

Inspection of Birchfield Independent Girls' School

30 Beacon Hill, Aston, Birmingham, West Midlands B6 6JU

Inspection dates: 11–13 February 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires Improvement
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

All staff aim to develop pupils' 'passion for knowledge and excellence in manners and conduct', as set out in the school's motto: 'In the footsteps of Aisha (RA)'. They achieve this very well. Pupils are polite, behave well and show a determination to achieve highly in their academic studies.

Leaders are determined that pupils will achieve well, and the vast majority do in most subjects. Leaders provide pupils with a wide range of information to help them choose the next steps in their education. Pupils are excited about education and have high aspirations for their future in careers such as psychology, medicine and law.

Leaders' work to improve behaviour has been very successful. Pupils show a high level of respect towards one another and all staff. They demonstrate responsible and mature attitudes towards learning and socialising at breaktimes. This creates a happy, calm and positive atmosphere across the school.

There are very positive relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils trust staff and know that they will help them if they are worried about anything. Many pupils told us that bullying does not happen in school, but they know that they can report any concerns and where to get help if needed.

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

All leaders share the same determination to raise pupils' aspirations. They have worked closely with parents and carers and the community to ensure that they share those same ambitions. The combination of Islamic studies and the secular curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to learn about their faith, but also how they can contribute to society in a wide range of careers. The school's careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) is of a very high quality. For example, pupils visit a range of sixth-form colleges, review apprenticeships and BTEC courses and attend talks from past pupils who are now studying at university. All pupils say that staff encourage them to 'aim high'. This is a real strength of the school. Almost all pupils continue to achieve highly in academic and vocational courses after leaving the school.

Leaders' work to improve behaviour has been very successful. Pupils understand the new behaviour policy. They know that there will be consequences if they do not follow the school rules. They also value the rewards they can earn by demonstrating positive behaviours. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 say that they have seen a significant improvement in behaviour since they started in Year 7.

Staff provide pupils with a wide range of meaningful and high-quality experiences to ensure that they are very well prepared to live in modern Britain. For example, pupils compare the Islamic faith with Catholicism through links with a Catholic school. They also compare similarities and differences of Islam with faiths such as

Sikhism and Judaism. Pupils show a very high level of respect and tolerance towards people of all faiths and those with no faith. Pupils say that they are happy to accept everyone for who they are because, 'Our religion teaches us to respect everyone.' Pupils are very proud of their fund-raising work for charities. Residential trips help to widen pupils' independence skills. Trips to theatre productions of Shakespearean plays also broaden their cultural understanding. Even so, some pupils would like a wider range of clubs to choose from, especially at lunchtimes.

Leaders have thought carefully about the school's curriculum. They make sure that pupils have experiences in linguistic, mathematical, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education. Recently, leaders have reviewed the school's curriculum and identified where further improvements could be made. This has been very successful in subjects such as mathematics, religious education (RE) and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. In these subjects, leaders have sequenced the curriculum logically so that pupils build on what they have learned before. Leaders also check that the curriculum is being taught well. This helps pupils to make strong progress in these subjects.

However, in a few subjects, such as science and history, curriculum improvements are still at an early stage of development. These curriculum plans are not yet sequenced well enough to enable pupils to build on prior learning so that they know and remember more over time. Some subject leaders are new to their roles. They need further support and training to help them check that the curriculum is sequenced logically and is being taught well. Senior leaders know this. They are already providing the support and development needed to ensure that pupils are able to make strong progress in all subjects.

Leaders are very supportive of all staff. Staff appreciate this support and take every opportunity to develop their teaching skills. This has led to strong improvements in teaching. For example, most teachers identify whether pupils have any gaps in their learning that might prevent them from understanding the new learning that has been planned. They then work to close any knowledge gaps. Some staff are very new to their roles. While leaders have provided some training, this is still at an early stage. This means that some teaching is not as effective as it could be.

The proprietor and governors work well with leaders to ensure that the independent school standards are consistently met. The proprietor has a strong understanding of the school's strengths, but also provides effective support to help leaders drive further improvements. His work has been an important factor in helping the school to improve.

