

Al Islah Girls' High School

108 Audley Range, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 1TF

Inspection dates

16–18 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Adequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- School leaders have not fulfilled their responsibilities to ensure that all of the independent school standards are met.
- There is lack of clarity about the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of different levels of leadership.
- Development planning is not sharp enough and does not focus sufficiently on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, including the opportunities for practical scientific enquiry.
- The school's child protection policy does not pay sufficient regard to the most recent statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- The school does not have appropriate monitoring and filtering of its internet connection.
- Proprietors, governors and leaders have not carried out the required prohibition checks on teachers and leaders.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils make good progress from their starting points and achieve well in a range of subjects, including English and religious studies.
- Pupils receive effective impartial advice and guidance about their future education and career options. They are well prepared for their next stages of education or employment.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. It promotes fundamental British values well, and is true to the school's faith-based ethos.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They say they feel safe in the school and struggle to recollect any incidents of bullying. Attendance is in line with national averages for secondary schools.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use questioning well to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and adults. They have good attitudes to learning. Consequently, disruptions to learning are rare.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2015 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all appropriate safeguarding checks on the suitability of staff are quickly completed
 - reviewing and amending the school’s child protection policy so that it takes due regard to the most recent guidance issued by the Secretary of State for Education in ‘Keeping children safe in education’ (2016), including that for sexting, and appropriate monitoring and filtering
 - ensuring that leaders implement quickly appropriate monitoring and filtering to the school internet connection
 - ensuring that school improvement planning is an effective management tool by including specific targets which are measurable, linked to improving learning and reviewed regularly
 - reviewing and clarifying the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of governors and school leaders.
- Improve the quality of personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by:
 - ensuring that all safeguarding requirements are met.
- Improve the quality of teaching learning and assessment by:
 - enhancing the opportunities for pupils to undertake practical scientific enquiry.
- The school must meet the following independent school standards.
 - The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b))
 - The standard in this paragraph is met if no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction; (paragraph 18, 18(2), 18(2)(b))
 - The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person’s appointment. (paragraph 18, 18(3))
 - The standard in this paragraph is met in relation to an individual (“MB”), not being the Chair of the school, who is a member of a body of persons corporate or unincorporate named as the proprietor of the school in the register or in an application to enter the school in the register, if MB does not carry out work, or intend to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an

interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction; (paragraph 20, 20(6), 20(6)(a)(ii))

- In relation to each member of staff (“S”) appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction; (paragraph 21, 21(3)(a)(iii))
- in relation to each member of staff (“S”), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed. (paragraph 21, 21(3)(b))
- The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently; fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and actively promote the well-being of pupils. (paragraph 34, 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c))

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders have not taken some appropriate actions to safeguard pupils at the school.
- The quality of monitoring and self-evaluation is not rigorous enough to ensure that leaders, some of whom are new and have little experience of school leadership, have a sharply focused understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Improvement planning is weak. Plans predominantly focus on the business development of the school and improvements to the building and learning environment. They do not sharply focus on enhancing teaching and learning.
- Leaders' regular and effective reporting to parents includes their use of the school's website and information evenings and, ensures that parents are well informed about their daughters' learning and school lives. Annual reports from teachers to parents focus on pupils' learning and identify clearly the next steps for development. Nearly all parents who responded to the most recent questionnaire, undertaken by the school following parent information evenings, are overwhelmingly supportive.
- This is a caring school where pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is developed well. Pupils learn about a range of faiths, cultures and human relationships through a well-planned and diverse religious studies and citizenship curriculum that does not detract from the school's own faith-based ethos.
- Leaders ensure that the school is well maintained. It offers good-quality resources for pupils' use including appropriate technology in classrooms, and a modern and well-equipped science laboratory. The school's new library provides pupils with regular access to a wide selection of appropriate modern texts that pupils have helped to choose.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. It gives pupils the opportunities to experience linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative education. Good-quality schemes of work support the quality of teaching in school well. They ensure that teachers plan sequences of lessons that systematically develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. As a result, the quality of teaching and progress made by pupils is good. In science, however, pupils sometimes have limited opportunities to undertake practical investigations.
- Although the school does not have its own outdoor space, school leaders have put in place appropriate risk assessments to enable the local mosque car park area to be used safely for recreation. A local sports centre is also used for outdoor physical education. Older pupils comment that they would like greater access to sports.

