

# Bahr Academy

72 Sceptre Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE4 6PR

## Inspection dates

14–16 March 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The well-placed actions of the proprietor and senior leaders have improved the school since it was last inspected. Together they communicate a clear vision that promotes pupils' spiritual and academic development effectively.
- Outcomes in GCSE subjects have improved and compare favourably with the national picture. Most pupils secure good GCSE grades in English and mathematics and across the range of other subjects available to them.
- Good training and opportunities for teachers to work together have sharpened the quality and consistency of teaching. Lessons are well planned and productive and build effectively on what pupils already know and understand.
- Assessment information is used well to ensure that the most able pupils are suitably challenged. Teachers tailor the work they provide for different pupils and track each pupil's progress at regular intervals. Occasionally, insightful questions from pupils are not discussed and debated fully.
- All members of staff foster and promote respect and tolerance as key values for life. Pupils consistently uphold these values in their day-to-day interactions with one another.
- Pupils are dedicated to their studies and work diligently across the day. The work in their books is extremely well presented and reflects their commitment and pride.
- Parents are pleased with the quality of education the school provides. Above all, they commented on the positive impact of the school's core Islamic and British values.
- Levels of attendance are high, reflecting pupils' commitment to their studies and their enjoyment of learning within a close-knit and supportive school community.
- Leaders have added more subjects to the curriculum since the school was last inspected. However, the range of examination courses at key stage 4 means some pupils' interests and career ambitions are less well catered for. The proprietor continues to work towards relocating the school to larger premises. This would enable the further expansion of the curriculum.
- The proprietor and trustees are systematic in the checks they make to ensure the school fully meets all of the independent school standards. Improvement plans for the next steps of the school's development could to be sharper however, with clear timescales for completion.

### 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?**

- Sharpen the level of detail in the school's plans for improvement. In particular, plan more carefully how to further broaden the curriculum so that pupils can select from a wider range of qualifications at key stage 4.
- Create more opportunities to engage pupils in discussion and debate so that their understanding of the subjects they study and the wider world is enhanced.
- Strengthen the quality of careers information, advice and guidance so that pupils have a deeper understanding of pathways available to them, including the opportunities available in higher education.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The quality of leadership and management has improved since the school was last inspected. Areas for improvement from the last inspection have been fully addressed.
- The proprietor, headteacher and head of Islamic studies have created an ambitious culture and raised expectations. Together they have encouraged and motivated teachers to strive for excellence. All pupils display a strong commitment to their studies and to the school's values and principles.
- Leaders make effective use of the independent school standards to review and evaluate the quality of the school. They have used their increased knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses to promote improvement effectively. However, they recognise that their ambitions are limited by the quality of accommodation in which the school is currently housed. Their current plans for relocating the school to a new site, in order to broaden the range of qualifications offered, lack depth.
- Leaders have provided effective training and time for teachers to work together. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning has improved and become more consistent. A suitable assessment system has been developed for tracking pupils' progress. Leaders' careful analysis of progress information has led to additional teaching time in English, mathematics and science and a reduction in the quantity of Islamic studies homework for Year 11 pupils as they prepare for GCSE examinations.
- Provision for pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. All members of staff positively promote the school's values and place particular emphasis on respecting one another, kindness, tolerance and upholding the rule of law. Pupils know and understand the difference between religious and civil law. They can clearly articulate a well-developed understanding of equalities legislation and the rights of different groups within society.
- The curriculum is becoming broader, as leaders take steps to increase access to more GCSE courses at key stage 4. Pupils now follow eight subjects to GCSE level. The limitations of the current site restrict further growth until relocation to the new site is complete. Pupils learn about different faiths in religious education and broaden their understanding through visits to local places of worship, including a synagogue and church. The teaching of Islamic studies helps to foster an appreciation of British values and strongly promotes respectful and tolerant attitudes.
- The school's website is in the process of being redeveloped. The current website is very limited and does not provide key policies or curriculum information. These are, however, available on request for parents together with the school's prospectus. The school administrator ensures that all policies are up to date and that they reflect the latest Department for Education guidance.
- The proprietor ensures that all the independent school standards are met.

