

THE arrow

NEWSLETTER FOR ARK SCHOOLS

ISSUE 2 • FEBRUARY 2010

Great expectations

King Solomon
Academy's
early success



Exporting success

Team Obama picks up ideas
from Teaching Leaders

Making teaching effective

Lessons from the latest research

PLUS • News • Networking • Features

Welcome



Welcome to the second ARK Schools Arrow and happy new year. We start the new year with good news, as the national GCSE attainment figures confirm the progress our academies are making. So congratulations to all involved.

The new year has got off to a busy start. Ark Academy and Evelyn Grace Academy have both had monitoring visits from Ofsted and Globe and Walworth expect visits in the next few months. In every case the visits are time consuming and sometimes feel like a distraction from the day job, but our results and Ofsted's gradings are the basis on which parents judge our performance – so they are really important. In this issue King Solomon Academy Headteachers, Venessa Willms and Max Haimendorf, tell us what it took to achieve their outstanding grading.

Kieran Larkin gives you a flavour of what the education team has planned for the ARK Schools Development Day on 22 February. It will be a great opportunity to bring together the talent across the network, to hear from colleagues and to share what works best across our academies. On a similar note Amanda Spielman has been studying the latest research on what works (and what doesn't) in the classroom and she sets out some of the interesting conclusions and the lessons they might offer to our schools.

And for those of us looking to sharpen up our minds – or our bodies – there are some tips from Marlon Miller at Evelyn Grace Academy on the back page – and a special offer on discounted gym membership to put the lessons into practice.

Sir Michael Wilshaw
 Director of Education, ARK Schools
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ARK tops table for academy sponsors

• Our schools show biggest GCSE improvement



ARK'S ANALYSIS of the published GCSE attainment for all academies in 2009 reveals that ARK Schools is the best performing multiple-academy sponsor for GCSE improvement since opening. The analysis rates ARK against other sponsors with at least three open academies with students entering GCSEs and excludes former CTCs and independent schools.

Burlington Danes (above), Walworth and Globe have together achieved a weighted average annual increase in GCSE attainment of 7.8 percentage points since each opened as an academy.

This is a remarkable achievement for all three academies given the challenges they faced before and since opening. Walworth, which opened as an academy two years ago in 2007, has won praise as one of the most improved schools in Southwark. Globe and Walworth principals, Jason Baigent and Devon Hanson both received letters from the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, Ed Balls, thanking and congratulating them on their

pupils' achievements. Mr Balls also praised Burlington Danes saying: he "was particularly impressed by the drive and determination of the Academy's leadership and the support that ARK was providing."

ARK Schools Director of Education, Sir Michael Wilshaw said "Those achievements are testimony to the hard work of all the staff at each school, to the strength of ARK's academic programme and to its commitment to help every single pupil achieve their potential."

"In many cases GCSE pupils have considerably exceeded expectations set only months earlier because of the intense support they've received through ARK's intervention programmes.

"The battle now is to maintain and build on that level of performance. Every one of our schools has very aggressive targets for next year, targets that we must meet if our pupils are to achieve their potential. We have set ambitious goals but, on performance so far, ones that are achievable."

GCSE PERFORMANCE OF MAJOR ACADEMY SPONSORS

	Open schools with GCSE results	Weighted annual increase %
ARK	3	7.8
Harris	6	6.5
ULT	12	4.6
Oasis	8	1.1
England national average (all schools over 5 years)		1.0

Note: excludes ex-CTCs and independent schools.



Twenty five leading US policy advisers from federal government and state school districts met Teaching Leaders and ARK US in Washington to discuss launching Teaching Leaders in the US in 2010.

(Left) Members of the Teaching Leaders team with American colleagues at the Washington summit.

US to trial Teaching Leaders

● Team Obama considers urban schools improvement scheme inspired by ARK programme

TEACHING LEADERS was created by ARK Schools and its partners to raise achievement in tough urban schools by developing outstanding middle leaders. Now the programme may be replicated as part of President Obama's \$4.35 billion "Race to the Top" school improvement programme, after a Washington summit hosted by Teaching Leaders.

Key presidential advisers, including Brad Jupp, head of the nationwide drive to raise teacher quality, President Bush's education secretary, Margaret Spellings, and top officials from US school districts in Chicago, Washington DC, Denver and New Orleans, attended the summit organised by Teaching Leaders Director Sharath Jeevan and his colleagues in December. Influential non-profit education providers also took part, including ARK Schools' first Education Director and Teaching Leaders co-founder, Jay Altman, who now runs Leading Educators in the US, New Leaders for New Schools, Teach for America and the New Schools Venture Fund. The Gates Foundation also attended as did members of the ARK Schools UK team and ARK US. Schools Minister

Vernon Coaker addressed the summit by video.

The Teaching Leaders team discussed the programme with officials from the Department of Education and President Obama's director of social innovation, who strongly supported launching a US pilot programme this year.

A number of US initiatives, including Teach First and Future Leaders, have been adopted in the UK. "It would be great to export an innovative educational programme to the US," said Sharath. "Right now the US is looking for ways to rapidly raise teaching standards and school leadership at every level. The

creation of ARK US gives us an opportunity to be a founding partner in a new US model of Teaching Leaders."

Jay Altman said: "As part of Race To The Top, states need to improve their school leadership pipeline, so identifying and developing talented middle leaders will be important. That's sparked national interest in the Teaching Leaders model, and in expanding our New Orleans based, Leading Educators programme, inspired by Teaching Leaders."

A US team is being recruited to drive the effort, supported by ARK's Sunita Mohanty.

Teaching Leaders was launched

in 2008 to raise school standards by developing talented middle leaders. It currently supports 79 middle leaders in 53 London secondary schools, including ARK's academies.

Just 16 months since launch, 30 per cent of the programme's participants have been promoted and pupils taught by participants are on track to improve their GCSE grades.

The programme has cross-party support and the government will fund up to 100 places this year. Shadow Education Secretary, Michael Gove, also backs rapid national expansion.

NEW DEAL FOR FUTURE LEADERS

"Future Leaders has consolidated its status as a high prestige route into leading challenging urban schools through a three year agreement with the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services", says Future Leaders Chief Executive, **Heath Monk**.

"Future Leaders will now be available for up to 75 participants a year as part of the new Accelerate to Headship programme. We'll also be recruiting up to 125 teachers and non-teachers to Tomorrow's Heads, the alternative route to headship in primary, rural secondary or special schools.

"We're also delighted to launch Future Leaders' expansion to Bristol and the South Coast as well as London, the North West, West Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber.

