

5th February 2018

Re: Parents Meeting 28th January 2018

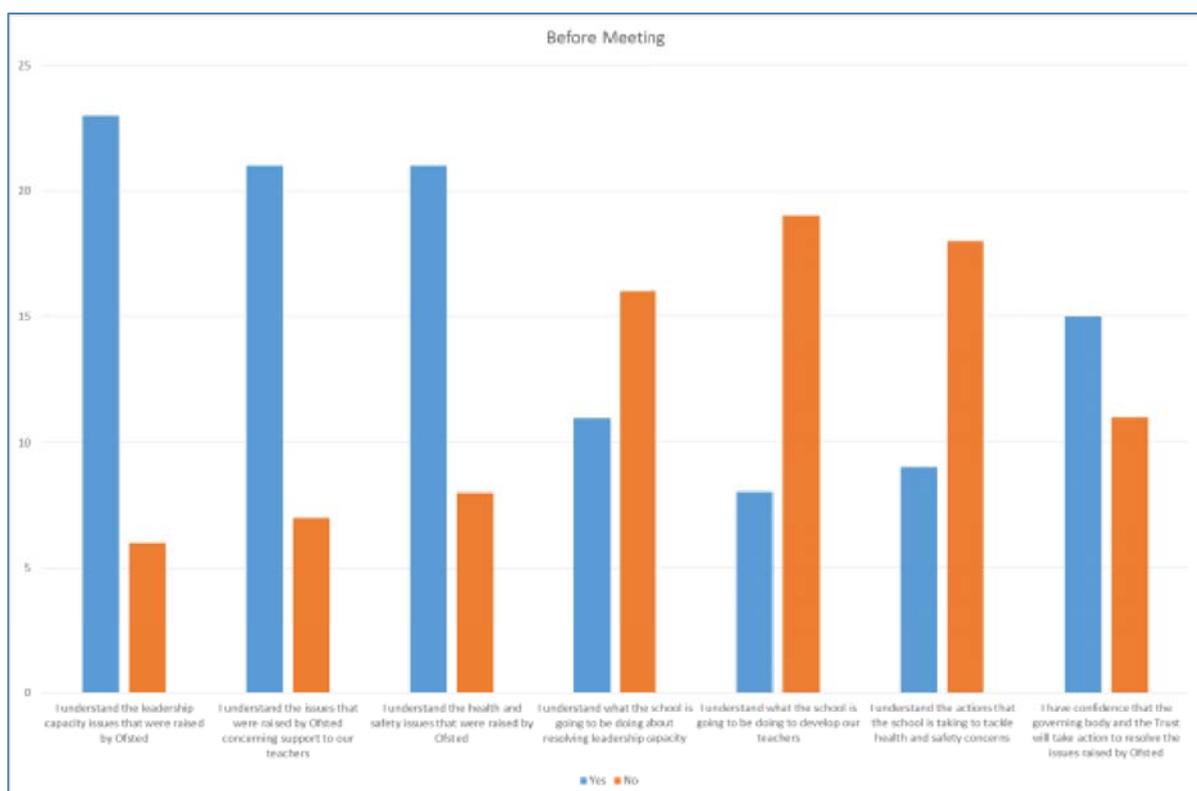
Following the publication of the Ofsted report on 8th January, a parents meeting was arranged to help allay any concerns and allow parents to meet the Governors, Trustees and members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

Since the inspection, Governors have been working on actions to address the concerns identified by Ofsted. Additionally, delays by Ofsted with the nursery inspection, ill-health and bereavement prevented this meeting being conducted any sooner, for which we apologise.

The following items were on the agenda:

1. Introduction from Mufti Abdullah
2. Ofsted's inspection framework and what it entails
3. Ofsted's concerns around capacity of leadership and health and safety (H&S)
4. Introduction of our new structure and processes
5. Q&A for leadership and H&S
6. Ofsted's concerns around support to our teachers and quality of resources
7. Plan to improve engagement level for Madrasa
8. Ofsted's concerns around EYFS
9. Q&A for teaching, EYFS and Madrasa

The **questionnaire prior to the meeting** illustrated that while parents largely understood the issues raised by Ofsted, understandably they were unclear on the detail of the actions the school was taking to remedy these issues:



We have provided a summary of the meeting below, with some additional clarifications.

