

Avecinna Academy

The Garrison Centre, 106 Garrison Lane, Bordesley, Birmingham B9 4BS

Inspection dates

30 January–1 February 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have worked hard to ensure that the independent school standards (ISS) are met and that the school provides a good quality of education to its pupils. As a result, pupils are safe, well taught and achieve well.
- Many pupils arrive at the school after the start of Year 7 and at various points throughout the school year. Many have low starting points. As a result of the good teaching they receive, pupils soon begin to catch up in reading, writing, mathematics and a range of other subjects.
- The swift progress they make ensures that pupils leave the school with appropriate qualifications, given their ages and starting points. Most gain certificates at GCSE or an equivalent level in English and mathematics. Almost all who stay until the end of Year 11 go on to study relevant courses of further education.
- Teachers know their pupils well and tailor the level of challenge to individuals. This is why pupils of all abilities achieve well.
- Leaders keep a close eye on the quality of teaching and take steps to ensure that it improves. As a result, teaching meets the requirements of the ISS. Some teaching is of exceptional quality.
- Pupils behave well. They are polite, courteous and respectful. In spite of the high degree of mobility and transience in the school's population, there is a sense of community, to which pupils are pleased to belong.
- Pupils are confident, well informed and considerate. They are committed to making positive contributions to the school, to the local community and to wider society.
- Pupils understand rights, responsibilities and respect. Leaders are now seeking ways to give boys and girls more experiences of interacting with each other, so as to prepare them for adult life in the mixed-sex society in which they will live and work.

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 at this time.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers should ensure that they end the school's unlawfully discriminatory practice of segregation by sex (although not taken into account in this inspection when determining the judgements, this will be taken into account following September 2018 – see the 'Information about this school' section below).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders are dedicated and passionate about doing what they can to promote the well-being and achievement of the school's pupils, most of whom come from extremely disadvantaged, highly disrupted backgrounds. Leaders are acutely attuned to the complex barriers that are present in the local community. They work determinedly to help pupils overcome these. As a result, they have created a school that serves its community well.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have ensured that they understand the requirements of the independent school standards. As a result, the school now meets almost all of the requirements and, for the purposes of this inspection, is treated as having met the requirements in full. However, the school's policy of sex segregation limits the pupils' opportunities for social development and means that the school does not provide effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society. This, however, has not been taken into account in this inspection when determining the judgements for the reasons set out in the 'Information about this school' section below.
- Leaders give great consideration to the content of the school's curriculum. It covers all required areas of learning. The curriculum includes a strong emphasis on personal, social, health and economic education, on citizenship and on promoting spiritual, moral and cultural development. This enables pupils to discuss, appreciate and understand the opportunities and challenges they will encounter in adult life.
- A broad range of visits and visitors enhance pupils' learning in different subjects. For example, pupils recently visited Warwick Castle as part of their history work. An impressive range of outside speakers enhance pupils' experience of the wider community and the institutions of British society, such as the police and armed forces. When pupils visit places they do so together. However, boys sit at the front of the coach and girls sit at the back. When visitors come into the school, boys and girls have the same experience but at separate times.
- Pupils learn about their rights and responsibilities in the community. They learn to show respect and tolerance towards all people, regardless of background or belief.
- Leaders are aware that they have a similar duty to ensure that boys and girls are prepared for the mixed-sex nature of society. Leaders are identifying ways in which pupils can interact with one another in the school, which educates boys and girls separately and separates pupils by sex at breaktimes. Some opportunities have already been taken. However, leaders know these must be more widespread in order to end the school's unlawfully discriminatory policy of segregation by sex prior to September 2018, when it will be taken into account in reaching key judgements – see the 'Information about this school' section below.
- Leaders work systematically to improve the quality of teaching. They regularly observe lessons and examine pupils' work. Points for improvement are discussed with teachers. Leaders provide appropriate training and support to remedy weaknesses. This is why the effectiveness of teaching continuously improves. Some teaching is now of exceptional quality. Less-experienced teachers are learning from their more-established colleagues.

The quality of teaching for and experiences of boys and girls in the curriculum are equal.

- The population of pupils is highly mobile. Leaders ensure that baseline assessments are carried out immediately when a pupil joins the school. They use this information to set individual academic targets. Leaders monitor pupils' progress each term. As a result, pupils almost always meet the expectations set for them.
- Leaders are self-evaluative and self-critical. They welcome external challenge and act quickly on trusted advice. For example, since the previous inspection, leaders have established a parent council to provide governance and accountability for the school.

