

Al Huda Girls School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	330/6088
Unique Reference Number	103595
Inspection number	334304
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Marian Harker HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

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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, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Al Huda Girls School is a Muslim secondary day school in Birmingham. It admits girls from 11 to 16 years of age and there are currently 129 pupils on roll. The vast majority are from Pakistani, Somali and Arabic backgrounds and were born in the United Kingdom. No pupils currently have a statement of special educational needs or are at the early stages of acquiring English.

The school opened in 1992 and is located in a Victorian building in the Washwood Heath area of Birmingham. Provision is a mix of Islamic and secular teaching. The school was last inspected in January 2006. The school aims to, 'promote equality of opportunity for young British Muslim girls, enabling them to understand and become integrated members of British society'.

Evaluation of the school

Al Huda Girls School provides an inadequate quality of education. The quality of the Islamic curriculum and teaching is satisfactory, but the secular curriculum is not well planned; this contributes to weaknesses in teaching and assessment and, as a consequence, pupils' progress in lessons, and over time, is often too slow. Since the school was last inspected, there has been a higher than expected turnover of staff which has delayed development in a number of areas. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and staff demonstrate a satisfactory standard of care for the pupils; however, essential elements are missing from the school's procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety, which are inadequate. The school does not comply with many regulations.

Quality of education

The secular curriculum is inadequate as most schemes of work are not planned well, do not have clear progression routes and are not implemented consistently by staff. Schemes of work do not guide staff as to teaching methods and how the needs of pupils with differing abilities will be met. These failings, coupled with the high turnover of staff in recent months, have resulted in the pupils being taught by a variety of teachers, who are not always familiar with the curriculum requirements. As a result, pupils do not make as much progress as they should, given their starting

points. Key Stage 4 curricular planning in mathematics and science is satisfactory. The school does not have an overall programme for the development of personal, social and health education, although elements are covered through science and Islamic studies. Information and communication technology (ICT) is at an early stage of development, largely due to ongoing technical difficulties with equipment. The school has suitable plans in place to update its ICT facilities. However, pupils are not prepared for their future effectively and they do not acquire a satisfactory level of basic skills, particularly in ICT. The secular curriculum in Key Stage 3 is based on the National Curriculum programmes of study. All of the required areas of learning are covered. In Key Stage 4, students study English language, English literature, mathematics, biology and additional science to GCSE level. Pupils also have the option to take GCSEs in Urdu or Arabic. GCSEs in art, chemistry and citizenship have recently been introduced. The Islamic curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils' knowledge of Arabic literature and theology are suitably developed. This aspect of the curriculum relates satisfactorily to pupils' personal and social development through topics such as living in a multicultural community. Careers' guidance is in the early stages of development. The recently appointed careers' coordinator has appropriate plans to develop the subject, but the provision does not yet meet requirements. There are few educational visits and only a limited number of visitors to enrich the curriculum: the pupils and parents say that they would like more and inspectors agree as to their potential benefits.

The quality of teaching is inadequate, although there are some examples of satisfactory or better teaching in both secular and Islamic subjects. In the better lessons, planning takes account of pupils' previous learning, teachers use stimulating materials to motivate and engage the pupils and lively debate is encouraged. The limitations of the school's long- and medium-term planning, and the absence of effective assessment, leaves most teachers without the guidance they need to plan effectively. As a consequence, work is not always matched sufficiently closely to the needs of pupils and they make inadequate progress, most noticeably in secular subjects. Staff work hard to promote pupils' learning, but teaching methods used in many lessons do not sufficiently engage or motivate the pupils. There is an over reliance on direct instruction and the completion of textbook exercises or worksheets. Too often, opportunities for discussion, debate and independent learning are missed. However, positive relationships exist between staff and pupils.

Assessment of pupils' work is inadequate. It is not sufficiently rigorous to inform future planning or enable teachers to monitor pupils' progress with accuracy. The school has plans to moderate assessment judgements and develop its current system further to enable the identification of underachievement, but this is at an early stage of development. The quality of marking is too variable. In the best examples, comments are encouraging and pupils are given guidance on how to improve their work. Most pupils are not sufficiently involved in assessing their own work and they receive too little guidance on what they need to do to improve future work.

