

Al-Ashraf Secondary School for Girls

Sinope Street, Gloucester, Gloucestershire GL1 4AW

Inspection dates

11 November 2015

Overall outcome

Independent school standards met

Context of the inspection

- This inspection was undertaken at the request of the Department for Education, the registration authority for independent schools. The inspection was unannounced. At the school's last full inspection in June 2014, its overall effectiveness was judged to be good. Subsequently, at an emergency inspection in January 2015, a number of the independent school standards were judged to be not met. In May 2015, the school's action plan was judged to require improvement. This was the first progress monitoring inspection to the school.
- The main purpose of this inspection was to monitor the school's progress in implementing its action plan in response to the weaknesses identified at the inspection in January 2015.

Main findings

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- The January 2015 inspection found that the teaching about other faiths and cultures was not sufficiently comprehensive. It was not evident how the school proposed to plan to teach pupils about cultures and faiths that are different from their own. This limited pupils' achievement and was not promoting mutual respect and tolerance or preparing them suitably for life in modern Britain. In its action plan, the school undertook to plan and teach religious education to all year groups. In addition, the school undertook to promote fundamental British values and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the teaching of citizenship and other subjects such as history, geography and art. Schemes of work, supported with detailed weekly plans are now in place for all subjects in Years 7 to 11. Teachers check pupils' progress in their subjects. Pupils can now confidently explain what it means to be British. They have a secure understanding of other religions such as Christianity, Buddhism and Sikhism, and demonstrate a maturity and deep respect and tolerance when discussing other faiths and cultures. In addition, pupils are ambitious for their futures. They state that the school provides the education and preparation they need as young Muslim women to succeed in modern Britain and their chosen careers.
- The school has ensured that assemblies are well planned to support the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Visitors, such as the police and representatives from local secular charities, lead assemblies to develop pupils' understanding of issues such as disability and dementia. Visits to places of local interest such as Gloucester Cathedral support learning in subjects across the school. These visits deepen pupils' appreciation of the cultures and faiths within the city of Gloucester. School leaders actively seek opportunities to teach pupils how to stay safe. For example, they tackle issues such as bullying and child sexual exploitation through assemblies and visiting theatre productions.

- The January 2015 inspection found the website had not been reviewed for some time and was not up to date. As a result of implementing the action plan, the school has made significant improvements to the information provided to families on the website. Schemes of work, a timetable for assemblies and a wealth of information about the school's work is now available. Further information explicitly details the school's commitment to promoting British values and their responsibility for keeping pupils safe from extremist views and radicalisation.
- The independent school standards in relation to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are now met.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- The January 2015 inspection found there was a weak culture of safeguarding. School leaders accept this judgement and have focused assiduously on reviewing and improving their safeguarding arrangements.
- The revised safeguarding policy takes full account of the most recent guidance issued by the Secretary of State, *Keeping children safe in education, July 2015*. The school has been proactive in working with local authority officers who have reviewed the safeguarding policy and confirm that practice meets requirements. In particular, the policy now makes explicit reference to preventing radicalisation and the school's commitment to keeping children safe. The school has also developed a policy regarding safe use of the internet. Both policies are available on the website. In discussions, pupils confirmed that they know how to keep safe when online and have a good understanding of possible dangers they may come across when using the internet.
- Following the inspection in January 2015, all staff have completed safeguarding training. Staff are now well placed to recognise signs of abuse or when pupils are at risk of harm. There are robust systems in place to respond to a child's disclosure. Leaders work closely with social services to support pupils at risk of harm. In addition, staff record incidents of inappropriate behaviour and leaders check the effectiveness of actions taken. Following implementation of the action plan, the school appointed a governor with specific responsibility for safeguarding. As a result, the school's policy and practices are monitored carefully. Plans to monitor and review the ongoing work of the school in these areas are effective. The independent school standards in relation to safeguarding are now met.

Quality of leadership and management

- School leaders have ensured that all the regulations are now met. The safeguarding policy they have introduced is in alignment with current guidance published by the Department for Education in July 2015.
- The website has been reviewed and updated to provide evidence of how and when pupils learn about other faiths and cultures. It also provides helpful information about how each subject promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Planned assemblies and links with the local community are now well established.
- The school has taken action to appoint governors with specific responsibility for monitoring the school's safeguarding policy arrangements, and also to check the school's 'Prevent' duty has been implemented effectively.
- During this inspection, Part 1 of the independent school standards was not inspected. However, in discussions, leaders recognise that the school needs to continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that all pupils make good progress in all subjects.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements

Inspection team

Catherine Leahy, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about this school

- Al-Ashraf Secondary School for Girls is an independent Muslim day school for girls from 11 to 16 years of age. It has been operating since 1994. There are 74 pupils on roll.
- Two thirds of pupils are of Indian or Pakistani heritage, with smaller numbers from a range of different backgrounds. The majority of pupils travel from areas such as Barton and Tredworth.
- There are no pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. The school has identified a small number of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs.
- 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 primary school.
- The school is owned by the Al-Madani Educational Trust.

School details

Unique reference number	115810
Inspection number	10005845
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 school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	74
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Al-Madani Educational Trust
Chair	Shahid M Vaid
Headteacher	Abdullah Patel
Date of previous school inspection	11–13 March 2014
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,200–£1,650
Telephone number	01452 300465
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