

Azhar Academy Girls School

235a Romford Road, Forest Gate, London E7 9HL

Inspection dates

14–16 March 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher's committed and highly effective leadership has ensured that pupils thrive, both personally and academically. All the independent school standards are met.
- The leadership of teaching is strong. Leaders are self-evaluative and are always looking to improve teaching through research and external partnerships. As a result, teaching, learning and assessment are consistently good, although the primary provision is not as strong as the secondary.
- Overall, outcomes for pupils are good. Secondary pupils make exceptional progress and their attainment at the end of year 11 is well above the national average. Leadership capacity to achieve the same quality of outcomes in the primary sector is not yet in place.
- Governors have a clear vision for the school and a strong sense of moral purpose for pupils to become good citizens. They are aspirational for pupils.
- The high quality of the conversions to the school buildings provide a very positive learning environment for pupils.
- The curriculum is broad and well planned. It is up to date and relevant for pupils. Extra-curricular activities enrich the curriculum very effectively.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding. Pupils are confident and articulate. Their behaviour in classes and around the school is mature and thoughtful.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders have developed effective partnerships with external agencies and pupils know how to keep themselves safe.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplary. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The early years provision is good. Children are well prepared for Year 1.

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 leadership and management by increasing the leadership capacity in the primary school to further improve the provision.
- Improve outcomes in the primary school, including in the early years provision, by ensuring that teaching, learning and assessment consistently reach the standard of the secondary school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has developed a strong team ethos. Staff feel valued and supported and, consequently, are highly supportive of the school. Morale is high. Leaders make things happen. There is a simplicity in leadership. The headteacher and her leadership team decide to do something and it happens. This highly effective leadership has ensured that pupils' personal development is outstanding and that pupils' learning and outcomes are strong across the school. All the independent school standards are met.
- The curriculum is well planned and has a sharp, academic focus. It fully supports pupils' aspirations. Leaders have ensured that it is flexible and supplemented by a wide range of clubs, visits and events to meet pupils' needs and interests. In the primary school, the curriculum includes a wide range of activities in addition to English and mathematics.
- Leaders have ensured that teaching is effective. Staff are supported to keep their subject knowledge up to date and develop their teaching skills. There is a full programme of staff meetings with a focus on teaching and learning. The school plays an active part in local and pan-London subject and professional networks and the local teaching school partnership. Leaders' development of teaching is also enhanced by their focus on proven research about learning and their links with higher education providers. During the inspection, leaders demonstrated that they are highly self-evaluative, they welcome feedback and they always want to improve further.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplary, and pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils' artistic talents are developed through the taught curriculum and extra-curricular clubs and visits. Pupils benefit from drama and art workshops and theatre visits. School leaders promote pupils' work through national competitions in science and mathematics. This brings pupils into contact with peers from very different backgrounds across the country.
- All pupils study personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, citizenship and religious education to GCSE, and all do work experience. They are knowledgeable about other faiths and equalities issues. The school promotes equalities, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT), effectively.

Governance

- Governors have a clear vision for pupils to become good citizens and contribute to their family, community and nation, and globally. That vision is becoming a reality through clarity of purpose, drive and determination. Governors have developed an aspirational learning environment for pupils. Governors employ highly qualified staff and focus on the successful development of teams. This has had a positive impact on pupils' learning, personal development and outcomes, particularly in the secondary school. Governors take care to recruit staff who are in tune with the aspirations of the school and so build teams to take their ambition forward to the next stage.
- Governors know the school well. They visit classes regularly, talk to pupils and staff, and make sure the building is well maintained. Documentation from governor meetings reveals that they have a strong focus on the development of the curriculum and teaching

and learning. They set the highest academic standards for pupils. They challenge and support staff to achieve them.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are knowledgeable and well trained. They understand their responsibilities and are confident in reporting concerns. The school has a safeguarding policy which meets requirements and is available to parents and carers on the school's website.
- Leaders have developed a strong culture of safeguarding through effective partnerships. Leaders work with the local authority, the police and associated projects and organisations, all of which are carefully vetted, to support pupils to stay safe. Leaders skilfully ensure that these assemblies, visiting speakers and outreach projects are embedded into the curriculum. Teachers organise form time with their pupils effectively so that pupils have time to discuss any issues raised. As a result, pupils are confident about managing personal risk and speaking out for themselves if they have concerns.
- The school's work to prevent radicalisation and extremism is particularly strong. There is a strong Muslim ethos but leaders are open to other voices. They are engaged and proactive in working with the local authority. As a result, girls are enthused and take the anti-extremism work forward within their own peer groups.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- In the primary and the secondary schools, the curriculum is broad and has a modern outlook. This exciting curriculum enables teachers to ensure that learning is always relevant, practical and up to date. This is a key feature across both schools and has a positive impact on pupils' involvement in learning activities, motivation and enjoyment of learning.
- Teachers are well qualified and have strong subject knowledge. Learning is purposeful and there is a high level of challenge in activities across subjects and year groups.
- Teachers use subject-specialist language effectively with pupils. Consequently, pupils develop strong listening and speaking skills. Their wide vocabulary enables them to interpret and understand challenging concepts.
- There are positive relationships between pupils and teachers, which has a positive impact on the learning environment and pupils' attitudes to learning.
- Both school buildings have been converted to a high standard and provide an inspiring learning environment for pupils. Leaders maintain the buildings well, and teachers enhance the environment further with displays and resources.
- Teachers are skilled questioners, particularly in the secondary school. They question pupils to check understanding, promote thinking, elicit views and opinions and deepen their understanding of concepts.
- Pupils are complimentary about the teaching. They enjoy learning and say teachers help them to understand the work they are given. Pupils say they feel well supported.
- In the primary school, pupils' learning is less strong than in the secondary school. This is because the school is relatively new, as are most staff. Schemes of work are not as well

