

Inspection of Al Huda Girls' School

74–76 Washwood Heath Road, Saltley, Birmingham, West Midlands B8 1RD

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 December 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this school. They feel safe and well cared for. They know they can trust the school's staff to help them whenever they need support. For example, although bullying is rare, pupils know that staff will deal quickly with any bullying that might happen.

Teachers expect pupils to work hard and behave well. Pupils rise to these high expectations. Their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are polite, courteous and confident. They have excellent attitudes to learning and are determined to do their best.

Pupils study an appropriate range of subjects. Teachers plan learning well in all subjects. Most of the time, teachers explain new ideas well and check that pupils understand what they have been taught. Pupils make good progress as a result. They produce work of a high standard.

Staff are committed to the school's ethos of preparing pupils for life as young Muslim women in modern Birmingham. The school promotes pupils' personal development well. It places as much emphasis on this as it does on academic excellence.

The headteacher and senior leaders provide clear leadership that is appreciated by staff and pupils. However, they have neglected some aspects of health and safety over recent years.

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

Many aspects of leadership are strong in this school. The proprietor and headteacher provide a clear vision for an inclusive school with a strong Islamic focus. They are determined that pupils should be well prepared for life in modern Britain. The quality of the school's curriculum and other activities mean they are successful in achieving this aim.

Leadership and management require improvement because the proprietor and leaders have failed to ensure that the school meets all independent school standards. The school does not comply with some aspects of health and safety law relating to fire safety. The school's fire risk assessment is not fit for purpose because leaders have not reviewed it for several years. Some other risk assessments are also weak. Although they identify risks, they do not clearly spell out the actions to be taken to reduce risks.

Despite these weaknesses, inspectors found no evidence that pupils were at risk of harm. During the inspection, leaders began to take action to remedy the failings. The school's fire alarm system and fire-fighting equipment were serviced very recently. Inspectors observed a fire drill. Pupils evacuated the school quickly and in an orderly manner.

The school building spans three floors. It is in a reasonable state of repair. Classrooms provide ample space with good lighting and acoustics. The school has all facilities required by the independent school standards. The school has a clear health and safety policy. Except for the fire-safety issues outlined previously, it is implemented effectively, and the site is safe.

All pupils study an appropriate, broad curriculum. Leaders have produced well planned work schemes in all subjects. These ensure that pupils' knowledge builds logically from year-to-year. Key knowledge is revisited regularly, and this helps pupils to remember what they have been taught. Teaching groups are small. This means that teachers give pupils individual support and feedback that meets their needs well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well as a result.

Teaching of the curriculum is effective in all subjects. Teachers know their subjects well. They usually give clear explanations of new content. They usually check that pupils understand new material, often using skilful questioning. Most teachers spot and address pupils' misconceptions quickly. There remains some variability in how well teachers explain and check pupils' understanding. Sometimes, these aspects of teaching are weaker than they should be.

Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. For example, pupils in Year 7 use complex vocabulary, metaphor and simile when producing pieces of Gothic writing. In many subjects, teachers ask pupils to read aloud. They do so fluently and confidently. Pupils enjoy mathematics. They are happy to ask questions and discuss their reasoning. This helps them to understand the mathematics they are being taught.

Pupils' behaviour cannot be faulted. The school's behaviour policy sets clear and high expectations. It has a strong focus on praise as well as sanctions. Sanctions are used very rarely because pupils behave so well. In class, pupils are hardworking and keen to succeed.

The school places great emphasis on promoting pupils' personal development. The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is thorough and taught well. It focuses effectively on issues relevant to young people in Birmingham. For example, pupils learn how to maintain their physical and mental health. They learn how to keep themselves safe online and from other risks, such as gang violence and criminal exploitation. There is a strong focus on what it means to be a young Muslim, playing a full part as a citizen in modern Britain. Pupils celebrate difference. They understand the importance of respect for others, particularly those with protected characteristics.

Leaders ensure that the school meets its statutory responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. The school has an appropriate accessibility plan.

Leaders ensure that pupils receive effective careers information, education, advice and guidance. For example, careers education is included in the PSHE programme for all years. All pupils undertake work experience while in Year 10 or 11.

The PSHE education programme includes regular and effective teaching about relationships, sex and health education. This programme is supported by a clear policy that has been shared with parents and carers. Pupils learn, through an Islamic lens, about topics such as consent, contraception and same-sex relationships. Inspectors observed pupils discussing same-sex relationships. They did so sensitively and maturely, skilfully guided by their teacher.

The school's staff form a small and dedicated team. They are committed to doing their best for pupils. They enjoy working at the school. They believe it is well led. They appreciate the care that leaders provide about their well-being and workload. They receive helpful guidance and effective training from the school's leaders.

The school has a website. It contains useful information for parents. This includes the safeguarding policy and complaints procedure. Both policies comply with statutory guidance. All other policies required by the independent school standards are available to parents on request.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding policy is comprehensive, up to date and fit for purpose. Leaders provide regular safeguarding training that focuses well on the dangers that pupils might face. Consequently, staff understand their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. They readily pass on concerns to leaders. Leaders deal with these appropriately, ensuring that pupils get the right support in a timely manner.

There is a very strong culture of care for pupils throughout the school. Pupils said they feel very safe and cared for in school. This aspect of safeguarding is very strong.

Weaknesses in the school's risk assessment process have the potential to put pupils at risk. However, inspectors found no evidence that pupils are at risk of harm.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- There is some variability in how well the curriculum is taught. Occasionally, teachers do not explain concepts as well as they could. They do not always identify and address pupils' misconceptions. When this occurs, pupils' learning is slowed. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is implemented consistently well throughout the school.

- Some of the school's processes for carrying out risk assessments are weak. For example, the school's fire risk assessment has not been reviewed for several years. Its COVID-19 risk assessment does not clearly set out the actions to be taken to mitigate risks. Leaders should ensure that risk assessments, including a fire risk assessment:
 - are carried out effectively
 - are recorded carefully
 - contain clear actions to mitigate risk and
 - are reviewed regularly.

The proprietor should check that this is the case.

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

School details

Unique reference number	103595
DfE registration number	330/6088
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10205081
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	33
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Asif Jawaid
Headteacher	Sumeya Jawaid
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,100
Telephone number	0121 328 8999
Website	www.al-hudagirlsschool.com
Email address	sumeya.jawaid@al-hudagirlsschool.com
Dates of previous inspection	23 to 25 May 2017

Information about this school

- This is an Islamic day school for girls.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2017, having previously been the school's deputy headteacher.
- Since its previous standard inspection in May 2017, the school has had two further inspections. The first was an emergency inspection on 26 March 2019 that found several unmet independent school standards. The school then had a progress monitoring inspection on 27 November 2019. At this time, the school was found to be meeting all the independent school standards.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

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.

This was the first routine inspection the school 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.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors held meetings with the proprietor, the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and religious studies. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered safeguarding by meeting with the designated safeguarding lead, scrutinising policies and records relating to child protection and examining the safeguarding checks made on staff before they join the school.
- Inspectors considered responses from staff to their online inspection questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils at breaktime and lunchtime. They observed the school at these times.

Inspection team

Alun Williams, lead inspector

Mary Maybank

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005[12].
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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