

Al-Noor College School

Inspection report

This inspection was carried out under section 162 (A) of the Education Act 2002 as amended. Bridge Schools Inspectorate (BSI) has been approved by the Secretary of State in the Department for Education (DfE) to undertake inspections in designated independent schools within membership of the Christian Schools Trust (CST) or the Association of Muslim Schools UK (AMSUK).

DfE number:	330/6130
Association:	AMSUK
Date of inspection:	20 th -23 rd May 2014
Lead Inspector:	Mrs M Buckingham
Team inspector:	Mrs M Mohamed Miss J Morgan
Age range of pupils:	11-16 years
Number on roll:	34
Full-time:	34 girls
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	none
Proprietor:	Mr Syed Mohammad Munawar Hussain Jamati
Head teacher:	Dr G Tallat
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The purpose and scope of the inspection

The main purpose of the inspection is twofold. It is to advise the DfE whether the school continues to meet the requirements for registration, and to determine whether the school's religious ethos continues to meet the expectations of its association. Ofsted monitors the work of independent inspectorates, including a sample of inspections, and you can find the latest evaluation of the work of The Bridge Schools Inspectorate on the Ofsted website.

Information about the school

Al-Noor College opened in 2008 as an Islamic secondary school for girls aged 11-16 years. It is situated in Sparkhill, a short distance from Birmingham city centre. The school uses part of a two-storey building owned by the Ameer-e-Millat mosque. At present there are 34 pupils on roll, mainly from Pakistani heritage, for whom English is not the principal language spoken at home. Pupils are fluent in English, although two newly arrived pupils are at an early stage of learning English. There are no pupils who have a statement of special educational needs.

The school aims:

- 'to provide students with an excellent standard of education and personal development and a robust sense of Islamic identity which they can be proud of
- to provide a broad, balanced curriculum which provides pupils with skills, knowledge and understanding relevant to their current and future needs
- to produce a Muslim generation graced with Islamic Tarbiyyah and capable of conveying the message of Islam through their knowledge and practice
- to enable them to develop a better understanding of other faiths through community cohesion.

Policies are designed to support the ethos, aims and vision of the school. They are in accordance with the following outcomes contained within Every Child Matters:

- Being healthy.
- Staying safe.
- Developing and strengthening Islamic Values.
- Enjoying and achieving.
- Making a positive contribution.
- Achieving economic wellbeing.'

The school was last inspected by Ofsted in 2011. This is the first inspection by BSI.

Evaluation of the school

The school largely meets its aims. It provides an orderly and caring environment, and pupils have a secure sense of their Islamic beliefs. Pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in lessons because of the overall good teaching, which sometimes has outstanding qualities. The curriculum is satisfactory in most respects

and has strength in the good programme of Islamic studies. This helps pupils to deepen their understanding and practice of Islam and grow in faith. Together with citizenship lessons the Islamic curriculum encourages pupils to develop into good British Muslims and responsible citizens. However, planning for two aspects of the curriculum: personal, social and health education (PSHE) and careers education are not in place and do not meet the requirements. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is good and their social and cultural development is satisfactory. Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. The very recent updating of policies has ensured that all the regulations in this section are now met; an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils' attendance is well below what would be expected mainly because of the extended family holidays taken during term time.

There has been some improvement from the last inspection in several areas. The head teacher is dedicated and, with teachers, is committed to doing their best for pupils. Day-to-day the school is orderly. The head teacher has a heavy work load being responsible for all the organisation and management of the school, including administration, finances, staffing, policies, as well as a head teacher's role to monitor the quality of the curriculum and teaching and learning. The head teacher is always available to respond to parents' requests and, as pupils acknowledge, she is the person go to. Consequently, there is limited time to ensure all the policies and requirements are kept thoroughly up-to-date. The school has a small governing body with the proprietor as chairperson. His wife is the link governor for safeguarding and, in addition, there are two male governors from the local community.

Quality of education provided

Overall, pupils receive a satisfactory quality of education. The Islamic curriculum is a strength. The secular curriculum is satisfactory and is based on much of the National Curriculum, except for music. Pupils have opportunities to learn and make progress. The curriculum includes the broad areas of learning required for independent schools. Pupils' linguistic learning is well supported with the good teaching in English. In addition, Arabic and Urdu are taught as modern foreign languages further extending pupils' linguistic skills. Appropriate time is given to mathematics and science. History, art, information and communication technology (ICT) and citizenship are taught in both key stages. All pupils have lessons in physical education (PE) to support their physical development using the outdoor play space. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Opportunities for enrichment are limited, as are extra-curricular activities. Through their responses to the questionnaires both parents and pupils indicated that they would welcome more educational visits.

The school provides a good Islamic curriculum, which is an improvement from the last inspection. It is well taught throughout both key stages and makes a significant contribution to achieving a school aim of *tarbiyyah* (helping pupils to grow in faith). Pupils study *Qur'anic studies* (study of Qur'anic text and its meaning), *tajweed* (correct pronunciation of the Qur'an) and Islamic Studies. These studies provide pupils with opportunities to reflect on their faith and secure their beliefs, reflecting the

school's Islamic vision for its pupils. Parents are very supportive of, and value this aspect of the school.

The curriculum policy has a clear rationale for the subjects taught within the Islamic ethos of the school. Subject schemes of work are based on national guidance, helping to set out the coverage of the knowledge and skills pupils are expected to acquire. They do not always relate directly to the school's practice. Teachers keep outlines of lessons in weekly planners and lesson plans were provided during the inspection; these are generally used effectively.

