

Ark Brunel Primary Academy

Middle Row, London W10 5AT

Inspection dates

10–11 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Since the school opened in 2013, pupils' achievement has been in the top 20% of all mainstream schools nationally. This outstanding achievement is set to improve even further this year.
- Pupils make rapid progress from low starting points because aspirations are high and teachers are insistent on pupils excelling.
- The idea of 'brilliance' is embedded in the pupils; they constantly try hard and do not give up. Pupils know and accept the school's values and demonstrate a strong spirit of 'resilience' when learning. Behaviour for learning is exemplary.
- Leaders and managers at all levels are unrelenting in driving improvement. They have 'Arkified' staff and pupils. As a result, changes were rapid and high aspiration is common practice. Skilful management and acceptance of a new culture has led to Ark Brunel being outstanding.
- Senior leaders set aspirational targets for teachers to achieve and ensure that they do not lose sight of them. They constantly check and hold staff responsible for pupils' progress.
- Teachers motivate pupils to learn very well, and the quality of teaching over time is outstanding.
- The local governing body provides strong challenge and does not accept excuses. They hold senior leaders to account very well.
- The school is successful because the Ark Schools Board provides leaders with templates tailored to the school's needs, and with strong systems of accountability, training and development. These powerful tools have undoubtedly propelled the headteacher to lead Brunel very well.
- Systems for safeguarding and keeping pupils safe are effective, and pupils and parents say that the school is a very safe place. However, while pupils' development is good, their attendance is below average.
- Assessment systems are used extremely well to track pupils' progress and provide relevant support.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a very good grounding in English and mathematics. The emphasis on 'depth before breadth' contributes to pupils finding all areas of learning exciting.
- The curriculum reflects the school's ethos, vision and values very well. The strong beliefs in respect and care contribute to pupils' personal growth and development. Parents say that the school is 'amazing', and inspectors agree.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that attendance improves to be above the national average by:
 - working with local authorities, from where pupils are drawn, to agree clear common guidelines on thresholds for absences
 - using the guidelines to decide on progressive courses of actions that could be taken when pupils do not attend regularly
 - making sure that the same strategy to improve attendance is not re-used when other more stringent actions are possible
 - ensuring that parents know the impact of poor attendance on their child's future life
 - explaining to parents the consequences for them if their child fails to meet the attendance target.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher leads the school very well. This outstanding achievement has been possible because of the very good support from other senior leaders and managers, including the governing bodies. The vision of high achievement is at the heart of the school's work. Leaders and staff, using the acronym HEART, stress that pupils should be **h**onest, show **e**nthusiasm, **a**mbition, **r**esilience and be **t**houghtful. They use these key principles of high achievement to shape the way in which the school operates.
- From the outset, senior leaders have skilfully led staff to embrace a new culture. The emphasis on high achievement has transformed lives. Staff are extremely ambitious for the pupils and there is no compromise. Teaching is strong and pupils behave extremely well.
- Parents refer to changes as transformational for their children. Parents very much appreciate the school's work, which leads to their children becoming confident young people with very good social skills.
- Assessment systems for checking pupils' progress and their attainment are thorough. Senior leaders gather and analyse a wide range of assessment information closely. They use this exceptionally well to assess the school's effectiveness, identify groups of pupils requiring help and the areas of learning that need strengthening. This ensures that pupils all have equal opportunities to achieve very well.
- The school ensures that the principles of the Equality Act 2010 are pursued, and any discriminatory behaviour is thoroughly investigated. The school ensures that positive relationships and respect are promoted.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is highly effective as the different layers of checking teachers' work are regular and well organised. These contribute to teachers sharpening their practice and extending pupils because:
 - training and development are sharply focused on the school's priorities and the needs of individual teachers
 - research is used to identify the best way forward
 - new staff receive specific training and support to develop their teaching skills to the highest level
 - programmes for coaching and mentoring make very good use of support plans with small action steps that are achievable within a short time, and
 - staff are reflective and act on advice and support.
- Middle leaders, as experienced teachers new to their roles, make a considerable contribution to developing the school's effectiveness. Their passion for their subject and belief in the school's ideals lead to them seizing opportunities to develop their leadership and management skills. Leaders spot and nurture talents very well as part of their succession plan to develop future leaders.
- The school is an exciting place. The inviting learning environment encourages pupils to love learning. Pupils' work decorates walls and they can see from a quick glance how well they are progressing. The school offers a curriculum that provides pupils with many opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, while still having fun learning discrete subjects such as art, science, music and French. The teaching of art is a strength across the school. Opportunities to work on different projects, take part in educational and residential visits including Shakespearean theatre, or to develop a music band have a positive impact on pupils' development. Cross-curricular work enables pupils to demonstrate how well they have mastered literacy, numeracy and computing skills.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and linked very well to the school's values. Senior leaders have created an environment in which pupils have very good relationships, and show respect for, and value, other cultural and religious beliefs. Pupils play an active role in the life of the school and the wider community. They understand right and wrong and are thoughtful about moral issues. These features of pupils' development demonstrate that the school promotes British values very well within this diverse and dynamic community. Pupils are well informed about tolerance, national institutions and the history of Britain
- Pupil premium funding is used exceptionally well to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, as well as their social and cultural skills. The school ensures that the increasing number of pupils eligible for the funding are fully equipped with the right skills to succeed very well. Similarly, the sports premium funding is used well to improve teachers' skills in dance and gymnastics. However, the impact of this work has not been evaluated.
- Specialist provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities contributes to pupils making strong gains. Excellent support enables pupils to work very well in mainstream lessons.