"There's just time to apply or nominate participants for 2010 before the 16 February deadline. Find out more at www.future-leaders.co.uk or call 0800 822 3783."

Your next career move?

If you're a middle leader looking for your next career move it's time to consider Teaching Leaders. Come to an information session and meet current participants this term or find out more at www.teachingleaders.org.uk. Applications for 2010 places are open from 1 March to 31 May.

● For more information go to www.teachingleaders.org.uk or contact Emily Burfoot at emily.burfoot@teachingleaders.org.uk or on 0207 395 1475.

NEWS IN BRIEF

**Globe pupils quiz the PM**

Year 11 Globe Academy pupils, Khalid Elmourei and Lara Fagade (pictured above), were selected from children all over the country to question the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change Ed Milliband MP (also pictured) at a climate change event at the Natural History Museum on December 4.

Top neurologist visits BDA

Renowned neurologist and author of *The Oxford Handbook of Neurology*, Dr Hadi Manji, led a careers workshop organised by the sixth form at Burlington Danes Academy on December 14. Director of sixth form, Stephen Adcock, said: "Medicine is the most popular career choice for our students, so we're glad we could offer them a chance to meet an expert in the complex field of neurology."

ARK is moving

ARK Schools is moving to offices up the road in Holborn to provide space for its growing team. ARK will move in early March. The new offices, on the top two floors of 65 Kingsway, London WC2B 6TD, will almost double ARK's space. It will make head office a far better resource with more meeting space, a large open plan office area and more hot desks. We look forward to seeing you there.

New choir for talented pupils

● ARK programme for children with exceptional musical ability

TALENTED PUPILS from ARK's London academies have won places in a new network choir.

The ARK Scholarship Singers choir comprises 40 age 11–14 pupils and is part of a new programme to engage children in inspirational music and develop their singing skills.

The Young Leaders programme will train 14 year 9 and 10 pupils to lead singing and song writing sessions in their schools.

The programmes are designed to encourage and develop the talents of pupils with exceptional musical ability or strong leadership potential. It will be run in partnership with world

class organisations including the Guildhall School of Music, Royal Opera House, Roundhouse, Orchestra Europa, Grand Union Orchestra and Voices Foundation.

The choir will be led by outstanding coaches, including Suzi Digby, director of the Voices Foundation, and a judge on TV's *Last Choir Standing*. Pupils will be given individual voice coaching and the chance to attend a series of master-classes. They will also visit well known venues and take part in professional singing events.

In December, they gave their first public performance at Siobhan Davies Studios, Elephant and Castle. The programme

culminates in a performance at the ARK Schools Music Gala 2010 at the Barbican in the summer.

ARK Schools Music Director, Jane Wheeler, said: "We're very excited about the Scholarship Singers programme. In every academy we're finding pupils of enormous ability and enthusiasm in music or potential as young leaders. This programme is a great route to help them become exceptional singers and musicians."

For more information about the Young Leader and Singing Scholarship programme contact Jane Wheeler on 0207 395 2080. jane.wheeler@arkonline.org

Pupils get tips on Shakespeare's magic

ST ALBAN'S Academy pupils were treated to an audience with actor Lenny Henry after they saw him perform in the title role in *Othello* last term.

The group included cast members of St Alban's own production of the play at the Shakespeare Schools Festival in London in November.

Having seen the professional production, the opportunity to talk to its leading actors Lenny Henry and Conrad Nelson offered pupils a valuable perspective on the play.

"It was a brilliant day and those who had acted in *Othello* were bowled over, not only by how realistic the performances were but also by how close some of the interpretation of the lines and roles was to our own," said Year 9 pupil Victoria Sogbesan.

After meeting the show's stars, Victoria said: "We asked about their acting careers and collected tips on how to stay calm and produce theatre 'magic'. It was a really good discussion."

As well as St Alban's *Othello*, pupils from Burlington Danes, Evelyn Grace and Globe academies gave performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,



St Alban's pupils with Lenny Henry. Below, Globe Academy's *Hamlet*

Romeo and Juliet and *Hamlet* at the Shakespeare Festival. Actor Alan Rickman, a former *Hamlet*, admired their performances.

ARK Schools' UK programmes manager, Sarah Gregory, said: "It was terrific to see all the performances come together. The actors were outstanding, especially as the shows were staged in a busy term and it was a great achievement for everyone."

Watch the highlights at www.arkschools.org/pages/ark-schools/news.php, the academy websites or on YouTube.



“An incredibly impressive school” says Cameron

CONSERVATIVE LEADER, David Cameron MP, has visited three ARK academies in recent weeks. In December, he visited King Solomon Academy. In January, days after its new building opened, Mr Cameron and shadow education secretary, Michael Gove MP, visited Walworth Academy, pursued by journalists and TV crews, to launch a draft education manifesto in Walworth's new top floor library. After meeting pupils and staff and visiting a science class, Mr Cameron described Walworth as “an incredibly impressive school with a record of achievement that shows what can be possible and makes me optimistic.” Finally, he visited Burlington Danes Academy for a “Cameron Direct” public consultation on education, chaired by ARK's own policy guru, Amanda Spielman.

■ Politicians haven't been the only celebrity visitors. Channel 4 newscaster, Krishnan Guru Murthy, visited BDA to help year 10 English students record a special bulletin on the earthquake in Haiti.



Inspecting the menu in the new dining room, meeting principal Devon Hanson and students. Mr Cameron's busy day at Walworth Academy.

BDA launches “sponsor a seat” campaign

BURLINGTON DANES Academy principal Sally Coates has launched a “sponsor a chair” fundraising campaign to kit out the academy's new Dennis Potter Performing Arts Centre named after the playwright and pupil of the original St Clement Danes School.

The campaign aims to raise half of the £50,000 needed for the 280 seat auditorium. The stunning modern centre opens this summer and is at the heart of developing the academy as a specialist performing arts hub.

Within days the appeal won £2,500 in pledges. The funding team is asking for £100 a chair, and has encouraged families and friends to club together to honour a pupil, parent or grandparent with a chair in their name.

“Parents and friends have been very generous and it's a great way to make a lasting commitment to the school,” says Sally Coates. Governor Zillah Bingley added: “It seemed like a really good way to get lots of people involved and to spread the word about the good work going on at BDA.”

Ask the expert: managing your career with ARK Schools



Many of you ask how to go about managing your

career, how to find out what opportunities are available. ARK Schools head of recruitment, **Lexy di Marco**, writes about developing your career with ARK Schools.

