

Al Huda Girls' School

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

Al Huda Girls' School is a Muslim secondary day school, located in Washwood Heath, Birmingham. The school opened in 1992 and is located in Victorian accommodation. It admits girls who are 11 to 16 years of age and there are currently 83 students on roll. The vast majority are from Pakistani, Somali and Bengali backgrounds; nearly all were born in the United Kingdom. No students currently have a statement of special educational needs or are at the early stages of acquiring English.

There is a mix of Islamic and secular teaching. The school aims to 'promote equality of opportunity for young British Muslim girls, enabling them to understand and become integrated members of British society.'

The school was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2011 when an unannounced visit took place to check on the school's progress. Its last standard inspection was in May 2009. High staff turnover still continues to be a feature of the school.

Evaluation of the school

Despite some recent improvements brought about through work with consultants, and a strong commitment for improvement by the headteacher and proprietor, the quality of education, teaching, assessment and students' progress is inadequate. Students make satisfactory progress in English but in mathematics and science, it is inadequate. Islamic and Qur'anic studies make a satisfactory contribution to students' personal development. Occasionally, a few students do not show enough respect when others are talking and disrupt lessons. Welfare, health and safety are inadequate; this is mainly because the school does not have enough regard to the government's safeguarding guidance and, particularly, safe recruitment procedures. The school has not improved sufficiently since its last two inspections and a number of important regulations remain unmet.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is inadequate. There is a reasonable breadth of subjects in Key Stage 3 which provide a full range of experiences in the required areas of learning. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught with the exception of music, although relevant experiences are provided through *Tajweed* (Qur'anic recitation). Islamic and Qur'anic studies make a sound contribution to students' spiritual and personal development throughout Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

The curriculum narrows in Key Stage 4 and is much narrower than last year when child development and health and social care were also taught. Aesthetic experiences continue to be developed through the *Tajweed* but technological understanding is not provided, as students cease to undertake a planned programme of work in information and communication technology (ICT) in Key Stage 4. They do make use of ICT such as in English or science, but there is no planning as such which continues to build on their skills, knowledge and understanding. All other areas of learning are provided and students currently undertake English, mathematics and science GCSE courses, with some studying Urdu at this level.

Year 11 students' performance in GCSE English has been broadly in line with students nationally, with them gaining a creditable 72% A* to C grades in 2011 examinations. However, their performance in mathematics and science has been very low in comparison. This has been the case for some years now and there has been little analysis by the school to discover the reason for this disparity until recently. From students' starting points, this represents inadequate progress in mathematics and science; progress in English is satisfactory.

Although the school is revising and developing some of its schemes of work, mainly as a result of the new staff's desire to improve these, not all are fully in place. Those for English, mathematics and science are well developed and are supported by published materials. These build reasonably on students' prior experiences, make links with other subjects and give opportunities for students to be provided with work at their different levels of understanding. Although other subject planning is adequate in the main, there is no planning for Year 9 in ICT. The physical education planning is repetitive, not sufficiently challenging and does not develop students' skills. The school could not provide any detailed planning for history or citizenship. A clear improvement is in the way that teachers promote opportunities to support and develop students' literacy and numeracy skills in lessons.

Parents and students both expressed concern about how those attending Al Huda were prepared for future life. The lack of development of students' ICT skills and their underachievement in mathematics and science limits their opportunities for the future. While there has been some improvement in careers education, such as links with Connexions, there is a lack of depth to the work and it is insufficiently planned.

A reasonable range of clubs have been developed after school, but opportunities for students' experiences to be enriched further, for example through visits and visitors, are too limited.

The quality of teaching and assessment is inadequate. There is similarity with the areas of weakness found at the unannounced inspection. There are examples of good teaching in subjects such as English and religious studies. This is mainly because of teachers' strong subject knowledge and the use of probing questions which challenge students to think deeply. A big improvement in teaching is in the variety of activities which students are now presented with in lessons, such as the use of multimedia presentations, paired work and discussion. Links are now made with other subjects which help students understand the relevance of what they are learning. This has a positive impact on their interest, motivation and behaviour. However, there is still a tendency for staff to resort to 'telling' students what to do and talking too much, rather than challenging them to learn or exploring their knowledge.

Even where teaching is satisfactory there are underlying weaknesses which prevent it from being good or better. These stem mainly from the weak use of assessment which, although improved recently, continues to be underdeveloped. What students are to learn is often expressed in broad terms, with not enough use of precise criteria to identify what they should learn by the end of a lesson.

In science and mathematics the teaching seen during the inspection was mostly inadequate. Key weaknesses were a lack of thorough explanation and demonstration, insufficient checking of whether students had understood and not enough involvement of students checking what they were doing. Sometimes students' misconceptions were not dealt with, so they went on making errors. In some year groups, the students lack the basic understanding of ideas which should have been developed at an earlier stage. This is not always recognised and staff miss opportunities to review students' learning. While teachers know they must provide work for students at different levels in their classes, not enough account is taken of the information that is available to them. In consequence, work is sometimes pitched at the wrong level. Occasionally, resources are not well managed. As a result, students take advantage to talk, become silly and inattentive and time is lost for learning.

