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Mr Arshad Mohammad
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Mohammad

Special measures monitoring inspection of Al-Hijrah School

Following my visit with David Hughes, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 23 and 24 May 2018, 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 that have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in March 2017. The full list of the areas for improvement that were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

We noted that the school continues to operate an unlawful discriminatory policy of strict segregation by sex in Year 6 and in the secondary phase. Plans for the school take some account of the need to address this practice.

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

- except as mentioned above, leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures
- the school may appoint three newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. You can appoint these newly qualified teachers to the English, mathematics or science departments.

You should contact me if you wish to appoint a newly qualified teacher to a department different to those listed.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the interim executive board (IEB), the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in March 2017.

- As a matter of urgency, improve safeguarding so that pupils are safe in all key stages, including in the early years, by:
 - clarifying the procedures for supporting pupils with medical needs and for dealing with emergencies and ensuring that all staff in all parts of the school, including lunchtime supervisors, are completely clear about all aspects of these procedures
 - ensuring that paediatric first aid training for staff in the early years is kept up to date and checked regularly
 - completing the necessary checks on all staff and ensuring that the single central record is compliant
 - ensuring that the number of staff on duty outside at breaktimes and lunchtimes is sufficient for the age and number of pupils, takes place as planned, and that staff on duty actively supervise the pupils
 - making sure that all staff, particularly the lunchtime supervisors, fully understand the safeguarding training they have received and put this into practice
 - looking into pupils' current concerns about bullying and ensuring that bullying concerns are always taken seriously, recorded and acted upon
 - reviewing the use of the outside areas used at breaktimes and lunchtimes so that all pupils' needs and interests are catered for, especially in the playground where boys play football.
- Improve behaviour and the management of behaviour by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders and governors gain an accurate picture of behaviour in the school, both in lessons and at informal times, taking into account the views of staff and pupils, and that leaders then take action accordingly
 - making sure that, in lessons and around the school, expectations of behaviour are high and consistently upheld
 - ensuring that pupils learn to respect adults in the school, their peers and the school environment
 - working with pupils to improve their ability to manage their own behaviour better at informal and social times, including providing them with more activities to do at these times
 - improving the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good, including in the early years, by:
 - making sure that pupils have the necessary skills to apply their English and mathematical understanding and knowledge in a range of contexts
 - making sure that teachers use the ongoing assessment of pupils' understanding and not just test results to plan and teach lessons
 - picking up on and addressing pupils' errors and misconceptions more quickly
 - making sure that the assessment of children's progress in the early years is accurate.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders gain an accurate picture of the quality of teaching across the school, identify where it is weak, and support and challenge staff accordingly
 - supporting teachers to eliminate both serious and low-level disruption in lessons
 - making sure that governors receive full and accurate information about the school's work so that they can support and challenge effectively
 - providing leaders at all levels with the support they need to strengthen their knowledge and understanding of the areas for which they are responsible and to enable them to become effective, including by forging links with other schools.

An external review of governance, including the school's use of the special educational needs and/or disabilities funding, should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 23 May 2018 to 24 May 2018

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with you, school leaders and members of the IEB, including the chair of the IEB. Inspectors spoke to a representative of the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP), which is providing support to the school, on the telephone. Inspectors scrutinised the school's analysis of pupils' current attainment, progress, behaviour and attendance. Additional documentation was analysed; for example, a selection of the school's policies, the school's procedures to ensure that pupils are kept safe and secure and the checks on the suitability of staff to work with children and young people. Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils in lessons, at breaktimes, lunchtime and as they moved between lessons. The school's arrangements for dropping pupils off in the morning and collecting them at home time were evaluated. Inspectors spoke informally with parents at these times. Inspectors observed pupils' learning in a range of primary and secondary classes across the school. During these observations, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to them about their learning. Inspectors also spoke informally to pupils about behaviour, attendance and how they learn to stay safe. There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to be considered.

Context

This inspection was completed during Ramadan and an alternative timetable was in place during this period. Year 11 pupils were on study leave and taking external examinations. Since the previous monitoring inspection in February 2018, one teacher has left the school. A head of science, a part-time special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), a mathematics teacher and two full-time cover supervisors have joined the school. The number of short-term supply teachers used by the school has been reduced.

