

# Ark Ayrton Primary Academy

Somers Road, Southsea, Portsmouth PO5 4LS

## Inspection dates

4–5 May 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Requires improvement**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' actions have not brought about consistently good outcomes for pupils. Leaders have focused too much on pupils making expected progress and not enough on helping those who have fallen behind to catch up.
- Leaders' and governors' views of the school are sometimes too generous because their judgements are based on the progress pupils make during the year, and consideration is not given to progress over time.
- Performance management processes are in place but targets for pupils' achievement are not specific enough to hold teachers fully to account.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good. Some teachers and teaching assistants do not adapt lessons and activities well enough to meet the needs of pupils. This is particularly the case for the most and least able. In some classes, teachers follow behaviour management processes so closely that they get in the way of learning.
- Pupils are beginning to use their skills in English and mathematics to better effect, but they do not get enough opportunities to apply them across the curriculum.
- Governors and the central academy board know the school well. However some processes, such as the monitoring of performance management, lack rigour.
- Some groups of pupils, such as boys, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs, do not achieve as well as their peers. Although leaders monitor this, they do not have a clear plan for closing the gaps.
- Provision in the early years is inconsistent. In Reception, children's learning needs are not met well enough because everyone does the same activity at the same level. As a result, children do not make as much progress as they should.

### The school has the following strengths

- The school has improved significantly in many areas since its predecessor school was judged to require special measures.
- Teaching and achievement are improving. In some classes, where teaching is better, pupils are working at the appropriate levels.
- Pupils feel safe and recognise the good work of leaders to keep them safe and ensure that they are happy. They speak very positively about the dedicated pastoral support the school provides.
- Pupils behave well and follow the tight routines for conduct and moving around the school.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that pupils catch up to at least the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics by making sure that:
  - teachers plan activities which are at the right level and adapt tasks during lessons to meet pupils' differing needs, particularly the most and least able
  - teachers demonstrate effective classroom management skills and routines so that behaviour management strategies do not get in the way of learning
  - teaching assistants provide consistently high-quality support in lessons.
- Improve early years provision by making sure that teachers in the Reception class provide learning experiences which build on those in the Nursery class, so that children develop their skills steadily over the year and are well prepared for the move to Year 1.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by making sure that:
  - leaders and governors take account of pupils' progress and attainment over time, as well as progress in year, when making judgements on the school's effectiveness and identifying priorities for development
  - pupils and groups of pupils who are not working at the expected levels are supported to make accelerated progress and catch up quickly
  - performance management targets are sharpened so that teachers can be held to account fully for the progress of the pupils they teach
  - the curriculum provides more opportunities for pupils to use their English (and mathematics) skills across the curriculum
  - governors hold the headteacher to account for pupils' progress.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders' actions to improve pupils' progress have not focused sufficiently on making sure that those pupils who have fallen behind catch up. Where there are gaps between groups of pupils and their peers, there has not been a systematic approach to closing them. Leaders have focused too much on whether pupils make expected progress in the current academic year. Not enough attention has been given to whether pupils are working at the expected level for their age. As a result, leaders and governors are overgenerous in their evaluation of the school's effectiveness.
- The headteacher, who was in post when the predecessor school became subject to special measures, has demonstrated resilience and commitment to improving the school. She has followed the Ark multi-academy trust's directives closely to tackle and improve many of the weaknesses in teaching and leadership. The headteacher has created a culture where staff morale is high. Teachers who have been at the school for a number of years speak very positively about the changes they have seen and of which they have been part. All members of staff particularly appreciate the high-quality training they receive as one of the Ark schools.
- Some middle leaders are able to explain exactly what needs to be done to improve their areas of responsibility and have taken effective action to make this happen. Other leaders are less clear about their priorities. This means that, in some areas of the school, weaknesses are not being tackled rapidly enough and senior leaders have to step in. For example, concerns about early years provision have been tackled and support has been put in place to improve teaching.
- Leaders have introduced appropriate systems and processes for checking how well pupils are learning. However, the information leaders and governors have is not being used to plan how pupils will catch up to the level at which they should be working.
- Monitoring of teaching is rigorous. Leaders observe, coach and role play with teachers so they are clear what they need to do to become effective. The agreed short-term targets are reviewed at each meeting. As a result, teaching is improving in many classes. There is more to do to ensure that this is the case across the school.
- The performance management of teachers is not as effective as it needs to be. It is positive that leaders set targets relating to pupils' progress. However, because the targets relate to the whole year group, they are not realistic or useful. As a result, teachers cannot be held fully to account through the process.
- Pupils spend much of their learning time on English-related activities but they do not get enough opportunities to use these skills across the curriculum. In other subjects, such as history and design technology, the quality of work is often not at the expected levels.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well. Lessons and assemblies enable pupils to explore their feelings and those of others. In one circle time lesson in Year 2, pupils discussed how it felt to be lonely and how they could support others so they did not feel sad. British values are incorporated into topics well. For example, when pupils learn about the gunpowder plot, they explore democracy and the rule of law. Pupils demonstrate respect and tolerance for different faiths and cultures.
- Leaders' use of the pupil premium (government funding to support disadvantaged pupils) is not sufficiently targeted to close the gaps between these pupils and their peers. Although many of the activities appear to be well planned and useful, there is insufficient analysis to show that they are having a positive impact on learning. This is particularly the case where extra staff have been employed but pupils are not making more progress.
- The Ark academy chain provides strong guidance in leadership, teaching and behaviour. The monitoring reports provided have been detailed, accurate and helpful in guiding the school on their improvement journey. However, along with school leaders and governors, academy leaders have taken too little account of pupils who have fallen behind so their evaluations of the school's effectiveness are also too generous.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors know the workings of the school well. As with other leaders, they have been too positive about the progress of pupils and not challenging enough about whether pupils are catching up quickly. They know where there are gaps between groups and their peers but they have not been clear about how and when leaders will ensure that these gaps are closed.

