

Press release

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For immediate use

Statement on ARK William Parker Academy Reorganisation

This week the Principal of ARK William Parker Academy met with staff to discuss a planned restructure. Such a decision is never easy, but is the result of the financial pressure on the school as a result of falling student numbers.

ARK William Parker Academy opened in September 2013, replacing William Parker Sports College which Ofsted had placed in special measures in November 2012 having assessed the school as inadequate. The new leadership of the school is determined to turn this around.

The Ofsted report understandably affected parental confidence and the school is undersubscribed. Admissions have fallen steadily and this year we have only 130 children in year 7 despite a published admissions number of 240.

Falling student numbers have a significant impact on the school budget. The predecessor school was carrying a structural deficit of approximately £200,000. With falling student numbers, the academy anticipates a deficit of more than £500,000 for the academic year 2013/14.

In addition, the current staffing structure indicates disproportionate numbers of roles that do not directly strengthen teaching and learning, which Ofsted has said we need to improve. In the new structure, staff roles will be focussed on raising the standards of teaching and ensuring a safe and supportive environment for students.

A reorganisation proposal was submitted to the local governing body and approved on 3 December 2013. This will result in a reduction in headcount from 88 to 58 posts which will affect administrative and support staff. Teaching staff are not affected.

Obviously, we would like to avoid compulsory redundancies where possible and so we will be inviting voluntary redundancies and will be looking for other opportunities for staff to redeploy within the ARK Schools network. However, we do anticipate there may be some compulsory redundancies.

A dedicated service offering legal, financial and welfare advice will be provided for affected staff and new training courses will be offered starting in January.

A full consultation involving staff and trade unions will now take place to ensure the process is as fair as possible and members of staff are fully supported.

Mark Phillips, Principal at ARK William Parker Academy, said:

“Like all schools, ARK William Parker is funded on a per student basis and numbers have fallen from this Year 7 by nearly half. That means we have to take some tough decisions to ensure we’re running an efficient school offering the best education possible for our students. Student achievement and the welfare of students are our top priorities.

“We met with staff on Tuesday and outlined our plans to reduce the number of administration and support staff to reflect our lower budget. This is a difficult situation for everyone involved and we are doing everything we can to support our staff and make sure they have access to legal and financial advice, as well as welfare support and retraining as and when they need.

“Wherever possible, we will aim to redeploy staff or seek voluntary redundancies but the priority now is to make sure staff are supported and that the quality of education at the school is unaffected.”

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. ARK Schools is a network of high-achieving, non-selective schools and one of the country’s top-performing academy groups. We run 27 academies in London, Birmingham, Portsmouth and Hastings, educating around 14,500 pupils. 11 of the 12 ARK academies so far inspected by Ofsted are rated good or outstanding. Our aim is to create outstanding schools that give every pupil, regardless of their background, the opportunity to go to university or pursue the career of their choice.

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