



Chief Executive Ark Schools

May 2026 | RBZSA





WELCOME

A letter from our Chair

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chief Executive of Ark Schools. This is a rare opportunity to lead one of the country's most influential multi-academy trusts.

Over the past two decades, under Lucy Heller's leadership, Ark has grown to become one of the largest and highest performing multi-academy trusts (MATs) in the UK, and a leading voice in education reform.

Educating nearly double the national average of children eligible for free school meals, Ark has consistently ranked among the top MATs for Key Stage 2 outcomes and has the best progress and attainment figures for a large MAT at both A-level and BTEC. Eighty-five percent of Ark's Year 13 students progress to university, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds are six times more likely to progress to a top third university than their disadvantaged peers nationally.

The next CEO will build on these strong foundations – raising outcomes further, strengthening inclusion, and growing the network so we are working where we can have the greatest impact.

Our Board is looking for an exceptional leader with the vision, integrity and operational judgement to take Ark Schools into its next chapter - someone who shares our belief that every child, whatever their background, deserves a great education and real choices in life.

If this sounds like you, we would very much welcome your application.

Tina Alexandrou

Chair of Trustees, Ark Schools

ABOUT ARK

Transforming lives through innovation in education

At Ark, we believe that every child deserves an excellent education and real choices in life. Yet for too many young people, life chances are still shaped by background and socio-economic circumstances. That conviction has driven our work from the very beginning and continues to shape everything we do across our schools and wider programmes, enabling children to fulfil their potential regardless of their starting point.

A research-led approach and an entrepreneurial mindset have defined Ark from the beginning. These principles have driven the development of a wide range of projects and partnerships, which today reach over 45 million children globally each year.

Since opening our first school two decades ago, Ark has sought to test new approaches to teaching and learning, and to extend our impact well beyond the classroom.

We are committed to continuous improvement and innovation in every aspect of our work, always striving to do more and do better for the children in our care. Insights from our schools feed directly into our national education programmes, ensuring our impact extends beyond our own communities and contributes to improving outcomes across the education system.

Read about our [history](#) and our [impact](#).

ARK IN NUMBERS

20+

years of innovating, incubating and school improvement

39

schools across the Ark network

30,000

children educated every day in Ark schools and nurseries

5.5m

children reached across the UK

45m

children impacted globally



A new leadership model

Ark is growing fast, expanding its network of schools and nurseries across the country as well as continuing to develop innovative programmes for the sector as a whole. To support our ambitions, Ark is appointing two Chief Executives: one to lead Ark Schools, and one to lead Ark, the wider charity. This structure will provide each organisation with the dedicated strategic focus it needs, while preserving the close collaboration between schools and ventures that has long been central to Ark's success. The two organisations will continue to operate as 'One Ark', with the Chief Executives working in close partnership to advance a shared mission and deepen our collective impact for the benefit of all children.

ARK SCHOOLS

Great schools for our communities.

Ark Schools is a large multi-academy trust, operating 39 primary and secondary schools across Birmingham, Hastings, London and Portsmouth. Our focus is on delivering excellent outcomes for the 30,000 children educated in Ark schools today — and growing that reach by onboarding new schools and trusts into the network.

ARK

Innovating for system change beyond our schools.

Ark is an education charity that develops, tests and scales the programmes that extend Ark's impact far beyond our schools. Our portfolio of ventures in subject mastery, teacher training and early years reaches over 300,000 children nationally, while EdCity provides a hub for the wider education sector to connect and collaborate for greater system impact.

A national network of excellent schools

Excellence for all children

We work where we can make the biggest difference. Most of our schools are located in areas of high need, yet Ark outperforms national averages at every stage, and our students go on to secure exceptional university and apprenticeship places.