- Governors ask appropriate and useful questions of school leaders but they do not always ask for or seek evidence of what they are told. This means they are too reliant on what leaders tell them.
- It is not helpful to the school that no checks are carried out regarding the implementation of performance appraisal processes for teachers. This means that, when targets are set which are not challenging enough, this is not identified.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The Ark academy chain carries out an audit each year and makes recommendations as to what could be even better. The record of staff details and checks is also monitored by Ark. The designated lead for safeguarding works closely with staff to ensure that concerns and issues are reported and followed up. All at the academy have a good understanding of the school's processes for recording and reporting concerns; they know their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** requires improvement

- Some teachers do not plan and deliver lessons that meet pupils' needs well enough. Less effective teachers adhere too closely to published schemes. This is particularly the case in the teaching of mathematics. Some teachers use the scheme as a guide to plan activities at the right level for their pupils; others follow it so closely that they do not notice when both the least and most able pupils are not learning.
- Approximately half the teachers enable pupils to make expected or more than expected progress. Teachers with good skills plan and deliver lessons which take account of pupils' particular learning needs. They also check what pupils can do during lessons and make further changes to activities and teaching as required. This means that learning time is not lost while pupils carry out tasks which are too easy or too hard.
- The teaching of phonics (how letters link to sounds) and reading is inconsistent. There is too much variation between different groups and classes. In one reading session, the teacher's questioning helped some Year 6 pupils to deepen their thinking and explore their ideas. At the same time, another Year 6 group made less progress because they answered questions which required them to remember the story they had read and refer to the text, but not to reflect on the meaning.
- Teaching of writing is not fully effective because some teachers' skills are not sufficiently developed. Changes to the way in which writing is modelled and shared with pupils are positive but they have not yet brought about the required improvements in pupils' learning and progress.
- A particular focus for the school has been to maximise learning time. To achieve this, routines and systems have been introduced and teachers have been taught to manage these tightly. Teachers who have a good understanding of how pupils learn have the confidence to be appropriately flexible with the school's agreed approach. However, in some classes, teachers focus so much on the routines and systems that they get in the way of learning.
- Teaching assistants' skills are variable. Significant investment in individual training has helped many to be effective. Where this is the case, these assistants use their initiative to provide carefully tailored support and use the teachers' plans to guide them, rather than following them as a checklist. However, some teaching assistants are less confident and skilled at doing this, so they focus more on helping pupils to complete tasks than their learning.
- The teaching in other subjects is variable. Although some subjects are taught by specialist coaches and teachers, most are taught by class teachers. Less effective teachers demonstrate weaknesses in subject knowledge.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** is good

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe. They say that bullying is resolved quickly if it happens. Pupils have a great deal of confidence in 'the lady with golden hair' who oversees pastoral support. They know they can share any concerns with her, and do.
- Pupils are confident and demonstrate good social skills. They are encouraged to be 'loud and proud' when sharing ideas, and this helps them to express themselves well.

- Pupils know how to keep healthy. In science, they learn how exercise keeps them healthy and why eating the right foods is important.
- Pupils learn about being safe through internet safety and not talking to strangers, whether face to face or online.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. All staff follow the expectations of the behaviour policy closely so all pupils are very clear about how to behave. Pupils' behaviour is very calm and orderly in lessons and when walking around the school.
- Pupils treat each other and adults with respect and good manners. They say that behaviour in school is good and that disruptions in lessons are rare. They speak positively about the consistent routines and systems all teachers follow.
- Punctuality and attendance have been an area of focus for the school. Many more pupils are now on time and attendance has improved so it is now broadly in line with national averages.
- Behaviour at lunchtime and breaktime is well managed. Supervising staff are carefully positioned so that pupils know where to find them at all times.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

### **require improvement**

- Pupils' progress and attainment are variable, reflecting the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching both past and present.
- In 2015 national tests, the proportion of Year 6 pupils who achieved the expected and higher levels was below the national proportion in reading, writing and mathematics. Some pupils in key stage 2 are not working at the expected level for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. This reflects the weak teaching they experienced in the past. Although some pupils are making accelerated progress to catch up to where they should be, this is not consistently the case. In 2015, the school did not meet the government's floor targets (the minimum requirements for English and mathematics). Current attainment of Year 6 pupils suggests that these targets will be met in 2016.
- At key stage 1, pupils' achievement reflects the improvements in teaching. Last year, compared with the national figures, a higher percentage of pupils achieved expected levels in phonics, reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2015, the percentage of children in the early years who achieved a good level of development was above average. At present, there is much to do to ensure the same outcomes for the current Reception children, many of whom are not working at the expected level. This reflects the weak teaching. Recent improvements are helping these pupils to catch up.
- Some of the most able pupils do not achieve as well as they should in some classes. This is because the work is not sufficiently adapted to challenge these pupils. As a result, not enough pupils are working at the higher levels.
- In some classes, some groups of pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This includes disadvantaged pupils, boys, and pupils with special educational needs. Although their learning is checked regularly, there is insufficient focus on helping these pupils to catch up with others.
- In some classes, pupils' work is often not as good as it should be in other subjects.

### **Early years provision**

### **requires improvement**

- Teaching in the Reception classes does not meet children's needs as well as it could. Much of the children's time is spent working on activities which are not adapted to their levels of ability. This means that children who are not working above or below the expected level do not get as much out of learning experiences as they could.
- Children in Reception do not have enough opportunities to make choices, work outside, explore and challenge themselves. This limits their personal, social and emotional development in some areas. This is in contrast to the wide range of appropriate and fun opportunities offered to children in the Nursery. In one such lesson, children enjoyed learning about shapes, choosing to explore two-dimensional shapes using pasta, water, play dough or magnetic shapes.

- Teaching in the Nursery class is much more effective. Children's needs are met well and they make good progress from their often low starting points. By the time the children move from Nursery to Reception, children are on track to achieve a good level of development by age five. Once the children reach Reception, progress slows. School leaders are aware of this and have taken action to improve provision and ensure that children achieve well. The new early years leader has a good understanding of how young children develop and learn. She is clear about what needs to be improved and has a plan to make the necessary changes happen.
- Leaders' assessment of children in the early years is accurate. With the planned interventions and additional support, leaders predict that approximately three quarters of the children are likely to achieve a good level of development. Leaders acknowledge that this method of catching up is not helping children to embed and develop their skills over time.
- Children's well-being is supported effectively by key workers who get to know their children very well and keep in close contact with parents. Children are kept safe and are happy.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139713
<b>Local authority</b>	Portsmouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	10011710

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	396 (including Nursery)
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Michael Gallagher
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jan Fleming
<b>Telephone number</b>	02392 824828
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.arkayrtonprimary.org">www.arkayrtonprimary.org</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@arkayrtonprimary.org">info@arkayrtonprimary.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Ark Ayrton Primary Academy opened in September 2013. The predecessor school, Somers Park Primary, was judged to require special measures in February 2013.
- It is a larger than average primary school, with a Nursery on site. There is also a private Nursery, which takes children from 9 months. It is managed by school leaders but is registered separately and was not considered as part of this inspection.
- There are two classes in each year from Foundation 1 to Year 6.
- A third of the pupils speak English as an additional language and the percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is higher than the national figure.
- More than half the pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding.
- In 2015, the school did not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, of which three were joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors also made some shorter visits to classes, listened to pupils reading and looked at pupils' work in books and on display.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the two deputy headteachers, other leaders, staff, members of the governing body, including the chair, and a group of pupils from key stage 2. The inspector also met the primary director for the Ark academy chain.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views through informal discussions and 42 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the school's information on pupils' progress, the school improvement plan, minutes of governors' meetings and documents related to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Louise Adams, lead inspector

Christine Dickens

Simon Francis

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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