

Ayesha Community School

10A, Montagu Road, Hendon, London, NW4 3ES

Inspection dates

4–6 June 2013

Overall effectiveness

Adequate **3**

Pupils' achievement	Adequate	3
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Adequate	3
Quality of curriculum	Adequate	3
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Adequate	3

Summary of key findings

This school is adequate because

- Although achievement is on an upward trend overall, the progress of all pupils is not consistent across the school. Achievement in the sixth form is adequate.
- Teaching is not yet at a good enough standard to ensure all pupils achieve well.
- There is still work to be done to ensure that writing standards match those of reading.
- Although the school has significantly improved its procedures for checking pupils' attainment and progress, not all teachers are secure at assessing accurately the level at which pupils are working.
- School leaders have made some notable improvements to the school since the last inspection, but procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching over time and holding teachers to account for the progress of pupils are insufficiently rigorous. As a consequence, teaching is not yet good.

The school has the following strengths

- School leaders are committed to making this a good school.
- The school has a strong sense of community and Islamic ethos. Behaviour is good and pupils show respect. School leaders and teachers promote tolerance and understanding of other faiths, beliefs and opinions.
- The welfare, health and safety of all pupils are given a high priority. As a result, pupils feel safe, secure and valued members of the Ayesha School community. Parents are happy with the school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school requires improvement and must take action to meet schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

- The school was inspected with a day’s notice.
- The inspectors observed 22 lessons or parts of lessons. The majority of teachers were observed. Pupils’ work was sampled. Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents relating to pupils’ achievement, the curriculum, teaching, leadership and the safeguarding of pupils.
- Meetings were held with primary and secondary aged pupils, the two school councils, senior leaders, the Principal and proprietor and staff from both the primary and secondary departments.
- Inspectors analysed the 34 responses from parents and carers on Parent View and evaluated the 28 responses from the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Martin Newell, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lubna Aziz, Team inspector	Additional Inspector
Rory O’Doherty, Team inspector	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ayesha Community School is a faith school that serves the Muslim communities of North London. The school is registered to admit up to 400 pupils from the age of four to 19. Currently there are 301 pupils on roll, 15 of whom are in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are no children receiving nursery funding. Both boys and girls attend the primary department of the school, but the secondary department is for girls only. A significant number of pupils start at the school in Year 7.
- The school opened in 2006 as a secondary school for girls with a small number of pupils. Numbers have increased significantly since 2006 and the school moved to the current much larger premises in 2009.
- Pupils and staff have diverse cultural and ethnic heritages. Many of the pupils are bilingual and there are no pupils at an early stage of learning English. There are currently no pupils attending the school with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school provides a mix of Islamic and secular teaching and its aim, as expressed through its mission statement is to 'provide a balanced quality of education in a caring and nurturing environment with a view to creating responsible citizens for the future'.
- Pupils in Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 regularly attend another Muslim school for practical science.
- The school was last inspected in February 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement by:
 - ensuring that all teachers set work that is consistently challenging and well matched to the abilities of pupils, particularly the more able
 - making sure that all teachers ask demanding questions that require extended answers and promote a greater level of discussion among pupils
 - ensuring that the marking of pupils' work clearly identifies what the pupils need to do to improve and there is an expectation that pupils respond to their teachers' comments.
- Ensure that school leaders improve the quality of teaching and learning, and at an accelerated rate, by:
 - analysing pupil data and sampling pupils' work alongside lesson observations to arrive at judgements about the quality of teaching and the areas in need of improvement
 - holding more regular meetings with individual teachers to hold them accountable for the progress of the pupils they teach.
- Continue and intensify the drive to raise standards in writing by ensuring that opportunities to write for different audiences and purposes across different subjects are always taken.
- Provide high quality training to ensure that all teachers accurately assess the levels at which pupils are working, that their assessments are moderated and the information used to set challenging but realistic targets for pupils to aspire to.
- **The school must meet the following independent school standards.**
 - provide suitable changing accommodation and showers for pupils aged 11 years and over at the start of the school year who receive physical education (paragraph 23A (1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Adequate

Pupils' achievement is adequate. Across the school, examples can be seen in lessons, in pupils' books and in the school data of pupils making good progress as a result of good teaching. However, teaching is not consistently good enough to ensure that pupils of all ages make good progress and achieve well. Children in the Reception class, at times, make good progress in the key areas of learning. This secure start is built on adequately as pupils move through Years 1 to 6. When teaching is at its strongest there is rapid acceleration in pupils' learning and progress, but conversely there are times when teaching in some classes does not meet the needs and abilities of all pupils, and as a result progress falters. The school carries out National Curriculum tests in English and mathematics and these indicate that standards are above average by the end of Year 6. Even so, achievement is not outstanding because of the undulating pattern of progress, particularly in writing.