The school operates a policy of segregation by sex in Year 6 and all secondary classes. Secondary boys and girls are not allowed to mix at breaktimes, at lunchtimes or during lesson changeovers. The policy causes a detriment to all pupils as they are denied the choice to socialise with the opposite sex, and the educational benefits of doing so, including preparing them for life in modern Britain. In addition, pupils are not allowed to enter certain rooms or use facilities when they are being used by the opposite sex. Given this detriment, the policy constitutes direct discrimination contrary to the Equality Act 2010.

In 2017, the Court of Appeal affirmed that segregation by sex in schools, in analogous circumstances, is contrary to the Equality Act 2010. Following this judgement, the Secretary of State for Education has stated that schools which segregate by sex should be given time to cease the practice. Ofsted have accepted

this. Therefore, the school's policy of segregation has not been taken into account in this inspection when determining the judgements. It is likely that a further section 8 inspection will take place after 1 September 2018, at which point any ongoing unlawful segregation by sex may result in the inspection being deemed a full section 5 inspection. During these inspections, any unlawful discrimination will be taken into account when determining the individual and overall effectiveness judgements.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

You, the IEB and most of your leadership team have successfully continued to address the areas for improvement identified at the inspection in March 2017. The leadership team is also addressing effectively the emerging issues identified as part of your self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness. The improvements to pupils' attendance, including that for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities or who are disadvantaged, and the reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions and negative behaviour incidents are evidence of this.

The school's safeguarding arrangements remain effective. The school's designated safeguarding leader demonstrates a secure level of understanding and expertise in implementing the school's policies and in making sure the school complies with the guidance in the current version of 'Keeping children safe in education'. She is in the process of preparing staff training that will update them on the guidance in the revised 'Keeping children safe in education', September 2018 document. However, while the school's practice ensures that pupils are safe, leaders do not routinely formally record all of their assessments of potential risks or 'near misses'. Staff new to the school confirm that they have received an extensive and thorough safeguarding induction, including about how to identify and support pupils with medical needs and conditions. The school's checks on staff's suitability to work with children and young people are effective. All of the staff new to the school have been suitably checked and the details accurately recorded on the single central record. The supervision of pupils by adults is appropriate. Supervision before school and at the home time pick up is particularly well staffed. Lunchtime supervisors are vigilant and address any issues appropriately. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe in school and that staff are thoughtful and caring. For example, pupils told inspectors that bullying incidents, though rare, are dealt with quickly and effectively.

You have, to some extent, resolved the leadership of the school's provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. You have appointed a temporary part-time SENCo. In addition, the first stage of the external review of the school's use of the special educational needs and/or disabilities funding has been completed through an audit of the school's provision. The SENCo, working with a higher-level teaching assistant, an assistant headteacher and Birmingham City Council, has begun to address the weaknesses identified in the audit successfully. For example, an increased number of pupils who find reading difficult have been identified and

supported. The school's special educational needs and/or disabilities policy is greatly improved, more accurately reflects the school's effective practice and is informed by the special educational needs and disability code of practice. However, the school still does not have an accessibility plan as required by Schedule 10, paragraph 3 of the Equality Act 2010.

The IEB provides suitable challenge and direction to you and your leadership team. In addition, they continue to address effectively the issues identified in the external review of governance. The IEB makes sure that the school's budget is managed effectively, provides value for money and benefits the pupils. For example, the mathematics and special educational needs and/or disabilities department has been able to invest in teaching and learning resources, materials and training. The school has successfully overturned a financial deficit so that the school now has a budget surplus. However, despite all statutory policies being available on request, the school's website still does not have all of the required information.

Leaders' use of information about pupils' attendance, behaviour, welfare and outcomes continues to improve. The majority of leaders use this information to inform their subsequent actions. However, some leaders do not analyse the information or data to explore links between, for example, pupils' behaviour, attendance and outcomes. This limits leaders' ability to act quickly and effectively to address issues or to intervene before issues arise.

You have reduced the number of short-term supply teachers used in the school. As a result, the quality of teaching and the implementation of policies is more consistent. Pupils who spoke with inspectors agree. Leaders have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching across the school and the effect this has on pupils' learning and outcomes. Leaders rightly identify that inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes in some year groups and classes. Leaders use their evaluations to provide training and support appropriate for and tailored to the needs of staff.