Leadership

The report highlighted concerns regarding leadership, which were explained in greater detail at the meeting. The report noted that “the leadership is not effective as too few members have too many responsibilities”. We would like to reassure the parents that the Ofsted inspector had no doubt about the competency of the SLT, but emphasised that the capacity of leadership needed to be enhanced.

It was with this feedback in mind, that Mufti Abdullah felt he could not apply his time effectively to both Al Ashraf Primary School and Al Ashraf Secondary School and tendered his resignation. Due to budgetary restriction and Ofsted deadlines (and following legal advice), appointments were made to provide the continuity that the School required at this critical juncture.

Members of the SLT were selected based on their deep knowledge of the Independent School Standards (ISS) and their ability to ‘hit the ground running’ in their respective roles. A formal recruitment campaign at this moment in time would have been far too costly with little guarantee of success, resulting in the School running at ‘risk’ and falling foul from an Ofsted requirement.

Mrs Khadija Jadwat has been serving as DH for the past 8 years and was praised by the Ofsted inspector. Her move to HT is a natural progression.

Mrs Zainab Patel has been working tirelessly behind the scenes in supporting Mrs Jadwat with duties that would have ordinarily been carried out by other members of SLT – this includes data analysis of pupil tracking, oversight of the ISS framework, policy work and supporting the then DH throughout the inspection. The Governors believe that this insight and experience makes her ideally placed to take over the role of DH.

Both Mrs Jadwat and Mrs Patel were requested by the Governors to help the school at this critical juncture by taking up their respective posts.

To further bolster the SLT, our Head of Teaching and Learning, Mrs Bhaimia, has had her hours increased (see below for further details). Additionally, Mrs Khatija Panchbhayya will also join the SLT as Head of EYFS.

The SLT between them will be responsible for ensuring the Independent School Standards are met. These are:

Part 1. Quality of teaching provided

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Part 6. Provision of information

