

# Islamia Girls' School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	304/6069
Unique Reference Number	101575
Inspection number	334618
Inspection dates	5 February 2009
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.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

## Information about the school

Islamia Girls' School is an independent Muslim secondary day school open to girls of all faiths, aged between 11 and 16 years. It is situated in the residential district of Queens Park, in the London Borough of Brent. It was founded in 1989 as a result of the expansion of Islamia Primary School, now a voluntary aided school. It is part of a consortium of three schools run by The Islamia Schools Trust which is a founding member of the Association of Muslim Schools. The affiliated schools are Islamia Primary School and Brondesbury College for Boys. At the time of the inspection there were 102 Muslim girls on roll representing a diversity of cultural heritages. Admission is by entry examination. The vast majority of students are bilingual or at various advanced stages of learning English as an additional language. At the time of the inspection, there were three students with a statement of special educational need. The school was last inspected in March 2006.

Islamia teaches National Curriculum subjects with the addition of Islamic studies, Qur'an and Arabic. Its mission is to *'strive to provide the best education in a secure Islamic environment through the knowledge and application of the Qur'an and Sunnah.'* One of its aims is to give students *'a strong sense of identity as Muslim women, and to provide them with an understanding of Islam that prepares them well to excel in higher education and contribute to the wider world.'*

## Evaluation of the school

Islamia Girls' School has been successful in improving further its educational and pastoral provision since the last inspection. This is a consequence of rigorous self-evaluation, the combined expertise and commitment of the teaching staff and leadership, and the energetic support of its parents and teachers' association (PTA). As a result, it meets its aims fully by providing an outstanding quality of education that enables students to make outstanding progress in their academic and personal development and prepares them exceptionally well for their future lives. Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. Islamia has addressed all the issues mentioned in the last report and complies with all the regulations for independent schools.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. Its breadth has improved significantly to meet the needs of all students more closely. Results in the mathematics GCSE examinations having been consistently very high for the past few years; the school has put in place a programme of accelerated learning, preparing all students to take the examination early, the more able students taking it in Year 10 to follow a course at Advanced Subsidiary level (AS) in core mathematics and mechanics in Year 11. In science, those students who are not suited to the triple award option, hitherto offered as the only available pathway, can now study for the double award, for which they say they are very grateful. The teaching of citizenship has expanded into a short GCSE course examined at the end of Year 9 and students have high quality opportunities for active citizenship. The history curriculum is developed fully in both Key Stages 3 and 4 and in 2008 history was the subject in which the largest proportion of students gained the highest grades in their GCSE examination. French is well established and is offered as a GCSE option. Arabic is a compulsory subject taught successfully in two strands, Arabic and non-Arabic speakers. The leadership plans to widen the curriculum further by introducing business studies in the near future and including more design and technology into art in response to students' views and interests.

The careers programme now encompasses a wide range of visits from professionals including former students of Islamia now at Imperial College, and visits to universities and careers fairs. Consequently, students feel very well informed and extremely well supported to make the right career choices. The teaching of the programme of personal, social and health education is more structured than it was three years ago, which has a positive impact on the pastoral care of students. The provision for students who have learning difficulties or disabilities is good and these students make as much progress as their peers.

Owing to the indefatigable support of the PTA, 'Friends of Islamia,' who raised funds to purchase interactive white boards and a video camera, information and communication technology (ICT) is used in all subjects, and there is an ongoing training programme in place to help staff familiarise themselves with the new technology. The PTA has also contributed other resources which make a positive impact on students' learning, such as science workshops.

Teaching and assessment were good in the last inspection and they are now outstanding. Teachers work very hard as a cohesive team to ensure that students can fulfil their potential, which students acknowledge when saying, 'Teachers want the best for us.' The leadership has taken effective measures to improve further the coordination of the curriculum and ensure closer monitoring of the planning of subjects. Teaching is underpinned by excellent knowledge of subject areas and of students' prior attainment, aptitudes and abilities. Teachers have very high expectations and plan challenging tasks that stretch students. In the most successful lessons, the teaching maintains a high level of challenge throughout and communicates enthusiasm for the subject. Assessment, which was judged to be a

strength in the last inspection, is even more rigorous owing to the setting of learning targets in all subjects. However, the leadership has correctly identified that target setting is not fully embedded and is an area for further improvement. There are excellent systems in place to monitor the progress of individual students closely in each subject and initiate timely intervention programmes to enable them to progress at the fastest possible rate.

