

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T: 01216 799164
Direct email: tim.ogbourn@serco.com



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Mr Alan Chambers
Acting Headteacher
Al-Hijrah School
Cherrywood Centre
Burbidge Road
Bordesley Green
Birmingham
B9 4US

Dear Alan Chambers

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Al-Hijrah

Following my visit with Usha Devi HMI and James McNeillie HMI to your school on 11 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The focus of the visit was to evaluate the quality of teaching and the work of the governing body. As agreed with the governors of the school a representative from Birmingham City local authority and an advisor from Tauheedul school were involved in lesson observations.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school should take immediate action to:

- improve the quality of teaching.

As a matter of urgency the governors and local authority should:

- resolve the budget issues to ensure the process for appointing a substantive headteacher can be started.

Evidence

During the visit I met with you and the senior leadership team to discuss the actions taken since my previous monitoring inspection in May 2013. Meetings were held with three members of the governing body including the Chair of Governors and a representative Tauheedul – an outstanding school that is now supporting Al-Hijrah School. HMI made visits to twenty lessons. I looked at a range of governing body minutes and a recent summary of the school's budget position.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection the primary year groups have moved into mobile classrooms on the main school site. There has been a significant turnover in teaching staff. The acting headteacher stood down at the end of October and you have taken on this role since then working 3 days a week. At the time of my visit you had worked in the school for only six days. An adviser from Tauheedul has been supporting the school.

Main findings

In almost half of the lessons observed by HMI teaching was judged to be inadequate. In only a third of lessons teaching was found to be good. No outstanding teaching was observed. This raises serious concerns about the quality of teaching. The improved Year 6 test and GCSE exam results in 2013 mask the inconsistent quality of teaching that exists. Senior leaders and governors have had a much more optimistic view of the quality of teaching but this has been based on out of date evidence which does not reflect the current staff make up.

Teaching that was judged to be inadequate failed to provide appropriate challenge to all pupils. Tasks were often too easy or too difficult and as a result pupils made inadequate progress. Teachers did not have high enough expectations of what pupils should achieve. In some lessons observed teachers' subject knowledge was weak.

When teaching was good teachers had planned their lessons well. They used questions to continually check on how well pupils were achieving. Teachers adapted their teaching when necessary to ensure that pupils were always challenged. When teaching was good the teacher had thought carefully about how to carefully pitch work given to pupils so that it was suitably challenging.

Governors have received training on their role and are intent on improving the school. However, they are not fully aware of the issues HMI have identified concerning teaching.

The governors have bought in external support to review the budget. The findings of this review cause grave concern. The deficit is much larger than reported to me when I visited the school in May 2013. While there are plans to reduce this deficit within three years there remains a number of unanswered questions that may affect progress.

The school is now being supported by an outstanding school and you, as the new acting headteacher, have very quickly identified concerns about the quality of teaching, lack of leadership structure and the issues concerning the budget. Due to unresolved budget issues the school is not in a position to advertise for a substantive headteacher. This leaves the long-term leadership of the school in a very vulnerable position.

As this visit has raised serious concerns about the quality of education Ofsted will review the timing of the school's next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority has been providing sound advice on the appointment of a new headteacher. The involvement of Tauheedul has been welcomed by the governors but any impact is not yet evident at this very early stage.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Cook
Her Majesty's Inspector