■ The governance of the school

- The local governing body is very well informed and makes an excellent contribution to the school's development. Close work with the central board means that there is constant challenge and accountability in the drive for the school to sustain high achievement. The local governors have a very good insight into the school's effectiveness. They use the hard-hitting reviews on teaching and learning to keep the school's leaders focused on the vision of high achievement.
- In their strategic role, they keep finance under review and balance spending with the rise or fall of pupil numbers. They have a clear vision about how the changing local population and new special needs unit will benefit pupils, linked to the careful use of resources.
- Governors know the school very well and ask searching questions about the progress of different groups of pupils; they review pupil premium funding and keep the appraisal of staff under review.
- Governors fulfil their statutory duties well.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Procedures and systems for supporting pupils requiring help and support are thorough. Staff are conversant with recent safeguarding requirements about, for example, the 'Prevent' duty, child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and children missing from education. Training is regular. Staff are vigilant and records are carefully maintained in relation to the checks carried out on all adults who work at the school. A high level of vigilance means that there is a consistent approach to dealing swiftly with referrals. Effective communication and systems are used to liaise with the many local authorities from which pupils are drawn.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Since the school was established, senior leaders have developed the quality of teaching and learning at a rapid pace so that, over time, it is outstanding.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are consistently high. This is reflected in the high rates of progress made by pupils over the last two academic years.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge that is enhanced by numerous training opportunities available to them in the Ark network. Staff indicate that the training provision is very helpful, primarily as this is highly organised and planned to support them to meet the needs of pupils. Their dedication and commitment to the Ark ideals mean that they are trained to take risks, and as staff said, 'within an inch of their lives!' Much is demanded and teachers rise to sustaining the key principles of Ark Brunel for pupils.
- Pupils and their parents recognise that the teachers are dedicated to helping pupils to learn well, and the comment from pupils convey this well. 'Our teachers spend hours planning our lessons; they are enthusiastic and active in lessons.' These attributes were evident during the inspection.
- Teachers' attention to using assessment information contributes to them making very good use of this to meet pupils' needs. Regular testing and analysis of pupils' achievement help them to assess the effectiveness of their teaching and enable them to identify what could be improved. Equally, pupils know how to improve their work because 'over the shoulder marking' takes place while they are working. The dialogue between pupils and staff is used to correct misconceptions and strengthen key learning points.
- Typically, well-established routines lead to pupils applying themselves to their work. The use of non-verbal signals and good relationships means that pupils do not waste time in lessons. Instances of pupils being slightly off task are indeed rare, and even when this occurs, pupils return to their work quickly without hesitation. They concentrate for long stretches and move effortlessly from task to task.
- Classrooms are a hive of activity underpinned by calmness, with pupils listening very well to their teachers and each other. Careful listening builds their confidence when doing written and practical tasks. They work very well with each other and with the support staff.
- Several features support the effectiveness of teaching particularly well. First, planning takes into consideration the needs of pupils effectively. Discussions with pupils, work in their books and the teaching and learning observed indicate that teaching over time helps them to make rapid progress. Occasionally, misconceptions are not always picked up, and pupils who are ahead are not always given that extra push to excel further. Notwithstanding this, there is very good use of teaching assistants and the specialist staff who support pupils requiring additional help. In addition, the use of talk and questioning are used well to probe pupils' minds and develop their speaking skills.
- Teachers develop pupils' literacy skills effectively. The emphasis on talking, as a starting point before they begin writing, helps pupils to explain and explore their ideas and increase their vocabulary. Language skills are reinforced very well. Reading is a particular strength and pupils are taught to read widely,

accurately and with understanding. The school recognises that writing skills are slightly weaker than speaking and listening, and reading. Consequently, from early years, children begin to write for a range of purposes and audiences. As they progress into key stage 1, they begin to learn how to plan, draft, revise and edit their work. In Year 1, as pupils edited their work, they showed that they could make good use of sentence openers, use different conjunctions, time phrases and chronology. They could also use and explain difficult vocabulary such as 'exquisite' while editing their writing using correct punctuation marks.

