

Blackstone Secondary School

Middleton Road, Oldham, Lancashire OL9 6JN

Inspection dates

28–30 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- School leaders have not fulfilled their responsibilities to ensure that all of the independent school standards are met.
- The school's medical room, provided for the short-term care of sick or injured pupils, is not appropriately located to meet their needs.
- The safety of the school's internet connection is not assured.
- Teaching requires improvement due to some inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of pupils. In some subjects, including mathematics and science, the most able pupils do not consistently receive the challenge that they need to develop their knowledge to a greater depth.
- Proprietors and leaders have not carried out the required prohibition checks on teachers, leaders and proprietors.
- The school's outdoor play and recreation area is not suitably secure to ensure pupils' safety.
- Leaders' systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching lack rigour. Leaders do not measure the impact of teachers' actions to improve learning and progress across the full range of subjects.
- The school development plan lacks clear, measurable milestones that allow leaders and proprietors to check that the plan is working.
- Pupils have limited opportunities to undertake extended writing tasks, practical science and computing activities.

The school has the following strengths

- This is a caring school where leaders strongly promote equality and British values in line with the school's faith-based ethos. All pupils participate fully in the educational opportunities that the school provides.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are polite and courteous towards each other and adults. They have good attitudes to learning and attend well.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They feel safe on the school premises and struggle to recollect any incidents of bullying. Pupils say that teachers care and are always willing to help with learning or to listen to worries or concerns.
- Teachers and leaders have good knowledge of the subjects they teach.

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 leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all appropriate safeguarding checks on the suitability of proprietors and staff are quickly completed
 - ensuring the implementation of appropriate monitoring and filtering to the school internet connection
 - ensuring that leaders' monitoring of the school's work is refined to evaluate more sharply the impact of teachers' actions on pupils' learning and record the progress pupils make in subjects other than English, mathematics and science
 - including specific targets within the school development plan which are measurable, linked to improving the quality of teaching and learning and reviewed regularly
 - ensuring the safety of pupils using the school's outdoor recreational space by quickly completing the required work
 - establishing a suitable medical room for the temporary treatment of pupils who are ill.
- Improve the quality of personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by:
 - ensuring that all safeguarding requirements are met.
- Improve the quality of teaching learning and assessment and the outcomes for pupils by:
 - enhancing pupils' understanding by providing more opportunities for them to undertake practical science tasks
 - developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of computing by ensuring that pupils have enough opportunities to apply skills in practical situations
 - ensuring that teachers use their knowledge of pupils' prior learning to consistently set high expectations, particularly for the most able pupils in mathematics and science
 - ensuring that pupils apply and practise their newly acquired grammar skills in longer writing tasks.

The school must meet the following independent school standards.

- The proprietor must ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school, and such arrangements must have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b))
- The proprietor must ensure that no person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction. (paragraph 18, 18(2), 18(2)(b))
- The proprietor, where the proprietor is a body of persons corporate or unincorporate, must ensure that:
 - an individual ('MB'), not being the Chair of the school, who is a member of a body of persons corporate or unincorporate named as the proprietor of the school in the

register or in an application to enter the school in the register is not barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act where that individual is or will be engaging in activity which is regulated activity within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 4 of that Act. Paragraph 20, 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i)

