

Al-Ashraf Secondary School for Girls

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	916/6073
Unique Reference Number (URN)	115810
Inspection number	364239
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 090070

© Crown copyright 2011



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

Al-Ashraf Secondary School for Girls provides full-time education for 63 girls aged from 11 to 16 years. It was set up in 1994 to serve the local Muslim population of mainly Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritages in Gloucester and further afield. The vast majority of students are at advanced stages of learning English as an additional language or are bilingual. There are no students with statements of special educational needs. The school's stated mission is to strive for academic and moral excellence through the teachings of Islam. It aims to ensure that students 'enjoy their life at school, and develop a love for learning and a strong desire to continue their education as a lifetime experience; and acquire a moral attitude to life through *taqwa* (conscious awareness) and practice of Divine Guidance in all their affairs and transactions'. The school was last inspected in January 2007.

Evaluation of the school

Al-Ashraf Secondary School for Girls continues to provide a good quality of education and meets its aims. Students make at least good progress in their personal development and learning as the school provides a good curriculum and good teaching with outstanding features. Their high levels of self-confidence, excellent capacity for reflection and outstanding behaviour and attitudes to work reflect their outstanding spiritual and moral development. Safeguarding procedures are robust and provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. The school has remedied all the deficiencies highlighted in the last inspection and now meets all of the regulations for independent schools. It is led by a team of senior leaders and teachers who are focused on continuously raising standards despite some recent turbulence in staffing.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good and serves students well. Its most notable strength is that it is well balanced, with a core of National Curriculum subjects and a comprehensive programme of Islamic studies that constitutes one third of the whole curriculum. Studies in Qur'anic recitation, *tafseer* (explanation of Qur'anic verses), *hadith*

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

(sayings or actions of Prophet Muhammad), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), Islamic beliefs and early Islamic history give students an excellent foundation for their spiritual and moral development and prepare them very well for their future lives as young Muslim women. The breadth of the Key Stage 4 curriculum enables each student to take GCSEs in at least nine subjects. It has widened since the last inspection with the introduction of art and citizenship throughout the school. However, some students do not feel sufficiently well prepared for their future and would justifiably welcome the provision of optional subjects at GCSE level, including history, business studies and graphic design. The school has responded well and has been exploring the possibilities for the most effective way of meeting this need. Provision for religious education, information and communication technology (ICT) and Urdu is outstanding and students have performed exceptionally well in their GCSE examinations in these subjects in the last two years. Stronger links made since the last inspection between the Islamic subjects and religious education prepare students extremely well for their GCSE examination and make their overall religious education more enjoyable and coherent. The use of ICT is now well developed across the curriculum, which represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. Provision for English, mathematics, science, geography and citizenship is good and students achieve highly in these subjects. The school has made significant improvements in developing students' speaking and writing skills in all subjects. However, good reading and comprehension skills are not promoted consistently. Successful partnership with a local arts college results in excellent provision for art. Provision for physical education is only satisfactory, owing to the difficulty of retaining specialist teachers, and the school has rightly identified this as a priority for improvement.

The school makes very effective use of the citizenship programme provided by the national Islam and Citizenship Education project in discrete lessons and in Islamic subjects. Personal, social and health education is strong and reflects the Islamic ethos of the school. Careers guidance has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Curriculum enrichment remains satisfactory and a high proportion of students and parents draw attention to the limited provision of educational visits.

Teaching and assessment are good with outstanding features. Individual students' progress is tracked effectively and this information is used to further challenge students so that they can achieve their potential, resulting in an increasing proportion of high grades in GCSE examinations in the last three years. However, the targets set for students are not always sufficiently challenging and the written comments made by teachers when reporting on students' progress do not always clearly indicate what students need to do next to improve. Students are not involved in the assessment of their learning to the same level in all subjects and so they do not always progress at the fastest rate of which they are capable.

Throughout the school, the teachers establish excellent working relationships and use a wide range of methods that matches students' varying learning styles and sustains their interest. Good teaching is underpinned by teachers' thorough subject knowledge and an understanding of individual students' aptitudes and prior

attainment. These insights result in tasks that stretch students so that they make good progress. Teachers check frequently on students' learning during the lessons and give tailor-made support to those who need it. Where the teaching is outstanding, expert subject knowledge is coupled with a thorough understanding of examination criteria. Here, lessons are conducted at a fast pace that helps to sustain a consistently high level of challenge while providing opportunities for reflection. Students make stimulating connections between apparently unconnected ideas and phenomena and their own experiences, and develop higher-order thinking skills; consequently they make outstanding progress.