Students' progress is inadequate. Over the past two years, the school has introduced and developed a system to track students' progress in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4, the school relies on information from teacher's mark books and there is no central overview. Teachers of this key stage often use GCSE criteria to assess against. The Key Stage 3 tracking takes account of students' National Curriculum levels and shows that they generally enter the school with broadly average attainment. Examination results reveal that they have made inadequate progress overall. A recent good feature is that students now have a personal assessment record and targets in their books, but this is not consistent across the school. However, levels are not always

accurately recorded. This is because the school does not have a systematic way of moderating their assessments. Plans to do this, identified at the time of the last standard inspection, have not materialised. Marking is still variable; some examples provide really good support in helping students improve their work while others are just ticks or work is not marked. A new marking scheme has been introduced but there is little evidence of its use in practice. Similarly, peer and self-assessment occurs in lessons but is generally undeveloped.

As a result of the weaknesses in planning, teaching and assessment, most students do not make the progress they are capable of from their starting points.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is satisfactory. The Islamic values instilled enable students to express their beliefs in a supportive atmosphere where spiritual development is valued alongside academic achievement. Students' involvement in daily prayers reinforces the school's commitment to students' spiritual development. However, these moments are not always sufficiently developed or planned to deepen fully students' understanding of Islamic teachings. Behaviour is satisfactory. On the whole most students behave well, are thoughtful and respectful. Occasionally, though, some do not concentrate well enough on their lessons and disrupt the learning of others by talking and acting in an immature manner. Students' moral and social values are firmly rooted in their faith and demonstrated in the quality of the good relationships within their culturally diverse school community. Attendance is satisfactory overall. On some days attendance dips below this, meaning that a few students miss out on important learning experiences. Assemblies and subjects such as citizenship, humanities, English and religious and Qur'anic studies, provide a firm basis for life in the wider community.

Students are tolerant of the diversity of cultures and beliefs in the local, national and world communities. They develop a sound awareness of British institutions through their work in citizenship. However, opportunities for their cultural awareness to be extended further, for instance through practical experiences and educational visits, are very limited.

Students appreciate opportunities to take on responsibility such as being prefects or head and deputy head girl and through the school council.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Welfare, health and safety is inadequate. Staff encourage students to be fit and healthy and many aspects have improved since the last inspection. The school complies with the Equality Act (2010) and now has a three-year plan to improve access to the building, information, and the curriculum. Two staff have been fully trained in first aid. Fire drills are undertaken monthly and the outcomes are fully

recorded. The fire risks assessment has been thoroughly completed and other potential risks within the building have been properly assessed. All the main policies are in place and meet requirements.

However, the school does not have sufficient regard for the government's guidance on safe recruitment. Not all staff complete an application form; some provide a curriculum vitae (CV) and some have neither. References are not always received and those that are, do not identify whether or not the referee has any concerns about a candidate working with children. Although the school states it holds interviews for new staff, no records could be provided and there is no evidence that any breaks in employment have been questioned. Sometimes no information is provided about previous employment. Although not mandatory, no senior staff responsible for recruitment have undertaken the national training.

Although there are two designated trained persons for child protection, in the absence of these, the headteacher undertakes this role. However, no certificate of training was provided. In addition, if a child protection allegation is made against the headteacher, the school does not have an independent person to investigate this. A small number of new staff have not yet undertaken training in child protection.

While the school has a suitable policy to prevent bullying, and being kind and respectful to each other features strongly in the faith curriculum, rare incidents of bullying do occur. Students feel safe and know that staff will support them if they have a problem. The school could explain how it deals with any bullying but sanctions imposed on the bully are not recorded. Other incidents and sanctions are adequately recorded in the current year group behaviour books.

The admissions register does not always have information about a student's last school or occasionally lacks details about the address.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Not all regulations are met. Enhanced criminal records bureau (CRB) checks are undertaken for staff who have not worked in a similar establishment previously and who have had a break of three or more months before being appointed at Al Huda. However, because the school does not have robust recruitment procedures and previous employment history is not always available, it is not possible to tell in some files whether a new CRB check is required. Medical checks are carried out on staff as well as the school checking evidence of a person's identity and qualifications. However, at the start of the inspection the single central register had not been fully updated and had missing information on a number of new staff. The school addressed the matter of the incomplete single central register as a matter of urgency during the inspection.

Premises and accommodation at the school

All regulations are met. Most classrooms are of a suitable size for the number of students the school is registered for. Students are taught in a year group form room and teachers move from room to room to teach the different subjects where students are located. There are two small science laboratories which are used in conjunction with a general teaching room and a reasonably-sized information and communication technology room. Flooring has been replaced in recent months and is in good condition. Similarly, because of recent improvements, there is a satisfactory standard of decoration and maintenance. The school is not designed to take disabled students and there is none on roll at present. Plans in place indicate that the school is taking steps to improve disabled access in the near future.

