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# Rochdale Girls School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	354/6006
Unique Reference Number	134575
Inspection number	316852
Inspection dates	5 - 6 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon HMI

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](http://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

Rochdale Girls School is a day school situated in a suburb of Rochdale. It provides Islamic and academic education for 109 girls aged 11 to 16. The school aims to develop the potential of each student and to foster their knowledge and understanding of Islam. This is the school's first full inspection of education since its registration in 2003.

## Evaluation of the school

Rochdale Girls' School provides good quality education. The school meets nearly all of the regulations; there are a few administrative matters where it does not. The school meets its stated aims well. The students really enjoy school; they make good progress and their public examination results are excellent. The school upholds and promotes the girls' Islamic education effectively, whilst developing tolerance and understanding of other viewpoints.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets all requirements. The curriculum policy is clearly outlined in the school prospectus. There are several strong features, particularly the provision for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and the promotion of spiritual and moral values. The curriculum is still developing, for example to enhance the creative dimension, with specialist teaching in art and in information and communication technology (ICT). Further plans for improving the curriculum depend on a planned move to new premises.

The Islamic and secular curricula are integrated. Islamic teaching is woven through all subjects, providing the main teaching perspective. However, the curriculum fosters an all-round viewpoint, helping to promote tolerance and understanding and preparing students well for life in a multi-ethnic country. In religious studies (RS) students learn about different religions, with Islam studied in greater depth. The Islamic ethos is strong, but sometimes opportunities are missed in other subjects to draw links to specific teachings which could develop students' understanding of Islam still further.

The curriculum is based closely on the National Curriculum. Students study English, mathematics, science, history, Urdu, RS, ICT, geography, art and Arabic. Arabic language is reinforced in Islamic studies. All students follow a course of personal,

social and health education (PSHE), which includes learning about healthy lifestyles and how to avoid risks such as smoking, alcohol or illicit drugs. This programme is closely linked to the science curriculum and makes a good contribution to helping prepare students for adult life.

The emphasis on basic skills prepares students well for their future economic well-being. All those who left school in 2007 continued into further education. Standards in English and mathematics are high, with excellent public examination results, well above national averages.

Provision for ICT is satisfactory. All students have at least two lessons per week. The school offers both short course and full course GCSE, but there are few opportunities for students to develop or apply their ICT skills in other subjects, for example in practical science or in preparing presentations of their work.

Students normally enter seven or eight GCSEs at the end of Year 11, but may do up to 11 subjects. High-attaining students have the opportunity to sit early for GCSE mathematics examinations in Year 9. At the end of Year 9 all students sit statutory attainment tests in English, science and mathematics. Standards are well above the national average.

Provision for physical education (PE) is satisfactory. All students have timetabled lessons, but there are no sports facilities apart from the playground where students can play simple ball games, and no facilities in case of bad weather. On such occasions students follow a health and fitness theory course. A small number of parents and students expressed concern about the restricted range of opportunities for taking exercise.

Careers preparation is satisfactory. Though there is no formal structure or programme, it meets the girls' needs. They have confidence in the advice given by their teachers and have access to information provided by the Connexions service. All do work experience in Year 10. There is little enhancement to the curriculum by the way of extracurricular clubs or visits out of school, though students say that they enjoy these and would appreciate more.

Teaching and assessment are good overall. Teaching is good; there are several subject specialists. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which ensures that the work the students do is sufficiently challenging. The teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects is catching. They will often draw on examples from their own lives or experiences to make lessons relevant for the students. They provide a good variety of activities and draw on a good range of methods. They are skilled at encouraging the students to think for themselves and to express their opinions.

Lessons are planned well and proceed at a lively pace. As a result, the teachers successfully capture and hold on to the students' interest. Students say that they really enjoy school and that teachers make the lessons fun. Students respond very

well, taking an active part in the lessons and making good progress. Beyond ICT lessons, there is little use of ICT by teachers to promote learning. This is a missed opportunity to extend learning opportunities and enliven lessons still further.

The systems for assessment are good and are developing further. At frequent points in lessons, teachers check what the students can do and have learnt. Students' work is marked regularly and teachers often give helpful comments. In this way they develop good awareness of students' needs and are able to plan suitable lessons.

Students have regular tests and an annual, formal assessment, based on National Curriculum levels and grades, with the results reported to parents. This provides good, regular information on progress so that parents and students are clear where strengths lie and when extra support or additional effort may be required. From these tests, students are set target grades, though this system is not yet consistently applied across all subjects. It is not easy to track an individual's progress over time, nor across the different subjects, in order to pinpoint where an individual student may be falling behind, or be doing particularly well.

