

Ark St Alban's Academy

Our theologically-rooted Christian Vision

Our mission is **to provide every pupil with a transformational education and the character needed to flourish in all that they do.**

We seek to provide pupils with the knowledge, qualifications and experiences that will lead them to success in their adult lives, but we also recognise the importance of the here and now. We want our pupils to both enjoy and be successful in all aspects of school life.

Our work is founded in the words spoken by God to King Solomon when he prayed that God give him an understanding mind: **"I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be".**

In these words from scripture, we find resonance with words of our founders, the Pollock Brothers who wrote in 1890 of their desire to provide an education of both the *conscience and the brain*.

Our Christian values and virtues direct how we think and act in our work to achieve our mission:

- Lead the way
- Act courageously
- Work together
- Show compassion
- Persevere

These values, precisely located in scripture and explicitly taught to pupils are the foundation of our Character Programme which seeks to instil practical wisdom and to grow discerning hearts and minds.

Our Character Programme guides pupils in asking and then answering with increasing confidence and precision, six Big Questions:

1. Who am I?
2. How can I keep myself safe and secure?
3. How can I be an active citizen?
4. Where am I going next?
5. How can I stay physically and mentally healthy?
6. How can I have healthy relationships?

In communicating our distinctively Christian vision, we draw on Abrahamic foundations and traditions in the recognition of the value in finding common ground and a common language within our majority-Muslim community and pupil population.

Ark St Alban's Academy was founded in 1871 by James Pollock and his younger brother Thomas.

The brothers were priests who dedicated their lives to bringing both the Gospel and education to what was – and still is – one of the most impoverished areas of Birmingham.

Ark St Alban's is a Church of England School and it is an Academy within the [Ark Schools](#) multi-academy trust. We serve 826 pupils. We are a secondary school (683 pupils) and a sixth form (143 pupils).

The [decision making framework](#) within Ark Schools delegates to the Principal responsibility for delivering all education and operational outcomes in the school, with the local governing body providing localised support and challenge. The Ark Schools Board of Trustees discharges management of the principal to the Regional Director. Local support and challenge is also provided by the [Birmingham Diocesan Board of Education](#).

The academy continues the work of the Pollock brothers in serving a community which experiences significant deprivation. 70% of our families live in postcodes ranking in the top decile for income deprivation affecting children. The academy has the fourth highest Pupil Premium rate for all mainstream secondary schools in England.

Around three-quarters of our pupils speak English as an additional language and more than three-quarters of our pupils arrive without having met the expected standard in reading and maths in Year 6. Moreover, around half arrive with a reading age below their chronological reading age (CRA), with around a quarter reading two or more years below their CRA.

We serve a diverse community. Over fifty ethnic groups are represented and celebrated in our pupil body. Faith plays an important role in the lives of the children and the families that we serve. 96% of our pupils have a faith and 92% of our pupils are Muslim. We are proud of how Christian worship, Abrahamic beliefs and British values coexist, strengthen one-another and enrich the character of pupils in our school.

[Ark Schools](#) is an education charity that exists to make sure that all children, regardless of their background, have access to a great education and real choices in life. Matters of social justice, especially those relating to the consequences of inequality are therefore central to our work. At Ark St Alban's Academy, our determination to address social disadvantage is enhanced by faith and by the example set by Jesus.

We believe that a great education is the starting point for social mobility which in turn, can result in social justice. We believe that a great education is a transformational education; an education which places pupils onto a different, more enriching life path. We believe that such an education is defined by the gaining of knowledge, qualifications and experiences which open ambitious and competitive pathways for our pupils.

We also believe that character development, the building of confidence, skills and values is equally important as academic achievement. We believe that without good character, pupils will not be able to flourish either now as children, or as adults in the future.

We take inspiration from the story of King Solomon, a young leader seeking wisdom and discernment from God. We recognise in his request and in God's granting of it, the value of knowledge (wisdom), the necessity of discernment (character) and the requirement of both in order to be able to flourish.

Being part of Ark Schools is integral to our mission. It places pupils and colleagues within a network of 39 schools, facilitating the sharing of best practice across all areas of provision and providing rigorous regional and national benchmarks which underpin self-evaluation. This support and challenge is balanced with a trust-wide approach which encourages all schools to maintain their own distinctive character and to reflect their local community. A

rk Schools also invests extensively in supporting its schools to provide extensive enrichment programmes and wider opportunities in a range of fields that no single school could provide alone.