

Palfrey Girls' School

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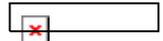
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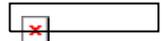
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Introduction and summary

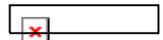


Purpose and scope of the inspection



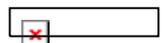
This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school



Palfrey Girls' School is an independent Muslim day school for girls aged 11 to 16. It is situated in Palfrey, Walsall, in the West Midlands. It was established in 1993. It provides full-time Islamic secondary education for 141 girls. The school aims to provide an education which has *`... a broad balance of science, technology and humanities together with a strong religious and spiritual input ...`*, so that *`... the whole community will benefit from well-educated young Muslims.`*

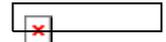
Summary of main findings



Palfrey Girls' school provides a sound Islamic environment in which pupils' behaviour is good and relationships are positive. The headteacher, staff and trustees provide good direction for the

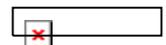
continuing development of the school. The curriculum is broad and balanced, but has some limitations. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and sometimes it is good or very good. However, a significant minority of teaching is unsatisfactory or poor, especially in science. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and reflects the school's Islamic ethos. The school prepares the pupils effectively for their role in British society. Pupils with special education needs are supported well. Close and productive links have been forged with other institutions of further and higher education.

What the school does well



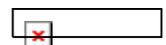
- it has a distinctive Islamic ethos from which pupils acquire a deeper understanding of their faith and develop as self-confident, caring and responsible young women, preparing them effectively for their role in British society;
- it provides a rich Islamic environment in which pupils' behaviour is very good and relationships are very positive;
- its provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good;
- its provision for pupils with statements for special educational needs is good; and
- teaching in Islamic studies is good.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations



- carry out thorough risk assessment of all practical work in science;
- ensure that the outside play area surface is safe for pupils; and
- make available a summary of staff qualifications to parents and parents of prospective pupils.

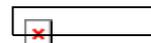
Next steps



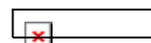
Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- improve the quality of the teaching;
- ensure that schemes of work are improved to support more consistent lesson planning;
- ensure that assessment information is used more effectively to set focused targets for pupils; and
- increase resources for the library so that it can better support teaching and learning.

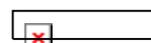
Compliance with the regulations for registration



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum



The curriculum is broad and balanced but has some limitations. The school largely achieves its aim *'...to provide an education that caters for every aspect of moral, physical, intellectual and spiritual development...'* set out in a detailed curriculum policy. Pupils study most of the National Curriculum subjects throughout the school, together with Arabic and Urdu. Islamic Studies, which include *Tajweed* (the art of Qur'anic recitation), *Salah* (worship) and Islamic history, enrich the curriculum. Creative opportunities for pupils arise, for example when studying poetry in English, considering historical artefacts and participating in *Nasheed* (religious songs). However, pupils' creative and aesthetic experiences are limited, as is the school's approach to technological work.

Some good links are made between Islam and subjects such as mathematics, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and humanities. Year 7 pupils, for example, conclude their study of the Romans looking at mosaics as a source of evidence. Pupils make their own mosaics and move on naturally to consider mosaics in Islamic art, in preparation for a future history project on Islamic design and architecture.

In Year 9 pupils follow the Durham Certificate of Arabic and Arabic Studies, which provides a useful foundation for later study of the language at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level. Pupils who take this certificate do very well. At Key Stage 4 the school offers a minimum of eight subjects for the GCSE, including the possibility of either single or double award science.

Curriculum planning is satisfactory overall, but inconsistencies in quality exist between subjects. All subjects have schemes of work based on the National Curriculum and commercial materials. Some subjects, for example geography in Key Stage 3, have detailed long-, medium- and short-term plans that provide a firm basis for lessons. Others, such as English and physical education (PE), do not have sufficient detail to structure teaching and learning on a termly and weekly basis.

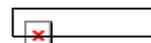
PSHE is taught throughout the school during tutorial time, and reflects the Islamic ethos of the school. Citizenship has been successfully introduced. At present, there is insufficient review of these courses to ensure that they complement each other, or take account of related learning in science.

The enterprise and business partnership with the local authority and other agencies is developing well. Themed days, for example, the Fair Trade Enterprise Day, greatly enhance and extend pupils' experiences. Their knowledge is further broadened by educational trips to museums and by visiting speakers, who talk about, for example, smoking and health.

