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8 April 2014

Anita Baptist  
Al-Hijrah School  
Cherrywood Centre  
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Dear Ms Baptist

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Al-Hijrah School**

Following my visit to your school on 7 April 2014 with Peter Humphries HMI, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 10-11 December 2013.

### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

### **Context**

The local authority has put in an application to the Department for Education for an Interim Executive Board – a change of governors. This application is being considered.

## **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

Governance remains inadequate. The Chair of Governors believes that the school has been targeted as part of a 'witch hunt' and has an unrealistic view of the capacity of governance. Since the previous inspection governors have spent time and energy on refuting the previous inspection judgements and the outcome of a local authority audit of finances. Governors continue to spend money on projects that are not addressing the key weaknesses across the school. Money has been spent, for example, on instructing architects to draw up plans for a new building despite the school having a current deficit of around £400,000. The local authority audit of finances raised a number of concerns about the way governors manage financial matters. Governors did not agree with the audit findings so they commissioned a further financial audit costing £6,000, which confirmed the concerns already raised. The school improvement plan is not fit for purpose because it does not realistically detail how the deficit and weaknesses in financial management will be robustly tackled.

Governors and the local authority are unable to work together. A recent meeting had to be abandoned because of a break down in discussion. Governors do not trust the local authority. There has been no joint working by local authority officers, governors and senior leaders to produce the local authority's statement of action (plans outlining how to improve the school). As a result, it is not based on up-to-date evidence about the school. The Chair of Governors describes the local authority's statement of action as 'fiction and fanciful'. Crucial to the actions outlined in the statement of action is the support from a local teaching school. However, the teaching school is only prepared to offer support if the school has an Interim Executive Board - a decision not yet made that leaves these plans in a state of flux. Recent attempts by a local authority officer to visit the school have been thwarted by senior leaders. The local authority has not been able to support or challenge the school.

The new temporary headteacher has helped teaching staff to refocus on improving the quality of teaching. Teachers whose teaching is not 'good' have received tailored support. Senior leaders have been checking the quality of teaching more often. Their findings suggest that teaching has improved. However, the progress made by disabled pupils and those with special education needs varies across year groups, suggesting variance in the quality of teaching.

At the time of the previous inspection senior leaders were told by inspectors to urgently agree an action plan to improve pupils' writing skills in the primary classes. The plan has been completed. It has some clear targets for the end of 2014 but

some targets, for example related to speaking and listening, have no measures for gauging success.

There has been a concerted effort by teachers to increase the use of praise more as a way of improving pupils' behaviour. Pupils speak positively about the use of rewards and how behaviour has improved because of this. Teachers have received training on managing behaviour. The school improvement plan identifies some pertinent actions to improve behaviour.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Cook  
**Senior Her Majesty's Inspector**