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27 February 2015

A P Wilson  
Golden Hillock School - A Park View Academy  
Golden Hillock Road  
Sparkhill  
Birmingham  
B11 2QG

Dear Mr Wilson

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Golden Hillock School - A Park View Academy**

Following my visit with Denah Jones, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Kerin Jones, Additional Inspector, to your school on 25–26 February 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place April 2014. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence, I strongly recommend that the academy does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the interim executive principal, Chair of the Trustees, Chair of the Local Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Angela Westington  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2014

- Urgently improve the academy's work to keep students safe by:
  - ensuring that safeguarding concerns are thoroughly investigated and procedures followed rigorously
  - strengthening the provision for personal, social, health, economic and citizenship education
  - provide effective sex and relationships education
  - making sure students and staff develop their understanding of risks associated with extremist views.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
  - have access to, and use, better information about what students already know to set work at the right level
  - mark students' work more regularly themselves and give helpful comments on how to improve.
  
- Improve students' achievement, especially in Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9 in English and mathematics by:
  - ensuring that teachers have sufficiently high expectations for students' attainment and progress, and that they insist on a high standard of presentation of written work from students
  - ensuring that the progress of different groups of students is tracked and monitored rigorously by subject, year and class, so that teaching can be adapted to accelerate progress where necessary
  - ensuring that specific programmes of support and intervention for disabled students and those with special educational needs are thoroughly monitored and evaluated to check on their success and to inform the planning of further support activities
  - developing monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that additional funding, including the pupil premium funding, is being spent effectively to improve students' progress
  - tackling the weaknesses in reading, writing, speaking and listening which hinder many students' progress
  - enabling students to develop and apply their mathematical skills in a range of subjects.
  
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - urgently reviewing all policies thoroughly and making sure that they are carried out in practice
  - using accumulated resources to tackle the academy's most pressing needs, especially in recruiting and retaining teachers and leaders

- ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, analyse data on the progress of different groups of students in all subjects, year groups and classes, and use this information to hold staff and leaders to account for their performance
- ensuring that action plans at whole school and department level have clear and measurable success criteria
- ensuring that senior leaders develop a broader, more accurate view of the quality of teaching
- ensuring that form time is used constructively to support students' skills and personal development.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 25–26 February 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim principal, the executive principal of Park View Educational Trust, two Park View Educational Trust trustees, the Chair of the Local Governing Body, a group of Year 10 GCSE religious studies students, a group of Year 7 students and members of the senior and middle leadership teams. An inspector also spoke on the telephone with a governor. Inspectors observed lessons across all year groups and across a range of subjects, most of them jointly with members of the senior leadership team. They also observed break and lunchtimes and one assembly.

During this inspection, inspectors examined in detail the mathematics curriculum, the teaching of mathematics and leadership of the subject.

### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, there have continued to be significant staffing challenges across the academy at senior and middle leadership, teaching and support staff levels. There are permanent teacher vacancies in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and humanities. There are also vacancies in posts of responsibility for pastoral care and students' behaviour. The academy's local governing body, which was inaugurated in November 2014, has met on a monthly basis and now has full membership.

As of 1 September 2015, the academy will be sponsored by the ARK network and will receive specific support from a neighbouring outstanding academy: St Alban's Academy in Birmingham.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Academic standards remain low across the academy, but especially so in mathematics and in Year 9.

The academy's own most recent data indicate continued low performance in the attainment and progress of current Year 11 students, especially in mathematics: 30% of students are currently predicted to achieve five good GCSEs including English and mathematics compared to 27% at the same point last year.

In mathematics, too many students are unable to carry out basic calculations or have mastered basic skills. This is the result of persistent low expectations of staff teaching the subject, their weak subject knowledge and exceptionally poor match of work to students' prior knowledge. Teachers of mathematics do not appear to appreciate what students in Key Stage 3 already know, can do and understand when they transfer from primary school.

The consequence of such low expectations is evident in lessons and in students' books. For example, in Year 9, students were unable to calculate which amount was greater: 30% or  $\frac{1}{3}$ . In Year 7, linear equations were not set out correctly but were marked as correct. In Year 9, coordinate axes were not set out correctly with the origin in the correct place and coordinates were incorrectly labelled and without brackets. Across the school, mathematical diagrams were drawn incorrectly without a ruler. In Year 11, students have been taught long multiplication using the 'Chinese multiplication' method. This method teaches a quick-fix route to an answer rather than developing in students a deeper understanding of number and place value. In a Year 10 science lesson, students were unable to use a measuring rule correctly to measure each other's height, leading to inaccurate results.

Across the school, standards of writing remain very low: punctuation, handwriting, grammar and spelling are weak. Staff are aware that students' handwriting is weak but there is no school policy for teaching it; teachers' own knowledge of how to teach it is weak and there is no clear guidance to students about what is expected, across all subjects, in the way that they present their work.

Despite all this, there are some signs of improvement. More than half of Year 7 and Year 8 students have made better than expected progress in reading in the four months that the new reading programme has been in operation. Some students have made gains of more than two and three years in their reading ages. Others though have regressed or made no progress. In Years 7 and 8 history and geography lessons, inspectors observed students reading quietly and writing extended answers, displaying good learning about models of economic development and the Battle of Hastings. In a Year 11 food technology lesson, students displayed high levels of knowledge and skill about recipe development, used tools safely and clearly enjoyed their work, taking great pride in their results. In a Year 11 drama lesson, inspectors observed mixed groups of boys and girls debating with each other how to plan their performance. The students' lively discussion, in this last example, contrasted sharply with some of the mumbled and inarticulate responses observed in other lessons.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching is improving in science, history, geography and religious studies, and in reading. Key features of the improvements noted include: greater levels of challenge by teachers, consistent use of correct terminology by teachers and students, and more opportunities for students to undertake extended writing in science, history and geography.

