

Inspection dates

2–3 December 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' achievements are not consistently strong across the school because leaders place too much emphasis on Key Stage 4 and not enough on developing the basic skills that all pupils need.
- Teaching is improving but is not yet consistently good enough across all key stages and subjects to address weaknesses in reading and writing.
- Teachers do not plan work well enough using information on what pupils already know, leading to work which is often too easy.
- Standards in writing for Key Stage 3 pupils are low because pupils have not been taught well enough in the past and weaknesses in writing continue.
- Teaching of reading is hindered because there aren't enough books to allow pupils in all year groups, across all key stages and in all subjects to read extensively and deeply.
- Early years requires improvement. Children are not given opportunities to practise their phonic skills (the sounds letters make) in school, or to take a suitable book home.
- Behaviour is improving but is not managed consistently well by all teachers. Where teachers' expectations are too low, low-level disruption is seen.
- Owing to the very recent appointment of a new headteacher, other temporary leadership roles and the recent introduction of new systems to track progress and check on the quality of teaching, it is too early to see whether these changes are making any difference.
- Leaders are failing in their statutory duty to ensure there is an embedded strategy of careers guidance for all pupils in Years 8 to 11.

The school has the following strengths

- The safety of pupils is given a very high priority. Safeguarding procedures are highly effective in creating a safe culture in the school.
- Mathematics is taught well in Key Stage 2 and pupils are well supported to help them to catch up if they have gaps in their understanding or for the most-able pupils to be challenged and stretched.
- Pupils make exceptional progress in GCSE English and mathematics.
- Improvements to the curriculum have been made and pupils now have the opportunity to learn computing, art, drama and sound studies (music) across the school and to learn about other faiths and cultures.
- Governance is highly effective through the knowledgeable and experienced interim executive board, led exceptionally well by the Chair, who has a clear vision for how to improve the school.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils make more sustained progress, especially from Key Stage 2, by all teachers using the high-quality information they now have to plan and deliver work which builds on what pupils already know, can do and understand.
- Strengthen the teaching of reading across the school, especially for those who are not meeting the expected level, by:
 - significantly investing in the purchase of a wide range of reading books across the full range of curriculum subjects and across all key stages to overcome the lack of investment in this aspect of the school's work over a number of years
 - guiding pupils to read a wide range of books, across all subject areas, which interest them and are suitably challenging
 - making sure that teachers know how to help pupils to improve their reading.
- Improve the way in which behaviour is managed across the school by making sure that all teachers have high expectations of good behaviour, follow the school's policy on managing behaviour and apply sanctions in a consistent way.
- Improve the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - investing significantly in the stock of early, decodable reading books so that children can practise their phonic skills at home and in school daily
 - sharpening the teaching and match of activities more closely to what children already know, can do and understand
 - using time wisely to maximise children's learning.
- Improve independent careers guidance and ensure that the interim executive board (IEB) fulfils its statutory duty by ensuring that the school has an embedded careers information, advice and guidance (IAG) strategy for all pupils in Years 8 to 11, which provides them with:
 - a range of activities which inspire them, such as talks from employers
 - more opportunities to develop entrepreneurial skills for self-employment