AS YOU will know, in September 2009 ARK Schools added Charter and St Alban's to the network and opened King Solomon Academy's secondary school. In September 2010, Ark Academy in Wembley Park opens its secondary school, Evelyn Grace and King Solomon each add another year to their secondary school and Walworth will open its sixth form. In 2011, Globe opens its sixth form and in 2012 we open a ninth academy in Redbridge.

So, there's a lot going on and every opening, growth or transition offers new opportunities. If you're looking

for a new challenge, or to broaden, or change your role, it's worth at least considering these.

You may want to speak with your principal, small school head or line manager in the first instance. They'll often be thinking ahead about who might be interested in the next role they have to fill. But they're juggling lots of options so don't take it for granted that they know you want something new. Sometimes you might miss out on a short term sideways move that could be a good way to acquire new skills or broaden your experience, even if it's not an instant promotion.

We, of course, want to develop

and keep our talent within ARK Schools, so do keep up to date with all the vacancies which are posted at www.arkschools.org. Also, watch the network pages in the Arrow for training opportunities and use the development day to chat to colleagues at other ARK academies, as they'll know what opportunities might be coming up in their own schools. And if you're not sure what your next move might be and want to talk it over, please do call me directly.

Lexy di Marco, 0207 395 2080, alexia.dimarco@arkonline.org



Making teaching effective – what really works?



Schools are assailed with advice on how to make learning more effective. Professor John Hattie's twenty year study of the impact of different educational

approaches on achievement, synthesises more than 50,000 research studies to compare the effectiveness of around 100 separate factors. ARK Schools' research director, **Amanda Spielman** looks at the lessons for ARK academies.

Professor Hattie's research, (*Visible Learning*, Routledge, 2009), used data from more than 800 research studies which, in turn drew on the results of more than 50,000 individual research studies around the world to calculate an average effect size for each approach or intervention studied. (That is, the rate at which student attainment went up or down as a result of the approach or intervention.)

The size and breadth of the study makes the analysis extremely accurate. Almost all the effects apply regardless of country, age or subject, so the research is a good starting point from which to consider interventions that could make an impact in ARK schools.

John Hattie is Professor of Education at Auckland University, New Zealand, and author of Visible Learning (Routledge 2009).

Impact on achievement – the core argument

In general, people tend to respond positively to change, so most educational interventions have some positive effect. The vast majority of the interventions studied had an effect size between 0 and 1, with only a few producing negative effects. But many interventions are alternatives, so we should look for the approaches that have most positive effect that can be managed within school resources.

An effect size above 0.4 represents above average effectiveness; while an approach with an effect size of 0.2 or less is unlikely to be a good use of school resources.

To give some examples:

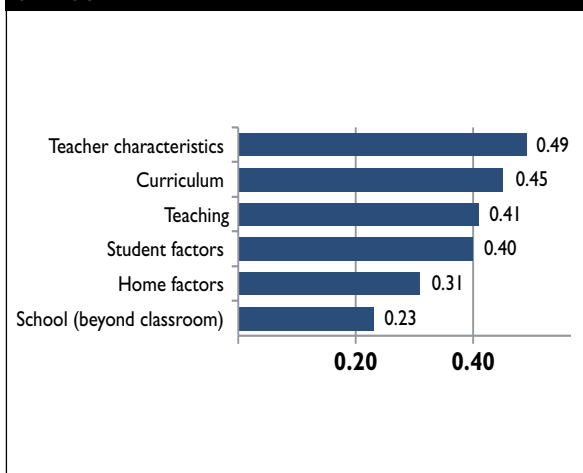
Approach	effect size
Pupil retention (holding back)	-0.18
Class size less than 30	0.21
Effective teacher feedback	0.73

So although holding back underachieving students to repeat a year is common in some countries, it actually reduces achievement. Another surprise is that reducing class sizes has relatively little effect, so although small class sizes do improve results the effect size is only 0.2. By contrast, effective feedback from teachers (at 0.73) is a far more important driver of educational attainment than smaller class sizes or pupil retention

How important are different types of contributor?

Grouping the hundred contributory factors into categories, you get a really clear picture. As you would expect, the top three categories, those relating to teachers, the curriculum and teaching, are what matter most.

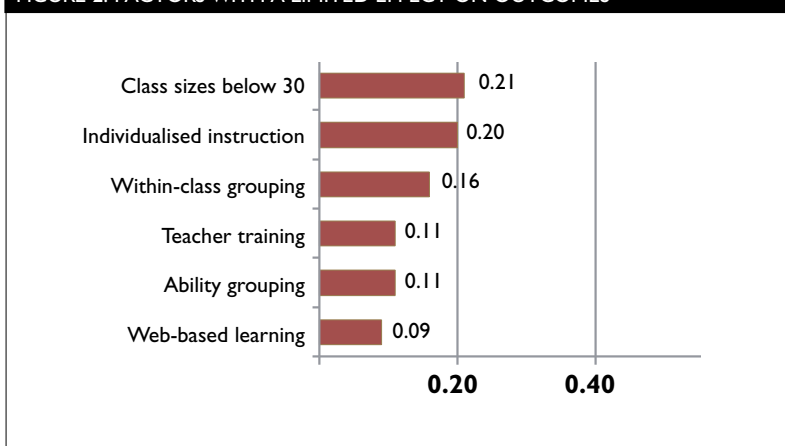
FIGURE 1: EFFECTIVENESS FACTORS GROUPED BY CATEGORY



The three low scoring categories are far less significant but they do include some points worth noting:

- **Students:** after prior attainment the most significant factors are motivation and concentration/persistence/engagement (both 0.48): both strongly prioritised by ARK academies.
- **Home:** by far the most important factor is parental aspiration and expectations for children's educational achievement (0.80), followed by parental communication with the child (interest in progress and talking about and helping with homework and school work) (0.38). Note that it is parent-child rather than parent-school communication that is most important.
- **School:** outside the classroom, one of the more significant factors is school size (0.43). The reported maximum desirable school size, from this study, is 600-900 pupils (i.e. 150-225 pupils per year), with the caveat that the higher the proportion of minority students, the smaller the school should be. Again the research backs up ARK's preference for schools with no more than 180 pupils in a year.

