

The Fountain

Independent school standard inspection report

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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

The Fountain is an independent Islamic day school for girls aged from 11 to 16 years of age located near the centre of Bradford. There are 104 pupils on roll. Most pupils come from the surrounding area and some travel to school from nearby towns. Most pupils are from Pakistani, Indian and Bangaldeshi backgrounds, but some are from other backgrounds. The school's aims are founded on the belief that every individual is of value. It aims 'to provide a broad and balanced Islamic Sunni and mainstream secondary education in order to equip [parents'] daughters with the necessary knowledge, skills, experience, moral values, and Islamic spirituality for a successful life'. There are no pupils in the school who have a statement of special educational needs. The school opened in 2003 and was previously inspected in February 2008.

Evaluation of the school

The overall quality of education is good. The school meets its aims well and has made good progress since its previous inspection. The quality of the curriculum, teaching and assessment is good, enabling the pupils to make good progress in their learning. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding. The girls' Islamic education has a strong impact on how they feel and conduct themselves. Their behaviour is outstanding.

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Safeguarding procedures and practices are satisfactory. The school meets all but one of the regulations for independent schools: the policy to promote good behaviour is not always applied as intended.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good and has improved since the last inspection. It meets pupils' needs well, with increased opportunities to be creative and imaginative. It is well balanced between the *Aalimah* (Islamic) education in the mornings 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

secular curriculum provided in the afternoons which is based on the National Curriculum. There are clear links between these two parts. For example, the personal, social, health and citizenship education programme (PSHCE) is delivered very effectively across both aspects. The curriculum gives pupils good opportunities for accreditation, through sitting GCSE examinations which supports the preparation of the girls for their future lives. Although there is no programme of work experience, pupils learn about the world of work through visitors to the school and through a newly-planned programme introducing them to different careers.

The *Aalimah* is taught by teachers who hold relevant qualifications. The curriculum includes a study of the Qur'an in depth and the learning of Arabic and Urdu. Older pupils also study elements of *fiqh* (jurisprudence). Pupils are given opportunities to practise *nasheed* (recitation) in preparation for a performance event at the end of the school year. There are well-structured programmes to develop pupils' skills in English and mathematics. Pupils have good opportunities to write at length and to use their imaginations. For example, in a good and challenging Year 7 lesson pupils were enjoying writing poetry.

Pupils' creative and aesthetic education is suitably fostered through art, craft and work with textiles. Pupils' art work is prominently displayed in the classrooms. The art curriculum has clear themes, which are chosen so that they are relevant to pupils' lives. In history and geography, pupils study issues such as climate change and learn about different countries and cultures. Physical education (PE) lessons take place weekly in the school playground or hall, focusing on fitness and team games.

Resources are good and continue to improve. The recent introduction of interactive whiteboards in classrooms is increasing pupils' enjoyment in learning. This technology is widening the range of resources that teachers can use to support learning, although its full potential is still being explored. All pupils have lessons in information and communication technology (ICT) leading to a GCSE examination in the subject. Pupils apply their ICT skills in other subjects, for example, for independent research. This equips pupils with useful skills for their future lives.

Teaching and assessment are good and have improved since the previous inspection. Lessons are well planned and briskly paced. Teachers outline the aims of the lesson at the outset and regularly check pupils' understanding. They encourage pupils to take an active part in lessons and to think for themselves. As a result, pupils make good progress. They show excellent attitudes to learning and take care with the presentation of their work. Teachers provide good guidance on examination technique and offer extra support for those who require more help. They employ an appropriate range of activities and tasks in the lessons, allowing for individual work and, increasingly, arrange for pupils to work in pairs or groups, so that pupils improve their listening and speaking skills as well as writing skills. There are satisfactory opportunities for practical work, such as in science. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good, leading to a very positive working atmosphere in lessons.

Assessment is good. Pupils' progress is now more regularly assessed than at the time of the previous inspection, through tests at the end of a unit of work and through the marking of class work and homework. The quality of day-to-day marking varies, with the best, such as in English, giving helpful indications to pupils as to how they might improve their work. In science and English pupils have targets related to the levels in the National Curriculum. At the end of the first term in each year pupils are assessed in all their subjects, including their work in the *Aalimah*. Formal examinations at the end of the school year provide information about the levels pupils have attained.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. The *Aalimah* curriculum contributes strongly to this outcome. Pupils read and deepen their understanding of the Qur'an and of the teachings of the prophets. They apply what they have learnt, for example in how they behave in school. They are clear that the teaching they receive has a very positive influence on their home lives and attitudes to other people. Pupils have a very good understanding of right and wrong. Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are outstanding. Only rarely do they fall below this standard, for example, if teaching is weaker. Attendance at school is average. The weekly extended assembly contributes effectively to the programme for their personal development. During the inspection, the theme of duty to one's mother was explored and subsequently reinforced in lessons.

