

# Inspection of Al Hikmah Boys School

145 High Street, Luton, Bedfordshire LU4 9LE

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Inspection dates: 6 to 8 June 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Good**

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The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

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?**

At Al Hikmah, pupils become good Muslims. They learn readiness for life in modern Britain. Both the Islamic and secular curriculum teach pupils tolerance and kindness. Boys know a great deal about British society and values. They develop a strong understanding of cultures different to their own. For example, pupils talk articulately about their knowledge of, and respect for, different religions. A typical comment about an educational visit was, 'It made me proud to be a British Muslim.'

Pupils understand and demonstrate leaders' high expectations. They are eager for knowledge and produce high-quality work. Boys conduct themselves in lessons and around the school with maturity.

Boys describe the school community as a family. They are happy and safe. Boys benefit from nurturing relationships with staff. Pupils support each other through difficulties. During discussions, they take turns courteously. Pupils are notably polite and friendly.

Boys develop exemplary attributes. They build confidence and character through the many meaningful opportunities provided. Pupils make speeches in front of large audiences and speak on local radio. They complete effective charity work, such as raising money for the recent earthquake in Turkey and Syria. Boys take pride in making a positive difference to the world.

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

Leaders have designed a carefully considered curriculum. The Islamic and the secular curriculum run side by side and connect with each other well. Subject leaders set out in detail the knowledge to be taught, assessed and revisited. Pupils in key stage 3 build up a depth of knowledge that prepares them effectively for more complex content in key stage 4. As a result, pupils develop detailed, rich and interesting knowledge.

Teachers explain and model new learning clearly. Pupils have opportunities to think about and apply what they have been taught. For example, they learn and discuss important concepts in science. Pupils explain these in complex sentences using technical vocabulary. Teachers check pupils' understanding carefully and correct any misconceptions. Pupils learn successfully.

Leaders want all pupils to succeed. When a pupil struggles with reading, the right additional support means they swiftly catch up. Therefore, pupils read confidently and are able to access the full curriculum. However, leaders are not sufficiently knowledgeable about special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This means pupils' needs are not always identified as precisely as they should be. Consequently, although pupils achieve well, there are some who could do better.

Leaders and staff teach pupils to how to behave appropriately at all times. When any misbehaviour happens, it gets resolved swiftly, and does not recur.

The curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is exceptional and highly effective. Teachers deliver topics such as consent and democracy sensitively, not shying away from important discussions. Boys have excellent recall of what they learn. They articulate this with conviction and clarity. Wider activities build purposefully on what pupils learn during lessons. A recent trip to the Houses of Parliament extended pupils' learning about the rule of law. Leaders use assemblies and form times to reinforce what has been taught in PSHE lessons. For instance, pupils receive strong teaching about the protected characteristics. They express heartfelt understanding and kindness towards those with different identities and views to themselves.

Pupils receive thorough and objective careers advice. This helps pupils to make informed choices, whether they wish to pursue an Islamic or secular pathway beyond school.

The proprietor body has steered the school successfully through a recent period of change. Governors have the knowledge, skills and experience they need to fulfil their roles. They have a clear ambition for the school's direction and ethos. Staff feel valued and are well supported.

The proprietor body and leaders ensure that all the independent school standards are met. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders use risk assessments well to make sure all aspects of provision are suitable for pupils' learning. The relationships, health and sex education policy provides pupils with the information they need in an age-appropriate way. There is a suitable complaints policy, and any queries are carefully reviewed.

Leaders ensure that the school site is appropriate and safe. While this is the case, some of leaders' checks are not as regular or rigorous as they should be. There were some aspects of the standards that had to be amended during the inspection. This included minor issues of health and safety, and some of the information published on the school's website. Leaders do not monitor the quality of education as effectively as they could.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school is a calm and safe place. Staff are well trained and know how to spot and record any concerns, including possible signs of abuse, radicalisation and child-on-child harassment.