FIGURE 2: FACTORS WITH A LIMITED EFFECT ON OUTCOMES

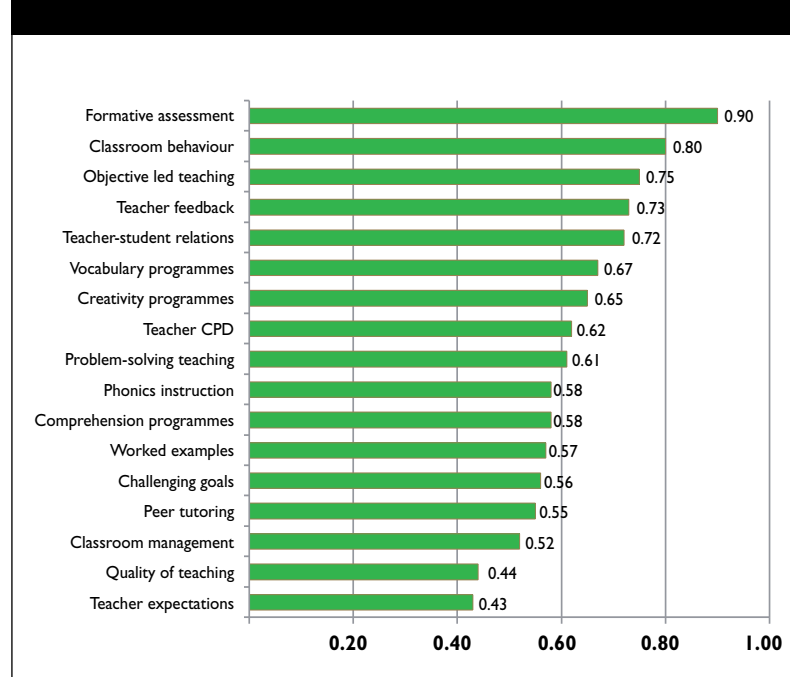


What should not worry us

The study also shows (figure 2) that much public debate focuses on factors that have a fairly limited impact on outcomes.

Where these cost little or nothing to implement, they are good to have; but if they consume significant staff time or money they are probably diverting them from better uses.

FIGURE 3: TEACHING EFFECTS – WHAT WORKS BEST



Teachers, curriculum and teaching: what makes a big difference?

Remember – every one of these are the factors that have a significant impact on pupil progress. So what does the research say makes the difference? **YOU do!** What you teach and how you teach it has by far the biggest impact on what students achieve.

And the factors that make the difference remind us that:

- We all need to believe in what students can achieve and take responsibility for our students' high achievement.
- As teachers, we do tend to underestimate students' ability so it is essential that we have high aspirations for our students if they are going to reach and exceed their potential.
- Formative assessment has far more value than grading and is the single most effective practice identified.
- We must encourage students to support their classmates trying, and sometimes failing, as they learn. They need the confidence to make mistakes they can learn from.
- Teaching is all about knowing what your students think and understand, what they can or cannot do, and helping them to fill in the gaps.
- We need to be active teachers not just "guides on the side".
- Teachers need to make time to think about how they teach; discussing teaching with each other is a particularly effective way of doing this.

Conclusion

All in all, this research is a really useful indicator of what actually works and reinforces much of the approach taken by our academies; this article gives only a taste of the findings. It is very encouraging to see how many of the practices that the study highlights as valuable are already embedded in some or all of our schools.

● *What do you think? Does it ring true based on your experience? I would love to hear your views. Contact me at amanda.spielman@arkonline.org.*



Great expectations

Ofsted inspectors have described the pioneering King Solomon Academy as “an outstanding and unique 21st century school”.

Jeremy Sutcliffe reports on the reasons behind its success

As soon as you walk into a classroom at King Solomon Academy in Westminster you will see a reminder of the school’s ambition for its pupils. On each of the nine classroom doors is the name of a university town – from Leeds to Bristol, Warwick and Canterbury – serving as a reminder to aim high, and that every child’s goal is a place at university.

The expectation is further emphasised by the name of each year group; the Class of 2020, or the Class of 2021, denoting the year the pupils will graduate from sixth form. What is surprising is that the expectation begins so early: not at secondary school, as is the norm for most children, but even before they start reception class.

“When parents come in for a prospective parents’ evening they are quite surprised that a primary school would be talking about university. They seem even more surprised when I say that ‘This is the expectation for your child’. It’s all about creating aspirations. We don’t want to wait until they start secondary school; it’s about peppering



their expectations along the way,” says Venessa Willms, the academy’s primary headteacher.

The school serves an ethnically diverse community with a high level of deprivation. About 65 per cent of the children speak English as a second language and a high proportion are entitled to free school meals.

“Children come into this school significantly below national expectations. They have very little language, either first or second. By the end of their first year at school, their progress outstrips national figures and their attainment is significantly higher than would be expected and achieved nationally. Our own targets are obviously higher, because we’re an ARK School, and we’ve outperformed even our own targets for two consecutive years,” Ms Willms says.

Visionary goals

Last month, the success of the new academy was recognised by school inspectors, who judged it to be outstanding in almost every respect, praising it for its visionary

WHAT THE INSPECTORS SAID ABOUT KING SOLOMON ACADEMY

Main findings

King Solomon Academy is an outstanding and unique 21st century school that rightly judges its provision to be so. Its primary aim is to, ‘provide a rigorous and transformational education that prepares our pupils for success at university and beyond.’ As such, the academy breeds success and consistently practises its chant, ‘Whatever it takes. We work. We learn. We all succeed’. This axiom means that no child is left behind and because nothing is left to chance, all staff, including the governors, pupils and parents, give ‘100% every day to ensure success all the way’.

The academy’s transformational mission makes it distinctive in many ways. First, it has successfully created and inspired a community of enthusiastic learners, who are passionate about achieving academic excellence. Second, visionary goals are at the heart of its work. Aspirations are high and the academy is making a difference to pupils’ lives irrespective of their starting point. Teachers and parents recognise that despite facing challenging circumstances, pupils can succeed against all odds because the provision is outstanding. For example, the academy is intent on all pupils attending and succeeding at university and beyond, and so drives them to reach and exceed goals that may initially appear too ambitious and unattainable. Attainment is well above average in Reception and Key Stage 1 and the rate of pupils’ progress and achievement is outstanding in all year groups. The unrelenting focus on pupils having ‘Big Hairy Audacious Goals’ (BHAG) from age 3 upwards has a strong impact on their personal goals to pursue academic excellence. Third, exemplary care, guidance and support and consistently good teaching when combined with the outstanding curriculum generate a very strong culture of learning, which serves pupils’ individual needs very well.

Outcomes for pupils

Pupils make exceptionally rapid progress and their achievement is outstanding. On entry to the academy, attainment is below average in mathematics and significantly below in English. In addition, a small but increasing number of pupils are at the early stage of learning English but no barrier is too high or difficult to conquer.