As a result of a good curriculum and good teaching, students make at least good progress, and some make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points in both National Curriculum and Islamic subjects. The personal and academic skills which they develop prepare them well for their future. Nearly all students move on to a college or sixth form.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

While the provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, their spiritual and moral development is outstanding, their social development is good and their cultural development is satisfactory. Students and parents appreciate the well-ordered, caring family atmosphere. Students enjoy school and their attendance is very good. Their outstanding behaviour, excellent attitudes to work and respect for others and for their environment reflect the school's strong emphasis on moral education. Students form very positive relationships and instances of bullying are very rare. They are hard-working, well mannered, considerate and friendly. Their spiritual development is nurtured through the Islamic subjects, assemblies and congregational prayers, as well as numerous opportunities for reflection in lessons. Consequently, students display high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence and they participate highly in lessons, contributing well-thought-out and creative responses. They develop a strong sense of identity as young British Muslim girls and a strong sense of community.

Students' awareness of their rights, duties and responsibilities as citizens has considerably improved since the last inspection through the introduction of the national Islam and Citizenship Education programme that contextualises Islam in Britain. Students experience democracy and contribute to school life through the school council. Council members have classroom responsibilities, engage in peer mediation and show prospective parents around on open days. The student council has taken the initiative to help Year 11 students prepare for entry into a sixth form by organising workshops and mock interviews. Students also enjoy participating in public end-of-year presentations, playing in local netball tournaments and helping to run a summer fete. They raise funds for a number of national and international charities. However, their contributions to the local and wider communities are limited and they are ready to shoulder higher-level responsibilities. Students' cultural awareness has greatly improved through the excellent provision for art that

encourages all to think creatively, and some to discover new talents. Students learn about world religions through religious education and Islamic subjects in a way that promotes tolerance and social harmony. However, their cultural development is not sufficiently enhanced by educational visits and projects.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. All the required policies and procedures aimed at minimising risks in all circumstances and promoting students' well-being are up to date and are implemented consistently. Safeguarding arrangements are robust. The school has remedied previous shortcomings and now obtains appropriate references on volunteers and staff. Staff receive the appropriate level of training in child protection; their knowledge of what to do should a concern arise is supported effectively by a detailed and clear safeguarding policy. Any students at risk are identified and supported well in partnerships with parents and outside agencies. The school is particularly successful in promoting the highest standards of behaviour and instances of bullying are very rare. Several staff have received first aid training and Year 11 students are trained in first aid before they leave the school. The school maintains a satisfactory level of fire safety and emergency evacuation drills are recorded in detail. Registers are maintained carefully.

Students are encouraged to eat healthily and learn about healthy lifestyles through the curriculum and educational visits. However, some justifiably feel that they have insufficient opportunities for vigorous exercise.

The school fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has remedied the deficiencies in recruitment procedures highlighted in the last inspection report. All of the required checks on staff and proprietors are carried out to verify their suitability to work with children before confirmation of their employment. These checks are recorded in a single central register in the appropriate manner.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises provide spacious teaching accommodation for the numbers on roll and meet all the regulations to enable safe and effective teaching and learning. A rolling maintenance programme ensures that needed repairs are carried out promptly, that the premises are maintained satisfactorily and that they are kept in good decorative order. Since the last inspection, a suitable art room and a small library have been

created to extend the existing specialist accommodation. There is adequate space for indoor and outdoor physical exercise.

Provision of information

Parents and others are well informed of the school's procedures, daily routines and work through a wide range of accurate and up-to-date information that includes a website, an information pack and newsletters. Parents express a high level of satisfaction with the school.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

There are suitable procedures for handling complaints fairly and promptly.

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:

- improve the provision for students' physical and cultural development
- further widen the curriculum to provide students with optional subjects and meet their educational needs more closely
- help students progress at an even faster rate by involving them consistently in the assessment of their own learning and setting targets that are always sufficiently challenging
- widen the range of responsibilities shouldered by students, especially at the level of the wider community.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

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		✓		
--	--	---	--	--

School details

School status	Independent
Type of school	Muslim day secondary school
Date school opened	1994
Age range of pupils	11–16 years
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	63
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils who are looked after	0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,000–£1,300
Address of school	Sinope Street Gloucester Gloucestershire GL1 4AW
Telephone number	01452 300465
Email address	iacademy@yahoo.co.uk
Headteacher	Mr Abdullah Patel
Proprietor	Al Madani Trust