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Mr Arshad Mohammad
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Mohammad

Special measures monitoring inspection of Al-Hijrah School

Following my visit with Gwen Coates, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 3 and 4 October 2017, 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 that 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 that took place in March 2017.

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

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. You should contact me should you wish to review this before the next monitoring visit.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board (IEB), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in March 2017.

- As a matter of urgency, improve safeguarding so that pupils are safe in all key stages, including in the early years, by:
 - clarifying the procedures for supporting pupils with medical needs and for dealing with emergencies and ensuring that all staff in all parts of the school, including lunchtime supervisors, are completely clear about all aspects of these procedures
 - ensuring that paediatric first aid training for staff in the early years is kept up to date and checked regularly
 - completing the necessary checks on all staff and ensuring that the single central record is compliant
 - ensuring that the number of staff on duty outside at breaktimes and lunchtimes is sufficient for the age and number of pupils, takes place as planned, and that staff on duty actively supervise the pupils
 - making sure that all staff, particularly the lunchtime supervisors, fully understand the safeguarding training they have received and put this into practice
 - looking into pupils' current concerns about bullying and ensuring that bullying concerns are always taken seriously, recorded and acted upon
 - reviewing the use of the outside areas used at breaktimes and lunchtimes so that all pupils' needs and interests are catered for, especially in the playground where boys play football.
- Improve behaviour and the management of behaviour by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders and governors gain an accurate picture of behaviour in the school, both in lessons and at informal times, taking into account the views of staff and pupils, and that leaders then take action accordingly
 - making sure that, in lessons and around the school, expectations of behaviour are high and consistently upheld
 - ensuring that pupils learn to respect adults in the school, their peers and the school environment
 - working with pupils to improve their ability to manage their own behaviour better at informal and social times, including providing them with more activities to do at these times
 - improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good, including in the early years, by:
 - making sure that pupils have the necessary skills to apply their English and mathematical understanding and knowledge in a range of contexts
 - making sure that teachers use the ongoing assessment of pupils' understanding and not just test results to plan and teach lessons
 - picking up on and addressing pupils' errors and misconceptions more quickly
 - making sure that the assessment of children's progress in the early years is accurate.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders gain an accurate picture of the quality of teaching across the school, identify where it is weak, and support and challenge staff accordingly
 - supporting teachers to eliminate both serious and low-level disruption in lessons
 - making sure that governors receive full and accurate information about the school's work so that they can support and challenge effectively
 - providing leaders at all levels with the support they need to strengthen their knowledge and understanding of the areas for which they are responsible and to enable them to become effective, including by forging links with other schools.

An external review of governance, including the school's use of the special educational needs and/or disabilities funding, should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 3 October 2017 to 4 October 2017

Evidence

Inspectors observed pupils' learning in the early years and the primary and secondary classes. During these observations, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning. Inspectors also spoke informally and formally to pupils about behaviour, attendance and how they learn to keep themselves safe. Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils as they arrived at the school. They also scrutinised behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtime, as pupils moved between lessons, as they left the school premises at the end of the day, and in lessons. Meetings were held with school leaders, members of the interim executive board (IEB) and a representative of the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP), which is providing support to the school. Inspectors spoke to parents at the start and end of the school day. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to be considered. Inspectors also spoke to teachers, support and administrative staff and catering staff. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's analysis of pupils' current attainment, progress, behaviour and attendance. Additional documentation was analysed. For example, information about the quality of learning, teaching and assessment, minutes of IEB meetings, the school's procedures to ensure pupils are kept safe and secure and the checks on the suitability of staff to work with children. The school's improvement plan was evaluated.

Context

Since the previous inspection in March 2017, one teacher and three teaching assistants have left the school. One member of staff has returned from maternity leave. You have reduced the number of supply teachers teaching in the school. You have successfully completed a consultation on the restructuring of the leadership team and of the administrative, support and teaching staff teams. You plan to implement these changes in January 2018.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

At the previous inspection, inspectors judged the school's safeguarding arrangements to be ineffective. Leaders, well supported by BEP and members of the IEB, have acted swiftly to address the issues identified.

