

Al Huda Girl's School

Independent school progress monitoring inspection report

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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 inspection was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Al Huda Girls' School is a Muslim secondary day school, located in Washwood Heath, Birmingham. The school opened in 1992 and is located in Victorian accommodation. It admits girls who are 11 to 16 years of age and there are currently 83 students on roll. The vast majority are from Pakistani, Somali and Bengali backgrounds; nearly all were born in the United Kingdom. No students currently have a statement of special educational needs or are at the early stages of acquiring English.

There is a mix of Islamic and secular teaching. The school aims to 'promote equality of opportunity for young British Muslim girls, enabling them to understand and become integrated members of British society.'

High staff turnover still continues to be a feature of the school.

Context of the inspection

The school had its last standard inspection in May 2009. Three inspection visits, to assess the progress the school has made implementing its action plan, have taken place since. The last was an unannounced inspection in January 2011. Two other progress monitoring visits took place in November 2009 and October 2010. Improvement was judged to be inadequate on all the visits made. The current monitoring visit is the fourth.

The school produced an action plan for improvement in July 2009 which was deemed unsatisfactory. The school was requested to produce a further action plan, which was assessed on 19 April 2010. This was evaluated to be generally satisfactory, but needed some improvement. During the current inspection another action plan was provided by the school.

The purpose of this visit was to check whether the school has taken appropriate steps to address the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection and to assess the amount of progress made in meeting regulations.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

The school has made inadequate progress in implementing its action plan. Despite some recent improvements, regulations with regard to the quality of the curriculum and teaching and assessment remain unmet. These failures result in students not making the progress of which they are capable. Some important regulations with regard to the safeguarding of students' welfare, health and safety are also unmet.

At its standard inspection in May 2009 and at the previous progress monitoring visits, there were many weaknesses in the school's schemes of work and in their use to inform day-to-day planning. Planning to support students' learning and progress, and their preparation for the future was insufficient. The school planned to review the curriculum policy and introduce a new planning template for staff to use, which it has done. However, there are still many weaknesses that the school has failed to address.

There is now a reasonable breadth of subjects in Key Stage 3 which provide a full range of experiences in the required areas of learning. However, the curriculum narrows in Key Stage 4. Aesthetic experiences are developed through the *Tajweed* but technological understanding is not provided, as students cease to undertake a planned programme of work in information and communication technology (ICT) in Key Stage 4. All other areas of learning are provided. Students currently undertake English, mathematics and science GCSE courses, with some studying Urdu at this level.

The school's new action plan shows that it is revising and developing its schemes of work. This is mainly as a result of the new staff's and consultant's desire to ensure that all these are fully in place. Those for English, mathematics and science are well developed and are supported by published materials. However, there is no planning for Year 9 in ICT. The physical education planning is repetitive, not sufficiently challenging and does not develop students' skills. The school could not provide any detailed planning for history or citizenship. A clear improvement is in the way that teachers promote opportunities to support and develop students' literacy, and to some extent, numeracy skills in lessons.

The lack of development of students' ICT skills and their underachievement in mathematics and science limits their opportunities for the future. While there has been some improvement in careers education, such as links with Connexions, there is a lack of depth to the work and it is insufficiently planned.

The last standard inspection and the progress monitoring visits since found a range of weaknesses in teaching, including a lack of use of information from assessments to plan lessons and to meet the range of students' needs. The new action plan focuses on improving teaching methods, promoting speaking and listening and using assessment, progress tracking and target setting to inform planning.

Teaching and assessment remain inadequate. The key weaknesses are similar to those found at the unannounced inspection. There are examples of good teaching in subjects such as English and religious studies. The variety of activities which students are now presented with in these subjects, such as the use of multimedia presentations, paired work and discussion, has increased well. Links are now made with other subjects which help students understand the relevance of what they are learning. However, there is still a tendency for staff to resort to 'telling' students what to do and talking too much, rather than challenging them to learn or exploring their knowledge.

Although improved recently, the use of assessment continues to be underdeveloped. What students are to learn is often expressed in broad terms, with not enough use of precise criteria to identify what they should achieve by the end of a lesson. The teaching seen in mathematics and science during the inspection was mostly inadequate. Key weaknesses were a lack of thorough explanation and demonstration, insufficient checking of whether students had understood and not enough involvement of students checking what they were doing. Sometimes students' misconceptions were not dealt with, so they continued to make errors. In some year groups, the students lack the basic understanding of ideas which should have been developed at an earlier stage. This is not always recognised and staff miss opportunities to review students' learning. While teachers know they must provide work for students at different levels in their classes, not enough account is taken of the information that is available to them. In consequence, work is sometimes pitched at the wrong level. Occasionally, resources are not well managed. As a result, students take advantage to talk, become silly and inattentive and time is lost for learning.

Over the past two years, the school has introduced and developed a system to track students' progress in Key Stage 3, although there is no such system in Key Stage 4. A very recent, but positive, feature is that students now have a personal assessment record and targets in their books, although this is not consistent across the school. Attainment levels are not always accurately recorded. This is because the school does not have a systematic way of moderating their assessments. Plans to do this, identified at the time of the last standard inspection, have not materialised. Marking is still variable; a new marking scheme has been introduced but there is little evidence of its use in practice. Similarly, peer- and self-assessment occurs in lessons but is generally undeveloped.

There were weaknesses in the policies and procedures for safeguarding students identified at the time of the inspection in May 2009. The school planned to revise its child protection policy, which it has satisfactorily done. Safe recruitment also improved following that inspection and the school ensured that all staff were trained in child protection.

