

Iqra Academy

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	David Rzeznik HMI

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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

Iqra Academy is a small, independent girls' secondary school in Peterborough. It is registered for 205 students aged 11 to 16 years. Currently there are 47 girls on roll aged between 11 and 14 years. All are Muslims and are mainly of Pakistani heritage. The school admits non-Muslims. No student has a statement of special educational needs and none is at the early stage of acquiring English. Before admission the vast majority of girls attended local schools in the city. The school's work is overseen by a charitable trust that consists of a board of directors and a board of governors. However, the proprietor is an individual, who is also a director. Most of the teachers work part time. The headteacher works full time. The school opened in September 2009. This is its first inspection since it was registered in 2009. The school aims to provide an environment where students can excel academically within an Islamic environment.

Evaluation of the school

Iqra Academy provides a satisfactory quality of education. The curriculum and teaching in secular and Islamic subjects are satisfactory. Provision and outcomes in Qur'anic studies are good. Girls' spiritual and cultural development is being developed effectively. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory and girls say that they feel safe and secure. Parents and carers hold the school in high regard. The school meets most but not all of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. The Qur'anic studies curriculum is good, and the Islamic and secular parts are satisfactory. Around 70% of curriculum time is devoted to teaching National Curriculum subjects, and the rest to Islamic education which includes Islamic history, Islamic studies, Qur'anic studies and Arabic. All secular and Islamic subjects are taught in English. A written curriculum policy exists and it is supported by appropriate schemes of work for all of the subjects taught.

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

Islamic education provides girls with plenty of opportunities to learn various languages, particularly Arabic but also Urdu, as well as the religious teachings of their faith. Arabic is taught for an hour a week and an appropriate emphasis is placed on developing listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The subject makes an important contribution to girls' understanding of Qur'anic text. The Qur'anic curriculum is stimulating and enjoyed by students of all abilities. Provision ensures they make good gains in Qur'anic translation, recitation and interpretation.

Islamic subject matter is appropriate for the girls' age and stage of development. It has meaning and relevance because learning activities are related to the girls' lives in the United Kingdom. This strengthens their religious understanding and also their knowledge of British society. Islamic learning is integrated with secular learning. Staff make connections across subjects, such as personal, social and health education, to encourage the girls to think about the consequences of their actions and deeds.

All areas of learning are covered within the secular provision, and schemes of work follow national guidelines. No girls are currently taking GCSE courses as they are not old enough. The school will offer courses next academic year which lead to recognised qualifications, including GCSE. Links have been established with the local Connexions service which ensures appropriate careers guidance is provided. A suitable range of visits enrich the curriculum. Extra-curricular activities are currently provided after school on two nights a week. Girls say they have benefited from booster classes in mathematics and look forward to art classes. They are disappointed that no residential opportunities are provided.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory in both Islamic studies and secular subjects. Provision enables girls to make at least satisfactory progress academically. There are pockets of good teaching, particularly in Qur'anic studies, but the quality of teaching is inconsistent. Where teaching is effective, work is well matched to girls' differing capabilities and learning moves on at a good pace. The work is interesting and good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to promote research and encourage the girls to find things out for themselves. Where teaching is less effective, it is mainly because teachers do not have a good enough understanding of the girls' aptitudes or needs. Consequently, work is insufficiently challenging and assessment information is not used well enough to ensure work is properly matched to individuals' capabilities.

A range of assessment methods is used to determine girls' attainment on entry and to track their progress through units of work. Staff are starting to use national criteria to determine what National Curriculum levels individuals' are working at in Islamic and secular subjects. Not all staff are familiar with these criteria which means some are not making secure judgements about the standards achieved. The school recognises that the moderation of attainment and progress judgements are not robust enough. Marking is regular but inconsistent. Work scrutiny reveals that girls' spelling, handwriting, punctuation and presentation skills are underdeveloped. Staff lack good quality guidance on how to teach these basic skills. To bring about further improvement the school has placed a greater emphasis on developing literacy skills