Governance

- The governance of the school is not effective because governors have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Governors share the vision and commitment to improvement that is held by school leaders and staff.

- There is a blurred understanding of the different roles and responsibilities held by governors and school staff. Governors, who are keen to support the school, have taken on a range of different roles and actions that would normally be the responsibility of a headteacher. However, this over-eagerness and lack of coordination has led to ambiguity in the lines of accountability.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- The governing body has not ensured that all the required checks are made on the suitability of staff. No prohibition checks have been carried out on governors, teachers and leaders.
- The child protection policy published on the school's website is out of date and does not pay due regard to the most recent statutory guidance from the Secretary of State issued in 'Keeping children safe in education' (2016). As a result, the school has no clear policies about dealing with any incidents of 'sexting' or the appropriate filtering and monitoring of its internet connection.
- Governors have not ensured that the school's internet is appropriately monitored and filtered to protect both pupils and staff from online threats. Although leaders have taken steps to procure appropriate filtering and monitoring software, this was not in place at the time of the inspection.
- All staff are vigilant and well trained to protect pupils from potential safeguarding risks associated with radicalisation and extremism, because leaders ensure that their skills and knowledge are kept up to date.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers' high expectations and good subject knowledge, particularly in English, mathematics and science, contribute well to the planning of effective sequences of lessons.
- Subjects, including English and mathematics, are taught systematically across the school using consistently good ways of developing pupils' skills and confidence. Consequently, pupils build on their prior learning and make good progress. Pupils, nearly all of whom have English as an additional language, develop a broad and rich vocabulary, because of the effective teaching they receive. Teachers effectively promote pupils' development of writing by making good use of links to learning in other subjects such as history and religious studies to provide pupils with opportunities to apply their writing skills in different contexts.
- Teachers use questioning well to probe and develop pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils quickly develop their knowledge and respond to questions with confidence. For example, in a history lesson, pupils clearly articulated their understanding of how the German national socialist party effectively used propaganda to gain power.
- There are strong positive relationships between pupils and their teachers that help to motivate pupils to learn.
- Teachers use homework effectively to practise and embed skills and understanding. Pupils regularly complete tasks in writing and use online resources effectively to help develop

their understanding, particularly in mathematics.

- Senior leaders have a clear understanding of pupils' achievement because teachers carefully track the progress of pupils through regular assessments. Teachers use this information effectively to amend their planning to ensure that misconceptions are corrected. Leaders have used this information to identify and challenge robustly any underperformance. Consequently, they have taken effective actions to bring about change and improve the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics.
- Most-able pupils nearly always receive appropriate challenge in the work set for them. However, on a small number of occasions, the work set for most-able pupils does not take into account their higher levels of skill and understanding. Despite this, they make good progress, often being encouraged to develop their work further to demonstrate what they can do. For example, in computing, most-able pupils added additional content and animation to their presentation, above the minimum required.
- In science, pupils' theoretical scientific knowledge is good. For example, they study cell histology and apply this knowledge effectively to research the different types of cancer commonly suffered by humans as part of their GCSE coursework. However, their opportunities to experience practical scientific enquiry are limited.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Leaders have not ensured that some independent school standards relating to safeguarding are met. These include the non-completion of required prohibition checks on suitability of staff, and out-of-date policies and procedures for child protection.
- Other aspects of personal development and welfare are well established and of good quality.
- Pupils are proud of their school and say that it has a 'homely feel' about it. They say that teachers help them to learn and that they feel safe. Parents share this view and are overwhelmingly supportive.
- Pupils know how to stay safe in and out of school, including online, because of the guidance they receive. Focused work on online safety ensures that pupils are confident and able to explain what they would do if they were worried by something on screen.
- Pupils carry out roles of responsibility maturely, including the roles of head girl, deputy head girl and prefects. Prefects help supervise younger pupils at break and lunchtimes, and act as academic and pastoral mentors.
- Pupils are well supported to become good citizens. They have a secure understanding of the rule of law, modern British institutions and democracy. They take part in school elections and contribute to their wider community through open days for the general public including those of other faiths and cultures, charity collections and links with other independent schools, including those that are non-Islamic.
- Pupils receive good careers guidance from impartial and suitably qualified advisers. Older pupils are involved in visits to employers, sixth-form education providers and careers

