

Shifa School

Independent school light-touch inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Lynne Kauffman

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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}

This was a light touch educational inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

The Shifa School is an independent day school for girls aged from 11 to 16. The school has an Islamic ethos and was founded by the Ash-Shifa Trust in 2002. It gained registration in 2005 and had its first inspection in 2007. At present the school is in the process of completing its move to a new location; final decoration continues each evening once students have left the building. The school provides secondary education based on National Curriculum subjects interwoven with Islamic studies and with a strong focus on personal, social and health education (PSHE). Student numbers have increased to 32 on roll. All students are from the local Pakistani community. The school provides for a complete range of learning needs and all students are bilingual. One student has a statement of special educational needs. Ash-Shifa aims to 'provide its students with a complete programme of education along with basic growth of personality using our prophet Muhammad as their example. We also aim to assist them in developing skills and qualities according to the Qur'an and Sunnah for life in a multicultural society.'

Evaluation of the school

During a time of significant change in the school's accommodation and management, Shifa School has maintained its good quality of education and welfare. Students enjoy school life and achieve well. Their attitudes, behaviour and manners are outstanding. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Teaching is good and managers ensure that teaching and learning are rigorously reviewed. The curriculum provides a good range of subjects. The school meets all but one of the regulations and has successfully acted on the suggested improvements from the previous report. The outdoor play space has improved in size and accessibility since the move to the new site but it is uninviting to use and the

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

surface in some weather conditions is potentially slippery. Safeguarding procedures are in line with requirements and are effectively implemented.

Quality of education.

The overall quality of education is good. Parents' comments include: 'My daughter has never been so happy at school and I can see she is challenged to do her best.' The curriculum is good, having appropriate breadth and balance. Shifa School's limited accommodation for physical education and science has encouraged the school to develop strong links with several local secondary schools, thus enhancing the curriculum and strengthening the school's local community involvement.

Staff and managers have improved many aspects of the curriculum such as information and communication technology (ICT), work experience and work-related learning. The vocational links are of high quality and have enabled students to explore many different roles and professions, raising the aspirations of students and many parents. Programmes for teaching Islamic studies follow similar planning principles to the National Curriculum. Islamic studies include the *Hadith* (the words of the prophet Muhammad), *Sirah* (a chronological study of the prophet Muhammad's life) and the prayer activities of the day, including *Tajweed* (learning to recite the Qur'an correctly). The students' work is planned logically and good provision is made for those with special educational needs. The lack of teaching of a foreign language, an issue in the previous inspection, has been addressed as Arabic is now taught as a modern foreign language. Students are able to take GCSEs at the end of Key Stage 4 in a range of subjects; however there is no alternative qualification for students who may not be ideally suited to a GCSE programme.

The provision for English, mathematics and religious studies is good. English is the strongest of the core areas because of its cross-curricular involvement in students' learning. It ensures that students learn to apply literacy skills across all subjects. The very successful programme for PSHE reflects the Islamic ethos of the school and ensures that areas such as health education, citizenship and work-related learning have a high profile. They are much enjoyed by the students. Parents can see that this aspect of the curriculum has a good impact on raising self-esteem and confidence which impacts on students' progress. The school makes high quality provision for the teaching of Urdu; students often take their GCSE examination early and move on to A-level Urdu in Year 11. The teaching and use of ICT, although limited in its impact on learning in other subjects, has improved since the school's previous inspection because more hardware has been installed, enabling better access for all. Students are keen to begin after-school clubs but at present any extra-curricular work is restricted to 'one-off' activities such as the school's production of 'Narnia'.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall and has a positive impact on students' progress. Students achieve well against their targets and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress as the school

follows the guidelines laid down in their individual education plans and statements. All students gain skills, knowledge and understanding at a good rate. The quality of teaching is good with examples of outstanding teaching which provides the school with exemplary practice to share. The senior leaders have a rigorous programme of observations which is having a good impact on raising standards and achievement. The most successful lessons are well planned with clear learning targets and are driven by the teachers' passion for their subject. Students are closely engaged in learning through group and paired discussion, feedback to the class and short, sharp activities that maintain a good pace of learning. In less successful lessons, learning slows because teachers talk for too long and use a limited range of teaching styles which leads to a drop in pace and in students' interest. Behaviour is outstanding; this impacts on both teaching and learning. The school's assessment of progress is demanding, regular and shared with parents, although there is some variability in the quality and impact of marking.

Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to lessons. They have advance warning of lesson plans enabling them to plan a good match of modified activities and support to the needs of their targeted students. Parents are very pleased by the level of support their daughters receive. They are keen to explain the very positive impact of the school on their daughters' learning and on their self-assured attitude to life.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students enjoy school life. They are keen to explain how much they gain from school, in particular the effective preparation the next stage of their education. Students feel independent and able to make guided decisions. Their behaviour is outstanding and they develop strong friendships across the age range, making for a harmonious school atmosphere. Students are friendly, courteous and offer a warm welcome to visitors to the school. In discussion, the girls are mature and reflective in sharing their views. Attendance is excellent.

Islamic studies reinforce the teachings of the Qur'an, helping students deepen their knowledge and understanding of their faith. The programme also reflects on religions from other cultures. The girls are able to explain how better understanding encourages tolerance in a multi-faith society.

Students learn about British institutions through PSHE and their visits to places of interest such as Oxford. They contribute to school life by sharing their skills when planning for school events. The latest developments under discussion are a vegetable plot and a chicken-run in the school grounds. Students' fundraising helps them to develop good skills of teamwork, leadership and an understanding of economic well-being for their future lives. Communication and presentational skills are well developed overall, but in some cases their development is held back by the lack of laptop computers.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Safeguarding is good. All necessary procedures are in place. The school has carried out the appropriate checks on all staff to ensure they are fit to work with young people. Staff show sensitive care and concern for all students. Well-planned training ensures that child protection and specific health and safety issues are kept under scrutiny and an effective series of risk assessments covers all school activities. Policies are detailed, have a date of acceptance and specify a date for review. Any accidents are recorded. First aid provision is good with at least three staff holding the necessary qualification. The fire service provides the school with regular reviews of fire safety on the premises.

Welfare provision for all students is good. The quality of care is evident in the high level of commitment for promoting students' health and safety. Students explain that they feel safe in school and all can speak about how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and all express confidence in their community involvement. They are clear about having a member of staff they can talk to at times of concern. The students' outstanding behaviour is promoted effectively by the school and anti-bullying strategies are part of the annual induction for all students. The school has a zero tolerance of bullying and racism; any issues are dealt with very swiftly and involve parents.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- ensure there are appropriate arrangements for providing outside space for students to play safely (paragraph 23(s)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made

- closely monitor the consistency of marking and its impact on students' achievement
- consider providing an alternative qualification for students who may not be ideally suited to a GCSE programme
- extend the range of extra-curricular activities.

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	Muslim secondary school		
Date school opened	2002		
Age range of students	11-16 years		
Gender of students	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 0	Girls: 32	Total: 32
Number on roll (part-time students)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of students with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees	£1,650		
Address of school	Lady Aisha House St Leonard's Building Dukes Street, off Middleton Road Banbury OX164AH		
Telephone number	01295 266062		
Email address	h.abbasi@shifa.org.uk		
Headteacher	Ms H Abbasi		
Proprietor	Ash-Shifa Trust		