

Al-Burhan Grammar School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Al-Burhan Grammar School is a Muslim day school that provides secondary education to girls of any faith, aged from 11 to 16 years. It is housed in a two-storey building located in a quiet, mainly residential part of Birmingham. It opened in 2002 with eight students and now has 80 students on roll, admitted through an entry examination. Students come from a range of diverse backgrounds but are mainly of Pakistani heritage. At the time of the inspection, there were no students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities including those with learning difficulties or with statements of special educational needs, and most students were at various advanced stages of learning English as an additional language. The school was last inspected in September 2006.

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 students to fulfil their potential and to grow towards reflective, responsible adulthood; and to help them 'successfully integrate into British society.'

Overall Evaluation of the school

Al-Burhan Grammar School provides an outstanding quality of education and achieves its aims fully. The school has improved significantly in the last five years and parents, carers and students are, understandably, overwhelmingly positive about its work. Students make outstanding progress due to a good curriculum, outstanding provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and outstanding teaching and assessment. Students are encouraged to have high aspirations and their attitudes to work and their behaviour are outstanding. Robust safeguarding arrangements and good pastoral care contribute to making good provision for students' welfare, health and safety. The school meets all the regulations for independent schools.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. It has both outstanding and satisfactory features. It is broad and balanced, and serves all students well. Its breadth includes all the National Curriculum subjects except for music in Key Stage 3. All students learn Arabic and French and most also learn Urdu. History, geography and citizenship are taught on a rota in termly blocks. In Key Stage 4, all students may study up to 12 subjects at GCSE level. They choose at least one language from Arabic, French and Urdu. Throughout the school, students also have lessons in physical education, citizenship, Qur'anic studies and personal, social and health education. The balance of the curriculum has improved since the last inspection. All students now have two weekly sessions of physical education, whereas formerly they had just one. The range of subjects offered at GCSE level has expanded to include history, art, and environmental science.

The flexibility of the curriculum enables students to progress at a faster rate than expected and it meets the needs of students of all abilities. This is one of its main strengths. Science is examined as single, double and triple awards, which suits all students. In the current academic year, Year 10 students were entered early for their GCSE examinations in English language and literature, mathematics, religious education, and some were entered early for statistics. This enables students to start AS level courses in religious education, English and core mathematics in Year 11. Gifted students are fast-tracked so that they can progress at the fastest rate of which they are capable.

Provision for most subjects, especially basic skills, is strong. In English, there is a particular emphasis on promoting reading and communication skills. Literacy skills are promoted well in all subjects. The mathematics curriculum has expanded with the introduction of statistics examined at GCSE level. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) has developed since the last inspection and ICT is now also used as a learning tool in all subjects. Provision for physical education is satisfactory. Personal, social and health education reflects the Islamic ethos of the school. Careers guidance is good and helps students to make informed choices for their future. The schemes of work are reviewed regularly and they are of satisfactory to good quality. The curriculum is adequately resourced and ICT facilities are good. The curriculum is now enriched by a good range of clubs that enable students to develop a wide range of skills, but it is only satisfactorily enhanced by educational visits.

Teaching and assessment are outstanding. The school has considerably developed the use of assessment to support students' learning since the last inspection. Students gain a good understanding of what to do next to improve through constructive verbal and written feedback, the setting of learning targets and self- and peer-assessment. Teachers know their students well, use information from assessment to plan challenging tasks and monitor students' progress closely. Teachers' good to excellent subject knowledge and thorough understanding of

examination criteria ensure that students are very well prepared for their examinations. Through a variety of methods, probing questioning and very effective use of resources, teachers successfully promote students' thinking, social, communication and creative skills. Outstanding teaching is characterised by extremely high expectations of what students can achieve and excellent understanding of their capabilities, which results in consistently high levels of challenge for all students. In such cases, students progress at an exceptionally fast rate, including those who had low or very low starting points. Where the teaching is good, rather than outstanding, a good level of challenge is provided but it is not sustained throughout the lesson.

