

Al-Islah Schools

Independent school inspection report

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Unique Reference Number (URN)	119856
Inspection number	353896
Inspection dates	5-6 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Mohammad Ismail

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², 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-Islah School is an independent Muslim day school that is registered to provide full-time education to 160 girls aged 11 to 16 years. There are currently 121 students on roll. Admission into Year 7 is by examination. The school opened in 1999 and is located in the south-east area of Blackburn. The school is accommodated in a local mosque. All students are British Muslims of South Asian heritage. At present there are no students with a statement of special educational needs. The school aims to:

'nurture the intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual growth of Muslim children with the hope of producing confident, competent individuals who can go out into British society and contribute positively without compromising their beliefs and practices.'

The school was last inspected in September 2007.

Evaluation of the school

Al-Islah meets most of its aims by providing a satisfactory quality of education and, as a result, students make satisfactory progress. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding as is their behaviour. The school meets the requirements for safeguarding and its provision for the students' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. The school meets most of the regulations required for its continued registration as an independent school. The school has made satisfactory improvement since its last inspection.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is based on a policy which sets out clear objectives for learning all subjects in the National Curriculum except for music, which is not taught. Arabic, Urdu, Islamic studies and moral education are also part of school's curriculum. The curriculum is supported by well planned schemes of work. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) enables students to

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

develop effectively their computer skills. The school has no science laboratory but has made appropriate alternative arrangements to meet the learning needs of its students. A suitable amount of time is allocated to nearly all subject areas of the curriculum. However, the time allocated to physical education is limited to only one session per week. The curriculum offers a broad range of learning experiences for students at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. This effectively permits all students to study for GCSE examinations in a wide range of subjects. The curriculum takes into account the needs of all students including those in need of extra help. For students with additional learning needs there are individual educational plans in place which appropriately address each student's learning needs. In addition, there is a policy for gifted and talented students which in practice, helps to boost their confidence through a system of rewards and the provision of additional help. Class time and resources are appropriately used to support learning and there are interactive whiteboards in place as an additional tool for learning. The school uses a local sports facility for its physical education provision.

Personal, social and health education is offered in accordance with the school's ethos through assemblies, citizenship and in a moral education programme to ensure that students are well informed about their responsibilities, and social and cultural issues. The school provides careers guidance in partnership with the Connexions service. The school, for the first time this year, has successfully arranged work placements for Year 10 and Year 11 students. They are also involved in a study skills programme that includes, for example, work-related learning and the development of ICT skills in learning how to search and apply for jobs. Most students from last year have successfully progressed into further education. The school offers some extra-curricular activities to enhance students' learning. For example, students organise plays to learn more about important events in the Islamic calendar. They also took part in a mathematics challenge programme. However, as the building is used by the mosque immediately after the end of lessons in the afternoon, this restricts students' opportunities for after-school activities to discover new interests, talents and to develop their interpersonal skills. There are some educational visits to museums and other places to help students in their learning; for example, there was a recent visit to a local history museum and a university.

Last September the school introduced a new progress tracking system which has impacted positively on the quality of teaching and assessment, and on students' progress. The quality of teaching and assessment is now good. Whilst some students are making good progress already, the majority are making satisfactory and improving progress. Teachers plan their lessons carefully to meet each student's needs and abilities. They take into consideration the prior attainment of their students in planning their lessons. Teachers use a range of different methods to make their lessons enjoyable and to engage their students more effectively in learning. Class time is well managed. During the lessons students are appropriately involved in group activities and have opportunities to develop their independent learning skills. Teachers successfully link different subject areas of the curriculum in order to extend students' experiences in learning. Relationships between teachers

and students are very good. Teachers are caring, courteous and good role models for their students. Students demonstrate excellent behaviour and show respect to their teachers and to fellow students. All lessons start and finish with an Islamic prayer which strongly reflects on the students' behaviour in the lesson.

Students show interest in their lessons and they take an active part in group discussions. For example, in a good citizenship lesson, students were learning about the media and both its negative and positive influence. Later, they shared their findings with each other and came to understand the importance of factual accuracy in reporting. In another lesson students learnt about the negative effects of taking illegal drugs which can result in crime and health and social problems. In both examples students made good progress in their learning and social development. However, in a few instances where lessons are satisfactory, teachers do not make learning as interesting or as enjoyable as it could be.

