



Immediate release – Monday 9 June 2014

Statement from Park View Educational Trust on Ofsted reports on Park View, Golden Hillock and Nansen schools

On behalf of the staff, students and parents who have worked so hard to improve their schools, we are extremely disappointed to confirm that Ofsted has graded Park View, Golden Hillock and Nansen schools inadequate and placed them into Special Measures.

While we support the role of Ofsted in holding schools to account in a fair and transparent way, we wholeheartedly dispute the validity of these gradings. Park View, Golden Hillock and Nansen are categorically not inadequate schools.

Following their first unannounced inspection visit to Park View School on the 5th and 6th of March, Ofsted inspectors focused on school improvement progress and recommended further areas for development and focus.

However, it is the Trust's firm belief that when Ofsted returned unannounced to Park View on 17th March to continue that earlier inspection they approached it in a substantially different spirit. On the morning of 17th March, an INSET day, having spoken to no staff or students inspectors took the decision to escalate their visit to a full Section 5 inspection.

We believe they were working to a timeline and in a climate of suspicion, driven by the Trojan Horse letter and coupled with unproven allegations about Park View that had started to appear in the media.

This led to unprecedented lines of enquiry around the imposition of strict Islamic practices at Trust schools. These questions included asking girls whether they were forced to sit away from boys, whether the school forced them to wear headscarves and whether they were made to pray. Teachers were also directly asked whether they were homophobic, and whether elements of the syllabus in Biology and other subjects had been removed. These lines of enquiry then continued at Nansen and Golden Hillock.

The Ofsted reports find absolutely no evidence of extremism or an imposition of strict Islamic practices in our schools. We reject the judgment that not students are not being prepared to play an integrated role in modern British society.

The idea of a Trojan Horse plot has created a perfect storm for individuals and organisations with agendas around education, immigration, faith, securitisation and straightforward party politics.

There is a legitimate conversation to be had about how to drive up standards for pupils in inner-city schools, as we have done, where historically the system has failed them. There is equally a conversation to be had about the important role that school governance can play within that.

However, that is not what has happened. Instead the parents, students and staff who make up our school community, with whom we have fought hard to improve education, have effectively been



dehumanised as people have rushed to use what they think they know about our schools to rally support for their agendas.

In the weeks since the Trojan Horse letter first became public in March, Park View School in particular has been re-imagined from what it is: an 'Outstanding' school with now consistently excellent results (drawing strong praise from Sir Michael Wilshaw amongst others), to being grossly misrepresented as infiltrated by Islamist radicals and presenting a threat to the British way of life.

We still do not know how leaked drafts of our Ofsted and EFA reports reached the media in March. What we *are* clear about is that they caused our school community substantial damage by allowing the lines between purported official findings and unproven, mainly anonymous, allegations to become even more blurred.

The reported Cabinet Office enquiry into these leaks has yet to make any contact with the Trust. Any impression left that Ofsted and the Department for Education may have colluded with the media should be as much a concern for them as it is for the Trust.

The Trust does not accept the findings of the reports, which mischaracterise the schools, and is now challenging them through the appropriate legal channels.

In disputing our schools being placed in Special Measures we make the following points:

Park View, Golden Hillock and Nansen are substantially improving, not failing schools

Park View: In spite of 72% of students being eligible for Pupil Premium at Park View School, 75% of pupils achieved 5A*-Cs at GCSE (including English and Maths) in 2013. This makes it the best performing school of similar characteristics in the country. Excellent results rely on committed staff, a strong focus on teaching and learning and strong leadership, with the support of students and their families.

Golden Hillock: 52% of students achieved 5 A*-Cs at GCSE (including English and Maths) in 2013. Although the school officially joined the Trust in October 2013, it was fully supported by Park View for a number of months prior to academy conversion with the impact that results increased from 43% in 2012 to 52% (including English and Maths) in 2013. This is the highest result in the history of the school. This pass rate is expected to rise to 57% in 2014.

Nansen Primary: 49% of pupils achieved Level 4+ in KS2 SATS in 2012. Nansen Primary joined the Trust in September 2012 and the number of children achieving L4+ rose to 61% in 2013, and is forecast to rise to over 70% for 2014.

