

Al-Furqan Community College

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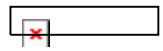
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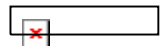
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Introduction and summary

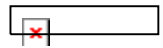


Purpose and scope of the inspection



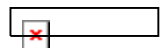
This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the college



Al-Furqan Community College is situated in the Tyseley area of Birmingham. It is an independent Muslim day school for girls that grew out of the expansion of Al-Furqan primary school in 1996. It is run by a charitable trust and managed by a principal who has overall responsibility for the quality of education. It serves a multicultural community and caters for 126 students aged 11 to 16 years. It aims to *provide a happy and secure Islamic environment in which every student can discover and realise their full potential*.

Summary of main findings

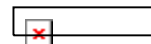


The college provides good quality education and successfully meets its aims. Its innovative curriculum enables students to achieve to the best of their ability. Teaching is very good overall. The quality of assessment of students' work and the monitoring of their progress in each subject are strengths of the college.

The college has a caring ethos that fosters very good relationships and very good behaviour and attitudes to learning. The provision for the students' spiritual, moral and social development is very

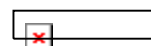
good and is clearly reflected in the students' attitude and behaviour. The health and safety of students are very well promoted and provision for their welfare is sound. Parents feel well informed of their children's progress and are highly supportive of the college.

What the college does well



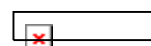
- it provides a secure and caring Islamic environment which enables students to develop a strong spiritual, moral and social foundation;
- it provides an innovative curriculum that enables students to achieve to the best of their ability;
- it successfully encourages students to take responsibility for their learning and, as a consequence, they have a mature attitude to work;
- its teaching is very good and enables students to achieve well; the quality of assessment of students' work and the monitoring of their progress in subjects are strengths of the college;
- it establishes very good relationships between students and between students and staff, which promote a purposeful and happy working atmosphere; in response, students behave very well; and
- it promotes the health and safety of students very effectively.

What the college must do in order to comply with the regulations



The college fully meets the regulations.

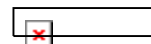
Next steps



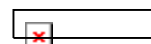
Whilst not required by the regulations, the college might wish to consider the following points for development:

- establish more rigorous frameworks for the assessments of students with learning difficulties and students learning English as an additional language (EAL) so that provision matches more accurately their specific needs;
- enrich the curriculum with frequent visits and regular extra-curricular activities;
- improve the quality and quantity of teaching and learning resources when finances allow;
- implement a robust system to ensure that all references to check the suitability of staff before their appointment are rigorously documented; and
- ensure that the new Child Protection Officer and all staff receive the appropriate training which is planned for them.

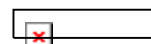
Compliance with the regulations for registration



1. The quality of education provided by the college



The quality of the curriculum



Curriculum provision is good in both key stages. It is broad, balanced and flexible. It provides opportunities for students to develop intellectually, creatively and personally.

An appropriate core of English, mathematics and science is extended through art, humanities, games and two languages. Information and communication technology (ICT) is given appropriate emphasis. There is a clear focus on key skills across subjects. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship are incorporated in a number of subjects, including Islamic Studies and the humanities. The curriculum is underpinned by National Curriculum schemes of work and the course work materials of the GCSE. These give a sound basis for planning lessons.

The PSHE programme is planned carefully to cover issues relevant to each age group. Sex education and drug awareness are elements of the science and Islamic curricula whilst the humanities curriculum includes a comprehensive health education component. The rigorously planned programme of assemblies reinforces many issues raised in lessons.

Islamic Studies, the Qur'an and Arabic are core subjects. The teaching of Islamic Studies and Arabic is based on two different curricula leading to two separate strands of examination: internal examinations devised by the Ibrahimic Board of Education and GCSE. Students attain high standards in their Islamic Studies examination.

The curriculum is innovative in that it allows students to take subjects of the GCSE over a period of three years, starting in Year 9. Fluent Arabic and Urdu speakers take GCSE in Year 8. The flexibility of the system from Year 7 means that higher attaining students work in the year group above their chronological age. There is a clear focus on helping students attain high standards. Students study between five and thirteen GCSE subjects. The opportunity to study three sciences provides students with the choice of a wide range of courses in further education. At the end of Year 7, students are entered for the Entry Level Certificate (ELC) in the core subjects and ICT. In addition, over a period of two years older students are expected to achieve the ELC in Arabic, history, geography and religious studies.