As a result of the outstanding curriculum and teaching, students make outstanding progress. The GCSE results of the last four years show that students attain exceptionally high standards in all subjects and that the school has improved its performance continuously over this period. Not only did all students gain A\* to C grades in at least five subjects, including English and mathematics, in 2007 and 2008, but the 2008 GCSE results record 62% A\* to A grades and 89% A\* to B grades across all subjects.

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

Islamia has improved its provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development significantly and it is now outstanding. The staff and students have reviewed together the principles underpinning the pastoral system and have agreed to promote the Islamic values of *taqwa* (God-consciousness), community, equality, compassion, integrity, courage and endeavour. Exploration of these principles in assemblies and the institution of 'thought for the day' in tutorials enhance students' spiritual development, sense of identity and community spirit.

The school has devised a coherent strategy to boost students' self-esteem and self-confidence and develop their moral character. This strategy includes the setting of termly personal targets that are shared with parents, ensuring that at least 50% of the students are directly involved in drama activities throughout the year and raising the level of the contributions they make to school and community life. For example, each year group leads assemblies, Year 8 students prepare an annual report for a BBC Schools programme and Year 10 students participate in the annual National Youth Parliament debate. The student council has a wide remit that includes initiating and running projects to support charities, this year Action Against Hunger. Its work culminates in a charity evening organised by the students and featuring drama productions. Increased responsibilities have an enormously positive impact on students' maturity and self-confidence, clearly reflected in their outstanding behaviour, the glowing feedback from parents, charities, members of parliament and other visitors, and in the fact that the highest achievers in 2007 and 2008 were among council members. Students are in agreement that, 'Islamia helps us not only to have a good education but grow personally in our beliefs and self-confidence.'

The vast majority of students like their school. They appreciate the friendly, calm, family atmosphere created by the school. However, a small minority of parents do not respond to the school's efforts to improve their daughters' attendance and punctuality, which has a negative impact on the overall attendance figures and masks the otherwise good attendance of the majority. The leadership has strengthened links with parents, former students and outside agencies to support its

academic, pastoral and community cohesion work. The PTA plays a much stronger role by leading assemblies, for example on peer pressure, and giving first aid training to students. Former students of Islamia contribute significantly to careers education and those who study at Imperial College run science booster classes. The school takes part in a number of interfaith projects including the 'Alif-Aleph' programme with Jewish schools and an exploration of identity and citizenship through photography in conjunction with six schools. Students learn to debate in a respectful way and their cultural development is enhanced very effectively by a rich programme of educational visits. Students can develop a wide range of skills by joining the extra-curricular activities on offer. Through the well-established Young Enterprise Scheme, good quality careers education, highly developed skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT, as well as team work and creative work, students are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education. Their increased levels of self-confidence and strong sense of identity prepare them well for their future lives.

## Safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety has improved and it is now good, supported by essential policies and procedures that are reviewed annually. The role of form tutors is well developed, the behaviour policy is implemented consistently and instances of bullying are very rare. Consequently, students feel very safe and well cared for. They report that they can talk easily to teachers in and out of lessons. The safeguarding arrangements comply fully with the latest guidance and inform rigorous recruitment procedures that are recorded on a centralized register. Staff receive appropriate child protection training at the required intervals. Many staff have first aid training, as do students. Medical needs and accidents are recorded carefully as are the required health and safety checks. Students know how to keep themselves and others safe around the school and in practical lessons, as reflected in the low level of accidents.

Students develop a sound awareness of healthy lifestyles through the curriculum. The school encourages healthy eating by providing daily vegetables and a salad bar at lunch time. However, its ban on junk food is not sufficiently well supported by parents. Some students and parents feel that there are insufficient opportunities for physical exercise within school hours. Although the school provides three sports clubs in addition to one weekly lesson of physical education that incorporates swimming, ice skating and optional horse riding, no physical activities are offered at break times.

The school fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

## 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 physical activities for students at break times and raise their commitment to healthy eating
- improve the rate of attendance and punctuality.

# Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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## The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of students	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs	✓			
How well students make progress in their learning	✓			

## Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of students	✓			

## Welfare, health and safety of students

The overall welfare, health and safety of students		✓		
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## School details

Name of school	Islamia Girls' School
DCSF number	304/6069
Unique reference number	101575
Type of school	Muslim secondary day school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1989
Age range of students	11-16 years
Gender of students	Girls
Number on roll	102
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	3
Annual fees	£6,100
Address of school	129 Salusbury Road London NW6 6PE
Telephone number	020 7372 3472
Fax number	020 7604 4061
Email address	headteacher@islamiaschools.com
Headteacher	Ms Asmat Ali
Proprietor and principal	Mrs Fauzia Islam
Reporting inspector	Mrs Michèle Messaoudi
Date of inspection	5 February 2009