

# The Fountain

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	380/6116
Unique Reference Number	134587
Inspection number	320174
Inspection dates	6-7 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi

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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## 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

The Fountain is an independent Muslim school for girls aged between 11 and 16 years. It opened in 2003 and was registered in 2005. It teaches most subjects of the National Curriculum combined with an *alimah* course (Islamic theology). There are 91 students on roll, most of whom live in Bradford and some of whom travel from far afield. All students are from a Pakistani or Indian background. All are either bilingual or at various advanced stages of learning English as an additional language. None has a statement of special educational need. The school's mission is to '*provide a broadly balanced Islamic and mainstream secondary education in order to equip the individual with the necessary knowledge, skills, experience, Islamic moral values and spirituality for a successful life.*' It aims to '*foster a warm and friendly atmosphere in a caring school community in which self-esteem and respect for others can develop; promote the self-discipline of the individual, furthering independence towards making objective decisions and choices.*' This is the school's first inspection report.

## Evaluation of the school

The Fountain provides a satisfactory quality of education and meets most of its aims. Parents and students express a high level of satisfaction with the curriculum, particularly the *alimah* course. The curriculum as a whole places a great emphasis on personal development, and provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school creates a warm and friendly atmosphere and makes good provision for students' care. It complies with most of the regulations for independent schools.

### Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is broad and well balanced between a course of traditional Islamic sciences leading to the *alimah* qualification, taught in the morning, and National Curriculum subjects, taught in the afternoon. A particular strength of the *alimah* course is the teaching of a high standard of reading and comprehension in Arabic. The course includes Arabic, translation of the Qur'an, Hadith (collection of sayings illustrating Prophet Muhammad's example to follow), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), and *usulul fiqh* (sources of jurisprudence). It is a seven-year course that requires completion beyond Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3, students also study English,

mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), religious education (RE), geography, history, Urdu, art, physical education (PE) and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). Students take the national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9. In Key Stage 4, they have the opportunity to take nine subjects to GCSE level. However, there is no planned PE provision for Years 10 and 11, whether through PE lessons or extra-curricular activities. The planning of the curriculum is satisfactory as there is a wide range of sufficiently detailed documents to support the teaching. However, it is generally more detailed in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Provision for PSHCE and multicultural education are strengths of the afternoon curriculum. The school continuously strives to improve resources and the curriculum is adequately resourced. ICT is used well in some subjects. Students who have moderate learning difficulties receive adequate support.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory, and there are examples of good practice in the school. The school faces recruitment and retention difficulties and the high staff turnover makes it difficult to establish continuity in the systems put in place. This is a concern to parents and the school is addressing this issue. The school managers have rightly identified the continuous professional development of staff as a priority for improvement.

Where the teaching is good, it is based on a planning structure that enables students to understand what they are about to learn, to review their prior learning, to practise their new learning through a variety of tasks and to assess their understanding at the end. Lessons begin with an interesting activity that engages all students and are conducted at a brisk pace, which sustains students' interest. Good teaching gives students many opportunities to solve problems in pairs or groups, to discuss and argue points and, in so doing, develop their confidence and speaking skills. It models technical language specific to the subject taught effectively, so students improve their literacy skills. Where the teaching is only satisfactory, it generally relies too much on text books and does not provide tasks that match students' needs sufficiently closely. It is also generally dominated by the teachers' talking, resulting in passive learning. Occasionally, time is not used wisely. Most teachers use an appropriate level of questioning that encourages students to think for themselves. However, sometimes, the questioning does not encourage students to think at a higher level.

When students join the school, there is no initial assessment to provide a benchmark to evaluate their future progress and to inform teachers of their prior attainments. In some cases, the school does obtain details of students' prior attainments but this information is not shared with teachers. The school has identified this issue as a priority for improvement and is taking steps to remedy the situation. Marking is regular but rarely shows students exactly how to improve, although students receive useful verbal feedback. The systems in place to assess students' learning and monitor their progress are not rigorous enough to inform the school of what it needs to do next to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The school is already addressing this issue and improving its assessment procedures.

As a result of satisfactory curriculum and teaching, students make satisfactory progress over time. Students will be entered for GCSE examinations for the first time in 2008. The 2007 Key Stage 3 national test results show that students achieved better in English than in mathematics and science.