All pupils have lessons in religious education (RE) as part of the secular curriculum, following a local agreed syllabus. Pupils learn about other religions as well as Islam, leading to a GCSE in religious studies, which focuses on Islam and Christianity. Pupils' awareness of other cultures is further reinforced through humanities lessons where they gain an appreciation of British history to add to the historical perspective gained from the *Aalimah work*. In discussion pupils show that they are developing a good understanding of and tolerance towards those from other cultures and religions. The RE curriculum includes, additionally, a well-planned programme of lessons about citizenship that extends what is taught in the *Aalimah* curriculum. This is further complemented by visitors to the school from different professions.

The school has begun a programme of visits out of school to enhance learning and foster pupils' social and cultural development. Pupils in Year 8 have visited the Colour Museum to support their work in science and art. Questionnaire responses from parents, carers and pupils, and discussions with pupils indicate that they would welcome further visits and activities.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. The school has regard to the guidance issued to schools on these matters and satisfactorily

safeguards its pupils. Staff are trained as required in child protection procedures. The required policies are in place to minimise the health and safety risks to pupils. Policies are, however not all regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain up-to-date and occasionally records are inaccurate.

An appropriate risk assessment has been carried out in relation to fire safety. However, at the time of the inspection, a fire drill was overdue. The school has clear safety rules for practical or potentially hazardous subjects and staff and pupils show a good awareness of risk in the lessons. However, the school has not formalised the rules into written risk assessments to strengthen the current satisfactory procedures and practices.

Pupils say that they feel safe and report that there is no bullying in the school. The vast majority of the girls say that they feel well cared for. Several of the questionnaire responses from pupils, parents and carers were very positive about the support the school provides. Parents and carers typically said that they would recommend the school to friends. Most of the parents and carers who replied were happy with the school.

A number of parents and pupils expressed concerns; most related to the provision for promoting health. The provision to promote healthy living is satisfactory. The outside area for PE has been improved and additional resources have been provided. The PSHCE programme informs pupils about the dangers of harmful substances and the *Aalimah* curriculum teaches them about the importance and the protocols for hygiene. Pupils know the principles involved in leading a healthy lifestyle. However, they commented, rightly, that this aspect was a weaker feature of the curriculum as pupils have only one PE lesson of 45 minutes per week. This is sufficient to meet the regulations but falls below the two-hour minimum recommended as a good weekly practice. Healthy choices at lunchtime, such as fruit, are not regularly provided and pupils tend too often to opt for an unhealthy snack, such as sweets or crisps.

A policy to promote good behaviour is in place but sanctions have not always been implemented consistently in line with the policy. An inappropriate sanction has at times been applied in the past but this has now been stopped. Some pupils were unhappy about their bags being searched. This practice is not inappropriate as pupils are present when it takes place; it is a practice supported by parents and has proved to be an effective means of enforcing school rules regarding checking on the presence of prohibited items.

A school council has been formed which is beginning to provide a channel for pupils to express their views on matters related to their education and welfare. The school complies with its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school undertakes all the required checks on its staff to ensure their suitability to work with children. It keeps this information up to date in a centrally-held single record, as the regulations specify. Recruitment procedures for new staff meet the regulations.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises are suitable; they are warm, light, bright and comfortable and are in good decorative order. There are several classrooms, a science laboratory, an ICT suite, a school hall for prayer and indoor PE, a second smaller prayer hall, a small library and a canteen. The premises were newly refurbished when the school opened and are arranged on three floors and a basement, served by stairs and a lift. There are sufficient washbasins and toilets. There is a fenced playground of a reasonable size, including an area where pupils can sit.

Provision of information

A prospectus for parents and carers provides all the information required by the regulations. It is up to date, clear and accurate. The amount of information provided for parents and carers has improved since the previous inspection. Parents and carers receive appropriate details about pupils' progress. An information evening in January provides interim information on progress. Formal reports in July give full details of pupils' progress in each subject, together with the levels they are attaining in English, mathematics, science and the humanities. Reports provide suitable information on progress in the *Alimah* curriculum.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's policy and procedures for handling complaints meet the regulations. Parents are directed to the existence of the policy through the prospectus, which also lists the main points. In their responses to the questionnaire, a number of parents and carers did not think that the school deals well with complaints or listens to parents and carers' views and concerns. The school agrees it could improve its means of communication with parents further, for example to address and allay any fears they may have. There have been no formal complaints in the last academic year.

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 provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure that the policy to promote good behaviour amongst pupils states more clearly which sanctions the school considers appropriate in the event of pupils misbehaving, and which it does not, and check that all staff implement the policy correctly and consistently (paragraph 9).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- promote better communication with parents on school matters, so that parents feel their views and concerns can be more easily heard
- develop further the programme of visits and activities out of school
- improve the provision to help pupils to lead a healthy lifestyle.

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

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	Islamic day school for girls		
Date school opened	August 2003		
Age range of pupils	11-16 years		
Gender of pupils	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 104	Total: 104
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)	£1,295		
Address of school	109-111 New Cross Street Bradford BD5 8BP		
Telephone number	01274 735913		
Email address	admin@fountainschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Abeer Seada		
Proprietor	Mr Mohammad Asfar		