

Rochdale Girls School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Katharine Halifax

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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 purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Rochdale Girls School provides for day students and is situated on the outskirts of the town. It provides an Islamic and academic education for girls aged between 11 and 16 years of age. Currently there are 107 students on roll. No students have a statement of special educational needs and none are learning English as an additional language. The school aims to provide education according to the National Curriculum in a safe and protective Muslim environment while developing the potential of each student and fostering their knowledge and understanding of Islam. The school opened in 2003 and was last inspected in December 2007.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality of education. It meets all of the regulations for registration as an independent school and fulfils its stated aims well. The school successfully promotes the girls' Islamic education, at the same time as developing a respect and understanding for the views of others. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection. The few regulations not met at the time of the last inspection relating to checks on staff and the provision for students who are unwell are now met. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. Students enjoy their time in school and as a result of good teaching and a good curriculum, they make good progress.

Quality of education

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and is now good. A fitting balance has been achieved between the secular and religious curricula with the Islamic curriculum being carefully interwoven with the teaching of National Curriculum subjects throughout the school week. For example, views about evolution are taught in science alongside Islamic teaching, so students are well-informed about differing viewpoints on creation. The guidance in the curriculum policy and accompanying schemes of work are used effectively by teachers when planning

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

lessons. A good range of experiences is provided in most areas of learning, although the provision for physical education (PE) is limited by the nature of the accommodation. A small yard is utilised, but its usage is governed by the weather. Managers have identified the need to explore indoor and off-site alternatives to improve the provision for PE. While a computer suite has been created, the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) is irregular. ICT is not used sufficiently to support learning in other subjects and is not accredited through any nationally recognised qualifications. Students expressed the concern that this may adversely influence their further education. Nonetheless, teachers are imaginative in developing other skills in technology. For example, while studying materials in science, a detailed investigation is made into notable British structures, including the London Eye and the Millennium Bridge.

The Islamic curriculum provides many opportunities for students to develop an in-depth understanding of the *Deen* (Islamic way of life). Instruction in Islamic values, teachings and practices ensures students achieve a good understanding of the expectations on them as Muslims. Specific areas of study include *Hadith* (teachings of the Prophet), the virtues of *Dua* (supplication) and the spiritual dimensions of Islam. A significant number of students are in the process of memorising sections of the Qur'an through the demanding *Tahfeez ul Qur'an* programme. Students say they enjoy Islamic studies and finding out more about their faith and using their knowledge to explain, for example, how Islamic law teaches them to understand and abide by the laws of the United Kingdom.

The provision for students' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. A wide range of opportunities in the Islamic and secular curricula provide useful occasions for constructive discussions. Good links have been established with the Connexions service and a number of employers. Students appreciate the opportunity to undertake a two-week work placement in Year 10 and explained how the high-quality placements in commerce, education and medical centres have confirmed their career aspirations.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects motivates students and ensures learning is meaningful. Lessons have a good structure, are conducted with a sense of urgency, and have a range of activities to maintain students' interest. Most lessons include discussions which make students think and reason, for example, when comparing the attitude of three poets on the subject of death. Skilful questioning is used to check on students' understanding and to reshape activities when necessary. Assessments are accurate. In addition to individual subject records, the whole-school tracking of students' attainment and progress each year gives the headteacher a good overview of progress and helps to ensure there are no gaps in the students' learning.

Students' progress is good. They achieve well in public examinations. Since the last inspection, all students have left the school with a high number of GCSEs passes, with A* to C grades. Furthermore, all have moved on to further education or work-

based learning. Through excellent relationships between staff and students and good teacher role models, students' aspirations are extremely high with previous students now at university studying medicine, law and dentistry.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students

The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The curriculum and daily routines encourage students to grow in confidence and develop self-knowledge. Students are justifiably proud of their efforts and were positively animated as they discussed their work and school activities with the inspector. Through the Islamic teaching and PSHE, students are well prepared to become responsible citizens. They have a good understanding of public institutions and services. All adults provide outstanding role models and promote tolerance and harmony between different cultures exceptionally well.

Students are extremely proud of their Islamic identity and their participation in daily prayers contributes significantly to their spiritual development. The religious education syllabus provides well for students' understanding of the major world faiths, giving them an insight into the beliefs and traditions of those who hold differing views. However, students' knowledge and understanding of western culture, particularly in the creative arts, is more limited. Adults have been successful in engendering a strong sense of community in the school and wider area. Students are generous fund raisers, making considerable monetary contributions to, for example, the flood victims in Pakistan and the people of Gaza. Students' behaviour is good overall. The behaviour of the majority is impeccable. However, a handful of students are sometimes over-exuberant. There have been a few recent exclusions of students who have caused some disruption to lessons. Checks are made on students' attendance, and appropriate action is taken if students are late. As a result, students' attendance is above average and lessons begin promptly. Students are well prepared for the transition to further education and the world of work.

Welfare, health and safety of students

The provision for safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. All the required policies are in place, and are understood and implemented by the staff. Checks on fire equipment and electrical appliances are up-to-date. A recent visit by the fire officer identified a number of areas for improvement. All have been addressed fully or actioned. All adults have received recent training in child protection procedures. Suitable arrangements are in place to administer first aid. Day-to-day pastoral care is good, but students do not have sufficient opportunities to take part in exercise and physical activities to enable them to pursue a healthy lifestyle more fully, a feature commented on by both students and their parents and carers. Overall, students say they feel safe in school and staff listen to any concerns. Topics in science and PSHE have raised students' awareness of substance misuse and of the need to be alert to the dangers of using the Internet. A suitable plan has

been compiled to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The procedures to recruit new staff are rigorous and consistently implemented. All regulations are met relating to the checks on staff and the proprietor. The school maintains a single central register of the checks undertaken as required.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The accommodation is suitable for learning in safety. The conversion of some office space into a medical room for students who are unwell means all the regulations are now met. Students appreciate the presence of new carpets and the improved internal decoration saying they have made the building warmer and more welcoming. While classrooms are cramped, the accommodation is adequate and is enhanced by a laboratory which contributes to students' achievement in practical science.

Provision of information

The school provides all the required information for parents, carers and for prospective parents. Information is clearly presented, accurate and up to date. Reports to parents continue to be informative about progress and now contain 'targets' in each subject area to accelerate students' progress.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

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

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

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

- provide more opportunities for students to use ICT in different subjects and to have their work suitably accredited

- provide more opportunities for students to undertake exercise and to be physically active.

Inspection judgements

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 students		√		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs		√		
How well students make progress in their learning		√		

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		√		
The behaviour of students		√		

Welfare, health and safety of students

The overall welfare, health and safety of students			√	
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Secondary Girls		
Date school opened	September 2003		
Age range of students	11-16		
Gender of students	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 0	Girls: 107	Total: 107
Number of students with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day students)	£1,200 Key Stage 3 £1,500 Key Stage 4 36 Taylor Street		
Address of school	Rochdale OL12 0HX		
Telephone number	01706 646642		
Email address	Rgs.araz@yahoo.com		
Headteacher	Mr A Razzak		
Proprietor	Mr H Ikram		