 - independent advice and guidance on the range of education and training options available to them, including apprenticeships.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the team is new and it is too early to see the impact of developments the team is now putting in place. With the very recent appointment of a permanent headteacher, the school now has a complete senior leadership team. Recent changes to other leadership roles have been made, with some areas covered by temporary leaders. Leadership of this school is no longer dependent on external support from leaders in a teaching school; this support was withdrawn in July 2015.
- Senior leaders' knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment to improving the school is clear. Rigorous processes have been introduced to support self-evaluation, and leaders have a clear understanding of the areas in the school that still need to be tackled. However, a lack of resources is hindering the rate of progress at the school.
- Plans are in place to tackle the substantial financial deficit of almost £3 million, a large proportion of which was accrued under the previous leadership regime. These plans are already having a significant impact as, by the end of this tax year, the deficit budget will be half what it was when the IEB took over the running of the school in May 2014.
- School leaders now have an accurate view of learning and progress across the whole of the primary phase due to checks on teachers' assessments which are then externally verified through the local authority. At Key Stage 4, leaders are confident that pupils' grades are accurate and moderation processes are effective, based on the feedback received from examination boards. Teachers' assessments at Key Stage 3 are not yet checked with the same rigour.
- Leaders' new approach to assessment without using National Curriculum levels provides a coherent approach to tracking the progress made by pupils across the school. Leaders quickly identify pupils who are not making the progress they should and take swift action to help them to catch up. Although this approach has only recently been introduced, leaders are in a strong position to be able to tell whether their intervention work is making any difference. However, pupils and parents do not fully understand this new approach.
- Leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching is more reliable than at the last inspection because they use a wider range of information to find out about the strengths of teaching within a subject, key stage or across the school. This includes observations of teaching and learning, checks on pupils' work in books and a greater emphasis given to the progress being made by pupils. The information gathered contributes towards teachers' training and supports well the management of teachers' performance and pay progression.
- Teachers receive help to address any weaknesses in their teaching through an action plan which sets clear targets for improvement and through supported work with other teachers. Leaders check whether this training is making a difference by looking for evidence of impact in their regular observations of teaching. Whole-school training is provided for key priorities such as safeguarding, extremism and radicalisation.
- Improvements to the curriculum are having a good impact on pupils' development and progress, including their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. In the primary phase, computing has been introduced and pupils learn about drama and sound studies (music). In the secondary phase, after-school Mandarin and Spanish classes take place for pupils who wish to learn a new language. These are well attended by boys and girls. Year 10 pupils told inspectors that they enjoy business studies, a new option introduced for the first time in September. Pupils find out more about other beliefs and religions outside Islam through a new programme of religious education which follows the Birmingham agreed syllabus.
- Leaders ensure that prompt action is taken to improve attendance further, such as phone calls home on the first day a pupil is absent and referrals to the family liaison officer to follow up concerns with families. As a result of this work, the number of pupils who are persistently absent is reducing.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - is highly effective. The very experienced and knowledgeable IEB is led exceptionally well by the Chair, who has a clear vision of how to improve the standard of education for pupils at the school
 - through the IEB, has been instrumental in driving improvements in the school so far
 - has made sure that all checks on all people employed in the school, including volunteers, are carried out in meticulous detail and are accurate

