

Ark Chamberlain Primary Academy

Oldknow Road, Small Heath, Birmingham, West Midlands B10 0HU

Inspection dates

21–22 March 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- In some lessons, teachers do not provide work that is at the right level of challenge or difficulty. This slows learning for pupils who have the ability to reach or exceed age-related standards.
- Although standards are improving in every year group, there are significant differences in the rate of pupils' progress because too much teaching requires improvement.
- The progress pupils make over time is slower in some classes compared with others. These differences reflect teachers' inconsistent expectations.
- Pupils are given increasing opportunities to write independently but many are not making enough progress in learning to spell and punctuate accurately.
- Although pupils are starting to read more often and widely and standards are improving, pupils make slower progress in understanding what they read.
- Teachers are not using assessment information enough to pinpoint gaps or misunderstandings in pupils' learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Good leadership and governance are improving the school. The head of school, senior and middle leaders, local governing body and the academy trust are moving the school forward.
- Over the course of previous monitoring inspections, leaders have effectively managed significant staff changes and eradicated inadequate teaching.
- Teaching is improving well in many classes. Consistently strong teaching in some classes, particularly in Year 6, is rapidly improving pupils' achievement. This is particularly the case in mathematics.
- Pupils in the very early stages of learning to speak and communicate in English achieve well. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.
- Pupils enjoy school and behave well at all times. There are positive relationships between pupils and staff. The curriculum and staff make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There is strong pastoral support and welfare. Safeguarding and child protection arrangements are robust and the staff are very committed to pupils' well-being and safety.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils in all classes receive the right level of challenge and support by:
 - making sure that teachers provide the right standard of work or learning at depth for pupils who have the potential to reach or exceed age-related standards in reading, writing and mathematics
 - checking pupils' work more diligently to help with misunderstandings and to help pupils avoid repeating the same mistakes
 - asking questions that enable pupils to think harder and deepen their understanding, rather than going over too much work already learned
 - adapting tasks during lessons and providing more support, especially in those classes where pupils have a lot of ground to catch up.
- Sustain improvements to pupils' achievement in all classes by:
 - making sure that teachers and support staff apply the school's policy for correcting work to enable pupils to make corrections, especially when writing independently
 - using more effective and consistent methods to help pupils make more progress in the accuracy of their spelling and punctuation
 - building on the effective work developing pupils' phonics and technical reading skills to develop their vocabulary and understanding of what they read
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to correct errors in writing and mathematics and to learn from their mistakes.
- Build on the improvements made to the school's assessment systems to:
 - make sure that teachers use assessment information about pupils' progress and performance to identify gaps or misunderstandings in pupils' learning
 - check that pupils' work in books indicates whether or not they are on track to make enough progress towards their expected learning targets so that action can be taken as appropriate.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- There have been many changes to staffing and leadership since the previous inspection. The head of school, executive headteacher and senior leaders have managed these changes well. During recent monitoring inspections, leaders and governors have brought about stability and demonstrated good capacity to sustain further improvements to teaching and learning.
- During previous monitoring inspections, the overuse of supply teachers resulted in too much inadequate or weak teaching. This hampered the school's efforts to sustain improvement evenly in every year group and class. It was also difficult for leaders and permanent staff to maintain a consistent rise in pupils' achievement in all classes. A great deal of time had previously been spent dealing with weak teaching.
- Despite these difficulties, senior leaders and Ark Schools (the trust) have worked tirelessly with staff to improve teaching and pupils' achievement. Much has been achieved in the last six months particularly. There is now effective and consistent leadership at all levels, including good governance, together with clear and effective oversight of developments carried out by the trust.
- The head of school has been particularly strong in bringing about stability and ensuring that staff morale remains high. As a result, everyone associated with the school at all levels of responsibility are now pulling in the same direction to bring about sustained improvements. There is now a consistent and ambitious culture aimed at sustaining improvements to pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching.
- Senior leaders, subject leaders and heads of year work closely with staff so that teachers and support staff see and share best practice. This has eliminated all inadequate practice. Leaders' monitoring records show that all staff are improving their classroom practice, but recognise that there is still some way to go to make sure that, in all classes, pupils make consistently good progress over time. Currently, leaders are checking that the school's policy for teaching spelling and punctuation is as effective as it could be.
- The large majority of parents agree that the school is improving and that their children are making more progress than previously. Parents are right. The measures taken by leaders to monitor, support, coach and improve teaching have been effective.
- Pupils' work in books and much improved assessment and monitoring systems show that more classes than previously, and over time, are being taught well. Leaders are now, rightly, targeting teaching that still requires further improvement, particularly in classes where expectations for pupils' work should be higher.
- Senior and middle leaders have the necessary skills to coach, mentor and influence the work of other teachers and support staff. The trust also utilises the expertise of staff across its network who mentor staff, for example modelling the teaching of literacy, mathematics or phonics. Heads of year and subject leaders monitor pupils' progress and teachers' performance well and there is now very effective management and oversight of assessment information. However, monitoring by leaders at different levels of responsibility does not always point out to staff inconsistencies in the use of the