conferences. They undertake work experience and voluntary work in the community that help them to make informed choices about the next stage of their education. All pupils leave the school to enter education, employment or training.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils attend well and show positive attitudes towards their learning. They are very polite towards staff and visitors, and they are smart in their uniforms.
- Pupils respond well to instructions and show resilience and determination in completing their work. They are well equipped and prepared for learning.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, including the use of homophobic terms, and know that bullying is wrong. They say that incidents are rare. Indeed, they struggled to recollect any recent examples. Pupils are confident that teachers and other adults would deal quickly and effectively with any instances should these arise.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils enter the school with standards generally in line with national expectations and make good progress from their starting points. Few pupils enter with standards above those expected for their age. Generally, pupils enter the school with lower achievement in mathematics than in English.
- The inspector saw evidence of good progress in English and mathematics. Progress in mathematics is improving rapidly due to the better teaching pupils now receive from a highly qualified mathematician who delivers stimulating and challenging learning opportunities for pupils.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils achieving five A* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, was in line with the national average. The proportion achieving five A* to C GCSE grades was above the national figure, as was the proportion achieving the English Baccalaureate.
- In 2016, pupils sustained their good rates of progress from their starting points in nearly all subjects. Outcomes at the end of key stage 4 remain high in English literature, religious studies and additional science, where all pupils who chose to follow the course achieved a good pass. The proportion of pupils achieving a good pass in mathematics fell in 2016. Leaders have taken swift and effective action to address this. Work in books of pupils currently in school shows that they make good progress and achieve well, particularly in mathematics, where progress is improving rapidly.
- Outcomes in religious studies at the end of key stage 4 were particularly good with high proportions of pupils achieving A* to A grades in GCSE examinations. Work in books shows that pupils' progress in other subjects is good.
- Pupils develop a love of books and read fluently with expression. They eagerly enter into

mature conversations about their favourite authors and genres of books. They recommend articulately what would be a good read. Pupils are encouraged to read widely and have helped choose a broad range of new books for the redeveloped school library that they also help run.

- There were few pupils identified as being most-able in the 2016 cohort. However, school-based tracking and work in books show that those pupils who are among the most able make good progress from their starting points in a range of subjects.

School details

Unique reference number	119856
DfE registration number	889/6004
Inspection number	10020804

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Islamic Educational Society
Chair	Hasan Desai
Headteacher	Ismail Desei
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,200
Telephone number	01254 261 573
Website	www.alislah.org.uk
Email address	alislahschool@hotmail.com
Date of previous inspection	3–5 December 2013

Information about this school

- The Al-Islah School is an independent Muslim day school that is registered to provide full-time education for girls aged from 11 to 16. The school opened in 1999.
- There are currently 63 pupils on roll. There are no students currently on roll who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses alternative off-site provision for some physical education activities.

- Since the last inspection, the school has experienced turbulence in leadership. Since September 2016, a governor who is a qualified teacher has undertaken the role of acting headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted with one day's notice to the school.
- The inspector observed learning throughout the school, checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards and looked at samples of pupils' work across a range of subjects.
- The inspector held meetings with leaders and teachers in the school, the chair of the governing body, governors and trustees, and a group of pupils.
- The inspector scrutinised an extensive range of school documentation including policies, planning, information provided to governors, documentation relating to training, and information about the progress, behaviour and attendance of pupils in the school. He looked at the school's single central record of employment checks.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, or the online pupil questionnaire. The inspector considered the school's own parent questionnaire responses following the most recent parent information evenings. He also considered the single returned staff questionnaire.
- The inspector made a thorough tour of the school.

Inspection team

John Nixon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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