Sapience Girls Academy

319 Waterloo Street, Glodwick, Oldham OL4 1ER

Inspection dates	16 November 2022
Overall outcome	**The school is likely to meet all the independent school standards when it opens**

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 1, 2(1)(a-b).

- The curriculum policy reflects the ethos of the school. Pupils will study a broad range of subjects, including up to GCSE level. At key stage 3, subject planning is closely aligned to the national curriculum for England. Each subject has detailed schemes of work, and the work seen in pupils' books demonstrates that these are delivered according to these plans.
- Leaders have established a relatively new special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) team. However, they have quickly assessed all the current pupils at the school and have identified those who require additional support, either because they may have SEND or because they have fallen behind where they should be for their age. All these pupils have individual plans which set out how teachers can best support them. On the day of the inspection, leaders were training teachers with a focus on ensuring subject schemes of work were suitable for pupils who need additional help. It is evident that this is a priority for the school.
- Leaders prioritise reading both within the curriculum and through additional interventions for some pupils. This focus also supports pupils of different abilities to access the curriculum.

Paragraph 2(2)(a-e; h-i)

- The proposed school's timetable shows that pupils will receive a full-time education that covers all the curriculum areas required by the independent school standards (the standards). This includes an emphasis on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, along with a broad range of other subjects such as history, art, information technology and physical education (PE). Alongside these subjects, pupils will also learn Islamic Studies, in line with the ethos of the school.
- The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is well planned and is delivered through lessons, assemblies and other enrichment activities. It is informed by the school's Islamic ethos and covers areas of learning such as relationships and careers education. Pupils also have access to external careers advisers and regular careers events so they can understand the broad range of

opportunities available to them once they leave the school after their GCSEs. School records show that most pupils go on to study academic courses at local sixth-form colleges.

Paragraph 2A(1)(a-g), 2A(2).

- Leaders have consulted with current parents about the school's relationships and sex (RSE) education policy. They have shared resources with parents so that parents can understand how some aspects of this will be delivered in the classroom. The school uses an external curriculum produced by an Islamic education association. This meets the requirements of the government's statutory RSE framework. Parents know that they can withdraw their children from sex education, but none have currently chosen to do so.

Paragraph 3(a-j)

- Leaders have prioritised recruiting new teachers who have academic qualifications aligned to the subjects that they teach. Some also have qualified teacher status, including those in leadership positions. Teachers have also been supported to access externally accredited teaching courses.
- Leaders' records show that they discuss teaching practice regularly with staff, including through a weekly development meeting. Lesson observation records reflect a sharp focus on providing guidance to teachers on adapting plans as they identify gaps in pupils' learning.
- Pupils who met with the inspector spoke enthusiastically about their work in lessons and about how the school's pupil council provides a forum for them to share how well they are learning with the executive headteacher. The work in pupils' books demonstrates that they are making progress across subjects in line with the planned curriculum. Behaviour records from lessons indicate that poor behaviour is extremely rare; pupils and teachers confirmed this to be the case.

Paragraph 4

- Leaders have developed the school's own assessment process at key stage 3, which is aligned to the learning outcomes that are detailed in the curriculum plans. Currently, the school has two formal assessment points each year and parents receive a written record of pupils' progress in each subject after this. At GCSE, pupils are assessed using the grade criteria from the relevant examination specification.
- School leader s have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraph 5(a-d)

- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is explicitly planned for across a range of subject areas. Teachers have thought creatively about how they can help pupils to understand British values through the lens of local, national and international history. For example, pupils learn about the Oldham riots and how the legal right to protest has, at times, tipped into activity that breaks British law. They learn about different political systems and how the struggle for democracy and equal

rights has had transformative effects on countries, for example through the abolition of apartheid in South Africa.

- Curriculum planning in both RSE and across other subjects demonstrate that pupils are made aware of all the protected characteristics from the Equality Act 2010. Religious Education lessons enable pupils to learn in detail about different religions and also about people of no faith. This subject also provides opportunities for pupils to discuss difficult political and ethical issues in a safe environment.
- Leaders know that teaching should not be partisan in nature when discussing political issues with pupils. They have a visiting speaker's policy which sets out the requirements they expect from external visitors. Safeguarding leaders are mindful of the risks that radical views can pose, and ensure that pupils are not exposed to these while under the supervision of the school, for example through the school's internet-filtering system.
- School leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7(a-b)

- Leaders updated the school's safeguarding policy for September 2022, and it now reflects the statutory requirements expected. The school's leaders for safeguarding have been appropriately trained and have a detailed understanding of the risks that pupils may encounter in the local community. Pupils learn about these through explicit teaching in the school's PSHE curriculum. Leaders make referrals to the local authority when this is necessary.
- Teachers and trustees have received training in the school's safeguarding approach this September and can speak confidently about how to identify harms and make referrals, including if they have concerns about the actions of another adult.
- The school has an up-to-date 'Prevent' risk assessment. Leaders monitor pupils' use of the internet while they are in school, and teach pupils regularly about how to keep themselves safe online when they are using their own tablets or smartphones.