Effective careers guidance is provided by the Connexions agency. Year 10 pupils welcome the talks from the careers adviser and have a clear idea of the range of options after the age of 16. In addition, the school is developing good links with community and other agencies to encourage pupils to continue in education and training. Working with a private provider, funded by the Learning

and Skills Council, a post-16 child care vocational accredited training course has started successfully. For the next academic year six Year 11 girls have gained places, subject to their GCSE results, at a local girls' grammar school to study advanced level courses prior to higher education.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Over four-fifths of teaching is satisfactory or better, and of this, more than one-third is good. On a few occasions, teaching is very good. Almost one-fifth of the teaching is unsatisfactory or poor, and is weakest in science.

In the best lessons, teachers' subject knowledge is secure, their planning precise and they use assessment effectively. They match tasks appropriately to pupils' competencies. Teaching is energetic and the enthusiasm for the subject succeeds in maintaining the interest and involvement of pupils. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace and resources are used effectively. As a result, pupils make good progress in their learning. In a very good Year 7 mathematics lesson with more able pupils, clear links were made with the individual tests results provided by referring primary schools. The good lesson plan made effective use of this assessment information. High expectations by the teacher, coupled with challenging questions, ensured that pupils made very good progress in their understanding of irregular shapes. Pupils worked hard, encouraged by the effective individual support and praise given throughout the lesson.

Satisfactory lessons are well organised, with a clear purpose, and teachers' subject knowledge is sound. Most pupils make satisfactory gains in their learning, but more able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently, or provided with further work. However, the consolidation of pupils' learning in the summing up at the end of the lesson is not consistent.

In the significant minority of unsatisfactory or poor lessons, planning is sketchy and lacks focus and direction. Classroom management is weak, and the pupils have little sense of where their work is taking them, or why. Teachers' subject knowledge is insecure and pupils make little progress.

The majority of pupils make satisfactory and, occasionally, good progress. Where the teaching is unsatisfactory or poor, pupils make little progress. Although for the majority English is their first language, all pupils are bi-lingual and their achievements in all aspects of language vary. When reading aloud in Urdu and Arabic, pupils have a good standard of expression and intonation. In English, pupils read aloud accurately but many do not do so with the fluency of articulation and confidence achieved in other languages. They communicate effectively with peers and adults in day-to-day and social settings, but require further and regular practice in the use of more formal spoken English and in reading aloud to develop skill in expression and character.

Pupils are highly motivated to learn. They respond positively to the variety of teaching methods used in several lessons, such as paired or group work, which allow them to articulate and explore ideas. They collaborate eagerly with each other.

Working in small groups in English, Year 10 pupils thoughtfully tackled two challenging poems by Sylvia Plath: *The Mirror* and *Blackberry*. They shared their initial reactions to the emotions portrayed in a mature manner, each member of the group listening respectfully to the opinions of the others.

Behaviour in lessons is very good, although there is an occasional lack of concentration. Even when faced with poor teaching, although baffled, pupils remain attentive and try hard. Relationships between staff and pupils are relaxed but good order is maintained.

The progress of all pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is monitored closely and the

information used to plan the next steps in their development. Pupils with statements of special educational needs make good progress and are well supported in their learning and personal development by learning support assistants, either within the class, or working individually or in small groups. A Year 8 pupil made good progress in understanding how plants grow through careful and patient one-to-one teaching. Planting seeds gave very good opportunities to extend the pupil's motor skills and language. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills were fully utilised and extended when word processing the instructions on how to plant seeds. Relationships between this pupil and the learning support assistant were excellent, enabling good gains to be made in scientific learning and social confidence.

The comprehensive assessment policy is not implemented consistently across all subjects. Diagnostic tests on entry, combined with information from primary schools and a range of end-of-unit tests and half-yearly examinations, provide information on pupils' progress. This builds up a useful record of progress over time. Much informal assessment goes on in lessons, but information from this is not utilised consistently in all subjects to inform teachers' planning, or to set realistic and focused targets for individual pupils.

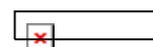
Teachers' marking is generally conscientious and adheres to the school policy, although confusion exists in applying the rank order numbering for pupil effort. Marking is insufficiently informative to pupils on how they can improve their work.

