

Al-Hijrah Secondary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133306
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	343800
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Pam Haezwindt HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	294
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr M Hanif
Headteacher	Mr M Saqib
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2009
School address	Cherrywood Centre Burbidge Road Bordesley Green
Telephone number	0121 773 7979
Fax number	0121 773 7111
Email address	admin@al-hijrah.bham.sch.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 19 lessons, of which six were observed jointly with senior leaders, and observed 17 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, different groups of students and the Chair of the Governing Body. They observed the school's work, and looked at safeguarding information and policies, assessment and progress data, curriculum development plans, community cohesion documentation, governing body minutes and financial information. 117 parental/carers questionnaires were returned.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the key areas for improvement from the previous inspection
- boys' underachievement and how it is being dealt with
- the extent to which governance has improved
- the extent to which community cohesion has been audited, planned for, implemented and evaluated, and students' understanding of its meaning.

Information about the school

Al-Hijrah is a very small secondary school situated close to the centre of Birmingham. Boys and girls come from a variety of electoral wards across Birmingham. They are all from Islamic faith backgrounds, the criterion for attending the school. It is well known and the number wishing to attend far exceeds the number of students it can accommodate; it currently takes in about 60 students each year. Girls and boys are taught separately. Almost all students speak English as an additional language, but the school deems the large majority to be advanced English speakers. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school became a specialist science college in 2008.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (5) of the Education Act of 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Al-Hijrah School is an effective school which provides a good standard of education. Students' results in examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 are high. Overall, good progress is made across the school. Students' behaviour and attendance are excellent and the students are very aware that these two elements help them to achieve well. The students feel safe and know to whom to go if they have a problem. Their spiritual, social and moral development is outstanding; both the school's ethos of respect and the students' upbringing to respect others, along with their spiritual development, make for a very harmonious environment.

Senior leaders and the governing body set about the improvements needed after the last inspection vigorously, such that all aspects have seen good improvement. New senior appointments were made to support this; the deputy headteacher took on the leadership of the curriculum and new appointments were made to lead teaching and learning and special educational needs provision. These appointments have all been successful. Currently, curriculum provision is satisfactory. From a very narrow starting point, the curriculum now provides the entitlement it should in Key Stage 3 and, for the first time, option pathways have been made available to Year 9 students, who express their pleasure at this. There is also a clear development plan for curriculum expansion, but it does not yet take sufficient account of vocational accreditations and students' wishes. Teaching has improved from satisfactory to good; this was evident from the beginning of the inspection, when it was clear that there is now an emphasis on students actively participating and contributing to lessons. Assessment in lessons and marking are satisfactory, but the school's continuous assessment of students' progress is good, with robust data collection, tracking of individual students' progress, and provision of information to staff to inform teaching.

The management of provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved with new and stable leadership of this area this year and good individual learning plans are in place. These students are making good progress. There have been inroads into recovering the large debt the primary school owes the school and, although there is still some way to go, there is a clear plan to do so and to re-organise the Al-Hijrah to make it more efficient. The governing body have now fulfilled their statutory duties by putting in place appropriate schemes for equalities and community cohesion.

The very large majority of parents and carers think the school is doing well by their