The careers course enables students to make informed decisions about their further education or work place when leaving the college. They value the discussion with an adviser from the local Connexions service and the work experience opportunities provided in Year 11.

The college has a clearly written policy on special educational needs (SEN). The provision for students with statements of SEN is satisfactory. However, provision for students who experience difficulties with their work is not rigorously planned.

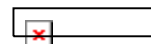
All but one or two students speak English as an additional language (EAL). They are well integrated into the life of the college and participate enthusiastically in group activities. However, the absence

of appropriate assessment procedures means that on occasions staff do not realise the language problems students at an early stage of English language acquisition are experiencing.

The college provides "booster" classes during lunch time and after college in the core subjects. It has a well-organised system of homework which complements the classroom curriculum. Students report that they are given a reasonable amount each day. The parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that homework builds successfully on their children's work in lessons.

There are few visits to places of interest to deepen and extend students' understanding of their class work. At the end of each college year, students experience a week of educational, recreational, sporting and creative activities. These range from visits to famous London landmarks to canoeing, abseiling and jewellery making. All students are encouraged to participate.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



In just over half the lessons observed, the quality of teaching was very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. A small minority of lessons were satisfactory. Students are able to make good progress and develop their skills because teachers plan their work meticulously. Teachers use their assessments of students' work rigorously to target their individual needs. They have devised effective systems to track students' progress. They keep detailed records of their assessments. The day-to-day assessment of students' work and the monitoring of their progress are strengths of the college. As a result of these thorough procedures, teachers know exactly where individual students are and make informed decisions when planning lessons. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning through target setting. Targets are reviewed every term and entered in students' homework diaries where they can be shared with parents. Teachers mark students' work carefully and show those in Years 10 and 11 how to improve; however, teachers' comments are not so helpful in earlier year groups.

The features of good teaching are secure subject knowledge, good classroom management, the use of an appropriate range of teaching and learning strategies, clear sharing of learning objectives with the students and focused reinforcement of their learning at the end of lessons. In the very good lessons observed, students achieved very highly because all ability groups were consistently challenged; the lessons were conducted at a very good pace and teachers gave very clear targets for every task. Above all, the teaching was inspirational because the teachers were able to convey their passion for their subject, which translated into enthusiasm on the part of the students. In the small minority of satisfactory lessons seen, either the teacher did not use a broad enough range of methods to match all the learning styles or her delivery was not stimulating enough to engage students fully.

Teachers understand that a number of students have specific needs and they do their best to provide suitable work and support for them. However, the present arrangements to diagnose the needs of students with learning difficulties and those in the early stages of learning English as an additional language (EAL) are not rigorous enough. As a result, the work provided does not always closely match their needs.

Relationships between the students and the teachers are very good, and sometimes excellent. Students are very responsive to the caring ethos of the college and its reinforcement of positive behaviour. They have a mature attitude to learning and apply themselves to all tasks. They listen actively in class and contribute readily. This enables them to achieve well.

Resources are just adequate and staff use them effectively to support teaching and learning. However, the art resources are too limited to enable students to develop a wide range of skills. The library has only the minimal range of books required to support the curriculum and needs

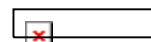
developing. Students are encouraged to use public libraries and the vast majority do. The ICT suite is well resourced and provides one computer for each student. The college is presently focusing on developing ICT resources for classrooms, which has been correctly identified in its development plan as a priority to improve teaching and learning in every subject.

The college's assessment framework includes numerous opportunities to evaluate students' performance against internal or national norms as they work toward ELCs, Key Stage 3 national tests and GCSEs. Students are assessed at the end of Year 7 against National Curriculum levels in English, mathematics and science. The higher achievers access an accelerated programme of study the following year. Its performance in GCSE is compared to the performance of other Muslim schools and national averages. The college's annual published results indicate that all students have attained A*-C grades in at least five subjects by the time they leave the college. Results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations show that the college has been one of the top performing Muslim secondary schools in the United Kingdom for the last five years.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students



The provision for students' spiritual, moral and social development is very good and a clear reflection of the college's Islamic ethos. The college does not promote the cultural development of students so well.