Ofsted made no judgment, nor did they find any evidence, that extremism or radicalism is promoted or tolerated in any Trust schools

Ofsted judges that Nansen Primary, Golden Hillock and Park View are not doing enough to raise students' awareness of the 'risks of extremism'. We reject this. It is also crucial to note that the



Ofsted reports make absolutely no suggestion, nor did they find any evidence, that Trust schools either promote or tolerate extremism or radicalisation.

In fact the reports detail specific examples of prevention work, including:

- Within five months of joining the Trust, all staff at Golden Hillock had received Prevent (the Government's counter-extremism programme) training. The report states, "staff have only very recently been trained in recognising signs of radicalisation and how to tailor their teaching to counter this." (GHS Ofsted 2014 page 6). The school joined the Trust in October 2013 and inspectors visited in March 2014 so we dispute the finding that this progress has been "slow".
- At Park View School the Ofsted report notes that "use, in liaison with the police, of the government's Prevent strategy" has taken place for all students in Years 7 and 8 (PVS Ofsted 2014 page 6). The report also notes that "most staff have not received training in the Prevent programme but there are plans for this to take place." (PVS Ofsted 2014 page 6). In fact this training has now taken place for all staff and, as we informed inspectors at the time, all pastoral staff received Prevent training in June 2013. Furthermore, one possible case was referred to the Prevent team in late 2013 and was found not to meet the threshold for immediate concern.
- Park View students across the school work with the Prevent team on preventing violent extremism and addressing the risks of being groomed towards having a right-wing ideology. The Prevent team have been welcomed without restriction into Park View School and have done more work at Park View than with many other schools. We reject Ofsted's judgment that Park View's work on raising students' awareness of the risks of extremism as inadequate.
- All staff at Nansen Primary have now undertaken Prevent training, which the local Prevent team advised is optional for the primary sector. This optionality is underlined by the fact that the Prevent officer advised that the Counter Terrorism Unit has no materials or guidance to support the use of Prevent within primary schools. Prevent is one part of Nansen's comprehensive safeguarding practice, in which staff are properly trained to report all causes of concern – whether they are observed or disclosed.

The Trust is clear that violent extremism is a perversion of Islam. Further evidence of Park View School's prevention work includes:

- The day after the murder of Lee Rigby in Woolwich the school held rolling assemblies for all students in which the act was condemned as outrageous and utterly wrong.
- In October of 2012 the school held a workshop for Years 9 and 10 students run by Birmingham's Play House theatre. The Tapestry workshop was funded by the Prevent strategy and supported by West Midlands Police and dealt specifically with preventing violent extremism. Details of the workshop were included in our parents' newsletter in Autumn 2012 (and can be found online at www.parkviewbham.sch.uk).



Ofsted made no judgments about students' option to pray at Park View School

There is space set aside for those who wish to pray at Park View School, and this is a matter of personal choice. Posters are displayed around the school detailing the time and place of the prayers.

The inspectors made no reference, nor did they raise any concerns with regards to prayer within their report this year. However in Park View's 2012 Ofsted report inspectors noted, "There is a wide range of opportunities for spiritual development", and they used the "voluntary Friday prayers meeting," as an example of this (PVS Ofsted 2012 page 8).

There is also space set aside at Golden Hillock School for self-directed prayer.

Ofsted made no judgment that boys and girls were segregated in lessons, or that girls are treated less favourably than boys

The Trust believes in the right to an excellent education for all. Ofsted made no judgments whatsoever that girls and boys are segregated by Trust schools, or that girls are treated less favourably.

Teaching PE separately is a school policy, as it is in most other secondary schools.

Personal Development and RE are timetabled against PE, which means they are taught separately as a matter of timetabling necessity.

In the Park View Ofsted report inspectors noted, "this is a missed opportunity for girls and boys to share opinions and discuss together some important matters that are part of their daily lives." (PVS Ofsted 2014 page 7). This is a judgment that equally could be made of any single sex school in the country and we do not believe that Park View should be singled out in this regard.

In line with trends in secondary education across the country girls' attainment in Trust schools is actually higher than boys. As we have previously stated, this simply would not be the case if girls were not getting the support they deserve.

Furthermore at Park View School there are 61 prefects – 42 of whom are girls.

