

# Al-Islah Schools

108 Audley Range, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB1 1TF

## Inspection dates

3–5 December 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

- Students' progress in some subjects, including mathematics, is only adequate and standards are not high enough.
- Teachers mark students' work but not regularly enough. Students are not told frequently enough where they have gone wrong and how they can improve.
- Although teachers question students well in lessons to check their understanding, they do not always adapt activities when necessary to ensure all students can make good progress.
- Leaders do not use their systems for checking on students' progress and school developments well enough to bring about improvements. They have not ensured that teaching and achievement are good.

### The school has the following strengths

- Progress in English is outstanding.
- The behaviour and personal development of students' are good. Students all say they feel safe and that they enjoy coming to school. Many talk of the school as 'being like a big family'.
- Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are robust and that the provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. The new headteacher and the deputy headteacher have quickly and accurately evaluated the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Some improvement is already evident.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets 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.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspectors observed 13 lessons taught by seven different teachers in a range of subjects. The inspector analysed students' work in several year groups in both mathematics and English.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, staff, students and governors. There were no Parent View responses. Five Ofsted questionnaire responses from staff were analysed.
- The school's documentation was checked including schemes of work, teachers' planning, records of students' progress, assessment records and documentation concerning school development planning and self-evaluation. The school's welfare, health, safety and safeguarding policies and procedures were also looked at.

## Inspection team

Jo Sharpe, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Denise Shields

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Al-Islah School is an independent Muslim day school that is registered to provide full-time education for girls aged from 11 to 16 years. The school opened in 1999.
- There are currently 86 students on roll. There are no students currently on roll who have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school was last inspected in May 2010.
- The school uses alternative off-site provision for some physical education activities.
- Since the last inspection the school has had two headteachers. A governor took on the responsibility of headteacher last year until September 2013, when the current headteacher was appointed. Since taking up her post in September the headteacher has been absent due to unforeseen circumstances but is due to return shortly.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to raise attainment, particularly in mathematics, by
  - ensuring that work the students are set in lessons is accurately matched to their different levels of ability
  - making sure that, following checks on students' understanding in lessons, activities are adapted when necessary so all students can make good progress
  - ensuring that work is regularly marked and teachers pick up on any misconceptions, frequent mistakes and also inform pupils how they can improve their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of the leadership and management by:
  - ensuring the system for checking students' progress is used more effectively so it identifies earlier those who are not making good or better progress
  - making sure that targets for improvement in the school development plan are more sharply focused and that the impact of actions taken is evaluated more carefully.

## Inspection judgements

### Pupils' achievement

#### Adequate

Achievement is adequate overall due to adequate teaching and an adequate curriculum. Students' progress in English is good and often outstanding. Students' starting points in English at Year 7 are at the nationally expected levels for students their age. By the time they leave the school in Year 11 students are reaching standards which are well above other students nationally. Students take the GCSE examination in English language a year earlier than is usual. Students' standards in mathematics are adequate. Although students starting points in Year 7 are generally lower in mathematics than they are in English, they still do not make good enough progress. Therefore, students leave school in Year 11 with examination results in mathematics which are consistently below those of other students nationally. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Year 8, too much time was spent by the more able pupils in consolidating work already known while other students needed further support. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers.

Students' achievement in other subjects varies considerably. Students make good progress in Islamic studies and enjoy these lessons. Even with early entry to GCSE examinations, students still achieve above average standards in religious studies and Urdu. Students' attainment in other subjects such as the sciences, history and Arabic is consistently below that of other students nationally.

### Pupils' behaviour and personal development

#### Good

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are good. Through the strong Islamic ethos, good relationships and a positive attitude are promoted. Students have a thirst for learning and apply themselves diligently to tasks. Students are polite and welcoming and all adults are good role models. Students all say they feel safe. Students' knowledge of how to keep safe is reinforced by visits from local police officers.

The development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural is good and is a priority for the school. Weekly media lessons engage students in profound moral discussions around recent local, national and global issues. These lessons also help students gain a good knowledge and understanding of institutions and services in Britain and other countries. The students have a good understanding of different cultures and this understanding is enhanced by visits to different places of worship. Students conduct themselves well at all times and minor disruption in lessons is rare and quickly and effectively dealt with by teachers. The behaviour policy is clear in its rewards and sanctions. Some of the sanctions, such as the detention strategy, are not working effectively. However, school leaders are very aware of this shortcoming and have included its review in the new school development plan. Attendance is average and improving. No responses were made by parents to the online Parent View questionnaire. However, all pupils and staff consider that behaviour is good and well managed. Leaders ensure that when controversial and political issues are considered, steps have been taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views.

### Quality of teaching

#### Adequate

The quality of teaching overall is adequate which enables students to make adequate progress overall. Teachers use effective questioning in the majority of lessons to assess students' understanding and in better lessons this information is used to challenge and support students with different levels of ability to promote better progress. However, in a Year 8 lesson more able students spent too long repeating work because other less able students needed to firm up their knowledge. In some other lessons less able students complete work that is too difficult for them and they are made to move on to something new when they have not fully understood the work.

