

Avicenna Academy

Coleridge Resource Centre, Tinsley Park Road, Darnall, Sheffield, S9 5DL

Inspection dates 2–4 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school because

- Good teaching across the school ensures that students achieve well. Students develop good basic skills in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) and this helps them to prepare well for the future.
- Outstanding, flawless behaviour and excellent arrangements for safety ensure that students can concentrate fully on their learning. Excellent opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensure that students flower into young citizens who are proud to be British and of everything that Great Britain stands for.
- The school's effective work in the early years ensures that children develop good skills which they can use as they move up the school.
- The good leadership, management and governance have ensured that this new school has established itself firmly and quickly. Leaders have placed a strong emphasis on ensuring that teaching and achievement are good. The school continues to improve.
- Students are happy and like the academic, religious and herbal education opportunities on offer.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Marking in workbooks does not tell students about how well they are doing in comparison to other students nationally.
- Leaders do not always check the impact of teaching on students' progress when they observe lessons.
- The school's evaluation of its own work lacks detail and this slightly limits improvement planning.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspectors observed five lessons taught by five members of staff and scrutinised samples of students' work in most subjects. A 'learning walk' was also undertaken by an inspector who briefly observed several lessons.
- Discussions took place with staff including trustees (who are also members of staff), the senior leadership team, teachers, other staff and students.
- Inspectors took account of questionnaire returns from 12 parents and nine staff. There were not enough responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) for inspectors to be able to evaluate views expressed online.
- Various school documents were examined to check compliance with the independent school standards. These included the school's prospectus, information about students' progress, the school's own evaluation of its work, students' workbooks and school policies. Records relating to behaviour and safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Saleem Hussain, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Paul Rafferty

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Avicenna Academy is a Muslim independent day school for girls and boys aged between four and 16 years. It is situated in the Darnall area of Sheffield.
- The school first registered in November 2013 to admit up to 240 students. Currently, there are 54 students on roll, aged between four and 15 years.
- The school has a full-time early years provision which has seven children. The school has not applied for an exemption from the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- A very small proportion of students have a statement of special educational needs. None of the students is disabled. None of the students is disadvantaged.
- All students are British nationals and mostly of South Asian origin.
- The school offers primary and secondary secular as well as Islamic and herbal education.
- The school runs after-school community courses in Islamic scholarship (*Alim*) and weekend courses in herbal medicine.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school has not applied for registration under the government's nursery scheme funding but is planning to do so in the near future.
- This is the school's first standard inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that the impact of teaching on students' progress is always checked and recorded in lesson evaluations
 - ensuring that self-evaluation is more detailed so that it can be used more precisely to plan the actions required to make the school outstanding.
- Ensure that students know how well they are doing in comparison to other students nationally by improving marking in this respect.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

are good

- The quality of leadership is good. Leaders have worked very effectively since the school first registered. They have successfully concentrated on laying firm foundations to ensure that teaching is strong and achievement is good. There are two members of the senior leadership team and they lead by example. Between them, they ensure that all of the school's high quality policies are effectively implemented and students enjoy school life. The school does not have middle leaders.
- Leaders have a clear vision of excellence for the future and communicate high expectations and ambition frequently to staff. As a result, a culture of teamwork exists across the school, teaching is of a good quality and impeccable behaviour is the norm. Everyone shares a common purpose and is focused on maintaining high academic standards and helping students to achieve well.
- The school aims include: 'To provide a first-rate education for all of the students'. It is clear that the school's leadership has made a good start to achieving this aim.
- Leaders have established a good quality and range of effective learning experiences for students. Subjects and activities on offer are effective in promoting students' academic development. Students say that they like everything that the school offers and would not change anything. Questionnaire returns from staff and parents indicate that they are very pleased with the work of the school.
- Leaders regularly check the quality of learning activities on offer to ensure that these prepare students well for their future economic well-being and they understand their responsibilities as young people in modern Britain. The school's arrangements for advice and careers guidance help students to make good choices about examination subjects and to think about the world of work.
- Leaders have a good understanding about the quality of teaching. There are good arrangements in place for staff training and development. Leaders regularly undertake 'learning walks' and visit lessons. A record is kept about the quality of teaching and learning. However, leaders acknowledge that the impact of teaching on progress is not always checked and recorded. As a result, leaders are not always clear about the progress made in lessons.
- The school knows its strengths and weaknesses. However, the school's written evaluation of all its work lacks detail. As a result, school improvement planning is slightly limited. This is because weaknesses are not set out in enough detail for leaders to go on and plan the actions required to make the school outstanding.
- Leaders have developed excellent and very effective arrangements for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, students' personal development, behaviour and the contribution they make to their community are exceptional. All of the evidence indicates that the school promotes equality of opportunity, fosters excellent relations and tackles discrimination if it should arise.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective. The board of trustees holds the school to account well. The trustees are also members of staff, being either leaders or teachers. Inspectors judge that they are able to stand back and evaluate the school effectively. Trustees are well aware of how well the school is doing and about the quality of teaching but are less well informed about the impact of teaching on students' progress.
 - Trustees meet regularly to check the school's data, review the work of the school and to consider the effectiveness of teachers. They are currently reviewing what can be done to reward good teaching and ensure that any weaknesses in teaching are addressed through further training.
 - Trustees make sure that the school's overall work is of a high quality and check that there is continued compliance with the independent school standards. They rigorously ensure that arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements and are effective.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Attitudes to learning are excellent across the school, in different learning situations and throughout the day. Students listen intently and with great enthusiasm to adults in different subjects and are always very eager to get on with their work. Attendance and punctuality are excellent. Minor disruption to learning is extremely rare. The school is a very orderly place. These factors make an excellent contribution to students' progress.

