

Lady Aisha Academy

Victoria Road, 2 (Annex Building), Barking, Essex IG11 8PY

Inspection dates

6–8 November 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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school meets all the requirements of the independent school standards.
- The headteacher leads by example. He is highly respected by staff, parents, carers and pupils.
- The curriculum has been improved since the last inspection, for example with the addition of GCSE courses in fine art and history. A range of visits and extra-curricular activities, which are popular and valued by pupils, complement the curriculum well.
- A significant strength of the school is its focus on preparing pupils for life in modern Britain. Leaders' vision that 'pupils become balanced citizens, inclusive of everybody and accepting of diversity' is being achieved. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is strong.
- Parents and carers are positive about the school. One parent's view chimed with that of others when they commented that the school 'strongly encourages pupils to become strong independent, free thinking young women'.
- Reading is promoted and organised well. Pupils read regularly for pleasure. They read and talk with confidence about plots and characters from the books they have been reading.
- Teachers have typically good subject knowledge and they explain concepts well. There is a great deal of consistency across the school, for example in how staff manage behaviour and use homework, in line with school policies.
- Good teaching has ensured that pupils attain well in GCSE examinations. They make good progress overall.
- Some teaching for most-able pupils, for example in mathematics and science, is not pushing them to attain as highly as they could. Leaders' checks on the progress of the most able are not as thorough as they need to be.
- Pupils behave well, they work hard and have typically positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are happy and feel safe. Their attendance this year has improved sharply.
- The headteacher, who is also the proprietor, would benefit from some additional support and challenge in improving the school still further.

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 effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - establishing a system of providing additional support and challenge to the headteacher, for example through a governing body or external partner
 - sharpening how leaders check and use information about the progress of the most able pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that more of the most able pupils reach even higher levels of attainment by:
 - ensuring that pupils tackle more difficult work, which deepens their knowledge and understanding
 - teachers using their questioning skills to encourage pupils to explain and analyse their ideas.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have maintained the good quality of education since the previous inspection and ensured that all the independent school standards continue to be met.
- Leaders are reflective and are reviewing how they evaluate the school's effectiveness. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection have been successfully addressed.
- There are new leaders in post supporting the headteacher to manage behaviour and improve the quality of teaching. There are appropriate plans in place to help them develop their effectiveness in their job roles.
- Staff morale is high. All staff spoken to during the inspection, and those who completed Ofsted's staff survey, commented positively about the quality of training that they receive and the supportiveness of senior leaders. Staff are observed regularly and receive regular feedback and training. As a result, teaching is good.
- The headteacher is ambitious for the school. He works effectively with his staff to ensure that the school is an inclusive community and that pupils are fully prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils regularly benefit from opportunities to take part in community activities, such as fund raising and visits to a care home for the elderly.
- Pupils of all ages speak confidently about how and what they are taught about respecting and understanding the diversity of London and beyond. Pupils, for example, have a deep understanding of different religions, places of worship and how families and lifestyles can be different. One pupil summed up their reflections when she commented that they are taught to 'have no position or the authority to judge anybody' and another said, 'we are about giving people confidence in their own lives'.
- The curriculum has been further improved since the previous inspection. This includes the addition of new GCSE courses in fine art and history. The time allocated to different subjects enables pupils to access and explore different subject content in depth, including in design and technology, information technology and art. Leaders add to the formal curriculum with a range of clubs, including drama and creative writing. There are also regular visits for pupils, including to museums and leisure facilities. The information technology suite has recently been upgraded with new computers. Plans to further develop computer science are in place.
- The school's approach to the curriculum and how it prepares pupils for the world around them have both combined to ensure that pupils' SMSC development is a strength of the school.
- Leaders have put in place a system to monitor and assess pupils' overall progress in different subjects. This includes identifying underachievement and putting in place intervention strategies to help pupils catch up. However, leaders do not check on the progress of the most able pupils rigorously enough, for example in their observations of learning and analysis of progress. As a result, improvement planning for this group is not as sharp as it could be.

Governance

- The headteacher is also the proprietor. There is no governing body.
- The headteacher ensures that school policies are updated and meet statutory requirements. He makes sure that he checks on the effectiveness of the school, and seeks advice when needed, for example from the local authority.
- However, given his teaching commitments and spread of duties, the headteacher would benefit from further support and challenge, for example from an external partner.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have a secure grasp of the risks that may affect pupils, including mental health, radicalisation, extremism and knife crime. Leaders work effectively with a range of external agencies to educate pupils on these risks, for example theatre groups and the police force. Pupils talk confidently about how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Leaders are planning to develop their work to help pupils manage their well-being by offering counselling support should any of the pupils need it.
- The school's safeguarding policy is available on the school's website and takes account of the latest statutory guidance. Staff are aware of this guidance and receive regular safeguarding updates. They know their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe well.
- A strength in the school's approach to safeguarding is that leaders ask for advice from external agencies to inform their decision making about pupils' welfare. Their record-keeping about safeguarding-related concerns is well managed.
- Parents are positive about the school. Those who replied to Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire, were unanimous that their children are safe, happy and well looked after. This echoes with the views of pupils who stated that they felt safe and that adults would take any concerns that they had seriously.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers typically have good subject knowledge, and they use this to explain concepts well. They use good-quality resources to deliver their subject. They make effective use of a range of commercially produced resources to help plan and assess different subjects at an age-appropriate level.
- Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and they have positive working relationships with their classes. They encourage pupils to work hard.
- In most cases, teachers apply school policies, for example in managing behaviour and reviewing pupils' work. There is some variability when it comes to giving pupils time to make improvements to their work in line with the school policy.
- Leaders and teachers place importance on homework. Teachers set interesting and varied homework tasks. Homework is taken seriously by pupils and, as a result, they produce good-quality work that builds on and applies their classroom learning.
- Teachers' use of assessment is good. They use a variety of ways to check pupils' knowledge and understanding, for example through questioning and end of unit tests.