Students gain strong spiritual awareness through Islamic and Qur'anic studies, regular assemblies and class tutor times. They pray collectively in an attractively designed, purpose-built mosque that enhances their Islamic identity. Lessons often begin and end with the recitation of du`as (supplications) or Qur'anic verses. Students have opportunities to make presentations for special assemblies on religious themes and to attend events centred on spirituality during the month of Ramadan.

Several factors contribute to the students' very good moral and social development. The staff provide very good role models by showing courtesy and respect for each other and for their students. They establish very good relationships with their students and foster a relaxed and purposeful atmosphere. Their caring attitude is reflected in the amount and quality of support they give students and in the feedback they seek from them on the work given. This in turn promotes self-esteem and a responsible attitude to learning, further enhanced by praise and target setting. Paired work provides numerous opportunities for students to support each other and respect each other's ideas and work. Students have a clear understanding of right and wrong because the good behaviour policy is clearly explained to them and consistently and fairly applied. Therefore they respond very sensibly to the reward and sanction system and behave very well in and outside lessons. Merits are given for good manners, improved work, honesty, care for the college environment, attendance and sensitivity to others, giving a clear message about moral and social responsibility.

The college places a clear emphasis in all subjects on the development of key skills, such as communication, working with others, improving one's own learning and performance, and knowledge and understanding of different research methodologies. These make a strong contribution to students' personal development. Strategies such as role play in humanities, languages and English, enhance these skills and develop students' self-confidence.

The humanities curriculum, the Islamic studies subjects and the PSHE programme also contribute

extensively to the moral and social development of students. For instance, in humanities, students explore the rights and responsibilities of businesses and consumers. They gain an understanding of how they can contribute to community life through the college council, set up a year ago. Elected members have been mainly involved in planning college events. Students show much initiative when given the opportunity.

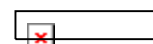
The college has thought carefully about the most effective way to provide students with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England. It has planned citizenship links in all subjects and most of the elements are taught through humanities. For instance, students learn about trade unions, business and ethics, health care in different countries, welfare provision and the judicial system. The Islamic studies curriculum has numerous citizenship components explored in fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), explanation of Qur'anic verses, hadith (what the Prophet Muhammad said or did) and assemblies. The college council provides opportunities for active citizenship. The college has planned to enhance this learning with a visit to the Houses of Parliament at the end of the summer term.

Students' cultural development is satisfactory. Their art work includes projects on William Morris, drawings in the style of Van Gogh and Islamic geometric patterns applied to interior design. Links with Islamic art are under-developed. Students do not study other faiths in Islamic studies but refer to them when comparing the attitudes of various faiths to certain issues. In humanities, they explore the diversity of views within the same faith and between different faiths. For example, when studying racial discrimination, Year 10 and 11 students have looked at Christian responses to discrimination and they have also studied marriage in Christianity. Such comparisons are conducive to promoting tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions. The college places a great deal of importance on social cohesion and harmony, as evidenced by displays in the hall. Educational visits are too infrequent to enhance the cultural foundation which students acquire in lessons.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the students



The provision for the health and safety of students is very good. Provision for their welfare is satisfactory. The college gives a high priority to students' care and the arrangements to ensure a healthy and safe environment. A range of detailed policies and effective procedures is in place relating to such areas as behaviour management and hazardous substances. All necessary measures to reduce risks are taken. Regular fire practices are carried out and evacuation times recorded. Risk assessments are conducted systematically and staff are deployed so as to provide a good level of supervision and to ensure students' safety at all times. There are clearly-defined safety practices in science, ICT and physical education (PE). Teachers are conscientious in ensuring that students are fully informed of the procedures.

The college has a clearly-articulated behaviour policy. Written records are kept of sanctions imposed on students for serious disciplinary offences. All students understand the system of rewards and sanctions and consider them fair and effective. There is a complaints procedure in place for students who feel they have been treated unfairly. Teachers' expectations are realistic and measures to promote good discipline are firm and consistent. Strong emphasis is placed on positive behaviour. Clear procedures guard against harassment or bullying. The college deals efficiently with incidents on the rare occasions when they occur. Students behave very well and are polite.

The college has a well-defined First Aid policy that provides appropriate guidance to staff. Students are fully aware of the college's accident procedures. A number of staff have appropriate

qualifications in First Aid. An accident book is maintained meticulously.

