

The Wisdom Academy

16 Windsor Street South, Nechells, Birmingham B7 4HY

Inspection dates

14–16 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- In 2016, the attainment of pupils by the end of Year 6 was below that found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In most year groups, rates of progress for pupils currently in the school are variable in English and mathematics, and some pupils struggle to improve their writing skills.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school because assessment is not accurate enough to inform planning for progress from different starting points over time.
- School leaders and the proprietor have an overly generous view of standards in the school, based on the actions they have taken to secure improvement, rather than the impact these have had up to this point.
- School leaders have developed a new assessment system to underpin the curriculum, but this does not yet provide accurate measures of pupils' progress from different starting points.
- The way in which children's development was recorded has slowed their progress in the past. This is now being addressed by the early years leader, who is making effective improvements to the system.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils who have attended the school since key stage 1 achieve significantly better than others in both English and mathematics.
- Those who join the school with limited or no English are well supported to learn to speak, read and write in English.
- Pupils' behaviour and conduct around the school are good. They demonstrate respect and tolerance on a daily basis because staff take good care of their welfare and development.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have an excellent understanding of modern British values because leaders have ensured that these are part of everyday life in the school.
- Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a high priority. As a result, pupils are safe, staff are well trained and risks are constantly reviewed and ameliorated.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to at least consistently good, and raise achievement, particularly for those who join the school in key stage 2, by ensuring that:
 - teachers use accurate assessment to plan learning over time that meets the needs of pupils at different starting points
 - all teachers develop strategies to deal with the occasional instances when pupils cease to pay attention to their tasks
 - the development of literacy, particularly writing, is supported across subjects.
- Further improve leadership and management, so that self-evaluation is accurate, by:
 - developing an assessment system that enables teachers to accurately assess pupils and to monitor the progress they make from their starting points across a range of subjects.
 - Ensuring the assessment system enables leaders to monitor progress of different groups in relation to national standards.
- Improve early years provision, by ensuring that:
 - the new systems to monitor children's development enable leaders to judge how the achievement of children in the school compares with that of children nationally and how quickly provision is improving
 - a greater proportion of children reach a good level of development, especially when their starting points suggest that this should be the case.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school (ISS 3):
 - 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 (ISS 3(a))
 - involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time (ISS 3(c))
 - shows good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (ISS 3(d))
 - demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and uses information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress (ISS 3(g)).
- The proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school (ISS 34(1)):
 - demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently (ISS 34(1)(a))
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (ISS 34(1)(b)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Leaders have not yet succeeded in ensuring that teaching and learning throughout the school are good. Leaders have accurately identified current weaknesses in teaching and have put a suitable programme of training in place. However, a high proportion of staff are new to the school and some are in their first year of teaching. Consequently, there has not been enough time for those actions to have full effect. ■ The current assessment system is not fit for purpose because it does not enable teachers and leaders to accurately monitor pupils' progress from their starting points. As a result, teachers sometimes struggle to plan learning over time that meets pupils' needs, and this slows their progress. Although learning targets are set for pupils, sometimes these are not challenging enough and pupils do not always know what their targets are and why they have them. ■ Leaders have recently updated the school's marking policy to focus more on providing pupils with clear next steps for learning. Although some teachers are applying the policy effectively, others are not yet using it consistently. ■ The headteacher has implemented an effective system to monitor the quality of teaching. Staff are well supported if they need extra help. In addition, the focused recruitment of subject specialists is enabling senior leaders to begin to delegate some subject responsibilities appropriately. ■ There is an appropriate programme of professional development in place that meets the needs of whole-school improvement targets as well as individual teacher development. The recent focus on improving the approach to teaching mathematics is enabling teachers to address gaps in pupils' knowledge more effectively and raise achievement in this subject. ■ The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. It has recently been reviewed with a view to providing additional teaching time for writing to address weaker progress in this area. Pupils study a range of subjects, including Arabic, history, geography, science, physical education, information technology, personal, social and health education, and art. The curriculum is further enhanced through educational visits to a range of British institutions and regular cultural days. For example, pupils have taken part in cooking meals from different countries and cultures, studied Black history, visited a church and learned about harvest festival in the Christian faith. Community links have been well developed and pupils occasionally visit a local care home for the elderly. ■ Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good because pupils are provided with a range of opportunities to experience and understand the cultures and beliefs of others. For example, in a Year 4 lesson where the teacher was leading a discussion about what makes a 'good' person, pupils were supported to articulate their views. They explained with confidence that it is actions, not beliefs that identify 'goodness'. ■ Pupils' understanding of modern British values is excellent because teachers and leaders take every opportunity to link rights, responsibilities and religious beliefs with being a British citizen and explain what this means in everyday life. Leaders have worked hard with parents to ensure that they understand and support the school's work in this area. 	

- The school meets the requirements to publish a safeguarding policy on its website.
- The school promotes equality effectively. Pupils learn about differences and the need to respect these, and demonstrate that they are able to do so.
- Leaders of the school have made a request to the Department for Education for a material change to increase the number of pupils at the school to 380, with an age range of pupils changing to 4–14 years of age. Accommodation for those extra pupils would be on another site. Inspectors considered that this accommodation is suitable for the numbers requested and meets the relevant independent school standards. Inspectors also considered that the provision to be made for the secondary aged pupils at this site is a likely to meet all independent school standards.

Governance

- The sole proprietor takes full responsibility for the governance of this school. He ensures that statutory duties are met, including those for safeguarding, and takes an appropriately strategic role in school improvement. Regular, focused meetings with school leaders ensure that the proprietor is well informed of the school's progress against agreed areas for improvement. He maintains an overview of the quality of teaching and ensures that teachers only move up the school's pay scale where they have met targets set.
- The proprietor ensures that the headteacher has appropriate support and challenge, holding him to account for pupils' progress. However, together with school leaders, he has held an overly generous view of standards achieved, particularly in relation to how the school compares with national standards.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a robust culture of safeguarding that infuses the school. As a result of regular and effective training, all staff have the confidence to recognise early warning signs of potential problems, and know what to do in these cases and how they should respond. Records show that the school is meticulous in recording any concerns, no matter how small, making timely referrals where required and working effectively with other agencies. Consequently, pupils feel safe and their parents are very confident that their children are safe and secure.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Over time, teaching has not been consistently good enough to ensure that all pupils make the progress they should. However, teachers are keen to take advice and improve their practice. School records and inspection evidence show that teaching is improving. ■ Teachers are now making better use of ongoing assessment information to plan lessons that take pupils' aptitudes and abilities into account. However, in too many cases, all pupils are doing work at the same level of difficulty. When this happens, the most able pupils are often not challenged enough and the least able sometimes struggle to complete work set. ■ Where work is not well matched to pupils' needs, a very small minority of pupils can become distracted. In these instances, teachers do not have clear strategies to ensure that pupils are redirected as quickly as possible to productive tasks. As a 	

result, the pace of learning slows down.

- Teachers' planning for learning and progression over time is not securing rapid progress because assessment based on testing has not been precise enough as it is not clearly linked to age-related expectations. Too often, targets set are not challenging enough, particularly for the most able, and opportunities to improve pupils' literacy skills are missed.
- Teachers and teaching assistants rapidly establish good relationships with their pupils and support them to develop their relationships with others. Consequently, pupils work well with each other in lessons, including those who join the school in different year groups and at different times of the school year.
- Teachers support pupils who join the school with limited or no English very well, so that they quickly begin to catch up with their peers. Many teachers are skilled in using discussion activities to help pupils develop and extend their ideas, through questioning that demands deep thinking and an increasingly varied vocabulary.
- Where work is well matched to pupils' level of understanding, pupils make more rapid progress. For example, in Year 5, pupils work on similar problems but at different levels of difficulty. The most able pupils in this group are making good progress because the work set is helping them to achieve a deeper level of understanding.
- In the early years, increasingly effective use of careful assessment is ensuring that children are supported to develop the independence required to be 'school ready', setting high expectations of attitudes to learning as soon as children arrive.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have consistently good attitudes to learning. Even where teaching does not provide enough challenge, the vast majority remain on task. Although occasionally some pupils do become inattentive, low-level disruption is rare.
- Pupils take pride in their work, including presentation. They are keen to share what they have learned and experienced with visitors and are clearly proud of their school and their achievements.
- All pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe. For instance, older pupils spoke with confidence of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. Pupils are well versed in what to do if they have concerns about anything in this respect. Younger pupils explained how they are taught about risks linked to road safety and strangers.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and limited to name-calling when it does happen. They are very confident that their teachers will address any type of bullying quickly and effectively. Discussions with parents confirmed that they are equally confident that the school deals with very occasional incidents well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Senior leaders, teachers and pupils agree that behaviour has improved since the last inspection as a result of changes made to the school's behaviour policy. Pupils say that the focus is now on rewards for good behaviour rather than sanctions for poor behaviour. They are very keen to achieve behaviour points for good work, effort or

good deeds and very proud when they do so.

- Pupils nearly always behave well in lessons and around the school at all times of the day. They are respectful of adults and each other. They demonstrate tolerance of different beliefs and cultures on a daily basis through their interactions with each other and their understanding of the wider, multicultural society in which they live. They show real interest in different cultures and this is fostered by the school through the range of cultural days provided throughout the year.
- Although below the national average, attendance and punctuality have improved significantly since the last inspection because the headteacher has taken effective action, including working with parents to gain their support for improvement.

Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Prior to 2016, the achievement of pupils showed a steady improvement in reading, writing and mathematics and was close to national averages in 2015. However, in 2016, pupils' achievement fell below the national average in reading and mathematics and well below in writing. ■ Currently, the school's assessment system does not enable leaders to demonstrate progress over time for different groups of pupils because assessment is not tied closely enough to age-related expectations. Consequently, starting points are not always accurately identified and teachers' planning for progress over time does not consistently address the needs of all groups of pupils. As a result, rates of progress are not rapid enough, particularly for those who join the school in key stage 2. ■ Pupils who join the school in key stage 1 make significantly better progress than those who join later. In 2016, for instance, 80% of those who had been in the school for at least five years met or exceeded the national average in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 6, compared with 28% of those who had been in the school for three years or fewer. In this small group, the most able pupils achieved above national expectations in reading and mathematics and broadly matched national expectations in writing. ■ In all year groups, pupils currently in the school are making better progress, particularly in mathematics. Teachers are enabling pupils to achieve fluency in different aspects of mathematics and giving them opportunities to apply their understanding to problem solving. This is particularly the case for the small group of the most-able pupils and for those who have been in the school for longer. ■ The work in pupils' books and teachers' ongoing assessment show that pupils make good progress in Arabic, science and Islamic studies. ■ A significant proportion of pupils join the school at a very early stage of learning English. Some of these have not attended a school before, including some who join the school in key stage 2. These pupils make good progress in developing their use of English because they are supported effectively by well-trained staff. As a result, they are able to access the curriculum and begin to catch up with their peers. 	

Early years provision	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Although now improving, the quality of teaching in the early years requires improvement because, over time, it has not enabled children to make the rapid progress required to be well prepared for Year 1. For instance, in 2016, only 50% of 	

children reached a good level of development.

- The majority of children join the Reception class with skills and understanding well below those expected for their age. A significant proportion of children do not speak English when they arrive. Last year, the early years leader implemented a more effective assessment system that is now underpinning much improved planning to meet the needs of children, including those who need to develop their language skills. However, as yet, there is limited information to show how this has improved children's development in comparison with previous years.
- Classroom areas are well organised within the constraints of the resources available. Children are encouraged to access activities independently and they do so with confidence. At this early point in the new academic year, literacy displays and evidence of children's work are limited. The outdoor area has been improved and provides appropriate activities to support children's learning.
- High expectations of behaviour and attitudes to learning are quickly established and inspectors saw children respond to these positively. The values of respect and tolerance are actively taught at an age-appropriate level so that children quickly understand that they must share with each other, listen to each other and the teacher and try their best. This is supported by close partnerships with parents, who are encouraged to come into the classroom with their children and to share the work they are doing. The recent purchase of an online facility for parents to access their children's work and activities has proved popular and effective in involving parents and helping them to understand what and how their children are learning.
- The early years leader has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in provision and has clear and appropriate plans to address these. Senior leaders are supportive and are now providing appropriate challenge to ensure that plans are implemented and monitored to check how effective they are.
- The school meets the early years safeguarding and welfare requirements and all the relevant independent school standards. Children are safe and secure.

School details

Unique reference number	135882
DfE registration number	330/6206
Inspection number	10020835

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.

A material change inspection was also carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

Type of school	Primary
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	142
Proprietor	Mr S. Al-Ghadie
Headteacher	Sakhawat Ali
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,000
Telephone number	0121 333 7066
Website	www.thewisdomacademy.co.uk
Email address	admin@thewisdomacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 June 2010

Information about this school

- The Wisdom Academy is an independent, selective Islamic day school for boys and girls aged 4–11 years old. It opened in 2008.
- Governance of the school is through a sole proprietor.
- The school aims to promote moral and academic excellence in a caring and secure Islamic environment, providing opportunities and harnessing every child's potential.
- All pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- There are no pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- There are no children in the care of the local authority.
- A significant proportion of pupils join the school at an early stage of learning English.
- A significant proportion of pupils join the school during the school year and in different year groups.

- No pupils attend off-site provision.
- The school meets the requirements to publish its safeguarding policy on the school's website.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The last standard inspection of the school was in June 2010, when it was judged to be satisfactory.
- An emergency inspection was carried out in October 2014. This was followed by a material change inspection in March 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 15 lessons or parts of lessons and made additional shorter visits to classrooms throughout the inspection.
- During visits to classrooms, inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke with them about their learning. Inspectors also looked in more detail at work from pupils across all ages and abilities.
- Inspectors heard pupils of different abilities read, including the most able and those who find reading difficult.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, the proprietor, teachers, parents and pupils. A discussion was also held with an external partner supporting the school to develop its curriculum.
- A tour of the school was undertaken with the headteacher.
- Inspectors observed pupils during lunchtimes and breaks, and on arrival and departure from school.
- Inspectors took account of the views of one response to Parent View, the online Ofsted questionnaire, and spoke to a range of parents through formal meetings and informal discussions.
- Inspectors took account of 12 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A material change inspection was carried out at the same time as the standard inspection. This was to ascertain whether the proposed new secondary provision is likely to meet the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Mel Ford, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Philippa Darley	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michael Onyon	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Parent View

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2016