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

The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and is strongly fostered through the curriculum and through the warm atmosphere created by the school. The overwhelming majority of students like their school. They value the opportunity to take the *alimah* course alongside National Curriculum subjects and enjoy having friendly and caring teachers. However, there is a perception among some students that not all staff treat all students fairly.

Through the *alimah* course, students gain detailed knowledge of their faith and develop a good understanding of right and wrong. Weekly events such as Islamic assemblies contribute to their spiritual development. Work in PSHCE gives them opportunities to learn about British institutions and to explore the moral, social and cultural aspects of society. A good understanding of diversity in a multicultural society is promoted by the RE curriculum that includes study of the beliefs and practices of all major world religions. However, students' cultural awareness is not enriched by educational visits and this was noted by parents and students.

Students develop a good range of skills and are fairly well prepared for the next stage of their education. They show strong work ethics when at school and their behaviour is outstanding in and out of lessons. However, this is not reflected in their attendance as the level of unauthorised absence is rather high. Opportunities to contribute to school life and decision making are limited. There is an insufficient range of extra-curricular activities to help students develop creative and physical skills. The programme of career education is satisfactory and developing.

## Welfare, health and safety of the students

This aspect of the provision is good. There are policies and procedures in place to minimise risks throughout the school day and provide a good standard of care to students on a day-to-day basis. However, the nominated person for child protection has yet to complete her training and update the relevant policy. The school reviews its policies and records regularly to improve its systems. For example, it has recently introduced more effective behaviour management strategies and reduced the number of exclusions considerably. Instances of bullying are rare and the vast majority of students feel safe. Attendance registers record a high level of unauthorised absence. Although the school contacts parents to request absence notes, this is not pursued with sufficient vigour.

Students develop a good understanding of what constitutes healthy living through the curriculum. This is enhanced by regular visits from a nurse with whom students can discuss health issues. The school encourages healthy eating by providing a pleasant dining area and banning fizzy drinks. However, its efforts to provide healthier menus have met with a lot of resistance from students. A high proportion of students feel that they do not have sufficient exercise. This is mainly because there is no equipment for physical activities on the playground. Also, there are no PE lessons for the older students and no opportunities for physical activities after school hours.

The school fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and provides good access to its premises. It will be drawing up a plan to review the possibility of improving this provision further.

### Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The proprietor has recently updated the recruitment procedures to comply with the latest guidance. The school has compiled a single central register that enables it to monitor that all the required checks are carried out on staff before their employment is confirmed.

### School's premises and accommodation

There is an extensive refurbishment programme under way and most of the premises have been renovated. The work is carried out to a high standard and the accommodation is tastefully decorated, providing a very attractive learning environment with specialist areas.

### Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Communication with parents and others is good. Parents are consulted regularly on school matters and they are very positive about the school. However, not all of them feel sufficiently well informed about their daughters' progress. They meet teachers once a year to review their daughters' progress. They also receive an annual report that records their daughters' attainment in each subject. However, there are no comments on students' progress in each subject and no indication of their next step in learning.

### Procedures for handling complaints

The school has suitable procedures for handling complaints fairly and promptly. As communication with parents is good, complaints have been rare.

## 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:

- ensure that all students of compulsory school age have PE (paragraph 1(2)(a)(ii))
- ensure that lessons are well planned, effective teaching methods and suitable activities are used (paragraph 1(3)(c))
- ensure that teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 1(3)(d))
- ensure that there is a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and that information from such assessment is utilised to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are students at the school in compliance with Department for Children Schools and Families guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

## 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 broad range of enrichment activities including educational visits
- give students a greater voice in school affairs
- improve the quality of reporting to parents.

## School details

Name of school	The Fountain
DCSF number	380/6116
Unique reference number	134587
Type of school	Day Muslim school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	August 2003
Age range of students	11-16 years
Gender of students	Girls
Number on roll	91
Annual fees	£1,095
Address of school	109-111 New Cross Street Bradford BD5 8BP
Telephone number	01274 735913
Fax number	01274 735913
Email address	admin@fountainschool.co.uk
Headteacher	Mrs Abeer Niehad
Proprietor	Mr Mohammad Asfar
Reporting inspector	Mrs Michèle Messaoudi
Dates of inspection	6-7 February 2008