- an individual ('MB'), not being the Chair of the school, who is a member of a body of persons corporate or unincorporate named as the proprietor of the school in the register or in an application to enter the school in the register does not carry out work, or intend to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction; (paragraph 20, 20(6), 20(6)(a)(ii))
- subject to sub-paragraphs (7) to (8), the Chair of the school makes the following checks relating to MB: where relevant to the individual, an enhanced criminal record check; and checks confirming MB's identity and MB's right to work in the United Kingdom; (paragraph 20, 20(6), 20(6)(b)(i),(ii))
- The proprietor must keep a register which shows:
 - in relation to each member of staff appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether a check was made to establish whether such member of staff is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction. (paragraph 21, 21(3), 21(3)(a)(iii))
 - in relation to each member of staff, whether a check was made to establish whether such member of staff is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed. (paragraph 21, 21(3), 21(3)(b))
 - in relation each member ("MB") of a body of persons named as the proprietor appointed on or after 1st May 2007, the checks referred to in paragraph 20(6)(b) were made, the date they were made and the date on which the resulting certificate was obtained. (paragraph 21, 21(6))
- The proprietor must ensure that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils; and accommodation for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility. (paragraph 24, 24(1), 24(1)(a) and paragraph 24, 24(1), 24(1)(b))
- The proprietor must ensure that suitable outdoor space is provided in order to enable pupils to play outside. (paragraph 29, 29(1), 29(1)(b))
- The proprietor must:
 - ensure 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;
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - actively promote the well-being of pupils. (paragraphs 34, 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b),

34(1)(c))

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders have not taken all of the necessary actions to safeguard pupils at the school. Deficiencies include the completion of appropriate checks on some staff and directors of the proprietary body and ensuring that the school's internet connection has appropriate monitoring and filtering in place.
- The school's outdoor space is not currently appropriate for pupils to use for play. School leaders have put in place appropriate risk assessments to enable pupils to visit local sports centres for physical education.
- Leaders have not ensured the provision of an appropriate medical room for the short-term treatment of pupils in school. Leaders are aware of the limitations of the current room but have not yet ensured that work to provide a more suitable venue has been completed.
- Leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching is frequent but it lacks rigour. Leaders do not sufficiently evaluate the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and outcomes. As a result, the quality of teaching is not consistently good.
- Improvement planning is weak. The school development plan identifies appropriate priorities for action but does not identify the accountable person for each development. The plan lacks clear timescales and does not contain measurable expectations of outcomes. Consequently, it is difficult for leaders to check whether the plan is working.
- Leaders' effective use of the school's social media pages and information days, including a recent day focused on gender equality in education, ensures that parents are kept up to date about their children's life in school. Parents are regularly informed about their children's learning through termly reports that give clear information about pupils' progress, effort and attainment. These reports also give parents detailed information about their children's attendance in school and highlight any concerns. Parents are very positive about the communication between home and school. They are also very positive about the effectiveness of leaders' work to improve pupils' reading, speaking and listening skills.
- This is a caring school where pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural understanding is developed well. Pupils learn about a range of faiths, cultures and human relationships through a well-planned and diverse personal, social, cultural, health and economic curriculum programme that complements the school's own faith-based ethos.
- Leaders ensure that the school is well maintained. Classrooms are bright and inviting to pupils and provide an appropriate environment in which they can undertake their studies. Resources are adequate and well used by teachers to support learning. Leaders are committed to further developing facilities to provide opportunities to study subjects such as computing and science more deeply. However, these developments have not yet been completed.
- The school has chosen not to follow the national curriculum but follows one of its own based around three distinct elements: grammar, logic and rhetoric. The curriculum is broad and balanced. It gives pupils the opportunities to experience linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and

creative education. Good-quality schemes of work support teaching well. Teachers plan sequences of lessons that systematically develop pupils' knowledge and understanding, particularly in English. In science and computing, however, pupils have more limited opportunities to undertake practical investigations to consolidate their understanding.

- Leaders receive no additional funding for pupils who are disadvantaged or for any pupil who has special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Governance

