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Mr Arshad Mohammad
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Dear Mr Mohammad

Special measures monitoring inspection of Al-Hijrah School

Following my visit with Philip Hamilton, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 27 and 28 February 2018, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in March 2017. The full list of the areas for improvement that were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

We noted that the school continues to operate an unlawful discriminatory policy of strict segregation by sex in Year 6 and in the secondary phase. Plans for the school take some account of the need to address this practice.

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

Except as mentioned above, leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint three newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. You can appoint these newly qualified teachers to the English, mathematics or science departments. You should contact me if you wish to appoint a newly qualified teacher to a department different to those listed.

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 second monitoring inspection on 27 February 2018 to 28 February 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed pupils' learning in all the early years and primary classes and across a range of subjects in secondary classes. During these observations, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning. Inspectors also spoke informally to pupils about behaviour, attendance and how they learn to stay safe. 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 that pupils are kept safe and secure and the checks on the suitability of staff to work with children. Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils as they arrived at the school and at breaktimes and lunchtime as they moved between lessons, as they left the school premises at the end of the day. Inspectors also observed their behaviour in lessons. Meetings were held with school leaders, members of the IEB and a representative of the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP), which is providing support to the school. Inspectors also spoke to teachers, support and administrative staff and catering staff. The school's self-evaluation form and improvement plan were evaluated. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's own online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to be considered.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in October 2017, five teachers have left the school, including an assistant headteacher, a primary teacher, the head of science and teachers in art and mathematics. Three teachers, a primary teacher and teachers in English and science and two cover supervisors have joined the school. A large number of supply teachers teach pupils in the secondary phase.

The school's leadership and management team has been restructured. The team consists of you, one deputy headteacher, five assistant headteachers and a business manager.

Boys and girls are now taught together for all subjects in Year 5. Boys and girls, come together for breaktimes, assemblies and some extracurricular visits in all year groups from Reception Year to Year 5. However, the school continues to operate an unlawful discriminatory policy of strict segregation by sex in Year 6 and in the secondary phase. As a result, pupils of the opposite sex in these year groups are not allowed to mix in lessons, at breaktimes and lunchtimes, or during school-led activities after school. For example, boys and girls are not allowed to mix in corridors or in the playground. This policy of segregation by sex causes a detriment to all pupils as they are denied the choice to socialise with the opposite sex, and the educational benefits of doing so. Given this detriment, the policy constitutes direct

discrimination contrary to the Equality Act 2010. In 2017, the Court of Appeal affirmed in the case of Al-Hijrah School versus HMCI (Ofsted) that the school's practice of strict segregation by sex is direct discrimination contrary to the Equality Act 2010. Following this judgement, the Secretary of State for Education has stated that schools which segregate by sex should be given some time to cease the practice. Therefore, the school's policy of sex segregation has not been taken into account at this inspection when determining the judgements. A section 8 inspection will be arranged to take place in or after September 2018, at which point any ongoing unlawful segregation by sex will be taken into account when determining judgements.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

You and your leadership team have sustained the improvements seen at the previous monitoring inspection in October 2017. Senior staff acknowledge and understand the challenges faced by the school and are taking effective action to address most of the issues identified at the inspection in March 2017 successfully. The continued improvements in the majority of pupils' outcomes and behaviour are evidence of this. The vast majority of staff share leaders' vision and desire for improvement. However, the ongoing uncertainty about the school's future causes some staff to feel anxious about their future.

Leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is broadly accurate. However, a few leaders at all levels do not routinely use the information from their evaluations of the school's performance to inform subsequent actions and strategic action planning. Nevertheless, the vast majority of leaders' actions are resulting in improvements to the quality of learning and teaching and pupils' outcomes and behaviour. Full-time teaching staff told inspectors that they value the help, support and guidance they receive to improve their practice. Members of the IEB receive full and accurate information about the school's work. As a result, the IEB has an accurate understanding of the school's performance and provides suitable support and challenge to leaders. The external review of governance has been completed and the IEB are acting upon the findings. However, the external review of the school's use of the special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities funding has not begun.