Provision of information

All regulations are met. The school provides all the required information for its parents and carers, either through its informative prospectus or via its website. They receive a satisfactory annual report of students' performance in subjects together with a briefer report each term. At times, the reports contain more detail about the students' attainment rather than an exemplification of what they have learned, the progress they have made and what they need to do next.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school does not meet all the regulations. Parent questionnaires received during the inspection identified concerns about how the school manages complaints. Inspectors found that the school has not handled complaints in accordance with the regulations. The school's policy was revised after the inspection in January, when it met requirements, but that seen at the beginning of this inspection did not have a full range of procedures. The school addressed the deficiencies in its complaints policy as a matter of urgency during the inspection.

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

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

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

- ensure that there are full schemes of work for all subjects taught and that these are implemented effectively (paragraph 2(1))
- provide students of all ages with experience in the technological areas of learning (paragraph 2(2)(a))
- provide subject matter appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of pupils, including those pupils with a statement of special educational needs (paragraph 2(2)(b))
- provide appropriate careers guidance for students receiving secondary education (paragraph 2(2)(g))
- provide opportunities for all students to learn and make progress (paragraph 2(2)(i))
- adequately prepare students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life (paragraph 2(2)(j))
- ensure that teaching enables students to acquire new knowledge and make progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught (paragraph 3(a))
- ensure that teaching encourages pupils to apply intellectual, physical or creative effort and to show interest in their work and to think and learn for themselves (paragraph 3(b))
- ensure that lessons are well planned and that staff use effective teaching methods, suitable activities and appropriately manage class time (paragraph 3(c))
- ensure teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the students, and ensure these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 3(d))
- ensure there is a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly, and that information from such assessment is utilised to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (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:

- make arrangements made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and ensure these arrangements have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7)

- ensure there is a record of the sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious misbehaviour (paragraph 16)
- ensure the admissions register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 17).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors (standards in part 4) and must:

- for each member of staff appointed after 1 May 2007, ensure that the register contains all relevant information (paragraph 22(3)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the manner in which complaints are to be handled (standards in part 7) and must:

- ensure that if parents are not satisfied with the response to a written complaint, there is provision for the establishment of a hearing before a panel appointed by the proprietor of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint (paragraph 25(f))
- ensure that where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, there is provision that one person on the panel is independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 25(g))
- ensure that the procedure allows for parents to attend the panel hearing and, if they wish, to be accompanied (paragraph 25 (h))
- ensure the procedure provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and ensure the procedure stipulates that a copy of the findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about and available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the headteacher (paragraph 25(i))
- ensure the procedure provides for written records to be kept of all complaints, indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 25(j))
- ensure the procedure provides that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential (paragraph 25(k)).

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	Muslim girls day school		
Date school opened	1992		
Age range of pupils	11–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 83	Total: 83
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)	£1,200		
Address of school	74-76 Washwood Heath Road, Saltley, Birmingham, B8 1RD		
Telephone number	0121 3288999		
Email address	Al_huda@hotmail.co.uk		
Headteacher	Samina Jawaid		
Proprietor	Asif Jawaid		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

5 October 2011

Dear Students



Inspection of Al Huda Girls' School, Birmingham, B8 1RD

You will remember we inspected your school this week. Although staff are working hard to improve things, we found a number of aspects, including teaching and your progress, to be inadequate.

Thank you for taking time to inform us of your views during our inspection of your school; we take these very seriously. Most of you feel well cared for by staff and enjoy coming to school. A few of you told us you were very proud of the school and of the achievements of students, past and present. The work you do in Islamic and Qur'anic studies helps to satisfactorily develop your personal skills. You also make a sound contribution to the local community, helping others. We know that some of you would like to visit places of religious worship but sometimes opportunities to do so are missed.

Nearly half of you who responded to our questionnaire expressed some concerns; these were mainly about a lack of equipment to do your work, student behaviour, your preparation for the future and how the school listens to your views. We found that the student council provides you with a strong 'voice' to make comments, suggestions and request changes. We think you have enough equipment to do your work, although your computers are old. Sometimes, a few of you do not always behave well enough and disrupt lessons by talking when others are talking or by not doing your work. Please ensure that you are always respectful to other students and staff. The school has taken steps to improve your preparation for leaving school but we feel that more must be done. Too many of you do not do well enough in mathematics and science and past students' results in the GCSE examinations have been much lower than those in English. In addition, you do not have much opportunity to develop your ICT skills in Key Stage 4.

We want the school to improve your life chances and have asked senior staff to address these weaknesses. We have also asked the school to ensure that staff records contain all the information required and that all staff are trained in child protection.

Yours sincerely

George Derby
Lead inspector