Paragraph 9(a-c)

- The school's behaviour policy is implemented well. Pupils shared with the inspector how the system of merits and demerits works, and said that poor behaviour was rare. Behaviour records reflect this. There have been no serious incidents of poor behaviour since September, but there is a record in place in case these do occur.

Paragraph 10

- The school's anti-bullying policy is appropriate and supported by measures such as a drop-box where pupils can anonymously raise concerns. While pupils occasionally fall out with each other, they say that bullying is extremely rare.

Paragraph 11 and Paragraph 16(a-b)

- The school's health and safety policy is effectively implemented. Records from external agencies that check on elements of this, such as legionella risks, show that leaders carry out the mitigating factors to remove risk to adults and pupils. There are

multiple risk assessments, both of the site, for subjects such as science and PE, and for off-site visits. These are all appropriately completed.

Paragraph 12

- The school's fire risk assessment was assessed and updated by an external agency in July of this year. Any risks identified were minor and some have already been rectified. Evacuation routes are signposted well, and the alarm system is tested weekly. Electrical tests have taken place and fire-fighting equipment is routinely serviced.

Paragraph 13

- The first-aid policy was reviewed in July 2022 and is appropriate. Two members of staff are trained first aiders, including the PE teacher who takes pupils to the local sports centre on a Monday. The school accident book records minor injuries and the treatment these first aiders administered and reported to parents.

Paragraph 14

- The school has enough teaching staff to ensure that pupils are supervised effectively. Off-site risk assessments demonstrate that due consideration is given to adult-to-pupil ratios. The pupils who spoke to the inspector described an inclusive culture with positive relationships between themselves and adults. They feel safe in school.

Paragraph 15

- The school has a central admissions register that contains all the information required by this standard. Registers are taken twice daily. These show that pupils' attendance and punctuality are high. Where leaders have concerns about a pupils' attendance, they follow this up conscientiously.
- School leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraph 17, 18(1), 18(2)(a-f), 18(3).

- School leaders have ensured that all the necessary checks are made on staff before confirming their appointments. Records show that leaders ensure the school's safer recruitment policy is applied carefully to all new appointments, and the safeguarding leader checks that this is the case. For example, where staff have lived and/or worked abroad, leaders ensure they obtain confirmation of good conduct from overseas authorities.
- All new appointments are required to complete the school's application form, and interview records and references are kept. Leaders check on teachers' qualifications to ensure that they have the necessary subject background. All teachers are university graduates and some have postgraduate teaching qualifications.

Paragraph 19(1), 19(2)(a-d), 19(3).

- The school does not currently employ any supply staff. However, leaders demonstrate a clear understanding of the assurances that they would need to seek from any teaching agency if they did employ any supply staff.

Paragraph 20(6)(a-c).

- The necessary checks have been undertaken on all members of the trustee board, which is the proprietor of the school. These checks include an enhanced criminal record check, prohibition and identification checks, and checks on members' right to work in the United Kingdom.

Paragraph 21(1), 21(2), 21(3)(a-b), 21(4), 21(6), 21(7)(a-b).

- The school keeps a single central record which contains the information on recruitment checks for all staff and trustees. School leaders and trustees regularly review this to check it is complete and up to date.
- School leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23-29

- The school premises are well maintained and a pleasant place to learn. There is a large hall that is used for assemblies and some lessons, which contains a small library. Classrooms have natural light and there is plenty of space for pupils to work in them. There is a small science laboratory for practical lessons. Internal lighting is suitable and there is external lighting to help people enter and exit the school when it is dark.
- The toilet facilities are suitable for the number of girls that the school intends to admit. They are kept very clean and have appropriate washing facilities, both for hygiene purposes and for the function of wudhu. The school does not have shower facilities on site, but pupils can access these at the local sports centre when they go there for PE lessons.
- There is a small sick room at the rear of the school. This is suitably furnished with a bed and has its own toilet and sink. Essential first-aid equipment is stored here and is also kept by the office staff, one of whom is a certified first aider.
- Drinking water for pupils is dispensed via a water container. At the time of this inspection, this was not in use as leaders were waiting for a replacement. The school had ensured that pupils could access drinking water by providing water bottles.
- The outdoor space to the side and rear of the school is suitable, but not especially welcoming for pupils. Leaders have submitted plans to the local authority to address this. They have also agreed an arrangement with the neighbouring church hall to allow pupils to use the outside space next door. This is a much larger area but requires some maintenance before it can be used safely.
- The school leader responsible for the health and safety of the school site checks regularly on both the internal and external areas of the school. These records and those from external agencies, such as fire-prevention officers, show that the maintenance of the site is a priority to leaders given the age of the building. The school's first-aid records also show that current pupils do not have accidents because of any poor maintenance.
- School leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1)(a-c; f-g), 32(2)(a-b; d).