Assessment is improving. The academy has introduced a new model of assessment through which students are tested on what they have been taught at the end of the

unit. This model requires students to revise and review their new learning and places more responsibility upon them to engage.

The teaching of mathematics is inadequate. The Key Stage 3 mathematics curriculum is inadequate. There is no clear philosophy or clarity of departmental expectations. The new National Curriculum for mathematics, which came into force in September 2014, is not being taught in Year 9, and therefore students are not being adequately prepared to start GCSE courses that build on the Key Stage 3 curriculum. This new curriculum is fundamentally different to the previous one and requires students to develop 'mastery' of concepts and skills. Current Year 9 students have inappropriately started their GCSE mathematics syllabus a year early, not having completed Key Stage 3. They are following the 'old' GCSE syllabus and are not being prepared for the 'new' syllabus which begins in September 2015. There has been no planning of bridging units for the current Year 9 students who will, eventually, be examined on the new curriculum requirements.

Marking is weak. In too many books, in too many subjects, some work has been unmarked for weeks. Students are therefore unable to use their work to revise or improve.

The school's inherited system of setting students is extremely confusing and holds back the progress of too many students. Leaders are not clear how or why students are set in two distinct bands in each year group.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The behaviour and safety of students has improved significantly as a result of the new behaviour policy implemented from January 2015. All aspects of basic welfare, and health and safety, which were identified as weaknesses at the previous monitoring inspection, have been tackled successfully. For example, the food technology room was out of use for six weeks while it was deep cleaned, refurbished, redecorated and made safer.

Attendance has improved in the current school year to date (95.6%) compared to the same period last year (94.7%) and remains above the national average.

Every class teacher is now responsible for managing behaviour in lessons, in line with the agreed policy. At the end of each lesson, students are awarded points in line with agreed behaviour expectations, and teachers record this detail against each student's name on a centrally managed software program. Students gain rewards or are subject to sanctions based on the points they accrue. Senior leaders are now able to monitor effectively where behaviour 'hotspots' occur and which members of staff need support. Students and adults overwhelmingly identified the new behaviour policy as a major step forward.

One consequence of the new policy has been the increase in temporary exclusions and detentions following its implementation, as some students test the new, more clearly defined boundaries.

Lunchtime arrangements are improved; those students spoken to all agreed that movement in and around the lunchrooms was better and safer.

Work has been undertaken to improve transition arrangements for Year 6 students, including appointing current Year 7 students as ambassadors and buddies and improving links with primary schools.

The work of the revised pastoral team is developing and includes a stronger focus on capturing the views of students and engaging them in the work of the school; for example, as prefects, head boy and girl, and participating in appointment panels.

Changes to religious studies are having a very positive impact on students. In a discussion with Year 10 GCSE religious studies students, the young people displayed exceptional levels of tolerance and understanding of other peoples' views and their own. They spoke articulately and sensitively about their understanding of jihad, of Muslim dress codes, and of the supremacy of the rule of British law. School leaders continue to review the curriculum to ensure that fundamental British values are integrated into subjects, and they are developing a good range of training and materials to support staff and students. However, they are not complacent and continue to identify and refer to other agencies individual students whose views are of concern. Leaders work very closely with the Prevent officer in general and in specific cases. Training for staff on Prevent and safeguarding continues.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Very strong, strategic leadership by the trustees, local governing body, executive principal and interim principal continues to drive the academy forward at a rapid pace.

The new local governing body is up and running and meets regularly. Its high calibre members are highly visible in the school and are taking on specific roles and responsibilities. They are already having an impact; for example, in producing a governors' safeguarding audit checklist and undertaking safeguarding reviews.

Trustees and governors have agreed the formal sponsorship of the academy by the ARK network with effect from September 2015. Trustees are keen to ensure that the close links with local schools also continue and they have secured additional support from King Edward VI Five Ways Academy.

Leaders have employed an external consultant to train all staff on behaviour management, produce and implement the behaviour policy and train staff in the use

of the software program. The positive impact of this decision is evident around the academy.

Assemblies have been revised and planned for the terms ahead to ensure that major festivals and events, and fundamental British values, are covered. A separate reflection room has been established for students of all faiths and none, who wish to use it during Friday prayer time.

Focus groups looking at fundamental British values have been established to review the curriculum on offer. So far, religious studies have been redeveloped for students in Years 7 and 8.

A new induction programme for all new long-term supply staff has been devised and put in place to minimise disruption to students' learning and progress. Staffing issues remain a grave concern. Several senior and middle leadership posts are vacant and middle leadership, generally, is weak, especially subject leadership. Leadership of mathematics is inadequate.

### **External support**

The Department for Education continues to work closely with the academy. It has worked with the trustees to secure sponsorship of the academy by the ARK network.

The Education Commissioner for Birmingham is working with the academy to broker support and to alleviate recruitment problems. He is also facilitating enhanced partnerships with Birmingham employers and higher education institutions. The resilience officer at the local authority works closely with staff and governors on safeguarding issues.

There has been limited direct involvement in the academy by Birmingham City Council; however, the local authority has supported Park View Trustees at a strategic level.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- As a matter of urgency, the academy should review and revise the provision for Year 9 mathematics.