- The teaching of mathematics meets the needs of all pupils exceptionally well. They have opportunities to acquire mastery of numbers and cited this as a favourite subject. Scrutiny of mathematics work in books shows consistently strong progress and developing secure understanding of problem solving and number work, with the most able reaching high standards in, for example, Year 5.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils have very good social skills and are confident and communicative. They respond very well to all that the school offers them in increasing and developing their social and cultural skills. As such, they are very good ambassadors for the school.
- They are full of pride when talking about their school and wear their uniform with dignity. They are aware of their personal growth and take their lessons seriously. Discussions indicated that they maintain their focus and do not waste time. Pupils gladly demonstrated this when they listened to the fable about the ants and the grasshopper in assembly.
- Through the school, pupils show high levels of concentration and maintain a very sharp focus on their learning. They are not easily deterred from working. As a result, they make rapid progress and children in the early years, like pupils in other year groups, are well ahead in showing resilience when learning. This level of persistence makes them eager to learn and want the school to extend the school day. Parents love the way that their children rush home each day, full of excitement about their learning. Even when unwell, parents say that their child will insist on attending school.
- Relationships between pupils are strong. Discussions and observations of them at work and during social times indicate that they respect and care for each other. They spoke feelingly about helping each other if they are stuck and know that name-calling, some of which is silly and misguided, is unacceptable. Senior leaders recognise that there is more to do on this.
- The school council, an elected body, act as mentors and are clear that they lead by example, and look after children in the playground. They model the values of the school and show respect for others.
- Persistent absence has reduced significantly, but attendance is below average because a very small core group do not attend regularly. This is despite the school doing all that it can, within its power, to persuade parents to work with them. The local authorities from where pupils are drawn have not taken any formal action, even though agreed contracts with parents and carers rarely work.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Exemplary behaviour for learning is the accepted order.
- Staff are highly effective in managing children's and pupils' behaviour. Staff communicate high expectations of behaviour across the school. Pupils are taught how to manage their feelings and apply themselves to their learning. They line up and enter the building quietly and, while moving around the site, they maintain good self-control. Exceptionally good behaviour means that pupils are ready to learn.
- Pupils feel safe in the school, trust the adults who work with them and know they can turn to someone if they have worries or concerns. They know that adults are always around and that their teachers assess possible risks linked to activities before they take them out of the school building. Parents, like their children, are assured that the school is a very safe place.
- The management of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders is outstanding. The school seeks specialist support and as a result, the pupils settle and make similar progress to others in their class.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about different forms of bullying, including social bullying and e-safety, racist behaviour, religious bigotry and name-calling. They are taught how to oppose these unacceptable behaviours in assembly, personal and social education, and as part of circle time.
- The school has not permanently excluded any pupil since opening. Fixed-term exclusions are rare.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Pupils' academic progress was outstanding in 2015, and standards reached were slightly better than the national average in both key stages 1 and 2. Outcomes were significantly above average at the highest level in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 1. Similarly, at key stage 2, outcomes were also high in mathematics and in grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Differences in rates of progress between different groups of pupils in key stage 1 or in key stage 2 were not significant. Pupils made rapid progress from below-average starting points from their predecessor school because of the very good teaching and their application to high achievement. Children made good progress in the Nursery and Reception class while Year 1 pupils achieved exceptionally well in the phonics screening check, as did the very few Year 2 pupils who were rechecked. Virtually all achieved the standard expected nationally.
- Scrutiny of books and observations of pupils in lessons indicate that the school is likely to achieve even higher outcomes this year. Continuous and reliable moderation of assessment information and the use of interventions confirm this.
- Disadvantaged pupils made exceptionally good progress, and standards attained in 2015 were in line with or above the national average. Standards were, however, slightly below that of other pupils in the school by around six months or more, particularly in writing and mathematics in key stage 2. Actions to address this have been successful. Consequently, current information shows that the attainment gap has closed significantly and there is no evident difference to other pupils.
- The most able pupils in both key stages met their targets and are set to reach similarly high standards in 2016.
- The achievement of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities continues to be excellent. Work with specialist staff, including the speech and language therapist, the support teacher and other adults working with them, contributes to them making similarly rapid progress to their peers. The individual small-group work provides opportunities for pupils to receive intensive support and interact well with their specialist teacher.
- Within this diverse community, all groups achieve equally well, particularly in mathematics and reading. This includes pupils who speak English as an additional language, White British pupils and all other ethnic groups. Boys generally outperform girls in all areas, particularly in English, grammar and punctuation and spelling. Pupils' competence in writing is not as good as in reading because they find the more advanced skills of writing to be challenging. Leaders have moved swiftly to tackle this through the purchasing of appropriate resources and a sharper focus on developing pupils' skills in this area.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- From the start of the Nursery year, children receive a very good grounding in basic reading and writing skills. It is not unusual for them, with support, to see and say out the sound of words like, 'cat', 'vet', 'car' and 'mop'. High aspirations mean that teachers and other adults push them to identify particular sounds of letters in more complex vocabulary such as 'invitation', 'instrument' and 'exercise'. Phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) skills are taught extremely well, in a lively and energetic way. This captures children's attention and leads them to enjoy writing.
- The vibrant setting displays and celebrates children's work, providing them with ample space and resources for role play, painting and a wide range of engaging activities. Children do not flit from activity to activity but instead demonstrate self-discipline when working through activities that is clearly evident among older pupils in key stages 1 and 2.
- Children sit and work with adults for extended periods of time. They cooperate very well, listen intently and respond quickly when questions are asked; they are not easily distracted. This very good level of discipline leads to exemplary behaviour and they make strong progress in all areas of their work.
- Progress in writing is strong, and children in Reception show that they can write from spoken dictation. The group was able to write accurately, for example, 'My hen has got an egg.' Inspectors noted striking progress made by pupils over time.
- The pace of learning is rapid, and the timing and challenge of activities is appropriate. Staff make very good use of questions to assess children's understanding. The length of time spent listening on the carpet works well for pupils because they are ready to show how well they can explain and apply the skills learned.

