

# Birmingham Muslim School

Bisley Works, Golden Hillock Road, Small Heath, Birmingham, West Midlands B11 2PZ

## Inspection dates

17–19 October 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Those responsible for the governance of the school lack the necessary knowledge to ensure that all of the independent school standards are met. Consequently, leaders have been unable to secure sustainable school improvement.
- Too many leadership responsibilities rest on the headteacher, which is overwhelming. Leaders do not have an up-to-date understanding of all the procedures for running a school.
- There are no lines of accountability for senior leaders. This means they do not get enough challenge and support to help them do their jobs and to improve the school.
- Teaching and learning, particularly in English, have some shortcomings. Teachers do not adjust tasks to suit different pupils' specific needs.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 are below national figures. While progress for current pupils is improving, reading, writing and aspects of mathematics remain in need of further improvement.
- Phonics teaching requires improvement.
- Pupils' inaccurate spelling limits the quality of their writing.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' conduct is good. They enjoy school and get on well with one another. Bullying or unkind behaviours are very rare.
- Procedures for keeping pupils safe are in place and work well. Pupils are taught to behave responsibly and show respect for others.
- Provision in the early years is good because teaching is effective.
- The school curriculum promotes values that help pupils to become constructive members of society.
- Pupils have good number skills because arithmetic teaching is effective.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by making sure that:
  - those responsible for governance have the necessary knowledge and expertise to check on the school's performance and plan for sustained improvements
  - all senior leaders receive guidance and training so they understand the requirements of the independent school standards (so that all standards are met) and the framework for school inspection
  - there are proper lines of support and accountability for the school's senior leaders in order to help them do their jobs
  - leaders keep a more watchful eye on the school curriculum to make sure there is an appropriate variety of reading, writing and mathematical activities in each year group.
- Improve teaching, especially in English, in order to raise standards in reading and writing, by making sure that:
  - the teaching of spelling builds on the strong start made in the early years
  - pupils read regularly and have access to a good range of books and activities that help to develop their comprehension skills
  - teaching staff learn about good practice in phonics teaching and plan for progression across the school
  - pupils who need extra help or are ready for a new challenge are noticed quickly in lessons and given the work that they need.

### The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that teaching:
  - 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 (paragraph 3 and 3(a))
  - involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time (paragraph 3(c)).
- The proprietor must ensure that:
  - the school's safeguarding policy (paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(b) and 32(1)(c)) is published on the school's website
  - following an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act, a copy of the report of the inspection (if it has been sent to the proprietor) is published and maintained on the school's website, and provided to parents of each registered pupil, by any date specified by the body that conducted the inspection (paragraph 32(1)(d)).
- The proprietor must ensure that all of the required information is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils and, on request, to Her Majesty's Chief

Inspector, the Secretary of State or an independent inspectorate:

- the school’s address and telephone number and the name of the headteacher (paragraph 32(2), 32(1)(a) and 32(2)(a))
  - where the proprietor is a body of persons, the address and telephone number of its registered or principal office (paragraph 32(2)(b) and 32(2)(b)(ii))
  - where there is a governing body, the name and address for correspondence of its chair (paragraph 32(2)(c))
  - a statement of the school’s ethos (including any religious ethos) and aims (paragraph 32(2)(d))
  - particulars of the school’s policy on and arrangements for admissions, misbehaviour and exclusions (paragraph 32(3) and 32(3)(a))
  - particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan and pupils who speak English as an additional language (paragraph 32(3)(b))
  - particulars of the school’s curriculum policy (32(3)(c))
  - the school’s written behaviour policy (paragraph 32(3)(d))
  - particulars of the school’s academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 32(3)(e))
  - a copy of the report of any inspection carried out under sections 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act or section 87(1) of the 1989 Act (paragraph 32(3)(g)).
- 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 (paragraphs 34(1) and 34(1)(a)).
  - The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a) and 34(1)(b)).