Teaching and learning

Over time, consistently good teaching with some that is outstanding contributes strongly to pupils making outstanding progress. The consistent emphasis on learning and exemplary use of assessment information ensure that pupils are given clear advice on how to improve their work and tasks and resources are tailored to the needs of individuals and groups.

Foundation stage

From a below average start, the vast majority of children make exceptional progress, achieving skills that are securely within or beyond the levels expected for their age. The strong emphasis on the teaching of phonics leads to children making outstanding progress in recognising words and the sounds they make. Consequently, language skills are very good. The leadership and management are outstanding and ensure that activities and learning relate exceptionally well to children’s needs.

goals, above average attainment, consistently good teaching and outstanding leadership and management.

The academy, says Ofsted, has “successfully created and inspired a community of enthusiastic learners, who are passionate about achieving excellence”. Aspirations are high and

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the academy is making a difference to pupils’ lives irrespective of their starting point, it says.

So what are the ingredients behind the academy’s success? According to Venessa Willms, four principles underpin the school’s approach: no excuses;

depth before breadth; a small school model; and rigorous and regular assessment.



Opposition leader David Cameron during a recent visit to King Solomon Academy. Below, primary pupils practise the violin.



“Firstly, ‘no excuses’ applies to every member of this community: myself, my teachers, my children and their families. Social background, gender or ethnicity are no excuse for children to not do well and to go to university. They have to. There is a very strong culture in the school that that is what we’re about,” she says.

The second principle, ‘depth before breadth’, is about ensuring children become fluent in literacy and numeracy. “We have to get the foundations right. It’s about making sure our children can read, write and are confident and competent with number. And the more quickly they do it, the more quickly we are able to broaden the curriculum, because they are then able to access it.”

The belief that schools should be small and organised on a human scale is perhaps the most radical feature of King Solomon. The new academy, which opened its primary school in 2007, is an all-through school, with 60 pupils in each year. When full, the school will be organised into four small schools, infant, junior, middle and upper. Currently, the oldest primary pupils are in Year 2 and the first Year 7 cohort started school in September 2009.

No child left behind

“Small schools are really all about no child being left behind. We know every child and their family at school and every child is known not just to the class teacher, but to me and to people in the office, to our midday meal ladies, to our catering manager, and to the secondary school,” says Ms Willms.

“It’s about trying to get schools, which in essence are large organisations, broken down into meaningful small families. It’s about having families involved as much as possible; it’s about me as a head being out there walking the corridors, being in class, being at the gates talking to people.”

Another guiding principle is the academy’s emphasis on assessment. “We assess every six weeks, we set a target for every child for the end of each year, which is aspirational and challenging, and we track them throughout the year to see if they are on the right trajectory to get to their target. If a child is identified as at risk of not making it then we have some very comprehensive and bespoke intervention programmes to help them catch up,” Ms Willms says.

Underpinning the academy’s success is a formal approach to the curriculum, with its emphasis on basic skills, an extended school day and zero tolerance of poor behaviour. This approach applies as much to pupils in the new secondary as to the primary school.

Max Haimendorf, the academy’s secondary headteacher, is particularly pleased that the inspectors judged the curriculum offered to the first cohort of Year 7s as outstanding, less than a term after the secondary school opened.

A longer school day

“They recognised that our curriculum was markedly different to other offerings and that it brilliantly meets the needs of our pupils – in particular, the longer day, which provides more time with the children and allows children more time to master what we teach. Our school day, from eight to five, and our summer school, mean that over the year we have half as much curriculum time again as a standard comprehensive and that means we can offer real depth in English and maths,” he said.

One advantage of King Solomon’s all-through model is that it enables both headteachers and their teams to co-ordinate their approach. A formal curriculum starts in reception where all children follow a rigorous phonics programme and learning takes place in a formal setting that looks very much like a Year 1 classroom.

“By the time children leave reception they are on a solid national curriculum level and ready to move into key stage 1.

There's been a lot of talk about the transition between reception and Year 1 being quite traumatic for children, but it's not like that here," says Ms Willms.

The emphasis on firm discipline is also evident throughout the school. From the moment the children start in reception clear expectations are set about the way they present themselves, their manners and routines. The staff spend a lot of time working with parents to make sure they understand the academy's expectations and its policy of rewards and sanctions, says Ms Willms.

'Sweating the small stuff'

"Our children are very well behaved. They're not angels by any stretch of the imagination, but their attitude to learning is beyond their years. That isn't to say they don't get into trouble and I don't have to phone home regularly to say that someone's done something wrong but, the fact is, we do phone home and say something is wrong when we need to. It's about sweating the small stuff. Every little thing does matter and, if you don't pick up on them, all of a sudden, you have a very large problem on your hands.

"As a result, our children feel very safe at school. They like the boundaries and appreciate that if they tell a teacher something that's worrying them or has upset them the teachers will react to it immediately. Children know that if they say something it doesn't fall on deaf ears."

Mr Haimendorf and his staff operate a similar policy. "We believe in challenging pupils' behaviour over small things with the understanding that through learning about the boundaries on the small things we won't be having conversations about more serious misdemeanours. The pupils have absolute clarity that we are here to learn and that anything that disrupts learning will have a consequence," he says.

On occasions, up to half of the 60 Year 7s have had to stay until 5.45pm having failed to meet expectations on homework or behaviour. Some compare this no-nonsense approach to a US-style boot camp, but Mr Haimendorf stresses the sense of common purpose and buy-in from both pupils and parents.



"AS A SCHOOL COMMUNITY THERE'S A GREAT SENSE OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS EACH OTHER AND A SENSE OF PRIDE THAT SO MUCH HAS BEEN LEARNED AND THAT PUPILS ARE DOING SO WELL"

MAX HAIMENDORF

"We lead by example as well as by setting firm boundaries. At our 'family service' meals pupils and staff eat together giving us to chance to reinforce the school's values in a social setting. And it helps us to get to know every pupil very well. They know and their families know that their futures matter to us.

"As a school community, there's a great sense of accountability and responsibility towards each other and a sense of pride that so much has been learned and that pupils are doing so well. We recognise that our staff make a huge commitment. We expect more of our pupils and their parents but also more of ourselves."

Meanwhile, anticipation is rising in the primary school as the Year 2 pupils prepare to take their SATs this summer, giving the school a formal benchmark against national standards.