As a result of the inconsistencies and weaknesses in curricular planning, alongside the inadequacies in teaching and assessment, most pupils do not make the progress they should. Although more pupils are now achieving the higher GCSE grades than at the time of the last inspection, they do not achieve as well as they should, when set against their abilities and starting points. In 2008, pupils performed best in biology and additional science in their GCSE examinations.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. The emphasis placed on the moral and spiritual aspects of their education is taught mainly through Islamic studies, Qur'anic recitation and assemblies. This leads to pupils' growing understanding of right and wrong and awareness of self-knowledge. Pupils are polite, respectful and speak to visitors with confidence. They generally behave well in lessons and their behaviour is satisfactory overall. Teachers provide appropriate role models for Islamic life and this has a positive impact on pupils' moral development. Pupils have a clear understanding of their Islamic identity, which is reinforced by the lunchtime congregational prayer.

Pupils show initiative within the school community when given the opportunity. Each year group has appointed prefects who fulfil their duties with enthusiasm. Pupils report that they enjoy coming to school and levels of attendance are generally satisfactory. However, their enjoyment is not enhanced by a wide enough range of extra-curricular activities or opportunities to contribute to the wider community. Pupils' future economic well-being is not sufficiently developed. Some pupils leave the school without the key skills they will need for their next steps in learning or the world of work, particularly in ICT. The citizenship programme contributes well to preparing pupils for their future roles as British citizens and assists their understanding of public institutions and services in England. Pupils learn about the major world religions in Islamic studies and the recent introduction of art lessons complements pupils' cultural development.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for the overall welfare, health and safety of the pupils is inadequate. Staff demonstrate a satisfactory standard of day-to-day care for the pupils. They encourage pupils to stay fit, healthy and safe. However, essential elements of policies relating to the safe recruitment of staff are not in place. The school has not carried out the appropriate checks prior to some staff taking up post. Policies relating to child protection do not meet current requirements. There is a designated person responsible for child protection and she has undergone the appropriate training. However, the school was unable to provide evidence that all the staff had received the appropriate child protection training. Arrangements to ensure the safety of the premises and pupils are satisfactory. The school has a suitable anti-bullying policy and pupils report that they feel safe and know who to turn to, should a problem arise. The school carries out regular fire safety checks and has an appropriate

number of staff trained in first aid. Although the school provides ramp access to its premises, it has no plan showing how it will fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. The school has a satisfactory policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on educational visits.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school does not have sufficiently rigorous staff recruitment procedures in place. Consequently, it does not ensure that all the necessary checks have been carried out prior to confirmation of staff employment, including some statutory checks by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) to confirm that staff are suitable to work with children. Appropriate checks are not always carried out to confirm identity and character references are not always requested prior to confirmation of employment. The school occasionally uses agency supply teachers, but does not make the relevant checks to ensure the safeguarding of the pupils. Checks on staff are not recorded on a single central register as required. These issues are being addressed as a matter of urgency.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is situated in a converted Victorian building. The accommodation has been adapted to provide several classrooms of various sizes, which mostly ensure effective learning. One of the classrooms is too small for the number of pupils being taught in it. There are also two ICT suites, two science laboratories and a small hall which is used for indoor physical education (PE), prayers and lunch. The outside play area is safe and provides a reasonably sized hard surface for outdoor play and PE. The number of pupils has increased since the last inspection but there are insufficient washroom facilities for the number currently on roll. Internal decoration and some of the carpeted areas around the school, particularly on the stairs, are in need of updating. The proprietor recognises the limitations of the accommodation and has plans to improve its facilities.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides parents with some useful information about the school, its ethos and organisation. Parents report they are pleased with the school; they receive regular written reports with details of their children's organisational skills, attitudes to work and the National Curriculum levels they achieve. The prospectus has been recently updated and fully meets requirements.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's procedures for handling complaints meet all the requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ("the Regulations"), with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- ensure that there are appropriate plans and schemes of work for each subject and that they are implemented effectively (paragraph 1(2))
- ensure that the curriculum policy enables pupils to acquire skills in speaking/listening/literacy/numeracy (paragraph 1(2)(c))
- provide personal, social and health education which reflects the school aims and ethos (paragraph 1(2)(f))
- provide appropriate careers' guidance for secondary age pupils (paragraph 1(2)(g))
- ensure that the curriculum provides opportunities for all pupils to learn and make progress (paragraph 1(2)(i))
- ensure that there is adequate preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life (paragraph 1(2)(j))
- ensure that teaching enables pupils 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 1(3)(a))
- ensure that teaching encourages pupils to apply intellectual, physical or creative efforts and to show interest in their work and to think and learn for themselves (paragraph 1(3)(b))
- ensure that lessons are well planned, effective teaching methods and suitable activities are used and class time is managed wisely (paragraph 1(3)(c))
- ensure that teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensure that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 1(3)(d))
- ensure that teachers demonstrate appropriate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught (paragraph 1(3)(e))
- ensure that there is a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and that information from such assessments is utilised to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g))
- ensure that the school has in place a framework by which pupil performance can be evaluated by reference to either the school's own aims, as provided to parents and/or, by national norms (paragraph 1(4)).

