

Hamd House School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	330/6097
Unique Reference Number (URN)	131687
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Inspection dates	18 – 19 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Wordsworth HMI

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002¹, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is 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 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

Hamd House is an independent co-educational Preparatory School that admits children aged three to 11, from the children of families from the Muslim community in Small Heath and the surrounding areas of Birmingham; however, it is open to children of all faiths. The school aims to provide a safe and secure learning environment that upholds the ethos of the Muslim community and aims to integrate its pupils successfully into British society. The school was established in a grade II Victorian church in 1998. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2007. The school is registered for 650 pupils and there are currently 208 full-time pupils on roll, taught in seven classes across the school. There are a further 340 part-time pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage located in three annexes in Sparkhill, Small Heath and Saltley, all of whom receive nursery funding from the government. There is currently no pupil attending the school who has special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are a number of pupils, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, who are at the early stages of speaking English.

Evaluation of the school

Hamd House School is a good school that continues to improve steadily. It has made good progress since it was last inspected and makes outstanding provision for the Islamic and Arabic curriculum. It provides a good quality of education for the pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, effectively meeting its stated aims. It meets all the requirements for registration. Pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve well in the main school, and make excellent progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Nonetheless, some aspects of provision in the Nursery are not as strong as that in Reception. The school has successfully created a strong spiritual and nurturing environment firmly based on Islamic principles. Staff securely and outstandingly promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The provision for safeguarding pupils' welfare health and safety is good. The school is due to

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

undergo major refurbishment in August of this year; however, there are still some important maintenance issues that have not been addressed, such as missing covers on fluorescent lights. There is full compliance with all regulations pertaining to the safer recruitment of staff and completion of the single central record of safeguarding checks. The school's self-evaluation has led to a good understanding of its strengths and has highlighted areas of the teaching and assessment that it is continually seeking to develop.

Quality of education

The overall quality of education is good. The curriculum is good, despite some shortcomings in the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The outstanding Islamic Studies programme includes excellent schemes of work. The teaching of tajweed (recitation), hadith (teachings of the prophet) and akhlaq and adaab (Islamic moral teachings) all give pupils the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Qur'an. A particular strength of the Islamic curriculum is the way in which the teachers provide excellent opportunities for pupils to understand the meaning of Surahs so that they can implement the learning behind them in their daily lives. The school has a well-conceived personal, social, health and citizenship programme (PHSE), which makes an effective contribution to the pupils' outstanding personal development. The Islamic curriculum is complemented well, by a broad and balanced secular curriculum, firmly based on the National Curriculum. All aspects are underpinned by detailed policies and schemes of work that provide excellent emphasis on, and rigorous coverage of, the core skills of literacy and numeracy, so as to ensure that pupils build on them securely from year-to-year and make good progress.

Specialist teachers make a strong contribution to the curriculum. Provision for the teaching of reading is an important strength and, as a result, pupils make outstanding progress in this respect and attain highly. Reading is well resourced and teachers and parents are given effective guidance to ensure a consistent approach to the development of reading throughout the school and at home, particularly for those pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who are at an early stage of learning English. Standards in writing, although above average, in some year groups are lower than in reading nevertheless. This is because teachers miss opportunities to consolidate skills taught in English lessons in pupils' creative writing. As a result, pupils make slower progress in this area because writing skills are not taught systematically. In addition, there are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length or to use a range of more complex writing styles.

There have been clear improvements since the previous inspection. The secular curriculum is integrated well with the Islamic and Arabic curricula, often exploiting links between the two. For example, in a mathematics lesson when pupils were being taught to tell the time and use clocks, links were made with prayer times. There is now a comprehensive range of extra-curricular activities, some of which are charged for,

including horse riding, elocution, poetry and archery skills. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has been improved and there is an appropriately resourced computer suite. This is used well to develop pupils' ICT skills and pupils themselves speak positively about their improving computer skills such as using spreadsheets and PowerPoint presentations. Nonetheless, the use of ICT in other subjects, although improving, is underdeveloped.

Teaching and assessment are good overall, despite some shortcomings in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teaching is variable in quality: teaching in the Reception is of high quality, as it is in many areas of the main school, but satisfactory in the Nursery. Expectations in Reception are much higher and there is continual extension and challenge for those children who complete activities quickly or who are more able, resulting in children making outstanding progress. The school's own data indicates that all pupils make good progress across the school and outstanding progress in Reception. Work seen in pupils' books, and discussions with pupils during the inspection, indicate that these assessments are accurate. A key reason for the success relates to the good quality of lesson planning, which routinely identifies learning needs for at least three ability levels. Despite this, on a very small number of occasions, some most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Nonetheless, lessons are typified by excellent relationships, mutual respect, humour and warmth with in-class support used effectively to support all pupils. These features were exemplified in a Year 4 English lesson on writing humorous poetry. The pupils buzzed with excitement and worked in a mature and independent manner to create their poems. Pupils were able to respond creatively to the task because they clearly enjoyed the activity and understood what it was they were learning. Pupils forge ahead in such lessons and make good and sometimes excellent progress, because the work is challenging and the pace is brisk. On occasions, teaching is less effective because teachers miss opportunities to allow pupils to work independently, particularly in some classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Here learning is sometimes inhibited by the limitations on resources, particularly for outdoor learning.

