

Al-Mahad-Al-Islami Secondary School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	373/6028
Unique Reference Number	131122
Inspection number	316827
Inspection dates	3-4 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Raminder Arora

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Al-Mahad-Al-Islam Secondary School is an Islamic faith secondary school for girls founded in 1996. There are 69 pupils aged from 12 to 16, who mostly reside in the immediate catchment area of Darnall, in Sheffield. The school community is made up of girls from various backgrounds, including Pakistani and Somali heritage; Staff and girls are all Muslims and speak English as an additional language. There are 12 girls with learning difficulties or disabilities and none with a statement of special educational needs. The school has a governing body, the *Shura Committee*, comprising five members, including a chairperson who is also the proprietor.

The school seeks to help the girls towards achieving an understanding of their own faith, and the role of Islam in their lives, and to teach all subjects of the National Curriculum, as well as Arabic, Islamic and Qu'ranic studies. The school aims to *'ensure that the students receive a broad and balanced education according to the National Curriculum and in an Islamic environment; provide a caring, safe and a well ordered environment for the girls to develop their educational and life skills, and foster in each child the understanding that every individual is a valued citizen of the community'*.

This is the school's first published inspection report.

Evaluation of the school

Al-Mahad-Al-Islami Secondary School provides a satisfactory quality of education and meets its stated aims. The level of support, care and guidance is satisfactory. The curriculum is satisfactory, as is the provision for the girls' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The girls are well behaved, have positive attitudes and display good manners due to the school's supportive Islamic ethos. Teaching and assessment are satisfactory. As a result, the girls make at least satisfactory progress. The school is well liked by the parents and pupils. The school complies with most of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory and is adequately constructed to be relevant to the ages and needs of pupils. It suitably balances the secular and Islamic subjects. In Key Stage 3, the girls study English, mathematics, science, physical education (PE),

information and communication technology (ICT), citizenship and geography. In Key Stage 4 they follow courses in eight subjects, including Arabic, Urdu and Religious and Islamic Studies examined at GCSE level. The Islamic programme is appropriate to the needs of the girls; it forms 40% of the curriculum and is taught throughout the school. The girls' personal and social development is included in Islamic studies, generally linked to the study of citizenship. There is no written scheme of work for personal, social and health education to ensure an organised and coherent programme to provide systematic coverage of all appropriate themes and issues. There tends to be insufficient focus on investigation and research and on practical work. Consequently, although almost all girls reach the levels expected for their age, they have not had enough opportunities to apply their skills creatively. Not all subjects are taught. Geography has been introduced into the curriculum recently and there are plans to include history, art and design and technology in the near future. An adequate range of resources supports the curriculum, including a recently installed ICT suite and a science laboratory. However, the ICT suite is not yet networked and the use of ICT in all subjects is under-developed. The resources for practical science are very limited. There are suitable plans and schemes of work in most subjects, but these are not always written in a consistent format and therefore vary in quality. Additionally, the monitoring of each subject to assure the quality of the curriculum is insufficiently rigorous.

Teaching is satisfactory and the girls make satisfactory progress overall, although there are variations. Girls with specific learning difficulties make the expected progress in relation to the targets set in their individual educational plans. Where teaching is effective, teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and ask challenging questions. This was noted in an English lesson, where the teacher developed the lesson at a brisk pace and guided the girls successfully in planning an essay. Teachers of Islamic studies have good subject expertise; the girls enjoy their work and are taught values appropriate to the aims of the school. When teaching is less effective, it is sometimes too teacher-directed, with insufficient input from pupils. In some lessons, where teaching is mostly book-based, there is little teacher involvement to assess pupils' understanding and provide challenge.

There is a satisfactory framework to regularly assess pupils' attainment in each subject and to set appropriate targets. The school records satisfactorily identify pupils' levels of attainment and chart their progress as they move through the school. Teachers know their pupils well and provide clear academic guidance through individual discussions and marking which is regular and encouraging. Most girls' recorded work is very well presented.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Their spiritual and moral development is central to the school's aims and ethos. A calm atmosphere is evident in lessons and girls show good attitudes and say that they are happy at

school. They develop knowledge of spirituality through Islamic studies, but opportunities to enhance it in other subjects are sometimes missed. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.

The school is developing opportunities to enable girls to take greater responsibility for their school, for example, by the establishment of a school council, which is providing an important forum for pupils to develop an understanding of democracy and have an elected voice for their views to be made known. Pupils' understanding of right and wrong and respect for the law is supported through the study of Citizenship. Pupils acquire a general knowledge and appreciation of institutions and services in England, and have a good knowledge of their own culture. However, their awareness and understanding of other cultures is very limited. There is currently no planned provision for raising pupils' awareness and knowledge of other faiths and cultures represented in Britain's multi-cultural society.

