



Al-Hijrah Secondary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 133306
LEA Birmingham
Inspection number 282300
Inspection dates 6 June 2006 to 7 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mark Sims HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Cherrywood Centre
School category	Voluntary aided		Burbidge Road
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Birmingham, West Midlands B9 4US
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 7737979
Number on roll	270	Fax number	0121 7737111
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Dr Muhammad Hanif
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr Muhammad Saqib

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Al-Hijrah is a small school set in the heart of Birmingham. Before attaining voluntary aided status in 2002, it was a private school. It is heavily oversubscribed, with over a thousand applications for just sixty places. Girls and boys are taught in two separate mixed-ability classes. All pupils are from Muslim background. The largest minority ethnic group is Pakistani, representing over three quarters of the school population. Few of the pupils have English as their first language, although none are at the early stages of learning English. There is a small but increasing number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Eligibility for free school meals is high. At the time of the inspection the headteacher was absent due to illness.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some very good features. Achievement and standards are high, and personal development, which is good overall, has outstanding features in pupils' spiritual and moral development.

Pupils start school at about the expected level nationally and progress well during their time in school. This is particularly marked for younger pupils. By the time they leave school pupils are working at levels above the national average. This is in a large part down to their self-motivation and willingness to succeed. Their behaviour is also of a high standard. Whilst some of the teaching is good, too much of it is satisfactory, characterised by pupils' lack of opportunities to participate actively in lessons.

The curriculum gives pupils a good grounding in languages and Islamic studies but elsewhere there are gaps and no opportunities for older pupils to choose options. Whilst there is a wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer, pupils report some dissatisfaction, especially with regard to sporting opportunities. Care for pupils is a strength of the school. Pupils report that they feel safe and secure and parental questionnaires confirm this. Support for academic guidance varies from subject to subject.

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The school is well served by a strong governing body and senior leadership team giving clear direction. The quality of leadership at subject level is more variable, where monitoring of the subject departments' effectiveness and procedures for assessing pupils' work are not consistent. However, given the recent leadership appointments, the school has a good capacity to improve in the areas identified.

What the school should do to improve further

- Review the planning of the curriculum to ensure that it provides wider opportunities for all pupils.
- Raise the standard of teaching to ensure that it is consistently good by sharing the best practise within the school.
- Ensure there is consistency in monitoring and assessment procedures throughout all subject departments by sharing the good practice that already exists in the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards of achievement in the school are good. When pupils come to the school their attainment is at about the expected level nationally but by the end of Key Stage 3 they have made good progress to be above the national average. This is especially due to the high motivation of pupils in their desire to do well. The higher-attaining pupils do particularly well in mathematics. Although recent test results were down at Key Stage 4, they remain well above the national average. Progress for older pupils is not as rapid as it is for younger ones. In particular, the progress of boys loses momentum in literacy. Boys did better than girls in last year's test results in

mathematics when they received additional provision. The most successful subjects in Key Stage 4 tests are combined science, mathematics, information and communication technology and religious education, but compared to the national average, standards are lower in geography and languages. The small number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress, in line with their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is good. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good overall. The spiritual and moral aspects are outstanding because of the contribution of the regular assemblies, together with opportunities in the curriculum. Relationships within the school are good and there is mutual respect between staff and pupils. Behaviour is good and pupils say there is no threat from bullying or racism within the school. All pupils feel safe.

Most pupils say they enjoy being at school but this was not always reflected within lessons, especially where there was little pupil participation. Although attendance is slightly below expectations, the school has introduced good procedures to encourage improvement. Attitudes to learning are good and pupils are willing to take on responsibilities whenever they are given. They make a significant contribution to the community through activities such as charity fund raising and support for a school in Pakistan. Pupils readily receive the advice they need to help them stay healthy but the lack of choice in meals and restricted sport provision are barriers to adopting healthy lifestyles. The pupils' zero tolerance of all harmful substances is outstanding. Pupils' views are obtained through the school council in which they proudly participate, but many consider the school does not always listen to their views. Their preparation for later life is good but is restricted for some by the narrowness of the curriculum.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and most lessons are well planned. They make increasingly good use of interactive whiteboards. Teachers have good classroom management skills and a positive rapport with their pupils. All of these features of teaching enable effective learning to take place. Pupils are very well motivated.

