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Peter Haylock
Executive Principal
Ark Burlington Danes Academy
Wood Lane
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Dear Mr Haylock

No formal designation inspection of Ark Burlington Danes Academy

Following my visit to your school with Tim McLoughlin and Anne Hudson, Ofsted Inspectors, on 26 February 2020, 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 me and the time you took to discuss behaviour in your school.

The inspection was carried out in accordance with the no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills was concerned about behaviour at the school.

Evidence

Inspectors considered evidence that included:

- observations of pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning in lessons
- observations of pupils' behaviour throughout the day, including discussions with pupils
- documentary evidence
- discussions with school leaders, the chair of governors and staff.

Having evaluated the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers have taken effective action to improve behaviour and secure consistently positive attitudes to learning.

Context

Part of the Ark multi-academy trust, this all-through Church of England school has 1,319 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Around a third of the pupils speak English as an additional language and just over half are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with an education and health care plan, is broadly average. Levels of pupil mobility are slightly higher than average. The academy does not report any significant difficulties with recruiting and retaining staff.

The principal and executive principal have been in post since September 2018. A new head of primary is due to take up post in May 2020. The principal was unwell and not present at school on the day of this inspection. Because of issues raised in and since the last inspection in October 2018, this inspection focused largely on the secondary phase. However, behaviour in the primary phase and the sixth form was also considered by inspectors.

Behaviour and attitudes

Leaders and governors are fully aware that behaviour is a significant area for improvement, particularly in the secondary phase of the academy. The secondary regional trust director, executive principal and chair of governors are open and honest about the challenges. They are clear about the changes that were needed and the impact these have had to date. They are equally aware that much more still needs to be done.

Minutes of governing body meetings show challenge to leaders about pupils' behaviour and the way it is managed. Governors have been very clear about their concerns, including how they have been kept informed by leaders. A new vice-principal and a new designated safeguarding lead took up their posts in September 2019. They are purposeful and are starting to make a difference; they are well supported by the executive principal and the secondary regional director. Clear systems and strategies are in place for identifying, dealing with and reporting poor behaviour. The secondary behaviour policy was revised in September 2019 and a further 'hard reset' of expectations communicated to staff in January. The school site is secure; and classrooms and communal areas are generally well maintained.

Behaviour seen around the school site was orderly and safe, including at lesson changeovers and at breaktimes. In response to concerns from staff, leaders have put extensive rotas in place to ensure that the corridors and open spaces around the school are always supervised. Expected routines are clear. The system of 'line-ups' at various points during the day, including on arrival and departure from school, is helpful in establishing a sense of order and to give a punctual start to the school day. However, these are not always carried out as swiftly or efficiently as they might

be. Consequently, punctuality to lessons varies and this provides pupils with opportunities to misbehave.

Inspectors noted that some staff including heads of year are adept at moving pupils on and instilling a cheerful sense of purpose as they move to lessons. Other staff seem more hesitant to challenge, or they give instructions in a manner that brings a negative response from pupils. This also delays the start of lessons. Pupils who spoke to inspectors confirmed all this, commenting on the inconsistency with which members of staff behave and speak to them. Ensuring a consistent staff culture of good behaviour management is a key area for improvement.

Pupils did not express concerns about bullying. They said that equalities are promoted well. Again, though, they were not confident that all staff would successfully deal with bullying incidents if these occurred. They were much more positive about the recent introduction of pupil bullying advocates and peer mediators.

The majority of pupils take care with their personal presentation. This pride is reflected through work in their books. Attitudes to learning in lessons were much more variable. As a rule, pupils came to lessons equipped and prepared to learn. In some classrooms visited, pupils' behaviour was very positive. Behaviour and attitudes seen in primary classrooms and in the sixth form were strong. However, in other cases, off-task talking had a detrimental effect on the learning environment. This included talking over the teacher or while other pupils were presenting their work. Teachers observed were consistent in their use of the behaviour management strategies and sanctions outlined in the school's behaviour policy. Pupils told inspectors they feel that the use of rewards is much less frequent than the use of sanctions. Inspectors agree. It was also very clear that, where off-task behaviour was most prevalent, it was where the learning tasks were mundane. Pupils talked and engaged in silly behaviour because the curriculum and the work they were given was not demanding enough.

Inspectors spoke to a group of pupils who have previously shown inappropriate behaviour but whose attitudes have been improved significantly by leaders and staff. These pupils spoke positively about the support they had been given. They said that the mentoring system, and the close involvement of their parents, played an important part in helping them to improve. These, and other pupils, said that they felt safe, although they recognised that some pupils' physical behaviour could sometimes be intimidating. Sixth-form students said that they had noticed improvements in pupils' behaviour, particularly since the start of this school year.

Attendance has improved this year, particularly in the secondary phase. This includes in the sixth form and particularly in Year 11. Persistent absence has fallen. The new behaviour policy saw an initial rise in fixed-term exclusions as a result of increased expectations. The school's records show that, although they are still too high, exclusions have reduced this term. This is partly through using on-site 'internal

inclusion' which sanctions pupils for their misdemeanours but enables them to remain in school and continue learning. The strategy is having a positive effect. Pupils in the inclusion room during the inspection made it clear that they had no wish to repeat the experience.

At present, on-site inclusion is held in part of the school library. This is not ideal as it limits the library's use as an important learning resource for other pupils. The 'reflection room' – part of the previous behaviour strategy – remains in use. The number of pupils referred to this room has decreased dramatically. However, the purpose of this room is not always clear to staff or to pupils. Pupils are placed there for a variety of different reasons not all linked to poor behaviour. A further review by leaders of the arrangements for internal inclusion and 'reflection' is recommended.

Very few pupils are taken off the school roll. Leaders make use of short alternative provision placements as part of their strategy for reintegrating pupils after exclusion. Pupils are monitored regularly while they are excluded or educated off-site. For most, this strategy is successful although a small number stay at placements for too long or for repeated periods. Leaders have recently considered the appropriateness of using online alternative provision as a way of reintegrating excluded pupils. They have rightly decided to phase this out.

Staff who talked informally to inspectors remain concerned and uncomfortable about some pupils' behaviour. Some said that they lack confidence in the way that behaviour is managed and say that communication between leaders and staff is not always clear or helpful. The school's records show clearly that there have been some physical altercations and other unacceptable incidents during the school day and that the majority of senior leaders have acted swiftly and appropriately in response.

The governing body is fully aware of these issues. Governors have challenged leaders about the improvements needed. They have asked the right questions. The governing body has sought better communication from leaders; new appointments to the leadership team are starting to provide this. Governors and the trust have put training and support in place for individual leaders where it is needed, and they are holding leaders to account. Nevertheless, they know that improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes remains the school's biggest and most pressing priority.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to reduce the number of exclusions, internal inclusions, and referrals to the 'reflection' room due to inappropriate behaviour. Leaders should also undertake a review of the location of the internal inclusion room, and the purpose and use of the 'reflection' room.
- Governors should review the effectiveness of leaders' communication with and support for staff about behaviour. Leaders should review the consistency of the

way that staff communicate about and manage pupils' behaviour. Leaders should put in place additional, bespoke training and support where it is needed.

- Leaders should complete the phasing out of online alternative provision, ensuring that all placements are appropriate for promoting pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Leaders and governors should ensure that all discussions, planning and training about the quality of education take full account of the links between effective learning and good behaviour.
- Leaders and staff should reduce the time taken for 'line-ups' and sharpen pupil movement between lessons, so that learning time is not wasted and opportunities for misbehaviour are minimised.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector