

Bury Park Educational Institute (Al-Hikmah School for Boys and Girls)

82-86 Dunstable Road, Luton, Bedfordshire, LU1 1EH

29 September–1 October
2015

Inspection dates

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The leadership and management of the school are not yet good. School improvement planning is not robust and is lacking in detail.
- Inspectors uncovered a number of flaws in some of the documentation presented to them during the inspection. Although most of these were put right during the inspection, the fact that they occurred demonstrates a lack of attention to detail.
- Middle leadership is not consistently strong. Middle leaders do not make enough contribution to school improvement.
- Leaders, managers and members of the governing body are over-reliant on the views of external partners and have not effectively nurtured the talents of school staff.
- Members of the governing body do not hold leaders sufficiently to account.
- Although the school rightly arranges various activities for students to promote fundamental British values, this work has yet to impact on every student in the school. These well-intentioned activities do not bring all students in contact with students of other faiths.
- The curriculum is too narrowly focused because it does not focus sufficiently on students' creative and aesthetic education.

The school has the following strengths

- Students achieve well because teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and gain the respect of the students they teach.
- Where marking is most effective, it tells students what they have done well and what they need to do to improve.
- Teachers assess students' work and set homework regularly. Students know how well they are doing and they make good progress as they move through the school. They know their academic targets.
- Islamic studies are taught well and contribute positively to the school's ethos.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning, they attend the school regularly and arrive to their lessons on time.
- Students feel safe when in school and are taught effectively on how to keep themselves safe.
- Students behave well and are respectful towards their teachers and each other.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership at all levels by:
 - ensuring that the school establishes accurate and robust quality assurance systems to measure its performance against the most up-to-date Independent School Standards
 - producing school improvement planning documents which make clear what needs to be done, how those monitoring will measure the success of planned actions and how frequently monitoring will take place
 - providing middle leaders with good quality training so that they can fulfil their role in contributing to school improvement
 - providing suitable training to members of the governing body so that they become more effective in holding school leaders to account
 - ensuring that the activities arranged to promote fundamental British values are monitored for their impact, that these activities target all students and bring them into regular contact with young people of different faiths.

- Review the curriculum to ensure it gives boys and girls improved experiences in aesthetic and creative education.

- The school must meet the following Independent School Standards.
 - The proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively and that full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, scientific, technological, human and social and aesthetic and creative education (paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a) and 2(2)(a)).
 - The proprietor ensures that that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently 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

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The school does not meet all of the Independent School Standards and the school's leaders have not established robust systems to monitor the school's performance against the most recent Independent School Standards. School improvement planning is lacking in detail. This means that it is difficult for those who are monitoring the school's documents to check whether leaders' actions are ambitious enough and whether they are on track to achieve their aims.
- Inspectors found contradictory information in some of the school's key documents and policies. Some information contained on the school's website and prospectus was out of date. Although this was rectified by the headteacher when drawn to his attention, this demonstrates a lack of rigour and attention to important detail.
- Senior leaders have been slow in ensuring that middle leaders are able to play a full role in driving school improvement. Although middle leaders are willing, the school has relied too much on the use of external support rather than nurturing the leadership potential that exists within the school.
- The school's curriculum has improved over time and promotes better equality of opportunity for both boys and girls than previously. However, the aesthetic and creative aspects of the curriculum are underdeveloped.
- The headteacher's vision for the school is known and understood well by teachers, support staff, students and parents. Teachers clearly aim to deliver good quality lessons to enable students to succeed. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire speak with admiration about the positive learning environment and the reflective culture of the school.
- Teachers' performance is monitored mainly through the quality of their teaching, and they move up the school's pay scale according to the school's performance management policy. Leaders are now rightly considering gathering a wider range of evidence to inform their judgements on individual teachers to include scrutiny of students' books and a sharper analysis of individual students' performance.
- Leaders have engaged a lot of external partners to promote fundamental British values through visits to the school. These include members of the armed forces, 'Grassroots Luton' -a Christian community organisation, police community cohesion officers and a local Church of England priest. In addition, small groups of students have engaged in activities outside of school. This work is yet to have a marked impact on the majority of students.
- The school promotes students' spiritual, moral and social development well. In particular, the Islamic studies curriculum provides students with opportunities to offer each other mutual support, to reflect and to understand why it is important to do the right thing. Students' understanding of other cultures is less well developed. Although they read about other cultures, they are offered few opportunities to interact with students from different cultures of a similar age.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body have a range of valuable skills. However, minutes of the quarterly meetings do not reflect a high enough degree of challenge. Topics for discussion are often operational in nature and lacking in any long-term strategy. For example, there is little evidence to demonstrate that governors challenge the headteacher on the quality of teaching and students' learning outcomes.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff training in the safeguarding of children is up to date and the school's risk assessments are detailed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The good quality of teaching helps students to learn effectively. Teachers use their subject knowledge well both in the Islamic studies lessons and in National Curriculum subjects. Lessons are interesting and engage students well.
- Teachers make effective use of questioning to deepen students' understanding of what they are learning. They make clear their high expectations and encourage students through good use of praise. This establishes a positive climate for learning, in which students want to do well.
- Teachers are skilled in planning lessons for classes with a range of abilities. They make effective use of information on students' previous learning and link this to students' academic targets. For example, in a Year 11 mathematics lesson for boys, where students were solving linear equations, the teacher ensured that different groups of students were appropriately challenged throughout the lesson, so that each

