

Inspection of Al-Ashraf Secondary School for Girls

Sinope Street, Gloucester, Gloucestershire GL1 4AW

Inspection dates: 12–14 November 2019

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is part of a close-knit community. Teachers know the pupils and their parents and carers very well. Pupils appreciate their teachers' commitment and hard work. Pupils feel safe and secure at school. They know that their teachers will always listen to them and help if they worry about anything.

Teachers set high standards for pupils' behaviour. Pupils accept and abide by these standards. Consequently, pupils conduct themselves well in lessons. Incidents of bullying are extremely rare. Pupils found it difficult to recall any recent incidents of pupils being mean to each other.

This school provides a distinctive faith-based education. Pupils learn about the Islamic faith at the same time as studying a range of academic subjects. Some pupils would like to see more clubs and activities at school.

Pupils are avid readers. They enjoy reading and studying the Qur'an in Arabic. Pupils read enthusiastically across all their subjects. This makes a big contribution to their academic success.

Teachers provide pupils with clear guidance about the importance of tolerance and respect for others' views. One assembly typified this. The headteacher spoke passionately about the significance of the greeting, salaam, as a sign of acceptance.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school was created 25 years ago to educate the girls from the local community. The proprietorial trust and the governing body remain ambitious for pupils. They aim for pupils to be confident British Muslim young women when they leave. They communicate this expectation well to parents and staff.

All pupils take the English Baccalaureate suite of GCSE subjects. Pupils have a small but suitable range of subjects to choose from. For example, leaders recently introduced a vocational qualification in catering. Pupils also study the 'Islamiat'. This is a group of subjects about the Islamic faith. Pupils enjoy these subjects. The importance of tolerance of other people's views is a theme woven into these subjects.

Teachers' knowledge is strong in most subject areas. Less-experienced staff are being mentored by older, more-experienced teachers. Even so, staff who are working as the sole teacher in a subject sometimes do not get enough support.

The curriculum is clearly set out. Teachers make the purpose of learning easy for pupils to grasp. Even so, the sequence of topics sometimes hinders learning. For example, in science, pupils are not clear about when and how to use different types of chemical equations.

Teachers choose interesting examples to illustrate learning. For example, in business studies, Year 10 pupils study a small trampolining business. This enables pupils to understand marketing strategy.

Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education. The proportion of pupils that attain a standard pass in both English and mathematics GCSE is high. GCSE results in the other subjects are strong. All pupils go on to further study or training when they leave Year 11.

Pupils' respectful conduct is a strong factor in their academic success. Pupils complete classwork and homework diligently. Parents support the school strongly.

The school encourages pupils to develop a broad understanding of different faiths. For example, all pupils study GCSE religious studies and benefit from a link with the local Anglican church. Teachers thread positive messages about moral and social issues throughout the curriculum. They prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. This is one of the school's strengths.

A small proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers provide these pupils with the extra help they need to overcome their difficulties.

The proprietor ensures that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The school meets all the independent school standards. The buildings are old and in continual need of repair. However, with community support, the proprietor provides resources to maintain it adequately.

The headteacher leads the school with humility and determination. The leadership team has increased in size since the previous inspection. This has led to the introduction of new systems for monitoring the quality of education. However, senior leaders do not yet analyse the information that this generates closely enough. Consequently, governors do not get the clearest possible picture of the effectiveness of the school.

Senior leaders have commissioned training for teachers to improve their skills. Teachers produce detailed curriculum plans in their areas of responsibility. Leaders have been mindful of teachers' workload throughout this period of development work. Staff morale remains strong. They respect the headteacher and his senior team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders fulfil the requirements of the latest statutory guidance. Pre-employment checks are made on all staff, governors and members of the trust. Senior leaders record these checks appropriately and diligently.

Staff receive regular training and updates about safeguarding. Consequently, staff are vigilant for the signs that a pupil's well-being is at risk.

Teachers provide pupils with good advice about the risks they face outside school. For example, teachers give pupils guidance about their personal safety when travelling to and from school. This builds pupils' resilience against unkind or unfair treatment if they are exposed to it.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Staff support each other well. For example, in religious studies, Urdu and mathematics, less-experienced members of staff receive good-quality help and support from their colleagues. Nevertheless, senior leaders need to ensure that teachers who are the only ones teaching a subject, as in physical education, geography and business studies, have access to similar support and guidance.
- Teachers generally plan learning well. They make the aim of each series of lessons clear for pupils to understand. However, senior leaders need to make sure that pupils master the essential elements of knowledge before they move on to grapple with new ideas. Curriculum development work needs to continue.
- The leadership team of four senior staff is focused on the right priorities. It is increasingly effective at monitoring the school's work and providing training for staff. Leaders have access to a growing amount of information about the quality of education. Leaders need to sharpen their use of this information. They need to present it to the governing body more effectively so that governors are able to provide further challenge and make the school even better.

How can I feed back my views?

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The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

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| Unique reference number | 115810 |
| DfE registration number | 916/6073 |
| Local authority | Gloucestershire |
| Inspection number | 10090664 |
| 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 | 72 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Al-Madani Educational Trust |
| Chair | Yakub Patel |
| Headteacher | Abdullah Patel |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £1,430 to £2,200 |
| Telephone number | 01452 300465 |
| Website | http://secondary.al-ashraf.org.uk |
| Email address | info@al-ashraf.gloucs.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 14–16 November 2017 |

Information about this school

- The school is an independent Muslim day school for girls aged 11 to 16 that opened in 1994. The proprietor is the Al-Madani Educational Trust. The trust has operated the school since 2010. The trustees delegate the governance of the school to a governing body which is chaired by one of the trustees.
- The school operates from one site. This is a Victorian school building in the centre of Gloucester. Most pupils travel to school from the immediate area around the school. Some pupils travel from much further afield. For example, some pupils travel by train from Bristol every day to attend the school.
- The school provides a curriculum in Islamic studies known as the 'Islamiat' for

approximately one fifth of the pupils' time. Pupils receive a secular academic curriculum for the remainder of their time. The school does not use any alternative provision.

- No pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and teachers. The lead inspector met with the chair of the proprietorial trust, the chair of the governing body and three other governors. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a consultant who provides professional development training for leaders and teachers.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: English, business studies, science and art. In each of these subjects, inspectors met with teachers, considered curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke with pupils and considered pupils' written work.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's documentation relating to safeguarding, including the safeguarding policy. Inspectors asked pupils for their opinions about behaviour, bullying and personal safety. Inspectors considered parents' views via the Ofsted Parent View survey.

Inspection team

Paul Williams, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kathy Maddocks

Her Majesty's Inspector

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