Leaders have ensured that the school has an adequate accessibility plan that complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a safeguarding policy that is published on its website. The policy meets the most recent guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

All staff take the safety of pupils very seriously. The school's safeguarding policies and procedures are comprehensive. Staff understand them well and make sure they follow them. Staff are highly vigilant to any potential safeguarding threats that may pose a risk to pupils. They ensure that all possible steps are taken to mitigate any risks that pupils may face.

Staff are especially alert to the risk of pupils being radicalised by extremist views. They have been very successful in educating pupils about what to do if they are exposed to extremist views. Pupils talk very knowledgeably about how to protect themselves should this occur. Pupils show a high level of respect for all cultures and beliefs and know that extremism is wrong.

A 'safeguarding awareness programme' runs alongside the PSHE curriculum. This helps pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. For example, a visiting speaker taught pupils about how to report and respond to any issues relating to sexual harassment in the workplace. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. Through internet safety work, pupils reflect on the impact of social media on mental health and are encouraged to ensure that their social interactions online are positive.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a few subjects, curriculum plans do not set out well enough how pupils' knowledge and skills will be developed from one year to the next. This means that pupils' learning is held back in some subjects. Leaders should review and refine these curriculum plans and schemes of work further to enable pupils to build on what they already know and can do.
- Some curriculum leaders lack experience in their roles. This limits their ability to identify what actions they need to take to further improve the quality of education in their subject. Senior leaders and governors should ensure that these leaders receive further support and training to help them monitor how well the curriculum plans are being implemented.
- A few teachers do not have a sufficiently detailed understanding of how pupils should progress through the curriculum. As a result, pupils are not able to make equally strong progress in all subjects. Leaders should continue to support and develop staff, especially those who are new to their roles, to ensure that they all

have a deep and secure understanding of the curriculum and how pupils should progress through it.

- Some pupils feel that they do not have enough clubs and extra-curricular activities to choose from. The provision of more activities should enable pupils to further broaden their experiences outside their academic studies. Leaders should consider how the range of activities on offer can be extended to meet pupils' interests.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

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

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

School details

Unique reference number	103591
DfE registration number	330/6083
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10144876
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 17
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	104
Proprietor	Mohammed Aminur Rahman
Chair	Mohammed Aminur Rahman
Headteacher	R Mogra
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,250
Telephone number	0121 327 7707
Website	www.bigs.bham.sch.uk
Email address	admin@bigs.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous published inspection	13 March 2018

Information about this school

- Birchfield Independent Girls' School is an independent secondary school that provides Islamic education for girls in Birmingham. The school opened in 1990 and since 1998 has been housed in a building that was formerly a jobcentre.
- The aims of the school state: 'We strive for academic excellence while treating children as individuals. We encourage children to develop their own talents and personality, and we value diversity in our school community.'
- Before 2018, the school was inspected by The Bridge Inspectorate. The first inspection by Ofsted was in March 2018.
- The school is registered to take pupils up to 17 years of age. There were no pupils in the school beyond Year 11 during this inspection.

- The school does not use alternative providers. However, pupils use physical education facilities at the Lighthouse Centre in Newtown and at King Edward's School, Aston.

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.

- We met with the headteacher and the leader for learning and teaching, the designated safeguarding lead and the leaders for English, mathematics, history, PSHE, spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education and CEIAG. The lead inspector met with the leader of special educational needs.
- The lead inspector met with the proprietor.
- We focused on English, mathematics, history and PSHE as part of this inspection. We discussed the curriculum design with the headteacher and subject leaders, reviewed pupils' work in these subjects, spoke to teachers about pupils' learning and a number of lessons. We also looked at RE, art and science.
- We reviewed a range of documentation provided by the school. We looked at school policies, curriculum documents, health and safety documentation, and documents relating to behaviour and attendance.
- The lead inspector toured the school premises to check their suitability.
- We reviewed a range of safeguarding information, including the checks that leaders make on staff prior to employment. We checked the school's safeguarding policy and spoke to staff about the school's safeguarding procedures. We checked staff's safeguarding training. We also checked the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe when in school, including when using computers. We checked the school's accessibility plan.
- We considered the 11 free-text comments and the 11 responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- The lead inspector considered the five responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 13 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.
- We spoke informally to pupils throughout the inspection. We also met formally with two groups of pupils to discuss their views on their learning and the school.
- We talked to staff about their views of the school.

Inspection team

Ann Pritchard, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jane Spilsbury

Her Majesty's Inspector

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