

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Miss Jacqueline Stephenson
Al-Madinah School
1 Nelson Street
Midland House
Derby
DE1 2SA

Dear Miss Stephenson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Al-Madinah School

Following my visit to your school on 24 May 2016, 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 second 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- urgently close the attainment gaps in mathematics, reading and writing, particularly in key stage 2, for all pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you. I met with the deputy headteacher, the early years leader, the Islamic studies leader and the key stage 1 and key stage 2 leaders. I also met with the leader for safeguarding and child protection, and a telephone call was held with the chair of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I toured the school with you, spoke with pupils about their work and scrutinised their books. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I also scrutinised school documentation relating to pupils' attainment and progress and those relating to the safeguarding of pupils. The single central register was checked.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. A new deputy headteacher has also been appointed. The chair of the governing body resigned and a new chair has been appointed. The vice-chair of the governing body has resigned and a new vice-chair has been appointed. The school has recruited four new members of the governing body. The Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust, that had been supporting the school, ceased to have any further involvement from January 2016. The English subject leader, who was also key stage 2 leader, resigned at the end of the spring term. A new leader for key stage 2 has been appointed. A new key stage 1 leader has also been appointed. The school is currently in the process of planning a move to a new site for the coming school year.

Main findings

Since your appointment in January 2016, you have successfully gained the trust and support of your senior leaders and staff. They share your determination and commitment to improve the outcomes for your pupils. You have rapidly assessed the strengths and areas for development of the school. You have wasted no time in formulating an action plan to address the current areas for development. As a result, actions for improvement have been taken quickly and effectively.

You have improved the quality of teaching through a careful assessment of each individual teacher's strengths and areas for development. The deputy headteacher and key stage leaders have supported your teachers to improve identified weaknesses. You have ensured all teachers received coaching and training to improve their work. You have improved the way you track the progress of pupils. This has been effective in improving the quality of teaching. As a result, teachers plan better to meet pupils' learning needs. Current school assessment information shows the large majority of pupils are making accelerated progress in mathematics, reading and writing. This accelerated progress is particularly strong in mathematics. However, current data also shows large gaps in the pupils' knowledge and understanding. Many pupils are not working within age-related expectations in all three subjects.

The leadership of the early years has improved since the previous inspection. You have secured a staff team who work well together to identify the learning needs of your youngest children. Adults plan learning that excites, engages and inspires children. The early years leader ensures her team rapidly addresses any gaps in the learning of children. As a result, it is predicted that the proportion of children reaching a good level of development will rise considerably this year. Consequently, children are being much better prepared for the next stage in their education.

You have ensured the school business manager carefully records the checks you make on the safety of pupils. You keep detailed records of any health and safety concerns staff may have. You have ensured playtime is safer by reducing the number of pupils who play in the playground at any one time. However, accident logs still show a significant number of minor bumps and falls. You do not analyse this information carefully enough to know if there any patterns or times when accidents happen. This prevents you from taking action to reduce accidents further.

You and the Islamic studies leader continue to encourage and support the parents to take part in the life of the school. Opportunities for parents to come into school have increased, for example during the open days when parents are able to see their children at work. This has resulted in parents gaining a better understanding of how they are able to support the work you do in school.

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the governing body has changed considerably. An experienced chair and vice-chair now lead this relatively inexperienced group of governors. The chair and vice-chair have begun to rapidly address the training needs of individual governors. Training has taken place to support governors to analyse and evaluate the current school assessment information. Governors have also grown in confidence to challenge school leaders to explain and justify plans for financial expenditure. Although plans are in place to increase the monitoring activities of the governing body, these are not fully realised. As a result, they do not have a broad enough picture of the quality of education at the school. Consequently, the governing body is unable to fulfil its role completely as a critical friend.

External support

The chair and vice-chair of the governing body have identified the support of an external education consultant to aid you to check the quality of teaching and learning in the school. He has been effective in helping you identify the next steps in the school improvement process. The school also works effectively with a number of local schools, including Bishop Lonsdale and Derby Teaching School Alliance, to moderate teachers' assessments of pupils' learning. Governors also purchase support from the local authority. This supports you to build effective links within the wider Derby family of schools.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Derby. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jan Connor
Her Majesty's Inspector