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

children and there were some very supportive comments, for example, 'I am very happy with the education my child is receiving at Al-Hijrah School; the teachers are trying their best to meet the children's variety of needs.' However, a few parents and carers would like the school to help them to support their children's learning better and take more account of their suggestions and concerns. The senior leaders' response to developing the school following the previous inspection, together with the development of the role of middle leaders and their involvement in improvements, demonstrate that the school has good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Expand the curriculum further to meet the demands of the modern world by, for example, introducing a choice of vocational subjects and a European language.
- Develop assessment techniques in the classroom so that teachers:
 - are aware of what has been learned in lessons by all student groups and plan students' next steps in a targeted way
 - ensure that students know how well they have done at the end of a lesson
 - improve marking in all subjects by providing short-term, focussed targets for improvement on pieces of work.
- Improve communications with parents and carers by:
 - enabling all parents and carers to support their children's learning better
 - showing them how suggestions and concerns are dealt with.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average, varying from year to year. The number of students gaining five or more good GCSE grades is high and has been for the last three years. This is also the case for the number gaining five or more good grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. The impact of the science specialism has been excellent. Mathematics and science grades are exceptionally high, for example in A* and A grades in 2009. A small number of boys underachieved in 2009 and the school has responded well to this by putting in place intervention measures and teaching some subjects in split groups, for example in Urdu and Arabic. Higher-attaining students are suitably challenged and there are sometimes arrangements for early entry to GCSE, for example in science. The school's data shows that attainment overall in 2010 might possibly be slightly higher. The school sets itself exceptionally challenging long-term targets, which are difficult to meet in the short term in subjects like geography and languages where attainment has not been as high. However, progress in these subjects has been significant this year. Overall, progress in lessons observed was good. Pupils are keen and committed to doing well and work hard in lessons, particularly when teaching is engaging and they can clearly see the point of what they are learning. A small minority of students responded on the questionnaire that they did not enjoy school, but gave no reasons why; those spoken to were unanimous in their enjoyment

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

of school and said there was a very friendly, family atmosphere and they learned something new each day.

Students know very well how to be healthy and take part in a good amount of physical education and sport that the school now ensures is possible, despite the lack of facilities on site. They can also talk about what they need to eat to stay healthy. The final submission for the Healthy Schools Award was submitted in the week of the inspection. Students contribute well to school life and more widely through the School Council, which is run by the students. For example, changes to school lunches were made at the instigation of students, with more balanced, healthy options now available, and much charity work is organised, for example for the British Heart Foundation and for providing incubators in Ghaza. The students are also taking initiatives to raise money for school musical instruments. Students feel well prepared to move into the next stage of their education or training: overall their standards of literacy, numeracy and information communications technology are high, they all learn a language and they learn from two enterprise days. Students told inspectors proudly that, in past years, all students went on to further education or training at 16. There is, however, no provision for vocational subjects. Students' cultural development is good as they celebrate diversity through visiting other faiths and having visitors to the school, but it is not yet broad enough through, for example history, art and music across the school, as these are in their infancy.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

<p>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</p> <p>Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms</p>	
<p>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</p> <p>Taking into account: Pupils' attendance¹</p>	<p>2</p> <hr/> <p>1</p>
<p>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</p>	<p>1</p>

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good because there are high expectations in lessons and, in the majority of lessons, the pace is very good. There has been a big change since the previous inspection and students are now active participants in good or better lessons, working in groups and/or pairs in well-planned lessons which highlight the times of different activities and aim for assessment opportunities. Students of different abilities are taken account of, either through the preparation of material or very adroit targeting of students who are clearly not making enough progress in a lesson. For example, the former was clear in a Year 9 history lesson and the latter in a Year 8 Arabic lesson. Generally speaking, however, assessment in the classroom remains satisfactory. This is a feature of adequate lessons, where planning focuses more on activities than on what students will learn and so there is no clarity about assessing learning outcomes. There is also insufficient self- and peer-assessment and marking which outlines short-term targets for students to improve their work. The deployment of additional adults varies, depending on how well briefed they are about their specific role in each lesson.

The curriculum has improved exponentially since last year and is now satisfactory. Key Stage 3 students, now, receive their entitlement to all National Curriculum subjects. Year 9 students were able to choose from options this year that include design technology and the arts and options pathways are due to expand in 2011 and beyond. Currently, the school is constricted by its physical size, but it has worked to expand provision through partnerships, for example for physical education and design technology, and through the community to bring in music. The current building of an extension and the acquisition of mobile classrooms should help further. The school is exploring Key Stage 3 'tasters' for options, early entry mathematics and the delivery of textiles. Students said they would like more choice of subjects, such as media studies, a European language and business studies. There is a strong element of citizenship taught during tutorials; the developmental content of the session observed on Eritrean refugees in the Sudan was excellent. The science specialism has had a positive impact in providing resources, funding trips and expanding sciences so that more able students can take three subjects. There is an expanding range of out-of-hours activities, including booster classes, sports and subject clubs.