Governance

- Governance is provided by the parent council. Members are knowledgeable and appropriately skilled. For example, the chair is an experienced headteacher.
- The council effectively supports leaders in achieving the school's ambition. It monitors the quality of teaching by visiting classrooms and scrutinising pupils' work. The council provides a good balance between support and challenge for leaders to ensure that the quality of education continues to improve.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. These are set out in a comprehensive policy which is on the school's website.
- Leaders take their responsibility for promoting pupils' welfare extremely seriously. For example, the designated lead for safeguarding works closely with different groups to educate them that female genital mutilation is illegal and about the risks to girls in the community.
- Leaders are extremely proactive in ensuring that pupils are protected from the dangers of abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism. Staff are highly alert to the indicators that pupils may be at risk and act appropriately when this happens.
- The school works very closely with the local authority to ensure that concerns are reported promptly and followed up effectively so that pupils and their families are well supported.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The effective quality of teaching in the school is built upon the secure, trusting relationships that exist between pupils and their teachers. Teachers expect the best from pupils and challenge themselves to teach as well as they can. Pupils appreciate the support they receive and work hard as a result.
- As soon as pupils arrive at the school, teachers assess what knowledge and skills they have. This information is used to set challenging targets for pupils' future attainment. Teachers keep a close check on whether pupils are on track to meet their targets. They provide helpful support if a pupil appears to be falling behind. This helps them catch up to meet the expectation set for them.
- Teachers are well qualified in the subjects they teach. When they start teaching at the

school, most do not have a teaching qualification. However, they work hard under the effective guidance of leaders to gain the skills they need. Pupils make good progress as a result of teachers' effectiveness.

- Teachers' expertise in their subjects helps them present knowledge in manageable amounts and in meaningful ways for pupils. Some teachers are exceptionally skilled at this. For example, during the inspection, Years 7 and 8 pupils were learning how to infer meaning from challenging texts. The teacher asked precisely targeted questions and gradually introduced new information to the pupils. This systematically built their confidence and understanding.
- Literacy lessons are used to ensure that pupils are taught basic spelling, punctuation and grammar skills. This is particularly important to the many pupils who are new to speaking English. In addition to focusing on the subject they teach, teachers reinforce basic skills by expecting and supporting pupils to use them correctly in their written work.
- The school has a clear policy about how teachers will provide feedback to pupils. The expected approach is implemented effectively. As a result, pupils know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve further. The most skilled teachers use this policy exceptionally well. Less-experienced teachers are learning from their colleagues. The impact of their feedback is improving as a result.
- Teachers use opportunities in lessons to celebrate diversity and teach tolerance for people from different religious and cultural heritages.
- All pupils receive an equal quality of education. Both sexes are taught the same content by the same teachers, both male and female.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is accepted to be good for the purposes of this inspection. However, Ofsted will take any ongoing breach of the Equality Act 2010 arising from sex segregation into account in relation to key inspection judgements made from September 2018 – see the 'Information about this school' section below.
- Many pupils join the school during the year. Most come from abroad. Many have little experience of the British school system. Some need to overcome substantial emotional and social barriers to learning. Pupils quickly develop a sense of belonging and community, regardless of how long or short the period for which they attend. As a result, pupils are confident, hard-working learners. They take pleasure in the success they achieve.
- Pupils have a strong sense of moral duty. The school helps them to understand the necessity of making a positive contribution to society. High-quality careers information, advice and guidance support them in making appropriate choices about their futures.
- Pupils say there are no known instances of bullying. They are confident that issues would be sorted out if they arose. Pupils feel well supported by staff. They say adults will listen to their worries and help them.
- The school has implemented a well-designed and thorough programme to teach pupils

about the dangers they may encounter in adult life. This helps prepare them to be resilient to the pressures associated with radicalisation, extremism, gang culture, female genital mutilation, domestic violence and forced marriage.

- The school is aware that it has a duty to ensure that boys and girls are well prepared for adult life in a mixed-sex society. Some opportunities to help boys and girls interact in learning and social situations have been taken. For example, groups of boys and girls competed against each other to see who could make the most profit in the 'Tenner' project. Further, similar opportunities are being explored and leaders are intending to use the personal, social and health education curriculum to enable the school to begin to address compliance with the Equality Act 2010 in relation to sex segregation from September 2018.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves sensibly as they move around the school. They speak confidently and politely to staff and to visitors.
- Pupils are attentive in lessons. They follow instructions immediately and ask questions if they need more information to help them complete their work.
- Lessons are rarely disrupted by pupils' misbehaviour. When a reminder is needed, pupils respond immediately and refocus on their work.
- Procedures for tracking pupils' attendance are effective. Each day, any absence is checked and verified. If the reason is not clear or convincing, leaders contact parents or carers or the local authority to confirm the pupil's whereabouts. As a result of the school's efforts, attendance has improved and levels are now above the national figure for all schools.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils join the school when they move to England with their families. Some have little or no experience of formal schooling. Those who have been to school bring with them little, if any, information about their past achievement.
- As soon as they arrive, teachers test pupils' understanding of English, along with their reading, writing and mathematics skills. This assessment shows many are new to speaking English and most have low starting points in other areas of learning.
- Teachers set challenging academic targets for pupils because they want them to overcome these barriers to future success. The good quality of teaching ensures that pupils make strong progress in a wide range of subjects. Almost all go on to meet or exceed their targets and gain the qualifications of which they are capable. For example, the most able go on to attain appropriately high standards.
- Boys and girls achieve equally well academically.
- Most pupils gain qualifications at GCSE level. In 2017, the two Year 11 pupils who had been in the school since Year 7 gained more than five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics at grades 9 to 4. In recent years, some parents requested their

