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Miss J Steele  
Headteacher  
Ark Academy  
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Wembley  
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Dear Miss Steele

Academies initiative: monitoring inspection to Ark Academy

## Introduction

Following my visit with Jane Wotherspoon HMI to your academy on 12-13 January 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was a first monitoring inspection in connection with the academies initiative.

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, headteacher, chair of local governing body, a representative of the sponsors, staff, parents and pupils.

## Context

Ark Academy opened in September 2008 to Reception children. The academy has a current roll of 116 pupils in two Reception and two Year 1 classes. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and there is a larger proportion of pupils from ethnic minority groups than is found nationally. The academy has specialisms in mathematics and citizenship and is located in high quality, specialist temporary accommodation. The brand new, purpose built learning environment is under construction on the same site and is due to open in September 2010 ready for the first intake of Year 7 pupils. The academy is growing each year with a planned eventual roll of 1630. The academy principal and a number of senior leaders have now been appointed and the staff is increasing as the academy grows.

## Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Pupils in the Reception achieve learning goals that are higher than expected for their age. This is sustained in Year 1 where attainment is above average. Pupils are developing good learning habits. They are keen to contribute and enjoy the range of activities available. Pupils have a very positive view of the academy and are confident learners. The positive ethos within the academy and the enthusiasm for learning of pupils assists them in making good progress. There are no significant differences in the attainment of the various groups within the academy. The headteacher monitors this well.

## Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils are very polite, friendly, and helpful to one another. They generally behave well in lessons, although their attention is reduced when they have to sit or listen for too long. Attendance is low but is improving. The academy is working with parents to encourage increased attendance but some parents are not always conscientious about ensuring good attendance. Pupils have a strong sense of community and an appreciation of different cultures. This is promoted well within the academy.

## The effectiveness of provision

Teachers are developing good practice in the classroom with a collaborative approach to planning which draws on the strengths from all staff. There are very warm and positive relationships between staff and pupils that demonstrate a high level of care and mutual respect. This, along with high quality displays celebrating success, ensures the creation of a positive learning environment. Planning is clear and teachers work hard to ensure that pupils have interesting learning experiences. The use of real applications of mathematics for example gave pupils a clear understanding of subtraction as they calculated the different distances that cars travelled down a ramp. This approach helped pupils to understand the context of learning and apply it effectively. Teachers have produced a range of high quality resources and use the interactive white boards particularly well. However, teachers' plans to cater for the range of pupil abilities are not always implemented effectively and opportunities to extend learning are not always taken. Greater access to outdoor learning areas is also needed for Reception pupils. Inspectors observed very effective practice by teaching assistants that promoted learning and engaged pupils in exciting and varied activities. Teaching assistants have built positive relationships with pupils and know the needs of individuals well. Further training is planned to ensure that all teaching assistants are able to secure higher levels of progress when leading small group work.

The academy has An appropriate focus on literacy and numeracy. This is having a positive impact on pupils. There is an extended day for pupils which parents have found to be a positive feature of the academy. In addition to the extended

timetabled programme, there are a range of additional clubs and activities that are well organised and well attended by pupils.

The academy has developed a very effective system to track and analyse the attainment and progress of pupils. The assessments by teachers are increasingly accurate and provide information for informed discussion about the progress of the academy and of groups of learners. This helps the academy to implement appropriate interventions effectively.

There is a great deal of hard work undertaken to ensure pupils settle quickly and successfully. Pupils and parents feel that the academy is a friendly open and caring place. Current government safeguarding regulations are however not fully met.

### The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher has demonstrated a clear vision in establishing strong foundations for the future of the academy. She has worked hard with others to successfully establish a positive, growing and vibrant place of learning. Much has been achieved in the first four terms. Morale is high amongst staff, and the enthusiasm to ensure all pupils achieve is strong. Staff are evaluative and analyse their practice continually. The headteacher knows the academy's strengths and areas for development well. Clear priorities have been established and she monitors the day-to-day work effectively, challenging appropriately. She is determined to ensure pupils are provided with high quality experiences. The leadership of numeracy and literacy is developing well and there are examples of good collaborative planning and peer observations that are helping the development of good practice.

The academy's local governing body has recently been established and will grow in number over the coming years. The chair of governors is clear about the responsibilities and about the need to challenge further and hold the academy fully to account. A wide range of policies have been established in the academy and plans to monitor their effectiveness are in place. The governing body does however need to ensure that the impact of policies is assessed - particularly policies relating to safeguarding and equality. The leadership has established many successful features of the academy in a very short time but has not monitored effectively some key policies. As such it has demonstrated a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

### External support

Leaders in the academy have made good use of help and support from a range of external consultants and across the network of Ark Academies. This has assisted the academy to develop well and has been appreciated by the headteacher and the subject coordinators in the academy.

## Main Judgements

The academy has made good progress towards raising standards. However, the academy's failure to meet all current government requirements with regard to safeguarding has raised significant concerns and I am recommending a return visit.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that all statutory requirements for the safeguarding of pupils are immediately met
- To ensure the support provided by learning assistants is consistent and matches the high quality of the best practitioners in the academy.
- Ensure that governors monitor the effective implementation and assess the impact of their policies.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Academies Group at the Department for Children, Schools and Families. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Paul Scott  
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc chair of governors  
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