school's marking policy to prevent pupils from making repeated errors in their work.

- Leaders at all levels have set out the right priorities in the improvement plan and in subject action plans. There are clear measures of success and evaluative action statements in subject leaders' 'top ten' priorities and achievements. Leaders at all levels present a clear and regular analysis of pupils' attainment and progress using standardised tests and accurate assessments. However, pupils' books are not checked closely enough to judge whether or not pupils are on track to achieve their learning targets.
- The curriculum includes a broad range of topics and subjects, including a modern foreign language, music and the creative and performing arts. The staff plan a range of activities, lessons and events which have a positive effect on pupils' personal development, behaviour and attitudes to school and learning. For example, pupils in Year 5 were recently immersed in a four-week project studying the works of William Shakespeare. This improved their confidence and vocabulary, as well as having a positive impact on improving their reading and writing skills.
- The staff are determined and work hard to ensure that the planned curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. British values of respect, democracy and tolerance are taught through special topics, projects and visits. For example, visits to religious places of worship, such as mosques, churches and synagogues, as well as interesting visitors, such as theatre companies, authors and artists, enthuse pupils, make learning varied and enjoyable.
- The school's curriculum provides broad and relevant experiences that help pupils understand how to deal with the threats posed by intolerance, extremism or radicalisation. Visits to the Houses of Parliament help pupils understand how representative democracy works and how this can be replicated in their school through the election of school councillors. Older pupils have been taken to local universities to raise aspirations and broaden their experiences. Important discussions, workshops and lessons about cultural and racial diversity, include the celebration of traditional festivals that mark special cultural events, and encourage pupils to embrace cultural diversity in a modern and tolerant society.
- Additional funding for pupils eligible for the pupil premium is targeted effectively at those pupils for whom it is intended. For example, there are significant signs of improvement in mathematics in all four year groups, and, to some extent, in the quality and range of pupils' writing across the school. Leaders and staff are rapidly narrowing and closing the differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others who are not disadvantaged in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used very well to provide the most effective intervention programmes that support their learning. Support for these pupils is targeted and tailored to meet their specific learning needs and assessments show they are making good progress as a result.
- The primary school physical education (PE) and sports fund is used very well to hire specialist teachers and coaches. They bring suitable expertise to deliver effective PE and games lessons. Pupils benefit from the many opportunities they have to be active participants in sports and team games. Participation rates are high in the many and varied after-school sports and games clubs.