There are good examples of teachers giving pupils regular feedback through their marking of pupils' work, providing clear explanations and ideas on how to improve their work, but this is not the case in all classes. The best examples now make it clear what pupils need to do to improve, with pupils given the opportunity to ask questions if they have not grasped something.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Even the youngest children make outstanding progress in their Islamic Studies. Teachers provide excellent role models for Islamic life and this has a very positive impact on pupils' moral development. Their active part in Islamic studies (early recitation of Surahs) supports pupils' spiritual and moral development. This provides pupils with valuable opportunities to develop their linguistic skills and to learn the language of the Quran. Moreover, the daily routines such as Duaa (supplication) and Zohar Salah (lunchtime prayer) enable

pupils to practise their faith and develop a very strong sense of community. In addition, they develop excellent knowledge of what is right and wrong and have a clear understanding of their Islamic identity. Pupils of all ages develop strong and trusting relationships with each other and with adults, showing considerable respect for the feelings and values of others. As a result, pupils including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, behave in an outstanding manner, say they really enjoy school, and attend on a very regular basis.

The school provides a varied range of experiences that enable pupils at all stages of their education to learn about different cultures. Pupils become aware of the qualities needed to live in a harmonious and ethnically diverse world. They learn about other religions and cultures in their own community. Pupils have visited Sikh and Hindu families and there are plans for the oldest pupils to visit St. Paul's Cathedral. Pupils take an active part in poetry clubs and visits to museums, which further contribute to their cultural development. The recent improved provision for the teaching of art complements pupils' cultural development. The citizenship programme also contributes well to preparing pupils for their future roles as British citizens and their understanding of public institutions and services in England. Consequently, pupils are confident young people who enjoy being involved in all school activities, such as charity events, and make a good contribution to the wider community, through their involvement in community events and through their support of the school's orphanage in Pakistan.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The provision for safeguarding, welfare, health and safety of pupils is considered carefully and is good across all phases of the school. Pupils flourish because they are happy and kept safe. The school has succeeded in creating a community with a shared ethos in which individual pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, feel safe, cared for and valued. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils contribute well to the sense of security and belonging which the pupils experience. A range of relevant policies has been implemented including a suitable plan to address a range of disability, discrimination and access issues, an improvement from the previous inspection. There are appropriate systems for risk assessing educational visits and the recording of accidents and incidents. There are, however, some elements of the school's procedures in this area that lack consistency. The school has an appropriate policy for child protection with frequent staff training. Recruitment procedures fully comply with statutory requirements on safeguarding with detailed records kept. Staff encourage healthy eating by providing fresh fruit and vegetables at each session. However, the uptake on this is low and parents often supplement the school healthy snack or replace it with a salty, sugary alternative snack/drinks of their own. Staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage recognise they have more work to do on this.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children are happy and are willing to take part in activities. Children enter the Nurseries with skills well below those expected for their age. They make outstanding progress over the entire Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result, during the Reception Year, they meet, or in many cases greatly exceed, the early learning goals for their age, so outcomes are outstanding. Nonetheless, those leaving the Nursery phase for other providers are likely to have made satisfactory to good progress. This is because staff do not always utilise the learning potential of all activities, resources or routines to develop children's independence. Moreover, planning for the youngest children focuses on the activity itself rather than any intended learning which might come out of the activity for particular children. Although key workers know children well, Nursery staff are not planning sufficiently closely for children's next steps in all areas of learning. Importantly, they do not make enough observations to inform assessment and future planning to ensure children progress as far as possible. Sometimes their expectations are not great enough and their questioning provides insufficient challenge.

Provision is good. Staff work well as a team and provide a secure learning environment which reflects the children's cultural background. Children's progress is slowest in their physical and creative development. Their access to the outdoor play areas is strictly timetabled, which inhibits the quality of the outdoors curriculum. Most children are not able to access climbing apparatus to support the development of their gross motor skills. Expectations for behaviour are clear and so children behave very well.

Leadership and management are good. Staff work well in partnership with parents and refer to outside agencies when a need arises. The quality of teaching is monitored and planning is evaluated, but this system does not specifically monitor learning, nor check that the planning captures children's next steps effectively across the nursery provision.

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:

- consider ways of giving pupils more sustained opportunities to write creatively and at length
- make more effective use of marking to inform pupils about how they can improve their work
- increase the level of challenge for all pupils, particularly the most able.

Early Years Foundation Stage

- improve the nursery provision to ensure consistent quality across the entire Early Years Foundation Stage
- ensure all staff make regular observations of children in all six areas of learning and that there is robust assessment of children's progress which accurately informs children's next steps in learning
- evaluate the learning potential of all activities and routines, ensuring each child in the Early Years Foundation Stage accesses a rich curriculum, including improving the provision for outdoor learning with teaching that challenges sufficiently.

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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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How good are the outcomes for children in the EYFS?	✓			
What is the quality of provision in the EYFS?		✓		
How effectively is the EYFS led and managed?		✓		
Overall effectiveness: how well does the school meet the needs of children in the EYFS?		✓		

School details

Name of school	Hamd House Preparatory School		
DCSF number	330/6097		
Unique Reference Number (URN)	131687		
Type of school	Independent School		
Status	Preparatory		
Date school opened	1998		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 110	Girls: 98	Total: 208
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 186	Girls: 154	Total: 340
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£990 – £1980		
Address of school	11-27 Saint Oswald's Road Small Heath Birmingham West Midlands B10 9RB		
Telephone number	0121 772 7608		
Fax number	0121 772 7517		
Email address	rmruh@blueyonder.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Ali		
Proprietor	Mr Khan		
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Wordsworth HMI		
Dates of inspection	18 May 2010		