The leadership of the school's provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is in a state of some uncertainty. A higher-level teaching assistant, directed by an assistant headteacher, has responsibility for the day-to-day running of the special educational needs department. The local authority has provided appropriate and timely support and guidance. This temporary arrangement is largely successful. The school has appropriate systems in place to identify and support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. However, some aspects have not been completed as required by the special educational needs and disability code of practice and by Schedule 10 paragraph 3 of the Equality Act 2010. For example, the school's accessibility plan is well out of date, has not been reviewed and does not include

information about how pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities will access the school's curriculum. The school's most current special educational needs policy is not on the school's website and does not accurately reflect the school's effective practice.

Leaders recognise that the increasing number of supply teachers in the school makes it difficult to implement policies and practice consistently. A significant number of pupils told inspectors that when supply teachers take their classes, they often repeat the same work or the work is too easy. Where full-time teachers take classes, pupils generally behave well. However, where supply teachers take classes pupils' behaviour can deteriorate as they become bored or disengaged from their learning.

Leaders with whole-school responsibility or for subjects or year groups in both the primary and secondary phases are improving their ability to analyse and use information about pupils' learning, behaviour and attendance. The school provides opportunities for middle leaders to visit schools to share effective teaching and leadership and management practice. As a result, the majority of leaders are taking effective action to raise standards in the area for which they have responsibility. However, a few leaders are still slow to use their analysis to implement suitable actions, for example in identifying trends and patterns in pupils' behaviour and attendance or in quickly identifying secondary pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities who are not making good progress from their starting points.

The school's safeguarding arrangements remain effective. The checks on staff's suitability to work with children are thorough and detailed. Staff new to the school, including supply staff, receive a suitable induction that includes a focus on the school's safeguarding policies and procedures. Staff who spoke with inspectors were clear about their, and others', roles and responsibilities, including in meeting the needs of pupils with medical needs and conditions. The school has a sufficient number of first aiders and paediatric first aiders whose training is up to date. Staff supervise pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes appropriately. Pupils' behaviour at these times is much improved.

The local authority remain in discussions with a number of potential academy sponsors about the school's future. However, at this stage it is not clear who will sponsor the conversion to academy status or when this will happen. School leaders anticipate that the proposed plans under discussion will resolve the issue of segregation by sex in a mixed setting. These plans include having a mixed primary school and a boys' single sex school on separate new sites and single-sex provision for girls on the existing site.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The number of supply teachers taking classes, especially in the secondary phase, has increased. As a result, inconsistencies in the quality of learning, teaching and assessment remain.

Where teaching is effective, teachers use what they know about pupils' knowledge, understanding, abilities and aptitudes to plan learning tasks that meet pupils' needs. Teachers use assessment well to modify and adapt lessons and to help pupils improve their work. In these lessons, the majority of staff have high expectations of what pupils should know and do. Pupils do well from their starting points as a result. There are positive relationships among pupils and between teachers and pupils. Staff manage pupils' behaviour effectively so that pupils are engaged in their learning and produce work that matches their ability.

Since the previous inspection, the early years leader and staff have improved the outdoor area. Pupils now have increased opportunities to explore, observe and develop their imagination. However, the early years leader correctly recognises that not all staff adequately guide children's imaginative play so that they enhance their learning.

Where teaching is less effective, or a class has a succession of supply teachers, pupils often repeat the same work or work that is too easy. Year 7 pupils told inspectors that they have repeated work this year that they did in Years 4 and 5. A scrutiny of the work in their books confirms this. You and other leaders are aware that a number of staff do not consistently apply the school's policies. You are, to some extent, addressing this through the induction process that staff complete when they join the school. However, inconsistencies remain.

Weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics remain in the primary phase. A few teachers' subject knowledge is insecure. As a result, teachers' explanations and responses to pupils' questions are inaccurate and they do not correct pupils' misconceptions or mistakes. Teachers use a limited range of strategies and approaches to develop pupils' understanding. For example, pupils who find mathematics difficult told inspectors that using a variety of physical resources or equipment helped them understand more abstract and difficult concepts. However, they said that they do not use this equipment often enough.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

You and your staff have adopted a zero tolerance approach to poor behaviour. You have 'drawn a line in the sand', and made clear how you expect pupils to behave. These raised expectations have resulted in an increased number of fixed-term exclusions. However, the exclusions were for justified reasons. The number of red cards and internal isolations, however, has reduced. Pupils' behaviour has improved at breaktimes and lunchtimes and in lessons that engage and enthuse them. In effective lessons, where staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, pupils frequently demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning, producing work that is accurate, neat and well presented. Some low-level disruption persists where teaching is ineffective and pupils become bored and disengaged from their learning.

Leaders routinely record episodes of bullying. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said

that staff take bullying seriously and take swift and effective action to deal with incidents. Leaders recognise that they could refine how they record information to make monitoring and evaluation easier. For example, staff record potential racist incidents as bullying when they may be one-off occurrences.

Pupils' attendance in all years and for all vulnerable groups has declined significantly since the previous inspection in October. Information provided by the school indicates that pupils' attendance is considerably below national figures. Leaders and the IEB are aware of, and addressing, the issues. However, there is no indication to suggest that these actions are having any positive effect. For example, pupils' attendance during this inspection was low.

No pupils attend alternative educational provision.

We noted that Year 6 and secondary pupils have no opportunities to mix with pupils of the opposite sex as they are taught separately for all lessons and do not mix at breaktimes or lunchtime or on school trips. This is detrimental to both girls and boys. The plans to address this practice, other than creating separate single-sex schools at some point in the future, are vague. Consequently, pupils continue to be denied the opportunity to develop their understanding and acceptance of, and mutual respect for, others' differences. In addition, school leaders are not actively seeking to promote and embed the fundamental British values with this cohort of pupils. As a result, current Year 6 and secondary pupils may leave school not fully prepared for life in modern Britain. As stated above, we did not take the practice of segregation by sex or its consequences for pupils into account when reaching the judgements in this report.

Outcomes for pupils

In the secondary phase, where pupils are taught by full-time teachers the majority of pupils do well from their starting points in a range of subjects, particularly in English and mathematics. A scrutiny of pupils' work shows that higher-attaining and middle-attaining pupils have work that challenges them and helps them to do well. Lower-attaining pupils and pupils who have SEN and disabilities do less well across the school, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Information provided by the school shows that the majority of pupils currently in Years 10 and 11 are doing well. The work in pupils' books reflects this.

Almost all of the pupils who left the school at the end of Year 11 in 2017 found a place in further education or employment and training.

In the primary phase, outcomes are less positive, particularly in mathematics. This is particularly the case in Years 1 and 2. Girls continue to do better than boys do across a range of subjects, particularly in the early years.

Unsurprisingly, pupils across the school do less well when they routinely have supply teachers or exposure to teaching that fails to meet their needs, abilities and aptitudes. Pupils' ability to use and apply their literacy and numeracy skills across subjects other than English and mathematics remains undeveloped.

External support

The local authority has commissioned the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) to support you, other leaders and staff. BEP continues to provide effective support to you and the staff. Staff who spoke with inspectors were very positive about the recent visit to Whitehouse Common Primary School. Staff said that the visit helped them to understand and to deliver effective practice in terms of learning, teaching and assessment and in how to evaluate these aspects. The improvements in these areas support their view. While the support for staff is effective, you feel that further additional support for you would help you to accelerate the school's improvements. Inspectors agree.

Priorities for further improvement

Leaders should make sure that they end the school's unlawfully discriminatory practice of segregation by sex (although not taken into account in this inspection when determining the judgements, this will be taken into account following September 2018 – see the 'Context' section above).