

Al-Burhan Grammar School

Spring Road Centre, 258 Spring Road, Birmingham, B11 3DW

Inspection dates 4–6 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding school

- Under the headteacher's resolute leadership, the school continues to provide an outstanding quality of education for its students.
- The headteacher and staff are committed to students achieving their very best academically and flourishing in their personal development.
- Leaders have successfully maintained students' high standards and outstanding achievement over a number of years.
- Outstanding teaching results in the vast majority of students making rapid progress in relation to their starting points.
- The curriculum is broad, well planned and successfully supports students' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and personal development. It prepares students well for life in modern Britain.
- Students behave exceptionally well. Systems for keeping students safe are effective. Leaders are aware of improvements needed to enable staff and students to recognise and deal with risk specific to young Muslim girls.
- All students are extremely self-disciplined and show maturity in their attitudes and work ethic. Their perseverance, resilience and attitudes to learning are exemplary. Homework is completed diligently.
- The skills of the middle leaders in checking on the work of other teachers are developing well. Not all teachers mark students' work as carefully as they could.
- Senior leaders manage teachers' performance effectively. The trustees keep a careful check on the work of the school, especially students' achievement. Trustees have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, they do not have systems in place to check the school's work for themselves.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 18 lessons or part lessons.
- During visits to classrooms, inspectors looked at students' work, spoke with students about their work, and listened to all students in Year 7 read. They scrutinised work in students' books in a range of subjects.
- A tour of the school's premises was undertaken with the headteacher.
- Inspectors held discussions with the leadership team, students and the trustees.
- School documents and records were examined, including information about students' progress, behaviour and attendance and school improvement planning.
- Inspectors observed lunch and playtimes.
- There were not enough responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, but inspectors considered results from the school's own surveys. Inspectors also considered responses to the student questionnaires called 'point-in-time' surveys.
- On the third day of the inspection, Years 10 and 11 were taking part in an educational visit to Birmingham University.

Inspection team

Jacqueline Wordsworth, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Merryl Ford

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Al-Burhan Grammar School is an independent selective Islamic day school for girls aged 11 to 16 years of age. It opened in 2002. It is housed in a former NHS two-storey building located in a quiet, mainly residential part of Birmingham.
- All of the school population are from minority ethnic backgrounds, which is well above average. The largest ethnic group is Pakistani, which makes up almost 90% of the school population.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized school. There are 105 students on roll.
- There are no disabled students.
- There are two students with a statement of special educational needs.
- No students are in the care of the local authority.
- No students attend off-site alternative provision.
- All students speak English as an additional language which is higher than the national average but none are at the early stages of learning to speak English.
- 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'.
- The school was last inspected in 2011, when it was judged to be meeting all of the independent school regulations. A material change visit was made in 2013, when the school re-located to new premises. The advice to the Department of Education recommended that school be granted the material change. It was noted that the school continued to meet all of the independent school regulations.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain students' exceptional achievement, and the outstanding quality of teaching, by ensuring that all teachers consistently mark students' work as well as the very best teachers, so that they build on what students have already learnt.
- Refine the role of the trustees and those responsible for subjects or aspects of school life so that:
 - monitoring activities are undertaken more frequently to gauge the impact of the school's actions
 - they know who is responsible for leading the actions and priorities for further improvement
 - students are taught to deal with all aspects of risk that may affect their lives.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are good. All staff share the headteacher's clear vision for the school and are passionate about the school's work. They are clearly focused on how best to raise students' achievement even further and ensure that all girls go on to study at a university of their choice.
- Leaders very effectively encourage an ethos of exceptional behaviour and exemplary attitudes to learning. The school's aims are very well met. They are prominent in all aspects of school life and support a hardworking and harmonious community.
- Self-evaluation is realistic, and improvement planning has a clear focus that is understood across the school. Leaders and managers have made important improvements to provision since the previous inspection, such as that for those who have special educational needs. They have also secured improvements in the provision of a specialist science laboratory so that practical science can be taught.
- The curriculum reflects the required areas of learning for students of compulsory school age. The curriculum policy has been updated in accordance with the new regulations and is underpinned by a commercial scheme of work for each subject. These very successfully support the development of students' literacy and mathematical skills as well as subjects such as computing, science, art and history. For each subject, there is a clear overview of what should be taught in each term and the expectations for learning to support students' progress over time.
- Visits and visitors to the school add breadth to the curriculum. In particular, visits from successful female role models raise students' aspiration to succeed academically. Leaders have been less successful in providing a broad range of after-school clubs; these remain adequate.
- Teachers with responsibility for computing, art, science and mathematics manage their subjects well. They track students' progress in detail and actively involve students in discussions about how to improve their grades as quickly as possible. This effective practice is not consistent across all subjects. Although senior leaders and those with specific responsibilities check on the quality of teaching in the classroom, much of the information gained is shared informally with colleagues and prevents other teachers benefiting from the most effective practice in the school.
- The school has grown rapidly in recent years owing to its popularity with parents. Many students travel from other areas of the West Midlands to attend the school.
- The governance of the school:
 - Trustees have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, they do not have systems in place to check the school's work for themselves. They rely upon the headteacher to provide them with information. Although monthly meetings with the trustees and the headteacher take place, records of such meetings are not always kept. Therefore, it is difficult to check how and when decisions have been made regarding teachers' pay and performance.
 - Teachers are set targets for improvement but these are monitored informally and are not always linked to pay. Trustees are aware that this is an area that requires improvement.
 - Minor deficiencies in the first aid procedures identified at the start of the inspection were very quickly rectified. Trustees ensure that all requirements related to recruitment and suitability of staff are met in full.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. All of the independent school standards relating to students' welfare, health and safety are met, with some minor revisions made during the inspection to first aid and administration of medicines.
- Adults are well trained in safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Senior leaders are clear that some cultural practices have no place in Islam and that they are illegal. The school has revised its child protection policy in line with the latest guidance from the Secretary of State, *Keeping children safe in*

education. Training for the designated lead for safeguarding is up to date and to the required level, including training on the 'Prevent Strategy' to keep students safe from potential radicalisation or extremism.

