

Bahr Academy

72 Sceptre Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE4 6PR

Inspection dates 13–15 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management	Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils	Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings

This is a school which requires improvement. It is not good because

- Leaders and managers do not have a clear understanding of the independent school standards. They are therefore unable to carry out an accurate self-evaluation of how well the school is performing and what needs to improve.
- Teachers do not always follow the school marking policy by indicating to students what they should do to improve and how to take their learning to the next stage.
- Not all students achieve as well as they could. Teachers do not provide sufficient challenge for more-able students to enable them to develop a deeper understanding of topics covered.
- Staff do not have a clear view of student achievement because marks are not recorded consistently or in a single place. Therefore, they cannot identify where additional support is needed.

The school has the following strengths

- Students work seriously and with concentration. They are ambitious and keen to succeed.
- The religious ethos of the school provides a unifying factor and encourages a positive relationship between staff and students.
- Students are well behaved and proud of their school. They feel safe and well supported by staff.
- Middle managers are keen to develop the school and moved quickly to begin to address weaknesses identified during the course of the inspection.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day’s notice.
- As all students were sitting or revising for examinations in both Islamic and secular studies, there was almost no teaching taking place during the inspection. Inspectors observed two lessons taught by two teachers and scrutinised curriculum materials, schemes of work, samples of students’ work across all subjects, together with student grades and external examination results. They looked at a range of school policies and documentation.
- Inspectors spoke to students in both formal and informal settings. They took into account opinions expressed in 13 staff questionnaires and 15 responses from parents on the Parents View website.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior and middle managers and trustees.

Inspection team

Michael Glickman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Barbara Waugh

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bahr Academy is an Islamic faith secondary school for girls located in the Elswick area of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. It is owned by the Bahr Academy Trust.
- The school is registered for 30 students aged 11 to 16 years and currently has 30 students on the roll. Students come from across the North East and are all British with a South Asian heritage. None has an education and health care plan or is learning English as an additional language. Students previously attended local authority primary schools. The school does not use any alternative educational provision.
- The school aims to 'create a culture that strengthens faith and values integrity above all else' and to 'inculcate in students academic success and excellence combined with a sublime character, compassion towards humanity and respect for people from all walks of life'.
- The school has purchased a sizable listed building with extensive grounds near its current premises. It is in the process of refurbishing it and had planned to move there at the beginning of the current academic year. However, due to delays in financing and completing the work, the transfer has been postponed.
- The school opened in September 2010. Its last full inspection was in September 2011 when it was judged to provide a good quality of education. A subsequent emergency inspection in April 2014 found that three regulations were not met.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers must familiarise themselves with the current independent school standards and use them to carry out an accurate self-evaluation which leads to an appropriate action plan showing how weaknesses will be addressed.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.
- Teachers should improve student achievement by:
 - ensuring that all teaching challenges more-able students and enables them to gain a deeper understanding of the subjects taught
 - consistently following the school's marking policy by showing students what they need to do to improve their work and move their learning on to the next stage.
- The school should develop a consistent and unified recording system for students' marks which enables staff to track students' progress across all subjects and identify where additional support is required.
- The school must meet the following independent school standards.
 - The proprietor should ensure that teaching at the school enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught and ensuring that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraphs 3 and 3(a)).
 - The proprietor should ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a) and 34(1)(b)).

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leaders and managers are insufficiently familiar with the current independent school standards. As a result, although they have carried out an evaluation of the school's work, it does not accurately identify where improvements are required.
- The Islamic ethos of the school effectively unites staff and students with a set of common values. Notices around the premises remind students of the behaviour expected by their faith and of prayers to be said at relevant points in their daily routine.
- The recently appointed administrator has accurately identified weaknesses in current administrative procedures. She has acted quickly to address these, for instance by standardising the presentation of school policies and the format of staff files. She has ensured that admission and attendance registers comply with requirements.
- The heads of Islamic and secular studies carry out regular lesson observations and use these to identify areas for staff development. These are reported back to teachers as suggestions for improving their teaching. Staff are offered a range of development opportunities through courses organised by the local authority and the Association of Muslim Schools. This has had a positive effect on the teaching methods employed.
- The administrator and the subject heads constitute an effective middle-management tier. They work together closely and were quick to act on issues raised during the inspection and begin to develop an action plan to address weaknesses identified.
- The school works well to promote equality of opportunity, foster good relations and tackle discrimination. Students are offered impartial careers guidance by independent advisors who visit the school regularly. They are ambitious and are considering a range of options, including further and higher education leading to entry to various professions.
- The school teaches students to respect other communities and faiths through both Islamic and secular studies. Students are being well prepared for life in modern Britain. The school actively promotes British values. Students are familiar with the parliamentary process and understand the importance of obeying civil law. They learn about other religions and have visited other places of worship. They contribute to the community, for example through fund-raising for charity. They have maintained contact with non-Muslim friends from primary school and feel confident that they will integrate well into higher and further education settings. All external speakers are vetted to ensure that they do not express extremist views and subject heads monitor teaching to ensure that students are not exposed to extremist ideas.
- The school premises are small, consisting of a sizable upstairs flat, but they are adequate for the number of students and maximum use has been made of the available space. For example, the science laboratory packs into a lockable trolley unit so that the classroom can also be used for other subjects. Physical education is delivered at a local leisure centre, where there are changing and shower facilities, and students use a nearby hard-covered yard area for breaks. There are suitable facilities for students who are unwell.
- The school is aware that its current premises are not accessible to potential students with limited mobility. Although it is unable to address the issue at present, it has included accessibility in its plans for the school's new premises.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet requirements and are effective in contributing to students feeling safe and well-supported in school.
- The school provides the required information to parents. It has a complaints policy which complies with requirements. In the Parent View online survey, parents were almost unanimously positive about the education provided by the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - does not ensure that the school meets all the standards expected of independent schools. The Principal is also the chair of trustees. The other trustees are not directly involved in the running of the school. The Principal is involved in all areas of the day-to-day running of the school and is kept well informed by middle managers about student progress and staff performance. However, his lack of understanding of the current independent school standards prevents him from accurately identifying areas for improvement
 - the proprietors have ambitious and detailed plans to greatly expand the school. Although work has commenced on the new premises, shortage of funds has prevented them from implementing these plans in the current academic year and they do not currently have a completion date