- Students are excellent ambassadors for the school. They take responsibility for their own learning seriously, and their manners, courtesy and respect for others are remarkable.
- Students instinctively help each other in lessons. For example, in joint tasks the more able actively help others if they struggle to understand something. In an ICT lesson, students were very keen to check with each other to make sure everyone was keeping up with the amount of work expected by the teacher at various stages of the lesson.
- The school has developed many excellent opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It complies most effectively with the relevant independent school standards. Opportunities for personal development include assembly themes and topic work in subjects such as English, art and history. Religious education, drama and learning about different events which are important to the wider community provide further examples. As a result of the school's work, students blossom into well-rounded individuals.
- Students develop their self-confidence very effectively through many opportunities for reflection at assemblies, prayers and at other times. The school's rewards system, including certificates and postcards home, is very effective.
- Students learn to respect the criminal and civil law. Excellent moral development was evident in discussions with students around several different subjects. For example, they talked eloquently about the importance of showing respect and helping others. They also expressed admirable views about tolerance and the need for community harmony in modern Britain.
- Social development is enhanced by many opportunities to interact with the community through visits and visitors.
- The school provides students with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England. For example, students learn about the function of Parliament and local services. Leaders have taken very positive steps to ensure that political views are discussed in a balanced way and extremist views are not promoted.
- Leaders actively encourage students to care about the community. For example, students often raise funds for charities and good causes. They have written some marvellous poetry and done much art work around Remembrance Day. This illustrates clearly how proud students are of British values and being British.
- Membership of the school council gives students experience of how a democracy works; for example, members are elected by their peers.
- Students develop very high levels of awareness and understanding of different cultures, values and beliefs in modern Britain. They enjoy educational visits to places of interest such as libraries, museums, theatres and different places of worship.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. The school complies most effectively with the relevant independent school standards. Parents' questionnaire responses indicate that their children feel safe in school.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are robust. The school's designated officer for child protection is trained to the required standard and all staff have received basic training. Effective steps are taken to ensure the appointment of suitable staff.
- The school's anti-bullying and internet safety policies are effective. Students say that bullying is unheard of in school; they feel very safe and they know that they can approach staff if they feel worried about anything. Students demonstrate a high level of awareness of different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying.
- A high number of staff have received extensive training in administering first aid.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is good in most subjects. Consequently, all groups of students including boys, girls, those with differing capability, those from different ethnic heritages and those with special educational needs make equally good progress over their time in school.
- Good teaching ensures that students learn and achieve well, including in literacy, reading, writing, communication skills and mathematics. Furthermore, the school's effectiveness in meeting the standards relating to the quality of education provided and personal development is good.
- Teachers have high expectations of the standards they want students to reach. They communicate these high expectations to students effectively. For example, expectations are discussed during lessons and

during one-to-one reviews with students.

- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge in many areas, including English, mathematics and ICT, to plan interesting, enjoyable activities for students. For example, in mathematics students are often given work based on real-life matters such as shopping on a limited budget.
- Teachers also use their subject knowledge well to frame searching, challenging questions aimed at different groups of students to ensure high levels of participation from everyone.
- Teaching assistants work closely with teachers to ensure that all groups of students achieve well. For example, they often support lower ability students at the start of lessons and also intervene to help the most able as the lesson goes on, for example by asking them additional questions to make sure they are meeting their learning targets.
- Teachers often take opportunities in different subjects to develop students' reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. For example, in a Year 1 and 2 Islamic studies lesson about the five pillars of Islam, there were many opportunities to develop reading and spelling skills. Mathematics is taught effectively and teachers ensure that students use appropriate mathematical vocabulary and also know how to use different approaches to problem solving.
- Assessment is good. The school keeps clear and accurate records regarding students' starting points. Good use is made of nationally accepted measures to ascertain attainment and progress in key academic subjects. Marking ensures that students know how well they are doing as individuals and how they can improve. However, discussions with students indicate that they do not know how well they are doing in comparison to other students nationally. As a result, they are unsure about whether the standards they aim to achieve match their aspirations.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Achievement is good because teaching is good and students participate enthusiastically in the full range of subjects and activities on offer. Views from students included: 'Our teachers always help us to learn by explaining things until we all understand the work.'
- The school meets the standards relating to the subjects and learning activities on offer and also for assessment. Based on their starting points, all groups of students make good gains in their knowledge and understanding in most subjects and develop many key skills over their time in school, representing good achievement. This is confirmed by evidence in students' workbooks and school records.
- All groups of students including boys, girls, those with differing capability, those from different ethnic heritages and those with special educational needs make good progress in English and mathematics when compared to other students both in school and nationally. It is clear that students are being well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The most-able students (in common with other groups) achieve well. They are given carefully planned, individually based work which challenges them. For example, they are provided with additional objectives and learning targets in comparison to their peers. These factors ensure that the most able are pushed well to ensure that they make progress in line with their capability.
- The needs of students with special educational needs are met well by the school. For example, good levels of additional support are provided by teaching assistants in the classroom to ensure that they too achieve well over the passage of time.
- Students enter Year 1 with standards of attainment in English and mathematics which are usually in line with what is expected for their age. They make good progress in their reading, writing, communication and mathematics because basic skills in these areas are taught well.
- The school has not yet had any students in Years 6 or 11. Inspection evidence confirms that students in all the year groups currently attending school are reaching at least expected standards for their age, including in English and mathematics. It is also clear that the school prepares older students well to take GCSE examinations in a wide range of subjects. However, the school has not been operating long enough to enable them to sit examinations and no students have been entered earlier than would be expected. This means that nationally published data cannot be used yet as an indicator of students' achievements at this school.
- Students are provided with much time each day to read and enjoy reading widely. The school organised a successful 'reading day' recently, focusing well on the development of expression in reading. Inspection evidence also indicates that students are provided with many good opportunities to develop their speaking, listening and writing skills in subjects other than English.
- Achievement in relation to Islamic studies is good. These studies include the *Qur'an*, *Hadith* (sayings of the Prophet), *Aqeedah* (theology) and *Fiqh* (Islamic laws). A number of older students have made a start

in relation to the *Alim* course and all the indications are that they are making very good progress.

The early years provision

is good

- The effectiveness of the early years setting is good. This is reflected in children's good achievement over their time in the early years. The school's effectiveness in meeting the requirements of the independent school standards for the early years is also good.
- All of the evidence indicates that children make at least expected progress towards achieving the early learning goals. This ensures that they can make a good start to their learning when they eventually move to Year 1. Parents receive regular updates about their children's progress and are very pleased with their achievements.
- Records of children's starting points on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are not always clear for reasons outside the school's control. Leaders have remedied this weakness as best they can by making reasonable, professional judgements based on the school's own observations and assessments. Furthermore, everything possible is being done to collect information to accurately ascertain the starting points of children new to the school.
- Leadership and management are good. Discussions with the headteacher and the Early Years Foundation Stage class teacher indicate that the school has a clear, accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the early years.
- Planning to ensure that all groups of children make good progress, including those from different ethnic heritages, boys, girls and the most able is good.
- Teaching is good, indoors and outdoors. For example, adults often take the opportunity to develop children's basic skills in communication, language, reading, writing and spelling. Children showed excellent attitudes as they tried to spell simple words when invited to do so by the teacher. In common with teaching across the school, teachers use resources well to support learning. The outdoor learning environment supports physical development particularly well.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are happy. They like the appealing experiences which support their development in all key areas of learning. They are encouraged to make good choices about activities to take part in which appeal to their sense of curiosity and help them to learn well.
- Safety and safeguarding are given a top priority and the day-to-day care, guidance and support from staff are excellent. These factors instil confidence in children and nurture outstanding behaviour and attitudes.

What inspection judgements mean

Schools

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

Unique reference number	140479
Inspection number	447249
DfE registration number	373/6004

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted 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	Muslim primary and secondary school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	54
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Avicenna Global
Chair	Atabek Sukurov
Headteacher	Sulaiman Ahmed
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,599
Telephone number	0114 221 7010
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	info@avicennaacademy.com

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