You and your team have reviewed the arrangements to support pupils with medical needs, especially for pupils who have allergies to particular foods. All staff have completed suitable training and safeguarding updates. All of the staff, including kitchen staff and lunchtime supervisors who spoke with inspectors, understand and are clear about the school's procedures for dealing with emergencies. They know how to support pupils' medical needs. For example, staff were able to tell inspectors

where pupils' EpiPens and individual healthcare plans are located.

The school has a sufficient number of first aiders and paediatric first aiders whose training is up to date. The checks made on staff's suitability to work with children are thorough and detailed. The school's business manager accurately records the information on the single central record, which meets current government guidelines.

The number of staff on duty at breaktimes and lunchtime is appropriate. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that the level of staff supervision seen during this inspection was typical. The vast majority of staff supervise vigilantly and attentively as pupils arrive at school, as they move around the school site and when they leave school. However, a few staff do not regulate pupils' overly boisterous behaviour at breaktimes. As a result, pupils running excitedly around the playground can occasionally bump into other pupils and cause accidents. You have begun to address this by delivering further training for staff and providing play equipment for pupils and places for them to go inside the school. Pupils told inspectors that they appreciate the extra equipment, such as basketball rings, and opportunities to use the school library at breaktimes.

You and other leaders, including members of the IEB, have begun to challenge staff's low expectations. You have shared your vision with staff. The majority of staff who spoke with inspectors said that this vision is clear. However, you acknowledge that there are a few staff who do not share your vision. These staff have found the raised expectations in terms of managing pupils' behaviour and the way they teach difficult and challenging. You have put suitable arrangements in place to support these members of staff or to challenge their underperformance.

The checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and behaviour are frequent and thorough. This has helped you to identify and address the school's strengths and weaknesses and to hold staff to account for the outcomes of pupils in their care. The improvements in pupils' behaviour are indications that leaders are effective in addressing the issues that you have identified.

Since the previous inspection, there has been a reduction in the number of supply teachers working at the school. Pupils told inspectors that, historically, the large number of supply teachers had negatively affected their learning. They are grateful that the number has been reduced. Pupils feel that this has helped to improve the atmosphere in school and the quality of teaching they receive.

You and members of the IEB have reviewed and updated many of the school's policies. These are suitable and their implementation is frequently checked. However, some are inconsistently applied. For example, a few staff do not implement or promote the school's behaviour for learning policy. As a consequence, pupils' inappropriate behaviour around the school or in the playground is not always challenged. In addition, a few staff do not provide pupils with feedback that is in

line with the school's assessment and feedback policy.

The school has appropriate systems in place to identify and support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff track and record the attainment, attendance and behaviour of this group of pupils as well as other pupils. However, leaders do not routinely analyse this information to make sure that this group of pupils are making good progress from their starting points. Members of the IEB told inspectors that they receive large amounts of information but that this data is not always summarised or evaluated clearly. The external review of governance, including the school's use of the special educational needs and/or disabilities funding, is in the process of being completed. You and the IEB acknowledge that the recommendations from this review must be implemented quickly to make sure pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.

The majority of senior and middle leaders are successfully developing their skills and ability to raise standards. However, a few middle leaders still lack the necessary expertise to identify and challenge teachers' and pupils' underperformance.

Members of the IEB provide suitable challenge and support for school leaders. The information they receive from school leaders is increasingly detailed and realistic. For example, leaders have identified where there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.

The local authority is in discussions with a number of potential academy sponsors. However, at this stage it is not clear who will sponsor the conversion to academy status or when this will happen. This delay is causing some concern for you and other staff.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment remain. The work in pupils' books shows that teaching is improving but that the quality still remains too variable.