A similar pattern emerges in the secondary department. There are examples where some pupils make outstanding progress and attain GCSE grades that are well above those expected, given their starting points, and these compare favourably with results nationally. GCSE results in English, mathematics and science are on an upward trajectory, but data indicate that a pattern of high attainment and good progress is not embedded to ensure that all pupils are reaching their full potential, particularly the more-able pupils. Achievement in the small sixth form is adequate. Inspection evidence from lesson observations, pupils' work and the school's own data confirms the school's own evaluation that achievement overall is adequate because of the inconsistencies in teaching that are not always addressed rapidly enough to bring about more rapid improvement.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are good. Across the school, behaviour is typically good with only an occasional drop in standards in particular lessons. Pupils who attend offsite provision for science behave very well. Pupils and staff show high levels of respect to each other. This helps to create an effective learning environment and, as many pupils were ready to point out, Ayesha is 'a close, knit, family community'. School leaders and staff actively promote pupils' awareness and understanding of, and respect for, different world faiths, beliefs and cultures. This includes visits to places of worship and visits from speakers from different faiths and traditions. All this is set in the context of making the commitment to their own faith ideals a living reality. Pupils learn about moral and social issues that have local, national and international dimensions. Pupils instigate and run their own fundraising events that raise money for charities and organisations that have included the Salvation Army, MacMillan Nurses and charities working in Syria and Palestine. All this is testimony to the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development the school provides.

Pupils are motivated, keen and enthusiastic learners who want to achieve well, both academically and personally. Pupils enjoy school, as reflected in the continually improving attendance rates. They state that any form of bullying is a rare event and have every confidence that it would be tackled immediately if it were to occur. Pupils are given a genuine voice in the life of the school. The school councils provide a forum for expressing their views and opinions and have led to improvements in playground facilities and healthy eating, for example. Pupils' views are also encouraged through debating sessions for the older pupils.

Good provision is made to ensure that pupils learn about democracy in the United Kingdom and how public institutions function. This is helped by visits to the Houses of Parliament and a visit from the local Member of Parliament. Currently, a visit from the Mayor of London has been agreed to support the school's involvement in a project aimed at developing citizenship in young people.

The proprietor ensures that when controversial political views or standpoints are discussed that the role of teachers is clear and balanced so that no particular political philosophy is promoted.

Quality of teaching

Adequate

The quality of teaching is adequate. Although there is evidence of good and outstanding teaching over time the overall quality is not good because inconsistencies in quality result in uneven pupil progress and some underachievement.

Across the school, relationships between staff and pupils are good and, in most instances, pupils are managed well. In these circumstances, more could be asked of students, but a weakness in teaching is that the work set is not consistently sufficiently challenging, particularly for the more-able pupils. There is some good and better practice that the school could build on. For example, in a Year 10 Arabic lesson the pace and challenge were unrelenting and consequently learning was rapid and sustained. There are also indications that standards in writing are improving, but the school rightly recognises that more needs to be done in the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills to help drive further improvements. When teaching is good, for example in a Year 5 English lesson, highly effective questioning elicited extended answers using powerful and captivating vocabulary. In such cases, where questioning is at a high level, the understanding of all pupils in the class is deepened as there are real opportunities for pupils to learn from one another.

The school has improved its assessment procedures since the last inspection. Teachers are now required to assess pupils' progress regularly so that it can be tracked over time. However, not all teachers are confident and effective at assessing pupils' work accurately and their judgements on attainment and predictions on progress are sometimes unrealistic. Across the school there are some very good examples of the marking of pupils' work that are leading to sustained improvement. The school has already identified, however, that not all marking is as good as this in helping move pupils' learning on at a faster pace.