Inclusion and SEND

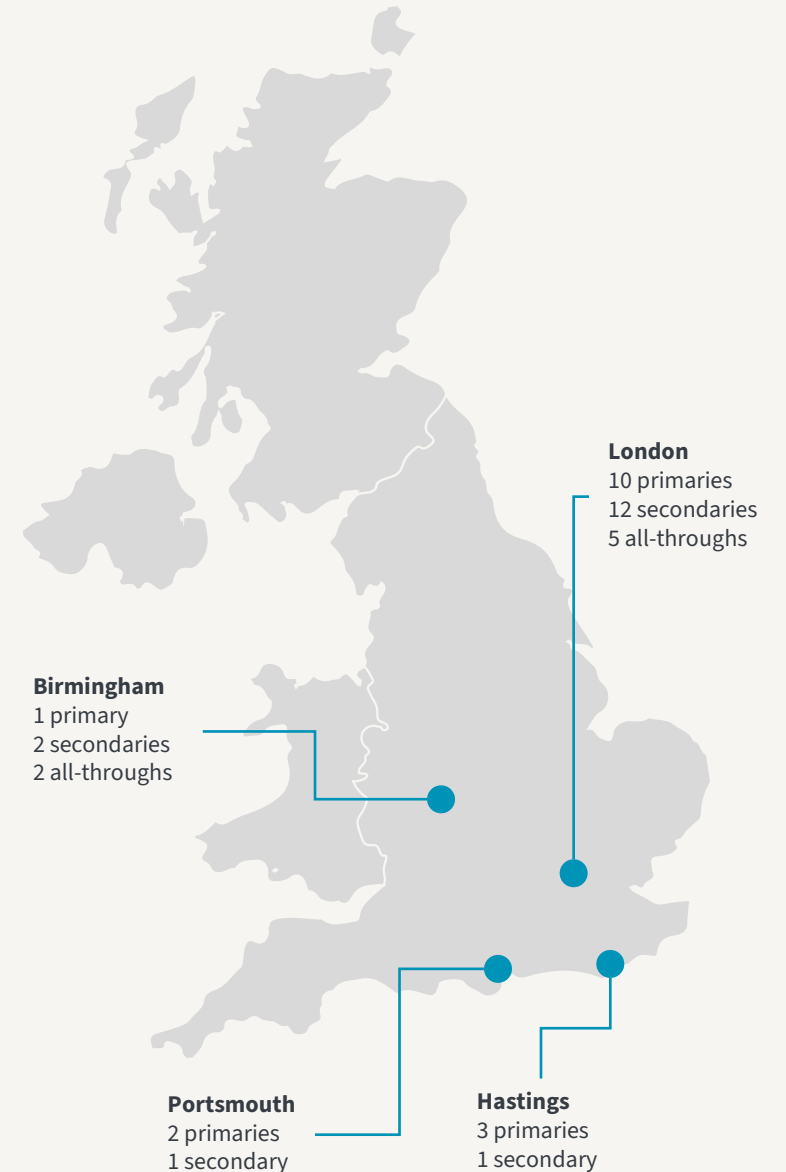
The number of children with SEND in our schools is growing, and the national system is under severe strain. Implementing our new SEND strategy — with early identification, specialist provision within mainstream schools, and high-quality teaching for all — is a major priority for the first three years.

Belonging, wellbeing and enrichment

Strong relationships and a culture of belonging are central to our approach. Our sports, music, arts and mental health programmes extend learning beyond the classroom and support the development and well-being of the whole child.

Growth and operational strength

Our 2035 ambition is to grow the network sustainably, bringing new schools and trusts into Ark. This requires a sharpened school operations model, sound financial health, and leadership that can translate strategy into delivery across a national network.



Results that change lives.

Ark is among the top-performing multi-academy trusts at both primary and secondary, despite having significantly higher levels of disadvantage.

Every Ark primary that has joined the network is now rated Good or Outstanding* in all areas by Ofsted. At secondary, the proportion of Good or Outstanding schools has trebled — from 31% to 95%.

* assessed under the previous framework



PUPIL OUTCOMES (2025)

80%

achieve a good level of development in early years
+12pp above national

78%

meet reading, writing and maths expectations in primary
+16pp above national

61%

of disadvantaged students achieve 4+ in English and Maths at GCSE
+17.5pp above national

#1

Top performing large MAT for progress and attainment at A Level and BTEC

85%

of Year 13s progress to university
+48pp above national

A shared approach across our schools

Our schools are deeply rooted in their local communities, and each has a unique character, but they all subscribe to the same set of core principles that are the defining features of our approach.



Knowing every child

Every child is known well by the adults in the school. We champion each child's progress and work in partnership with families to support them.



High expectations

Every child can achieve great things. Our schools create a culture where everyone aims high, children are taught to take responsibility for their learning, behaviour is exemplary and children can get the best outcomes possible.



Excellent teaching

Excellent teaching sparks curiosity and brings learning alive. We recruit people who share our vision and invest in their development.



Ambitious curriculum

A knowledge-rich curriculum provides the building blocks for children to make exceptional progress. Our schools establish the fundamentals in English and maths so children can access a breadth of subjects that open up the world around them.



Enriching experiences

An excellent education helps children understand themselves, what they value and where they want to go. We provide enriching experiences that broaden horizons and develop the attributes and skills children need to thrive



Strong relationships

Our schools are flourishing communities built on strong relationships and shared values. They are collaborative, positive and inclusive places where everyone – children and adults – can belong.

Better, bolder, bigger — together.

Over the next decade, our mission is to drive a step change in academic outcomes for our pupils and ensure they can flourish at school and beyond. Our 2035 strategy is built on four strategic shifts.

Better

Continue to iterate and improve our educational model, invest in our people, and transform school operations.

Bolder

Innovate through our schools and Ark's wider education programmes — leveraging digital technologies and AI.

Bigger

Grow the network by bringing new schools and trusts into Ark, expanding the reach of our ventures and influence.