## Governance

- The proprietor and trustees provide careful oversight of the school. They are very familiar with the independent school standards and evaluate the school's work through regular visits and discussions with leaders and managers.
- The proprietor holds leaders fully to account and ensures that they are well supported through access to appropriate networks and training opportunities.
- All relevant health and safety requirements are met because the proprietor ensures that the necessary checks are made. For example, fire safety equipment checks, evacuation procedures, checks on alarms and first-aid training are all up to date.
- The proprietor and trustees keep a sharp eye on pupils' progress and take steps quickly to provide pupils with additional support when it is required. The proprietor ensures that teachers' performance is regularly monitored and that each teacher receives helpful feedback.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Good, systematic procedures ensure that all necessary checks are made on members of staff employed at the school and adults who visit the school. All members of staff are trained in child protection and safeguarding and know what signs to look for and what steps to take if they have a concern. They are acutely aware of cultural barriers that may prevent a concerned or worried child from coming forward and do everything they can to promote safety and openness, including providing training for parents. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme that the school teaches covers sensitive issues relating to safety and risk head-on. In discussions, pupils displayed a mature grasp of potential risks and a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The quality of teaching has improved since the school's last standard inspection. Effective training, clearer policies and more regular opportunities for teachers to share their practice have ensured greater consistency.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully, taking account of assessment information and their knowledge of pupils' starting points. They adapt the tasks they provide to meet each pupil's individual needs. Lessons are carefully structured and teachers employ a range of strategies to gauge pupils' level of understanding throughout each lesson.
- Teachers ask probing questions and take particular care to check pupils' understanding of new words as they occur in texts being studied. Although no pupil speaks English as an additional language, care is also taken to ensure that pupils correctly understand command words in examination-style questions. This focus on correct definition of terms ensures that pupils are specific in their answers.
- Lessons consistently provide opportunities for pupils to practise and apply new knowledge and skills independently. Careful assessment of this work ensures that teachers have an accurate picture of pupils' strengths and weaknesses.

- At times, teachers do not fully explore questions asked by pupils. This inhibits pupils' natural curiosity. For example, not enough time was given to exploring the key features of 'democracy' in a history lesson and discussion about the reasons why some sacred buildings are vandalised was not explored well enough in an Islamic studies lesson.
- In most subjects, teachers display good subject knowledge. In some subjects, such as art and music, less specialist teaching and the restrictions of the school building limit the range of activities and consequently the progress pupils make.
- Pupils are dedicated to their studies and apply themselves diligently across the day. They take the utmost care in the presentation of their work and in the completion of their homework. In lessons, pupils are highly respectful of one another's ideas and cooperate well in pairs or small groups to develop their thinking.
- The teaching of Islamic studies makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers use sacred texts to explore moral issues and values in modern Britain and cleverly draw parallels with learning from the past that is relevant in the present. For example, in a Years 10 and 11 lesson, a discussion about relationships with one's neighbour led on to consideration of the topical issue of Scottish independence from the United Kingdom.
- The school provides an annual written report to parents about each pupil's progress, attainment, behaviour and attendance. Parents who responded to Parent View were all pleased with the information they receive and were very happy with the quality of teaching provided.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

## **Outstanding**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are dedicated to their studies and strive to give of their best. They concentrate fully throughout the day and maintain high standards of presentation in all of their work.
- Pupils are happy to stay late at school some evenings for additional mathematics teaching. This reflects their commitment and determination to achieve as highly as possible. Teachers are aware that the pupils push themselves hard and keep an eye on their mental health and levels of stress as they approach examinations. A number of recreational trips and other rewards are used to ensure a healthy balance is maintained between social and academic development.
- Pupils consistently show respect for one another and members of staff. They engage with each other in lessons and chat with each other during social times in a harmonious atmosphere.
- The personal, social, health and economic programme covers a broad range of topics that supports pupils' personal development and safety. For example, in a Years 7 and 8 lesson, pupils sensitively inferred information from diary extracts about a teenage girl's mental and physical health. They went on to consider how they would help if they were one of the girl's friends.

