

# Rochdale Girls School

Greenbank Road, Rochdale, Lancashire OL12 0HZ

## Inspection date

15 March 2016

## Overall outcome

**Independent school standards not met**

## Context of the inspection

- The registration authority for independent schools commissioned this inspection in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan.
- The school was last inspected on 12–14 May 2015 when it received a full inspection carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The school was judged not to have met the independent school standards and to require improvement to do so. The standards unmet related to the quality of education provided, including the provision of impartial and up-to-date careers guidance, and the quality of teaching. Standards were also unmet relating to the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, the medical checks that the school carries out prior to employment, and the leadership and management of the school.
- The school submitted an action plan to show how it would remedy these issues. The plan was evaluated on 16 October 2015 and judged to require improvement.
- This is the school's first monitoring inspection since the full inspection in May 2015. The inspection was unannounced.
- During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and representatives of the governors including the chair of the governing body. Teaching was observed in all year groups across both sites of the school and pupils' work in books scrutinised. Documentation relating to staff training, leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching and the tracking of pupils' progress was examined. The school's single central record and paperwork relating to staff appointments and safeguarding, including the checks made to ensure the medical fitness of staff, were also scrutinised.

## Main findings

### Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

- The inspection in May 2015 found that leaders had only recently begun to check and confirm a person's medical fitness before that person took up an appointment at the school.
- In its action plan that was evaluated in October 2015, the school did not identify the actions it would take to meet this standard. The school's revised action plan indicated that the school would retrospectively complete formal medical checks to ensure the fitness for employment of all staff, and follow up any issues identified resulting from their checks.
- As a result of implementing its action plan, leaders have completed all retrospective checks on all members of staff regarding their medical fitness for employment through the effective use of a formal medical declaration form. This process is now included in the school's appointment procedures and used for all appointments. Consequently, this standard is met.

### Quality of education provided

- The inspection in May 2015 found that pupils did not receive sufficient guidance about future opportunities, including careers. The school had appointed a member of staff to take responsibility for developing this aspect of the school's work but had not ensured that pupils received impartial advice.

- In its action plan that was evaluated in October 2015, the school identified that an additional person would be appointed to lead impartial careers guidance and that the school would begin the completion of a national careers guidance award scheme. The school's revised action plan indicated that the school would:
  - commission impartial careers advice and guidance from a charitable organisation currently working with the school
  - develop the curriculum to include additional careers-focused learning activities for pupils
  - utilise the school's community links to provide additional careers mentoring for pupils
  - develop a series of visits and experiences for pupils relating to careers.
- As a result of implementing the school's action plan, leaders' actions have ensured that pupils now receive appropriate impartial advice and guidance about their career choices and the required standard is met.
- Leaders have improved the quality of careers guidance pupils receive. They have clearly identified middle leaders who are responsible for the development of impartial advice and guidance in both parts of the school. Leaders hold them to account regularly through monitoring meetings.
- Impartial advice regarding careers is now available to pupils because leaders have commissioned an external provider who visits the school regularly to provide advice and guidance. Both boys and girls learn about different careers through interesting and engaging activities such as designing advertisements for different jobs and developing their application and interview techniques. For example, some boys have recently been through role-play appointment procedures to become teachers. These role plays involved writing applications and having mock interviews.
- Pupils have high aspirations and demonstrate high levels of knowledge about the required qualifications needed for their preferred careers because leaders ensure that they have access to the correct information. Pupils welcome visits to the school by ex-pupils who have professional roles in the community. These visits allow pupils to ask about the positive and negative aspects of their jobs and to get up-to-date information. Additionally, recent visits to careers fairs allow pupils to learn about a broad range of possible career opportunities and to get further advice and guidance.
- Pupils in Key Stage 4 receive additional one-to-one mentoring regarding the choice of their future careers from an experienced voluntary mentor. Because of the improvements to the availability and quality of advice and guidance, pupils are clear about their future aspirations and able to explain clearly how they use the information about their chosen career to help them choose the correct subjects to study. They are also clear about how they go about identifying the most appropriate sixth-form provider to help them achieve their goals.

### **Quality of teaching and assessment**

- The inspection in May 2015 found a number of deficiencies in the school's arrangements to ensure that the quality of education received by pupils was good enough. Leaders did not do all they could to improve the quality of teaching and rarely monitored teachers' work, which resulted in teachers not receiving sufficient training and professional development. Consequently, teachers did not use their good subject knowledge to provide interesting and inspiring lessons. The inspection further identified that there was a limited range of resources in school to support effective teaching. As a result, pupils did not engage in their learning with enough intellectual or creative effort to make the progress they should. The inspection also identified that leaders had not established a clear and robust method of tracking the progress pupils make across all the key stages, nor did they analyse achievement in a timely manner. This meant that leaders were unable to identify when additional challenge and support for teachers were needed.

