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12 January 2017

Mrs Victoria Twort  
Acting head of school  
Ark Chamberlain Primary Academy  
Oldknow Road  
Small Heath  
Birmingham  
West Midlands  
B10 0HU

Dear Mrs Twort

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Ark Chamberlain Primary Academy**

Following my visit with Michael Appleby, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 6 to 7 December 2016, 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 that have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in June 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that 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:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

Having considered all the evidence, the school may appoint no more than two newly qualified teachers. This will be reviewed the next time the school is monitored.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the local governing board, the regional director of Birmingham Primaries at Ark Schools, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in June 2015.**

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise the attainment and progress of pupils, especially in writing, by ensuring that:
  - work is matched to pupils’ different abilities and takes into account their starting points
  - pupils are given more opportunities to write at length across a range of subjects
  - the most able pupils are provided with appropriate challenge and the less able are given the support they need
  - disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are given the guidance they need to make good progress
  - the feedback teachers give to pupils consistently guides them on what they need to do to improve their work
  - the academy is less dependent on temporary supply teachers.
- Improve safeguarding procedures by:
  - providing training for all staff in safeguarding, child protection and the potential risks of radicalisation and extremism
  - ensuring that all staff are appropriately trained in issues of health and safety
  - ensuring that all staff and leaders are fully aware of child protection procedures
  - improving the links between the academy’s designated lead for safeguarding and the governing body.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - providing training and support for leaders to develop and fulfil their roles
  - clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the governing body and ensuring it holds leaders to account for their actions
  - effectively monitoring the impact of the pupil premium to ensure that it provides value for money
  - ensuring that the academy has a stable and sustainable leadership team which is not reliant on external support
  - ensuring that the academy has a realistic view of its strengths and weaknesses and devises plans to address its priorities for improvement.

An external review of governance, including the use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 6 to 7 December 2016**

### **Evidence**

In addition to observing lessons, some of them jointly with the acting head of school and the assistant principal in charge of teaching and learning, inspectors scrutinised documents and pupils' work in books. Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, head of school, senior leaders and some members of the middle leadership team. An inspector met with a group of pupils to hear them read and talk about their work and progress. A meeting was held with the chair of the local governing board and a senior representative of Ark Schools, the multi-academy trust. Staff vetting and safeguarding procedures were examined.

The foci of this monitoring inspection were: the impact that teaching is having on pupils' achievement; how well senior leaders and governors are managing staff changes; and the extent to which teaching is improving across the school.

### **Context**

There have been significant changes to staffing and leadership since the last monitoring inspection. The principal at the time of the previous monitoring inspection left at the end of the summer term. Ark Schools put in place interim leadership arrangements. The executive headteacher, one of Ark's regional directors, and the acting head of school, formerly one of the assistant principals, are temporarily leading and managing the school until a permanent headteacher is appointed. Since the previous monitoring inspection in June 2016, the school has appointed more permanent teachers to replace teachers who left and to fill vacancies in classes that were taught by temporary supply teachers. At the time of this monitoring inspection, there has been a significant reduction in the use of supply teachers.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Since the previous monitoring inspection, Ark Schools and the local governing board have intervened with more urgency to address the long-standing disruption caused by high staff turnover and instability. Until now, the overuse of supply teachers and staff instability have distracted leaders' efforts to sustain improvements to the quality of teaching in all classes. The executive headteacher and acting head of school have been well supported by the senior leadership team. The vice principal and assistant principals are now teaching in Year 6 classes so they can lead by their example to improve teaching and learning across the school. As a result of these important changes, there has been a significant reduction in the use of supply teachers, resulting in more consistency and higher expectations in most classes.

Leaders have appointed more permanent teachers and have redeployed and reviewed the role of middle leaders. This has improved the management and oversight of teaching in all four year groups. There is now much sharper and

regular monitoring of lessons and of pupils' work in books. Heads of year and subject leaders are now identifying with increasing accuracy pupils who need to catch up, as well as setting more ambitious learning targets for pupils to aim for.

The appointment of permanent class teachers and some middle leaders has strengthened the teaching. One notable feature has been a renewed focus on improving teachers' subject expertise. The acting head of school and executive headteacher have identified and appointed new middle leaders or re-assigned mentoring or leadership roles to existing staff who have the expertise to support and improve teaching. The heads of English and mathematics, for example, have secure subject expertise in their respective areas. These, and other middle leaders such as heads of year, are now much more involved in mentoring and coaching teachers. This is having a positive effect on improving the consistency of practice in lessons and improves teachers' subject expertise. There is still room for improvement, particularly in mathematics, as some teachers lack the knowledge and expertise to extend pupils' understanding so they learn at greater depth. This particularly affects the most able pupils and those who are close to reaching age-related standards.