A child protection policy and appropriate procedures are in place. The designated Child Protection Officer for the college was the Principal, but he has recently identified a female colleague to undertake this role. She has not yet undergone training in inter-agency procedures but appropriate training is planned. Some staff have attended training in the autumn term and the college has made arrangements for the remaining staff to receive this training as soon as possible.

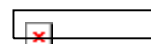
The college maintains the admission register and the attendance registers in accordance with the regulations.

It fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



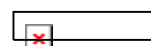
The college is governed by the Al-Furqan Educational Trust and is a founding member of the Association of Muslim Schools. It is managed by a principal who has overall responsibility for the welfare and education of the students. He has delegated some of his duties to a headteacher. A teacher has responsibilities for SEN and another for overseeing the function of the college council. The college has forged strong links with the primary school with which it is able to share good practice in teaching and learning, as well as management. The staff are suitably qualified for the subjects they teach.

Procedures for checking the suitability of staff prior to their appointment are in place. However, the college's procedure for obtaining references lacks consistency. Suitable written references are sought and obtained in some cases. When oral references are obtained, the college does not keep a detailed, written record of relevant telephone conversations to provide sufficiently robust documentation in support of its consideration of the appointment. New staff receive appropriate induction so that they familiarise themselves quickly with the college's policies, systems and curriculum.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The college is housed in a self-contained extension adjacent to a primary school and provides a pleasant and comfortable environment in accommodation which is generally suited to its purpose. All the classrooms and offices are conveniently situated on the ground floor. The building is well maintained and in a good decorative order. The classrooms are of adequate size to accommodate the students in each study group. The science laboratory is not spacious enough to allow whole class teaching and suitable arrangements are made to teach half a class at a time for practical work. The art room is just adequate. The library is far too small to fulfil its function and is currently

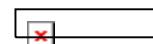
used for individual support work. An open space is creatively used as a meeting point for assemblies and a number of practical lessons. It has been thoughtfully decorated to provide an area of calm and beauty in the compact accommodation. There is a suitably furnished sick room next to the headteacher's office, near washing and toilet facilities. There are sufficient and adequate toilet facilities for students and staff. The changing facilities for PE are barely adequate and the college is looking into suitable alternatives.

The college shares other specialist rooms with the primary school, such as a very spacious and well-resourced ICT suite, a PE hall that doubles as a canteen and a purpose-built mosque. The college also shares the large playground with the primary school. Suitable arrangements are made to safeguard the health, welfare and safety of students when using the shared accommodation.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The college places great importance on maintaining good links with parents. The parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the college.

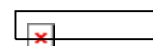
Effective strategies are established to ensure that new parents and students are well informed about the college. The prospectus is a helpful document which gives parents a clear picture of the college aims, its philosophy and curriculum. New students spend a day at the college before they join in order to learn about its procedures, practices and expectations. This enables them to settle quickly and easily. Ninety-nine per cent of parents feel that the college helped their daughter settle well when she started at the college. In addition, the information evening, held at the beginning of the autumn term, familiarises parents with the subjects offered, the way the curriculum is organised and their own role in supporting their children's learning.

The thrice-yearly reports give objective information to parents about their children's attainment in all the subjects offered. Parents' evenings are held twice a year and are well attended. At any time, parents can discuss their children's progress with individual subject teachers. Almost all the parents who responded to the questionnaire feel they are well informed about their children's progress.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

7. The effectiveness of the college's procedures for handling complaints

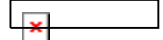


The college has received few complaints since it was established. The proprietor and staff are eager to respond to any concerns raised by parents. The complaints policy meets in full the requirements of the regulations. It is available to parents and prospective parents, and sets out clear time scales and procedures which the college will follow in the management of a complaint.

Does the college meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

College details



Name of college:	Al-Furqan Community College		
DfES ref number:	330/6084		
Type of college:	Muslim Day School		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of students:	11-16 years		
Gender of students:	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time students):	Boys 0,	Girls 126,	Total 126
Number of students with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 0,	Girls 3,	Total 3
Annual fees:	£3,180		
Address of college:	Reddings Lane Tyseley Birmingham West Midlands B11 3EY		
E-mail address:	amjad.ahmed@talk21.com		
Telephone number:	0121 777 8666		
Fax number:	0121 777 1811		
Principal:	Mr A Ahmed		
Proprietor:	Al-Furqan Educational Trust		
Lead Inspector:	Mrs M Messaoudi		
Dates of inspection:	21 - 24 February 2005		

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