The school has adequate resources in most subjects, and teachers use them thoughtfully to support pupils' learning. Provision for ICT is particularly good, an illustration of partnership with local providers. Pupils develop good skills in ICT lessons. However, they are not required to use them sufficiently in other areas of the curriculum. Some teachers are making effective use of visual equipment such as PowerPoint and overhead projectors to support learning effectively. The library is evolving but is under-resourced, and does not yet make an impact on pupils' learning and personal reading.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their behaviour is excellent and reflects the school's Islamic ethos, aims and values. A strong sense of responsibility to the community and the wider society is inculcated in the pupils. The school's 'Code of Conduct' contains a clear commitment to understanding, and becoming integrated into, British society. Islamic Studies also make a strong and effective contribution to the development of a clear set of values and standards of behaviour.

Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. They are given a balanced religious guidance through the Islamic curriculum. *Zohar Salah* (early afternoon prayers) are timetabled. Opportunities to reflect are provided in assembly, prayers and lessons. For example, just before *Zohar Salah* pupils were asked to reflect on the many blessings including peace, good health and the educational opportunities they have. Pupils' spiritual development is also supported through celebration of themed days, for example, the Hajj day, where the whole school comes together to consider the religious significance of the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The curriculum affords good opportunities for pupils' moral development. Pupils are taught to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the law, in the light of the teachings of the Qur'an. Pupils have many opportunities in their lessons to discuss the difference between right and wrong. For

example, in an Islamic Studies lesson pupils discussed why it was wrong to encroach on someone else's property.

The social development of pupils is good. There is a strong emphasis on good manners, courtesy and caring for others. This is achieved through a wide range of activities including lunch time *Nasheed* club where pupils voluntarily come together to sing Islamic songs. Pupils recite with enthusiasm *Nazms* (Urdu poems) and *Na'at-e-Nabawi* (poems in praise of the Prophet). Their enjoyment of this is evident and they participate with creative endeavour and commitment.

Staff provide good role models through their thoughtful and considerate behaviour and pupils respond well to this. Pupils show good team spirit in class activities, for example, in a mathematics lesson they worked in small groups to estimate the area of various different shapes.

There are planned opportunities for pupils to work with each other in pairs and in small groups. For example, in a *Tajweed* lesson (the rules of pronunciation and enunciation of the Qur'an), pupils worked in pairs, listening to each other reciting short extracts and offering useful, constructive feedback.

Pupils' awareness of the needs of others is developed well, through, for example, charity events. Pupils raised a substantial amount of funds for the Tsunami appeal in January.

The good behaviour and co-operation of pupils inside and outside the classroom reflects the school's positive social ethos and environment. Staff and pupils relate very well to one another. There are extensive opportunities for pupils to learn how to respond to others with kindness and thoughtfulness. As a result the school is an orderly community, characterised by mutual concern and friendliness.

Pupils' cultural development is good. They learn to respect and appreciate their own and other cultures through both the Islamic and the secondary curriculum. A study of Urdu and Arabic languages gives them access to many different cultures of the Muslim world. Secondary subjects such as English Literature give them insights into English culture. For example, pupils in Year 9 have been to watch *Macbeth* and were able to interpret themes of power and coercion.

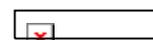
The school promotes tolerance between different cultures. For example, it has worked successfully with Walsall Council on an anti-racism campaign. In several different curriculum areas pupils consider the lives of people from other cultures and countries and learn the importance of understanding and respecting one another. In an Arabic lesson pupils discussed the diverse customs and practices of meeting and greeting friends and relatives in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

The school promotes a sound general knowledge of public institutions and services in England. A number of visiting speakers have given talks about the general election, higher education, employment and health matters.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school provides a healthy environment where its pupils feel safe and where their welfare is taken seriously. There is an appropriate range of policies which clearly describe the principles and procedures underpinning the welfare, health and safety of pupils. The school management and staff

mostly give a high priority to their responsibilities with regard to the pupils' welfare, health and safety. However, there is sometimes insufficient awareness of the importance of risk assessments for practical work in science. For example, in a science lesson boiling water was poured into conical flasks for pupils to measure the boiling point but no potential hazards and appropriate precautions to prevent burning or scalding were highlighted.

