

Palfrey Girls School

72 Queen Mary Street, Palfrey, Walsall, West Midlands WS1 4AB

Inspection dates

20 July 2016

Overall outcome

Independent school standards not met

Context of the inspection

- This unannounced progress monitoring visit was conducted at the request of the Department for Education, which is the registration authority for independent schools.
- The last full inspection was in October 2015, when the overall effectiveness of the school was judged as inadequate.
- The school's action plan to address the findings from the last full inspection was evaluated by Ofsted in February 2016. The outcome of the evaluation was that the school's action plan required improvement.
- The inspectors observed learning in several classes across the school and pupils' workbooks were evaluated during observations.
- Discussions took place with pupils, the headteacher, members of the interim executive board, other leaders and administrative staff.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation including the school's action plan, safeguarding and child protection information. Other documents were examined to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards and to provide evidence of the school's progress since the last inspection.

Main findings

- Leaders and managers have made clear improvements to the quality of education provided at the school in the nine months since the last full inspection.
- As a result of improved leadership, teaching and safeguarding measures, nearly all of the independent school standards are now met.
- The school does not yet have enough resources and some of the ones they do have are not looked after well and therefore this standard is not met. Although initial improvements have taken place to develop the Reception provision, further work is needed here to ensure the children in this class have full and independent access to all areas of learning for their age.
- As a result of not all standards being met, some leadership and management standards are not yet met.
- In a short space of time, the new headteacher has used his experience to increase the school's expectations of the quality of teaching, assessment and feedback to pupils. He has worked effectively with the interim executive board to produce an ambitious improvement plan. Evidence shows that a number of improvements are already in place. An example of this is the leadership structure which has been created and shows a good capacity to sustain the current improvements.
- The new interim executive board has quickly provided an effective balance of support and challenge for the school. The chair of the executive board gives a strong, well-considered steer to the current improvements at the school.

Summary of the progress made by the school towards the areas for improvement **(in bold)** outlined at the time of the previous full inspection in October 2015.

■ **Immediately improve the safeguarding arrangements for pupils by:**

- **making sure that safeguarding policies and practice meet statutory requirements, the independent school standards and the statutory requirements for the early years**
- **making sure that rigorous and appropriate steps are taken to stringently follow up when children are missing from school**
- **carrying out the required 'disqualification by association' checks on staff**
- **implementing a policy, and procedures, for administering medicines to children in the early years.**

■ The full inspection in October 2015 found that there were several safeguarding weaknesses.

■ Leaders have worked with Walsall local authority to put an up-to-date safeguarding policy in place. They have recently published it on the school's website.

■ Completed attendance registers were seen during the inspection. Pupils' attendance is high and carefully monitored on a daily basis. Appropriate steps are now taken when a pupil is missing from school.

■ An improved system to safeguard pupils is now in place, with four senior staff trained to take a lead role in child protection. All staff have had basic child protection training, along with training in preventing extremism and radicalisation in education. All staff have now received and read government safeguarding guidance, such as the latest version of, 'Keeping children safe in education'. Records are kept to help protect vulnerable pupils and concerns are followed up thoroughly.

■ Leaders have implemented policy and procedures for properly administering medicines to pupils, including those in the Reception class.

■ Clear steps have now been taken, leading to much improved safeguarding procedures. As a result of this, previous weaknesses have been eradicated and these standards are now met.

■ **Improve the leadership and management of the school by:**

- **increasing the checks on the implementation of the curriculum, the quality of teaching, pupils' learning, behaviour, attendance, and pupils' safety, so that the proprietor and school leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses**
- **making sure that the information produced by the checks on the school's work is carefully analysed to inform strategic plans that drive rapid improvement**
- **providing trustees with information about all aspects of the provision and outcomes for pupils**
- **making sure staff have the skills necessary to teach and assess pupils' progress effectively, particularly in the primary phase**
- **making sure teachers and leaders are held to account for pupils' performance and improving the work of the school**
- **making sure agreed policies and procedures are followed by all staff**
- **making sure that statutory policies are published on the school's website or made available to parents on request.**

■ The full inspection in October 2015 found that there were a number of weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school causing concern.

■ Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed and a new senior leadership structure put in place. An interim executive board has replaced the board of

governors. These changes have led to a leadership and management team which is organised, strategic and has been effective in leading a number of improvements since the last inspection.

- Curriculum policies are now in place for the primary and secondary areas of the school. The secondary curriculum policy identifies how the school will teach pupils of different abilities and assess pupils. However, the primary curriculum policy does not clearly identify these aspects and this should be rectified.
- Appropriate schemes of work have been put in place for a wide range of technological, physical, human and social, aesthetic and creative subjects.
- The headteacher has introduced a new assessment system. Consequently, the school's monitoring of pupils' progress is much improved. Leaders and teachers now have a systematic way of identifying those pupils who are falling behind and need extra support or those who require further challenge.
- The interim executive board is competently led and has quickly had a strong impact on the leadership and management of the school. Self-evaluation of improvement plans show that a number of targets have been achieved, demonstrating the very positive start that the new leadership of the school has made.
- Some leadership and management standards remain not met as a result of a small number of remaining weaknesses in the quality of education provided at the school. However, significant progress has been made to the effectiveness of leadership and management since the last full inspection. Leaders demonstrate a strong capacity to lead further improvements and are realistic about the changes still needed.
- **Improve the quality of teaching and, as a result, accelerate pupils' progress in all year groups by making sure that:**
 - **schemes of work (teachers' expectations of what pupils should learn in all subjects) and teachers' planning take into account the ages, abilities and needs of all pupils**
 - **teachers know how well pupils are doing and match pupils' learning activities closely to their specific needs, particularly for the most and least able pupils**
 - **feedback and guidance given by teachers consistently helps pupils to improve their work**
 - **pupils take pride in their work and ensure that it is well presented, neat and tidy**
 - **teachers improve pupils' writing skills by securing rapid improvement in their spelling, punctuation and grammar, both in English lessons and across other subjects**
 - **teachers improve pupils' ability to use and apply their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding by giving them opportunities to reason mathematically, solve problems and to go into greater depth in each topic, both in mathematics lessons and in other relevant subjects**
 - **pupils in the early years and primary phases use their phonics skills (the sounds letters make) to improve their reading, writing and understanding of what they have read**
 - **pupils have the necessary skills to overcome problems and difficulties with their work**
 - **pupils in the primary phase have the necessary technological skills to access the key stage 3 computing curriculum**
 - **pupils in the primary phase have sufficient opportunities to study a range of different faiths, beliefs and religions**
 - **pupils have access to a suitable range of good-quality resources that support their learning**
 - **children in the early years have access to opportunities for stimulating outdoor play that develops their coordination, control and movement.**

- The full inspection in October 2015 found that there were a number of weaknesses in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Schemes of work have been put in place for all the subjects taught in the school. These include religious education, mathematics and literacy and are likely to support better teaching and therefore increase pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. However, the schemes of work indicate a lesser focus on creative subjects such as music and art.
- Pupils have a positive view of their school and say that aspects of the school are getting better. Older pupils have aspirations to be doctors and engineers, for example. They feel safe in school and the school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum helps them to develop their understanding and be well-prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Observations and records show that teaching has improved and that staff have a better understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils. Teachers generally demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught and therefore help pupils to develop their skills. However, inspection evidence shows that pupils' presentation is not of a consistently high quality.
- Resources are not used as effectively as they could be. For example, owing to the position of the classroom, there is limited access to outdoor provision for Reception children. Bookshelves and displays are not well looked after or of a high quality. The playground is bare and has very few resources, seating or shaded areas. There is no school library. In summary, this means that pupils are unable to fully develop independent learning skills and do not have access to the resources they need to make the progress they are capable of.
- The early years foundation stage standards which were not met at the time of the last inspection have been addressed. However, the quality of education, resources and provision in the Reception class needs further work to ensure that children have full access to the early years foundation stage curriculum.
- Some evidence of improved practice to support computing for primary-aged pupils was seen. However, not all computers are working properly and there are not yet enough resources for pupils to use.
- Leaders have ensured, on the whole, that the school premises and facilities provided are maintained to a standard such that the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured. However, there are some areas which still require attention, particularly in the Reception classroom.
- Leaders have updated a few aspects of the school's website but agree that further work is needed to bring it fully up to date and make it beneficial for parents and pupils.
- As one aspect (in particular) of the quality of education provided is not met, this overall standard remains not met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that
 - teaching at the school utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range (paragraph 3, 3(f)).
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by ensuring that:
 - the proprietor ensures 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 (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a))
 - the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(b)).

Inspection team

Stuart Bellworthy, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Angela Westington

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about this school

- Palfrey Girls School is an independent Muslim day school for pupils aged between four and 16 years. The primary phase, including the Reception Year, admits both boys and girls. The secondary phase admits only girls.
- The school opened in October 1993 and is housed in a former residential home. The school is registered for 242 pupils. There are currently 159 pupils on roll in Years 7 to 11, 60 pupils in Years 1 to 6 and 10 children in the Reception Year.
- The school's vision, values and aims include: 'We aim to develop our students to fulfil their potential intellectually, socially, economically, and culturally to demonstrate to themselves, their families and the wider community that social deprivation, gender or ethnicity need be no barrier to the highest levels of achievement ... in which tolerance and understanding of other values and beliefs is at the heart of our ethos to equip our students to play a vital role in building a more cohesive society both nationally and globally'.
- The school offers secular and Islamic education.
- The school is now governed by an interim executive board.
- All pupils are British and of Asian origin. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision. The school does not run any off-site units.
- Children in the Reception class attend on a full-time basis.
- Little Stars Nursery shares the same site and some resources, but is independent of the school and inspected separately.

School details

Unique reference number	104267
Inspection number	10020390
DfE registration number	335/6008

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.

Type of school	Muslim faith school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	229
Proprietor	Mr B Lorgat
Chair	Mrs F Kholwadia
Headteacher	Mr A Hussain
Date of previous school inspection	29 September – 1 October 2015
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1500
Telephone number	01922 625510
Email address	admin@palfreygirlsschool.org

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