- Students who met with inspectors said that bullying was rare. Students understand the different forms that bullying can take and know what to do if they experience or know of anyone being bullied. They are less aware of homophobic and other prejudice-based bullying. Students are not sufficiently well aware of how to deal with risks specific to young Muslim girls or women.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding. Staff set high expectations for behaviour, politeness and courtesy; their students reflect this. The policy and the code of conduct give specific guidance on encouraging students with behavioural difficulties to accept responsibility for their actions and to treat others with courtesy and respect. It provides an excellent focus on the development of students' self-esteem and confidence.
- The school successfully instils the values underlying modern British society. Students are taught what it means to be law abiding and have a sound knowledge of the role of public institutions, such as the work of parliament and the judiciary.
- Students behave exceptionally in social times, reflecting excellent provision for their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students were seen to behave well and show care and respect for each other at all times, both in and out of lessons.
- The schemes of work for art, history and religious education support students' developing insight into other cultures and traditions around them, so that they acquire an appreciation of the diversity of faiths and cultures in the world at large. Students are keen to learn about other religions and to learn from them. At present, they have an excellent understanding of Islam and an adequate but rudimentary knowledge of other faiths. Leaders are aware of this and have suitable plans for further improvement.
- Students are eager to learn. They contribute to lessons exceptionally well and share their thoughts and ideas. Students appreciate the importance of working hard and understand that completing homework just as carefully as classwork helps them to show that they understand the topic they are studying. They know how well they are doing in each subject and what is needed to reach their own individual targets.
- Attendance is above the national average and school leaders rigorously monitor attendance and emphasise the importance of attending regularly.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Evidence from a scrutiny of students' work, assessment information and visits to lessons indicate that teaching is outstanding. Teachers have excellent knowledge of the subjects they teach and this results in all groups of students making outstanding progress and attaining highly over time.
- Teachers assess students' attainment accurately and use their findings very effectively to challenge students to achieve highly in all subjects including mathematics and English. Staff know and respond well to students' needs. Effective use of homework builds upon what the students have learned in lessons. It is used successfully to make sure that students make outstanding progress and attain highly by the time they leave school in Year 11.
- Reading is taught well; students read widely and often. Students in Year 7 talked keenly about 'Tom's Midnight Garden', showing that they understood the key themes within the book.
- Teachers use questions extremely well to check students' understanding in lessons and create an environment where students are confident to ask for further explanation. The most-able students are challenged to reach their potential; they also make exceptional progress and attain high standards in all subjects. Students are excellently prepared for the future; all students who leave school at the end of Year 11 move onto further or higher education, with many gaining places at high performing universities.
- Marking in most subjects, particularly in English, is used very effectively to extend students' learning. In

the very best examples, misconceptions are corrected, misspellings and grammatical errors are pointed out and good written guidance is provided to students so that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, this is not the case in all subjects.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Achievement is outstanding because all groups of students make swift progress across all subjects and achieve exceptionally well, particularly in English, mathematics and science, from broadly average starting points in Year 7.
- The proportion of students gaining five or more passes at GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, in 2014 was very high when compared to the national figure. This has been the case for a number of years. The school's monitoring and records of students' progress show that the school is on track for this to be sustained in 2015.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' achievement and typically expect students to make at least one GCSE grade progress across each school year, which is well above the average rate of progress seen nationally. Students respond well to this challenge and work hard to improve their skills and to achieve better than this minimum expectation.
- Almost all of the most-able students are on track to attain at the highest level. The school's monitoring information shows that the proportion of students set to attain A* or A is on track to rise from 47% in 2014 to well over 50% in most subjects next summer. Attainment in mathematics and science is particularly strong. There are good opportunities for students to develop problem-solving and investigative skills.
- Inspectors saw the distinct improvements in students' work as they practised their skills in response to guidance given by teachers. In a Year 10 art lesson, students enthusiastically asked questions about how better to use tone and texture in their work as they tried hard to perfect this technique. In a Year 8 chemistry lesson, students used models to construct elements, molecules and compounds before using the chemical symbols to represent them. In both of these cases, and in many others seen, there were rapid gains in learning.
- Students who have special educational needs receive highly effective support enabling them to make outstanding progress and achieve well. All students have equal access to the curriculum.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

Unique reference number	134034
Inspection number	447293
DfE registration number	330/6104
Type of school	Secondary
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	105
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Al-Burhan Foundation
Chair	Mohammad Nasrullah
Headteacher	Mohammad Nasrullah
Date of previous school inspection	29 June 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4200
Telephone number	0121 440 5454
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