At the time of the unannounced inspection in January 2011, there were again failings in child protection training, in health and safety of students as there were no risk

assessments, and in the quality of the premises. There were also no up-to-date tests carried out on portable electrical equipment. Fire drills were not undertaken regularly. The first aid policy lacked detail and staff had not been trained. There was no disability accessibility plan. The school planned to rectify these by reviewing its policies and procedures.

There is now a suitable fire policy. Procedures for fire evacuations, tests and drills are all in place. This includes an adequate fire risk assessment, which is part of the premises risk assessment. Electrical appliance testing has been completed. There is a sufficient number of qualified first aiders and a detailed policy. However, the school does not have enough regard for the government's guidance on safe recruitment. Not all staff complete an application form; some provide a curriculum vitae (CV) and some have neither. References are not always received and those that are do not identify whether, or not, the referee has any concerns about a candidate working with children. Although the school states it holds interviews for new staff, no records could be provided and there is no evidence that any breaks in employment have been questioned. Sometimes no information is provided about previous employment.

Although there are two designated trained persons for child protection, in the absence of these, the headteacher undertakes this role. However, no certificate of training was provided. In addition, if a child protection allegation is made against the headteacher, the school does not have an independent person to investigate this. A small number of new staff have not yet undertaken training in child protection.

While the school has a suitable policy to prevent bullying, rare incidents of bullying do occur. The school could explain how it deals with any bullying but sanctions imposed on the bully are not recorded. Other incidents and sanctions are adequately recorded in the current year group behaviour books.

The admissions register does not always have information about a student's last school or occasionally lacks details about the address.

The school now complies with the Equality Act (2010) and since January 2011 has had a three-year plan to improve access to the building, information, and the curriculum.

At the time of the inspection in May 2009 the school did not undertake all the required checks on its staff. The school rectified this situation quickly and at the first monitoring visit, its procedures met requirements. However on this inspection, not all regulations are met. Enhanced criminal records bureau (CRB) checks are undertaken for staff who have not worked in a similar establishment previously and who have had a break of three or more months before being appointed at Al Huda. However, because the school does not have robust recruitment procedures and previous employment history is not always available, it is not possible to tell in some files whether a new CRB check is required. Medical checks are carried out on appointed staff as well evidence collected of a person's identity and qualifications. However, at the start of the inspection the single central register had not been fully updated and

had missing information on a small number of new staff. The school addressed the matter of the incomplete single central register as a matter of urgency during the inspection.

The previous standard inspection and the progress monitoring visits found weaknesses in the maintenance of the school's premises. Some improvement had been made, which was recognised at the time of the visit in January, although there were still some regulations which were not met. All regulations for the premises and accommodation are now met. This is partly due to the influence of the school's new consultants; the premises are reasonably clean, maintained and have suitable flooring.

The school has recently revised its complaints policy and procedures. These no longer meet requirements due to important information being missing.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

As a result of this inspection, the school must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010¹ ('the Regulations'), as follows.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- ensure that there are full schemes of work for all subjects taught and that these are implemented effectively (paragraph 2(1))
- provide students of all ages with experience in the technological areas of learning (paragraph 2(2)(a))
- provide subject matter appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of pupils (paragraph 2(2)(b))
- provide appropriate careers guidance for students receiving secondary education (paragraph 2(2)(g))
- provide opportunities for all students to learn and make progress (paragraph 2(2)(i))
- adequately prepare students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life (paragraph 2(2)(j))

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made

- ensure that teaching enables students to acquire new knowledge and make progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught (paragraph 3(a))
- ensure that teaching encourages pupils to apply intellectual, physical or creative effort and to show interest in their work and to think and learn for themselves (paragraph 3(b))
- ensure that lessons are well planned and that staff use effective teaching methods, suitable activities and appropriately manage class time (paragraph 3(c))
- ensure teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the students, and ensure these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 3(d))
- ensure there is a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly, and that information from such assessment is utilised to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 3(g)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- make arrangements made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and ensure these arrangements have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7)
- ensure there is a record of the sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious misbehaviour (paragraph 16)
- ensure the admissions register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 17).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors (standards in part 4) and must:

- for each member of staff appointed after 1 May 2007, ensure that the register contains all relevant information (paragraph 22(3)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the manner in which complaints are to be handled (standards in part 7) and must:

- ensure that if parents are not satisfied with the response to a written complaint, there is provision for the establishment of a hearing before a panel appointed by the proprietor of at least three people who have not

been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint (paragraph 25(f))

- ensure that where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, there is provision that one person on the panel is independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 25(g))
- ensure that the procedure allows for parents to attend the panel hearing and, if they wish, to be accompanied (paragraph 25 (h))
- ensure the procedure provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and ensure the procedure stipulates that a copy of the findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about and available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the headteacher (paragraph 25(i))
- ensure the procedure provides for written records to be kept of all complaints, indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 25(j))
- ensure the procedure provides that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential (paragraph 25(k)).

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Muslim girls day school		
Date school opened	1992		
Age range of pupils	11 to 16 years		
Gender of pupils	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 83	Total: 83
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)	£1,200		
Address of school	74-76 Washwood Heath Road, Saltley, Birmingham, B8 1RD		
Telephone number	0121 3288999		
Email address	Al_huda@hotmail.co.uk		
Headteacher	Samina Jawaid		
Proprietor	Asif Jawaid		