

ARK Putney Academy

Pullman Gardens, London, SW15 3DG

Inspection dates 6–7 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- This is a well-led academy. The students and staff attribute the success of their academy to the vision and hard work of the Principal and the leadership of the academy.
- Students make good progress and achieve well, especially in mathematics. Students' attainment by the end of Year 11 is above the national average.
- Teaching is usually good, with some that is outstanding.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use effective questioning to ensure that students make good progress in lessons.
- Students' behaviour is good. They feel safe and conduct themselves well around the academy and in most lessons. They treat each other and staff with courtesy and respect.
- Leaders, governors and the Ark Schools board have a very good understanding of how well the academy has progressed. In addition, they are very clear as to what it needs to do to improve still further the quality of teaching and student achievement.
- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well and make a positive contribution to the life of the academy.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In some lessons, work is not pitched at the right level for everyone in the class, particularly, but not exclusively, for the more able students.
- In a minority of subjects, the achievement of students needs to be improved.
- Recent strategies to further improve teaching and learning are not yet fully embedded.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 lessons, of which nine were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, middle and senior leaders and with a representative of the Ark Academies School board. In addition, the inspection team met students informally in breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work, scrutinised students’ work during lesson observations, progress information, development and evaluation documents, safeguarding information, and records relating to behaviour and attendance as well as minutes of governing body meetings.
- They looked carefully at examination results for 2012 and the effectiveness of the tracking data in order to determine its accuracy over time.
- Inspectors took account of 26 responses to the staff questionnaire and one comment from a phone call response to the inspection. There were, however, no on-line parent questionnaires available from Parent View.

Inspection team

Moazam Parvez, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sandra Teacher

Additional Inspector

Babrul Matin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- ARK Putney Academy is a smaller-than-average secondary school, with a growing sixth form.
- Its predecessor was Elliott School, which was judged as satisfactory in its last inspection. The academy was opened in September 2012 as a part of the ARK group of academies.
- There are substantially more boys than girls on roll and the numbers on roll in the main school have declined since 2007; however, the number of parents selecting the academy as a first choice for their child has increased this year.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is above average, with Black African and Black Caribbean being the highest.
- Many students are advanced bilingual learners, but very few are at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of students known to be in receipt of pupil premium funding is high and of these, almost all are eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of students supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is much higher than the national average. The proportion of students supported at school action is low.
- The school meets the current government floor standards.
- Six days prior to the inspection, the academy moved to its temporary accommodation to facilitate the refurbishment of the original buildings. Consequently, the inspection was carried out in very challenging circumstances for the academy and for the inspection team.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, throughout the academy, to outstanding by:
 - eradicating the small amount of teaching that requires improvement
 - making sure that work is at the right level of difficulty so that all students are always challenged
 - reducing the variability of teaching and learning between subjects.
- Ensuring that all groups of students make good progress by:
 - having an improved focus on groups, particularly White British students
 - making sure that the recently introduced strategies to further improve the quality of teaching and learning are fully embedded and have the best possible impact on accelerating the progress for identified groups of students.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students join the academy with levels of attainment that are below average. By the time they reach the end of Year 11, they have made good progress. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including in English and mathematics is above the national average. Although there was a slight dip in English results in 2012, this is being successfully and rigorously addressed by the leaders and managers in the academy.
- Students achieve better in some subjects than in others. They perform well in English and mathematics, but do less well in geography and modern foreign languages. The leaders and managers are implementing strategies to improve this as a matter of priority. Lesson observations, scrutiny of students' work and the academy's own tracking data show that most current students are making good progress.
- The academy enters some students early for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics. Leaders believe this approach offers students the greatest chance of succeeding in these subjects. Inspectors agree, as academy data show that attainment in both subjects has risen over time.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress over time. The gaps in attainment between students working at school action, school action plus or with the support of a statement of special educational needs, and other students in the academy are narrowing at a good rate. The achievement of students from minority ethnic heritages is good.
- The academy's focus on improving students' skills in literacy is having a positive impact on their levels of progress. Very effective systems for tracking students' achievement ensure that support is provided at an early stage. Leaders and managers have an accurate picture of how well different groups of students are doing, as well as of how well individual students are achieving.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to support eligible students. These students make good progress. Strategies to support students eligible for pupil premium include one to one teaching and small group teaching, for example in humanities and English, as well as extra staff employed to support in class. Consequently, there is only a small difference between their average GCSE scores, including for each of English and mathematics, and those of other students.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Strategies for raising achievement in Year 12 are having a positive effect on retaining numbers into Year 13.
- White British students' attainment is below the average for the school but the gaps with other students are narrowing as strategies to improve teaching for these and other identified groups are having more impact. However, school leaders recognise that there is still work to be done on further embedding these strategies so that the impact is even greater.
- Girls perform a little better than boys in almost all measures of performance but again gaps are narrowing.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is typically good, with some that is outstanding. However, there is also a very small proportion of lessons where teaching needs improvement. The leaders in the academy are aware of this and are putting strategies in place to address this. The 'do it now' strategy is focusing the students on learning as soon as they arrive in the lesson, so allowing for continuing improvement in teaching and learning.
- The strongest teaching was seen in English, mathematics, business studies and design technology, and school leaders have identified the necessity to ensure that teaching in all subjects matches that seen in the best.
- A strong focus on developing literacy, including the 'marking for literacy' policy, across the curriculum is evident and is having a positive effect on learning.

