

# Al-Risalah

145 Upper Tooting Road, London SW17 7TJ

<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 December 2015
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have improved the work of the school since the previous inspection.
- Consistently good teaching in all subjects motivates pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe and have good relationships with their classmates and staff.
- Children in the nursery settle quickly and make good progress because they are well cared for.
- Parents and staff are highly satisfied with the school.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly of fundamental British values, is strong. Pupils link these to Islamic values, and any inequalities or prejudices are not tolerated. Pupils have a very good understanding of how democracy works and the importance of obeying the law.
- Leaders and governors have made sure that all the independent school standards are met.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The most-able pupils are not always given sufficiently challenging work to enable them to make rapid progress and attain the top GCSE grades.
- Pupils do not always receive the effective advice on improving their work that is prescribed in the school's marking policy.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring:
  - teachers consistently follow the school's marking policy to show pupils how to improve
  - the most-able pupils are always given harder work so that they make greater progress in their learning and achieve the top grades at GCSE.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The governors and the new headteacher share an aspirational vision for the school to become an outstanding educational institution, underpinned by the values of Islam. The other senior and middle leaders share this ambition and effectively support the work of the school.
- The new headteacher is determined to ensure all pupils make rapid progress. As a result, all staff and the parents now understand that the high proportion of good-quality GCSE grades are not good enough for pupils with above-average attainment when they start school.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is robust and the school provides effective support and training opportunities to further improve it. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the last inspection and it is now good. However, not all teachers consistently follow the school's marking policy.
- The broad and balanced range of subjects, carefully matched to pupils' interests and enthusiasms, ensure that equality of opportunity is promoted well in both the girls' and boys' schools. For example, art has been introduced and some pupils are making portfolios, which they can use for A level examinations in their new schools. The range of physical education activities has been broadened to include karate, rounders and football, and geography has been introduced at Key Stage 3. Pupils are offered a wide range of enrichment activities through after school clubs, visits to places of educational interest and visitors who come to talk about their experiences. During the inspection, Year 11 pupils went to the Imperial War Museum to see the exhibition on the Holocaust and Year 10 went to visit the Science Museum. This further enriched their learning.
- The promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is the strength of the school. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about the principles of democracy, law and order. For example, they have listened to speakers such as a local Member of Parliament, a councillor and other members of political parties. Pupils take part in the local youth parliament. Leaders have effective systems in place to ensure that extremist and partisan views are not tolerated. All staff and governors have attended 'Prevent' training so that they know how to identify and respond to any concerns that may arise.
- Senior and middle leaders monitor the quality of teaching regularly. Information on pupils' progress is now reviewed more robustly.
- Staff receive regular feedback on their performance so that challenging targets are set that are linked to pupils' achievement. Teachers are encouraged to observe examples of good practice within the school and this has helped to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Staff provide positive role models and have high expectations, and, as a result, pupils' personal development and behaviour are good.
- Parents are highly appreciative of the school's work as they say that their children are safe and are making good progress.
- Leaders have ensured that all independent school standards are met for leadership and management, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors are highly involved in the school's activities. They are fully aware of the school's strengths and areas for development.
  - Governors hold leaders and managers to account for all aspects of their work, challenging them on how they can bring about improvements. For example, they challenged the school as to why the GCSE results had not improved from previous years.
  - Governors provide high levels of support, particularly in how to keep pupils safe, and have helped the school by updating policies and procedures.
  - They receive a wide range of training to keep them up to date with requirements such as 'Prevent' and the Secretary of State's guidance, *Keeping children safe in education*.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All policies and procedures are effectively implemented and updated taking account of the regulatory bodies. Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements. The designated safeguarding leads have undertaken training at the required level, and all staff have received regular update training on how to keep pupils safe. Checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are carefully carried out. The school site is maintained to a good standard and all welfare, health and safety requirements are met.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers use their subject knowledge well to plan activities that keep pupils focused in lessons. They use skilful questioning to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding as was seen when pupils were discussing the key characters in *Animal Farm*.
- Staff know their pupils well and understand the level they are working at. However, sometimes teachers miss opportunities to provide additional and more challenging activities for the most-able pupils.
- Pupils receive regular feedback on their work. Also, they are given many opportunities to check their own and each other's work, which helps them to understand how they learn best.
- The development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is effective. Pupils practise these skills in all subjects, including using the correct punctuation, grammar and spelling. Work is well presented with neat and beautiful handwriting. This is because the teachers have high expectations and challenge any careless and shoddy work.
- Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to use the laboratory for scientific experimentation. This is an improvement from the previous inspection.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are very positive. As a result, pupils are helped to develop good attitudes towards their learning.
- Leaders have ensured that all independent school standards for teaching, learning and assessment are met.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils wear their uniforms with pride, and feel privileged to attend the school. They have positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils understand what constitutes bullying and say that it is rare, and if it happens they know where to report it. They know the different types of bullying and how to keep safe while using the internet or social media.
- Pupils collect funds for charities that benefit a wide range of British and overseas organisations. The programme for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is strong and is well linked to Islamic and religious studies.
- Pupils are reflective about the values of their faith and know that, while boys and girls are taught separately, they are offered the same opportunities and treated as equals. Pupils receive good careers guidance; although all pupils go for academic choices, information about work-related education is also provided. This helps pupils to make choices for their future careers.
- All the standards are met for pupils' personal development and welfare.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Most pupils demonstrate good levels of engagement. When some pupils get disengaged even for a very short time, they sit quietly and do not disrupt lessons. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and to adults. However, very occasionally, some pupils become distracted, but staff are skilful in helping them to refocus on their learning.
- Around the school, pupils follow the rules and behave well during lunch breaks. The hall is used effectively to provide a place where pupils indulge in social and friendly conversation.
- Pupils are punctual and attend regularly; any absence is followed up immediately.
- The school's behaviour policy is applied consistently. Pupils are clear about what is expected from them, and behaviour logs indicate that poor behaviour is rare.
- Leaders have ensured that a full range of policies and procedures are in place, so that the independent school standards for this aspect of the school's work are met.

## Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils enter the school with skills that are broadly average or above average. By the end of Year 11,

pupils' attainment is well above the national average in English, mathematics and science, demonstrating good progress over time.

- Last year, over 70% of pupils gained good-quality GCSEs across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. The school's information shows that most pupils in all year groups are making good progress and are on track to meet their challenging targets for this year.
- In lessons, pupils display a real thirst for knowledge and show great enthusiasm for the subject being studied. Older pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and all go on to further education to study academic subjects. As a result, all pupils proceed to further education.
- The most-able pupils do not always achieve the top GCSE grades. This is because teachers do not always set challenging enough tasks to ensure all pupils make rapid progress, particularly the most able.
- All the independent standards are met for the outcomes for pupils.

## Early years provision

is good

- The nursery manager is highly ambitious and along with governors provides good leadership and manages the nursery well.
- When children join the school, their skills are checked and this information is used to provide appropriate tasks and activities to ensure children make good progress. Records show that children make good progress in all areas of learning and are well prepared to join Reception classes in their choice of schools.
- All children are learning English as an additional language. They enter the nursery with skills in communication, literacy, reading and writing that are lower than is typical for their age. From the time children start school, daily routines and activities help them to develop these skills. For example, children working with one adult were learning the names of fruits that the 'Hungry Caterpillar' ate. Another group were mixing paint colours and talking about the new colours they had made.
- Staff have high expectations of children and support their learning and welfare needs well. Many creative and imaginative activities help them to become confident and enthusiastic learners. For example, when children were learning about what a circle is, they made chapattis from India and Pakistan, pancakes from Nigeria and crêpes from France.
- Daily phonics (letters and the sounds they make) sessions help children to learn to read and write. However, there are insufficient resources for children to enable them to practise and deepen their learning.
- There is a good focus on developing children's mathematical skills with many opportunities to count and recognise numbers and shapes. In addition to the early years areas of learning, children are also taught basics of Islamic studies and this promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Children's welfare, health and safety are effective. The small outdoor play area is planned judiciously and meets children's learning needs in all areas, particularly in understanding of the world and physical development. Children were observed using wheeled toys and the climbing equipment, taking great care not to encroach on each other's space.
- There is a good balance of staff-led activities and the ones chosen by the children themselves. As a result, children are highly engaged in their learning.
- Children settle quickly when they join school because of the positive relationships between staff and parents. Regular contact is maintained so that parents can support their children at home. The end-of-year report very clearly informs parents about the progress their child has made and how they can help to further improve it. This valuable and helpful information is also given to the children's next schools.
- The leadership and management of the manager are good. She monitors quality of teaching and learning regularly and the information gleaned is used to plan to make further improvements. For example, she noticed that boys' attainment in almost all areas was lower than the girls. She implemented strategies such as additional staff support and opportunities for boys to initiate activities to ensure that they are well focused and make good or better progress. The school's information shows that this is working well.