- The governance of the school is not effective because governors have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- The school does not have a governing body. The headteacher is a senior director of the proprietorial company Blackstone Academy Limited and another director of the company works within the school as part of the senior leadership team.
- The headteacher undertakes the vast majority of governance actions in school. However, the lack of formal reporting to the proprietorial board means other company directors do not receive sufficient information to evaluate the work of the school and the impact of actions taken to develop the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- The proprietor has not ensured that all the required checks are made on the suitability of staff. No prohibition checks have been carried out on directors, teachers and leaders. No identity or criminal records checks have been carried out on some directors.
- The proprietor has not ensured the appropriate monitoring and filtering of the school's internet to protect both students and staff from online threats.
- The child protection policy published on the school's website at the start of the inspection was out of date and did not reflect the practices found in school. Leaders' immediate action ensured that the publication of school's most recent policy is sufficiently detailed and pays due regard to the most recent statutory guidance from the Secretary of State issued in 'Keeping children safe in education' (2016).
- Effective systems are in place to ensure that detailed records of any safeguarding concerns are kept and that swift actions are taken to report any concerns to the appropriate authorities.
- All staff are vigilant and well trained to protect pupils from potential safeguarding risks, including those associated with radicalisation and extremism. Leaders ensure that their skills and knowledge are kept up to date. The majority of staff have appropriate first aid qualifications.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers' expectations of the quality of work that pupils should produce are inconsistent. Consequently, pupils show variable pride in their work and some pupils' progress is slowed. In English, for example, teachers' high expectations and clear guidance results in

pupils making strong progress and producing work that is consistently well presented. In other subjects, however, inconsistencies in teachers' expectations mean that sometimes pupils' progress is not as strong and the quality of work they present is not of the highest standard.

- Many teachers use their assessment of pupils' prior learning to ensure that tasks are carefully matched to pupils' abilities. However, in some lessons the use of teachers' own assessments to inform their planning is inconsistent. As a result, in mathematics and science for example, the most able pupils do not receive the challenge that they need to consolidate their knowledge and learn about subjects at a greater depth.
- In science, pupils' theoretical knowledge of the history of science is good. For example, they study how science in ancient Egypt developed alongside mathematics and how this history has influenced modern-day scientific knowledge. However, pupils' opportunities to experience practical scientific enquiry are limited. Similarly, in the computing curriculum, pupils study the theory of computer systems in some depth but a current lack of resources limits their opportunities to apply their knowledge to real computing systems. Leaders are aware of these issues and taking appropriate actions to tackle them.
- Teachers use questioning well to probe and develop pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils develop their knowledge and respond to questions with confidence. For example, in an Islamic studies lesson about ritualistic cleansing, teachers effectively developed pupils' knowledge and understanding through carefully crafted questions that encouraged pupils to explain their thinking by teaching each other.
- There are strong positive relationships between pupils and their teachers that help to motivate pupils to learn.
- Teachers seize opportunities to develop learning. They also amend their lessons to address emerging gaps in pupils' knowledge. For example, when a teacher became aware of pupils' lack of experience of formal letter-writing, she quickly amended her planning to teach the skills involved and set an introductory homework about the reasons why a person may want to write a formal letter. Teachers use homework effectively to practise and embed skills and develop understanding.
- Senior leaders have a clear understanding of pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science because teachers carefully track the progress of pupils and report on it weekly. Leaders have used this information to identify appropriate performance management targets for staff. Teachers use this information effectively each half term to identify learning targets for individual pupils. Leaders recognise that the next steps for development in their assessment systems are to develop the tracking of pupils' achievement in other subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Leaders have not ensured that some independent school standards relating to safeguarding are met. These include the non-completion of required prohibition checks on suitability of staff and proprietors, the provision of suitable facilities for medical treatment

and outdoor play.