Staff morale is high and there is a positive atmosphere in the school, with a determination among most staff to continue improving outcomes for pupils. However, leaders are realistic and understand that there is still a great deal to do to make sure that all pupils achieve as well as they should as standards in all year groups remain too low.

Staff training, teacher mentoring and coaching and more robust oversight of teachers' performance and pupils' progress are having a positive impact. The executive headteacher and acting head of school have brought greater clarity to leaders' roles at all levels. Heads of year regularly lead co-planning sessions with the teachers in their year groups and assistant principals have clearly defined responsibilities that are understood by the staff. One of these responsibilities is to manage assessment systems. This has been successful as the assistant principal in charge of assessment has implemented clear and robust evaluations and analyses of the progress and performance of all groups and individual pupils in all classes. The analysis is also displayed on charts in classrooms showing the number of pupils reaching age-related standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The chart is presented as a Venn diagram so that leaders and teachers can see which pupils need targeted support or special booster work to help them catch up on previously lost ground. There are early indications that this has also improved the way teachers plan their lessons. However, there are still weaknesses in some of the teaching. Although there has been a significant reduction in the amount of inadequate teaching, leaders have still to address this further to make sure that all teachers provide the right level of challenge in lessons.

As reported previously, governors continue to exercise their roles and responsibilities and hold school leaders to account. Regular reviews and reports to the local governing board are supplemented now with more detailed and accurate

assessments of pupils' progress and teachers' performance. Subject action plans include clear measures of success and target specific groups, such as the disadvantaged and most able pupils, to ensure that teaching and interventions are the right ones to help pupils make more rapid progress than previously.

The oversight and management of special educational needs provision has improved. The monitoring of pupils' needs is sharper than previously and intervention programmes are now better matched to pupils' individual needs. Records show that the assistant principal in charge of inclusion and the coordinator for special educational needs have set out clearly defined categories of support to help pupils meet their learning targets. However, there is still a mixed picture across classes, reflecting inconsistent expectations and variable quality of support provided by teachers and teaching assistants, particularly in some Year 3 and Year 4 classes.

Priorities in the school's improvement plan and the subject and year group action plans are clear and consistent and include accurate identification of the most immediate priorities. This monitoring inspection has found a more focused determination by leaders and the local governing board to improve teaching and pupil outcomes. The acting head of school has made a good start and maintained staff morale during a period of change and upheaval. Staffing stability has also established continuity for pupils. There is now a cohesive senior and middle leadership team who are all pulling together to maintain the current momentum of improvement to teaching.

The curriculum is enriched by a range of music, as well as other creative and performing arts, sport and extra-curricular activities. Pupils commented to inspectors on how much they enjoy using the school's radio station, which enables pupils to broadcast news and events across the school. This is an innovative and very positive activity that improves pupils' speech and language skills as well as their self-confidence. Pupils are also encouraged to contribute to the school newspaper, the Ark Chronicle, which is an enjoyable endeavour for the whole-school community, enabling pupils to improve their literacy and writing skills.

As reported at the time of the previous monitoring inspection, safeguarding continues to be robust and effective. There are clear links between the school's designated safeguarding lead and the local governing board.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

The school's monitoring records show that teaching is improving but there are still inconsistencies. Many pupils are starting to catch up on lost ground in most classes but not at the same rate, reflecting inconsistencies in teachers' expectations.

The interim leadership arrangements that have been put in place since the previous monitoring inspection have significantly strengthened the teaching in Years 5 and 6. To a lesser extent there have been improvements too in Years 3 and 4, but there remain weaknesses in some classes that are stalling pupils' learning and progress.

Where learning is most effective, the teaching provides challenge and good quality support from teachers and teaching assistants. Expectations are higher in those classes where the pace of learning is more productive because pupils are expected to complete tasks and go on to more challenging extension work. Sometimes, learning continues to be hampered because teaching and support does not ensure that pupils do enough work. As a result, time is wasted. Pupils do not disturb others because behaviour is usually good but their concentration wanders and they either chat to their classmates or take time to complete even the simplest of tasks when left unchallenged.

Teachers are now providing more opportunities for pupils to write independently and time for them to edit and improve their writing. The quality of handwriting and the form and structure of writing, as reported at the time of the previous monitoring inspection, continues to improve. There are increasing opportunities in most classes for pupils to talk about their writing and to share ideas with their classmates. However, in some lessons, discussions are limited to short question and answer sessions with few opportunities for pupils to articulate or explain themselves fully.