However, some teachers do not use their questioning to deepen pupils' understanding sufficiently. Some pupils would benefit from additional opportunities to explain and/or analyse their thinking more deeply.

- The most able pupils are not being challenged in their learning as much as they should be. Some teaching does not build quickly enough on what pupils already know and can do. This is because, while teachers provide extension work, the most able are being held back, because they are required to complete easier questions first.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They are fully aware of the different types of bullying, particularly emotional and online bullying. Pupils say that bullying does not happen at the school, but if it did, school leaders would deal with it quickly and fairly.
- Leaders have a comprehensive and age-appropriate personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum in place. It includes a wide range of topics, including healthy eating, the dangers of drugs and alcohol misuse, and marriage and civil partnership. As a result, pupils speak confidently about how to keep themselves safe, and of their awareness of topical issues in their own local area and beyond. Leaders arrange activities, for example for pupils to work with pupils from other schools in participating in different sports, such as cricket.
- Pupils are ambitious and socially confident young women. They talk about their aspirations, such as becoming lawyers, architects, engineers and midwives. This is helped by the school's effective careers provision, which begins from Year 7. As well as exploring careers in PSHE and citizenship lessons, pupils also visit universities, careers fairs and hear from a range of visiting speakers.
- Pupils are being supported to become confident learners. However, some teaching is not challenging pupils to become as resilient and self-assured as they could be.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils typically behave well and settle down to their learning quickly. They treat staff with respect. Pupils also keep school facilities clean and tidy. Pupils take pride in their work.
- Pupils support each other well, both in and outside of lessons. They help make the school a safe and welcoming community.
- Occasionally, mainly when teaching lacks challenge, some pupils lose concentration.
- Attendance in the last school year was below the national average. Leaders do monitor attendance well and, over the course of the current school year, it has improved.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils attain well in their studies by the end of key stage 4. Their GCSE results in 2017 and 2018 compare favourably to national averages, including English, mathematics and the sciences. Attainment in Arabic is high.
- Inspection evidence suggests that current pupils are making good progress overall in a wide range of subjects. In some subjects, such as art, pupils produce high-quality work.
- Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Numeracy skills are being developed well in subjects such as art and science. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their work together, and to read aloud during lessons. However, some teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils spell subject-specific language accurately or give detailed explanations in their written work.
- Reading is promoted effectively. The school has a small library to support pupils in accessing books. Pupils read a range of different genres that are well matched to their different ages and abilities. They reflect on their reading, speaking articulately about plots and characters. Overall, pupils read fluently and with confidence.
- The most able pupils are not making the substantial and sustained progress of which they are capable, including at key stage 3. This is because some teaching is not challenging enough in equipping pupils with the knowledge and understanding needed to maximise their academic potential.
- Leaders support pupils well in preparing for life after school. As a result, at the end of key stage 4, last year, all pupils moved on to study at local sixth forms and colleges, or pursued an apprenticeship.

School details

Unique reference number	136746
DfE registration number	301/6003
Inspection number	10055415

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	91
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Naeem Aslam
Chair	Not applicable
Headteacher	Naeem Aslam
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,600
Telephone number	07376 104178
Website	www.ladyaisha.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@ladyaisha.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–21 April 2016

Information about this school

- Lady Aisha is a Muslim faith secondary school.
- The school is situated in its own building on the site of Barking mosque. The school makes use of the sports hall within the mosque complex.
- The school building has customised classrooms, a science laboratory, a computer suite and administration spaces. Suitable off-site facilities are used in the summer months for physical education.
- The school provides an education for girls between Years 7 and 11. There are currently

no pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The headteacher is also the proprietor. There is no governing body.
- The school's last inspection was in April 2016, when it was judged to be good.
- The school's website meets the requirements of the independent school standards.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited lessons and reviewed pupils' work in a range of subjects. The headteacher accompanied the lead inspector on a few visits to lessons.
- The inspection team held meetings with leaders to evaluate the impact of their work. Inspectors also held meetings with a group of staff and spoke to a range of pupils, formally and informally. The lead inspector spoke to a safeguarding officer within the local authority.
- Inspectors evaluated the 23 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents. Inspectors also considered the 12 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of documentation provided by leaders, including: internal assessment information for pupils in all year groups; leaders' self-evaluation and improvement planning; an analysis of GCSE outcomes over time; a range of school policies; the record of recruitment checks on staff working at the school, and a wide range of other information relating to the safeguarding of pupils, including case files and child protection records.

Inspection team

Sam Hainey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gerard Strong

Ofsted Inspector

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