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

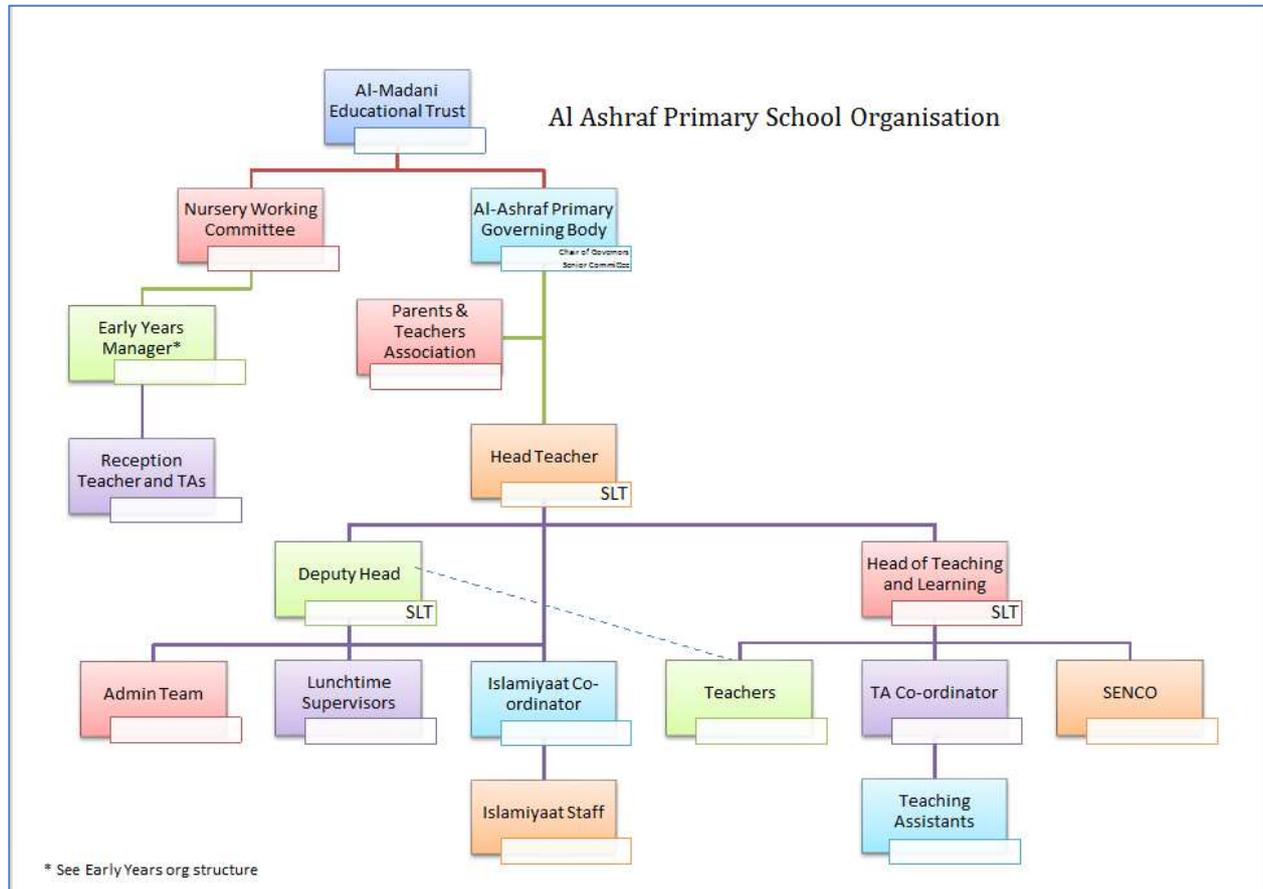
Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

The Head of Teaching and Learning will have responsibility of all standards related to teaching and learning whilst all other standards will fall under the remit of the HT and DH.

Governance

Ofsted's concerns regarding governance were mainly due to the lack of analysis of performance and non-performance data, i.e. attendance levels, attainment and progress. Parents have been advised that an analyst has now been employed to process this data, which will allow the Governors to track and evaluate progress.

Parents were informed that Governors not only perform their 'Governor duties', but due to financial constraints, are expected to work voluntarily as 'unpaid staff', saving the School in excess of 100k per annum.



Parental involvement

Parents were informed that there are currently vacancies to join the Governing body, Alhamd. many parents have expressed an interest. If you are also interested please complete and return the slip at the end of this letter. Once all the forms are received interested parties will be asked to complete an application form.

Alhamd. since the report, not only have parents come forward with constructive feedback, but they are also eager to give their time and skills to further improve the school. To facilitate this, we are in the process of forming a Parent Teachers Association (PTA). Mrs Kathryn Akrouit has volunteered to coordinate setting this up. IA she will be contacting parents who have expressed an interest soon. Some of the changes the PTA could lead on, will be:

- Help improve playground equipment and engagement
- Establish partnerships with other Schools
- Work with teachers to improve the quality of resources
- Volunteer for supporting staff
- Volunteer for School trips and local visits
- Friday prayer coordination
- Coordinating and leading fundraising events
- Assist in maintenance and upkeep of the School

Health and Safety

Ofsted's concerns regarding H&S were explained in more detail. It is very important to note that H&S comes under safeguarding, so the standards not met relate to the lack of rigour around the H&S documentation and risk assessments.

The Trust, Governing Body and School recognise the wellbeing of the children is vital and will not remain complacent in its duty of care and will give this the utmost priority.

