

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 0121 6799169
Direct email: mathew.mitchell@serco.com



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Safeena Higgins
Acting Principal
Al-Madinah School
1 Nelson Street
Midland House
Derby
DE1 2SA

Dear Mrs Higgins

Special measures monitoring inspection of Al-Madinah School

Following my visit with Wayne Norrie, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 25–26 March 2014, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 1–2 October 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The proprietor's statement of action is fit for purpose

I strongly recommend that the school does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Derby City and the Education Funding Agency.

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2013

- Ensure the school is safe for pupils and remains so before re-opening.

- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring governance is effective
 - ensuring the services of an interim Principal are secured until a substantive Principal can be appointed
 - arranging for successful primary and secondary schools to support this school by sharing their basic systems, procedures and good practice.

- Develop a curriculum which is broad and balanced and meets the needs of pupils.

- Implement a coherent staffing structure which clearly identifies roles and responsibilities and appropriate accountabilities.

- Identify disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in the school and ensure they receive the additional support they are entitled to.

- Implement systems for capturing reliable data, monitoring attendance and notifying parents of those children who do not arrive at school as expected.

- Ensure statutory requirements are met and particularly those arising from legislation concerning racism, disability and special educational needs as well as those relating to the appointment of specified posts.

- Raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching by:
 - training teachers to use assessment information to plan lessons with activities of varying difficulty matched to pupils' needs
 - training teachers to assess accurately pupils' standards of work
 - ensuring teachers regularly assess pupils' work and provide written guidance on how they might improve
 - establishing higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and boosting the pace of learning
 - regularly monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and taking effective action to bring about improvement where weaknesses are identified.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 25–26 March 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed six parts of lessons across the school and other learning activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and Key Stages 1 and 2, with senior leaders. Pupils' behaviour was also observed at lunch and break times. Meetings were held with senior leaders, external consultants and the Chair of the Governing Body Trust. Inspectors met with groups of pupils from the secondary and primary phase of the school. A scrutiny of pupils' workbooks was carried out with the principal of the primary phase. Inspectors examined a range of school self-evaluation documentation, including school improvement plans, external evaluation reports, monitoring records, assessment data, governing body records and other quality assurance reviews.

Context

The Department for Education has declared the closure of the secondary provision of the school by the end of the summer term. The primary phase of the school has been entirely relocated to join with the secondary phase at the Midland Road site. The previous members of the governing body trust resigned by 31 January 2014 and are now replaced by an entirely new membership consisting of four people. The Chair of the Governing Body Trust was appointed directly by the Department for Education. A new principal of the primary phase has been appointed. One mathematics teacher and one history teacher have left the secondary phase of the school and two more teachers have tendered their resignations. There were 140 students in the secondary phase at the time of the last monitoring inspection; there are now 87.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Current leaders have worked hard to ensure greater reliability of assessment data in Key Stages 1 and 2. Recent tests carried out in Key Stage 1 for Year 2 pupils for writing and mathematics were externally verified; the current predictions are consistent with attainment expected at this time of the year. Reading tests are due to be carried out before the end of term. Attainment upon entry assessment information in the Early Years Foundation Stage suggests that children arrive at the school below expectations; however, they are now making more rapid progress during this stage because of improved teaching and provision. Targets for pupils across the school are now appropriately challenging; this has rightly raised expectations for both staff and pupils, especially in the primary phase.

The progress made by students in the secondary phase has not improved; it remains far too slow to enable these students to achieve the standards of which they are capable. The achievement of these students in physical education and information

and communication technology is very limited, as these subjects are no longer taught discretely.

Current assessment data suggests that the gap in attainment between pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and others is smaller than national differences. Progress of this group, as well as disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, could not be determined because new leaders have only recently ensured that there is accurate information about these pupils.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is better than the rest of the primary phase. There is a wide range of child-initiated activities which enable children to demonstrate progress. Skilled questioning by teachers was observed by inspectors. Phonics (the sounds that letters make) is not taught effectively, although leaders are putting into place training for staff to improve the teaching of reading. Too much teaching in the secondary phase is weak. Students report that many of their lessons are taught by temporary teachers and their work is rarely marked.

The relocation of the primary phase to the new site has significantly improved the learning environment, which now promotes and support pupils' learning. Parents have reported that children are happier and noticed that teaching has improved. Pupils interviewed by inspectors are overwhelmingly positive about their learning experience in the school.

Overall, the quality of teaching in the primary phase is improving as a result of specific training and development activities, and teachers being held to account more rigorously. Assessment information is increasingly being used by teachers to plan effective learning activities for different ability groups and those with special educational needs, although the level of challenge for all groups remains an area for further development. Nevertheless, recent work in pupils' books is beginning to show better marking and feedback, and improved learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of pupils across the school is improving. Pupils, especially in the primary phase, report that they feel safe and happy. They are very clear about the processes for receiving rewards and sanctions. Much work has been done by the new leaders to promote the physical and emotional well-being of pupils, either through the improvement of the learning environment or the quality of teaching they receive.

Exclusions have reduced considerably because behaviour is managed more effectively by the teachers. Pupils are confident that adults would take any concerns they had about bullying seriously and they would be dealt with. Parents recognise

that behaviour in the school has improved recently and the new principal of the primary phase is making a difference.

Attendance is now monitored carefully and a system for notifying parents has been introduced. Whilst attendance in the primary phase is just below the national average, the attendance of secondary students remains very low.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

New leaders, including members of the governing body trust, have brought valuable knowledge, expertise and experience to the school in a very short period of time; most importantly, they have addressed the serious safeguarding concerns raised in the section 5 inspection. All safeguarding policies and procedures meet statutory requirements, and additional measures have been taken to further secure the site.

The trust's statement of action is now fit for purpose; the vision and plan demonstrate clarity of purpose and direction. Timely, appropriate monitoring activities and the formation of the 'scrutiny committee' ensures that school leaders are held to account. The school's action plan is now also fit for purpose and rightly prioritises improving teaching and leadership; however, success criteria are not firmly grounded in accurate progress measures.

Leaders of teaching have the appropriate skills and knowledge to drive improvements in classroom practice; the early impact of their work was evident. The new principal of the primary phase has demonstrated sound evaluative and judgment skills; for example, she was able to quickly and accurately identify issues in the teaching of phonics and reading throughout Key Stages 1 and 2.

A planned programme of continuous professional development is supported by appropriate use of external consultants, so that teachers can learn from best practice.

New leaders have begun to establish a clear system for capturing reliable data. A new management information system has been procured to further support this. Monitoring and tracking information provides teachers with valuable assessments to help them plan their lessons more effectively. Methods of recording and reporting attendance information are improving.

The principal of the primary phase, with expert support from an outstanding headteacher, has ensured robust leadership of special educational needs provision. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and those for whom the school receives pupil premium funding, have now been appropriately identified and clear plans are being put into place to support their learning. The trust has established mechanisms to ensure that close monitoring of these pupils' progress and the impact of intervention plans are effective.

External support

The members of the governing body trust, especially the Chair, have drawn upon important and valuable professional external expertise to support school improvement, with significant success so far. Leaders from The Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust have brought structure and vision to school improvement. As well as securing clarity and statutory compliance regarding finance and human resources, their coaching of current leaders in the school ensures sustainable improvement.

School leaders have also sought the services of Derby City school improvement services to ensure the accuracy of the school's assessments of the levels at which pupils are working.