Together

Strengthen relationships across schools, communities, parents, and partners in the wider education sector.

2035 AMBITIONS FOR PUPILS

90%

meeting expectations in reading, writing and maths at KS2

90%

achieving 4+ at GCSE in English and maths

100%

of those working below expectations make good progress

95%

attendance at secondary and 97% at primary

95%

of our pupils say that they feel they belong

100%

of leavers into education or employment post-KS4



THE OPPORTUNITY

Lead the next chapter for one of the country's top-performing trusts.

The next CEO of Ark Schools will take a remarkable network of schools - already among the best in the country - and build on that to deliver an even greater impact for more children across the UK.

We are seeking a visionary chief executive who shares Ark's entrepreneurial mindset and core values. The successful candidate will bring an unwavering commitment to the young people and communities we serve, alongside the confidence to empower leaders and teams to test new ideas, innovate boldly, and continually strengthen teaching and learning.

Ark is entering an exciting phase of growth. A merger with Pontefract Academies Trust - a highly-regarded group of seven primary and two secondary schools in Yorkshire - is planned for September 2026. This will form the foundation of Ark's new northern hub and marks an important next chapter in Ark's growth.

The next CEO will have a strong understanding of the educational and policy landscape in which we operate, combining commercial rigour with political awareness to ensure resources are deployed effectively, responsibly and sustainably.

We are looking for a natural collaborator and ambassador: a leader who will build strong partnerships, champion our communities, and lead Ark Schools with confidence and ambition into the future.

Chief Executive Officer, Ark Schools

PURPOSE OF THE ROLE

The Chief Executive of Ark Schools leads the Ark Schools multi-academy trust and is responsible for the educational performance, leadership and development of the network of schools.

The CEO serves as Accounting Officer for Ark Schools, with direct responsibility for the trust's financial stewardship, regulatory compliance and value for money.

The CEO reports to the Ark Schools Board, working closely with the Chair and trustees to ensure strong governance and accountability.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Educational Leadership

- Provide strategic leadership for the Ark Schools network
- Ensure consistently strong outcomes for pupils across all schools
- Maintain a relentless focus on improving outcomes for young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds

School Performance and Improvement

- Hold school principals and regional leaders accountable for performance
- Ensure robust systems for monitoring attainment, progress and pupil wellbeing
- Lead interventions and improvement strategies where necessary

Leadership Development

- Develop a strong pipeline of school leaders
- Ensure Ark Schools remains a sector leader in leadership development and professional learning
- Build a culture of excellence and collaboration across the network

Governance and Accountability

- Serve as Accounting Officer for Ark Schools
- Report to the Ark Schools Board
- Ensure Ark Schools meets all regulatory and statutory responsibilities

Growth and System Contribution

- Lead the responsible growth and development of the Ark Schools network
- Support the opening of new schools and academisation where appropriate
- Contribute to the wider education system through collaboration and sharing best practice
- Responsible for the reputation of Ark Schools externally

Chief Executive Officer, Ark Schools

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES CONT.

Financial and Operational Leadership

- Ensure the effective use of public funding and strong financial management across the trust
- Oversee operational functions including finance, estates, HR and data
- Ensure long-term sustainability of the school network

Key Relationships

- Ark Schools Board
- CEO of Ark
- School principals and leadership teams
- Department for Education and Ofsted
- Education sector partners
- Key donors

Governance and Collaboration

Ark Schools operates with its own board and governance structure. The Chair of the Ark Schools Board attends meetings of the Ark Board to ensure alignment and collaboration between Ark Schools and the wider Ark organisation.

The CEO of Ark Schools works closely with the CEO of Ark to maintain strategic alignment while preserving the clear accountability of Ark Schools to its own board.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

- Outstanding track record of leadership in education
- Experience leading a complex school organisation or multi-academy trust
- Deep understanding of school improvement and educational performance
- Strong financial and governance capability as Accounting Officer
- Willing and capable to drive efficiencies across the network
- Adept at developing strong external relationships
- Collaborative working style
- Open to innovation
- Excellent communication skills, including public speaking
- Respectful of our core philosophy
- An advocate for educational equity and system change

Application process.

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to Ark Schools on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role via <https://roles.saxbam.com/> using code **RBZSA**. Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter, and to complete the online equal opportunities monitoring* form.

*The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application.

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS

Noon on Tuesday 26 May 2026

Due diligence

Due diligence will be carried out as part of the application process, which may include searches carried out via internet search engines and any public social media accounts.

Safeguarding

Ark is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in its academies. In order to meet this responsibility, Ark follows a rigorous selection process and requires all employees to undertake an enhanced DBS check.

GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, Saxton Bampfylde Ltd are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply. Please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter), and do not include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.



Transforming lives through education.

APPOINTMENT MANAGED BY

Saxton Bampfylde