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- The proprietor and school leaders have not demonstrated the necessary knowledge and expertise to ensure that all of the independent school standards are met consistently. While leaders have taken some effective action in response to the findings of the emergency inspection in January 2017, they have taken their eye off other aspects of the school's work. Consequently, they have been unable to plan for, or secure, sustained school improvement.
- The current quality of teaching does not enable pupils to make good progress, especially in English. Furthermore, previous inspections over a long period of time have found various shortcomings with different aspects of the school's work. There has been a pattern of leaders solving one problem only for another problem to appear. A key reason for this inability to secure long-lasting improvements is that too much responsibility rests with the headteacher, which is overwhelming. In addition, there are no informed lines of accountability for senior leaders, which means self-evaluation is weak.
- There is no doubting the ambition, commitment and hard work of school leaders. They simply do not know enough about the government's requirements for running a school.
- The school does have a website but it is temporarily offline. In the meantime, most of the information that the school is required to make available to parents can be obtained from the school's office. Having said this, at the time of the inspection it was not clear whether the website was working or not, so some information was not easily available for parents. This is why several of the independent school standards for the provision of information are not met.
- Any previous confusion about the named proprietor has been resolved. The information provided by the school matches that held by the Department for Education (DfE), Ofsted and the Charities Commission.
- The school curriculum is suitably broad and all of the required areas of learning are taught. It provides an interesting and appropriate mix of activities each week. This said, the curriculum could be better balanced to make sure there is an appropriate variety of reading, writing and mathematical activities in each year group. All pupils spend time on Islamic studies but also have equal access to national curriculum subjects. Around the school building, there are bright displays that record and celebrate pupils' work in many subjects, including history, art, computing, religious education and sport. Pupils also get to enjoy special events in school, such as a bake-off challenge, and make visits to places of interest, such as the Liverpool War Museum, a sea-life centre and different places of worship. Older pupils are able to attend an after-school booster club, to help them prepare for end-of-key-stage-2 tests.
- The curriculum appropriately prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. Through the school's newly revised personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme, pupils learn how people can be different. Indeed, over the past two terms, older pupils have done a lot of work about protected characteristics and the harm that can be caused by prejudice and ignorance. On top of this, pupils consider ways they can help others and make a positive contribution to society. They regularly get involved in

fundraising for good causes.

- Parents have very positive views about the school. Parents who spoke to inspectors said they felt well informed about school life and praised pupils' good behaviour. Of those who responded to Parent View, 100% would recommend the school to others. Staff, too, express supportive views.

## **Governance**

- The current governance arrangements are not effective.
- The governors, one of whom is the headteacher, are all school staff. The headteacher is also a trustee, so represents the proprietor. While this structure is not a problem in itself, in practice it does mean that there are no objective lines of accountability between different tiers of leadership. Given that leaders do not have a secure enough knowledge of government requirements for running an independent school, this lack of rigour severely limits school improvement and compliance with regulatory requirements.
- Governors know that teaching and learning are still not good enough. They also recognise that they need more expertise on the governing body and are trying to recruit new governors.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's safeguarding policy reflects current guidance and is fit for purpose. However, it is not available on the school's website, which is temporarily offline.
- The emergency inspection in January 2017 raised concerns about pupils' safety and the school's work to protect them from extreme views. This inspection found no evidence to renew these concerns. Indeed, school leaders have taken steps to highlight the dangers of radicalisation and have worked with the local 'Prevent' duty team to tighten up the school's policies and practice.
- Staff safeguarding training is up to date and procedures for recording and reporting concerns are in place. Inspectors saw several examples of records that showed evidence of effective multi-agency working in response to safety matters. Furthermore, leaders follow up any unexplained absences and are alert to the warning signs of abuse, including female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. They give out firm messages about what to do should such practice be suspected. School staff confirm that they know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil's safety or welfare.
- In response to a recent fire-safety audit, the school's basement area has been cleared of redundant furniture and materials. Satisfactory fire-safety measures are in place and meet government requirements. The school building is rather tatty, but does not pose a risk to health or safety. The school playground has been improved and provides a safe outdoor space for recreation and play.
- All of the necessary recruitment checks on staff's and visitors' suitability to work with children are carried out and recorded as required.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Requires improvement**