The teaching of phonics and targeted interventions in Years 3 and 4 are starting to help pupils who struggle to read independently. However, more generally, pupils across the school are not reading often or widely enough. Pupils use dictionaries and thesauruses often to find the meaning of words or to look for alternative words when constructing complex sentences. However, those pupils who have limited vocabulary have not been taught to look up words efficiently. For example, some pupils were observed thumbing through dictionaries page-by-page rather than using alphabetical order.

At the time of this monitoring inspection, the school is much less dependent on the use of supply teachers which provides pupils with continuity and more consistent expectations in lessons. The new and much improved assessment systems are helping teachers to plan lessons and work for pupils of all abilities. However, some teachers are not offering the right level of challenge, particularly for pupils capable of reaching or exceeding age-related standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

### **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

Despite many staff changes, pupils explained how much they enjoy their lessons and extra-curricular activities. Pupils' enjoyment of school and learning is also reflected in above average attendance rates and low levels of persistent absenteeism.

Pupils form friendships easily. They are polite and courteous to their classmates and adults. Boys and girls cooperate very well and work together in lessons. In most of the lessons observed, pupils were busy and productive. They happily engage in conversations with others when on task, but in some lessons they are not always

expected to complete enough work and sit for long periods doing very little.

Leaders and teachers provide a curriculum that is stimulating and holds pupils' interest and enthusiasm. There are, for example, good opportunities for pupils to learn to play a musical instrument or engage in the performing and creative arts and sport. In many lessons, tasks are varied and stimulating, engaging pupils' interest and resulting in more purposeful learning behaviour, but this is not yet consistent practice reflecting inconsistent expectations for work and progress.

Pupils are well cared for and enjoy school. They are safe and secure because staff are well trained in safeguarding and child protection. There are good safety arrangements in place before and after school. For example, adults wear coloured tabards at breaktimes and after school when escorting pupils and handing them over to their parents. The school positions wardens by the school gate to make sure that pupils cross the road safely with their parents and carers.

Pupils are very aware of safe practices when using computers or other media. There are positive and trusting relationships between pupils and staff.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

There is a mixed picture to report following the most recent unvalidated national assessment results in 2016. Although the school met national floor standards in 2015 (these are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2), assessments show that standards in reading, writing and mathematics were well below national figures in 2016.

Current assessments show that Ark Schools, leaders and teachers are acting with more urgency to improve pupils' learning and raise standards. Current progress measures in most classes show signs of improvement and standards are on track to be higher in Years 5 and 6 compared with last year's national assessments. However, improvements are uneven across classes, subjects and pupil groups, reflecting the inconsistent quality of teaching and support. For example, the school's assessments show that pupils who find learning difficult or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make more progress than pupils who have the capability to reach or exceed age-related standards. In Years 5 and 6, pupils who are capable of reaching or exceeding age-related standards are catching up on lost ground in writing and mathematics but less so in reading. Pupils across the school make better progress in writing compared with reading. In mathematics, the most able pupils make more progress in Years 5 and 6 compared with Years 3 and 4. This uneven picture points to an overall profile of steady improvement but there are many pupils who still have a lot of ground to catch up.

There are differences between the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils and others nationally who are not disadvantaged. Again, an uneven or patchy picture emerges when looking at pupils' outcomes across the school. In some

classes in Years 3 and 4, the teaching is more ambitious and challenging, so differences between disadvantaged pupils and others are diminishing. In other Year 3 and Year 4 classes, however, this is not yet the case. In Years 5 and 6, there is greater consistency so that pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are starting to make more progress than previously. For most year groups, pupils who read independently do not always do so with full understanding. Pupils' limited vocabulary reflects the fact that most are learning English as an additional language but do not read enough challenging or varied texts and books to improve their speech, language and vocabulary. In mathematics, pupils make more progress when exposed to skilled and effective teaching and less progress where teachers' subject expertise is lacking.

### **External support**

Ark Schools has intervened to provide extensive and effective support to help resolve difficult staffing issues. The trust plays a significant role in challenging both leaders and governors to improve teaching and pupils' outcomes. Recent staff appointments and the re-assignment of senior leaders to more direct teaching roles have strengthened the teaching. The acting head of school is maintaining staff morale very well and is improving the school's leadership capacity. Effective and well-devised professional development and staff training are providing staff with good opportunities to see and share best practice.