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22 March 2013

Mrs Ruth Murad  
Principal  
Montgomery Primary Academy  
White Road  
Sparkbrook  
Birmingham  
B11 1EH

Dear Mrs Murad

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Montgomery Primary Academy**

Following my visit with Charalambos Loizou, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 20–21 March 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the academy's predecessor school was judged to be a school causing concern.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with groups of pupils, the Principal, acting deputy headteacher, middle leaders, the school improvement lead, the regional director for the sponsor, and the Chair and two other members of the Interim Management Board.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress in raising standards for all pupils.

### **Context**

With 653 pupils on roll, the academy is much larger than most primary schools. All pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, with the majority being of Pakistani

heritage. A minority of pupils have Bangladeshi or Black African backgrounds. A much larger than average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals and therefore receive pupil premium funding. This is additional funding from the government. The majority of pupils are learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils included in the register of special educational needs is above average, although the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is average.

The school became an academy in October 2012 following the closure of its predecessor school, Montgomery Primary School. It is sponsored by the Academies Enterprise Trust. Since the school converted to an academy there have been many staffing changes. The acting headteacher has been appointed as the Principal. Three assistant headteachers and a leader of Year 2 started in January 2013. A leader with responsibility for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs started in September 2012. Currently, there are three supply teachers to cover for staff absence.

### **Achievement of pupils at the academy**

Children start in the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are well below those typical for their age, especially in early English language skills. For many children, having to communicate at school is their first experience of the English language. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, new initiatives and better teaching are resulting in children in Reception becoming much more confident and skilled in their use of English. However, children's progress in early literacy skills is slower in the Nursery because children are not provided with enough opportunities to communicate and develop their vocabulary through play and other activities.

Improved teaching and better leadership are resulting in rising attainment and faster progress across the academy. More pupils are now making and exceeding the expected rate of progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There is very little difference between the progress made by boys and girls, and between those who are eligible for pupil premium funding and those who are not. The progress of disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those who are in the early stages of learning English is also accelerating because additional support is becoming better matched to their abilities and specific needs, especially in language development. However, there is still an inconsistent picture of pupils' progress across the academy, with rates of progress varying between classes. As a result, pupils' progress has not been fast enough for attainment to rise sharply and standards remain below average, with few pupils exceeding the levels expected for their age.

Lessons for pupils to practise their reading skills and to learn about the links between letters of the alphabet and the sounds they make (phonics) are now far more organised than in the past and pupils' learning is more structured. However,

the changes are too recent to have a major impact on helping pupils improve their reading skills.

### **The quality of teaching**

Since the school became an academy, the quality of teaching has not been consistently good enough to raise pupils' attainment rapidly. Staff absences and the resulting lack of continuity in teaching have disrupted pupils' progress in many classes. Recent new permanent appointments of experienced teachers and a variety of staff training programmes mean that the staffing is now much more stable and the quality of teaching is improving. Pupils comment that lessons are now much more enjoyable because they are given something to do rather than sitting and listening to the teacher for long periods of time.

A strong feature of all lessons observed was the positive relationship between pupils and adults. In lessons, pupils of all backgrounds collaborate well and are respectful of one another. Teachers work hard at their lesson planning and try their best to ensure that all pupils learn well. However, the main reason why pupils do not make better progress is that, in many lessons, pupils do not know what they are expected to learn and their work does not build upon what they already know and can do. This means that some of the less-able pupils struggle with the work and the more able have little to extend their learning. Teaching assistants work hard supporting pupils, especially disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. However, in many lessons, the teaching assistants are not clear about what the pupils are expected to learn and they merely ensure that the pupils stick to the task rather than develop their learning.

Pupils are now given far more time to practise speaking and listening by talking to each other in lessons. However, they are rarely taught how to improve these skills by, for example, being more articulate when speaking, or listening to another pupil then summarising what they have heard.

The quality of marking is now much more consistent and there are many instances of good guidance given to pupils showing them how to improve their work. In some classes, there are examples of pupils responding to, and learning from, the marking. Most pupils are taught to take a pride in their work through careful presentation in their books. However, there are a few classes where presentation is untidy and pupils are allowed to make careless mistakes with spelling or not do their best with their handwriting.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils are polite and well mannered to visitors and usually show good attitudes to learning. Most pupils behave well around school and in the playground. There are only a few instances of bullying, and pupils say that these are dealt with swiftly by

the academy. They say that they feel safe in the academy and know that adults will respond well if any pupil has a concern. In lessons, when they are given work that is too hard or too easy, pupils lose attention, become restless and, occasionally, a few disrupt the learning of others. The academy's checks on punctuality show that more pupils now arrive on time. Attendance is higher than at the same time last year and is close to average.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the academy**

Staff and pupils say that the new Principal has provided a clear direction for the academy based on raising achievement through improving teaching. She has resolutely tackled instances where teaching or leadership and management have been identified as inadequate. Meetings with teachers to discuss pupils' achievement are now a regular part of the life of the academy. As a result, teachers feel more accountable for the achievement of the pupils they teach. Teachers have their own individualised improvement plans, and training and support are provided.

The improvements since the school became an academy have not been achieved easily. Many staff absences and the use of a number of supply teachers have slowed progress. Nevertheless, recent new appointments have strengthened leadership capacity and improved teaching. The impact of the new leadership appointment on the Early Years Foundation Stage has been immediate and substantial. Teaching in the Reception classes is now mostly good and there is a clear plan for further improvement.

Most of the lessons observed during the inspection were carried out jointly with senior leaders. The judgments of the Principal and acting deputy headteacher are accurate and their understanding of the factors that make good teaching are clear and precise. They know the academy well and have plans to remedy the weaknesses and build upon the strengths. The newly appointed middle leaders are beginning to strengthen the academy's leadership through, for example, checking on the quality of pupils' work in books. However, they are not making an effective contribution to pupils' learning in their areas of responsibility because their leadership skills, especially those of advising teachers how to improve their teaching skills, are not fully developed.

The newly formed interim management board, which is responsible for the governance of the school, has a great deal of professional skill and knowledge which is used well to support and challenge the academy's leaders. The board has steered the school very effectively through its first few months as an academy.

### **External support**

Good partnership between the academy leadership and the sponsor mean that the academy staff value the support available. The sponsor has provided and arranged

consultant support on a number of teaching, leadership and personnel issues. The school's leaders particularly value the support of the school improvement lead who has been a consistent source of advice and support since the school became an academy.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure that, in all lessons, pupils know what they are expected to learn and their work builds upon what they can already know and can do.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Interim Management Board, and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Roy Bowers

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

Cc Chair of the Interim Management Board, Montgomery Primary Academy  
The Academies Advisers Unit, DfE