- Other aspects of personal development and welfare are of good quality, although not all are well established due to the limited time the school has been open.
- Pupils are proud of their school and say that they enjoy coming to school each day and feel safe. They say that teachers help them to learn and are confident that they would listen to and help deal with any concerns or worries that they might have.
- Pupils know how to stay safe in and out of school, including online, because of the guidance that they receive. Frequent focused assemblies, linked to work in class, ensure that pupils have a good understanding of safe practices and are able to explain what they should do if they have any worries.
- Pupils are well supported to become good citizens. They have a secure understanding of the rule of law, modern British institutions and democracy. For example, pupils can explain clearly the differences between a monarch and a president. Some showed a deeper understanding of the role of monarchy by explaining that as 'head of state a queen could be the leader of a number of different countries'. Pupils contribute to their wider community through charity collections that support those locally of Muslim, other faiths and beyond.
- Appropriate careers guidance from impartial and suitably qualified advisors from the local authority is in place. However, it has not yet taken place as it is planned for the summer term.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils attend well and show positive attitudes towards their learning. They are very polite towards staff and visitors and they are smart in their uniforms. Pupils demonstrate exemplary conduct while moving about the school and during breaktimes.
- Pupils respond well to instructions and show resilience and determination in completing their work. They often work together effectively as a class or in small groups to achieve a common goal. For example, during a physical education lesson at a nearby five-a-side football venue, girls and boys worked cooperatively as members of the same teams to pass and shoot on goal. Pupils are well equipped and prepared for learning.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, including the use of homophobic terms or those relating to gender identity. They know that bullying is wrong. Pupils struggled to recollect any incidents of bullying in school and were confident that their teachers and headteacher would deal effectively with any that might arise.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- At the time of the inspection, there was limited evidence of pupils' outcomes available due to the school being open for less than two terms. The very small numbers of pupils in each year group mean that any statistical analysis by age is unreliable.
- There are no external qualification and assessment results for this school.
- Pupils enter the school broadly in line with national expectations. They make steady

progress from their starting points. Progress in English is stronger than in other subjects. Few pupils enter with standards above those expected for their age.

- The inspector found evidence of good progress in English where skills, particularly those relating to spelling, punctuation and grammar, are systematically developed. However, opportunities for pupils to apply their skills to longer and more-sustained writing tasks are more limited.
- Progress in mathematics and science is more variable than in English. Pupils make stronger progress in developing their knowledge of basic calculations, particularly mental multiplications, than in other aspects of mathematics. Some tasks set for the most able pupils are too easy and consequently limit the progress they make in deepening their knowledge and understanding of the topics taught.
- Pupils make good progress in their Islamic studies because of the quality of teaching that they receive. The quality of the feedback and guidance that pupils receive ensures that pupils know what their next steps are in their learning; this quickly improves their understanding.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. They read fluently and develop secure comprehension skills. They enter into mature conversations about their favourite authors and genres of books and clearly articulate the reasons for their choices. Pupils are encouraged to read widely and often, including classic texts from a variety of cultures. Pupils develop their love of reading through the school's curriculum and a range of other activities and celebrations, including World Book Day.

School details

Unique reference number	142773
DfE registration number	353/6003
Inspection number	10021744

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 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Blackstone Academy Ltd.
Chair	Mr Siddiquir Rahman
Headteacher	Mr Siddiquir Rahman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,200
Telephone number	07825 604260
Website	http://blackstonessecondary.co.uk/
Email address	sidq@hotmail.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Blackstone Secondary School is an independent Muslim day school for boys and girls aged from 11 to 14 years.
- Pupils come from different Asian heritages, all of whom have an Islamic background.
- The school has been open since September 2016, and was registered by the DfE for up to 120 pupils. It presently has 13 pupils on roll. This is the school's first standard inspection.
- The school's aim is to educate and prepare pupils to become independent thinkers, intellectual scholars and spiritual leaders who are deeply rooted in tradition yet wholly conversant with the modern world.

- There are currently no pupils on roll who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school employs six members of staff, including the headteacher.
- The school uses no alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted with one day's notice to the school.
- The inspector observed learning throughout the school, checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards and looked at samples of pupils' work across a range of subjects.
- The inspector held meetings with leaders and teachers in the school. This included the headteacher, who is also the representative of the proprietor company, school governors and the trustees. Meetings were also held with all of the pupils who attend the school.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of school documentation, including policies, planning documentation, information relating to ongoing staff training and information about the progress, behaviour and attendance of pupils in the school. The school's single central record of employment checks was also scrutinised.
- The inspector considered the three responses to the online parent questionnaire, Parent View, or the online pupil questionnaire. There were no responses to the staff or pupil online questionnaire.
- The inspector undertook a thorough tour of the school.

Inspection team

John Nixon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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