student worked well towards achieving their target GCSE grade.

- Occasionally, teachers are over-reliant on worksheets which do not always provide a sufficient level of challenge. Sometimes, these are used to keep a student occupied when they have completed the work set, rather than to extend their learning further.
- Students know their current levels of attainment and their targets for improvement, and this helps with their learning. This is because most teachers provide useful feedback to students either in writing or verbally, and students then respond to their teachers' comments to demonstrate they have understood. A few teachers do not provide such detailed feedback.
- Students' literacy and numeracy skills are developed well across a wide range of subjects. Students enjoy reading. A Year 8 English lesson for girls invited them to talk about some of their favourite characters in books they had read and how these characters had impacted on their emotions. The school has decided to decommission its existing library and move towards a system of digital reading. This move is popular with the students.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Students have positive attitudes towards their studies and recognise the value of doing well in school. Relationships between teachers and students are strong and are based upon mutual respect.
- Students feel safe when in the school. This view is supported by parents. Cases of bullying are extremely rare. Students demonstrate a good awareness of different types of bullying and know how to report this in the unlikely event that it should occur. They are aware of the risks involved in the use of the internet and social networking sites.
- Students' attendance is excellent and the school's systems for following up any absences are thorough. Punctuality to school and to lessons is good.
- Students' transition to any post-16 provision is well managed. Boys and girls receive good quality careers guidance. Many students aspire to pursue their studies at university, and those who spoke to inspectors were clear about their future career pathways and how to achieve them. None of the students who left school were not in education, employment or training in the last academic year.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students move around the school sensibly, showing courtesy to each other and to members of staff. During break times they socialise well with each other and show respect for the school environment. Hence there is no litter and no graffiti.
- Students are typically well behaved in lessons. They listen to their teachers and support each other with their learning.
- There have been no fixed-term or permanent exclusions in the last two years.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Students achieve well in this school. This is due to the good quality of teaching they receive and students' positive attitudes towards their studies.
- The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE in 2015 including in English and mathematics was above the national average set in 2014. Students consistently make good progress in both English and mathematics from their different starting points.
- This good progress is replicated across a wide range of subjects studied at Key Stage 4, apart from in Urdu and Arabic. Consequently, school leaders are considering the introduction of studies in Bengali, as this is the predominant ethnicity of the students.
- Students who are disadvantaged, which represents the majority, make good progress from their starting points, as do the most able students and those students with lower starting points.
- Inspectors' observations of students' learning, scrutiny of teachers' planning and students' books show that this good rate of progress is being sustained across all year groups and across a range of subjects.

School details

Unique reference number	134807
Inspection number	10007387
DfE registration number	821/6007
Type of school	Faith School
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Proprietor	Abul Hussain
Chair	Abul Hussain
Headteacher	Ashfaque Chowdhury
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1850
Telephone number	01582 728196
Website	www.alhikmahschool.com
Email address	admin@alhikmahschool.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Bury Park Educational Institute is an independent faith day school for boys and girls close to the centre of Luton in an area of high social deprivation. It was established in 2004 in order to provide an education for Muslim boys and girls regardless of their nationality or language. The school has strong links to the adjacent Bury Park Jamia Mosque.
- The boys and girls are educated separately in the same building. Boys attend the school in the morning and early afternoon and the girls in the late afternoon and early evening. The boys and girls are taught by separate staff.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- There are no students at the school who are disabled or who have special educational needs.
- The school expresses its aims as '*reviving the Islamic way of life with a quality education that is taught in a way that is dynamic and applicable to Muslims living in Luton and the United Kingdom as a whole.*'
- The girls joined the school in 2009 and there are plans for the girls to occupy the current site from September 2016, when the boys will move into a new building.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed 14 parts of lessons and also visited a number of lessons more briefly, accompanied by the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders and subject leaders, four groups of students, the acting Chair of the Governing Body and a number of external partners.
- Inspectors scrutinised school improvement documents, policies, information on students' achievement, students' work, records of the quality of teaching and minutes of meetings of the governing body. Eighteen responses to the online Parent View questionnaire were considered as well as 28 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

John Daniell, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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