adapted to challenge pupils and meet their needs. Therefore, expectations of pupils are not as high. However, teaching is solid and consistent, and pupils in the primary school make good progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are very self-confident and have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning across all year groups. The curriculum and learning are structured to give pupils every opportunity to put forward their views and justify their opinions. This enables them to develop into confident young women engaged with life in modern Britain. For example, as part of their citizenship studies, pupils recently set up a campaign against domestic violence, including honour-based violence. Pupils set up a stand in a local shopping centre, produced publicity material, and recorded the thoughts and stories of members of the public. They developed the skills of campaigning as well as understanding of the issues. They also developed confidence in talking in public about sensitive matters.
- Pupils develop strong empathy skills. They know and respect other religions and participate in a range of inter-faith projects and events. For example, pupils visited another local secondary school with a Christian faith basis and participated in art and theatre workshops. Pupil representatives attended the London Bridge vigil.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe. There is almost no bullying, including cyber bullying. Any incidents are swiftly managed and dealt with by adults. Pupils are well prepared to deal with a number of real issues, such as Islamophobia, in the local community. School leaders support pupils to face racism so that they are able to learn how to handle it. Pupils know how to stay safe on the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, they concentrate well in class and maintain their focus on their studies throughout the long school day.
- Pupils get on well with each other. Across all year groups, pupils support each other and take pride in their own and others' achievements. There is a strong community spirit.
- Pupils conduct themselves around the school with lively maturity. They are courteous and polite to adults and visitors and are self-aware, understanding how their conduct has an impact on others. Pupils' behaviour contributes to the safe atmosphere in school.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly in line with the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2017, at the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment was well above the national average across the full range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Pupils who are currently in the secondary school have sustained these positive outcomes. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils in all year groups in the secondary school and

across subjects make exceptional progress from their starting points. This is as a result of consistently strong leadership and teaching.

- Highly effective teaching, aspirational leadership and pupils' outstanding personal development combine to ensure that pupils can have a full range of further study opportunities open to them. All pupils take up places in local sixth-form colleges and school sixth forms. They go on to a range of universities, including Oxbridge and other members of the Russell Group.
- In key stages 1 and 2, pupils make good progress and attain broadly in line with national expectations. In mathematics, pupils make good progress in developing their understanding of number, shape and space.
- In English, pupils develop strong speaking and listening skills. This builds their confidence and has a positive impact on their personal development. Pupils read well and can apply their phonics knowledge effectively. Pupils' writing is not yet as strong as their reading because pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their own sustained writing.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress.

Early years provision

Good

- The leadership of the early years is effective. Children make good progress from their starting points and are well prepared for the Year 1 curriculum. All the requirements of the early years foundation stage are met.
- Leaders have planned the early years provision well, assessing and developing children's learning dispositions effectively. Children complete a wide range of activities across the areas of learning, and staff assess their learning and development suitably and frequently. Learning activities are well matched to children's individual needs and interests.
- In 2017, the proportion of children attaining a good level of development was above the national average. For current children, the school's own progress information shows that children make good progress. This is reflected in their literacy and 'special' books.
- Leaders communicate very effectively with parents. Parents were hugely complimentary about the early years provision and its impact on their children's learning and development. They say their children are happy and making good progress. Parents appreciate the opportunities to speak to their child's key worker regularly and value the combination of Islamic values within a broad curriculum.
- Children's behaviour is good. Adults set clear expectations and children respond well. Children learn to share and help each other. They play well together and also develop independence. Leaders are keen to further develop the outdoor area to increase the range of activities and provide more opportunities for children to develop their own interests.
- Children are well looked after and receive effective supervision and support. The provision has a strong focus on healthy eating. Staff work closely with parents to ensure that snacks are healthy and that pupils eat properly. Safeguarding is effective.

School details

Unique reference number	134417
DfE registration number	316/6064
Inspection number	10045225

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	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	336
Number of part-time pupils	16
Proprietor	Azhar Academy
Chair	Ismail Gangat
Headteacher	Rookshana Adam
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,000
Telephone number	020 8555 5959
Website	www.aags.org.uk
Email address	r.adam@azharacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	22–24 March 2016

Information about this school

- Azhar Academy Girls School is an independent Muslim day school. The school is located in two buildings about two miles apart, which have been converted for educational use. The school's total capacity is 500 pupils.
- The secondary school for girls, is located in the London Borough of Newham and occupies a former church building on the Romford Road. There are 232 pupils on roll between the ages of 11 and 16.
- The primary school for girls and boys, is in the London Borough of Waltham Forest and occupies a former police station on Leytonstone High Road. There are 104 pupils on roll.

At present, there are classes from Nursery to Year 3.

- The school's previous full standard inspection took place in March 2016, when the school was judged to be good.
- The secondary school uses off-site provision for physical education. These are the Atherton Leisure Centre on Romford Road and Durning Hall on Earlham Grove.
- The school has four pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classes in the secondary and primary schools, including the early years provision. Some of these visits were made jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books and also met with some Year 2 pupils to look at their books and talk to them about their work in more depth.
- Inspectors talked informally with pupils about their views of the school and an inspector met with the school council.
- Inspectors undertook a tour of the premises.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior staff to discuss the impact of their work.
- The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair of governors, who is also a trustee and representative of the proprietor body.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the 'Prevent' officer for Newham local authority.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, including the 63 responses to the Ofsted online survey (Parent View), and talked informally with parents at the primary school.
- Inspectors considered the 57 responses to the Ofsted staff survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation, including records of attendance, safeguarding, the curriculum, teaching, the maintenance of the premises and pupils' progress.

Inspection team

Janet Hallett, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Robin Hammerton

Ofsted Inspector

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