- has addressed previous gaps in expertise in legal, financial and human resource advice for the running of the school, commissioned through the local authority
 - makes certain pupil premium funding continues to be used well, to make sure gaps in attainment and progress for disadvantaged pupils compared with others nationally continues to stay closed, although this is less effective in the early years
 - knows how the primary physical education and sport premium is used to effectively raise participation in sport, although there is no information available on the amount received by the school for Year 7 catch-up funding as records were not made available to the IEB from the previous governing body
 - does not yet ensure that the IEB fulfils its statutory duty by ensuring the school has an embedded IAG strategy for all pupils in Years 8 to 11.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are highly effective in creating a safe culture in the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because there is too much variability within key stages and subjects.
- Assessments are carried out every half term which provides teachers with up-to-date and accurate information on what pupils know. Teachers do not use this information well enough to plan work that builds on what pupils already understand and can do.
- Teachers plan a variety of different worksheets or tasks, in accordance with the school's policy and recent training given on matching work to pupils' stage of development. Although this work often provides effective support for pupils who need extra help, it is not always challenging enough for the most-able pupils. As a result, too often, pupils are given work which repeats, or is too similar to, what they have done before. When this happens, pupils say the work is too easy and they become restless.
- Pupils are falling behind in classes covered by temporary teachers for several weeks, such as in mathematics in the secondary phase. Although pupils are being set work to do, they are not being taught the knowledge and skills they need to enable them to make the progress the school expects of them.
- The teaching of reading requires improvement because the school is woefully lacking in reading stock due to years of underinvestment. As a result, pupils in all year groups, across all key stages and in all subjects have very limited opportunities to read extensively and deeply, whether that is to read around a subject in the secondary phase or to explore a wide range of authors in the primary stage. Primary pupils do not have well-established habits of bringing in their reading books to be heard reading aloud and have their books changed. Secondary pupils spoken to had a very limited knowledge of authors and their works.
- The provision for those primary pupils who did not attain the expected level in reading in the summer 2015 national tests is weak when they transfer to Year 7. Although the school has reading ages for pupils, these are not used well to target appropriate support. The school was unable to provide information about how the Year 7 catch-up funding has been used to support pupils with weak reading skills.
- Writing, identified as a weakness in the previous inspection, is improving in the primary phase. However, not enough is done to help pupils who have now moved to Key Stage 3 to improve the presentation of their work. Correct use of punctuation and insisting pupils write in full sentences are features of religious education lessons. Pupils respond to these expectations for the standard of written work and improve their writing skills as a result.
- Mathematics teaching is improving in the primary phase. In a Year 3 class for pupils who needed help to fill gaps in their learning, they were excited to use their skills in 'counting on' in steps of 5, 10 and 20 and helped each other when accurately measuring out orange juice using measuring cylinders. The most-able pupils in Year 6 were challenged in their work as they calculated the size of interior angles in a tessellating pattern made from pentagons and quadrilaterals.
- Teachers across the school have good subject knowledge and use this well to ask pupils questions that require them to think more deeply about their work. In an Arabic lesson, a teaching assistant used good knowledge of the language to challenge most-able pupils further.
- The school's marking policy is particularly effective in supporting pupils' progress when it is followed carefully, for example, by teachers who give careful thought to additional tasks for pupils to complete which directly link to errors in their work, rather than merely asking them to work harder.
- Pupils told inspectors that they particularly like going on trips which help them to learn more about a subject outside school. Year 10 pupils did this recently on a geography field trip on rivers, which they enjoyed.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Safety of pupils is given a very high priority. Pupils know this and confirmed that they feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe such as when using the internet. They know the threats posed by extremist views and understand how to keep themselves safe from radicalisation.
- Pupils' understanding of British values is increasingly promoted through the curriculum and a range of activities. For example, a trip to the Houses of Parliament for pupils in Year 10 helped them to find out more about the way laws are made and the work of the government. Pupils have a good understanding of 'rights' but are less clear about 'responsibilities'.
- Pride was shown by pupils in telling inspectors about their fundraising work for Islamic Relief and empathy was demonstrated for the victims of the recent terrorist attacks in Paris as they talked about how they thought about the victims during silent reflection.
- Pupils in the primary phase demonstrated self-confidence and enjoyment of singing when they sang beautifully together in a group. All took part with enthusiasm and listened carefully to their teacher and to each other so that they knew when to sing their part.
- Pupils told inspectors that there is now virtually no bullying and that this is no longer an issue due to the introduction of 'STOP STOP' (which stands for 'several times on purpose – start telling other people'). Pupils know who to tell if they are being bullied and most are confident that when they do this, the bullying will stop.
