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Mohammad Sarwar
Headteacher
Marlborough Junior School
Green Lane
Small Heath
Birmingham
B10 9NY

Dear Mr Sarwar

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Marlborough Junior School

Following my visit with Julie Winyard, Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 7–8 April 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with the no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out following a request from the Secretary of State.

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspectors scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. They met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, pupils, a group of parents, five governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority. They scrutinised a range of the school's documentation, including the school improvement plan, curriculum documents, minutes from governing body meetings, and records of leaders' monitoring of teaching. Her Majesty's Inspectors also made short visits to lessons to observe the pupils at work.

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

The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements

The quality of leadership and management requires improvement

Context

A majority of the 360 pupils who attend the school are from a minority ethnic background. Most pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is also above the national average.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher both joined the school in January 2014 following the retirement of the previous headteacher and the promotion of the previous deputy headteacher.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils rightly say that they feel very safe at school and parents agree. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online. All of the statutory safeguarding checks for staff employed at the school are in place. School policies are appropriate and up-to-date. Staff receive regular training on how to keep pupils safe. They have had training in the past about preventing extremism. While there is currently no policy for vetting visitors to the school, the new headteacher has identified this as a priority and personally checks the suitability of all visitors. As a result, for example, visits to pupils' assemblies by speakers which were arranged by the previous headteacher, have been cancelled indefinitely until procedures are in place.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is at least good and often outstanding, including at lunchtime. Teachers and other adults follow the school's effective behaviour policy consistently. Racial incidents and bullying are extremely rare and pupils report that if these do occur they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils passionately oppose racism and the school's anti-racism councillors make a strong contribution to harmonious relationships between pupils from different backgrounds. For example, one pupil said: 'We are all the same on the inside.' The school's religious education curriculum makes sure that pupils learn about a range of beliefs and faiths. This is enhanced by a strong partnership with Birmingham City Mission. Attendance is above average and the school has a zero tolerance approach to pupils taking holidays during term time. Exclusions are very low.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The new headteacher and deputy headteacher have carried out an audit of safeguarding at the school. Consequently, the headteacher is in the process of

making sure that all pupils are also safeguarded well at the after school Madrasa. They have correctly identified the most important issues for development in leadership, teaching and pupils' achievement. Although there are ambitious improvement plans in place there has not been enough time for these to fully take effect. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are highly visible and accessible to parents. Parents say that the headteacher has gone out of his way to get to know them and their children quickly. Communication between the school and home has improved significantly.

While teaching is monitored regularly by all leaders, their analyses of strengths and weaknesses are not sharp enough. For example, leaders do not always sufficiently focus on pupils' progress in lessons or the achievement of different groups. Equally, the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' achievement is not measured consistently or clearly enough. However, the provision for disabled pupils and for those with special educational needs is very effective because leaders carefully track the impact of the extra support these pupils get, make adjustments when necessary, and ensure that these pupils make good progress.

Governors support and challenge school leaders. They know how pupil premium funding is spent but they do not analyse the impact of this funding in enough detail. It is unclear how governors are evaluating the impact of actions in the school improvement plan.

External support

The local authority has not identified the school as a priority and so has a limited knowledge of the school. It has not provided support in implementing its 'Prevent' programme, a government funded initiative intended to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism. An independent consultant provides useful support and challenge for school leaders. The headteacher has engaged a second independent consultant to further help the school to prevent extremism.

Priorities for further improvement

- ensure that the policy for vetting all external visitors is in place
- sharpen leaders' analyses of teaching, giving focused and specific feedback to teachers about what they are doing well and what they need to improve
- clarify governors' role in evaluating actions in the school improvement plan, including what impact pupil premium funding is having on pupils' achievement.

Her Majesty's Inspectors will continue to monitor the school and will consider this in determining the timing of the next full inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Haynes
Her Majesty's Inspector