

# Al-Hijrah Secondary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133306
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	328691
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 July 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mark Phillips HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	296
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Muhammad Hanif
<b>Headteacher</b>	Muhammad Saqib
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 June 2006
<b>School address</b>	Cherrywood Centre Burbidge Road Bordesley Green Birmingham B9 4US
<b>Telephone number</b>	01217 737979
<b>Fax number</b>	01217 737111

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Al-Hijrah Secondary School is much smaller than most secondary schools. It is situated in the Nechells ward, although students attend from a number of different wards across Birmingham. All students are from Muslim faith backgrounds; this is a key criterion for admission to the school. There are over 1000 applications for the 60 places allocated in each year group. Girls and boys are taught separately; there is one form per gender in each year group. The majority of students have Pakistani heritage. Almost all students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very low compared with the national average, but an average proportion has a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is around twice the national average.

Al-Hijrah was an independent school until 2002, when it became a voluntary aided state school. It continues to share a site and buildings with the independent Al-Hijrah Primary School. The Al-Hijrah Trust owns the primary school and provides support for the secondary school, under voluntary aided arrangements. The two schools share a headteacher; he is also Chair of the Trust. Al-Hijrah Secondary School was awarded specialist science college status in 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to providing a curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 that meets all statutory requirements and also meets the needs, interests and aspirations of students. Significant improvement is also required in relation to leadership and management including governance.

In their academic examinations and in their personal development, students at Al-Hijrah Secondary School make good progress. Overall, standards in the GCSE subjects that they study are firmly above average. These standards are achieved from starting points that are just above average. Students show a great willingness to acquire knowledge and appreciate the importance of education very well. They study diligently, behave compliantly, and have a very good sense of what is right and wrong. These attitudes help them to progress well in examinations.

While the school does much to instil these positive values and provide good pastoral care for students, other aspects of provision are not as strong. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have sound subject knowledge, but too often the emphasis is on instruction rather than students' active participation. Where there is a genuine dialogue and exchange of ideas between teacher and students, there is much enjoyment. Too frequently, though, the emphasis is on teacher exposition, rather than the students' learning. Academic guidance is satisfactory; the school is in the early stages of tracking students' performance and using this information to raise standards further. Teaching assistants work hard to help students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but the management of special educational needs is inconsistent and systems for meeting the needs of these students are not strong. Provision in English and mathematics is good; provision for information and communication technology is satisfactory. Specialist college status has already brought a number of benefits, including the introduction of separate science courses at GCSE, and new classroom facilities. However, while students do well in these core subjects, an important reason why they do not make even better progress is because the curriculum offered at both Key Stages 3 and 4 is too narrow. Even though the school is small in student numbers, and is unable to expand on its present site, not enough has been done to ensure that all statutory requirements are met and that students have the broad range of opportunities to which they are entitled.

The school's senior leaders promote high standards in examinations and in students' personal development and, while written self-evaluation is over-generous, dialogue with the deputy and assistant headteacher during the inspection showed that they have an honest and satisfactory understanding of the school's performance and provision. However, the school's value for money is inadequate despite the good outcomes achieved by students. There is a long-standing debt from the independent primary school, and this is having an adverse effect on the secondary school's budget and resource planning. The promotion and strategic management of equalities and community cohesion are inadequate. Governors have not fulfilled their statutory duties to put appropriate schemes in place to underpin the school's work in these important areas.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the Key Stage 3 curriculum meets all statutory requirements, and that Key Stage 4 students are offered the option choices that they are entitled to.
- Ensure that all lessons have a clear focus on the active participation and enjoyment of students, as well as their acquisition of knowledge.
- Improve the management of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, ensuring that appropriate plans and strategies are provided to fully meet their particular needs.
- As a matter of urgency, ensure that resource and financial management is at least satisfactory, that the debt from the Primary school is resolved, and that all statutory strategies and duties are in place and approved by the governing body.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Students join Year 7 having achieved standards just above average in their Key Stage 2 tests for English, mathematics and science. They make good progress in these core subjects during Key Stage 3. By the end of Year 11, they achieve standards in their GCSE exams that, overall, are well above average. In 2008, four out of every five Year 11 students gained five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics. Standards in mathematics are extraordinarily high. In science and religious studies standards are exceptionally high and progress is also outstanding. In English language and English literature, standards are clearly above average and progress is good. However, in Arabic, Urdu, and geography, subjects taken by all students, overall progress is only just satisfactory. Standards in these subjects are below average. This inconsistency in progress across subjects is one reason why students' overall progress is good, rather than outstanding. Nevertheless, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress in line with others, and there are no significant differences in the progress made by students from different ethnic backgrounds.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Students' spiritual and moral development is excellent. However, while students are keen to meet people from other backgrounds, their cultural understanding is less well developed, largely because of the narrowness of the curriculum, particularly in history and the arts. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Exclusion is used when students do not conform to the school's very high expectations, but the number of exclusions is below the national average. Students have a well-developed understanding of what it means to live healthily. They take regular exercise and, although the food on offer in school does not promote healthy eating, they recognise this and are strongly in favour of improvements. Their attitudes towards drugs and alcohol are excellent. They also have a good understanding about how to keep safe, and treat adults and each other with great respect. This helps them make a very good contribution to the school community, and develop good social skills that will help them in their later lives.

Attendance is satisfactory. While students are greatly appreciative of the school's efforts in helping them to achieve good examination grades, they remain concerned about the narrowness of curriculum options and, in lessons where there are limited opportunities for participation, their enjoyment is more limited.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Students' disciplined approach to learning, and their good industry in lessons, plays an important part in helping them to make good progress in examinations. Most teaching is authoritative, and classrooms are managed effectively. In the best lessons, students are actively engaged in problem solving and discussion. For example, in a mathematics lesson, students enjoyed exploring the different possibilities for fencing an area of land. The dialogue between the teacher and his students was challenging but also characterised by good humour. However, the majority of lessons are satisfactory rather than good. In these lessons activities often go on for too long and extended presentations by teachers do not give students enough opportunities to participate actively.