Actions taken to alleviate these concerns include:

- H&S officer employed - this role will include robust record keeping and risk assessments
- H&S training session to be organised for all staff by SLT
- Ensuring H&S policies are followed and understood
- Daily H&S checks by all staff
- Maintenance person proposed

Additionally, we would like to remind all parents that Ofsted raised concerns regarding the careless manner in which some parents drive and park their car. The safety of our children is paramount so we advise all parents to drive slowly and not too close to the school building.

School Finances

The Governors explained the current finances of the School and stressed how unsustainable it is. The income from fees and Reception grant is less than our annual expenses – this means we are running on a deficit. This deficit is exacerbated by sibling discounts and unpaid fees. Unfortunately, this shortfall prevents the funding of any future necessary/complimentary activities without assistance from various factors.

Fundraisers such as Mums & Munchies, donations, and support from Al Madani Educational Trust, helps address some of the debt, but the School would like to be self-sufficient and not reliant on unpredictable funding streams. In comparison, State Schools receive a minimum of £4500 per pupil. For Al Ashraf to break even, fees would need to rise significantly. We will ensure that any rise in fees is done as a last resort and not to a drastic level, with all other avenues for making the finances more sustainable explored first.

Teaching

To address the concerns Ofsted had regarding Teaching and Learning the School has taken the following steps:

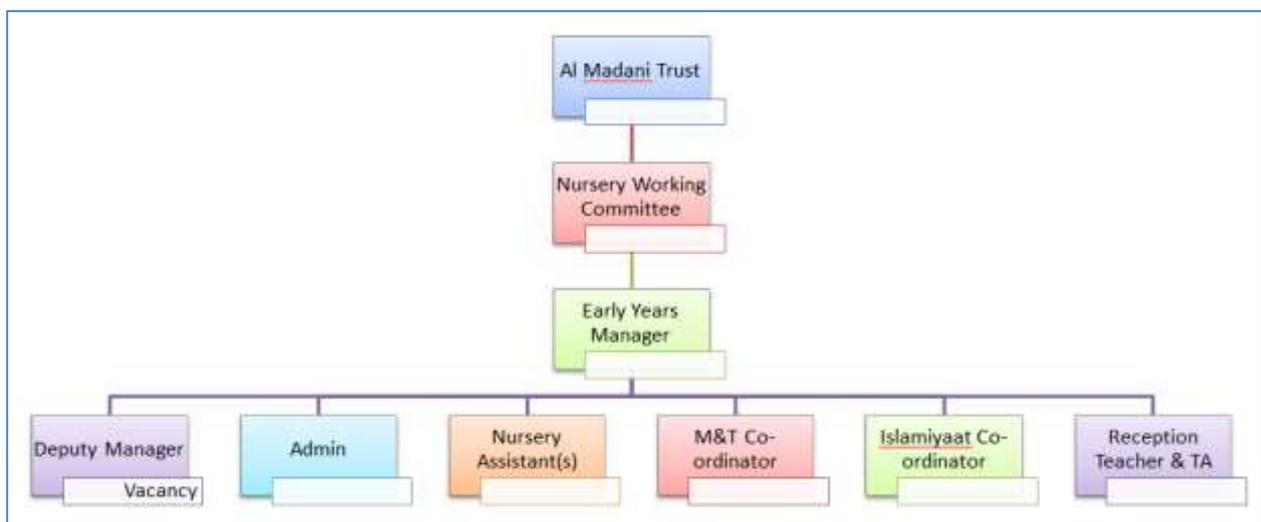
- Head of Teaching and Learning hours increased
- Special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) employed
- NQT (newly qualified teacher) mentor employed

Despite Ofsted's concerns, the school performs exceptionally well in comparison to its peers. KS2 results ranked Al-Ashraf Primary School first in all areas and third for Mathematics.