- The manager has a good relationship with the primary school where the majority of nursery children join the Reception classes. Children have many opportunities to visit the school and meet staff. This makes it easy for children to transfer to their new school.
- All the statutory framework requirements for early years and all independent school standards in relation to the nursery are met.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	101090
<b>Inspection number</b>	10006123
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.	
<b>DfE registration number</b>	212/6396
<b>Type of school</b>	Muslim secondary day school and nursery
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	197
<b>Proprietor: nursery and secondary school</b>	Al-Risalah Education Trust
<b>Chair: nursery and secondary school</b>	Y. Bobat
<b>Headteacher: secondary school</b>	Suhayl Lee
<b>Annual fees: secondary school (day pupils)</b>	£3,100– £3,300
<b>Telephone number: secondary school</b>	020 8767 6057
<b>Website: secondary school</b>	<a href="http://www.alrisalahschool.co.uk">www.alrisalahschool.co.uk</a>

## Information about this school

- Al-Risalah is an independent Muslim day school run by the Al-Risalah Education Trust. The Trust also runs a nursery school which has its own building (10 minutes' walk away), and runs independently of the secondary school. The only commonality is the governing body. This inspection covered both the secondary and nursery schools.
- The secondary school is located in a converted cinema, and the nursery is housed in a renovated residential building.
- The secondary school is registered to admit 287 pupils. Currently there are 197 pupils who attend the school full time. Boys and girls are taught separately.
- None of the pupils has a statement of special educational needs and there are no children who are looked after. All pupils are Muslims, but are from a range of ethnic minority backgrounds.
- The school was last inspected in May 2012. Since then, there have been two changes in the headship. The current headteacher took up his post in September 2015, and has worked at the school for the last 10 years. In addition, four new teachers joined the school in 2014/15.
- The school does not make use of any offsite training.
- The school aims to 'equip students with life skills in order to be role model citizens, ambassadors for Islam as well as good Muslims'.

## Information about the nursery school

- The nursery school accommodates 90 children (45 full-time equivalent), during the morning and afternoon sessions. All children attend the nursery for a total of 15 hours per week and are funded under the government's nursery scheme.
- All children speak English as an additional language. There are no children with a statement of special educational needs. The school has identified 10 children who are most in need of support.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.

### In the secondary school

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and governors in order to check the compliance with the regulatory requirement of the independent school standards.
- Inspectors observed 20 lessons or part lessons, eight of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the lead inspector undertook a learning walk to all classes, accompanied by the headteacher.
- Inspectors reviewed key documents and policies, including those related to safeguarding, and scrutinised pupils' files and the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress.
- Reports and other information given to parents were also analysed.
- Inspectors attended two assemblies both boys' and girls', and observed behaviour during lunchtimes and breaktimes. They also held informal discussions with pupils.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Inspectors considered the 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.

### In the nursery school

- Two inspectors visited the nursery on two consecutive days.
- Two learning walks were conducted to observe teaching and learning, both jointly with the nursery manager.
- The school's information on children's attainment and progress, including children's journals, was scrutinised.
- Meetings were held with the nursery manager and attendance officer to check compliance with the regulatory requirements of the independent school standards.

## Inspection team

Kanwaljit Singh, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Rosemarie McCarthy	Ofsted Inspector
Nasim Butt	Ofsted Inspector

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