There is a marking and assessment policy in place which is effectively implemented. Students' work is marked regularly although on occasions, teachers do not include comments to help the students understand how to improve. The school has recently introduced a progress tracking system which provides information which teachers use to inform their planning. The school's GCSEs results have gradually improved each year since the last inspection and last year's results were in line with expectations. This year, the school expects even better results than last year.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's ethos helps students to successfully acquire a set of values, principles and beliefs which shape their behaviour. Students' attitudes to learning are outstanding. They express a love for their school. They attend very regularly and actively take part in their lessons and other activities. The school's promotion of good behaviour, including through an extensive programme of assemblies, results in students showing considerable politeness to adults and students alike. They warmly greet each other and visitors, and assert their views in the right manner. They say they feel safe. The school assemblies and moral education programme helps students to distinguish between right and wrong. The school through its core subjects, ICT and work placements prepare students very well for their future life. All students vote to elect representatives for the school council. This process is well used by students to understand the concept of democracy. Council members said that they take active part in the planning for school's future development. They are encouraged to raise funds for charity and help others. They are given good opportunities to be monitors and prefects.

Students learn about British institutions in English, history and citizenship lessons. The school receives regularly visits from representatives of local civic organisations. Students learn about other faiths and visit different places of worship; they talked to the inspectors about their recent visits to a Sikh temple and a local church. This

effectively enhances the school's provision for community cohesion. The school has established good working relationships with other schools in the local area.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for safeguarding the students' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. There is a healthy food policy through which students are encouraged to eat healthy food. All the required policies are in place, including a safeguarding and child protection policy and all staff are trained in safeguarding at the required level. The school's designated child protection officer is trained and is updating the training this month. The school's risk assessment related to the premises is not always effectively implemented; for example, some required actions identified in the assessment have not been addressed. The school has a first aid policy and a first aid officer trained at the required level. The school has a fire risk assessment which has been approved by the local fire service. All fire-fighting equipment is regularly tested. The school has submitted a three years plan to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. The school maintains an attendance and admission register which meet the regulations.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has undertaken all the required measures to ensure that its staff, the proprietor and volunteers are suitable to work with children. There is a robust recruitment policy in place that is appropriately implemented. The school maintains a single central register which meets the regulations.

School's premises and accommodation

The school accommodation is in a mosque and students learn effectively and safely. There are sufficient classrooms, an ICT suite, a medical room, a small library and toilets with an area for ablutions. However, the toilets and ablution area is not adequately maintained at the required level and decoration in some rooms is poor. As a result, the school's accommodation does not meet all the regulations.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school meets all requirements by providing the necessary information to parents, carers and others through an up-to-date prospectus. The school has an effectively implemented policy of annually reporting to parents, carers and others.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a complaints policy and set of procedures, which meet all of the regulations. The school has taken steps to ensure that parents and carers are aware of these.

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.³

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

- prepare and implement a risk assessment on the school premises which has regard to the DCSF guidance Health and Safety: responsibilities and powers (DCSF 0803/2001 (paragraph 3(4)).

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

- provide sufficient washrooms for staff and pupils, including facilities for pupils with special needs, which take account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k))
- provide a satisfactory standard and adequate maintenance of decoration (paragraph 5 (q)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- extend the provision for physical education to at least two sessions per week
- provide, after the end of the school day, more extra-curricular activities to help students discover new interests and talents and to develop their interpersonal skills.

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm

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-Islah Schools		
DCSF number	889/6004		
Unique reference number (URN)	119856		
Type of school	Muslim day school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 1999		
Age range of pupils	11-16		
Gender of pupils	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 121	Total: 121
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,200		
Address of school	108 Audley Range Blackburn Lancashire BB1 1TF		
Telephone number	01254 261573		
Fax number	01254 671604		
Email address	Head@alislah.org.uk , admin@alislah.org.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs A Ahmed		
Proprietor	Islamic Educational Society		
Reporting inspector	Mohammad Ismail		
Dates of inspection	5-6 May 2010		