Says Ms Willms: "I'm very excited about that. I think people will be very surprised at how well our children are doing. That's down to a lot of hard work. We're aiming for nothing less than 100 per cent in English, maths and science." ■

HOW IT'S BEEN FOR US



Charli Rumsey, foundation stage co-ordinator and reception teacher It's a massive achievement to get an outstanding, especially in the early years. Since we started we've achieved a great deal. It's been lots of hard work. Being in a new building means there are lots of challenges and teething problems, but we have a good team and we've worked together really well to overcome the snags.



Georgia Snary, assistant primary headteacher and inclusion manager Sixty-five per cent of our children speak English as an additional language. Last year we had 30 per cent mobility in the year so we assessed each child on entry and planned interventions to help them catch up. As a result, they are making the same progress as their peers, as are children with special educational needs. That is one of the reasons we got an outstanding from Ofsted.



Elizabeth Jones, teaching assistant We have lots of intervention groups so I work with lots of children. My focus now is on getting children with additional languages used to academic language. A lot of children learn social language in the playground and can communicate with their friends but struggle in the classroom because they haven't come across structured lessons. It needs to be taught.



Steve Bullock, lead teacher of science, secondary We worked really hard to get set up and build on our fantastic start. Starting a new school has been really exciting, very different from where I've worked before. Having no lab at first was a challenge, but we coped by using classrooms as labs for a few lessons. I'm looking forward to doing some exciting stuff in our new labs this term.



Dianne Birmingham, Finance and Resources Director I love that as staff we have so much social interaction with the pupils. That is really important. At first, most are nervous about talking at family service lunch – even with each other. By the end of term they are chatting to each other and to us about films they've seen and books they've read. In three months their confidence has really grown.



Cheryl Francis, administrator We work hard to help parents help their children get the best out of school. That means getting every child here on time every day. So we give out certificates for attendance and punctuality and tell each class how they're doing every week. And we talk to parents; they know we support them and their families.



Mrs Eman Mustafa, Parent governor and mother of Year 7 pupil Yasmin's experience in KSA has been something we have never experienced before. The attention given to Yasmin and to us is outstanding. Her teachers support her and our whole family 100 per cent. Already, in year 7, she's being prepared for GCSEs. KSA is all we could have hoped for. We couldn't have asked for more.



Karen Buck, MP for Regent's Park and Kensington North The local community is being extremely well served by King Solomon Academy, demonstrating that our new generation of academy schools are helping to transform education in Westminster. I am very proud of the work that is being done there. Well done!



David Cameron MP, Leader of the Opposition I really admire all the hard work that Venessa Willms and Max Haimendorf have put into making this school such a shining example. The success of King Solomon is testament to the school's dedicated leadership, teachers and sponsors; and I am very pleased to see the school in action and to meet the teachers and children who are working so hard.



Building professional capacity across the ARK Schools network



Sharing proven effective practice will help our academies achieve consistently high standards, says **Kieran Larkin**, head of the education team for ARK academies.

To radically improve standards of attainment in academies across the ARK Schools network, we need to maintain consistently high quality teaching and learning.

This will be the key focus of our February 22 network development day. We will offer a menu of subject and thematic professional development opportunities in hubs across the ARK academies network.

Our eight academy network is now big enough that we can create subject specific networks where professionals, working towards ARK Schools' common principles, can meet to share, develop and improve practice.

That is why we want our networking days to be a regular

part of our professional development programme, to allow regular, on-going dialogue about teaching and learning that can inspire and support staff right across the network.

Networking is powerful and effective when individuals work together to develop their practice and where each in the group feels a sense of ownership, values every contribution and is willing to learn new things. This is the ethos that we want our networks to develop. It's a great sign of a learning organisation when practitioners jointly question, develop and extend their practice for the benefit of their students.

IMPROVING LITERACY IS THE PRIORITY FOR EVERY TEACHER IN EVERY SUBJECT AND THE KEY TO UNLOCKING MUCH OF THE CURRICULUM AND FUTURE ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Using network expertise

The hubs in February will draw on ARK academies' existing effective practice, supplemented where necessary with external thinking. It's an important balance to get right, but we should always look for internal expertise so that we develop a model for sustainable professional development.

The hubs will be facilitated by staff from our academies who are recognised by their peers as highly effective teachers making a demonstrable impact on students' attainment. We want people to come ready to contribute and keen to learn. We hope participants will go away with ideas to try and will keep in regular contact with their network to discuss and share ideas further. We want these networks to become a real strength, enabling staff to share professional experience and practices that have a proven impact on pupil attainment.

Sharing practice

Where possible, we have based hubs at academies with relevant expertise. So St Alban's Academy in Birmingham, will host the engineering hub and Globe Academy in Southwark will host the performing arts hub.

Basing the hubs at different locations across the network enables staff to visit other academies, see their resources and their work. CPD leads in each academy have details of all the hubs and their locations.

I hope these meetings will also spawn wider networking opportunities so that teachers and support staff will get used to communicating and exchanging ideas informally, online, face to face and, in due course, across an ARK Schools-wide intranet.

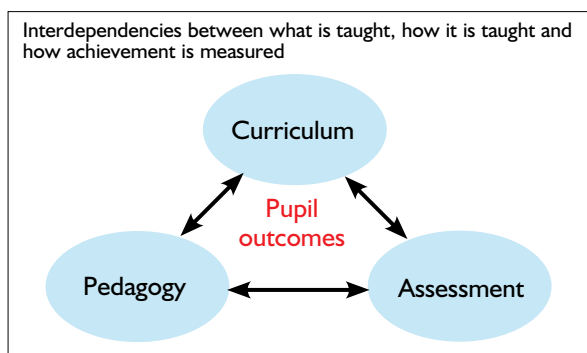
The leadership hub

The leadership hub enables Principals and senior leadership teams to discuss key priorities and themes and equip themselves to put them into action.

In February, Professor Brent Davies, an international authority on leadership development, will lead the day under the theme of 'the strategically focused school' (see panel).

The subject hubs

We want each subject hub to focus on three areas with the single objective of achieving outstanding student outcomes: the curriculum (what is taught and learned), pedagogy (the craft of teaching) and assessment (how learning outcomes are measured). In November, the specific focus was on assessment. This time we will focus, in particular, on pedagogy. One of the most significant inhibitors to student attainment



across the ARK network is low levels of literacy. Improving literacy is the priority for every teacher in every subject, as it is the key to unlocking much of the curriculum and future academic success. This will be a key theme for secondary subject teachers on February 22.

Primary mathematics

The focus for primary teachers will be on improving the quality of mathematics teaching across key stage 1 and 2 in our three primary schools, Globe, King Solomon and Ark.

