

Inspection of Ark Elvin Academy

Cecil Avenue, Wembley, Middlesex, London HA9 7DU

Inspection dates: 2–3 October 2019

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, parents and staff all agree that Ark Elvin Academy has improved out of all recognition. Pupils are proud of the school.

The headteacher and leaders have very high expectations. Their vision for the school is shared by everyone involved. Staff want all pupils to succeed in every area of their lives, not just academically.

The school is a calm, safe and supportive place for pupils. Pupils behave very well in lessons. They get on well with one another and with adults. At breaktimes the atmosphere in social areas is friendly. Pupils say they feel safe and bullying is not a problem. If there is any, it is dealt with quickly.

Attitudes to work are good. Pupils want to do well. In lessons, well-established routines help pupils settle down quickly. Pupils are making better progress and are achieving more than they did before. This is because the curriculum and teaching have improved.

Reading is better because the school has made it a priority. For example, pupils who missed out on phonics teaching when they were younger have catch-up sessions. This intensive approach is working well.

Every year, some pupils join after the start of the school year, often with little knowledge of English. They are helped to catch up rapidly.

Pupils take part in a wide variety of interesting activities outside lessons. They go to careers events and visit universities. These help them to aim high and be ambitious.

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

Senior leaders have thought carefully about the subjects that the school offers alongside English, mathematics and science. They want to ensure that pupils are very well prepared for their next steps. More pupils are now studying a modern foreign language. This has increased the number of pupils achieving the English Baccalaureate (Ebacc).

Subject leaders and teachers think deeply about their subjects. They plan good sequences of lessons which build up pupils' knowledge. Staff check regularly how well pupils remember what they have learned.

When given the opportunity, pupils could explain important ideas from lessons. In history, Year 10 pupils could explain why attitudes to crime and punishment had changed over time.

GCSE results are improving. In 2019, the majority of pupils gained good GCSE passes in mathematics, English, science, history and physical education (PE). However, leaders believe that pupils should have achieved even better in English, history and modern languages. Pupils' attainment was lower than expected in these subjects because of weaknesses in writing. Staff know that across all subjects, not just in English, they need to plan more writing and speaking activities. Pupils do not consistently use complex vocabulary in their writing. In addition, pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their speaking skills when debating.

Staff are working hard to help pupils to catch up. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) gain the knowledge they need to make good progress.

Pupils at an early stage of learning English have a tailored timetable. This means that they initially take fewer subjects. They concentrate on learning to speak English and learning about life in Britain. As soon as possible, they move to a full timetable. Extra support is still provided if needed. Most of them take the same range of GCSE courses as other pupils at the school.

Leaders have high expectations of how pupils should behave. Behaviour is improving as pupils become better at exercising self-control. The use of detention and internal exclusion is falling. The use of fixed-term and permanent exclusion is also falling but is still above the national average. Attendance has improved considerably. This is because staff work hard to help pupils and their families understand why good attendance matters.

Personal development is good. Pupils learn employability skills in careers education. Almost all go on to further education, employment or training. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) covers important topics such as citizenship, the law, democracy, relationships and how to stay safe. Pupils learn why qualities such as resilience are important for their future. Pupils develop their wider skills, as for instance on the residential trip in Year 9. Year 7 pupils enjoyed the criminal justice day 'Your life, You choose'.

Leaders and Ark trustees believe that nothing less than outstanding is good enough. The school has improved rapidly. Staff morale is high. Excellent training helps to motivate them. Leaders listen to their concerns and do all they can to keep the workload manageable. Clear systems mean that everyone knows exactly what is expected of them. The Ark Network and the local governors keep a close watch on the school's progress. They ask challenging questions of leaders when they have any concerns. They check that the school meets all legal requirements. They ensure that funding is used effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff take responsibility for keeping pupils safe. All the required checks are made before staff are employed. Staff have regular training and know what to do if they are concerned. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. For example, they learn about e-safety and about risks from gangs. Mental health and well-being issues are taken seriously. Pupils know what to do if they have any worries or concerns. Staff provide very good support for vulnerable pupils. Staff also work closely with parents and carers. Detailed records show that concerns and referrals to other agencies are followed up.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are still some relatively weaker areas in communication skills. More intensive work aimed at improving writing and oral skills has not yet started. In some subjects, pupils struggle when asked to write at length or in depth.
- Pupils are taught and encouraged to use subject-specific vocabulary. They need more opportunities to use this and more complex language in writing tasks. These tasks should help them apply their knowledge in greater depth and with more fluency.
- In lessons, question and answer sessions and paired talk are the main ways in which pupils learn to explain their ideas orally. The PSHE curriculum and some enrichment activities provide good opportunities for wider and deeper discussion. In other subjects, pupils do not yet have many opportunities to develop their confidence in speaking through discussions.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	141019
Local authority	Brent
Inspection number	10110365
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,001
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Marshall
Principal	Rebecca Curtis
Website	http://arkelvinacademy.org/
Date of previous inspection	6–7 June 2017

Information about this school

- The school currently caters for pupils up to the age of 16. The sixth form was closed in 2018 and a new sixth form is due to reopen in September 2020.
- The school moved into its new buildings in January 2018.
- The school uses some alternative provision. Currently, a very few pupils attend the Jubilee Academy.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- English, mathematics, history, languages and PE were considered as part of this inspection. Inspectors visited lessons jointly with senior leaders and scrutinised samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors talked formally with groups of pupils from Years 8 and 10 as well as informally with other pupils in all year groups.
- The team held meetings with the principal, senior and curriculum leaders and members of the governing body and trust.

- The team evaluated documentary and other types of information, including evidence relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Grace Marriott, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Aruna Sharma	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Moore	Ofsted Inspector
Janice Howkins	Ofsted Inspector

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