

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



8 January 2019

Ms Newman
Ark William Parker Academy
Parkstone Road
Hastings
East Sussex
TN34 2NT

Dear Ms Newman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ark William Parker Academy

Following my visit to your school on 17 December 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received two successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders, governors and the trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to ensure that:

- the recent improvements in teaching, learning and assessment lead to increased rates of progress for current pupils
- pupils' behaviour continues to improve and exclusion rates are further reduced.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the executive principal, senior leaders, the Ark director of secondary education, and the chair of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I also met with groups of pupils and staff.

I visited classrooms with you and scrutinised a sample of pupils' work. I reviewed safeguarding procedures at the school and evaluated documents provided by leaders.

Context

Since the last inspection, the school has opened a consultation on a proposal to merge with Ark Helenswood Academy, one of a number of schools run by the international children's charity known as Ark. The consultation closed on 30 October 2018 and the school is currently awaiting a decision from the Department for Education.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, you have made steady improvements to the school. Together with the executive principal, you have evaluated the improvements you have made and created a purposeful school improvement plan. You have successfully recruited a number of new teachers and have provided effective training so that they follow the higher standards you insist upon.

Leaders were disappointed with pupils' progress at the end of key stage 4 in 2018. Although attainment increased in several subjects, including English, mathematics, history and geography, overall progress rates remained low. Nevertheless, you have galvanised staff and leaders into continuing to work hard in order to improve the school.

Rightly, you have prioritised the improvement of pupils' behaviour through a more consistently applied behaviour policy. Consequently, pupils' behaviour is improving. You have made sure that staff adeptly supervise pupils. This means that pupils behave well at social times. They socialise sensibly and behave respectfully towards staff. Pupils move between lessons purposefully and behave well in assemblies. In lessons, pupils readily follow teachers' instructions, and disruption to learning has decreased. Pupils and staff recognise that teachers' higher expectations, improved behaviour systems and a more stable teacher workforce have led to calm and orderly lessons. The proportion of pupils excluded from school in the last academic year was high. However, rates of exclusion are now declining.

You have made significant improvements in teaching. Supported by the trust, you have provided high-quality training for teachers that has focused on helping teachers to apply the school's lesson-planning strategy consistently. Consequently, teachers have higher expectations and their planning increasingly meets the needs of pupils, particularly disadvantaged and most-able pupils. This was seen, for example, in science, where most-able pupils deepened their understanding of organic compounds by thinking hard about how to predict molecular formulae.

Leaders ensure that there is a greater consistency in the way teachers apply school policies. Teachers receive advice from leaders during lessons so that pupils' behaviour is quickly addressed when they are not following instructions. Teachers spoken to felt that this is supportive, and said that they appreciated the increased presence of senior leaders in lessons. The school's assessment policy is also implemented more consistently. Teachers increasingly ensure that pupils understand and reflect on the feedback they receive. Pupils spoken to said that this helps them to identify what they need to do to improve, and enables them to ask for extra help if they need it.

With the executive principal, you have monitored the quality of teaching, learning and assessment more closely so that you are able to identify subjects where pupils underachieve and where extra support for teachers is needed. You have recognised that pupils' progress in some subjects has increased. However, pupils' progress, particularly in key stage 4, is varied because of a legacy of weaker teaching from the past. You are resolute in ensuring that current pupils' progress improves.

You have worked hard to improve attendance by ensuring that your expectation that pupils attend school regularly is clearly communicated to parents. Consistently applied strategies and close monitoring have led to a reduction in the proportion of pupils absent and persistently absent. In 2017/18, attendance increased so that it was similar to the national average for secondary schools.

External support

The Ark trust provides a range of increasingly effective support for teachers and leaders. The regional director monitors the impact of improvements and provides challenge and support for leaders. The trust also provides training and development opportunities for staff. Notably, moderation procedures, organised across a number of schools, have made sure that leaders are assured of the validity of teachers' assessments.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the director of education for the Diocese of Chichester, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for East Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Harry Ingham
Her Majesty's Inspector