School Name	% of pupils meeting the expected standard	Reading	Writing	Maths	Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation
Longlevens Junior School	70%	84%	75%	87%	93%
Elmbridge Primary School	61%	64%	76%	85%	72%
Kingsholm Church of England Primary School	60%	72%	66%	74%	72%
Robinswood Primary School	39%	50%	61%	50%	46%
St James Church of England Junior School	38%	62%	68%	56%	68%
Widden Primary School	15%	45%	15%	53%	66%
Tredworth Junior School	36%	67%	39%	67%	57%
Al-Ashraf Primary School	70%	85%	86%	75%	95%

EYFS

The framework for the ISS means the Reception class is graded separately to the rest of the School. This is the reason why the Reception class was mentioned specifically in the report. The Reception class will now be merged with the Nursery to form an EYFS Unit. The Nursery has been praised for its effectiveness and this merger will allow for sharing of resources and best practice; we are confident this will improve the overall standard of the Reception class.



Madrassa

Parents and teachers have previously raised issues around behaviour, children not being engaged enough in class, the lack of time dedicated to Islamic morals and values, as well as the disruption to the school day in children moving classes to cater for ability groups. As a result of these complaints, we stood up a Madrassa Committee last year to investigate these issues and look for a solution to improve the provision of Madrassa.

A proposal was put together over the summer by the Committee, but due to logistical reasons this could not be implemented by the school leadership team. The exception to this was the Reception class, for whom the changes were implemented, resulting in the class staying with their school teacher and leaving the room in small groups for their Arabic letters lesson. This change has been successfully embedded and children have progressed well, with behaviour improving significantly. This new model will not affect Reception madrasa, which will remain unchanged.

Unlike previous inspections, the Ofsted inspectors evaluated Madrassa as part of the school, and raised the issues seen in the report. As a result, we need to ensure that these are resolved as part of the action plan, and embedded in time for the next monitoring visit by Ofsted in a few months' time.

The current Madrassa format requires the children to move classes for Quran. Although this session is for 1 hour, most children only spend on average twenty minutes actively studying and learning - pupils are then asked to consolidate their lesson independently. Children then move class again, spending 25 mins with a teacher delivering a lesson using an Islamic curriculum developed by Safar Academy.

In addition, an overwhelming majority of the children at our school, especially from Year 2 onwards attend evening Madrasa. Here they are able to dedicate more time to the learning of the Quran than we can afford during our school day. Allocating 1.5 hours each day to madrasa puts the school teachers under great pressure with delivering the curriculum.

To improve behaviour, engagement levels and to enhance the moral and spiritual development of our pupils, the Governors and SLT believe a change is needed in the way Quran and Islamic Studies is delivered. Under this new model:

- Pupils will be taught in their year groups, helping to reduce the disruption caused by transition.
- The Islamic Studies lesson will be planned in the same manner as other lessons, with teachers following lesson plans and encouraging creativity – this will help with engagement levels.
- The teacher in each class will be supported by an additional teacher – this will help improve behaviour, engagement and differentiation.
- The Islamic Studies lesson will last for approximately 40 minutes, and the Quran lesson will be 20 minutes, although this may be adjusted to suit the year group.
- With Quran, the focus would move from completing it as quickly as possible, onto quality of recitation. Pupils will be taught to read the Quran with tarteel in the earlier years, before moving onto the rules of tajweed in later years. While this will still be taught using the Quran, the focus will be on the quality of recitation and not on the quantity.

Crucially, the madrasa going from 1.5 to 1 hr will free up much needed time for delivering the school curriculum. However, we strongly believe this move will not be at a detriment to our Islamic ethos; in fact, it will enhance it.

