

# Al-Ashraf Secondary School for Girls

Sinope Street, Gloucester GL1 4AW

## Inspection dates

14–16 November 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Outcomes, particularly in key stage 4, have declined in some subjects in recent years. Leaders have been slow to halt the decline.
- The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent between subjects. Leaders do not identify the training or support teachers need through their appraisal systems to ensure that pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Leaders and governors are overly generous in their view of the school's performance. They have not ensured that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good enough.
- The school's assessment system is underdeveloped, particularly in key stage 4 and some subjects in key stage 3.
- Teachers do not adapt their teaching to challenge the most able pupils sufficiently or give pupils the support they need when they do not understand. Teachers' expectations for what the most able pupils can achieve are not always high enough.
- Teachers often concentrate on the breadth of knowledge they expect pupils to learn. This can be at the expense of developing pupils' deeper understanding.
- Leaders have broadened the curriculum, especially in key stage 3, since the previous standard inspection. However, this improvement has not been seen at key stage 4.
- The school's target-setting system is not supporting pupils effectively to reach the standards they are capable of.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have sought out opportunities to broaden pupils' understanding of the world. They support pupils to challenge stereotypes and prepare them well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development needs are met effectively. Their understanding of a wide range of faiths and other cultures is strong.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are polite, articulate and confident. They are not afraid to perform in front of an audience and talk openly about their schooling, for example sharing their learning from a recent off-site visit.
- Governors have ensured that the independent school standards are met. The headteacher and trustees have ensured that pupils' welfare, health and safety are priorities.

### 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?

- Improve the quality of leadership, management and governance of the school by ensuring that:
  - governors and leaders draw on the support they need to more accurately evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of teaching and learning
  - the curriculum is suitably broad enough in key stage 4 so that pupils have the opportunity to follow qualifications in the arts
  - staff appraisal is used effectively to identify and provide the high-quality professional development they need to plan learning that better meets pupils' needs
  - leaders continue to develop their own systems for assessing, monitoring and evaluating the progress pupils make across the curriculum, ensuring that assessment information is accurate and reliable
  - there is greater consistency in the targets pupils are set across subjects.
- Strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
  - teachers plan learning to meet pupils' needs more closely
  - assessment is used effectively in lessons to adapt teaching to address any misconceptions or deepen pupils' understanding further.
- Improve pupils' outcomes further by:
  - ensuring that the same high academic expectations seen in many subjects are replicated across the curriculum
  - challenging the most able pupils to be able to reach the highest grades
  - providing timely support for those pupils who find learning more difficult.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across subjects is typically good. Teachers have not had the training they need to plan learning carefully enough to meet the needs of all pupils or assess their progress accurately.
- Governors and leaders have an overgenerous view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, particularly with respect to the quality of teaching and learning. While they have identified priorities for improvement, the early signs of decline were not picked up swiftly enough. Therefore, the quality of teaching is not yet typically good.
- Leaders have not implemented a suitably robust appraisal system of staff. Their monitoring of teaching and learning is not fully effective. As a result, leaders have not provided the specific training or level of support that teachers need to improve their teaching in many subjects.
- The newly introduced assessment system in key stage 3 is providing leaders with a stronger understanding of what pupils know, understand and can do. However, the assessment information is sometimes not accurate. Leaders and governors are aware of the need to develop a robust system for key stage 4.
- Leaders' arrangements for target setting for pupils in some subjects lack rigour. Targets vary for pupils with the same starting points. Teachers do not routinely use these to influence their planning of learning activities.
- Leaders ensure that teachers regularly report on pupils' progress to parents. However, sometimes these reports do not clearly state what pupils know, understand and can do, or identify the next steps pupils need to take to improve. However, all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend this school to other parents.
- Leaders have reviewed the curriculum and made some significant changes in key stage 3. Pupils commented about their enjoyment of learning in art, where they experience different aesthetic and creative techniques. The curriculum at key stage 4 does not offer the same richness of experience for pupils. For example, there are not opportunities for pupils to undertake a qualification in the arts.
- The headteacher is very committed to the secondary school. He invests the majority of his time in the school. However, the external support needed is not in place currently to review the school's strengths and areas for development. In previous years, the headteacher has benefited from the support of an external adviser which has helped his development in evaluating the school's performance.
- Leaders have relentlessly pursued every opportunity to develop pupils' understanding of the world, break down gender barriers and raise aspirations. As a result of the teaching they receive and the visits they experience, they are well prepared for life in a multi-gender modern Britain.
- Throughout the school, staff have high expectations of pupils' conduct and their aspirations. Pupils rise to these. They particularly value the visits of prominent members of the community, including the visit by the Bishop of Gloucester and former pupils who

have progressed to higher education. Pupils are clear that every option is open to them. They are keen to succeed.

- The headteacher provides very strong leadership of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. This is a strength of the school. Pupils benefit from a wide range of experiences which deepen their understanding of a range of faiths and different cultures. Extra-curricular activities are used effectively to enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Similarly, the headteacher has championed the strong understanding of British values. Pupils explained to inspectors the various aspects, and how they affect them and their families in everyday life.
- Leaders have ensured that the school complies with the independent school standards and associated regulations, including the promotion of equality and appreciation of diversity.

## **Governance**

- Governors have given insufficient attention to the quality of teaching and learning in the school. They are overly reliant on information from leaders. While they question leaders about the school's performance, they have not tested the reliability or accuracy of the information they receive for themselves.
- Each member of the governing body brings specialist skills and experience which they generously share with school staff. They use these skills to develop aspects of the curriculum, such as in computing and e-safety, and in maintaining the school premises to a good standard. For example, governors have upgraded the buildings to provide a comfortable environment for pupils to learn in. Hazards are noted and repairs implemented swiftly.
- Governors provide a clear channel of communication with the proprietor, the Al-Madani Educational Trust. This ensures that the proprietor is alert to many of the needs of the school, including the need for increased financial support.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils are well prepared for the risks they may face in society and online. The work on e-safety is particularly strong. Pupils are keenly aware of the risks of extremism and radicalisation, and how to protect themselves.
- The school's safeguarding policy is published on the school's website. It takes into account the latest guidance from the Secretary of State. Leaders with specific responsibility ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective. Leaders are alert to the risks pupils may face. They work well with other agencies and involve parents when necessary.
- The leader with responsibility for safeguarding is suitably trained and regularly updates her knowledge and understanding to ensure that staff are alert to the risks. The quality of record-keeping is strong. Governors use their professional expertise to enhance safeguarding, for example through ensuring that the internet filter system is robust.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school is inconsistent. The strongest teaching is seen in English and science. However, in some other subjects, teachers do not plan learning carefully enough to build up pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- In some subjects, teachers do not use information they keep about what pupils know, understand and can do. Teachers rely on information gained from formal assessments at the end of topics or in examinations. Consequently, in some lessons, teachers do not plan learning which deepens pupils' knowledge and understanding sufficiently.
- In lessons, teachers focus on the coverage of the content of the syllabus. This is at the expense of developing pupils' understanding. As a result, pupils have some gaps in their learning. These are only recently being addressed and so not all pupils have the depth of understanding they need to reach the highest grades.
- Pupils are not sufficiently clear about how they need to improve their work in many subjects. While many teachers provide advice to pupils, it is not specific enough to help them reflect on any shortcomings. Therefore, the impact is variable across subjects. Where the school's approach is effective, progress is correspondingly strong. This is also seen in the information provided to parents about their child's progress. However, reports do not consistently and clearly comment on what pupils are learning and the steps needed to improve.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good. However, they do not routinely adapt their teaching during lessons to ensure that pupils are challenged sufficiently or adequately supported. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils and the targets set by school leaders are not sufficiently challenging in some subjects, such as geography and mathematics. Consequently, outcomes have been less strong than for other subjects in the school such as English.
- Where learning is stronger, pupils are not afraid to take risks and make mistakes. This is the case in a number of subjects, such as science and English. Pupils make stronger gains in these subjects and achieve good outcomes.
- Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about practical-based subjects, such as science and art. In science, pupils are challenged to think deeply and solve problems. As a result, they have a secure understanding of the subject and the concepts. In art, they thrive on the wide range of creative opportunities and, as a result, make strong progress.
- Questioning is often used well to share knowledge, particularly in Islamic studies, religious education and English. However, it is less frequently used to deepen understanding, particularly for the most able.
- Staff actively challenge stereotypes. There are numerous examples where pupils have explored prominent roles that women hold. The careers information they receive shows that all employment sectors are open to them and the school has a good track record of pupils continuing into further study and careers in a wide range of employment sectors.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and self-assured. Year 9 pupils, who led an assembly to the whole school about their learning in mathematics following a recent visit to an outdoor centre during the inspection, did so enthusiastically. Another group of pupils from different year groups sang in front of the whole school confidently. Pupils value the opportunity to share their skills and knowledge with other pupils and visitors.
- Pupils greet visitors with warmth and hospitality. They show respect, politeness and good manners. They were keen to share their experiences of school with inspectors.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills are in place, such as through leading fundraising events and being a member of the student council.
- Pupils' understanding of some of the risks they may face in society are well developed. They follow current affairs and discuss and debate topics such as extremism and radicalisation. They are very clear, through extensive teaching, about the risks they can face online. Pupils actively participate in events to break down any cultural barriers.
- Strong careers guidance and support lead to pupils continuing to further study. Former pupils return to the school to share their experience. This has been particularly effective to show the range of successful careers that they now follow, such as in engineering and medicine.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well during the school day, including during breaktimes and at lunch. They have good manners and behave sensibly.
- The school is an orderly environment. Pupils respond quickly to the requests of staff. They are polite to staff and visitors.
- Pupils' attitudes towards their work are positive. They talk about many of the subjects they study with enthusiasm. Pupils are punctual to lessons and arrive ready to learn.
- Pupils value their education. This is demonstrated through their good attendance at school.
- Pupils, parents and staff agree that behaviour around school is good although some pupils comment that other pupils do not always show the kindness seen in the majority. This is not always tackled to their satisfaction by leaders.

## Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes at the end of key stage 4 in mathematics and geography have declined in recent years. Attainment was lower in these subjects than in the other subjects pupils studied. However, work in books confirms that there has been some improvement recently.

- In English, ICT, religious education and some aspects of the Islamic curriculum, attainment is strong and pupils make good progress. However, there remains scope for the most able pupils to achieve even higher standards. Teachers do not routinely challenge the most able pupils in their thinking to deepen their understanding. As a result, these pupils do not achieve the highest grades across the curriculum.
- Equally, those pupils who did not score highly in Year 6 assessments are not provided with the support they need in class. Teachers do not plan learning carefully enough to meet their needs, particularly for those who need individual support with their learning.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their learning. Almost all pupils who leave the school at the end of Year 11 go on to study at the sixth forms of the local grammar schools.
- Pupils' personal development, their understanding of the world and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are strong. They have used the good teaching in these areas, and the wide range of visits and experiences, to develop a very secure understanding in these matters.

## School details

Unique reference number	115810
DfE registration number	916/6073
Inspection number	10033886

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	79
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Al-Madani Educational Trust
Chair	Yakub Patel
Headteacher	Abdullah Patel
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,325–£2,000
Telephone number	01452 300 465
Website	<a href="http://secondary.al-ashraf.org.uk">http://secondary.al-ashraf.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@al-ashraf.gloucs.sch.uk">info@al-ashraf.gloucs.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	11–13 March 2014

## Information about this school

- Al-Ashraf Secondary School for Girls is an independent Muslim day school for girls aged 11 to 16. The number of pupils has risen year on year.
- The school is operated by the Al-Madani Educational Trust, a registered charity that provides educational help and local support in Gloucestershire. The trustees have delegated governance of the school to a governing body which is chaired by one of the trustees. The headteacher is responsible for both the secondary school and the nearby Al-Ashraf Primary School.
- The school is based in a Victorian school building near to the centre of Gloucester. Pupils

mainly travel from the surrounding areas, although a few travel long distances to attend the school. Most pupils are from Indian, Bengali or Pakistani backgrounds.

- The school aims to provide high-quality secular and Islamic education, which is broad, balanced and applicable within the requirements of the national curriculum. There is a particular emphasis on developing the 'whole' personality of pupils based on commitment to their faith and to British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- The school does not use any other alternative providers and there is no off-site provision. The school has no pupils on a part-time basis.
- No pupils who currently attend the school have either an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- The previous standard inspection was in March 2014. An emergency inspection was carried out in January 2015 when a number of standards were not met. At a progress monitoring inspection in November 2015, all standards were found to be met. All inspections have been carried out by Ofsted.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed lessons in all classes and looked at pupils' work from subjects across the curriculum. The headteacher joined the inspectors for many of these activities.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher (who is also the designated safeguarding lead), eight governors (of whom four are also members of the proprietor's board of trustees). Inspectors spoke with staff throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including information on pupils' attainment and progress, and records relating to former pupils. The school's plans for improvement, minutes of governors' meetings, behaviour logs, and the admissions and attendance registers were scrutinised. Inspectors also took into account staff performance management information, examples of reports to parents and records relating to safeguarding arrangements. One inspector undertook a tour of the premises.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils during visits to classes and at social times.
- The views of the 38 parents who responded to Parent View, including the comments made by parents, were taken into account. Inspectors also took into account the views of 23 members of staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Iain Freeland, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Non Davies

Ofsted Inspector

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