

Al Islah Girls' High School

108 Audley Range, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 1TF

Inspection dates

9–11 October 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching is not matched well enough to the learning needs and abilities of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. Off-task behaviour slows the learning of some pupils in these year groups. Progress is not consistently good.
- The most able pupils are not fully engaged in learning because they have little to do when they finish their work in class.
- The school's policies on assessment, homework and feedback to pupils are not consistently implemented as intended by leaders.
- Across the curriculum, pupils' mathematical and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are not developed as effectively as their literacy skills.
- A minority of pupils feel unable to express their views and ideas to school leaders.
- Displays are not used effectively to stimulate and support learning.
- Pupils have limited opportunities to exercise outdoors.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers have ensured that all the independent school standards are met and have dealt with inadequacies identified at the last inspection. They have the knowledge and skills to continue to improve the school.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Pupils feel and are safe in school.
- There is some good teaching, especially in history, religious studies and English in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and deliver a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are promoted effectively. Pupils' behaviour is good. They are kind towards each other and cooperative in lessons.
- Pupils make good progress in Years 10 and 11. Pupils typically attain above-average standards at GCSE.
- Effective careers advice, good personal development and historically high attainment in GCSE examinations equip pupils well for their next steps.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that work is pitched at the right level in Years 7, 8 and 9, taking into account pupils' prior learning and the standards expected for their age
 - ensuring that pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have the skills and techniques to improve their work
 - providing pupils who grasp concepts easily and finish their work quickly with interesting activities to deepen their learning
 - providing all pupils with activities that motivate and interest them
 - ensuring that, across the school, teachers apply consistently the school's policies on homework, assessment and feedback, as intended by school leaders
 - using displays effectively to stimulate and support learning
 - developing pupils' mathematical and technology skills across the curriculum
 - ensuring that teachers receive training and development to improve their teaching skills and share effective practice across the school.
- Make sure that pupils can have fresh air and exercise each day, when weather permits.
- Further develop opportunities for pupils to discuss their views and suggestions for improvement with school leaders.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The new leadership team and governing body have ensured that the standards that were not met at the last inspection are now met. They have dealt successfully with the areas for improvement identified at that inspection. School policies are fit for purpose and take account of government guidance. Safeguarding is effective. Planning for improvement is incisive and the new system to track pupils' progress is detailed and helpful.
- Leaders and governors are aspirational and ambitious for the pupils. They aim to equip pupils to make a positive contribution and achieve highly in their own community and the world beyond it. The culture in the school is conducive to learning and the development of pupils' personal skills.
- Staff are motivated. The vast majority of questionnaires returned were positive about the school. Staff say, for example: 'The headteacher and safeguarding leader do a brilliant job and a lot of positive changes have been made.'
- Leaders and governors have a good grasp of the strengths and aspects that need further development. School improvement planning is focused on the right priorities and actions are carefully planned. Teaching is a key priority.
- Experienced teachers provide good role models for those who have joined the school recently. Most staff are at very early stages of their teaching career. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are reflective and keen to develop their teaching skills. At this early stage, however, there is not a consistently good approach to assessing what pupils know and planning for their progress in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- The acting headteacher has developed effective systems to check and improve the quality of teaching and learning. She provides perceptive feedback to help teachers improve their practice. Each teacher has a good-quality personal action plan. These plans outline personal targets and the plans for professional training and development. They provide strong foundations to support further improvements in teaching and learning.
- The curriculum is planned carefully to provide pupils with a broad and balanced education. Pupils take a range of GCSEs and attain well in them.
- Pupils are provided with a range of additional activities that have a positive impact on their learning and personal development. For example, they have visited Christian churches and Sikh temples to learn about other faiths. They have visited law courts and council chambers, and spoken with the mayor of Blackburn with Darwen, to learn about British systems and values. Pupils also enjoy leisure trips and outdoor pursuits.
- Pupils are proud of their various activities to raise funds for different charities. They contribute positively to the local community, for example through visits to hospitals and the organisation of a food bank. After-school clubs, such as nasheed (singing), drama and the production of a school magazine, are popular.
- The school prepares pupils well for life in British society. All pupils gain a good understanding of British values through citizenship studies and various extra-curricular activities. They learn about broader society in a range of contexts. Pupils' good qualifications and wide-ranging careers advice support them in pursuing a range of