Following checks on students' understanding in lessons, activities are not always adapted when necessary so all students can make good progress. Teachers do not always set work which matches students' different learning needs. In many lessons, especially in mathematics, students are all set the same work. This means that at times the more able are not progressing fast enough and the less able are not gaining a firm understanding of the work they are completing.

In some lessons teaching is good, such as a Year 8 English lesson where students were studying the poetry of Robert Frost. The teacher had high expectations and encouraged even the quietest of students to contribute. All teachers reinforced the school ethos that 'we learn from making mistakes'. In outstanding lessons pupils are highly enthusiastic and actively engaged in their learning, such as in a Year 11 health and social care lesson. Students had a lively debate about peer pressure, religion and culture. Teachers promote equal opportunities, understanding and tolerance. All teachers have a very secure knowledge of the subject they are teaching.

Although students are aware of their current attainment level in each subject and the level they are set to achieve, they are not aware of how to improve their work to achieve the next level. Students comment that their books are not marked after every lesson. Misconceptions and frequent errors are not quickly identified by teachers and students are not regularly told how they could have improved their work or how they can challenge themselves further. Regular teacher assessments are collated by the deputy headteacher on a central system.

### Quality of curriculum

### Adequate

The curriculum is adequate which means students make only adequate progress. Schemes of work are in place for all subjects including Islamic studies, Arabic and Urdu. The school's teaching of the Islamic curriculum is a strong aspect of its curriculum, and as a result, students make good progress in their learning about Islam. The school covers all required areas of learning but currently the range of subjects available is rather limited. However, the leadership has ensured that the subjects available support students adequately to prepare them for the next stage of their education. The curriculum is good at developing strong social, moral, spiritual and cultural and personal development. The curriculum develops good English skills but is less effective in securing good mathematics skills. Students are provided with appropriate careers guidance from visiting speakers and visits to careers events at local colleges. Students use the local sports centre and the outside space in the mosque next door to make allowances for the limited outdoor space around the school building. The curriculum is enhanced by visits and 'themed days', such as the art day which was enhanced by a visiting artist. The school development plan notes the intention to enhance the sports curriculum, such as by making better use of the local sports centre for after-school activities.

### Pupils' welfare, health and safety

### Good

Arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of students are good. All independent school standards are met. All policies and procedures relating to welfare, health and safety are in place, including those for the prevention of bullying, and are effectively implemented and reviewed. All staff have recently undertaken appropriate training in child protection at the required levels. The child protection policy clearly notes protocols staff need to follow and who they need to direct their concerns to, it also gives clear advice regarding what may constitute child abuse. The students did not express any concerns regarding any forms of bullying in the school. Students know they can talk to members of staff about any concerns, if they need to and many comment on how they have done so. Checks to ensure the suitability of staff are robust and clearly noted on the single central register.

Students are well supervised at all times. Students show a maturity in the way they resolve any minor disputes, although adults are always available if they are needed. Appropriate risk assessments are undertaken in relation to fire, external visits and learning activities. Regular

evacuations and checks on fire safety equipment are undertaken. The admission and attendance registers are completed to a suitable format and kept up to date.

## Leadership and management

### Adequate

The leadership and management of the school are adequate and enable students to make adequate progress. All leaders, managers and teachers have high expectations. A dynamic new headteacher and deputy headteacher show a determination to ensure that achievement in all subjects is consistently good or better. This new team has already improved the facilities available for the students and ensured they are completed to a high standard. New initiatives, such as working with other schools to share good teaching practices and sporting events, are contained within the school development plan.

The governors and senior leaders self-evaluation of the school is accurate and all are aware of how the school must be improved. However, the school development plan is not sharply focused and therefore timescales and the impact of actions, particularly on teaching and achievement, cannot be carefully measured and monitored. A new tracking system is being used to follow students' progress. This system is not yet fully effective in checking whether students are making good or better progress towards their targets and in which subjects. Teachers feel well supported. Lesson observations take place regularly and feedback is provided so that teachers can reflect on the quality of their teaching and consider areas for improvement. The deputy headteacher evaluates the strengths and areas for development in lessons accurately so as to promote improvement in teaching. Governors take an active role in the daily life of the school. They manage finances effectively to promote a good learning environment. Governors challenge and support the school well as they are acutely aware of its strengths and areas for improvement.

Required improvements which were identified at the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. The premises and accommodation are well maintained and the facilities are good. Parents and carers are well informed about their child's progress with reports and with parents' consultation evenings. The school prospectus gives all the required information to parents, carers and others and lists policies which are available, including the complaints policy which meets requirements. Leaders and managers have ensured that all independent school standards are met.

## 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/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.     |

## School details

|                                |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 119856   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 422709   |
| <b>DfE registration number</b> | 889/6004 |

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.

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Muslim Girls High School        |
| <b>School status</b>                       | Independent School              |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 11–16 years                     |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Girls                           |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 86                              |
| <b>Number of part time pupils</b>          | 0                               |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                          | The Islamic Educational Society |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Mr E Karolia                    |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Zarina Seedat                   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 5 May 2010                      |
| <b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>            | £1,200                          |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01254 261573                    |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 01254 671604                    |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | alislahschool@hotmail.com       |



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