Ofsted made no judgments that the teaching of Biology or any other Science was restricted

In fact inspectors noted that at Park View School "achievement in some subjects, such as home economics, was not as high as in Science and History where most able students attained particularly well." (PVS Ofsted 2014 page 5).

At Golden Hillock inspectors noted that, "in art and design, science, sport and RE teaching often inspires and motivates students to work to high standards". (GHS Ofsted 2014 page 6).

As we have previously stated, excellent exam results are quite simply not achievable if parts of the examined syllabus are being restricted.



Ofsted's judgment that governors at Nansen have removed some subjects, such as music, is a misrepresentation

This judgment refers to the period in the run-up to Key Stage 2 SATs when the school, in common with many others, places an increased focus on Maths and English with Year 6 students. This means that for a short period there is less space in the timetable for other subjects.

There is a programme of music for all year groups which includes instrument sessions, singing related to each topic, sessions on pitch and rhythm, as well as extra-curricular opportunities such as a weekly choir. Children also sing in their assemblies. Children would like to do more music and the leadership team is looking at how to introduce this.

Teaching of Music at Park View School

Students in Key Stage 3 have weekly lessons where they learn how to play keyboards, play both African and Dhol drums, sing, analyse music from many cultures and create their own music using an array of Music Technology. We have music concerts every term, where the students have an opportunity to showcase their many talents to the rest of the school. Recent activity includes a mixed group of 18 students performing at the NIA with Roger Waters 'Another Brick in the Wall' Concert and the mixed steel pan group performing in Birmingham's CBSO Centre as well as Bournville College.

Mixed groups of students are also taken regularly to concerts in Symphony Hall by the CBSO, and have been treated to a concert given in school by the entire CBSO String section.

Ofsted made no judgments that Trust schools have discriminated against women in their recruitment practices

Across the Trust as a whole there are more women in leadership positions than men. Ofsted made no judgments that female members of staff are treated less favourably than men, but stated that this was the perception of some staff. Inspectors were also provided with evidence that of the 24 members of staff appointed to Park View over the last 12 months, 14 have been women and 10 have been men.

Ofsted's judgment that students are not being prepared for life in modern Britain is a misrepresentation

The Trust's mission statement for all its schools is to, "ensure that every student develops the knowledge, skills and dispositions to pursue purposeful ambitions and fulfilling lives, enabling pupils to become integral and active members of modern society, making a valuable contribution to the wellbeing of society as a whole."

Ofsted's finding that our students are not being properly prepared for life in modern Britain is a misrepresentation. It is also substantially at odds with what they said during Park View's 2012 Ofsted



inspection. In that report inspectors described students' "excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development." They also noted that the curriculum "helps students to develop into very thoughtful, independent and confident young people". (PVS Ofsted 2012 page 4).

Park View's current Years 9, 10 and 11 students were at the school in 2012 and benefitted from this curriculum and Spiritual Moral Social and Cultural (SMSC) development. They have continued to do so. All our students have the opportunity to take part in a full range of activities and experiences in common with schools across the country.

We provided inspectors with evidence of these, many of which are detailed in Park View's parents' newsletters. These include that Park View School is:

- a registered Scouts centre
- students take part in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme
- students contribute to national fundraising events such as Red Nose Day and Macmillan coffee mornings.

Mixed groups of students go on residential trips to France, to local museums and are also taken regularly to concerts by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra at Symphony Hall. They have taken part in school versions of The Apprentice and Britain's Got Talent.

At Nansen we provided inspectors with evidence that class assemblies have looked at all major faith celebrations, as well as events on the national calendar such as Mother's Day and World Book Day. Pupils have also taken part in themed weeks around Black History Month and have raised money for national fundraising events such as Red Nose Day and Sport Relief. Nansen's Pupil Leadership representatives have set up their own school shop and also produce a termly newsletter.

We dispute Ofsted's suggestion that the school does not prepare pupils adequately for life in modern day Britain.

Across the Trust's three schools inspectors reported that they found students were polite, courteous, held doors open and said please and thank you. Students were smartly dressed and proud of their academy. "Students' attitudes to learning are generally positive and they want to succeed." (GHS Ofsted 2014 page 6).