These changes have been formulated after extensive discussions between governors, SLT and both madrasa and school teachers. Since the meeting these plans have also been approved by Mufti Abdullah, who is part of the Trust

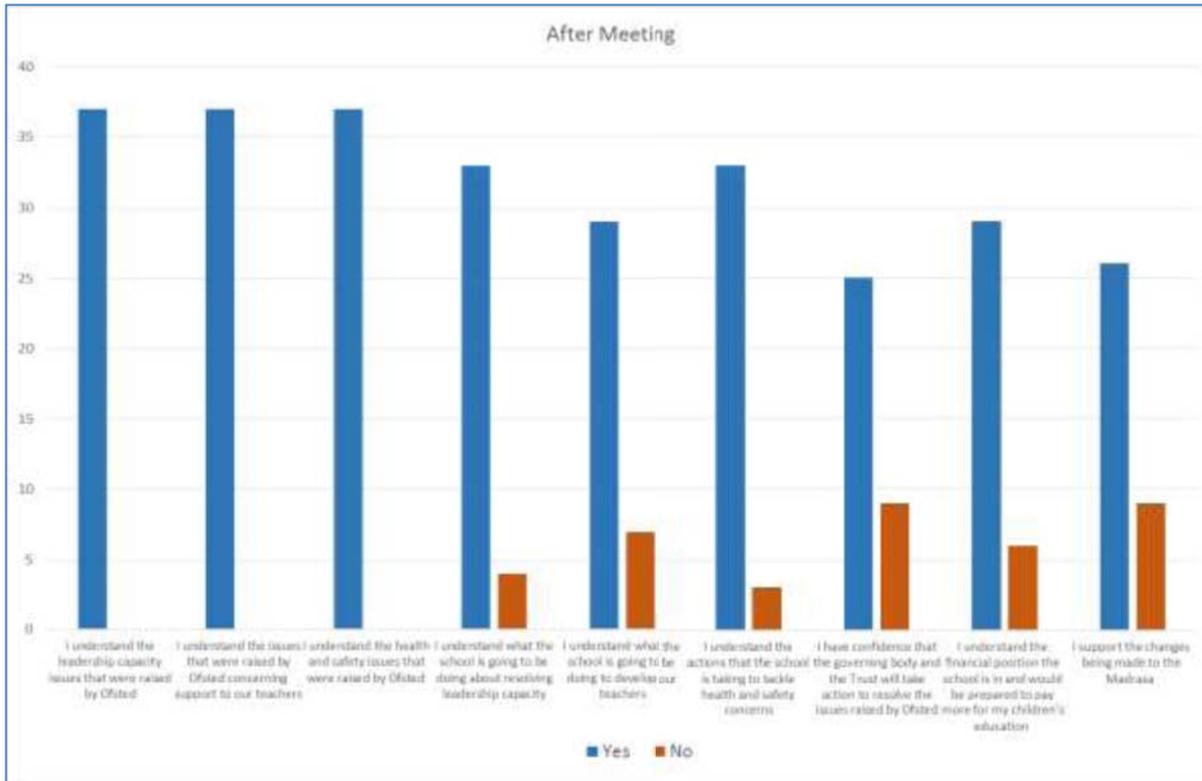
The Governors would be happy to receive any feedback or concerns you may have regarding these changes.

Next Steps

The School is now required to submit an Action Plan to the Department for Education (DfE) by 19th February 2018. The action plan will contain details of how the unmet Independent School Standards will be addressed. To ensure that the Action Plan is robust, we are planning on seeking advice from experts in this area. It will therefore need to be completed at least a few days before the deadline. This will require the focus and time of SLT and Governors over the next few weeks. Following the submission of the action plan, the DfE will commission Ofsted to carry out an unannounced progress monitoring inspection within the next few months.

Post Meeting Questionnaire

The questionnaire following the meeting illustrates that overall, parents have understood the Ofsted report and are largely in agreement with the actions the Trust, Governing Body and SLT are undertaking.



There is a growing desire within the School to see a change and therefore we hope with a newly formed PTA and with an ingest of new Governors, we will see an improvement in the school's ability to deliver what is best for our children – inshaA.

Kind Regards
Jzk Khair

School Governors & Senior Leadership Team
Al-Ashraf Primary School
www.al-ashraf.org.uk/primary

Name: _____ Children's Class(es): _____

Contact Info (phone/email): _____

I would be interested in joining the PTA

I would be interested in joining the Governing body

Please return this reply slip to the office by the 9th of February if you are interested in signing up.