- Teaching, particularly in English, varies in its effectiveness. Consequently, pupils do not make good progress in reading and writing. They do not learn spelling and punctuation rules in a sequential progression and this means some pupils fall behind, while others mark time. Many older pupils still make basic spelling errors or have underdeveloped comprehension skills because of shortcomings in the teaching of phonics and reading.
- Leaders are alert to this and the teaching of reading and phonics is improving. However, while teachers plan appropriate activities for pupils' different abilities, they do not react quickly enough to pupils who struggle or find tasks too easy. For example, some pupils who were attempting to write sentences including words with a particular letter sound were unable to succeed because there were no resources to help them. Elsewhere in the class, some pupils zipped through the task because they already knew what to do. This sort of thing does not happen all of the time, but it does happen more often than it should.
- While there is clearly room for improvement in how teachers use assessment information in class, a whole-school system does provide an informed view of what different pupils know. It is very clear that, as in previous years, current pupils are making better progress in mathematics than in English. This is because mathematics teaching, and particularly the teaching of arithmetic, is increasingly effective. During this inspection, for example, Years 3 and 4 pupils were made to think hard and use what they already knew in order to learn more as they explored methods of addition and subtraction. The teacher asked plenty of questions, listened carefully to pupils' answers and then refined tasks as necessary.
- Not all mathematics teaching is this well-tailored to pupils' differing needs. In a few instances, teachers rely on photocopied sheets to keep pupils occupied, rather than to set work to promote purposeful learning. Furthermore, there was little available evidence of work that developed pupils' reasoning, problem-solving or measurement skills. That said, curriculum plans for each year do include a full range of mathematical activities and there is a newly appointed mathematics leader who will be checking that pupils have a suitable breadth of study.
- Teaching in other subjects, such as science, history and religious education, covers an appropriate range of topics, informed by the national curriculum. Consequently, pupils get a good grounding in key skills and knowledge across a broad range of subjects. Nevertheless, weaknesses in pupils' literacy skills affect the quality of their written work across many subjects, which hinders their success. The teaching of Arabic and Islamic studies is good. Teachers have strong subject knowledge, manage time well and keep pupils interested. In fact, pupils show interest and a keenness to learn in all situations. Pupils' conscientious attitudes and positive relationships between all in the school community mean that classrooms are orderly and good behaviour is the norm.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- As was noted by the previous standard inspection, the attention to pupils' welfare is a positive aspect of the school's work. Adults are kind and friendly, yet firm and clear about

their expectations for behaviour and conduct. Consequently, pupils feel safe and secure and are confident to talk with staff if they are worried about anything.

- Pupils say that bullying is very rare. They are suitably informed about internet safety and other everyday risks and how to manage these. The school has a system in place to log and respond to pupils' or adults' concerns, and there is a worry box for pupils to use, should they feel the need.
- Medicines are stored securely but are readily available when needed. Inhalers are kept in suitable places in classrooms.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct in lessons, at breaktimes and when moving around the building is consistently good. They show respect to adults and one another and are keen to please. In class, pupils listen attentively to their teachers and do what is asked of them. Even when they are not sure what to do or find their work too hard, they do the best that they can.
- There are very few instances of poor behaviour and pupils report that the school's rules are fair and all are treated equally. Boys and girls get along well with one another and pupils of all ages enjoy helping out with jobs around the school.
- Overall attendance for the last school year was above national figures for primary schools. Most pupils attend regularly and on time, but a small number of pupils arrive a few minutes late in the mornings.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress in reading and writing is not as good as it ought to be given their starting points. Consequently, a significant proportion of pupils do not reach age-related expectations by the end of key stage 2.
- Pupils' spelling is a particular weakness. While they get off to a good start in the early years, and phonics teaching in Years 1 and 2 is effective, pupils do not go on to make the most of this positive start. Currently, pupils in key stage 2 regularly struggle with aspects of spelling and punctuation, and this limits the quality of their writing.
- In reading, current pupils are making stronger progress than the pupils who left recently. The school's focus on reading and pupils' increasing use of the new library are reasons why progress is starting to pick up. Nevertheless, pupils' attainment in reading, and especially their understanding of text, is not keeping pace with the higher standards seen in mathematics and remains in need of further improvement.
- In mathematics, pupils are doing better. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 6 have risen year after year and pupils are competent at arithmetic and have a good grasp of place value. There is still scope to improve their reasoning skills, but standards are definitely on the up.
- In other subjects, such as Arabic, science and humanities, pupils generally make good progress. Their very positive attitudes to learning, teachers' enthusiasm and good subject knowledge help to make sure pupils stay interested in their work. On displays around the