- The focus on improving the quality of teaching is apparent in the good GCSE, AS and A level results in both 2011 and 2012.
- Teachers sometimes do not plan lessons that take enough account of what students already know and understand. Consequently, work is occasionally too hard for some and too easy for more able students.
- Marking and assessment of students' work is generally good, with the students being clear on how to improve their work and make greater progress.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good and this gives students confidence that staff want them to succeed. Older students say that the quality of teaching has improved greatly and they enjoy lessons now. Previously they describe lessons that were disrupted by inappropriate behaviour and ineffective teaching that had a poor effect on their learning. They cite the leadership of the Principal as the main reason for this improvement.
- In most lessons, questioning is used well to encourage students to extend and justify their answers. This strategy is being spread to all subjects and staff and is improving the quality of learning in the academy.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good and is exemplified in one mathematics lesson where the students felt secure enough in their knowledge and understanding to be able to challenge the teacher through very perceptive questioning.
- The social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspect of education for the students is addressed well by the academy. This part of most students' education is met very well in almost all lessons as well as through assemblies and form periods.
- The social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects of education for the sixth form are also very well developed; opportunities are available to improve the experiences of students beyond the limits of the academy's surroundings through a range of enrichment activities.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students have a good understanding of the key ways of keeping safe. This includes advice on sexual health and substance abuse, including both cigarettes and alcohol. Students say bullying incidents are very rare now and they told inspectors they are confident that if bullying did occur, it would be dealt with effectively.
- Students say that they feel safe in the academy; older students told inspectors that behaviour has improved greatly since the arrival of the current Principal. One group of students described the academy as 'like being in a family' and said that there was 'always someone to go to' if they needed help.
- Students display positive attitudes to learning in lessons. Very few lessons observed featured behaviour which was anything less than good.
- Considering that they only moved into the new temporary accommodation six days before the inspection, students' behaviour around the academy was good and they arrived punctually to all lessons.
- Students are courteous and helpful. They show mutual respect for each other and to the staff. This view was supported by the responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Attendance in the academy, including in the sixth form, has improved significantly over the last two years. The proportion of students who are regularly absent is now much reduced, so that attendance figures across the academy are now in line with national averages.
- Sixth-form students make a positive contribution to the life of the academy as prefects and as house leaders and through activities such as providing reading support for younger students.

The leadership and management are good

- In the short time the Principal has been in post, he has, supported by his leadership team,

focused relentlessly on securing improvement in teaching and students' achievement. The leadership structure has been transformed through new appointments and restructuring in order to secure greater consistency and accountability.

- Leaders at all levels, including members of the governing body, have a clear view of the strengths and areas for development of the academy, which they are tackling rigorously and with determination. The academy's focus on securing achievement pervades the work of the leadership team and is understood and embraced by staff at all levels.
- Regular lesson observations, supported by 'learning walks' through monitoring visits from ARK representatives, have meant that the quality of teaching is improving. This improvement is being achieved through additional targeted support where needed, for example through staff development and training supported by the ARK network.
- Improvement is underpinned by information and analysis which enables monitoring of subjects, staff and students' performance to enable intervention to be targeted as required. Although monitoring of some groups, particularly White British students, still needs to be strengthened, monitoring has led to the identification of underperformance in modern foreign languages and geography and intervention has been initiated to secure improvement. The school is committed to ensuring an equality of opportunity for all students and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Tutor groups, consisting of students from all year groups, have been established which create better relationships between students across the year groups and so allow more focus to be given to raising achievement. The school is equally as proactive in fostering good relationships with parents, carers and outside agencies.
- There is now a close link between teachers' performance and pay awards, with clear and robust targets closely linked to the academy's priorities and student achievement. Staff morale is high and this was validated by the overwhelming majority of responses to the staff questionnaire which were positive.
- The academy's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- Pupil premium is targeted effectively on a range of support for specific groups of students such as the catch-up literacy and phonics (linking letters and the sounds they make) programme. In addition, money has been used to employ a member of staff to help families and students who have problems at home or where students are reluctant to attend school. Leaders carefully monitor how well students achieve as a result of this.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good. There is close monitoring of progress and challenging of underperformance; consequently students' outcomes continue to improve.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body and the ARK Academies School board have a strong vision for the development of the academy, based on their members' clear understanding of the needs of their community. The Principal provides the governing body with high quality, detailed and very honest reports about the academy's strengths and weaknesses in order to ensure that the governing body is kept up to date with the changes taking place in the school. The governing body was established in September 2012 and care was taken to ensure that governors recruited would bring a range of skills and experience to support the academy in its development. Governors attend training sessions to keep them up to date with local and national issues on school performance. They have a thorough understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses, and they hold the academy's leaders to account for what they are doing to make improvements. They play an important role in ensuring that there is a close link between teachers' performance and pay awards. This is helped in no small part by their knowledge of the quality of teaching and how well the school is performing when compared to other schools nationally.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138681
Local authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	409426

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	485
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	132
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Clark
Principal	Mark Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	020 8788 3421
Fax number	
Email address	info@arkputneyacademy.org

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