

Inspection of Al Islah Girls' High School

108 Audley Range, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 1TF

Inspection dates: 2 to 4 November 2021

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?

Pupils enjoy coming to school and do so regularly. They form strong friendships with peers and regard the support they get from staff very highly. Pupils are respectful to others and make a strong contribution to the calm but purposeful nature of the school. Pupils love learning and achieve well. They rise to the high expectations that staff have of their behaviour and achievement.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel very safe in school. They know that they can speak with any member of staff if they are worried about anything. Pupils told inspectors that bullying rarely happens. If it does happen, staff deal with it immediately.

Pupils are upstanding and active citizens. They know that their views are valued and heard. Recently, members of the school council successfully lobbied leaders for new play equipment and hot lunches. They also worked successfully with leaders to 'rebrand' the school uniform.

Pupils live the school's motto, which is, 'respect, educate and achieve'. This is evident in their conscientious behaviour and attitude to learning. Pupils collect funds for various charities and the local food bank. They recently raised money to pay for a water well, which was installed in a village in Sri Lanka.

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

The headteacher and senior leaders provide a high-quality education that encompasses British and Islamic values. The ambitious, well-sequenced curriculum enables pupils to achieve highly in a wide range of subjects. The proprietor and governors know where the school's strengths lie. They have a clear overview of the curriculum's effectiveness and support leaders' high ambitions for pupils' achievement.

Leaders have developed a broad, interesting and well-ordered curriculum that helps pupils to know and remember more of their learning. Teachers are clear about what content should be taught and when this should be covered. This enables pupils to build on their knowledge as they move through topics and year groups.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Staff provide additional reading sessions, to support those pupils who are new to the school and need to catch up with their peers. Pupils improve their confidence and fluency in reading across different year groups. For example, in English and history in Years 7 and 8, pupils are introduced to the works of Shakespeare and life in Elizabethan and Jacobean England. In Year 10, teachers build on this knowledge to help pupils read fluently and understand the themes and motivations of characters in plays such as 'Macbeth' and 'Much ado about nothing'. Assessment information is used well in most subjects to identify what pupils know and can do. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the systems to check on pupils' learning in some subjects are still in their infancy. This

means that in some areas of the curriculum, leaders do not have a clear understanding of how well pupils know and remember what has been taught.

Pupils benefit from regular, independent and in-school careers advice and guidance. Historically, all pupils have attained highly at GCSE level in subjects such as mathematics, English, history, biology, chemistry and physics, making them well prepared for their future learning. Typically, all pupils go on to further education, employment or training after leaving the school.

Pupils understand British values and appreciate the importance of fairness. For example, pupils know that discrimination based on race, gender, sexuality or religion is wrong. They also understand that they have a role to play in promoting equality. Pupils participate in national and international events, such as Remembrance Day. They celebrate Black History Month, and relish their leadership responsibilities as 'buddies', sports captains and prefects.

Leaders work in close partnership with parents and carers to develop the school's relationships and sex education policy and curriculum. This aspect of the curriculum is taught by trained staff. Specialist visitors are invited into the school to further enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding. The subject content helps to give pupils the knowledge and capability to take care of themselves and seek support if they need it.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They are committed to the school's values and their morale is very high. The specialist training available to teachers and teaching assistants supports their teaching practice well. Leaders are considerate of staff well-being and workload.

The proprietor and governors have worked closely with the headteacher to improve classroom resources and refurbish the science laboratory. The recent introduction of teaching assistants has strengthened the support available to pupils.

The proprietor and senior leaders demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their roles. They know the independent school standards and ensure that these are met. Leaders actively promote the health and welfare of pupils. They also ensure that teachers and other staff have the skills they need to help pupils to gain new knowledge and make progress in different subjects.

Leaders have a safeguarding policy in place. The policy takes account of the most recent guidelines on keeping pupils safe and is published on the school's website.

Parents are complimentary about the school. Those who spoke with inspectors and completed the inspection questionnaire said that they are happy with the regular reports they receive on their children's progress.

A written risk assessment policy is in place. This clearly outlines the responsibilities of staff and leaders and provides a suitable framework for protecting pupils from risk.

Leaders have ensured that suitable toilet and washing facilities are available for the sole use of pupils. Rooms are available for the medical examination and treatment of pupils with minor injuries and for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils.

The school's accessibility plan complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know exactly what to do if they are concerned about the safety or welfare of a pupil. All concerns are recorded and passed on to relevant staff. Staff and governors are trained well. They are familiar with the school's safeguarding policies and the government's latest guidelines on keeping pupils safe.

Safeguarding leaders are very experienced. They regularly update staff on new developments relating to maintaining pupils' safety. Systems to check on the suitability of staff to work with pupils are stringent and strictly adhered to. The school has strengthened its procedures to ensure that pupils use the internet safely and appropriately.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some subjects, assessment systems are in the process of being developed. This means that leaders do not have a strong understanding of how well pupils are learning the planned curriculum. This stops teachers from identifying gaps and helping pupils to catch up if they fall behind. Leaders should ensure that there are clear systems in place to check on pupils' learning. They will also need to make sure that staff are trained well to use the new systems so that they can help pupils overcome any gaps in their learning.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	119856
DfE registration number	889/6004
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10203780
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	81
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor and chair	Hasan Desai
Headteacher	Nikhat Pardesi
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,300
Telephone number	01254 261573
Website	www.alislah.org.uk
Email address	head@alislah.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 to 11 October 2018

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the acting headteacher has become the substantive headteacher.
- The school is registered for up to 245 pupils in the age range of seven to 16 years. Currently, 81 pupils attend the school.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, and senior leaders. The lead inspector met with six governors, including the proprietor, and a trustee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: English, mathematics, science, and personal, social, health and citizenship education. For each deep dive, inspectors looked at curriculum planning and spoke to leaders about their subjects. They conducted lesson visits, spoke with pupils and looked at a range of pupils' work. Inspectors also talked with class teachers and teaching assistants from the classes that they visited.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They spoke to parents to gather their views about the school. They also considered the responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including the free-text comments. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors examined a range of policies, schemes of work and curriculum plans. They also scrutinised safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding policy. The lead inspector spoke to the safeguarding lead and the headteacher about the reporting and recording of any safeguarding incidents.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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