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17 September 2021

Liam Collins  
Principal  
Ark Alexandra Academy  
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William Parker Campus  
Hastings  
East Sussex  
TN34 2PG

Dear Mr Collins

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ark Alexandra Academy**

Following my visit to your school on 13 July 2021, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the monitoring 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 to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8(2) 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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. I discussed the impact of the pandemic with you and have taken that into account in my evaluation.

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

**Leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action in order for the school to become a good school.**

The school should take further action to:

- continue to reduce fixed-term exclusions and persistent absence
- ensure that the curriculum is planned and sequenced consistently well in all subjects so that pupils build up their knowledge and skills over time.

## **Context**

Since the last section 5 inspection in October 2017, Ark Helenswood Academy and the Ark William Parker Academy have amalgamated to form Ark Alexandra Academy. You started at the school in September 2020. The senior leadership team has been restructured and now consists of a principal, one associate principal, two vice principals and four assistant principals. The local governing body was reconstituted in September 2019. Since then, three new governors have joined.

## **Main findings**

Since being appointed, you and your leadership team have shown unwavering determination to do what is necessary to provide pupils with a better education. Staff share your determination. They feel valued and well supported by leaders. Parents have an increasingly positive view of the school.

Pupils are learning and remembering more of what they learn. Leaders have introduced renewed approaches to teaching knowledge and concepts. Teachers are using these approaches more consistently. During the lessons I visited, teachers used well-thought-through explanations to enthuse and interest pupils. Teachers also assessed pupils' learning and dealt with any misconceptions quickly.

Pupils are concentrating more in lessons. They are more focused on their work and there are fewer disruptions to learning. Staff and parents agree that leaders manage behaviour well. The pupils I spoke with told me that they feel safe in school. They also said that bullying does not happen often and that if it does, it is dealt with well.

Leaders have developed their support for pupils who are at risk of exclusion. Consequently, the proportion of pupils being excluded has reduced significantly over the past year. However, it still remains the case that too many pupils are excluded from school for a fixed term.

You have introduced a revised personal, social and health education curriculum this year. Pupils appreciate these lessons and have developed their understanding of a range of issues, such as e-safety, equality and respect. Pupils who need extra support with managing their worries have found the school's new counselling service useful.

Together with the trust, you have supported subject leaders in developing their understanding of curriculum design. Trust specialists have helped subject leaders to decide how to structure learning. However, curriculum design is not yet consistently strong in all subjects. As a result, in subjects such as languages, pupils do not learn as well as they could.

You decided that pupils in Year 13 were no longer required to attend school after the summer half-term holiday because they had finished their examinations. Staff met with each student to discuss their next steps in education, training or employment. Pupils in Year 11 who were not joining the school's sixth form, were no longer required to attend after 25 June 2021. Those who were joining the sixth form started their studies from this date.

You have ensured that reading is now a priority. You have identified pupils who enter Year 7 unable to read well and have put measures in place to improve their reading. Leaders are determined to further improve reading in the new academic year.

Leaders have developed their approach to tackling pupils' poor attendance. They have adjusted this in response to the challenges families have faced during the national pandemic. Pupils' attendance has increased this year. However, there are still too many pupils who are persistently absent from school.

Governors have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are knowledgeable about the local area and the needs of pupils. Governors have been resolute in challenging and supporting leaders.

### **Additional support**

The trust has made a strong contribution to the development of the school. The trust's regional director of education provides frequent leadership support and has closely monitored the changes that you have made. Leaders from other schools within the trust have provided high-quality training for staff, particularly in embedding the new teaching expectations that you have introduced.

You have also worked closely with the diocese and the local authority on reviewing and evaluating the improvements you have made. You have found this support a helpful addition to your own evaluations of the schools' strengths and weaknesses.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders, staff, governors, a representative from the trust and a representative from the Diocese of Chichester to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's improvement plan. I visited lessons with a senior leader to observe learning. I also spoke to a group of pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees, and the chief executive officer of the Ark 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 reports website.

Yours sincerely

Harry Ingham  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**