children sit their GCSE examinations in Year 10, prior to moving abroad. All who did so passed.

- Pupils make particularly strong progress in English. All Year 11 pupils in 2017 achieved a GCSE at grade 1 or above. Around one third achieved grade 4 or above. Given their low starting points, these outcomes are impressive.
- Pupils who speak little English when they arrive at the school are very well supported. They make exceptional progress and catch up well with other pupils in a short time.
- Pupils read accurately, with confidence and understanding. This helps them make good progress across a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils acquire secure number skills and can apply these into meaningful experiences. Pupils learn to appreciate and handle finances, for example in the 'Tenner' project and in lessons on taxation and interest. This prepares them well for the world of work.

School details

Unique reference number	140382
DfE registration number	330/6016
Inspection number	10038849

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 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	49
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Mr Mohamed Dahir
Chair	Mr Sakawahat Ali
Headteacher	Mr Mohamed Dahir
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,200
Telephone number	0121 771 4782
Website	www.avecinnaacademy.com
Email address	enquiries@avecinnaacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	23–25 September 2014

Information about this school

- AVECINNA Academy is an independent day school offering full-time education for up to 100 boys and girls aged 11 to 17. The school has a Muslim religious ethos.
- The school was first registered as an independent girls' Islamic school in November 2013.
- Boys were admitted in September 2014 following an application for a material change.
- The school operates a policy of segregation by sex. Boys and girls are taught on separate floors of the building in all year groups. Boys and girls have their breaks at the same time but have separate playgrounds and are not allowed to mix during breaktimes. When pupils visit places, they do so together. However, boys sit at the front of the coach and

girls sit at the back. When visitors come into the school, boys and girls have the same experience but at separate times.

- Ofsted's view is that the policy of segregation by sex creates a detriment to girls (who are denied the choice to socialise with boys in lessons and during breaktimes and miss out on the educational benefits of doing so) and a detriment to boys (for the same reasons). Given this detriment, the policy constitutes direct discrimination contrary to the Equality Act 2010.
- In 2017, the Court of Appeal affirmed that segregation by sex in schools, in analogous circumstances, is direct sex discrimination contrary to section 13 of the Equality Act 2010. Nevertheless, the Secretary of State for Education has been clear that schools which engage in unlawfully discriminatory sex segregation should be given time to make their practice lawful. Therefore, the school's breach of the Equality Act 2010 in respect of segregation has not been taken into account when determining the inspection judgements.
- Ofsted intends to write to the Secretary of State and to suggest that he commissions a further inspection of the school in or after September 2018. From September 2018, Ofsted will take any ongoing breach of the Equality Act 2010 arising from sex segregation into account in relation to key inspection judgements made.
- In September 2015, the school moved to its current premises in the Garrison Centre in the Bordesley Green area of Birmingham.
- None of the pupils has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The majority of pupils are of Somali heritage.
- The school does not use alternative educational provision.
- A very large majority of pupils enter the school at times other than the start of Year 7.
- At the last full inspection in September 2014, the school failed to meet a number of the independent school standards. Progress monitoring inspections were carried out in November 2015 and September 2016.
- A third progress monitoring visit was carried out in March 2017. The inspection found that the school met all the previously failed regulations.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector toured the school to examine the premises.
- The inspector observed pupils' learning by visiting lessons, talking to pupils as they worked and looking at the work in their books.
- The inspector met with the headteacher (who is also the proprietor) and deputy headteacher (who is also the designated lead for safeguarding), other school staff, the chair and another member of the parent council, and pupils in Years 7 to 11. Inspectors spoke informally with other staff and pupils as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors took account of the three responses to the Parent View online survey.
- A range of documents was examined, including the school's checks on how well it is doing and its plans for improvement, minutes of meetings of the parent council, curriculum plans, policies relating to health and safety and pupils' welfare, and information about pupils' attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Sandy Hayes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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