Attendance is satisfactory and pupils arrive punctually for lessons. Concern for others in the wider community is demonstrated through support for charities, for example, NCCPR which works for children.

The girls are keen to participate but are not given enough opportunities to be active and independent learners, or to take the initiative in lessons. The range of school visits and extra-curricular activities is limited. The provision for careers education is satisfactory, but as yet they are not provided with a structured programme of work experience placements. In addition to the sound skills acquired in English, mathematics and science, pupils gain teamwork skills through the student council, which adequately prepares them for the work life in future.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The overall provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Procedures to ensure the well being of the girls are suitably outlined, for example in the health and safety, anti-bullying and risk assessments policies; and these are reviewed regularly. The behaviour policy is understood fully by both staff and the girls, and underpins the good behaviour observed around the school. Sanctions and rewards are outlined clearly and any incidents of bad behaviour are dealt with firmly. Bullying is rare and the girls say that they are safe in school and feel well supported. This is because the relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves are good. There are appropriate procedures in place to minimise risks in all circumstances and these are implemented adequately. Attendance and punctuality are monitored effectively. Staff are well informed through training and regular updates about procedures in child protection. Fire safety is managed well and periodic checks of equipment are carried out carefully. Trained members of staff treat pupils who need first aid or prescribed medication sympathetically. All incidents requiring first aid are recorded in the accident book. Pupils are aware of the need to stay healthy and fit. They eat fruit and drink water but opportunities to participate in a daily fitness programme are limited.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school undertakes the appropriate checks with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). A single central record is compiled to provide details of all requisite checks and dates. CRB checks on some members of the governing body are currently in progress. The recruitment and selection of staff is carried out carefully and applicants are fully checked for their suitability to work with children before their appointment is confirmed.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are of a satisfactory standard and are mostly suitably maintained. They enable safe and effective learning. However, space is restricted for the number of pupils, especially in the very small classrooms. There is a small computer suite but with no Internet facility as yet. There is no school library, and the number of books, both fiction and non-fiction, is limited. The science room is not designed or equipped sufficiently well for regular practical activities to take place effectively. Due to the lack of physical space, the school does not provide lunches. There is no hall. The playground is spacious with its surface being worked on to receive marking and improve safety. Opportunities for regular PE, games and sports are limited. Parents and pupils would like increased time for sports and more regular exercise. The furniture and fittings are of a sound quality and are suitable for the age of pupils. The school does not currently provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has satisfactory communication procedures. An annual report provides suitable information on each pupil's progress. The school's self-evaluation in preparation for the inspection provides a limited overview of all academic and pastoral aspects of the school. The prospectus gives brief but suitable information to parents and others about the school, its ethos and its policies on admissions, discipline and exclusion. It outlines the curriculum offered and briefly explains the policies on bullying, child protection, health and safety and other matters. The procedures for making complaints are set out clearly.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's arrangements for handling formal and informal complaints meet all requirements. The school has not received any formal written complaints in the last year.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- establish and implement appropriate plans and schemes of work in each subject to support the policy (paragraph 1(2))
- give pupils the opportunity for aesthetic and creative experiences (paragraph 1(2)(a)(ii))
- provide a programme of personal, social and health education which reflects its aims and ethos (paragraph 1(2) (f)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (standard 2) and must:

- assist the pupils in acquiring an appreciation and respect for other faiths and cultures (paragraph 2(e)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill (paragraph 5(l)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- provide a planned programme to promote an appreciation and respect for other faiths and cultures
- disseminate the best teaching practice and develop staff expertise through a rigorous training programme
- continue to build up resources in different subjects, especially science
- develop the use of ICT across the curriculum
- provide more organised opportunities for PE and sports.

School details

Name of school	Al-Mahad-Al-Islami Secondary School
DCSF number	373/6028
Unique reference number	131122
Type of school	Islamic faith school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1996
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Girls: 69
Annual fees (day pupils)	£900
Address of school	1 Industry Road Sheffield South Yorkshire S9 5FP
Telephone number	01142 423138
Email address	almahad_school@yahoo.co.uk
Headteacher	Dr B Rind
Proprietor	Mr M Hayat Khan
Reporting inspector	Raminder Arora
Dates of inspection	3-4 March 2008