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

- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff (including volunteers), ensure that appropriate checks have been carried out to confirm their identity, character references and, where appropriate, qualifications and professional references and take such information into account in determining whether their appointment will be confirmed (paragraph 4(2)(a))
- ensure that an enhanced criminal record check is made by the proprietor in respect of any member of staff appointed to a position at the school and ensure that the enhanced criminal record certificate which is the subject of the application is obtained before or as soon as is practicable after his/her appointment (paragraph 4(2)(b))
- ensure that members of staff or volunteers do not carry out work, or intend to carry out work, at the school in contravention of any direction made under section 142 of the 2002 Act(a) or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction (paragraph 4(2)(d))
- ensure that no person supplied by an employment business to the school begins work at the school unless the proprietor has received written confirmation that checks have been carried out in respect of the person's identity, right to work in the UK, qualifications, enhanced CRB clearance or where appropriate, confirmation that he/she does not contravene section 142 of the 2002 Act(a) (paragraph 4A (1-8))
- ensure that in relation to each member of staff in post on or after 1 August 2007, the register shows checks made (and certificates obtained where relevant) of: his/her identity; whether an enhanced CRB was obtained; the right to work in the UK, and where relevant for those who have lived outside the UK, suitability to work in a school; ensure the register includes the date on which each such check was completed or the certificate obtained (paragraph 4C(2 and 3))
- ensure that in relation to supply staff, the register shows whether written notification has been received from the employment business that the checks referred to in 4C(2) were carried out, together with the dates when these were completed or certificates obtained (paragraph 4C(4 and 5)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide all classrooms of appropriate size to allow effective teaching (paragraph 5(j))
- provide sufficient washrooms for pupils, including facilities for pupils with special needs, which take account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k))
- improve classrooms and other parts of the school so that they are maintained in a tidy, clean and hygienic state (paragraph 5(n))
- provide a satisfactory standard and adequate maintenance of decoration (paragraph 5(q))
- provide appropriate flooring that is in good condition (paragraph 5(s)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

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

Name of school	Al Huda Girls School		
DCSF number	330/6088		
Unique reference number	103595		
Type of school	Muslim Girls Day School		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1992		
Age range of pupils	11–16		
Gender of pupils	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 129	Total: 129
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	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 West Midlands B8 1RD		
Telephone number	0121 3288 999		
Fax number	0121 3272 974		
Email address	al_huda@hotmail.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Y Jawaid		
Proprietor	Mr A Jawaid		
Reporting inspector	Marian Harker HMI		
Dates of inspection	13–14 May 2009		