

Inspection of Al-Ashraf Secondary School for Girls

Sinope Street, Gloucester, Gloucestershire GL1 4AW

Inspection dates: 23 to 25 April 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

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 their learning and are motivated to succeed. The school is ambitious for all pupils. It supports them well with their academic and personal development. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils consistently live up to these. They follow routines willingly, and learning takes place without disruption. Pupils know how to cooperate with each other. They collaborate effectively in small groups to deliver presentations and work well in teams during physical education, for example.

Pupils discuss and debate ideas maturely. They reflect thoughtfully on their rights and responsibilities during personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Pupils are eager to help and learn from others. Some take on leadership roles in school life, such as leading prayers in assembly.

Pupils learn how to be active citizens. They raise money to support people in need locally and around the world. Pupils value opportunities to make a positive contribution to important causes, such as sustainability. For example, they helped design an environmentally friendly school uniform.

Pupils and staff enjoy warm, respectful relationships. As a result, a friendly, caring atmosphere pervades the school. Pupils feel safe and are confident sharing any worries with an adult.

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

Pupils are very well prepared for their next stage of education. They learn an ambitious range of subjects. All pupils follow the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects in key stage 4. The school has further widened the subjects that pupils can choose for GCSE. For example, some pupils now study further mathematics and classical civilization, in addition to their other subjects. The proprietor has ensured that schemes of work for most subjects are designed well.

Leaders have used professional development to enhance the quality of teaching. Teachers have the subject knowledge to deliver the curriculum effectively. They ensure that pupils use subject-specific vocabulary, for example when writing about the literature they study in English.

In all but a few subjects, the school has identified what pupils should learn and when. As a result, pupils gain a depth of knowledge and understanding across most of the curriculum. However, where subject curriculums are less precise, pupils do not build such detailed knowledge.

Teachers use assessment well. Pupils' misconceptions are quickly rectified. The school checks for gaps in pupils' learning and puts in place the right support. For

instance, any pupil who needs support with learning to read gets the help they need. There are only a few pupils with identified special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school ensures that these pupils' needs are met well.

Pupils benefit from an effective PSHE programme. The school has carefully considered the range of knowledge and skills that pupils need to be confident, informed young adults. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online. They make links between their learning, such as the impact of poor mental health on society and how they can care for their own well-being.

Pupils gain a strong understanding of different faiths and religions. They know the importance of respect and tolerance. Pupils learn about representation when they study parliament and when the school council is chosen each year. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain as a result.

Pupils benefit from some wider opportunities through the school's extra-curricular programme. They appreciate trips to London and to places of historic importance, such as Bletchley Park. These experiences help to enrich the curriculum that pupils learn. Some pupils make good use of clubs and activities during lunchtimes, such as magazine club and volleyball.

The school has designed and implemented a successful careers information, education, advice and guidance programme. Pupils valued a trip to the national skills show, meeting local employers and hearing from former pupils about their careers, for example. Pupils have diverse opportunities, such as learning how businesses work and how to prepare for university applications. Consequently, pupils are well-informed about their future choices.

Despite the strength in the quality of education pupils receive, the proprietor was not aware until the inspection that there were some shortfalls in the school's application of its operational practices. All the required maintenance checks of the school site happen regularly, but record-keeping has not been consistently strong in the recent past. The school buildings are suitable. Leaks in the roof have been fixed. However, actions on a number of outstanding issues, such as replacing two ceiling tiles and moving cleaning chemicals into the correct lockable cupboard, were required during the inspection. While there is no record of medicines being administered in school in recent times, the school updated its procedures during the inspection. There is now a secure medicine cabinet to store medicines and a system to make a written record of the administration of medicines should the need arise. There were some minor inconsistencies in safeguarding record-keeping found during the inspection. Although this did not place pupils at risk of harm, the proprietor had not assured itself of the effectiveness of this practice.

By the end of inspection, Parts 1 to 7 of the standards were met. However, there were too many examples where adjustments were needed while inspectors were on site. The proprietor's oversight has not ensured that staff have a firm understanding of the requirements of the standards. Therefore, Part 8, relating to leadership and management, is not met because the school does not demonstrate that it can meet

all the standards consistently and securely. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective, but some minor improvements are required. There has been, in the recent past, inconsistencies in the school's practice in making referrals to safeguarding partners and in safeguarding record-keeping. When on site, inspectors assured themselves that the school completed any outstanding actions and that records were complete.

The school provides effective training for staff and educates pupils well about how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils learn about the risks of 'grooming'. Many staff are highly knowledgeable and apply their training well. As a result, staff and pupils are alert to contextual safeguarding risks. The school works with external agencies, such as the police, to ensure that staff and pupils have a full understanding of safeguarding risks, including self-harm and honour-based violence. Teaching about online safety is robust and valued by pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

- In a few subjects, the key knowledge that pupils need to learn and by when is not defined clearly. As a result, pupils do not develop a depth of understanding like they do in other subjects. The proprietor must ensure that the school identifies the knowledge and concepts that are essential for pupils to know in every subject.
- Minor improvements to safeguarding are required. In the past, there have been occasions of inconsistencies in the rigour of record-keeping and the timeliness of information-sharing. The proprietor must ensure, and assure themselves, that necessary improvements are put into place so that school policies are always implemented promptly, securely and consistently.
- Some actions were required during the inspection to meet part 3 and part 5 of the independent school standards. Part 8 of the standards, relating to leadership and management, is not met because the internal capacity to meet the standards consistently and continually is not proven over time. The proprietor must ensure that it meets the independent school standards in full and that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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

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| Unique reference number | 115810 |
| DfE registration number | 916/6073 |
| Local authority | Gloucestershire |
| Inspection number | 10299159 |
| 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 | 83 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Al-Madani Educational Trust |
| Chair | Yakub Patel |
| Headteacher | Abdullah Patel |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £1,900 to £2,900 |
| Telephone number | 01452 300465 |
| Website | www.secondary.al-ashraf.org.uk |
| Email address | grp_aasgadmin@al-ashraf.gloucs.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 12 to 14 November 2019 |

Information about this school

- The school is an independent Muslim day school for girls aged 11 to 16 that opened in 1994. It was created to educate the girls from the local community.
- The proprietor is the Al-Madani Educational Trust. The trust has operated the school since 2010. The trustees delegate the governance of the school to a governing body.
- The school operates from one site. This is a Victorian school building in the centre of Gloucester. Most pupils travel to school from the immediate area around the school. Some pupils travel from much further afield. For example, some pupils travel by train from Bristol every day to attend the school.
- The school provides a curriculum in Islamic studies known as the 'Islamiat' for approximately one fifth of the pupils' time. Pupils receive a secular academic curriculum for the remainder of their time.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- No pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan.

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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders during the inspection. They met with the chair of the proprietary board and the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English (including reading), mathematics, PSHE, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive

culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first. Inspectors also spoke with representatives from Gloucestershire local authority.

- Inspectors conducted a range of activities to confirm whether the independent school standards were met in full. These activities included health and safety checks of the premises, risk assessments, record-keeping for behaviour management, attendance and supervision during social times.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to the online surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

James Oldham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julie Carrington

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

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; and

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