

Inspection report
Al-Burhan Grammar School
Independent school
DfES ref no: 330/6104

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 25 – 28 September 2006

Introduction

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 as part of pilot inspection arrangements in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Al-Burhan Grammar School provides secondary education to girls aged 11 to 16 years of any faith. It is housed in a two-storied building located in a quiet, mainly residential part of Birmingham. It opened in 2002 with 8 pupils and has now 80 pupils on roll. It admits pupils from diverse backgrounds through a selective examination. To meet the local demand, the school is now planning to expand into Post-16 education. At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils identified as having learning difficulties and the vast majority of pupils were at various advanced stages of learning English as an additional language. The school aims to '*provide education of high quality in accordance with the National Curriculum in an Islamic environment; to constantly encourage a sense of purpose, self-confidence, shared values, respect for others and a strong sense of community; to enable pupils to fulfil their potential and to grow towards reflective, responsible adulthood; and help them successfully integrate into British society.*'

Overall evaluation of the school

The school provides a satisfactory quality education by teaching a broad and fairly balanced curriculum. The teaching is good and the assessment of pupils' learning and achievement is satisfactory, which enables pupils to make at least satisfactory progress. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and the school meets its stated aim of preparing them well to live as responsible citizens in multicultural Britain. The provision for their welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. The school complies with almost all the independent school's regulations.

The school has worked hard to broaden its curriculum that is now satisfactory, and the vast majority of pupils enjoy their education. It teaches all the National Curriculum subjects except for music and design and technology, with a great emphasis on English and science. In addition, pupils study a programme of religious education (RE) that focuses on Islam and includes all world religions as well as Qur'anic recitation. The school provides a rich linguistic experience by offering Arabic, Urdu and French. The provision for careers education is satisfactory and pupils are fairly well prepared for the next stage of their education. The school is actively seeking to improve the balance of subjects by increasing its provision for art, geography, history and physical education (PE). In response to parental demand, it

is also planning to offer an optional intensive *alima* (Islamic theology) course after school hours. The teaching of the curriculum is based on commercial schemes of work and the quality of planning varies from satisfactory to good. The school has begun to plan links between subjects, especially with the programme of citizenship and information and communication technology (ICT). This would make pupils' learning experience more cohesive, especially in terms of personal, social and health education. The strategy to develop literacy in all subjects is insufficiently developed and not implemented consistently. As a result, there are missed opportunities to raise further the standard of literacy across subjects. There are no extra-curricular activities to extend pupils' skills in a wide range of learning areas, as noted by pupils in their pre-inspection questionnaires and discussions with inspectors.

Teaching is good, with some examples of outstanding practice. The school's managers have prioritised the provision of good quality resources including the recruitment of qualified teachers. However, there are no planned opportunities to share the best practice or to mentor newly qualified teachers. The spacious ICT suite, new science laboratory, and other materials and equipment are used effectively by the staff but resources for RE and PE are minimal. All lessons follow an agreed structure, with a brief introduction, varied activities and a conclusion to reinforce and assess learning. All staff have good subject knowledge, prepare their lessons conscientiously and most present them confidently. Most staff use a variety of methods that enables pupils to work independently, in pairs, in groups or as a whole class. This helps pupils develop a wide range of organisational, thinking and communication skills. Most staff use praise judiciously as a powerful motivation tool, and some use humour to great effect to establish excellent working relationships. In the best lessons, the teacher provides consistent challenge to all pupils but in some lessons, the more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. In the less successful lessons, the introductions are too long and the pace is too slow for pupils to sustain their concentration. In a few lessons, time is not well managed when supporting different groups of pupils and so the teacher neglects one or two groups. Sometimes, the method employed relies solely on the teacher so that pupils become passive learners. There are well established procedures to assess pupils' learning and the school has just begun to develop a rigorous system to track the progress of each individual pupil. Teachers have effective strategies to check pupils' understanding and learning throughout the lessons. However the concluding part of the lesson is not always used effectively for this purpose. Marking is frequent and often diagnostic, but the best practice is not consistently implemented across the school. Teachers involve pupils in assessment and pupils know what level they have reached in core subjects. The school enters pupils in the KS3 national tests and the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations. The first cohort of pupils educated at the school since Year 7 will take the GCSE examinations in 2007. Results in the KS3 national tests and teacher assessments show that pupils' achievement is at least in line with national expectations for their age.