Leaders are vigilant. They take their safeguarding responsibilities, such as the 'Prevent' duty, seriously. Leaders make prompt referrals to external agencies when needed. The recruitment checks on new staff are rigorous.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for example when online. They learn about local risks, such as drugs and gangs. Strong pastoral support creates a safe environment. This encourages pupils to discuss any worries they have.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- While leaders support pupils' needs well, they do not have sufficient knowledge of how to precisely support pupils with SEND. This means that, in a few cases, pupils' needs are not identified quickly and accurately. Some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders should gain the knowledge required so that they know how best to identify and support pupils' additional needs. This would ensure that all pupils get the best possible help to achieve their best.
- Leaders do not check on the quality of aspects of the school's provision rigorously enough. This means that some weaker aspects of the school's provision are not identified and addressed as quickly as they should be. Leaders need to put in place robust and regular systems for quality assurance so that improvements happen in a timely and effective manner.

## **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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147690
<b>DfE registration number</b>	821/6017
<b>Local authority</b>	Luton
<b>Inspection number</b>	10267700
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	102
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Bury Park Educational Institute
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Abul Hussain
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mohammed Rahman
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£3,200
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582510630
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.alhikmahschool.com">www.alhikmahschool.com</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:headteacher@alhikmahschool.org">headteacher@alhikmahschool.org</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	19 to 22 October 2021

## Information about this school

- The previous headteacher left the school in August 2022. For most of the academic year 2022/23, the substantive deputy headteacher acted as headteacher. The current headteacher was appointed in April 2023.
- The school was previously part of Bury Park Educational Institute (Al-Hikmah Secondary School), a mixed-gender school separately registered with the Department for Education (DfE). The school followed a policy of segregating pupils by gender and operated on two sites. The boys' part of the school moved to its current site, with DfE agreement, in 2016.
- A ruling by the Court of Appeal in 2017 affirmed that separate but equal treatment of girl and boy pupils in co-educational schools is contrary to the Equality Act 2010. In response, the proprietor applied to the DfE to register the boys' site as a separate school. This was agreed, and Al Hikmah Boys School was registered by the DfE on 26 March 2020. Bury Park Educational Institute (Al-Hikmah Secondary School) continues to operate but is now a single-sex school for girls.
- Leaders plan to apply to the DfE for a material change to increase the roll and allow pupils to be admitted up to the age of 18.
- The school has a religious ethos. It teaches both an Islamic curriculum and a secular curriculum.
- Leaders do not use agency staff.
- The school has no pupils with an education, health and care plan. There are no pupils on the school's SEND register.
- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school's inspection history:
  - In October 2021, Ofsted conducted the school's first standard inspection. The school was judged to require improvement. Two of the independent school standards were not met.
  - On 22 February 2022, the DfE issued the proprietor with a notice, requiring the proprietor to prepare an action plan to show how the unmet independent school standards would be addressed.
  - The submitted action plan was evaluated on 30 May 2022 and was found to be acceptable.
  - On 15 September 2022, Ofsted conducted a progress monitoring inspection. At this, it was judged that all the independent school standards were now met.

## 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.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with a representative of the proprietor body, and three governors. They met with the headteacher, senior leaders, other leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector had a conversation by telephone with a representative of Luton local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, art and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- As part of the evaluation of safeguarding, inspectors checked the school's single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, considered its safeguarding policy and procedures and spoke to leaders, staff and pupils.
- As part of checking compliance with the independent school standards, and evaluating other areas of provision, inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils and scrutinised a range of policies and documents. They checked the safety and appropriateness of the school site.
- Inspectors reviewed the 13 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and the nine free-text responses submitted by parents during the inspection. Inspectors considered the 25 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils. There were no responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.
- During the inspection, there were no Years 10 or 11 pupils on site. As part of mitigating for this, inspectors evaluated the curriculum for key stage 4 and considered a range of information about these pupils' educational experience and outcomes.

## Inspection team

Charlie Fordham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Hannah Stoten

His Majesty's Inspector

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