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Mr M Saqib
Al-Hijrah Secondary School
Cherrywood Centre
Burbidge Road
Bordesley Green
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Dear Mr Saqib

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 18 March 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. I would also like to thank the governors and the students for the contribution they made to the inspection.

Since the previous inspection, the school has worked very closely with the local authority and other schools in the area. A new member of the senior leadership team has taken particular responsibility for teaching and learning and the deputy headteacher now leads the curriculum.

As a result of the inspection in July 2009, the school was asked to:

- ensure that the curriculum meets all statutory requirements
- ensure that all lessons have a clear focus on the active participation and enjoyment of students
- ensure that appropriate plans and strategies are in place to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- improve financial management, resolve the debt from the primary school and ensure that all statutory strategies and requirements are met.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the students' achievement.

The school is making good progress in improving the curriculum as a result of strong leadership and better planning. The school has maintained good provision for literacy and numeracy since the previous inspection. Pupils now benefit from a broader curriculum which meets all statutory requirements. There is appropriate provision for music, art, design and technology and history across the school. The



schemes of work in each of these subjects are very detailed. A highly innovative approach is taken in music to ensure that statutory requirements are met in a way that retains the school's Islamic ethos. For instance, teaching in Nasheed (Islamic spiritual vocalisation) enables students to write and perform their work about the life of the holy prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him) in a contemporary style if they prefer. The school has recently appointed specialist teachers in art, design and technology and music. Physical resources in these subjects are also improving. There are new opportunities for older students to take more GCSE subjects than in the past and all students are no longer expected to study the same range of subjects. Students commented that they like the choices now on offer, including courses in design and technology and the arts.

Lesson plans now include time allocations for learning activities at the start, middle and end of lessons. Senior leaders monitor lessons regularly and rigorously, encouraging teachers to involve students more in their own learning by making presentations or discussing work more with peers as 'talking partners'. This has resulted in teachers improving their structure and organisation of lessons so that students are more effectively involved in learning.

Improvements are also seen in the management of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants continue to work closely with teachers in lessons to ensure that this student group makes as much progress as others. The special educational needs co-ordinator has now been in post for some time and the school has done its best to remedy the past issues that arose because of the frequent changes in post-holder. Measures put in place by the school at the time of the last inspection to make better use of individual education plans and annual reviews of students' progress continue to develop positively and improve outcomes. As a result, the progress of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and other groups is good.

The school is making good progress against the leadership and management issues. Following the previous inspection the governing body acted quickly and decisively to ensure improvements in resource and financial management. The majority of the debt from the primary school is resolved because of good monitoring by leaders. All statutory requirements are now in place and approved by the governing body. This includes the necessary schemes to ensure that no-one is discriminated against and also a formal strategy for promoting community cohesion.

The school was awarded specialist science college status in 2008. Governors and other leaders continue to work positively together to improve the impact of this status on the school's provision as a whole.

The local authority's statement of action is good and its support for the school is very effective. Local authority (LA) consultants, training and support strategies to spread good practice are greatly valued by the school. The school effectiveness partner supports and challenges the school extremely well.



I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Saleem Hussain

Additional Inspector