The local authority and the IEB have identified and tentatively secured a sponsor for the school's conversion to academy status. The local authority and school leaders suggest that the proposed plans for three separate schools will resolve the issue of unlawful segregation by sex in a mixed setting. These plans have changed slightly since the previous inspection. They include a mixed primary school, single-sex boys' school and a single-sex girls' school on three separate new sites.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving as a result of the reduced number of supply teachers and the suitable and effective training and support that leaders provide. However, inconsistencies remain. Where teaching is effective, staff have secure subject knowledge and use this to plan and deliver lessons that are well structured and interest, engage and motivate the pupils. The

work these teachers set is informed by an effective evaluation of what pupils know and can do. In addition, these staff modify or adapt pupils' learning based on an accurate assessment of their understanding during the lesson. As a result, pupils make secure progress as the work builds on their previous knowledge and understanding.

Where teaching is less effective, pupils are still required to complete work that lacks challenge or does not build on what they already know or can do. In many of these lessons, pupils become bored and distracted and lose interest in their work. This is particularly the case in some of the boys' classes.

Improvements in the teaching of mathematics are evident. This is as a result of the investment in materials, resources and training. An increasing number of pupils are using resources that enable them to understand mathematical concepts and the workings behind an answer. Pupils' mathematical fluency is improving as a result. However, in some primary and secondary classes pupils' mathematical reasoning is underdeveloped as they do not practise tackling a range of problems, select problem-solving strategies or easily apply what they know.

The quality of teaching and children's progress continues to improve in the early years. The outdoor area has been further improved and children have good opportunities to play and explore. The early years leader correctly identifies that teachers' and teaching assistants' questioning to develop children's imaginative play and thinking skills is still inconsistent.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

You and your staff have worked successfully to improve pupils' behaviour and attendance. The reduced number of fixed-term exclusions and negative behaviour incidents and higher attendance levels reflect this. Pupils' behaviour around the school is also greatly improved since the inspection in March 2017. However, the inconsistencies in how staff manage pupils' behaviour in lessons remain. Pupils' behaviour, particularly that of boys, deteriorates when teachers fail to plan and deliver learning that meets pupils' needs and engages them in their learning. Leaders are aware of this issue and have introduced suitable training for relevant staff. It is too early to see a significant effect.

Pupils' attendance, including that for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities or who are disadvantaged, has improved since the previous inspection. The school has a comprehensive and methodical process for finding out the reasons for pupils' absence. Telephone calls and text messages are sent to parents and carers on the first day of a pupil's absence. The school expects parents to reply to these calls and messages and quickly and effectively follows up when replies are not received. Leaders and staff understand the procedures for identifying and reporting pupils who may be missing in education. Staff report these incidents to the relevant team at the local authority. Pupils' attendance during this inspection was above national

figures. However, the school has identified that the proportion of pupils late to school has almost doubled since the same time last year. Staff are taking action to address this but it is too early to see a significant and sustained improvement.

The majority of pupils are polite, respectful, cooperative and thoughtful. They respect the school environment including wall displays. There is little litter and graffiti is rare. The vast majority of pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they greatly appreciate the help, support and guidance they receive from staff. For example, during this inspection a group of Year 11 pupils told inspectors that staff had come to school at 7am to provide last-minute revision for an examination for those pupils who wanted it.

Outcomes for pupils

Information provided by the school and the work in pupils' books show that pupils in many classes and subjects are making secure progress from their starting points and attaining standards that are likely to be in line with or above age-related expectations. However, as a result of inconsistent teaching some groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do less well. This is particularly the case in Years 6, 4 and 1. Across the school, girls generally do better than boys in a range of subjects.

The majority of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are doing well across the school. The school's monitoring of pupils' progress enables staff and leaders to identify and support those pupils falling behind. In addition, leaders use these checks to intervene quickly when teachers need support, for example when their assessments are inaccurate.

External support

Leaders and staff receive helpful and useful support from BEP, Parkfield Community School, Whitehouse Common Primary School, Christ Church C of E Primary School and Little Sutton Primary School. The school has also participated in the raising attainment of disadvantaged youngsters (RADY) project. Staff told inspectors that this support has challenged and supported them to improve their practice. For example, they talked very positively about the mathematics support provided by Parkfield Community School. The improvements in the quality of teaching, especially in mathematics, leadership and management and pupils' outcomes, particularly for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities or who are disadvantaged, show that this support is effective.

Priorities for further improvement

Leaders should make sure that they end the school's unlawfully discriminatory practice of segregation by sex for pupils in Year 6 and the secondary phase.

(Although not taken into account in this inspection when determining the judgements, this will be taken into account from September 2018 – see the 'Context' section above.)