across the curriculum. Staff training has begun on how to teach basic skills more effectively. However, the impact of initiatives is yet to be established. Marking is not rectifying weaknesses in English quickly enough. When errors are pointed out, girls do not always take appropriate action to bring about improvement. Classroom resources are satisfactory overall. There are sufficient textbooks, equipment and computers to facilitate learning but library and Arabic resources are quite limited.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for girls' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Girls are happy and enjoy school life because they like learning in an Islamic environment, and being in a small school, where they know each other very well. They have formed excellent relationships with staff and each other. They have very positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour is good. The ethos and behaviour management practices encourage girls to know right from wrong. Attendance is good and so is punctuality. Spiritual development in Islam is strong. Islamic studies and learning about other faiths means girls examine the nature of Islam and its beliefs and practices, as well as those of other religions. The impact is very positive. Girls are tolerant and respectful of cultural diversity and have great respect for their own and other faiths. They are making a positive contribution to the school and wider community by raising funds for good causes and the school. The school council is active in improving school facilities and planning activities for others to enjoy. An important strength is the willingness of students to participate in inter-faith initiatives to promote Islam and to learn about lifestyles different from their own. Such activity widens girls' social circles and further develops the necessary social and personal skills required for living and working in a global world.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Child protection procedures are satisfactory and all staff have been suitably trained to fulfil their child protection responsibilities. Behaviour and anti-bullying policies are of good quality and are effectively implemented. Girls say that they are free from harassment. Parents and carers report that on the rare occasions when unacceptable behaviour occurs it is dealt with effectively. Adequate risk assessments are carried out for the premises and visits off-site. The adult to student ratio is high and this means girls are well supervised at all times. A sufficient number of trained first-aiders deal effectively with any incidents and accidents, and these are appropriately recorded. However, the first aid policy it is not comprehensive enough. For example, it does not provide sufficient guidance on how medical conditions are identified and treated or on what levels of injury are treated on site or in hospital. Attendance registers are satisfactorily completed but there is no admission register. The school has produced a three-year plan outlining how it will improve accessibility and the curriculum in line with Disability Discrimination Act legislation. The school promotes a healthy lifestyle, for example, teaching girls about the danger of drugs and their impact on the body. However, they do not always make healthy choices, for example, many choose to eat crisps at break time.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has carried out all of the required employment and vetting checks on staff and volunteers to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. All of the necessary checks have been carried out on the proprietor by the Department for Education. A single central register is kept which contains all of the required information.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The accommodation is of good quality and there is plenty of outdoor space for play and recreation. Provision keeps girls safe and secure and enables them to learn satisfactorily. Classrooms, communal areas and offices are of a good size. They are light, airy, clean and tidy. The premises are well maintained and are in good decorative order. Adequate facilities are provided for those who are ill. The ICT suite is large and well equipped. The library is new and currently contains few resources. There is a large kitchen which is used to serve food. The area is kept in a hygienic condition.

Provision of information

The prospectus and website provide parents, carers and others with useful, up-to-date information about the school's aims, ethos and its curriculum. However, not all of the required information is supplied. The prospectus does not make explicit that some essential information is made available to parents, carers and others on request. Satisfactory annual reports are provided to parents and carers. Evaluations clearly indicate the attainment and progress made in the main subjects taught.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's written complaints procedure is clear, fair and meets regulatory 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'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- ensure teachers take girls' aptitudes, needs and prior attainments into account when planning lessons (paragraph 3(d))

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

- ensure that assessment information is used effectively in order that work is always properly matched to girls' capabilities (paragraph 3(g)).

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

- improve the quality of the first aid policy and ensure the amended guidance is implemented effectively (paragraph 14)
- produce an admission register and ensure it is maintained in accordance with regulatory requirements (paragraph 17).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- ensure that the school makes available to parents of girls and parents of prospective girls, and on request, to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State, or an independent inspectorate:
 - particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions (paragraph 24(1)(b))
 - particulars of policies relating to bullying, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of girls misbehaving (paragraph 24(1)(b))
 - particulars of the arrangements for tackling bullying, and for promoting girls' health and safety on the school premises and on educational visits (paragraph 24(1)(b))
 - particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 24(1)(b))
 - details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 24(1)(b))
 - details of the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 24(1)(b)).

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 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

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Independent Muslim girls day secondary school		
Date school opened	September 2009		
Age range of pupils	11 to 16 years		
Gender of pupils	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 47	Total: 47
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,000		
Address of school	Enterprise Way Peterborough PE3 8YQ		
Telephone number	01733 331433		
Email address	arazaq@iqraacademy.org.uk		
Headteacher	Abdul Razaq		
Proprietor	Peterborough Muslim Education Trust		