The school policies on anti-bullying, child protection, good behaviour and educational visits are carefully documented and are implemented conscientiously by staff.

A number of staff have participated in health and safety training. Pupils are supervised at all times. Fire drills are carried out every term and the fire alarm is maintained regularly. The school keeps a record of the fire drills.

All staff have been trained in basic First Aid to make sure that pupils are appropriately cared for. All accidents are recorded. The First Aid boxes contain appropriate medical resources and these are kept in suitable locations around the school.

The school maintains an admission register and an attendance register for each class.

The school takes seriously its responsibilities towards pupils with disabilities. School policies and practices reflect observance of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. School premises and classrooms have adequate wheelchair access. The governors and managers acknowledge that some further work is needed to improve access for pupils and staff with disabilities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

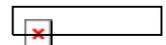
The school meets all but one of the requirements.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- have due regard to DfES guidance: 'Health and Safety: Responsibilities and Powers' (paragraph 3(4)).

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



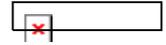
The school is run by Palfrey Girls' School Trust. The five trustees, including the chairman, serve as the board of governors. The school recruits appropriate staff to teach its Islamic and secular curricula. The teachers are, in the main, well qualified and suitably experienced. Learning support assistants make a positive contribution, especially to the support of pupils with SEN.

Procedures for checking the qualifications and previous employment history are in place. An employment and recruitment policy has been introduced to ensure that all appropriate checks have been carried out prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff. All have been subject to satisfactory clearance with the Criminal Records Bureau at an enhanced level.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The premises and accommodation are suitable for use as a school. The school building is maintained in satisfactory decorative order. Classrooms and other parts of the school are generally clean, tidy and in a hygienic state. There is good flooring throughout the school. Good quality pupils' work is attractively displayed in the classrooms and the corridors. Most classrooms are of an adequate size to accommodate the teaching groups. The one exception is the Year 8 room, which is barely adequate. Lighting and ventilation are good in most classrooms. The curriculum is enhanced by the use of specialist teaching areas for ICT. The large main hall is used for assemblies and other whole school events.

There are sufficient toilets and washrooms for staff and pupils. There are good facilities for *Wudhu* (ablution) and *Tahara* (sanitary hygiene). The toilets and washrooms are particularly clean and tidy. There is a room designated for pupils who are ill.

The outdoor play area surface is uneven and arrangements have been made to resurface this.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

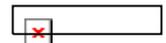
The school meets all but one of the requirements for registration.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- ensure that the outdoor space is safe for pupils to play (paragraph 5(t)).

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school provides an appropriate range of information to parents, prospective parents and other partners. The prospectus includes a statement of the school's ethos, aims and values, admissions policy and a list of subjects taught. Further details about the curriculum, policies and procedures of the school are available on request, except for information on staffing.

Communication between the school and pupils' homes is good. The school maintains an open door policy and parents are welcome to meet the staff at the beginning and end of the day or to make appointments to see them at other times.

Parents receive two written reports each year on the progress and attainment of their daughters in each subject. Where appropriate, the reports also include results of national tests. There is at least one formal meeting per year when parents and carers can meet with the teachers to discuss their daughter's progress at school. Most parents felt that they are kept well informed about their daughter's progress. The parents who responded to the questionnaires sent out before the inspection expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

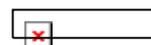
The school meets all but one of the requirements for registration.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- make available to parents and parents of prospective pupils a summary of staff qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k)).

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

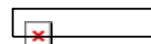


The school has effective procedures for handling complaints. There is a clearly written complaints policy.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	Palfrey Girls' School		
DfES ref number:	335/6008		
Type of school:	Muslim		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16 years		
Gender of pupils:	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys ,	Girls 141,	Total 141
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys ,	Girls 5,	Total 5
Annual fees (day pupils):	£850		
Address of school:	72 Queen Mary Street Walsall West Midlands WS1 4AB		
E-mail address:	info@palfreygirlschoo.co.uk		
Telephone number:	01922 625510		
Fax number:	01922 625510		
Headteacher:	Mrs Varachia		
Proprietor:	Mr Bashir Lorgat		
Lead Inspector:	Ms D Fareeda Naeem		
Dates of inspection:	13 - 16 June 2005		