Thematic hubs

There will also be hubs on particular themes, as well as subjects. We are fortunate to have people with high levels of specialist practice within the network. Miles Ridley, assistant

THE DEVELOPMENT DAY PROGRAMME

The ARK Schools network development day takes place on February 22 with hubs at ARK academies across the network. As well as 15 specialist subject hubs there will be dedicated hubs on school leadership, for primary teachers and teaching assistants, SENCOs, FRDs, librarians, staff with HR responsibilities and principals' PAs.

The hubs will cover the following:

Leadership, English, Mathematics, Art, Music, Science, ICT, ICT across the curriculum (Frontier development), Humanities, MFL, PE, Performing Arts, Engineering and D&T, SENCOs, Behaviour, Librarians, TAs, Principals' PAs, Finance and Resource Directors.

Subject hubs

Subject teachers will focus on:

- high quality subject teaching with a specific focus on KS3
- improving literacy in the subject [speaking and listening, reading comprehension, extended writing]
- developing a CPD strategy and programme

Primary

For primary teachers the day will focus on mathematics.

Leadership

Focusing on the 'strategically focused school', the leadership hub will help you develop skills in:

- strategy setting: analysing and developing strategies for whole-school development
- how to communicate and lead a new strategy
- strategic conversations to motivate and engage people

The day will cover: understanding strategy and futures thinking, developing strategic processes and approaches, balancing operational and strategic issues and building strategic leadership across the school

For more information about the day please contact Rebecca Curtis at ARK Schools on 0207 395 2080, Rebecca.curtis@arkonline.org

headteacher at King Solomon Academy, was the lead practitioner on SEN for the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust before joining ARK Schools in September 2009. He has a one day a week network wide role helping individual academies develop their special needs practice. He will use February's development day to help develop the special needs co-ordinators' network.

Professional development for everyone

In addition to the networks created by principals' personal assistants and finance and resource directors we want to foster professional networking for other staff. So we will offer a programme for teaching assistants and we are open to suggestions about other networking opportunities.

Future development

We are planning an ARK Schools wide conference in November 2010 bringing together everyone across the network. By then, following the general election, we will be clearer on how the next government will support the academies programme in the longer term.

It will be an opportunity to celebrate what we have achieved and to lay out our vision for the future. ■

Kieran Larkin joined ARK in May 2009. He started his career as a secondary Mathematics and ICT teacher and has held a range of subject and senior leadership roles in schools, local authorities and national organisations, latterly as part of the National Strategies. He now leads the education team at ARK and provides support to academy leadership teams across the network. kieran.larkin@arkonline.org



Walworth Academy's radio project is transforming pupils' attitudes and reconnecting them with learning.

PROJECTS

Pupils gain GCSEs while making radio programmes

Ten pupils from Walworth Academy are the first to take part in a new training programme offered as an alternative to classroom teaching. Those taking part will develop skills for the media industry, learn from BBC professionals, and volunteer for youth radio station Re-present.

The training is run by Eclectic Productions, an award-winning community media company, who set up Re-present to provide opportunities for young people. Its aim is to help pupils develop the purpose and confidence to re-engage with education and gain GCSEs and other qualifications.

Troy Gayle, one of the first students to complete the programme says: "The course has made me want to try more and not give up as much at school. I learnt how to present a radio show and how to DJ and I have much more confidence in myself now."

Eclectic Productions are developing the programme with ARK and Globe Academy pupils enrolled in January. We are hoping to take the programme into more schools and work with as many pupils as we can.

Catherine Willans, Head of Babbage School at Walworth, said: "I have seen attitudes transform, self-confidence grow and students reconnect with learning, enabling them to re-evaluate their futures.

Even among challenging students the impact has been positive and infectious."

The pilot project is working with Year 9 pupils who have had difficulties engaging with their school work, of which 83 per cent have achieved GCSE equivalent qualifications so far. Attendance and punctuality have improved, as has the willingness to re-engage with lessons.

Visit www.represent.org.uk to listen to some of the shows.

*For more information contact Shane Carey
shane@eclectic-productions.co.uk*

Brain training at EGA

Nikki Budd, consultant subject leader for music at Evelyn Grace Academy, is collaborating with John Gruzelier, Professor of Psychology at Goldsmiths, University of London, on a research project funded by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and Arts (NESTA), and supported by ARK. This furthers Professor Gruzelier's research on realising potential with brain wave training.

For over a decade he has been carrying out validation studies with diverse participants including trainee eye surgeons, competitive ballroom and Latin dancers, children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, RADA actors and, most relevant to the EGA research, musicians. Following brain wave training, Royal College of Music students showed professionally significant

enhancements in musicality, communication and technique.

Brain wave training consists of recording with a computer the electrical activity of the brain through sensors placed on the head which are connected with either a computer game or an audio track, which the participants learn to control by raising or lowering their brain waves, a technique called neurofeedback.

Eleven year olds at EGA are given ten half hour sessions of training. Music performance including improvisation, along with attention and wellbeing is assessed before and after, while school performance is tracked. The children are randomised to either slow wave training (audio track with eyes closed) or fast wave training (computer game) or to a no-training control group. The final assessments were completed in December and the results are now being analysed.

*For more information contact John Gruzelier
j.gruzelier@gold.ac.uk*

EVENTS

Debating competition

Public speaking is among the most life enhancing skills. Pupils from Burlington Danes and Globe Academies are involved in the national Debate Mate programme and attended its annual launch at the Royal Institute. Pupils on Walworth's debating programme recently

won the Southwark schools debating competition and Burlington Danes and Walworth pupils are also engaged with Speak Up.

To build on your pupils' successes ARK and Debate Mate will be hosting a network-wide debating competition in the late spring or early summer term.

Further details from Sarah Gregory, UK programmes manager on 0207 395 2080 or sarah.gregory@arkonline.org

ARK Youth Theatre

The ARK Academies' Youth Theatre will be launched in March 2010. We hope to create an acting company from our six London academies to perform A Midsummer Night's Dream in July at the Southwark Playhouse. Schools will receive information about auditions this term.

*Russell Jones, Globe Academy
r.jones@globeacademy.org*

Table tennis competition

The inaugural ARK Schools all-stars table tennis championship takes place this summer at Burlington Danes Academy. ARK will provide trophies and prizes. All ARK secondary schools are invited to field teams and the day will run from 10am until around 3pm or until one team emerges the victor. There are some great table tennis players in all our academies so watch out for the entry details in your school soon.

*More details from Sarah Gregory,
sarah.gregory@arkonline.org or your PE department.*

OPPORTUNITIES

Free Masters in Teaching and Learning for NQTs in ARK Schools!