"The behaviour of students is good. Students and staff say that behaviour has improved substantially since the opening of the academy, and this is reflected in falling numbers of students being excluded for poor behaviour." (GHS Ofsted 2014 page 6).

"Students are polite and courteous and behave well around the Academy site. They believe that relationships between students are good and that bullying is rare. The importance of countering bullying of all kinds is covered regularly in assemblies." (GHS Ofsted 2014 page 6).

In our view this is clear proof that students are being prepared to play an integrated and respectful role within society and we are very disappointed that inspectors did not make this link.



In common with schools across the country all lessons follow specifications from the National Curriculum and accredited exam boards, including Edexcel and AQA.

We are proud of our students and quite simply do not believe that Ofsted's judgment of them is one that others would reach if they visited our schools. In fact many school improvement partners and others have visited our schools and complimented our students on their maturity and readiness for learning, including visitors from Future Leaders, SSAT and the Department for Education.

And linking all of this, the Trust's focus on excellent results is rooted in the belief that with good qualifications young people stand a much better chance of playing an economically active and integrated role in society and making a valuable contribution to the communities in which they live.

Teaching of religion

Trust schools follow Birmingham's locally-agreed syllabus for teaching of religion in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, which includes visits to places of worship and class assemblies on different faiths.

At Key Stage 4 (GCSE) the Edexcel Religious Studies syllabus is taught - where both units focus on Islam.

GCSE teaching is supported by Edexcel resources which detail the kind of understanding students will need to have in order to achieve good results. This includes understanding the concepts of greater and lesser jihad and media representation around these. The content included in the syllabus and in Edexcel-approved resources is reflected in our schemes of work, which are published on our schools' websites.

GCSE achievement across the Trust is exceptional in this subject and all children continue to benefit from assemblies and visits from other faith leaders during their whole time at Park View and Golden Hillock Schools.

Our governing bodies are legitimately and appropriately involved in supporting their school's improvement plans for the benefits of students

The role of governing bodies is to help drive school improvement and their track record within Trust schools shows this is exactly what they have done. They are closely involved in supporting and challenging the head teachers, as effective governing bodies need to be. We dispute Ofsted's finding that within some of the Trust's schools they are overly-controlling, or involve themselves too fully in seeking to improve their schools.

The example for this provided in Ofsted's report on Nansen, coupled with the language used, seems almost deliberately designed to fuel misunderstanding. The report notes that Early Years staff wanted to involve children in a Nativity play and that governors "insisted on vetting" a copy of the script, advising staff that they could not use a doll as the baby Jesus. (Nansen Ofsted 2014 page 8).

In fact, no script was seen or vetted by the governors. A point was raised by a governor that some parents of Islamic background may object to their children depicting or acting God or son of God in



this way as this is contrary to the teachings of Islam. It was also stated that there would be no issue with Christian children playing that role.

As a community school Nansen has no requirement to stage a Nativity play, although it does teach about all major religions and their festivals. The governor's request was a reasonable intervention to accommodate the play in an inclusive way that recognised the needs of all children.

Views of staff

We accept that there is room for improvement across all Trust schools. In common with many schools in similar circumstances we have challenges around recruitment, staff pay and progression and embedding a new leadership and management structure following academy conversions.

However, our schools' achievements are a barometer of strong teaching methods and generally contented staff, a disillusioned workforce would soon result in standards slipping.

At Park View, for example, we are clear that many more staff expressed support to the Ofsted inspectors for the leadership team than criticised it, and that the majority of staff who spoke to the inspection team were supportive of the school and its strategic direction.

That this is not reflected in their report is, we suggest, indicative of the inspection team's approach. We believe this approach was one of ignoring evidence that contradicted their preconceived judgements and overemphasising that which confirmed them.

The Trust accepts that there is room for improvement at its schools, but categorically does not accept that any of the three schools are inadequate

The Ofsted judgment that governance – or indeed any other aspect of our schools – is inadequate is a misrepresentation.

We believe the decision to place our schools in Special Measures was the result of undue political influence – to allow the Secretary of State to intervene directly in their running.

We believe that this political influence was exerted based on a belief in a takeover plot within our schools, for which today's Ofsted reports find absolutely no evidence.

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