Quality of curriculum

Adequate

The curriculum is adequate in meeting the needs of pupils and contributing to their progress. Planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that the needs of children are met appropriately, and this is sometimes good and better. Detailed policies and schemes of work, following national guidance and which promote literacy and numeracy skills, support learning in both the primary and secondary departments. Good and improved provision is now made for pupils' personal, social and health education. The secular curriculum on offer is broad and balanced and gives due emphasis to the development of literacy and numeracy skills. The school has rightly identified the need to help improve writing skills by providing more opportunities for pupils to develop these skills across different subjects of the curriculum. The school provides an appropriate breadth of courses at GCSE and is seeking to expand the number on offer both at GCSE and at A level if the school expands further. The school provides good careers guidance and helps pupils prepare well for further education placements, including visits to a range of universities including Cambridge and Oxford. Appropriate support is provided for pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. Support for more-able pupils is at times less effective.

The school provides a good array of after-school activities over the course of the year, which are much appreciated by the pupils. The curriculum and pupils' learning are enriched through visits to museums, galleries, places of worship, local parks and also through many visitors that come to the school to talk to pupils about a range of topics and different faiths and beliefs.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

The provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good and all of the independent school

regulations for welfare are met. Discussions with pupils of all ages clearly indicate that they feel safe and secure at the school. They find staff approachable and say that there is someone on hand to talk to if they have any worries or concerns whatsoever. There are strong bonds of trust and respect between adults and pupils at the school.

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety has improved significantly since the last inspection. Policies and procedures for child protection, health and safety, behaviour and anti-bullying are well known and consistently implemented by all staff. Pupils are well aware of the sanctions relating to inappropriate behaviour, but state that the more serious sanctions are not often reached. Effective and rigorous procedures are in place to ensure that all child protection requirements are fully met. The designated officers have attended high-level training and all staff have been appropriately trained. This is particularly important as there is a high staff turnover in the secondary department in particular. The procedures for checking the suitability of staff to work with pupils are all fully in place and all adults working at the school have been subject to appropriate checks. All checks and other information are recorded on a single central register.

Risk assessments are regularly carried out around the school site and any issues dealt with. All off-site visits are subject to risk assessments, including visits to off-site provision at a local Muslim secondary school. An appropriate number of staff are trained in first aid and school leaders ensure that their training is kept up to date. All the checks relating to fire safety and maintenance are carried out on a regular basis and electrical appliances are checked by qualified contractors.

Leadership and management

Adequate

Leadership and management are adequate. The Principal and headteachers have played an effective role in school improvement since the time of the last inspection, at which time the school failed many regulations and was judged to be providing an inadequate quality of education. The school is accurate in its own evaluation that leadership and management are adequate because there is still work to be done to improve teaching and achievement further to move the school to good. There is a good team spirit in school where staff and leaders work together well and are committed to improving the quality of education. School leaders provide good opportunities for staff to attend professional training events both on and off the school site.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and its judgements match inspection findings. It identifies the school's strengths and importantly identifies the areas that need to be addressed to take the school to the next level. The school has introduced procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and these are supported by peer observations and opportunities for Ayesha staff to observe good practice in other schools. However, school leaders do not consistently look at pupils' work and class progress data, alongside lesson observations, to gain a better picture of teaching over time. In addition, teachers are not always regularly held to account enough for the progress of the pupils they teach. Performance management systems are in place for staff and plans are in hand for the Principal to adapt a more robust system for the performance management of the headteachers. School leaders and staff work hard to promote equality of opportunity but recognise that more needs to be done to ensure that all the more-able pupils achieve as well as they can.

Parents and carers receive all the required information. The school's website is informative and parents and carers are kept well informed about their children's progress. Appropriate procedures are in place for handling complaints. The school's accommodation is adequate. Money is being raised to develop science facilities at the school. The proprietor and school leaders have ensured that almost all of the independent school regulations are met. The one failing relates to a lack of shower facilities for pupils aged over 11.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	131261
Inspection number	420193
DfE registration number	302/6119

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Faith School (Muslim)
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4–19 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed primary department, girls only in the secondary department and sixth form.
Number of pupils on the school roll	301
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Shakil Ahmed
Chair	Shakil Ahmed
Headteacher	Atiya Saithna (Primary); Sadiya Dawre (Secondary)
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 February 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,240
Telephone number	02034112660
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