If you gained QTS in 2008/9 and took up post in 2009/10 then you are eligible to apply for a fully-funded Masters of Teacher and Learning, a Government-funded, classroom-based qualification developed to help teachers extend their teaching skills and abilities. ■

*For more information contact Hannah Obertelli
hannah.obertelli@arkonline.org*



“Our kids have a lot more pride”

MY BRILLIANT CAREER

Ewan Scott is vice-principal of Charter Academy in Portsmouth. He grew up in Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire and went to the local comprehensive. After graduating in environmental science at Sunderland Polytechnic, he became a science and PE teacher. In 2007, he was appointed deputy headteacher of Charter's predecessor, St Luke's Church of England School.

Why did you become a teacher?

My parents were special needs teachers so I was steeped in teaching from childhood. The question was what I would teach and whether I'd become a special

needs teacher. In the event, I took a science degree and became a science and PE teacher.

Was there a moment when you fell in love with teaching?

I have loved the idea of teaching since I was two or three years old, but I fell in love with the practice of teaching when I got through my NQT year.

You've moved about quite a bit in your career, haven't you?

I taught first for two years in Blyth, Northumberland. Then I moved to Worthing in Sussex and then to Basingstoke as second in science where I quickly became head of department. After qualifying as an advanced skills teacher in science I moved to a school in Southampton and was promoted to assistant head.

What attracted you to the job as St Luke's deputy head?

My impression was of children whose aspirations were very low and I felt I could significantly

help them to raise their sights and improve their life chances. The governors had already agreed the academy route so I knew what I was taking on and looked forward to the challenge.

Why did St Luke's go for academy status?

Becoming an ARK academy offered the chance to make a dramatic difference to children in one of Portsmouth's most disadvantaged areas. The school's original mission when the Church of England opened it in 1861 was to educate the most deprived families in the area. ARK's vision of high expectations for all children, no matter what their background, fitted very well.

What steps did you take to prepare for becoming an academy?

The first step was to change the assessment schedules, back in June 2007, before ARK had been appointed. Next we began to rationalise the curriculum

along the lines of “depth before breadth”, with a huge emphasis on literacy and numeracy, which is also part of the ARK model.

How did you find working for ARK?

At first some staff were a little wary as you would expect. The worries proved unfounded as we began to work together and ARK's ethos and methods dovetailed very well with what the school wanted to achieve. About 18 months ago, I began working with ARK on the feasibility study for the Building Schools for the Future programme. The design for the new academy is quite visionary and exciting. In a strikingly modern way it emulates the classic image of a cloistered Oxford or Cambridge university college and makes great use of spaces for different learning activities.

How would you sum up your experience as part of the transition team?

Incredibly fulfilling, rewarding, satisfying – and bloody hard work! During the transition, I had two jobs: as St Luke's deputy head and the development work on the new academy. One of the reasons the transition was so smooth was that many of the systems we put in place echoed ARK's expectations. St Luke's worked really closely with Dame Sharon Hollows from the summer term after she was appointed: that enabled us to achieve a far smoother transition than we might otherwise have done.

What is different about the school since the academy opened in September?

The kids have a lot more pride and self-belief. There is an expectation that in everything they do and everywhere they go they are Charter students – ready to learn, willing to engage, well mannered and on their best behaviour. We have come a long way quickly and our students have a new reputation for being smart and well-behaved. Recently some Charter students attending a literacy and numeracy session at Portsmouth FC were mistaken for public school students. That's how big a change we have made. ■

Tone up for 2010

Marlon Miller has just taken one of the two small school heads' roles at Evelyn Grace Academy. As a PE specialist he knows all about keeping pupils fit, healthy and alert – and about trying to balance a busy teaching and management workload. Here, as he starts his new role, he shares his tips for getting and staying fit.

Marlon has competed in gruelling triathlons and run marathons in New York and Rome. He is a martial arts specialist, plays a decent game of football and enjoys endurance sports.

His latest challenge is as the new headteacher of Evelyn School, one of Evelyn Grace Academy's two small schools. He is proud to be one of comparatively few PE specialists to rise to headship.

Marlon says staying healthy is about far more than sports.

"Exercise is about challenging the mind as well as the body. It encourages good discipline in everything you do," he says.

"It's an important message for students: an active body means a healthy mind. If they keep their bodies healthy they feel less tired and are more able to focus for longer periods of time. You can build up their focus by building up their stamina."

Marlon believes the benefits of keeping fit apply as much to teachers as their students.

He is supporting ARK Schools in helping staff to get fit and brush away the winter blues (see offer below). To help you get started here are Marlon's top fitness tips:

Marlon's top tips to get fit

1 Keep a diary

New Year resolutions are already forgotten so keeping a diary can help motivate you as you begin to see the gains you've made and the effort you've put in. It helps get you into a structured routine and gives you goals to achieve.

2 Look after your nutrition

Before and after any activity watch what you eat and drink both to enhance performance and aid recovery. Hydration is very important so drink enough liquid. Equally be sure to take on board the right amount of carbohydrates. To tone up reduce the fat rather than the calories.

3 Warm up properly

Always do a good warm-up and have a good cool-down to help your body recover. You need a pulse-raiser and some stretching exercises to mobilise your joints, particularly your knees, and avoid cramp and pulled muscles.

4 Don't get stressed about exercise

Don't try to catch up if you miss a gym session or a regular run. Make sure exercise is planned into your daily routine rather than doing it when there's nothing else left to do.

5 Vary your exercise

If you train with plenty of variety it makes your body more adaptable. It also motivates you to keep going and avoids boredom.



ARK Schools has negotiated reduced price membership for staff at Fitness First gyms across the country. ARK Schools and ARK Academies staff can get at least 20 per cent off the cost of membership at their local Fitness First gym. Join before March 15 and save the £30 registration fee too.

There are two ways to apply for discounted membership:

■ **Individual direct debit** Log onto www.fitnessfirst.co.uk/join-online.ark and complete the online application. Your chosen Fitness First club will call you to confirm your membership and arrange your induction.

■ **Interest free loan for annual membership** This option gives you the extra benefit of 12 months membership for the price of 10 if you apply for an interest free loan through your academy finance director. The loan repayments will be deducted from your pre-tax salary in 12 instalments so it slightly reduces your tax bill too.

To find the Fitness First club nearest to you go to www.fitnessfirst.co.uk and to find out more about the ARK Schools offer please contact Hannah Obertelli on 020 7395 2050 or hannah.obertelli@arkonline.org

FitnessFirst