The good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in the pupils' good behaviour and good personal development. Pupils are very confident, assertive and respectful. Good relationships with their peers and with staff are evident as they work productively in pairs or groups and contribute actively in class. Pupils value education, have a positive attitude to learning and have

sensible views on school matters. Their spiritual and moral development is good and the need for serious sanctions is very rare. A significant number of pupils feel that they are not sufficiently involved in making decisions about the school although they show excellent initiative when given the opportunity. The school council has been involved in limited projects so far. Pupils raise funds for national charities, plan to design their playground, and it is their ambition to run projects in the local community. The curriculum prepares them well for life in multicultural Britain. For example, Year 7 pupils are learning about the British constitution and local government in their citizenship lessons. The citizenship programme also includes several units on the main world religions and social harmony. Pupils benefit from the strong community links forged by the school and have recently visited a Sikh temple. This visit made them appreciate the commonality, as well as the differences, between Sikhism and Islam in a respectful way. The excellent provision for art further enriches their cultural development in a significant way. For example, pupils have had the opportunity to study patterns from the Aborigine, Islamic, Indian and North American Indian cultures. However, this learning is not sufficiently enhanced by educational visits.

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. The school implements policies and satisfactory procedures that safeguard pupils throughout the school day. A rigorous recruitment policy ensures that all the appropriate checks are made before employing staff. However, there are two deficiencies that the school is already addressing. The appointment of a great number of new staff this term means that the school no longer has a First Aider. Furthermore, all staff, including the nominated person, have not received up-to-date training in child protection and the procedures do not comply with the latest legislation. Although most staff work part-time, they succeed in establishing a consistent approach to behaviour management and they supervise pupils closely. However, a few staff lack the skills to develop self-discipline in pupils. There is a pastoral system in place to help pupils develop secure relationships and share their views and concerns. The school is committed to raising pupils' awareness of healthy eating and living. Most pupils can explain how they have improved their eating habits. 'I am now eating only one bag of crisps per week,' said one girl. However, a small minority feels that the current initiatives are insufficient.

The accommodation is well maintained and provides a pleasant learning environment enhanced by displays of pupils' work. There is a sensible plan to refurbish an outer building to provide a dedicated hall for PE. The school council also plans to make the playground into a more user-friendly area.

The school's managers have developed an effective communication system with parents, who are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Parents feel they can discuss their views and concerns easily and there has been no need for complaints to date. Should the need arise, the school has comprehensive procedures for making formal complaints. The quality of the annual report on pupils' progress is good and, with the opportunity to meet staff formally twice a year, parents feel well informed of their children's education and welfare.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the welfare, health and safety of pupils (standard 3) and must:

- ensure that the staff and the nominated person receive up-to-date training in child protection, and update its policy and procedures in compliance with the latest legislation (paragraph 3(2)(b)); and
- ensure that at least two members of staff receive training in First Aid (paragraph 3(6)).

What the school could do to improve further

Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- implement a whole-school strategy to develop literacy in all subjects with more rigour;
- improve the balance of the curriculum;
- share best teaching practice and mentor newly qualified teachers; and
- continue to build up resources and develop the use of ICT across subjects.

School details

Name of school:	Al - Burhan Grammar School
DfES Number:	330/6104
Type of school:	Day Muslim
Status:	Independent
Date school opened:	9 September 2002
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Girls
Number on roll :	Boys: 0 Girls: 80 Total: 80
Annual fees (day pupils):	£1,200 minimum, £2,250 maximum
Address of school:	28a George Street Balsall Heath Birmingham B12 9RG
Telephone number:	0121 440 5454
Fax number:	0121 440 5454
Email address:	Alburhan.school@virgin.net
Headteacher:	Dr Mohammad Nasrullah
Proprietor:	Dr Mohammad Nasrullah
Reporting Inspector:	Mrs Michèle Messaoudi
Dates of inspection:	25 – 28 September 2006

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