careers on leaving school.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well. Pupils gain an in-depth understanding of Islam and discuss other faiths in detail. They discuss moral issues thoughtfully. In a thought-provoking religious studies lesson, for example, Year 11 pupils discussed the existence of evil in the world in a mature and well-informed way.
- Pupils are taught about and have a good understanding of equality and groups with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act. They show respect and tolerance towards all the groups.
- Leaders are developing productive links with other schools in the area that are known for their outstanding practice. There are already effective links established with a local school's sixth form, supporting careers advice and guidance for pupils. Leaders are extending the links to provide opportunities for teachers to learn from and work alongside teachers in other schools.
- Leaders share information with parents and carers through the website, regular reports and newsletters. All required policies are published on the website. There were no responses to the Ofsted online parent survey, Parent View, because letters did not go out to parents. A few parents spoke with inspectors. They said their children thoroughly enjoy school and achieve well. They were complimentary about the leadership, stating, for example, 'Leaders have made a big difference for the good of the girls.'
- The school is safe and secure and the premises are well maintained. Classrooms are equipped for display but currently there is no display in most rooms and classrooms appear stark. Pupils say they would like to have a more stimulating environment.
- Pupils have access to an outdoor area but it is not used every day. Their access to fresh air and exercise has consequently been limited this term.
- Governors have a range of skills to provide strategic leadership, the headteacher has the knowledge and skills to improve teaching and the safeguarding lead ensures that pupils' personal development and welfare needs are met effectively. The more experienced teachers in school provide good role models for the development of teaching. Those teachers who are new to the profession have secure subject knowledge and are keen to develop their teaching skills. Collectively, they have good capacity to continue to improve the school.
- The proprietor, leaders and governors have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

Governance

- Since the last inspection, a new governing body, including the new proprietor, has been appointed. Governors have a range of relevant knowledge and skills and are committed to improving the school. They have invested in resources to support teaching and learning, including interactive whiteboards, computers and textbooks.
- Governors recognise the challenge in supporting new staff who do not have teaching experience to develop their skills. They have set aside funding and have a full programme of professional development organised.
- Governors have effective procedures to manage the performance of leaders and support the management of teachers' performance.

- Governors are committed to ensuring that pupils achieve highly and are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safeguarding leader has established good procedures to ensure the safe recruitment of staff and safeguard pupils. The safeguarding and related policies take full account of government guidelines and are thoroughly understood by staff. They are published on the school's website.
- Staff and governors have completed training relevant to their roles and responsibilities. They understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and know what to do if they have any concerns. Staff are also trained in health and safety, first aid and fire safety.
- The school works effectively with outside agencies. Leaders liaise with external agencies to support vulnerable or at-risk pupils. They work with Blackburn with Darwen local authority to make sure that their procedures and training are up to date.
- Leaders work closely with parents to make sure that all pupils are supported and safe. For example, they immediately call parents if pupils are absent from school. They make sure that parents are aware of how they can ensure their child's safety when they use the internet.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There is not a consistently good approach to assessing pupils' learning and planning teaching to meet their learning needs and abilities. Some key school policies, including those on assessment, homework and feedback to pupils, are not always followed as intended by school leaders.
- Pupils' work is not pitched at the right level in some subjects in Years 7, 8 and 9. Teachers do not have a clear understanding of what pupils have learned previously. Some pupils repeat work they have already mastered.
- The most able pupils who rapidly grasp new concepts and finish their work quickly are too often left without anything to do while waiting for their peers to catch up in class. Their learning is limited as a result.
- In some classes, teaching does not sustain the attention of pupils sufficiently to make sure that they all make consistently good progress over time. In Year 7 and Year 9, for example, pupils are easily distracted when they do not find teaching motivating. They lose concentration when they are required to wait to take turns, for example when using science equipment.
- Pupils usually complete tasks they are given to the best of their ability. However, they are not always clear about how to ensure that it is of high quality or how to improve it. In art, for example, pupils are not sure of the techniques to use in their compositions.
- Pupils' literacy skills are developed well in English and across the curriculum. Teachers pay good attention to developing pupils' subject-specific and technical vocabulary. There is a wide range of good-quality reading materials that support pupils' learning and

promote reading for pleasure. Pupils' mathematical and ICT skills are not developed as effectively as their literacy skills across the curriculum.