Whilst teaching assistants work hard in lessons to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, too often the work set by the teacher is aimed at the whole class, rather than taking account of students with different abilities. This is less of an issue in English, mathematics and science lessons in Key Stage 4, where classes are divided in half and taught by two teachers. Most books are marked regularly, although most comments are only brief and do not show students how to improve.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 4

There is good provision for literacy and numeracy. Boys and girls now receive the same amount of teaching in mathematics, resolving a concern from the previous inspection. The programme of personal, social, health and economic education is good. This includes good and improved opportunities for physical education (PE). The school does not have the facilities to provide appropriate opportunities for sport, but has effective partnerships with a neighbouring girls' school and the local sports centre to ensure that students receive their full quota of PE each week. However, there are other areas of the curriculum that the school is still failing to provide, and this is why the curriculum is inadequate overall. In Key Stage 3, there is no provision for music or design and technology. History is provided in Year 7, but the course is shallow and does not meet requirements. Art is taught, but there are no specialist facilities and the programme of study is too limited. In Key Stage 4, all students are required to follow the same subjects. There are no courses for them to choose in either design and technology or the arts, which is their entitlement. Inspectors agree with students' views that that this is unfair, and that they should be able to access broadly the same range of opportunities as their friends in other schools.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

Pastoral care is good; all pupils are well known by the teachers and support is offered freely. Robust systems are in place to promote good attendance and punctuality, helped by good relationships with outside agencies and parents. All safeguarding requirements are met. The school devotes much time to develop productive relationships with families, behaviour support services and other agencies when pupils demonstrate persistent poor behaviour. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour have been reduced. However, students say that the school's behaviour

and sanctions policy is inconsistently applied by some teachers. There are good links with the Connexions team to provide careers guidance, and nearly all students progress to further education. However, some consider that their sixth-form options are limited because of the narrowness of their curriculum in Key Stage 4.

Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well guided in lessons by teaching assistants, and some Key Stage 4 students have a tailored support plan. However, frequent changes of special educational needs co-ordinator over the past five years have led to a lack of continuity and insufficient data about these students. Measures are in place to make better use of individual education plans and annual reviews of students' progress, but these are still in the early stages.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 4**

The school's leadership is organised so that the headteacher focuses primarily on the school's overall faith and pastoral ethos. There is a very clear vision and expectation for hard work, discipline and service, and this does much to engender the good attitudes that students bring to their work. The deputy headteacher, supported by an assistant headteacher and an increasingly effective team of middle managers, is responsible for the curriculum, teaching and learning, and day-to-day operational matters. The school sets appropriately high expectations for examination success, but is less successful in ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning in lessons is consistently good. Lesson observations are carried out regularly, but these focus more on the teacher's performance than on students' learning. However, joint observations undertaken by the deputy headteacher and HMI during the inspection resulted in complete agreement. This, together with the good progress that students make, supports the view that the school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement despite the fact that in other important respects, such as the curriculum, the school has not shown sufficient improvement since the last inspection.

Nevertheless, while the day-to-day leadership of the school is satisfactory, the strategic management by the governing body, and leadership and management overall, are inadequate. Long-standing financial irregularities have not been resolved satisfactorily. While teachers try hard to make sure that all students are treated equally and that no-one is discriminated against, the governing body has not ensured that the necessary schemes are in place to guarantee these equal rights for all members of the school community. There are opportunities taken to promote students' understanding of the school's local, national and international contexts within the curriculum and the school works well with other schools, particularly through PE and science college status. However, governors have not approved and published a formal strategy for promoting community cohesion.

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## Annex A

**Inspection judgements**

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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**Overall effectiveness**

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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<sup>1</sup>Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	4
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

6 July 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Al-Hijrah Secondary School, Birmingham B9 4SU

I am writing to let you know the results of the inspection visit that we made to your school at the end of the summer term. Before I do that, however, I would like to extend my thanks to you all for the hospitality and welcome given to us during our two days in school. Your good attitudes to learning, your compliance with the school's expectations for good behaviour, and your strong moral values play an important part in helping you to achieve well in your examinations. I offer you many congratulations for this - these good personal qualities will serve you well in your future lives. Well done!

Impressed as we were with these aspects of your work, we nevertheless judged that your school requires some significant improvements in order to give you the education that you are entitled to. Most importantly, you are not being given opportunities to enjoy subjects such as music and design and technology, and the history programme in Key Stage 3 is not detailed enough. Older students told us that it is not fair that you do not have a choice of option subjects for GCSE, particularly in design and technology and the arts, and we agree completely. I have asked the school to make sure that your curriculum meets requirements as soon as possible. Another important improvement needed relates to the school's management by the governing body, supported by the Al-Hijrah Trust. While the day-to-day leadership makes sure that everyone is treated fairly and that the school runs smoothly, much more attention needs to be given by the governing body to making sure that the school's policies and resources are managed more effectively.

We met some particularly mature and well-focused young people during our visit to Al-Hijrah. You deserve your examination successes, and you also deserve every opportunity to enjoy learning across a wide range of subjects. We will be returning during the coming year to check on how things are going, and we would very much like to hear your views again. Finally, we also hope to see your attendance and punctuality improve – attending every day and not taking holidays during term-time is very important to your future success, and helps your teachers too.

With all best wishes for your studies,

Yours faithfully

Mark Phillips

Her Majesty's Inspector