As a result of a good curriculum and outstanding teaching, students make outstanding progress over time in relation to their varying starting points and they achieve exceptionally well. All students have achieved A* to C grades in at least five subjects including English and mathematics since 2007. The 2010 GCSE results indicate exceptional achievement in mathematics, statistics, religious education, ICT and Urdu.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

While provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding overall, their social and cultural development is good. Students' enjoyment of school life is reflected in their good attendance and punctuality and in high levels of participation in lessons and in activities. Students greatly appreciate the mix of purposeful learning environment and warm family atmosphere created by the staff. Their strong sense of responsibility and exemplary spiritual and moral development make them acutely aware of how they can contribute to the common good of the school community. One student eloquently expresses the views of many when saying, 'We respect our teachers and the headteacher because if it wasn't for them we wouldn't have an excellent education. We may not have a perfect school but together we aim for excellence.' Students are eager to learn, have strong work ethics and their behaviour is outstanding. They display an impressive level of maturity and fairness, and present very balanced views. They form very positive relationships and feel free from bullying and harassment. They are well-mannered, respectful, reflective and self-confident.

Students contribute to improving school life through the student council and other leadership roles. They show initiative when contributing to their local community through various activities, such as carrying out research for a local history project, purchasing a tree for a children's hospital and presenting their views on safeguarding children from harm on a local television programme. They contribute to the wider community by raising funds for national and international charities. While students learn about public institutions extensively through the citizenship programme, they do not have opportunities for first-hand, active citizenship that matches the excellence of their theoretical knowledge. Likewise, the good multicultural education which they receive through art and religious education is not sufficiently enhanced by

practical experiences. Students develop excellent basic skills that prepare them extremely well for their future through the curriculum and through a good range of clubs. In particular, regular participation in class presentations and debates, along with annual participation in writing competitions, enhances their communication and team work skills well.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school makes good provision for students' welfare, health and safety and has rectified the shortcomings identified during the last inspection. All the policies and procedures aimed at safeguarding children and minimising risks are up-to-date and implemented consistently. The staff gain a good understanding of their duties and responsibilities in matters of child protection through a detailed child protection policy and training at appropriate levels. References are obtained on all staff and their employment history is checked. Arrangements for first aid are good and few accidents occur. Strong pastoral care promotes very high standards of behaviour and emotional well-being, and instances of bullying are rare. Students feel very safe and have full confidence in the staff's ability to deal with incidents fairly and effectively. The school has a satisfactory level of fire safety. Appropriate risk assessments of the premises and off-site activities are carried out. Students' attendance is monitored effectively. The school has a three-year plan that fulfils the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Students develop an awareness of healthy lifestyles through personal, social and health education, science and Islamic studies, as well as through participation in events such as 'skip-a-thons' and visits from a nutritionist. The school encourages healthy snacks and packed lunches but not sufficiently robustly. Some students show insufficient commitment to healthy eating and regularly consume salty, oily and sugary foods. Although students have sufficient opportunities for regular exercise during the school week, they are not vigorously encouraged to engage in physical activities at break times.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Robust recruitment procedures ensure that all the required checks on the proprietors and staff are carried out in good time. These checks are appropriately recorded in a single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises provide teaching accommodation that is fit for purpose with sufficient specialist facilities and it enables safe and effective learning. The playground is under-developed for physical and creative activities.

Provision of information

Parents, carers and others receive accurate and up-to-date information mainly through the school website and a prospectus. Parents and carers feel well informed of the progress their daughters make through two formal meetings with teachers, one interim report and a detailed end-of-year report, in addition to informal feedback given on request.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The procedures for handling complaints fairly and promptly meet all requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

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

- further improve the social and cultural dimensions of the curriculum by providing more frequent educational visits, more opportunities for active citizenship and more practical experiences for students, and by continuing to build up resources
- help students to develop a stronger commitment to healthy lifestyles by encouraging them to engage in physical activities at break times and by increasing their awareness of healthy eating.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Day Muslim Secondary School		
Date school opened	2002		
Age range of pupils	11–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 80	Total: 80
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,000		
Address of school	28a George Street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham B12 9RG		
Telephone number	0121 440 5454		
Email address	admin@alburhan.org.uk		
Headteacher	Dr Mohammad Nasrullah		
Proprietor	Al Burhan Foundation Trust		