- In its action plan that was evaluated in October 2015, the school did not clearly identify the actions it intended to take in order to meet the required standards. However, the amended plan has clarified the details of the intended actions. The plan indicates that the school would:
  - restructure the leadership and management of the school to appoint middle leaders responsible for coaching and monitoring specific staff across both sites
  - develop common planning structures, referred to as thinking plans, to ensure consistency of planning
  - increase the frequency of monitoring of teaching through more regular lesson observations by senior leaders and learning leads, and work scrutiny
  - commission support and guidance from external professionals to improve the quality of teaching in the school
  - develop a structured professional development programme that focuses on key strategies for effective teaching, including the use of assessment in teaching, effective questioning and classroom management
  - enhance the resources available to teachers to develop their teaching
  - develop links with other schools to promote the development of good practice
  - implement a new whole-school tracking system and more frequently analyse the progress of pupils.
- As a result of implementing its action plan, the quality of teaching has improved due to the effective actions of senior leaders. Consequently, the rates of progress that pupils make are improving. Girls, in particular, make stronger progress than that made by boys. However, progress for boys in some subjects in key stage 3 is not as strong as it needs to be for them to succeed well in their GCSEs.
- The newly restructured leadership of the school had led to increased monitoring of teachers' work. Learning leads, fulfilling newly established roles in school, undertake frequent monitoring of the work of teachers and regularly scrutinise pupils' work in books to ensure that teachers are implementing the school's policies and acting on advice. Regular joint work between senior leaders and learning leads, and bi-weekly progress meetings, ensure greater consistency in their judgements and keep senior leaders better informed of the impact of their actions to improve teaching.
- The introduction of a formal assessment framework now allows leaders to track more accurately the progress of pupils and the impact of teachers on pupils' learning. Pupils across the school are regularly assessed and the information evaluated and analysed by senior leaders each half term. A new electronic system to support this is well used by the girls' site and gives leaders a greater depth of understanding of pupils' achievement. However, this system is not yet implemented on the boys' site where leaders use a more basic recording system that limits the analysis of results. Leaders are aware of this discrepancy and plans are in place to improve tracking at the boys' site by migrating to the new system. Overall, senior leaders have a better understanding of where the best teaching is and where teaching needs to be further improved.
- Teachers are improving the quality of their teaching because of a structured programme of professional development that focuses on the development of teaching strategies. For example, pupils are now set more open-ended tasks that require them to apply their knowledge and understanding following specific training on the use of questioning for teachers.
- Additional resources, including additional science equipment in the laboratory used by both boys and girls, and the provision of interactive whiteboards and televisions in classrooms, enable teachers to be more creative in their teaching and better inspire and engage pupils in learning. For example, in one science lesson on the boys' site, videos of cars racing round a track and rock climbers struggling for grip on a cliff were effectively used to engage pupils in learning about friction.

- Leaders have made effective use of external links with other schools to develop both their own and their teachers' skills. Senior leaders have visited a high-performing Muslim faith school to learn about the qualities of leadership needed to drive improvement. Links with a local maintained secondary school, which is also on the journey to good, are giving teachers and middle leaders opportunities to learn from shared training.
- Lessons are more engaging and better planned, particularly in the girls' section of the school, because of increased consistency in planning. Teachers now use assessment information more effectively to ensure that the work they plan for pupils is more closely matched to their needs and abilities. For example, one teacher's planning during a teaching module on the states of matter showed clearly how they amended their lesson content to address misconceptions in pupils' knowledge of the atomic structure.
- Pupils, both boys and girls, comment positively on the improvements to the quality of the teaching they now receive. Pupils say they now behave much better in lessons because these are more interesting. Pupils commented that teachers take more time to explain how to do things and more carefully match work to pupils' needs because they mark and assess work in more detail. For example, girls in year 11 explained how their mathematics teacher had established a clear revision pathway for them to follow based on the assessment of their performance over the year. As a result, the girls receive specific challenges and additional help to ensure that they feel secure in their weaker areas of mathematics.

### Leadership and management

- Leaders do not fulfil their responsibilities effectively because one of the independent school standards is still not met. Leaders are, however, aware of the specific aspects that require additional work to ensure that the standard is met and are taking appropriate actions to meet that standard.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have taken effective action to improve many aspects of the school. These include ensuring the safeguarding of pupils through the use of appropriate adult pre-employment checks, and ensuring that pupils receive appropriate advice and guidance about their future options and actions that result in better teaching and pupils' more positive attitudes to learning.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

#### The school must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements

- In order to meet the requirements in full, the school should ensure that the following standards are met.

The proprietor must ensure that the 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.	3, 3(a)
The proprietor must ensure that leaders and managers demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their roles so that the independent school standards are met consistently.	34(1), 34(1)(a)
The proprietor must ensure that leaders and managers fulfil their responsibilities so that the independent school standards are met consistently.	34(1), 34(1)(b)

## Inspection team

John Nixon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

## Information about this school

- Rochdale Girls School opened in 2003. It is an independent day school for secondary-aged Muslim girls and boys. It is a member of the Association of Muslim Schools UK.
- The boys' site opened in September 2014 and currently has pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. In September 2013, the girls' site moved into new accommodation, which is a purpose-built, single-storey school previously owned by the local authority.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2014 and is based at the girls' site.
- The school aims to provide an Islamic and National Curriculum to boys and girls aged between 11 and 16 from all ethnic backgrounds, in a safe environment. The school's mission is 'to provide education in an Islamic environment that encourages good discipline, behaviour, tolerance and respect, in order to achieve goals by developing potential, thereby creating role models for the community'.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school was last inspected by Ofsted in 2015 when it was judged to require improvement.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	134575
<b>Inspection number</b>	10010381
<b>DfE registration number</b>	354/6006

This inspection was conducted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

<b>Type of school</b>	Muslim secondary school
<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>	144
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mr Ikram Akhtar
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Shahzad Malik
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Aishah Akhtar
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12–14 May 2015
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£1,400–£1,700
<b>Telephone number</b>	01706 710184
<b>Fax number</b>	Not applicable
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@rochdalegirlsschool.com">admin@rochdalegirlsschool.com</a>

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