. They collaborate well and are equally engaged when working independently. This is because they respond well to clear expectations. When routines are less clearly established, some pupils find it hard to manage their own behaviour as well as they should.
- Leaders and governors have made reducing absence a priority. They have a 'zero tolerance' approach towards unexplained or unnecessary absence and are proactive in their approach in both challenging and supporting parents. Consequently, overall attendance is improving. Leaders recognise that while gains have been made in dealing with persistent absence, it is still too high.
- Pupils in alternative provision generally attend well. If concerns arise, leaders use external support and unannounced visits to ensure that pupils are safe.
- Leaders' work to reduce fixed-term exclusions is having a positive impact. Information shows that the number of exclusions is decreasing over time, with no fixed-term exclusions this academic year.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils develop their phonics skills well. In 2018, above-average proportions of pupils achieved the national phonics check standard by the end of Year 1, and current pupils are achieving similarly high standards. As a result, pupils' outcomes in reading are typically high.
- Standards are rising across key stage 1. The proportion of pupils working at least at the standard expected for their age is broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics, and is increasing over time. Last year, more pupils achieved a greater depth of learning by the end of key stage 1 than is typically the case.
- In 2018, Year 6 attainment and progress were below the national average. A quarter of the pupils had been in the school for less than two years. They made good progress while at the school but did not catch up from previous underachievement. Pupils who were at the school throughout key stage 2 made good progress and attained well compared with others nationally.
- Leaders' determined work is helping pupils who join the school late to catch up with their peers. As a result, these pupils make similarly strong progress in reading and writing, regardless of when they join the school. However, their progress is not currently comparable in mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils do well at Ark Ayrton Academy. Over time, they are catching up with other pupils, in the school and nationally, because of the useful extra help that

they receive. Pupils across key stage 1 and in Years 4 and 5 are currently making the strongest progress.

- The school's work to accelerate the progress of the most able pupils is beginning to show impact. The percentage of pupils attaining a greater depth of learning across key stages 1 and 2 is increasing, particularly for the disadvantaged. Nevertheless, improvements in writing are not as strong as for reading and mathematics.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress in reading as a result of the highly effective support that leaders put in place. Currently, progress in other subjects, particularly writing and mathematics, is not as strong. This is the focus of the newly appointed SENCo's current work.

Early years provision

Good

- Children achieve well in both the Nursery and Reception parts of the early years provision. Staff use their accurate assessment of children's starting points to plan activities that capture their interests, fuel their curiosity and meet their academic needs. Consequently, their strong progress over time is evident in their work.
- The amount of progress children make links closely to the length of time they spend in the early years at the school. The minority of children join the school during the Nursery Year. In 2018, they all achieved a good level of development. Most children join the school at a later point. Although they make good progress, they do not consistently reach the same standards as other children.
- Children read well in the early years. High-quality phonics teaching encourages children to develop a love of books. One child was eager to share her book with one of the inspectors. She used her phonics knowledge well to make a good attempt at sounding out the title and pointed to the words in the correct order, while using the pictures to tell her own story.
- Clear systems and processes promote good behaviour in early years. Expectations are clearly understood by the children, and rules are consistently applied by the adults. Children respond well to the 'fun' prompts and praise they receive when they choose to behave well. A firm but fair approach quickly corrects behaviour that is unacceptable.
- The early years leader has a strong vision for the setting, having a thorough knowledge and understanding of the provision. Her comprehension of the strengths, weaknesses and actions is good, and she has a clear understanding about the priorities for improvement. It is too soon to see the impact of her work at this early stage of her leadership.
- Leaders consider staff training to be a high priority. Staff are encouraged to participate actively in their own development, learning from expertise within and beyond the school. This contributes to ongoing improvements in the quality of early years provision over time.
- Children's safety in the early years is of paramount importance to all staff. Classrooms and outdoor spaces are safe and stimulating. Appropriate policies and procedures support staff well in ensuring that children's needs are met in a safe and sensitive manner.

School details

Unique reference number	139713
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	10053370

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	416
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mike Pye
Headteacher	Anne Hibberd-Chapman
Telephone number	02392 824 828
Website	www.arkayrtonprimary.org/
Email address	info@arkayrtonprimary.org
Date of previous inspection	4–5 May 2016

Information about this school

- Ark Ayrton Primary Academy is part of the Ark academy trust, which runs a network of 38 schools across the UK. It is a larger-than-average-size primary school with two classes in each year group from Nursery to Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the start of the Nursery Year is above average. For Year 6 last year, for instance, a quarter of pupils had joined the school after the end of Year 4. Similarly, only a fifth of pupils currently in the Reception Year attended the school's Nursery Year.
- The Ark academy trust delegates responsibility for some aspects of governance to a local academy board, which is shared with the Ark Dickens Primary Academy. A number of local governors, including the chair and vice-chair, have only recently taken up their posts.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2016.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is well above average.

- The proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities backgrounds is well above average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also well above average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited classrooms to observe pupils' learning. A number of these visits were carried out jointly with the headteacher and other school leaders.
- Discussions were held with school leaders, staff, members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and representatives from the local authority and the Ark academy trust.
- Inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation of its own performance, its improvement plan, a number of key school policies and minutes of governing body meetings. They also considered a range of documentation, including that relating to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils throughout the inspection to seek their views and considered their 36 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey. They also listened to a selection of them read, and reviewed a sample of their work.
- The inspection appraised the views of staff through their 50 responses to the Ofsted staff survey.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents throughout the inspection and took account of 30 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 29 free-text comments.

Inspection team

Stephanie Scutter, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Alan Jenner	Ofsted Inspector
Hilary Goddard	Ofsted Inspector

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