- Assessment information on children's skills across all areas of learning provides strong visual and written evidence to show what they can do, know and understand. Assessment is used very well to plan for their next steps. The achievement of targets provides strong evidence that children make rapid progress and secure gains in all areas of learning. For example, children's work on numbers illustrates this well: a child who joined in January was able to count and record units. By late April, the child could begin doubling numbers up to 20. All children make strong progress from a wide range of starting points.
- On entry, assessment is thorough and identifies where children are in their skills and development. Particular strengths are evident in personal development, but with weakness in listening, reading, numbers and speaking. These weaknesses are given special attention and children who stay and move into Reception make far better progress than others who join part-way during the academic year.
- Excellent leadership and management show that the early years provision improves each year and is linked to close partnership work with the parents who receive training and practical workshops. Staff training, strong teamwork and weekly evaluation of work to identify the next steps contribute to children making rapid progress.

School details

Unique reference number	139645
Local authority	Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	10011700

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	323
Appropriate authority	The local governing body
Chair	Caroline Gulliver
Headteacher	Dominic Smith
Telephone number	020 8969 4094
Website	www.arkbrunelprimary.org
Email address	info@arkbrunelprimary.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Ark Brunel is part of the ARK schools network. The school opened in September 2013 with 260 pupils from a number of neighbouring local authorities.
- The school is currently larger than the average-sized primary school, with a one-and-a-half form entry. When full to capacity, it expects to have 470 pupils on roll, with two forms in each year group.
- The school makes full-time provision for 47 children in Reception and 29 in the Nursery.
- While the proportion of pupils receiving special educational needs support is low, the proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are of a minority ethnic heritage is high, as is the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language.
- When the predecessor school closed, all of the staff moved into the new school. The Ark Schools Board is the main governing body with legal responsibility for all Ark schools. The local governing body focuses on the day-to-day responsibilities of the school.
- The school runs a morning club for children in early years and other pupils across the two key stages.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of learning activities across early years, both indoors and outdoors. Teaching was observed in both key stages. Twenty-five part lessons were observed, of which 15 were with senior leaders. The inspectors also scrutinised pupils' work, attended two assemblies and observed the early morning club.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, the chair and one other member of the local governing body, and with the Director of Primary, Ark.
- Discussions were held with three groups of pupils, and random groups who spoke with the inspectors throughout the inspection. Groups of pupils across the year groups read to the inspectors.
- The inspection team took into consideration the 22 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and a similar survey carried out in 2015 when 83 parents took part. Inspectors spoke with a number of parents who volunteered their views when dropping off their children at the school on the second day of the inspection.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness and development plan; external review of the school's work, minutes of governors' meetings, information on how teachers are assessed, records of senior and middle leaders' evaluation of teaching and learning and assessment of pupils' learning. Systems used to care for and protect the welfare of pupils at the school attendance records were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

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