Governance of the school

- Governance has improved significantly since the previous inspection in 2015. There is now good and effective governance of the school because of the following.
- The local governing body is now fully informed and kept up to date about teachers' performance and pupils' progress. Governors receive regular updates and assessments of the school's work and progress. The head of school provides governors with clear and accurate accounts of developments and their impact on teaching and learning.
- Governors challenge school leaders and monitor the school's performance well. Regular reviews of school performance and assessment information are discussed and challenged by governors.
- The local governing board and trust have been effective in recruiting key leaders and staff with the necessary expertise across the Ark Schools network to support improvement. This has been successful because it enables teachers and support staff to see and share best practice.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding arrangements are robust and fit for purpose. Staff recruitment and vetting procedures are rigorous. There is a vigilant and effective culture of safeguarding. Every member of staff, including supervisory and ancillary staff, understand their roles in relation to child protection procedures. Staff and governors know what to do and who to ask to seek advice about the safety and welfare of pupils.
- All relevant senior staff are trained in safer recruitment procedures and thorough risk assessments are carried out by leaders and staff to ensure that activities and resources are safe.
- The school liaises closely with other agencies, such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), to provide programmes, advice and guidance for pupils to help them keep safe. For example, lessons about e-safety on the safe use of mobile devices and sessions about healthy relationships as part of the school's personal, social and health education programme.
- Ark Schools has established consistent policies and procedures across its network of schools to ensure that staff are trained in, and follow the national 'Prevent' duty to protect pupils from the risks of exposure to extremism, intolerance and radicalisation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The teaching is improving but does not yet lead to consistently good progress for all pupils. In some classes, expectations for work and progress are not always high enough.
- The past legacy of weak teaching and unstable staffing resulted in many pupils falling behind. As a result, the national test results last year show that pupils in Year 6 underachieved overall, despite the fact that teaching was starting to improve as shown

during the most recent monitoring inspections. The quality of teaching in Year 6 is currently strong and effective, particularly in raising achievement.

- Over the period of the last three monitoring inspections, leaders have taken effective action to improve teaching and this is starting to show much improved rates of progress in every year group. Although the teaching still requires improvement in some classes, teachers' expectations are now much higher than previously. There is some strong teaching in each year group that is influencing improvement in other classes. This is being achieved by modelling and sharing of best practice, as well as effective mentoring and coaching by senior and middle leaders.
- Teachers usually engage pupils during class discussions, although in some lessons these discussions sometimes limit pupils' responses to questions because staff do not allow pupils enough opportunities to explain their answers fully. This stifles their use of language and vocabulary.
- Teachers and support staff do not always pose questions that help pupils think harder or deeply. In addition, the tasks planned for pupils are not always adapted or changed enough to identify and address misconceptions or misunderstandings. Work in books also shows that teachers are not checking for gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding so they can pick these up and address them during subsequent lessons.
- Assessment information has improved well over recent monitoring inspections. Leaders use this information to identify pupils who have the potential to reach or exceed age-related standards. Assessments are used well to identify what the staff call 'focus groups', indicating those pupils who previously underachieved and are catching up on lost ground. In many classes, these pupils are starting to catch up but the pace of learning varies across classes and year groups, reflecting inconsistencies that remain in teachers' expectations for work and progress.
- Although improving, pupils' work in books and some lessons observed by inspectors, show that pupils do not receive enough work that challenges them or extends their learning. In some lessons, tasks are not pitched at the right level of difficulty, and in some cases, tasks or problems are too difficult to solve or confusing.
- A scrutiny of pupils' writing in books shows some repeated spelling errors and inaccurate punctuation. The teaching of spelling and punctuation is not yet fully effective in all classes despite the good examples of writing displayed around the school aimed at showing the best examples of writing.
- The teaching of phonics is effective, particularly in Years 3, 4 and 5. This is helping pupils to become competent and independent readers. Pupils across the school are increasingly reading often and widely. This is helping to improve their confidence and skills when reading aloud to others or when reading independently. However, pupils who fall short of age-related standards do not read with full understanding because they have not developed a broad enough vocabulary.
- Teachers and support staff have improved the way they teach pupils to read. In addition to regular visits to the school's well-stocked library, the recent introduction of recommended reading lists is improving pupils' attitudes to reading. These lists include a range of traditional stories and modern children's literature, as well as a broad range of texts, books, authors and genres. The reading lists are well devised and age-related for each of the four year groups. It is too early to judge the full impact of this initiative,