school and in pupils' books there is plenty of evidence to show that pupils are on track with key knowledge and skills, although weaknesses in their spelling affect the quality of written work across the curriculum.

- There are no pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities and due to the relatively small numbers in each year group it would not be appropriate to report on other groups such as the least and most able. Suffice to say that variations in the quality of teaching mean that some work is not pitched at the right level, which slows progress for some pupils.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have maintained the good quality of provision in the early years. Good and informed oversight of this part of the school means that all the independent school standards for the early years are met, along with the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage.
- The available indoor and outdoor spaces are put to good use. While the fabric of the building is shabby, it is safe and children are supervised appropriately at all times.
- Like other staff in the school, the teacher in charge of the early years has a kindly and nurturing manner with children. She is attentive to their welfare and manages their behaviour very well. Children learn to share, take turns, listen to others and develop positive attitudes towards school. Consequently, they feel secure, behave well and are keen to attend. They are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Teaching is effective because it is informed by reliable information about what children already know and can do. The early years teacher attends moderation meetings to check that her judgements about children's progress are correct and seeks guidance from a range of different sources in order to keep up to date.
- At the time of this inspection, there were just five children in the early years, so it would not be appropriate to report on different groups of children. However, children of all abilities are making good progress because work is pitched at the right level.
- Staff provide useful information for parents and have held parent workshops to explain how different subjects, such as phonics, are taught. Regular communication with parents helps children to make a smooth start to school. It also ensures that parents are kept informed about their children's progress during this first year.



## School details

Unique reference number	133521
DfE registration number	330/6102
Inspection number	10040956

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	Muslim independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Albayan Education Foundation
Chair	Mrs Amal Zeiada
Headteacher	Ms Janet Laws
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,980
Telephone number	0121 766 8129
Website	<a href="http://www.birminghammuslimschool.org">www.birminghammuslimschool.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@birminghammuslimschool.org">info@birminghammuslimschool.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	7–9 June 2016

## Information about this school

- Birmingham Muslim School is an independent Islamic day school for girls and boys aged four to 11 years old. It was opened in 2001.
- There are currently 78 pupils on roll.
- No pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The proprietor is The Albayan Education Foundation. This is made up of a board of three trustees, one of whom is the headteacher.
- As well as being a trustee, the headteacher is one of three governors that make up the

governing body. The headteacher does not have a class teaching commitment.

- The last full inspection of the school took place in June 2016, when its overall effectiveness was judged to require improvement.
- An emergency inspection took place on 27 January 2017. This was commissioned by the DfE because of concerns about the quality of education; the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; pupils' safety and welfare; and the quality of leadership and management in the school.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders, staff, governors and pupils. The inspectors also examined pupils' work in books, and considered test and assessment information and heard some pupils read and sing.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes and breaktimes, during lessons and when pupils were moving about the school building and playing outside.
- By the end of the inspection, there were 27 recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and 12 responses to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors took account of these and spoke with parents during the inspection.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included: the school's prospectus, information about pupils' achievement, numerous policy statements, records relating to staff performance management, premises, staff appointment processes, training, behaviour, admissions, attendance, safety and safeguarding. The school's website was also checked.

## Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mel Ford

Her Majesty's Inspector

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