- There are strengths in teaching. It is very effective in history, religious studies and English in Years 10 and 11. In these subjects, the teachers' skilled questioning and clear explanations support pupils to deepen their learning. Teachers' effective management of activities sustains pupils' interest and motivates them to take their studies further.
- In all the subjects that progress through to GCSE, teachers have good subject knowledge. Their specialisms support them in being able to answer effectively any queries relating to subject knowledge. In Years 10 and 11, teaching follows examination syllabuses and deepens pupils' learning well, enabling them to attain good grades in examinations.
- Teachers have established effective relationships with pupils to support learning. Pupils feel at ease and are confident about raising questions, giving their opinions and seeking further clarification about their work.
- Teachers have consistently high expectations for the presentation of pupils' written work, both in class and when completing homework. Pupils have good-quality notes to which to refer.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The positive and encouraging relationships between staff and pupils support pupils to grow in confidence and self-esteem. All pupils who spoke with inspectors said they can talk to staff about any safeguarding concerns, their learning and their personal development.
- Pupils' physical, mental and emotional health are promoted effectively through the curriculum and additional activities. Pupils gain a good understanding of keeping healthy and sustaining positive relationships in personal, social and health education (PSHE). They come together in weekly assemblies to discuss themes such as developing a positive attitude, recognising and tackling bullying and keeping safe in the community.
- Pupils say they feel safe and staff are vigilant in ensuring that they are safe in school. Pupils are well informed about how to stay safe when using the internet and social media. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy outside school. For example, they are well informed about the risks associated with substance misuse.
- Pupils are safe from bullying and harassment in school. There have not been any incidents for several years and pupils say they are confident staff will deal effectively with any bullying that might arise. Pupils know about different types of bullying, including prejudice-based and homophobic bullying. They show respect to each other and for people from different backgrounds and with protected characteristics.
- Careers education is a strength. Pupils receive good information, advice and guidance on the range of careers available. They benefit from impartial advice from external advisers and at careers fairs. Pupils develop useful skills in PSHE, such as curriculum vitae writing. They develop team and leadership skills across the curriculum.

- There are no pupils attending alternative provision for academic studies. The school uses the local leisure centre for physical education (PE) activities. Leaders ensure that pupils are safely escorted and closely supervised when using these facilities.
- There is a student council which enables pupils to contribute their views and ideas about the school. Inspectors spoke with several groups of pupils and informally to pupils during lessons and at breaktimes. The majority were positive about the school. However, a group of pupils told inspectors that they did not like some aspects of the school and felt they were unable to express their views to school leaders. The issues that were raised related mostly to resources and planning.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are typically eager to talk about their learning and work together cooperatively. They get on with tasks in class and cooperate with the teacher. They look after their books and their work is neat and tidy.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is good. They are polite and behave sociably and considerately in shared areas.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning improve as they move through school. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have excellent attitudes to learning and a mature approach to their studies. The vast majority of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have positive attitudes to learning and are motivated in class. However, some off-task behaviour in Years 7 and 9 slows the learning of those pupils who are not fully engaged. It rarely disrupts teaching or affects the learning of other pupils.
- Attendance is well above average. There are clear and effective procedures to follow up absence, including immediate contact with parents.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The progress of pupils who are currently in school requires improvement in Years 7, 8 and 9. Teaching is not matched well enough to the learning needs and abilities of these pupils to enable them to make good progress in all subjects. Attitudes to learning are not as strong as they are in Years 10 and 11 and this can slow some pupils' progress at times.
- Pupils who are currently in Years 10 and 11 make good progress because teaching is at least good, and pupils are motivated to do well.
- Pupils who have previously left the school in Year 11 have attained highly at GCSE over several years. In 2017, the proportion of pupils attaining English Baccalaureate qualifications (at least a Grade 5 in English and mathematics and grade C or above in science, a language and history) was well above the national average. The results for 2018 were similarly high and above the 2017 national average.
- Pupils are prepared well for their next steps. Effective careers advice, good personal development and historically high attainment in GCSE examinations significantly contribute to pupils having a wide choice when they leave the school in Year 11. To date, all pupils have gone into a sixth form, further education or apprenticeships. Many go on to university and into professions.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 119856 |
| DfE registration number | 889/6004 |
| Inspection number | 10053724 |

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.

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| Type of school | Other independent school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Girls |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 58 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Hasan Desai |
| Chair | Hasan Desai |
| Headteacher | Sabiha Patel |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £1,300 |
| Telephone number | 01254 261 573 |
| Website | www.alislah.org.uk |
| Email address | head@alislah.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 16–18 November 2016 |

Information about this school

- The Al Islah Girls' High School is an independent Muslim day school that is registered to provide education for girls aged 11 to 16. The school opened in 1999.
- There are currently 58 pupils on roll. There are no pupils who have an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses off-site provision for PE activities.
- The last standard inspection took place in November 2016. A progress monitoring inspection was completed in November 2017.

- Since the last inspection, there have been extensive changes in leadership and management. There is a completely new governing body, a new proprietor and new leaders. An acting headteacher is currently in post.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors examined the premises and observed the school's work.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning and scrutinised pupils' work in all year groups and subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with a large number of pupils in several meetings, within lessons and at breaktimes.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including action planning, monitoring and evaluation of teaching, information about pupils' progress, safeguarding procedures, health and safety checks and risk assessments. School policies and the school's website were checked.
- Inspectors met with all governors and the proprietor, leaders and teachers. They took account of eight staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors spoke with parents. There were no responses to the Ofsted online parent questionnaire, Parent View, as the school did not send the inspection notification letter out to parents in time for them to register their response.

Inspection team

Jean Olsson-Law, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lenford White

Ofsted Inspector

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