the proprietors have ensured that the three independent school regulations failed in the emergency inspection of April 2014 have now been met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students are polite and well-mannered both in lessons and at break times. They welcome visitors and are keen to talk to them and learn about their different lifestyles.
- Students remain focused on their work at all times. During independent revision lessons, they worked in pairs conscientiously, revising and testing one another on the material. Although a teacher was in the room, at no time did she have to intervene to ensure that students remained on task.
- Although the school day is long, students say that they do not feel that this is a hardship. In fact, one student said that it was 'a privilege' to be able to attend the school. Students feel a duty to look after the building and have a rota for tidying and checking cleanliness.
- Attendance and punctuality are generally good. However, a small number of students come late, a few on a regular basis. The school has made attempts to address this issue but these have had limited success.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students are clear that there is no bullying in the school. They say that they feel safe and enjoy a close relationship with their teachers. They are aware of such risks as cyberbullying and learn through personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons how to keep themselves safe.
- The school has carried out appropriate risk assessments, including for off-site activities. The premises are regularly checked for hazards and remedial action carried out when necessary. Fire safety equipment has been professionally maintained and regular fire drills are carried out.
- One teacher has undertaken advanced training as a designated safeguarding lead officer and a further three members of staff are about to receive advanced training. Staff and students know what to do if they have concerns and the school has also appointed an independent listener if students require someone to talk to. However, references in the school's safeguarding policy were not in line with the current guidance. The school was aware of the current guidance and was quick to amend this when it was brought to their attention.
- The school has carried out the required checks on all members of staff. Although the school does not currently use a supply agency, they are aware of the requirements for ensuring that checks have been carried out on supply staff. They have obtained written confirmation from the organisation delivering their physical education programme that the necessary checks have been carried out on trainers.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement. Although it enables most students to make expected progress, including in literacy, reading and mathematics, teachers in both Islamic and secular studies do not systematically challenge the more-able students to achieve as well as they can. There is no evidence that they are given further work or more difficult tasks which would allow them to develop a greater understanding of each subject.
- Although the school has a detailed marking policy, this is not followed consistently by teachers. As a result, although much marking highlights strengths in students' work, it seldom shows them what they need to do to improve or what should be the next steps in their learning.
- Students have Islamic studies in the morning and secular studies in the afternoon. Mathematics lessons are timetabled in the evenings and each student attends school until 7.30pm at least once per week, but students say that they do not feel that this is a hardship.
- The school has subject policies and detailed schemes of work for both the Islamic and secular studies curriculum. All the required areas of learning are covered and students are entered for GCSEs or IGCSEs in English, mathematics, chemistry, biology, Arabic and Urdu. They have a physical education lesson weekly at a local leisure centre where professional trainers deliver a bespoke programme. Art is taught in Key Stages 3 and 4 and music is covered through Islamic studies.
- Islamic studies include the study of the Qur'an, *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *tajweed* (Qur'anic recitation) and the traditions of the prophet. Students learn how they are expected to conduct themselves in their daily lives and how they should behave towards others.

- Although there are some links between Islamic studies and secular subjects, for instance in Arabic, Urdu and science, these are not formally documented and therefore opportunities to develop learning are not always exploited. The school has identified which PSHE topics are covered through Islamic studies, and much of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is also covered. Links to this latter aspect are not always clearly documented.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The achievement of students requires improvement because teaching does not enable the more-able students to make progress at the rate of which they are capable.
- The school carries out regular assessments in both Islamic studies and secular subjects and available results indicate that most students are making expected progress. A number, however, fail to reach the targets set by the school. The school was unable to clarify how these targets are determined and therefore does not know whether they are realistic.
- While the school records termly achievement data for most subjects, the data is not held in a single place and is not recorded in a consistent format. This prevents the school from having a clear picture of overall student progress and from easily identifying where students may need extra support. The school has not identified any students as having special educational needs, but offers additional lessons to those students making slower progress in mathematics.
- While GCSE results in English last year were good, those in mathematics and science subjects were below those expected nationally. Although small numbers make it difficult to accurately identify trends, GCSE grades in mathematics have declined over the past three years. The school was unable to provide assessment data and historical GCSE grades for English during the inspection.
- Although students do not take any external qualification in Islamic studies, teachers are familiar with the standards in comparable schools. They believe that students are performing at least as well as their peers elsewhere. Islamic studies classes are arranged by ability rather than age, and students cannot progress until they have reached an appropriate standard. When a student begins to fall behind, extra support is offered. No students have failed to progress to the next class.
- In the few lessons observed, students participated well. Although they were just beginning to learn Urdu and Arabic, they worked diligently and were keen to offer answers. By the end of the lesson, they were beginning to demonstrate good progress. However, those students who showed greater ability were not challenged to deepen their knowledge and understanding.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
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.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	136258
Inspection number	454296
DfE registration number	391/6040

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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	Islamic faith secondary school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Bahr Academy Trust
Chair	Mr Muhammad Abdulmuheet
Principal	Mr Muhammad Abdulmuheet
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2014
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,300
Telephone number	0191 273 1907
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	info@bahracademy.co.uk

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