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26 May 2015

Mrs Suzanne Sutherland
Headteacher
Al-Madinah School
1 Nelson Street
Midland House
Derby
DE1 2SA

Dear Mrs Sutherland

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Al-Madinah School

Following my visit to your school on 22 May 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to ensure that:

- the school's improvement plan outlines how those who are new to the governing body will be included in activities to support the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. The improvement plan should be re-submitted to me by the end of the summer term 2015 reflecting this change.
- teachers consistently provide opportunities for pupils to complete work that is relevant to the targets they are set after work is marked.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, other school leaders, and with representatives of the Governing Body Trust to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. Your school improvement plan was evaluated and other school

documents, including the outcomes of leaders' monitoring activities, were scrutinised. I observed children learning in each classroom during a tour of the school and checked samples of work in pupils' books.

Context

Since the last inspection, one new staff governor has been appointed. The Trust continues to seek new members to join the governing body. The deputy headteacher has left the school and a new interim deputy headteacher has been appointed. A new leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has been appointed.

Main findings

You, and your staff team, have worked with determination and urgency to begin to address the areas identified for improvement at the time of the last inspection.

Your strategies to improve the school are set out in a detailed school improvement plan. The plan includes clear measures to enable leaders to evaluate the impact your actions are making on raising pupils' achievement. The plan includes some opportunities for members of the governing body to monitor and evaluate leaders' work. However, these opportunities are limited due to the current small size of the governing body. The Trust is working hard to identify suitable governors with appropriate skills to join the governing body. You have agreed to re-submit your improvement plan to me by the end of the summer term 2015, to show how new governors will be involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

Work in pupils' books indicates that teachers are beginning to assess pupils' performance more accurately, and, as a result, are pitching work at the right level for pupils of different abilities. Teachers mark pupils' work frequently, and comply with the school's revised marking policy. Pupils respond to teachers' marking regularly and more opportunities are being given for pupils to respond to teachers' comments. However, on some occasions, teachers write developmental comments that pupils are unable to respond to because they do not relate to the next pieces of work. When this occurs, marking makes less impact on accelerating pupils' progress.

Pupils are being given more frequent opportunities to practise their mental mathematics skills in lessons. Teachers now ensure that all mathematics lessons include a focus on developing mental calculation skills. Staff have agreed a policy to support greater consistency in their expectations of pupils' mental calculation skills in each year group.

Leaders, other than you, are playing a more active role in monitoring the quality of teaching and supporting staff to improve their work. There is now a much sharper focus on identifying development points for staff, providing targeted support where necessary, and checking that staff have acted on their development points to improve the quality of their work.

You have worked hard to try to improve partnerships with parents and carers to help them better understand how to support their children's learning. For example, one successful initiative has involved improved translation services to make school information more accessible to parents and carers who speak English as an additional language.

You have ensured that staff make a more active contribution to checking that all parts of the school are as safe as they possibly can be. For example, new daily and weekly safety checks and risk assessments have ensured that learning areas, including the outdoor learning area for the early years, are safer than at the time of the last inspection.

The Early Years Foundation Stage has undergone some significant improvements since the last inspection. The outdoor learning area now provides many more opportunities for children to develop their basic skills when working outdoors, and is a much more stimulating environment in which to work and play. Your leaders are working hard to forge improved relationships with other early years providers, for example through more visits to pre-school settings, to ensure that children are better prepared for the transition to school.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school continues to receive very strong and focused support from representatives of the Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust. This is helping to ensure that leaders evaluate the impact of their work accurately and have access to ideas and support from a broad range of other schools, recognised for their strong practice. There is evidence that this support is making an impact on raising the expectations of staff and accelerating pupils' achievement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, and as below.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Spencer
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- For free schools, [open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk]