

Bolton Islamic Girls School

Weston House, Weston Street, Bolton BL3 2AW

Inspection dates

10–12 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Adequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The governors and headteacher are passionate about providing an excellent academic education, while ensuring pupils' highest spiritual and moral development.
- Governors provide excellent guidance and support to the headteacher. Governors and the headteacher have worked intelligently and skilfully to develop an improving and very popular school.
- Pupils' achievement has improved year on year. It is now consistently good and pupils are now leaving this school with high educational standards. This, together with their very positive attitudes to learning, ensures that they are very well prepared for their next steps in education or training.
- The quality of teaching has been improving quickly. Governors have appointed teachers who are dedicated, well qualified and have good subject knowledge. Teaching in mathematics and science has been consistently good. The teaching of English is improving rapidly.
- The proprietor, headteacher and governors have rigorously ensured compliance with all the independent school standards.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Girls present themselves as excellent role models for young British Muslims. They have a broad educational understanding, are enthusiastic, tolerant, respectful and highly aspirational. They are very happy in school and a credit to themselves.
- Although improving, pupils' attendance is not good enough. For some pupils their weak attendance is limiting their progress.
- Not all teachers are vigilant in taking opportunities to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Some teachers' questioning demands only superficial answers. This does not require pupils to think deeply enough.
- The existing systems for school improvement planning, teachers' appraisal and assessing risk have been adequate for a very small school. However, as the school expands, these procedures have limited potential to drive further improvement.
- Both teachers and pupils make the best use of the very limited facilities for art and practical science and so achievement is good. However, these facilities make it very difficult for pupils to excel in these subjects.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve pupils' achievement by:
 - extending the work the school is doing with parents to ensure that pupils' attendance improves
 - ensuring that all teachers work to improve pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills
 - ensuring that all teachers use high-quality questioning to deepen pupils' understanding
 - improving the facilities pupils have to develop both their artwork and their scientific understanding through practical activities.
- Develop planning and teachers' appraisal procedures so that leaders continue to drive school improvement by:
 - using success criteria that are clear and, where possible, based on pupils' achievement
 - setting teachers' appraisal targets that are linked to the school improvement plan
 - ensuring that reviews of how well teachers and the whole school are performing are both regular and frequent.
- Further improve the procedures for assessing risk by ensuring that:
 - assessments are of a consistently good quality and are completed routinely
 - those responsible evaluate the effectiveness of improvements.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- In Bolton, there is an increasing demand for places in Islamic faith schools for girls. As the admissions criteria changed for existing schools, leaders of this community felt their children were beginning to miss out. The Mecca Mosque took steps to provide a school to increase the number of places available in Islamic education to girls in their community. The Mecca Mosque opened Bolton Islamic Girls School five years ago. Four governors and the headteacher lead the school. The governors are fully aware of the circumstances and aspirations of families within their community. Governors are dedicated to providing low-cost yet high-quality education. Governors have shown an exceptional talent in fundraising, which enables them to keep school fees low. This is critical in providing a good education to pupils who, by government criteria, would be considered to be disadvantaged due to their families' financial circumstances. The governing body's mission is to 'provide educational and moral excellence'. In only five years, governors and the headteacher are beginning to realise that ambition.
- The governors' aspirations are embodied in the work of the headteacher. She is driven to provide an excellent education, both academic and personal, for every pupil in the school. Her passion to achieve this is tangible and the pupils are inspired by her.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils, individually and in groups, frequently discuss moral aspects of their behaviour and attitudes. This helps them to become confident in making decisions, based on a high moral code. Pupils take their Islamic studies very seriously. In addition, the school provides pupils with very good opportunities to mix with and learn from pupils of other faiths, or indeed no faith. In July 2016, Year 7 and Year 8 pupils took part in a multifaith walk, which included visiting a synagogue and a mandir. Older pupils had taken part in a similar event two years before. Pupils learned about the strong similarities between religions, particularly how all religions encourage their followers to live peacefully and have high moral standards. In their religious studies lessons, pupils learn about how different faiths work together to achieve common good. Their strong moral and religious convictions can be seen in the considerable charitable work in which pupils participate. Most recently they have collected impressive amounts for Macmillan Cancer Support, British Heart Foundation and Islamic Help.
- As the school grows, so the curriculum improves. Pupils' achievement in science and mathematics has been a consistent strength of the school's work and their success in these subjects supports the future career ambitions of many pupils. The recent introduction of history and music to the curriculum, together with art and physical education, offers good alternatives, so all pupils benefit from a curriculum that is broad and balanced. Now, all pupils' aspirations are supported by the curriculum.
- There is a good range of enriching activities that are fun, educational and which support pupils' cultural and social development. For example, pupils have recently visited the theatre to watch a Shakespeare play and visited a local art gallery. An annual sports day has been introduced and the school has competed in netball matches against another school.

- The headteacher has improved the quality of teaching through good guidance, support and individualised professional development. Teachers have a considerable number of links with other schools. They visit these schools and learn from their practice, which is sometimes outstanding. Teachers in the school are very good at learning from each other. They are quick to notice what a teacher is doing well and that good practice will be adopted across the school.
- Systems to monitor the progress of pupils are developing quickly. The headteacher and teachers are now able to make termly evaluations of how well pupils are performing. This enables the staff to intervene quickly if any pupil or pupils start to lag behind.
- The school reports on the progress and behaviour of pupils to parents three times a year. These reports are mostly informative. However, they are not sufficiently clear about pupils' targets and how well pupils are on course to achieve those targets.
- Leaders and managers have been effective in continuing to ensure that the school meets the independent school standards and other requirements.

Governance

- Dedicated and passionate governors have quickly developed a good school where pupils' achievement is good and their personal development is excellent.
- Their principled approach reflects their Islamic belief, and this in turn provides excellent leadership and guidance to the headteacher, staff and pupils.
- Governors are fully aware that, through their success, the nature of the school is changing rapidly. Systems and procedures that were adequate for a very small school will no longer drive improvement as the numbers of staff and pupils increase. The plans to improve the school are currently too vague, particularly when setting criteria to measure the success of developments. Currently, it is not clear who is responsible for doing what, nor is it clear how developments will improve pupils' academic achievement or their personal development. Similarly, the appraisal of teachers' performance is weak because their targets do not focus sufficiently on the impact of their teaching on pupils' progress or their personal development.
- Procedures to assess risk and to ensure that timely improvements take place have been adequate. However, the governors have not been clear enough about their expectations, nor have they evaluated these procedures well enough. As a result, risk assessments are rather piecemeal. There are some excellent examples of risk assessment in the school, but also some examples that barely meet requirements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The most powerful aspect of safeguarding within the school is founded on the excellent relationship between pupils and adults, and between pupils themselves. All care for each other deeply. If someone is not their usual self, it is noticed quickly and dealt with sensitively. Pupils consider adults in the school to be mentors and so are very confident in talking to staff and raising concerns.
- Pupils are very well taught how to be safe, whether it is how they work, when in the community or when using social media.
- Staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding. They know how to spot signs of

abuse or radicalisation. They also know how to deal with concerns professionally and with whom to talk.

- Despite the school never having to refer a concern to an external agency, links with agencies are good. The headteacher will consult them for advice. Procedures for dealing with concerns are clear and if the need arose, would be effective.
- The school's policies on child protection and safeguarding comply with government requirements and are up to date. As the school currently does not have a website, these documents are available directly from the school on request.
- The school follows procedures for ensuring that children do not go missing from education. Systems to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work with children in the school are secure.
- The use of computers to access the internet is strictly supervised and systems are in place to monitor the suitability of sites that pupils can access.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is improving and is now effective in helping pupils achieve well.
- The strongest teachers are confident, have high expectations of pupils, are well trained and communicate very well. Pupils say that they learn best when they are given time to think for themselves and discuss their work and ideas. They say that some teachers plan lessons to enable them to do that and that they also enjoy a variety of learning tasks. Pupils say that the best teaching can be found in mathematics, English, art and science.
- Where teaching is not as strong, teachers' questioning strategies are weak. Their questions are often superficial, meaning that pupils are not required to think deeply enough to provide an answer. During these activities, pupils' engagement can be seen to be a little variable because they know someone will give the one 'right answer'. Planning, too, is not strong. Not enough account is taken of pupils' different abilities in the class. Frequently, all pupils are given the same level of challenge. This slows the progress of the most able pupils because they wait for all to complete their work. Sometimes the most-able pupils are given slightly more difficult additional work.
- The school governors recognise facilities to teach practical aspects of subjects are limited. This is most evident in science and art. However, teachers make extra efforts to mitigate these limitations. This has included the recent generosity of a neighbouring school to allow Bolton Islamic pupils to use their science laboratories. However, girls' high aspirations are not well supported by this weakness. It also prevents a greater number of pupils from achieving outstanding standards because their experiences are limited. The most able pupils are particularly affected. With the considerable enterprise of staff and the very positive approach by the pupils, progress of all pupils, from different starting points, in these subjects is good. Governors have already raised funds and are currently seeking the most cost-effective way to improve this aspect of provision.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are highly aspirational in terms of both their future careers and the way they want to conduct their lives. In conversations with the inspector, comments such as 'I aim to be a good British Muslim' and 'I want to break negative stereotypes of Islam' were common. Pupils recognise the freedoms that are available to them and want to use these opportunities for both self-improvement and community improvement.
- The school ensures that pupils have a high degree of understanding of those with people who are protected by the Equality Act. Pupils are very tolerant and respectful of other's rights, views and beliefs.
- Pupils' emotional and physical health are taken very seriously. Physical education lessons make a major contribution to promoting pupils' physical well-being. Pupils take rigorous exercise and they are also encouraged to eat well. Pupils care and look out for one another. They will not stand by if a fellow pupil appears to be unhappy. Pupils help each other, and if they have concerns, they talk confidently to staff. This supportive, open culture and good teaching, helps pupils learn how to stay safe and healthy in all aspects of their lives. The headteacher has ensured that teachers and pupils can gain access to good health professionals.
- Pupils are well educated and well informed about the extensive opportunities available to them. Their very strong personal development and moral purpose give them confidence about taking their next steps in education, and real enthusiasm to do so.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is impeccable. They are social and gracious. They are courteous and respectful. Pupils believe this is the right way to live their lives. Pupils say there is no bullying. Pupils' wish for harmony means they seek compromise or intervene before situations become unpleasant. Pupils are skilled in promoting cooperation and are very happy in this school. When asked why, they frequently comment on 'the real family feel'.
- Within class, pupils are studious. When given the opportunity, they collaborate very well and are good listeners. They are respectful of the views of others and will also confidently express theirs.
- The school has worked hard with parents to improve the attendance of some pupils. This includes demonstrating to parents the strong link between attendance and educational success. The school's efforts have significantly improved attendance over recent years. However, attendance is still not good enough. Once in school, pupils are very punctual to lessons.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The standards pupils have attained in GCSEs have improved quickly over recent years.

Initially, overall attainment was not good. However, with improved teaching, overall attainment last year was good.

- Pupils' attainment in English over time has not been as good as their attainment in mathematics and science, though the gap narrowed last year.
- The progress pupils currently in the school make is consistently good, including in English. The headteacher and teachers monitor the progress of pupils and spot quickly when a pupil needs additional support. Any additional support is effective and ensures that, overall, progress is good.
- Pupils enter the school with lower than average skills in literacy and numeracy. The school works hard to accelerate pupils' progress in these core skills. Some teachers are vigilant in correcting errors in literacy when marking pupils' work. However, there is inconsistency in this approach which slows pupils from improving. Too few teachers recognise and take the opportunity to support pupils' numerical development. In science, for example, opportunities are missed to insist on high standards of graphical work, or the consistent use of numerical units.
- Despite the school not receiving additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, their progress is uppermost in the minds of the headteacher and teachers. Their progress is carefully monitored. These pupils are currently progressing as well as others in the school.
- Pupils from all starting points make good progress. Most-able pupils make good progress because they are ambitious and know how to learn well independently. This makes up for some minor weaknesses in teaching, where teachers do not sufficiently challenge the most able pupils. The most able pupils also cope well with the current lack of facilities for practical elements of study, including in science.
- Pupils clearly enjoy reading and many are seen walking around school with a reading book in their hand. The recent refurbishment of the library has been popular with many pupils. Although book stocks are currently low, there is a very good range of books, including popular teenage literature.
- Pupils develop very good learning habits and strategies. They are very well prepared to move on from this school and become successful learners at college and beyond.

School details

Unique reference number	138498
DfE registration number	350/6001
Inspection number	10012843

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.

Type of school	Islamic faith school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mecca Mosque
Chair	Dr Kamran Khan
Headteacher	Dr Zakia Maqbool
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,300
Telephone number	01204 771570
Email address	info@boltonislamicgirlsschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 June 2013

Information about this school

- Bolton Islamic Girls School opened in September 2012. The current headteacher joined the school in January 2014. The school has expanded rapidly and forecasts suggest that numbers of pupils on roll will continue to increase.
- The proprietorial organisation is The Mecca Mosque. The day-to-day running of the school is led and managed by the headteacher. The proprietor's interests are represented in the school by the governing body. The governing body consists of four members, who support the school and hold leaders to account for maintaining and improving standards.
- Initially, the school was set up because local schools were struggling to meet the increasing demand to educate girls in an Islamic faith-based environment.

- The school's motto is 'striving for academic and moral excellence'.
- Seven pupils speak English as an additional language.
- By government criteria, about one third of pupils would be considered to be disadvantaged. This is much higher than seen nationally.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector, working with the headteacher, gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection, including through observations of teaching and scrutinising pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with school staff, the headteacher and two governors.
- The inspector spoke with pupils in a meeting, during lessons and informally at lunchtimes and break times.
- The inspector considered a large variety of documentation related to the school's work: improvement plans, the school's view of its performance and information concerning pupils' attainment, progress and attendance.
- The inspector scrutinised records concerning safeguarding, pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching and learning.
- The inspector analysed responses to written responses from parents to the school's own parental and pupil surveys. The inspector considered three text comments and one written comment sent to him by parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Neil Mackenzie, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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