Resources to support the curriculum are adequate, though for PE very limited. ICT resources have recently been improved, but there is little use of interactive technologies. A science laboratory has been installed since the school was first registered.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with particular strengths in moral, social and spiritual development. Students learn where the similarities and differences lie in different religions, for example in their common beliefs. The school's approach is to look for the common humanity whilst particularly developing students' knowledge and understanding of Islam.

Students are exposed to a range of influences in their daily lives, such as the media, their peers, family and community. They learn how to weigh each up, being encouraged to express their opinions and ask questions. So, for example, in a good Year 11 PSHE lesson observed, students discussed the wearing of *hijab*. This approach meets their needs well, preparing them for life in a multicultural society, whilst upholding their own religion. In this way students learn to respect others' viewpoints. They are encouraged to think widely and to express their views, in ways which promote tolerance and harmony.

The provision for education about citizenship is satisfactory. The programme includes community, racial discrimination, human rights, crime, laws, the economy, business and enterprise, and opportunities for active citizenship. Students' cultural development is assured though through English literature, history and geography, where they learn about other cultures.

Behaviour is outstanding. Students are industrious and attentive, yet lively. The curriculum develops confidence and self-esteem well. Students are valued. Relationships between them and their teachers, and amongst the girls themselves, are outstanding. This results in a very positive atmosphere for learning. Attendance is good. The students make a highly effective contribution to their community, for example through charity fundraising and through the school council.

## Welfare, health and safety of the students

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the students is good. The school meets all the regulations and all the required policies are in place to underpin this. The school's provision for encouraging a healthy lifestyle is satisfactory, limited by the restricted opportunities for regular exercise.

The staff take good care of the students. They are carefully supervised. The outstanding relationships between staff and students make the school a happy and safe place. Students say that bullying is not an issue and that the staff are approachable should they have any problems.

The school has not prepared a three-year plan as specified by the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has conducted some, but not all of the checks required on staff. Checks on the proprietor have been completed satisfactorily, but the school's recruitment procedures do not meet the most up-to-date guidance, as detailed at the end of this report. The school does not have a single central record, as required, to show that all checks have been done.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation are satisfactory. There are two specialist rooms, a science laboratory and an ICT room, along with a small library and several general classrooms allocated to subjects. These are adequate but, as numbers on roll have increased, they are rather cramped. The classrooms are tidy, but a little shabby in décor. The school is hopeful it will soon move into bigger premises and be able to expand the curriculum opportunities.

There is a small playground, used for PE. Some debris remains in the playground. The arrangements for a pupil who falls ill do not meet requirements and there are insufficient toilets for the number of girls in the school, though these are kept clean.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school's information for parents is satisfactory and meets requirements. Information is clear and accurate and is kept up-to-date through informal day to day contact with parents. Annual reports to parents provide some useful information about students' progress, but are not specific about what students need to do to improve in each subject.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school's procedures for handling complaints meet all requirements. There have been no formal 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 suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, including volunteers ensure that appropriate checks been carried out to confirm their identity, medical fitness, right to work in the United Kingdom, previous employment history, character references and, where appropriate, qualifications and professional references and ensure that such information is taken into account in determining whether their appointment will be confirmed (paragraph 4(2)(a))
- in relation to each member of staff in post on or after 1 August 2007, ensure that there is a central register which shows the checks made (and certificates obtained where relevant) of: his/her identity; qualifications (where required); whether an enhanced CRB was obtained, or where appropriate, that he/she is not working in contravention of section 142 of the Education Act 2002 (List 99); the right to work in the UK and, where relevant for those who have lived outside the UK, suitability to work in a school; and include the date on which each such check was completed or the certificate obtained (paragraph 4C(2 and 3))
- put into place the single central record that includes all the required information as listed above and ensure that, whilst the register may be kept in electronic form, the information so recorded is capable of being reproduced in legible form (paragraph 4C(9)).

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

- provide sufficient washrooms for staff and students, including facilities for students with special needs, which take account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k))
- provide appropriate facilities for students who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

## 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:

- seek further opportunities to draw links between Islamic studies and other subjects, and to extend the use of ICT across the different subjects
- enhance the systems for assessing students' progress in order to be able to show an individual's progress over time and across the different subjects
- improve information for parents in the students' annual reports by ensuring that targets show clearly how students might improve their work.

## School details

Name of school	Rochdale Girls School	
DCSF number	354/6006	
Unique reference number	134575	
Type of school	Secondary	
Status	Independent	
Date school opened	September 2003	
Age range of students	11-16	
Gender of students	Girls	
Number on roll (full-time students)		Total: 109
Annual fees (day students)	£1100	
Address of school	36 Taylor Street Rochdale OL12 0HX	
Telephone number	01706 646642	
Fax number	01706 646642	
Email address	rgs.araz@yahoo.com	
Headteacher	Mr A Razzak	
Proprietor	Mr A Razzak	
Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon HMI	
Dates of inspection	5 - 6 December 2007	