- The school does not currently have a live website. However, this has been built ready for when the school is officially registered. The website contains all the information required by the standards in this part. This includes the school's safeguarding policy. All the school's policies are also available for parents on request.
- The correct contact details for both the executive headteacher and the proprietor are recorded on the proposed school's website. The website also makes clear the school's aims, which are to provide a high-quality academic education within an Islamic ethos.

Paragraph 32(3)(a; c-d; f).

- The proposed school's website contains all the policies required by the standards, and more. This includes the school's admissions, curriculum, behaviour and anti-bullying policies.
- School leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33(a-k)

- The school's complaints policy was reviewed by the trustees in July 2022. It makes provision for parents to raise informal concerns in the first instance through the class teacher. From this, if they are not satisfied, a formal complaint can be put in writing to the headteacher. As is required by this standard, the policy makes provision for a panel hearing should the internal process not satisfy the parent. This panel would include at least one person who is independent to the leadership of the school.
- The timescales for managing any complaints are suitable and are set out with the intention of resolving concerns early.
- School leaders have ensured that this standard is likely to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34 (1)(a-c)

- There have been significant changes to the leadership of the school over the last year. Trustees have taken steps to secure the school through the appointment of the executive headteacher, a headteacher and two deputy headteachers. All school leaders have a thorough understanding of the independent school standards and other related legislation.
- The trustee board is under development. Some of the trustees are actively involved in monitoring and supporting school leaders, but not all. The chair intends to appoint two new trustees soon to expand the trustee board's capacity for holding leaders to account. Likewise, there is currently no governing body in place, but trustees intend to establish one once the school is registered.
- School leaders retain a strong focus on keeping pupils safe and ensuring that they receive a high-quality education. School leaders are knowledgeable and well respected

by staff and pupils. Because of this, while the majority of teachers are new to the school, they have quickly embraced leaders' vision and expectations.

- School leaders have ensured that these standards are likely to be met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The school's accessibility plan outlines how leaders will make the building and curriculum increasingly accessible to all pupils. The work that is underway to support pupils who may have SEND demonstrates that this plan is acted upon.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Proposed school details

Unique reference number	149339
DfE registration number	353/6009
Inspection number	10251768

This inspection was carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards that are required for registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School status	Independent school
Proprietor	Iqra Education and Welfare Trust
Chair	Manzoor Shakir
Executive Headteacher	Mehnaz Kauser
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,000
Telephone number	0161 652 8563
Website	N/A
Email address	kshakir@iqrahighschool.com
Date of previous standard inspection	Not previously inspected

Provider already operating

Number of pupils of compulsory school age	76
Number of pupils of compulsory school age who have an education, health and care plan, or who are looked after by a local authority	None
Total hours operating as a school per week	35
Total hours of teaching provided per week	30

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16	11 to 16	11 to 16
Number of pupils on the school roll	64	100	100

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Girls	Girls
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	64	100
Number of part-time pupils	None	None
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	7	7
Of which, number of pupils with an education, health and care plan	None	None
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with an education, health and care plan	None	None

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	4	4
Number of part-time teaching staff	8	8

Information about this proposed school

- The proposed school is currently operating as a registered independent school called Iqra High School – URN 141087. Iqra High School has been registered with the Department for Education (DfE) since July 2014. Leaders intend to ask the DfE to remove Iqra High School from the register of independent schools once Sapience Girls Academy is granted permission to open.
- The school is based in the Glodwick area of Oldham. It operates from one site, and the majority of the teaching takes place there. PE is largely taught at a nearby sports centre.
- Sapience Girls Academy will be an Islamic school for secondary-age girls. Its stated ethos is to 'ensure our students uphold the Islamic values, have their internal flame of intrigue and knowledge continually remain, and that they make positive contributions to the school and to the community, and go on to become responsible and inspiring young women'.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the DfE to determine whether the school is likely to meet the independent school standards if it opens.
- This is the school's first pre-registration inspection.
- The proposed school is currently operating as a registered independent school called Iqra High School – URN 141087. Iqra High School has been registered with the DfE since July 2014.
- On the day of the inspection, the school was not open to pupils. This was because there was a pre-planned staff training day. Therefore, the inspector was unable to observe any teaching.
- The inspector met with the proprietor and the executive headteacher throughout the inspection. She also met with those school leaders who are responsible for health and safety, the curriculum, safeguarding and provision for pupils with SEND. The inspector also spoke to a small group of staff.
- The inspector met with a group of pupils to discuss their work and current experiences at the registered school.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documents and information relating to the independent school standards. She also toured the school premises.

Inspection team

Philippa Darley, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

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