

Al-Ashraf Secondary School for Girls

Sinope Street, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL1 4AW

Inspection dates

29 January 2015

Overall outcome

Unmet independent school standards identified

Reason for the inspection

- The inspection was conducted at no notice. Inspectors were asked to look into the quality of the curriculum, equal opportunities and the use of language on the school's website.
- Inspectors were requested to consider whether the independent school standards contained in Part 1, Part 2, Part 3 and Part 8 are met.

Main findings

- Subject teaching emphasises debate and discussion. Students are encouraged to consider all viewpoints without prejudice. They approach their studies with an open mind.
- The Islamic history curriculum is taught factually. It sits alongside broad and balanced secular history teaching. British and European history maintains a focus on social change and the growth of democracy. There is strong evidence that in both the Islamic and secular curricula students are taught to view historical events without prejudice or bias.
- The headteacher accepted that some of the wording on the website used to illustrate the content of the Islamic curriculum was open to interpretation. Some of the language did not reflect the efforts of the headteacher and the governors to promote mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. The headteacher agreed that the website had not been reviewed for some time and is now currently under review.
- The personal, social, health and citizenship education curriculum has a good structure and clear development of core ideas and concepts such as identity and understanding of British values, the law and life in modern democratic Britain.
- Teaching about other faiths and cultures is not sufficiently comprehensive. Much of the students' awareness and understanding about world faiths comes incidentally through lessons in the personal, social, health and citizenship education programme. There are relevant inputs from the Islamic curriculum and also through assemblies but there is no overall mapping of these experiences or any checks on what has been learnt.
- The history, geography and art curriculum schemes of work successfully teach a range of skills. However, there is a paucity of well-planned lessons that would deepen students' appreciation of cultures and their contribution they make to contemporary society.
- There is no local studies programme or a programme of trips and visits into the local community to help the students gain a better understanding of the cultures and faiths within the city of Gloucester.
- Students have high aspirations of what they can achieve after they leave school. Almost all go on to enter local sixth forms. Those who do not wish to continue with a strictly academic pathway join apprenticeships. There is good access to independent advice and guidance. The programme is well established and the school is flexible in providing additional subjects to support the students' career choices.
- A blend of career fairs held in local sixth forms and talks from representatives from a wide range of public services, businesses and commerce successfully conveys the message that there are

no barriers to what women can achieve.

- There is a weak culture of safeguarding. Not all the staff, including those who have recently joined the school, have current basic awareness training. The lack of training on safeguarding issues for staff means that they are not well placed to recognise symptoms of abuse or when students are at risk of harm.
- Leaders and governors have not kept abreast of statutory guidance as set out in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* published by the Department for Education in April 2014. Leaders and governors lack an overarching strategy for monitoring and evaluating the academy's safeguarding arrangements. They do not evaluate the impact of the safeguarding processes to drive a clear improvement strategy that addresses specific safeguarding, behaviour and attendance issues. There is some effective intervention with individual students based on information given by them, but the use of such information to target improvements in safeguarding practice more widely is lacking.
- There has been a lack of external validation of procedures and practices to keep students safe, and as a consequence the key documents are out of date. For example, the policy does not set out the timescales for referrals to social services, or how staff are to respond immediately to a child making a disclosure and how the policy is to be checked for its impact. The policy has not yet been approved by the local safeguarding children's board.
- Students say they feel safe in school and know who to go to with any concerns they have. The personal, social, health and citizenship education curriculum seeks to cover what it means to say you feel safe.
- Governors are not sufficiently independent of the headteacher to make judgments about how effective safeguarding procedures are in the school. They are advised by the headteacher and other leaders of what improvements are required, and this reinforces their reliance. They are unaware that important documents, such as the child protection policy, are out of date and lack essential information to monitor safeguarding effectively.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements

- Ensure that the proprietor
 - actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs (paragraphs 5, 5(a))
 - encourages pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely (paragraph 5(b)(iii))
 - furthers tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures (paragraph 5(b)(v))
 - encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act (paragraph 5(b)(vi))
- Ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and that such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraphs 7, 7(a), (7b))
- Ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role; and that they fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b))
- Ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1)(c)).

Inspection team

Jonathan Palk, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about this school

- Al-Ashraf Secondary School for Girls is an independent Muslim day school for girls aged from 11 to 16 years of age. It has been operating since 1994. There are 72 students on roll.
- Students are mainly from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritages. The school is located in a former Victorian primary school building in Gloucester. The majority of the students travel from areas such as Barton and Tredworth.
- The school aims to provide 'high quality secular and Islamic education which is broad and balanced and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum'. The school uses the local sports centre for physical education.
- There is one headteacher who leads the primary and secondary schools. There is a deputy headteacher who has day-to-day responsibility for the secondary school.
- The overall effectiveness of the school was judged to be good on inspection in February 2014. The school met schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

School details

Unique reference number	115810
Inspection number	455438
DfE registration number	916/6073

This inspection was conducted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

Type of school	Muslim day school
School status	Independent
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Al-Madani Educational Trust
Chair	Yakub Patel
Headteacher	Mufti Abdullah Patel
Date of previous school inspection	11–13 March 2014
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,100 – £1,400
Telephone number	01452 300465
Email address	iacademy@yahoo.co.uk

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