although pupils told inspectors that they are increasingly choosing to read more often in school and at home.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils respond well to their learning in lessons and the good opportunities they have to study special topics or themes. British values, such as respect for law and democracy, are clearly reflected in the way pupils are involved in their school community as elected school councillors, play leaders, learning mentors or librarians. These opportunities make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards others in and beyond their community and thrive as they take part in charity events. For example, many told an inspector that they are now very well prepared for the forthcoming national 'red nose day'. The annual community fair, run and organised by parent community workers and regular curriculum workshops with pupils and parents are very popular and well attended. These help to improve pupils' self-confidence and social development, as well contributing to their school and wider community.
- Pupils are interested and enthused by the range of subjects and topics they study and the activities and visits provided by the school. The school's indoor environment and resources are well maintained, clean and stimulating which are appreciated and respected by pupils. There are advanced plans in place to improve the playground area further so that it provides more activities and opportunities to socialise and relax at breaktimes. Pupils willingly offer to tidy up after eating their lunchtime meal or sandwich and there is hardly any litter or unkempt area of the school reflecting how well pupils care for their school community.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is excellent. This is a significant improvement since the school's previous inspection. Pupils learn a lot about staying safe and healthy. For example, pupils can explain the precautions they need to take when using computers, including the use of the internet or text messaging on mobile devices. Pupils say that bullying is rare and many confirmed that the few incidents, like name-calling or when friends fall out, are dealt with very well by staff.
- Pupils who join the school speaking little or no English settle quickly and make friends easily. Pupils are very helpful and many becoming learning mentors and 'buddy up' with new arrivals to help them settle into school.
- Leaders and staff are successful in tackling any form of discrimination in a cohesive and supportive school community. The school's curriculum improves pupils' knowledge and understanding of the different cultural and ethnic traditions that exist in the United Kingdom and beyond.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are keen to answer questions, share ideas or contribute to discussions in lessons, although in some classes they are not always given enough opportunities to answer questions fully.
- Teachers and support staff maintain good behaviour and pupils respond positively, try hard and listen to instructions. There is very little disruption to learning as pupils are usually attentive and willing to learn and do well in school.
- The small number of incidents of racism, intimidation or intolerance are tackled directly by leaders and staff. Pupils form positive and trusting relationships with other pupils and staff and respect the views of others.
- Pupils enjoy school and the many out-of-hours activities and workshops provided. This is reflected in attendance rates that are above those of most primary schools. There is very effective monitoring and supervision of the few pupils who arrive late for school. Leaders and staff are vigilant and keep regular contact with families to ensure that pupils are safe and attend punctually.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Leaders are addressing previous inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. As a result, increasingly more pupils in every year group are reaching or exceeding age-related standards in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the pace of improvement and the rate of progress made by pupils varies across classes. The most able pupils are starting to catch up quickly in most classes, although this varies as some fall short of reaching higher standards.
- It is not possible to compare the most recent national test results (2016) for pupils in Year 6 as this was the first year that the revised national curriculum tests were administered and there are different attainment criteria compared to the previous years' tests. However, pupils currently in the school, and in all year groups, are catching up on previously lost ground.
- Last year's national test results show that the majority of pupils did not make enough progress in relation to their starting points when joining key stage 2. The results show that the overall attainment of pupils in Years 6 last year in reading and mathematics was below the national average. Teacher assessments show that writing standards are improving but more slowly than in reading and mathematics.
- To a large extent, last year's test results are a result of previous underachievement and the disruption to staffing and leadership that previously existed. However, pupils in all year groups are now making more progress than previously and many in some year groups, for example in Years 4 and 6, are making good progress in reading and mathematics. Overall, and across the school, pupils make more progress in mathematics compared with reading and writing. They make more progress in reading compared with writing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Support work and interventions in lessons, particularly English and mathematics lessons, are effective in helping those who find learning difficult to catch up on

previously lost ground.