- Although pupils in Year 11 benefit from good-quality, independent careers guidance, there is very little opportunity for pupils in Years 8 to 10 to develop entrepreneurial skills or to find out about different careers. It is left to individual teachers to share ideas with pupils. Pupils told inspectors that their mathematics teacher often tells them about careers they can go into if they have good qualifications.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement because it is not managed consistently well enough by all adults. Adults' expectations of standards of behaviour are sometimes too low.
- A lack of respect for the precious few resources the school has was observed in an art lesson. Girls left the room in a mess, with pencils and pastels left on tables or the floor and the teacher had to tidy these up before the next lesson.
- Low-level disruptive behaviour, seen during the last inspection, continues in some lessons where teachers do not plan work which is interesting and at the right level of difficulty and where the pace of learning is slow. Pupils were seen chatting to their friends, and teachers were observed sometimes having to shout over the noise to try to get everyone's attention. Pupils say this is worse in lessons covered by temporary teachers when their usual teacher is absent.
- Girls in the secondary phase, gathering for prayer, did this with some reluctance and teachers needed to coax pupils out of the toilets and out of classrooms to encourage them to 'hurry along'. When pupils arrived, teachers needed to do some 'shushing' before the girls settled and prayers could start.
- Nevertheless, behaviour is improving. More money has been spent on rewards for pupils in this term than in the previous term as pupils 'buy in' to the new behaviour system which has been introduced. Teachers are encouraged to emphasise praise rather than give out sanctions and an online system of recording rewards is helping to motivate pupils.
- Attendance is broadly average and similar to that seen at the last inspection. The gap between the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school has narrowed and there is now little difference between the two groups.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils' achievements are not consistently strong across the school and school leaders place too much emphasis on the outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4. Nevertheless, improvements have been made since the last inspection. Inspectors found no evidence of the standard of work declining but progress is still too slow in some subjects.
- Key Stage 2 outcomes in the past have been average, with lower standards seen in writing. Not enough is being done to help pupils to improve their writing now that they have moved into Key Stage 3. The weakness in writing is not being addressed in a consistent way although opportunities for extended writing were seen in history and religious education. Writing is improving at Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' reading skills are improving but they do not read widely or often enough. A culture of reading has not been established across the school. One impact of this lack of wider reading is evident in the poor GCSE outcomes in humanities and the average standards in reading at the end of Key Stage 2 over time.
- Standards in mathematics are improving rapidly in the primary phase, supported by use of appropriate equipment to help pupils to develop a good understanding of number, fractions and shape. Pupils at Key Stage 2 tackle problems in lessons confidently. In the secondary phase, this mastery approach is not yet developed well enough and standards are only average at Key Stage 3.
- Progress in art and design across the school and in graphics at Key Stage 4 is slow. In the past, primary-age pupils were not given the opportunity to experience the full art curriculum due to the overemphasis on English and mathematics. Their skills in drawing and use of tone and colour in shading are therefore not sufficiently well developed. This is now hindering their progress in the secondary phase.
- GCSE results improved in 2015. Far more pupils than has been the case in the past made exceptional progress in English and mathematics, well above the national average. Where attainment was very low, such as in geography, art and design, chemistry and physical education, leaders know the reasons for this and have taken action to improve these areas.
- The least-able pupils are very well supported in lessons and they achieve good outcomes across the school. When the most-able pupils are given work to do that presents them with a challenge so that they do not need to complete the easier work first, they too achieve well. However, the most able typically make slower progress than others.
- The very small number of pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs are equally supported in lessons and make similar progress to others in their class. Where there are differences, this is typically due to medical reasons resulting in long-term absences leading to pupils falling behind.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as others in the school and the gaps with other pupils seen nationally have either closed, as is the case in English at Key Stage 4, or are narrowing rapidly, as in mathematics.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good. Although staff undertake robust assessment of what the children know, can do and understand when they enter the school, and regularly thereafter, this information is not used to plan activities which closely match their needs. As a result, too many children, particularly the more able, are not stretched or challenged enough and so do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- On entry to the Reception class, many children already know most of the initial sounds of the alphabet, can name and recognise colours, can count to 10 and beyond and know and use prepositional language, such as 'in the box' and 'under the table'. Some can already form and write the numerals 1–20 well. The vast majority can use simple tools well, play cooperatively and initiate conversations with adults using complete sentences.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is good and, as a result, children make good progress in acquiring this important knowledge. However, they do not have access to decodable books (books that use only words that children can sound out) to practise their developing phonic skills, either at school or at home. In line with the rest of the school, the early years provision is woefully bereft of early reading books that other schools have built up over recent years in response to government requirements. Years of underfunding and lack of provision in this fundamental aspect of the school's work have left the early years staff without the books that they need to ensure that the children make good and better progress in their reading.

