

Al-Birr Independent School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	330/6206
Unique Reference Number (URN)	135882
Inspection number	353856
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Marian Harker HMI

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Al-Birr is a Muslim primary school for boys and girls aged five to eleven years of age. It was founded in July 2008 and provides both an Islamic and an academic education. The school is affiliated to the Association of Muslim Schools. The headteacher has been in post since October 2009. There are 75 pupils on roll. The majority of pupils are from Somali heritage with the remainder from British Pakistani, Arabic and Jamaican families. A small proportion of pupils are from White and Mixed heritage. No pupil has a statement of special educational need. All pupils speak English and many speak more than one other language. The school is situated near to Birmingham city centre. The school aims to, 'foster the invaluable Muslim character, as epitomised by the Prophet Muhammad, salallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, in the growing personalities of our children.' This is the school's first published inspection report.

Evaluation of the school

Al-Birr Primary School provides a satisfactory quality of education. The curriculum and the quality of teaching and assessment are satisfactory. As a result, the progress made by pupils is satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The school complies with all but one of the regulations and all safeguarding requirements are met. Pupils typically report that 'there have been lots of improvements' at the school since it opened. This, coupled with the commitment of the staff and dedication of the headteacher to improve the quality of education for the pupils, is positively contributing to taking the school forward.

Quality of education

Al-Birr provides a satisfactory quality of education. The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. It is broad and balanced, and takes account of National Curriculum expectations, although no music is taught. In addition pupils receive Islamic studies and Arabic lessons. Curriculum plans are in place for all subjects and a good emphasis is given to the teaching of literacy and numeracy, particularly in Years 1 and 2. However, a number of curriculum plans are in need of updating to reflect

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

current practice and to ensure progression in learning is clear. For example, the curriculum for personal, social, and health education (PSHE) is delivered through Islamic studies and science lessons but the school does not systematically track what is being taught. There is an appropriate balance between the secular subjects and Islamic studies and Arabic. The Islamic studies programme gives the pupils the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Qur'an and all pupils receive regular Arabic lessons. The daily lunchtime prayer enables pupils to practise their faith and develop a sense of community. A number of curriculum subject plans are based around structured schemes and this limits opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding. The school is aware that there is sometimes an over reliance on worksheets that are not appropriately matched to the pupils' needs. This has a particular impact on challenging those pupils who are more able, where teachers miss opportunities to extend learning. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they can in lessons. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught regularly and enjoyed by the pupils. Pupils also enjoy visits to places of interest that enrich the curriculum. Occasional visitors to the school such as a local vicar support pupils' understanding of different cultures and faiths, but this is at an early stage of development. The school has adequate outdoor spaces for physical education lessons. However, there are limited indoor facilities for use at times of inclement weather.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory. Many pupils join the school with knowledge and skills at or below expectations for their ages. Work seen in pupils' books and discussions with them indicate that they are making satisfactory progress. Classrooms are mostly well organised and there are some colourful displays of pupils' work. Lesson planning follows a common format and intended learning outcomes are routinely shared with pupils. Teachers know their pupils well and relationships are positive. As a result, pupils enjoy their lessons. Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. Opportunities are sometimes missed to provide appropriately challenging work and develop independent learning skills. For example, in an Arabic lesson, some pupils who were fluent Arabic speakers were not suitably challenged. Basic skills, including spelling and grammar, are taught regularly and the small class sizes enable teachers and support staff to provide individual support. However, on occasions teachers' expectations are not high enough and the quality or quantity of work produced by the pupils is variable. The school has recently developed a suitable assessment framework that includes regular tests and provides teachers with National Curriculum levels. However, teachers do not always have a clear understanding of what these levels mean and how this information can be used to plan the next steps in learning. Pupils' books are regularly marked, often with positive comments which build their confidence and self-esteem. Homework is regularly set to consolidate basic skills.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is satisfactory. Teachers provide good role models for Islamic life and this has a positive impact on