Care, guidance and support are good. Students' induction from primary school is well managed through visits and an induction week and transition to post-16 education and training is supported by a newly established Years 7 to 11 careers programme. Students facing significant difficulties and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well cared for because the school enlists the support of relevant outside agencies

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

appropriately and deploys well its own counselling support and mentoring processes, matched to students' needs. Their needs and support are carefully tracked and co-ordinated through detailed record keeping systems and meetings with parents and carers. Attendance is very well promoted through a reward system and immediate links with parents and carers if there is cause for concern.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher leads the spiritual development of the school and the overall pastoral ethos, which contributes so much to students' attitudes to their work and their self-esteem. The now-strong senior leadership team has been effective in a very short time, along with middle managers, in responding to the areas for improvement outlined in the previous inspection. They have evaluated well how far they have come and how far they still have to go. The collection and use of data is much improved and more securely embedded, such that any student can be identified and his/her progress tracked and teachers and parents and carers made aware of any improvement needed. The use of this data by teachers and middle managers is monitored robustly. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly and rigorously; senior leaders have a good awareness of staff capability and professional development has occurred at all levels.

The governing body has a much better awareness of their role than previously, although there are still some policies awaiting ratification. A large portion of the outstanding debt from the primary school has been recovered and there are clear financial plans for recovery of the remainder and for restructuring functions within the school so that efficiency is improved. The school has several and suitable mechanisms for engaging with parents and carers, but these are not always recognised by the latter as helpful. There is a good range of partnerships with local secondary schools, both to support students' learning and to support other schools, for example, teaching Urdu in a school nearby. The science specialism supports work in local primary schools and the school has forged links with Birmingham University, the National Health Service and the 'Physics Factory'. Al-Hijrah promotes equal opportunities well, other than in not yet providing the variety of subjects that students would expect to see in a larger secondary school, and there is no evidence of discrimination. Safeguarding procedures are in order. The school is well on its way to promoting community cohesion; it has audited provision, has a good policy and a plan and is actively implementing this. It is very well known

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

internationally, with frequent visitors to the school and students visiting other countries to learn about life and study with students there. It has not yet evaluated the effectiveness of its developments, but is planning to do so shortly, as its documentation comes up for review. The school deploys its resources well to achieve value for money, given students' outcomes, its accommodation restrictions and its plans to make the school more economically sound.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents or carers agree that the school is working hard for their children and doing a good job. For example, 'I think Al-Hijrah school is a beacon of excellence and I'm glad I sent him to this school. He is happy and is making excellent progress. If a child is happy, then the parents are happy too.' Many recognise improvements that have been made such as to subjects and healthy meals. There are still a few who feel things could be improved for their children and would like more contact with the school. Inspectors agree that communication with parents and carers could be strengthened.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Al-Hijrah Secondary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 117 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 294 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	36	67	57	6	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	57	49	57	49	2	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	45	38	58	50	11	9	3	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	29	67	57	14	12	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	31	26	71	61	11	9	3	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	30	55	47	23	27	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	30	68	58	12	10	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	36	31	62	53	13	11	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	26	68	58	14	12	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	47	57	49	4	3	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	25	61	52	23	20	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	36	31	63	54	10	9	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	38	65	56	7	6	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



18 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Al-Hijrah Secondary School, Bordesley Green, B9 4US

On behalf of the inspection team, I am writing to thank you for receiving us so well and talking to us so willingly. We find that your school is providing a good standard of education and that, in the subjects you take in your GCSE examinations, you mostly attain high results. Where results were less high, these are improving, due to the work and effort you and your teachers have put in this year. Your curriculum is broader than it was at the time of the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. Teaching has improved and we found you much more actively engaged in lessons and making good progress. Assessment is satisfactory and it may be that you could tell your teachers how they can help you improve - what helps you most in lessons and in marking? Your behaviour and attendance are excellent as are your spiritual, moral and social development; these elements are all part of why you do so well in school.

We consider that the school now no longer needs a 'Notice to Improve' but we have asked it to:

- broaden the curriculum still further, so that you have some vocational options
- improve assessment and marking
- consider how it can improve communications with all parents and carers.

We wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Pam Haezwindt

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.