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11 July 2014

Mrs Safeena Higgins  
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 9–10 July 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 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.

I strongly recommend that the academy 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 Trust, the Department for Education Academies Advisers Unit, and the Director of Children's Services for Derby City.

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 third monitoring inspection on 9–10 July 2014**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed parts of six lessons, two of which were seen jointly with the head of the primary school. Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documents and met with the principal, the head of the primary school, the Chair of the Governing Body Trust, consultant from the local authority and the Education Director from The Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust. Inspectors also formally interviewed six pupils from different year groups and visited all classes with the head of the primary school. Primary pupils were spoken to informally and their workbooks examined. An assembly was attended by the lead inspector.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, the acting principal has been appointed as the permanent postholder. The school has now secured a permanent head of operations. Nine teachers and six teaching support staff have left. The number of students in the secondary school has reduced to 15; these remaining students were on a field trip during the monitoring visit, so the secondary school was not inspected.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Achievement in the primary school is improving. Progress made by children in the Early Years Foundation Stage remains encouraging; the gap between these children's attainment and national averages is narrowing. This is a result of the continuing improvements in teaching. Pupils enter Key Stage 1 with knowledge and skills below national averages but their progress is accelerating. Work to improve their reading skills, and in particular their phonics skills (the sounds that letter make) is starting to raise standards. Writing and mathematical skills remain a weak area for many pupils across Key Stages 1 and 2.

Leaders continue to prioritise the need for accurate and reliable information derived from the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress. Consequently, they have now collected their most reliable set of data to date, which draws on a range of evidence to judge attainment. These data show that the gap in attainment is narrowing between pupils eligible for pupil premium and those who are not. Strategies to support these students are beginning to make a difference.

Current school data suggest that many of the disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making as much progress as their peers in the school. This is because of the increased level of specialist support. Their reading skills are weak; leaders have recognised this and developed a clear plan of action to address

it. Parents report that they are given useful guidance to help their children improve their reading skills.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching is improving. The school has worked hard to eradicate inadequate teaching through a comprehensive programme of training and coaching for staff and rigorous performance management. There is a clear emphasis on learning in the classroom; teachers are starting to use data about pupils' attainment to plan appropriate activities for different ability groups. The use of 'assertive mentoring' techniques, which help teachers to identify discrete areas of weakness in pupils' knowledge and skills, has improved lesson planning and enabled teachers to target their support more accurately. This is having a positive effect on the progress pupils are making. A clear and well-understood marking and feedback policy has been developed. However, it is not applied consistently well across the school; some of the feedback in workbooks does not give pupils enough guidance on how to improve their work.

The quality of support provided by teaching assistants is also improving. Increasingly, they are playing a significant role in the classroom by questioning more skilfully and intervening appropriately. Teaching assistants play a key and effective role in the teaching of phonics.

The school is developing a literacy strategy, and a skilled new coordinator has now been appointed. However, some teachers do not always model good grammar, spelling and punctuation in their own writing, both in books and in displays. Further work to improve this attention to detail and literacy precision is planned for the autumn term.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Leaders have significantly improved their monitoring and tracking of pupils' attendance. In addition, they have raised awareness with parents about the school policy on absences. This, in addition to close liaison with the local educational welfare officer, has made a difference to the numbers of sessions missed by pupils in the primary school. Attendance figures are now close to national averages in all year groups. Attendance in the secondary school, while still low, is well monitored and leaders are aware of reasons behind any persistence absenteeism.

The conduct and behaviour of pupils around the school are exemplary. They are polite and cheerful. Pupils say that they like the school and mention 'respect' as a key part of its values. Attitudes to learning in class are generally positive, although a good level of pride in work produced is not always evident from all pupils. Behaviour is well managed; the whole school community, including parents, are clear about the rewards and sanctions policy. Pupils are keen to earn rewards and appreciate

opportunities to celebrate their achievements; for example, the 'good to be green' awards.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Leaders have wasted no time in acting upon the areas of concern raised in the last monitoring visit. A clear plan of action is in place, with appropriate success criteria and quality assurance milestones. However, some of the actions are not described clearly enough and the monitoring activities are not detailed.

Leaders have made robust plans to ensure that staffing is secure and that all classes will be led by qualified full-time teachers from September. Safer recruitment practices have been followed diligently by leaders and administrators.

The head of the primary school is having a significant effect on the quality of teaching and achievement in the primary school. Her clear and unambiguous approach is leading to higher standards. The tracking of pupils' progress is carried out more rigorously than before and leaders are now able to identify underperformance rapidly. Leadership of behaviour and safety and special educational needs is improving; systems to manage these areas are now much more secure and coherent. Parents told inspectors that they have noticed a huge improvement in the way the school is organised and run; they are overwhelmingly positive about the education their children are receiving.

Governors continue to play a key role in supporting the developments in the school. Their high level of challenge, through the fortnightly meeting of the 'scrutiny committee', continues to drive improvements. Plans to increase the membership of the governing body and improve the skills of the governors next term reflect the continued drive and ambition of the governing body trust. Governors continue to ensure that all statutory duties regarding the safeguarding of children are adhered to diligently.

### **External support**

Leaders have drawn upon the expertise of a number of external consultants. This includes support from the Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust and the local authority. Each have provided an important external view of the work of the school and have helped the 'scrutiny committee' to hold leaders to account more rigorously. The principal and the head of the primary school acknowledge the need to evaluate the quality of all the support the school receives, to ensure that it gives good value for money.