Where teaching is effective, teachers have secure subject knowledge and use this to deliver lessons that are engaging and interesting. As a result, pupils are focused, well motivated, respond well to teachers' instructions and make good progress from their starting points. In these lessons, staff consistently apply the school's behaviour for learning and assessment for learning policies. Routines are well established and staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, quality of work and what pupils will know and do. Staff use what they know about pupils' abilities and aptitudes to plan learning activities that meet pupils' needs.

However, this effective teaching is not always evident in a range of subjects across the school, particularly in the teaching of mathematics in the primary phase. When teaching is less successful, pupils are unable to use and apply their mathematical

knowledge to solve increasingly difficult problems. Teachers do not identify pupils' lack of understanding, leading to pupils making the same mistakes or being unable to extend their understanding. You and your staff are working with other schools to develop teachers' expertise and primary teachers' mathematical teaching skills. However, this work is in the early stages and it is too early to see any significant impact.

Children continue to do well in the early years. In the summer term 2017, a representative of an outside education agency moderated staff's final judgements of children's level of development at the end of the Reception Year. These assessments were found to be accurate. Information provided by the school and verified by inspectors shows that early years staff prepare children well for Year 1. The outdoor play area, while safe, does not promote children's explorative, observational and investigative skills. The early years leader acknowledges that the development of a garden area, for example, would help children to develop their understanding of living things.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

You and your staff have revised the school's behaviour policy and raised expectations about pupils' behaviour. Most of the pupils who spoke with inspectors said that behaviour has improved since March 2017. Pupils are generally friendly, polite and well mannered. The number of fixed-term exclusions is low. Information provided by the school shows that the number of incidents of unacceptable behaviour is reducing. Pupils respect the school environment. For example, there are no signs of graffiti, displays are neat and there is very little litter. However, a few staff do not have high enough expectations about how pupils should move around the school or behave on the playground. These staff do not routinely intervene when pupils' behaviour is unacceptable. As a result, areas of the school can become noisy and not conducive to a calm and purposeful environment. In addition, a significant small minority of pupils are unable to regulate their own behaviour when unsupervised.

The large majority of pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they enjoy coming to school, feel safe and appreciate what leaders and staff are doing to improve the school. Leaders consistently track, record and act on incidents of bullying. Pupils said that incidents of bullying are reducing because staff take incidents seriously and deal with them quickly and effectively. The school's approaches to recording and challenging pupils' absence are comprehensive and thorough. Staff collaborate effectively with the local authority when pupils are absent for prolonged periods of time or are taken off the school roll. As a result, pupils', and groups of pupils', attendance is in line with national figures.

There are no pupils at alternative educational provision.

Outcomes for pupils

The inconsistencies in the quality of teaching mean that the inconsistencies in pupils' progress from their starting points remain, particularly in mathematics in key stages 1 and 2. The majority of teachers use what they know about pupils' abilities to plan learning that meets their needs. As a result, there are signs that the most able pupils are having work that extends their understanding and knowledge. However, it is too early to see significant and sustained improvements.

The provisional outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 show that pupils' progress in reading and writing was average, while it was below average in mathematics. The work in current pupils' books reflects these outcomes. In addition, girls make better progress than boys in all subjects.

The use of a commercial reading scheme is having a positive impact on pupils' reading skills and on their desire to read for pleasure. Information provided by the school shows that an increasing number of pupils are reading at greater depth.

Information provided by the school shows that pupils' achievement at the end of key stage 4 continues to compare favourably with that of other pupils nationally, particularly in English and mathematics.

Pupils' progress in key stage 3, including that of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is improving in a range of subjects, primarily due to the better teaching pupils now receive.

External support

The local authority has commissioned the BEP to support you and other leaders and staff. The improvements in the school's safeguarding arrangements, in the management of pupils' behaviour and in the way leaders use information to identify and address potential weaknesses are examples that show BEP's support has been effective.

Bordesley Green Girls' School and Sixth Form, Chilcote Primary School, Yardleys School and Aston Manor Academy have also provided effective support in improving the quality of teaching, in how leaders use information to evaluate the school's work and in managing pupils' behaviour.