In the best lessons, teachers involve pupils and clearly identify the learning objectives. Whilst good teachers also set a brisk and sometimes challenging pace, this is not the case for less successful lessons. There is insufficient variation of the task to match the needs of the wide range of abilities within mixed-ability classes. The school is aware that the use of assessment to ensure that tasks are matched to pupils' differing needs is a high priority for development. Teachers make comparatively little use of information

and communication technology for pupils as part of teaching and learning, but facilities are improving.

Pupils' work is marked regularly with helpful comments, and often grades are identified. In the better lessons, pupils are also involved in self-assessment at the end of the lesson but this varies from subject to subject. The formal tracking of the progress of all pupils is at an early stage of development.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress. Their needs are accurately identified but apart from those with statements, they do not receive extra support in class as there are not enough learning support assistants. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory but is restricted because all classes have a wide range of ability.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory, but there are some gaps in provision. The curriculum has been designed to balance the requirements of the national curriculum and the Muslim faith. One of its strengths is the provision for pupils to study two languages and the time dedicated to Islamic studies. The personal, social and health education provision is well planned and makes a significant contribution to helping pupils stay safe and healthy.

The subject range available to pupils is narrow because there is one class per year group for each gender and options are not offered. Pupils are unhappy about the absence of curriculum choices, which they feel puts them at a disadvantage when moving to further education. In mathematics there are more lessons per week for older boys than for older girls. There is a lack of continuity of provision in history and art as pupils move through the school.

The school has worked hard to improve its extra-curricular activities given the limitations of the building and size of staff. Provision is satisfactory but it is insufficiently well planned and does not provide continuity in the range of activities. Pupils themselves expressed some unhappiness with what they are offered. Whilst the school has a good library, it is underused because of the absence of a librarian.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. Whilst there are few vulnerable pupils, their specific needs are well monitored and addressed. Child protection procedures are fully in place. Pupils speak very highly about the friendly staff, who provide a good level of support and with whom they have good relationships. Appropriate police checks have been carried out for all staff in the school.

The pastoral system is well established, with the form tutor being the point of contact for pupil care. The small size of the school ensures that all pupils are well known to the teachers. Whilst the pastoral guidance is always good, there are inconsistencies

between subjects in the quality of academic guidance. Pupils are set targets to help them to know how to improve their work but the whole-school monitoring and assessment procedures are still at an early stage of development. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive additional support and those identified as at risk of underachieving are given booster classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The acting headteacher has a secure knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The self-review is a very accurate and honest account of where the school is at. The senior leadership team have vision for the school and know how they want the school to move forward. The development plan is appropriate in addressing the relevant priorities for the school.

The leadership team have been successful in maintaining high standards of achievement. They know where the best teaching is located and where it needs further development, although formal monitoring of teaching is at an early stage of development. Suitable action has been taken where teaching was not good enough, and further steps are needed to address the issue of the number of unqualified teaching staff in languages. There is inconsistency in the effectiveness of monitoring at head of department level, although recent appointments have significantly strengthened the team.

The governing body knows the school well. They are regularly kept up-to-date about standards in the school. Governors are sufficiently well informed to effectively support and challenge the school where necessary.

The school has been successful in integrating pupils of different ethnic backgrounds so that pupils can work in an environment free of racism and bullying. Provision for older girls in mathematics is not as good as it is for boys, however. Although it is a small school with very limited accommodation, it has deployed its resources well to achieve value for money. It has made satisfactory progress since achieving voluntary aided status and has good capacity to improve.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

You will know that a team of inspectors came to see your school and I thought you might like to know the outcome of our visit.

We think there are a number of things that the school does really well. The test results show how successful you are by the time you leave school and you must take much of the credit for your hard work and dedication.

We were especially impressed by your spiritual and moral development, as seen in prayer times and in lessons.

Your leaders and managers look after you very well and keep you safe. They have a good idea what needs to be done to develop the school further and you have a very important part to play in this in ensuring you make your views known to them.

You have very good provision in Islamic studies and languages but we have asked the school to consider how it can extend the range of subjects and after-school activities available to you. We have also asked the school to ensure that all teaching matches the level of the best that we saw. We also think the school should make sure that the way it checks how well you are doing in lessons is consistent in all subject areas.

We enjoyed our visit and want to thank you for your hospitality in making us feel welcome. I would like to wish you every success in your future.