- The outcomes of the 2015 Early Years Foundation Stage profile confirm these observations. The vast majority of children achieved in line with, or just above, the national picture across all areas of learning. Reading was the aspect in which children performed least well. The vast majority of children are, however, suitably prepared for the next stage in their education.
- The daily organisation of activities is not as effective as it could be. There is too much time slippage and the continuous provision is not planned well enough to enable children to consolidate the new knowledge and skills they are learning in the teacher-led activities.
- The children are happy and settled. They are well cared for. They behave well and show signs of developing empathy and concern for others. For example, in the playground two girls noticed a boy crying, asked him what was wrong and took care of him. Partnerships with parents and other professionals are effective and contribute positively to children's progress.
- Training, supervision and support for staff remain key priorities for leaders. The assistant headteacher with overall responsibility for the Early Years Foundation Stage is aware of what needs to be done to further improve the quality of practice and teaching.
- The school has very few children eligible for the early years pupil premium. Staff are unable to separate that funding from the overall budget and so are not able to comment on its impact.

School details

Unique reference number	133306
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	433741

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	All-through
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	780
Appropriate authority	The interim executive board
Chair	David Willey
Executive Headteacher	David Brown
Telephone number	0121 773 7979
Website	www.alhijrahschool.co.uk
Email address	enquiry@al-hijrah.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 December 2013

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized all-through school. It admits 60 pupils each year, although there are almost double this number in Year 10. From Year 5, girls and boys are segregated for lessons, and break- and lunchtime.
- As an Islamic voluntary- aided school, priority admission arrangements are in place for pupils practising the Islamic faith.
- An interim executive board commenced responsibility for governance of the school in May 2014.
- From June 2014, the school has been led by an executive headteacher, originally commissioned through a local teaching school providing support to the school. A permanent headteacher has very recently been appointed and commenced in November 2015.
- Until recently, the school has been receiving support to improve leadership and teaching through Calthorpe School, a local teaching school. This support ended in June 2015.
- All pupils are from minority ethnic groups and most are of Pakistani heritage with others from a range of backgrounds including Black African and Bangladeshi. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much higher than the national average.
- About two fifths of pupils in the school are supported by pupil premium funding, which is higher than average. This funding is provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after in public care.
- A very small number of pupils in the school have disabilities or special educational needs and this is typically around three or four pupils in each year group.
- The school does not make use of any alternative or off-site provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for primary and secondary pupils. In primary, this sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In secondary, the minimum expectations are for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 21 lessons and carried out a number of short visits to tutor time and to other lessons to look at how well literacy development and reading were promoted across the school. Pupils' work in books was reviewed and information about their work was also gained from viewing displays around the school and by inspectors talking to pupils about their work during lessons.
- It was not possible to see any teaching of Year 11 pupils as they were involved in mock examinations.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, headteacher and senior leaders, subject and other leaders, members of the IEB and the headteacher from the teaching school providing support to improve leadership and teaching in the school. An inspector also met with a representative from Birmingham City Council and spoke with a representative from the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP).
- Visits were carried out to the library to look at the range and suitability of books available for pupils, and to the intervention room where pupils receive additional support for English and mathematics.
- Inspectors observed behaviour at break- and lunchtime and visited the reflection room, where pupils from Years 5 to 11 receive support to help them to manage their behaviour. Girls from Key Stages 3 and 4 were observed during prayer.
- A group of pupils from Year 10 met formally with an inspector to share their views on the school. An inspector listened to a group of Key Stage 2 pupils read and another inspector had a guided tour of the school site with two pupils chosen by the school.
- An inspector met with a group of parents at the school gate and spoke with a parent who had requested a meeting with an inspector. The 60 responses made in the last 365 days to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, were also considered.
- Inspectors considered 20 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- A variety of information was reviewed about pupils' achievements, attendance and behaviour. The school's processes for self-evaluation and action-planning were considered and a thorough check was made of the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe.

Inspection team

Denah Jones, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Angela Westington	Her Majesty's Inspector
Robert Steed	Ofsted Inspector
Gareth Morgan	Ofsted Inspector

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