pupils' moral and spiritual development. For example, prayers are often offered in Islamic studies lessons to encourage the pupils to have high expectations. Through their participation in Islamic studies pupils develop a satisfactory understanding of what is right and wrong and have a clear understanding of their Islamic identity. As a result, pupils build trusting relationships with their peers and with their teachers. Pupils enjoy school and their behaviour, in lessons and in the playground, is good. The school's reward system is popular and pupils are keenly motivated to achieve a gold slip for good work or good deeds. Pupils have opportunities to develop a sense of responsibility as they undertake jobs such as monitors, playground buddies or members of the school council. Pupils report that they enjoy coming to school and have many friends. Attendance is satisfactory. In lessons, pupils settle quickly to their work and when tasks are appropriately interesting and challenging they apply themselves well. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of democracy, being a good citizen and the role of public organisations in England. The curriculum provides regular opportunities for pupils to learn about different faiths. However, opportunities for pupils to develop a wider understanding of different cultures are limited. Pupils make steady progress in their learning and this contributes satisfactorily to their future economic well-being.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. The school provides a calm and nurturing environment. Small class sizes and good staffing levels mean that pupils are supervised well at all times. Staff recruitment procedures follow guidelines and all staff and volunteers have undergone enhanced checks with the Criminal Records Bureau to confirm their suitability to work with children. Appropriate attention is given to health and safety through routine fire evacuations, checks on equipment and first aid procedures. All staff have received appropriate training in safeguarding and the deputy headteacher has attended higher level training. Pupils report that they feel safe in school and any concerns that they have are quickly dealt with by staff. The school actively promotes healthy lunchboxes and pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. One pupil typically commented, 'I enjoy my school, especially PE.' Parents and carers too report that they appreciate the health promotion strategies used by the school. Although all regulations have been met, some policies are in need of updating. The school has sensible plans in place to improve accessibility and Disability Discrimination Act requirements are met.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school fully complies with the regulations relating to the checks it makes on prospective employees and volunteers regarding their identity, qualifications, medical fitness and suitability to work with children. All required checks are recorded in a single central register.

School's premises and accommodation

The school premises and accommodation are satisfactory and enable pupils to learn effectively. The school is located in an original local authority, single storey nursery school building. The premises have been updated to provide appropriate internal teaching areas. In addition to four classrooms, there is a small communal area which is used as a dining area, for prayers, and for information and communication technology lessons. Each classroom has a small library but these resources are limited. The outdoor areas are adequate for the size of the school and pupils benefit from hard-surfaced and grassed areas for outdoor play and physical education. The indoor areas are reasonably well maintained and kept tidy providing an adequate learning environment. Facilities for pupils who are ill do not meet regulations. The designated room does not contain a sink or a suitable place where pupils could lie down if they were ill.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has established good links with parents and carers. They are kept well informed about their child's progress through regular written reports and meetings with staff. These reports are a helpful summary of progress in the key areas of learning. The prospectus has been updated and fully meets requirements.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a fair complaints policy which meets the requirements. There have been no formal complaints in the last 12 months.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations'), with the exception of the one listed below.³

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

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph (5I)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Ensure that all curriculum plans show clear progression in learning and systematically build on pupils' prior knowledge and skills.
- Make sure that all pupils, particularly the more able, are challenged to achieve as well as they can in lessons.
- Ensure teachers accurately assess pupils' learning and use this information to plan lessons that will meet their different needs.

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 pupils			✓	
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs			✓	
How well pupils make progress in their learning			✓	

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils			✓	
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School details

Name of school	Al-Birr Independent School		
DCSF number	330/6206		
Unique reference number (URN)	135882		
Type of school	Day School		
Status	Muslim Independent School		
Date school opened	2 July 2009		
Age range of pupils	5–11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 41	Girls: 34	Total: 75
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,350–£1,500		
Address of school	16 Windsor Street South Nechells Birmingham B7 4HY		
Telephone number	0121 333 7066		
Fax number	0121 333 7066		
Email address	admin@albirrschool.com		
Headteacher	Mr Sakhawat Ali		
Proprietor	Mr Saeed Alghadie		
Reporting inspector	Marian Harker HMI		
Dates of inspection	23–24 June 2010		