- The teaching of phonics in Years 3 to 5 is effective, resulting in the large majority of pupils learning to read with more confidence and independence. Pupils who join the school speaking little or no English do particularly well and make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, across the school many pupils lack the vocabulary and language skills to comprehend what they read. Recent initiatives aimed at improving pupils' understanding of words, phrases and the nuances of the English language are having a positive effect and there is evidence that standards in reading are improving well in all year groups. For example, the large majority of current pupils in Years 4 and 6 are on track to reach age-related standards in reading by the end of the year, although figures are lower in Years 3 and 5.
- Although improving, pupils in some classes make relatively slower progress in writing compared with reading because their progress in learning to spell accurately and to use correct punctuation is too slow. Pupils' progress in mathematics is improving well and pupils are starting to achieve well in mathematics in Years 4, 5 and 6. Pupils make relatively slower progress in writing, although handwriting and the structure of their writing are improving well. The current focus, rightly, is to improve spelling and punctuation.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide targeted support for disadvantaged pupils. The school's accurate assessments of these pupils show that disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to that of other pupils and many catch up on previously lost ground quickly. The work seen in pupils' books, school assessment information and the lessons observed during the inspection, indicate that disadvantaged pupils in some classes, but not all, make more rapid progress than others who are not disadvantaged.

School details

Unique reference number	138052
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10025605

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	599
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Judith Petterson
Head of School	Victoria Twort
Telephone number	0121 464 8771
Website	arkchamberlain.org
Email address	info@arkchamberlain.org
Date of previous inspection	11–12 June 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The academy is a large junior school. The large majority of pupils are from Pakistani or Bangladeshi backgrounds. Other pupils come from a range of backgrounds representing minority ethnic groups, the largest group represented by pupils of African heritage. Most pupils speak English as an additional language and many who join the school at different times of the year are in the very early stages of learning to speak and communicate in English.
- The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than that of most schools.

- The percentage of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is high compared with most schools. In this school, the pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils who are eligible to receive free school meals.
- The school met floor standards in 2016, which are the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Prior to this inspection, the school received four monitoring inspections because it was placed in special measures at the time of its previous inspection in June 2015. At that time, the school was called Oldknow Academy and changed its name to Ark Chamberlain Primary Academy in September 2015 after re-brokering to the Ark Schools Multi-Academy Trust. The four previous monitoring inspections, carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, judged that the school was taking effective action towards the removal from special measures.
- During the course of the previous monitoring inspections, there have been significant changes to staffing and leadership. The head of school was previously acting head of school for the previous monitoring visit and was appointed to the permanent post in March 2017. Ark Schools utilises the expertise of leaders and staff from its local network within the trust to support, coach and challenge staff at Ark Chamberlain. Much of this support work during previous monitoring inspections has been led and coordinated by the executive headteacher who is also the district lead for Ark Schools in Birmingham.
- The school runs before- and after-school clubs as well as additional and optional Saturday morning or school holiday workshops to provide extended learning opportunities for pupils and families.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out lesson observations, some undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors spoke to pupils during lessons about their work and progress. Inspectors checked samples of pupils' recorded work and met with groups of pupils to discuss their work, behaviour and safety, or to hear them read. Inspectors spoke to pupils informally during breaktimes and lunchtimes to ask them their views about the school. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and safety in the playground and at other times.
- Inspectors held discussions with the head of school, executive headteacher, assistant principals and deputy headteacher. Other meetings were held with the heads of year, members of staff responsible for leading English, mathematics, inclusion, curriculum and special educational needs provision. The lead inspector met three governors, including the chair of the local governing board, and with a representative of the Ark Schools Trust. The lead inspector also spoke by telephone to an external consultant commissioned by Ark Schools to lead a recent internal review of the school performance.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including: leaders' and governors' own evaluations of the school's effectiveness; the improvement plan; information about pupils' achievement, progress and performance; and documents and information related to governance, teaching, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the 11 responses from parents to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the views of parents who completed the school's most recent survey.
- Inspectors spoke to nearly all teaching staff to provide feedback on lessons observed.

Inspection team

Charalambos Loizou, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Joanne Evans	Ofsted Inspector
Deb Jenkins	Her Majesty's Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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