- The school has a clear behaviour policy and uses merits as a means to reward positive behaviours. However, pupils behave well because they take personal responsibility for their own conduct. Pupils said that they really enjoy coming to the school and feel that they are all 'one another's sisters'.
- Careers advice and guidance are available for pupils as part of the PSHE programme. This is supplemented by impartial advice they receive from an external careers guidance officer, visits from guest speakers and work experience undertaken in key stage 4. Pupils feel sufficiently well informed about their options when they leave the school, but none has had the opportunity to visit local universities, despite a number of pupils wanting to follow careers requiring graduate status.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils conduct themselves extremely well and show high levels of self-discipline and diligence. They stay focused on their studies from 8am through into the early evening on some days each week. They are very polite and supportive of one another when asked to work together in groups.
- Pupils are happy to participate in lessons and most show the confidence and maturity to articulate their views.
- In the relatively cramped space, pupils move between lessons quickly and quietly with little disruption. A calm and respectful atmosphere is maintained through social times and during prayers and assembly. Pupils look after the school's modest furnishings and resources and ensure that the classrooms are tidy at all times.
- Levels of attendance are well above the national average for secondary schools. Very few pupils miss school regularly. Leaders ensure careful arrangements are made for any pupil who takes an extended holiday.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Most pupils complete their primary education in local mainstream schools. The school uses the results of tests at the end of key stage 2 and its own assessments undertaken early in Year 7 to establish pupils' starting points. This information indicates that pupils enter the school with broadly average levels of attainment in English and mathematics. There are no pupils in the school who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Pupils study a programme of Islamic subjects across key stages 3 and 4, which are accredited by the school. Their progress in Islamic subjects is regularly assessed. The school's assessment information shows that almost all pupils make strong progress and develop a good understanding of the Koran, basic Arabic and the life of the Prophet. Pupils' books show a high level of pride and dedication to their studies and meticulous care is taken with handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Outcomes in GCSE English and mathematics have compared favourably with national averages over recent years. This represents strong progress from pupils' different starting points. Pupils currently in the school are on course to continue this pattern. This is because teachers ensure that the work provided is appropriately tailored to each pupil's needs and challenges them at the right level.

- In 2016, pupils also followed GCSE courses in chemistry, biology, and information and communication technology, and studied Urdu as a modern foreign language. Outcomes in these subjects were also strong and represented at least expected progress, with some results being considerably stronger.
- Pupils currently in key stage 4 all follow GCSE history. This is an addition to their curriculum. Improvements in the quality of teaching are helping to accelerate pupils' progress further. Current pupils are on track to make strong progress across the full range of courses available.
- Pupils follow a broader curriculum at key stage 3 which includes art, music, religious education and physical education. Although pupils make secure progress in these subjects and enjoy some memorable experiences, the lack of suitable accommodation and specialist teaching hinders progress in more practical subjects.
- Teachers consistently adapt tasks and increase the level of challenge for the small number of pupils who enter the school with higher levels of attainment. As a result, outcomes for the most able pupils are good. The two most able pupils in Year 11 last year attained GCSE A\*–B grades across all their GCSE subjects. The most able pupils currently in the school are keen to challenge themselves. Assessment information and the work in their books indicate that they are on track to attain A\*–B grades across most subjects in public examinations this summer.
- Pupils develop positive attitudes and a strong work ethic. Most express a commitment to furthering their studies when they leave the school. All pupils who left the school last year secured suitable places in further education or training. Some pupils told the inspector that they would appreciate a wider range of GCSE courses to choose from, linked to some of their career preferences.

## School details

Unique reference number	136258
DfE registration number	391/6040
Inspection number	10025962

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	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Muhammad Abdulmuheet
Chair	Sadiqur Rahman
Headteacher	Syeda Akhter
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,700 per annum plus a one-off fee of £500
Telephone number	0191 2731907
Website	<a href="http://www.bahracademy.co.uk">www.bahracademy.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@bahracademy.co.uk">info@bahracademy.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	13–15 January 2015

## Information about this school

- Bahr Academy is an Islamic faith secondary school for girls located in the Elswick area of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. It is owned by the Bahr Academy Trust.
- The school is registered for 30 pupils and currently has 28 girls on roll. Girls come from the surrounding area and all are of Asian heritage. None has an education, health and care plan or is learning English as an additional language.
- The school aims 'to develop righteous law abiding citizens who will enrich society'.
- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.



- The school continues to develop its plans to move into a sizable local building and grounds it purchased some years ago. The building still requires further refurbishment. The proprietor and trustees are unable to set a specific date by which relocation to the larger site will take place. The school has been based in the same premises since opening in 2010, which comprises a sizable upstairs flat providing small but adequate teaching spaces and facilities.
- The last standard inspection of the school took place in January 2015 and judged the school to require improvement. Some independent school standards were not met. A progress monitoring inspection took place in December 2015 and judged that the unmet standards had successfully been addressed.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited lessons across all ages and a broad range of subjects from both Islamic and secular studies. A number of observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. During observations, the inspector sampled pupils' books and talked to pupils in order to evaluate the quality of their current work. In addition, the inspector scrutinised in detail a sample of work from pupils across each year group.
- The inspector also attended prayers and an assembly.
- Observations were made of pupils' behaviour both inside the school and in the outside area at social times.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and head of Islamic studies, members of the board of trustees, the proprietor, a group of teachers and a group of pupils.
- A range of documents was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, assessment information, policies, safeguarding information and a range of health and safety information, in order to assess the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- The inspection team took account of the 19 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 19 responses to the staff survey.

## Inspection team

Chris Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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