

Our commitment to a diverse & inclusive Ark

At Ark, we believe that ensuring every child has access to an excellent education is an important way to help tackle social inequality. We are proud of our record on narrowing the achievement gap and widening opportunities. Our disadvantaged students make nearly half a grade more progress in each of their subjects than their peers nationally, and the proportion of students from poorer backgrounds going from an Ark sixth form to university is double the national average.

But we know there is more to do to tackle discrimination and promote equality, and we have a particular responsibility to make a positive difference because of the communities our schools serve. About 40% of our students are eligible for the pupil premium compared to 15% nationally, and about 70% are from an ethnic minority background compared to 30% nationally.

To underpin our work across Ark, we have therefore this year launched our own diversity and inclusion statement. It reads:

“We aim to build a diverse and inclusive organisation where everyone – staff and students – can do their best work and achieve their full potential. We want to reflect and represent diverse perspectives across our organisation because we know that doing so will make us stronger and more effective.”

We have also committed to delivering a series of commitments as part of a longer-term diversity and inclusion strategy. These include:

Improved representation

We will bring more diversity at every level of our organisation, particularly in senior leadership and governance positions. We will work to amplify parent voice in our schools and ensure our curriculum meets our students’ needs and aspirations and supports our commitment to diversity and inclusion. We will reduce bias in our people processes and further diversify our Local Governing Bodies, Ark’s Programme Boards and the ventures pipeline.

Better communication

We will promote and celebrate diversity of our organisation and create more opportunities for our staff and wider communities to discuss, engage and share our stories, our hopes and concerns. We will create more learning opportunities and we will launch a diversity and inclusion staff network for Ark central staff and provide resources for all Ark schools to do the same.

More data

We will develop and improve our systems to better understand where we are as an organisation and where we need to improve. We will seek to deepen our understanding of student and staff experiences and ensure that we review this information regularly and benchmark ourselves against others where possible.

These commitments are important but early steps, and the recruitment of a dedicated diversity & inclusion manager will help support this work across the organisation. We will provide regular reports on our progress via our annual report and other channels.