Resources to support learning are barely adequate. Pupils have text books for the core subjects but provide their own copies of reading texts for English, including dictionaries. The school does not have a library or collection of fiction and non-fiction books that pupils can borrow to encourage reading for information and enjoyment. The small selection of Islamic texts is not readily accessible to pupils and not directly relevant to the Islamic studies curriculum. The ICT room is well equipped with computers and has appropriate controlled access to the internet. Pupils do not use ICT generally to support their learning in other subjects. The science room has basic equipment but pupils do not use it frequently, so their opportunities to do practical and investigative work are restricted. Teachers make many of their own resources, searching the internet, and often to good effect to support pupils' learning.

The school reports PSHE is taught across the curriculum but has not set out how this will be put into practice. There is no scheme of work for PSHE and it is not identified as an aspect in other subject planning. The aims of the school make reference to the Every Child Matters outcomes, including keeping healthy and staying safe. Subjects such as science and PE make a contribution. However, there is no coordinated programme to support pupils' PSHE across both key stages, and a process to monitor that all pupils receive what is intended.

There is no planned programme from Year 9 that offers pupils systematic information about careers education. The school has no clear policy how pupils will receive individual guidance, have access to up-to-date information about work, further and higher education and training. Informal discussions, including a visiting speaker from a local college have given Key Stage 4 pupils some awareness of opportunities for further education. Some Year 10 pupils took part in work experience during last summer term, with little evidence that they evaluated and reflected on the experience. Few resources are available to support careers education. The coordinator is new to the responsibility and her first job must be to prepare a careers policy and to include a planned programme of careers education within the curriculum.

The school is mindful of the language needs of some newly arrived pupils who have very little English. Adequate support is provided by a teaching assistant in most lessons, although little training is given for this responsibility. Subject teachers provide different work to help these pupils improve their written and spoken English language. On occasion, they have individual support out of the lesson. Pupils make adequate progress in their English. This provision is not sufficiently coordinated and recording is limited. Pupils' abilities vary widely and generally teachers plan work

that matches this range. In some lessons abler pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.

The quality of teaching is variable; good overall and, on occasion it has some outstanding qualities. Pupils make commensurate progress in lessons. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Turnover of staff has been high affecting continuity in the school. Many of the teachers are new to the school having joined within the last nine months. They are enthusiastic and committed to the pupils. Minutes of recent staff meetings show a clear focus on professional development and discussion of teaching and learning and in sharing ideas about how to improve.

In the best lessons teachers have good subject knowledge that they share enthusiastically. Relationships are positive, so that pupils are fully engaged, enjoy their learning and make good progress. The lesson planning builds effectively on pupils' prior learning. A particular outstanding quality of some lessons is the challenging questions from the teacher so that pupils have to think for themselves and apply their knowledge in different contexts. In these lively lessons, the teacher's classroom management is good, the pace is brisk and lessons are conducted in a purposeful atmosphere. Praise and encouragement helps to build pupils' self-confidence. Lessons start with clear learning objectives. Teachers use a variety of activities to engage pupils' interests. The limited resources are supplemented by teachers making their own materials to match the task. Consequently, there is heavy reliance on photocopied work sheets. Effective use is made of video clips and other appropriate information teachers have researched on the internet. Because pupils' behaviour is very good and they want to do well, they do what is required of them. However, in some lessons when there is a slower pace and, on occasion teachers talk for too long, this allows pupils to be more passive. Classes are small and teachers know individual pupil's capabilities, however abler pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Homework is set regularly and reinforces work done in class. Older pupils say that it is not always spread evenly throughout the week.

Assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory; it is well established and regular. Teachers record pupils' attainment against National Curriculum levels and results of regular tests and assessments in their planners. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but teachers do not always provide feedback to help pupils understand what to do to improve. Good examples of marking were seen in English, mathematics and citizenship. The head teacher has recently introduced a system to record the National Curriculum levels of attainment so that pupils' progress can be tracked over the past two years. This is beginning to be analysed, so that intervention can be put in place for individual pupils. This data shows that most pupils make satisfactory progress. The school has only entered pupils for GCSE for two years and the cohorts are very small indeed. For example, only three pupils were entered last year, consequently, any comparison with national expectations is unsound. One pupil did obtain 5+ A* to C. It is a credit to both the pupils and the school that most of the current Year 11 pupils are planning to go on to further study.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual and moral development is good and their social and cultural development is satisfactory. The school's well-organised teaching of the Islamic

curriculum and faith ethos ensures that pupils gain a good understanding and insight into their Islamic beliefs, values and culture. Through the study of the Qur'an, Islamic studies and regular daily assemblies, pupils develop a strong sense of spiritual and moral awareness. This contributes to their identity and self-worth as young British Muslims. Pupils are given a clear message to respect others. In a morning tutorial time, pupils explored different ways of being tolerant and to show respect to other people from different religions and backgrounds. The discussion helped to develop their understanding that while different people may legitimately hold different views as to what is 'right' and 'wrong', all people living in England are equally subject to the law of the land. In an assembly pupils learnt the shared reverence that Jews, Christians and Muslims have for Job.

Pupils learn and practice daily *duas* (prayer) at the beginning of each lesson and conduct their prayers with reverence and respect. They have opportunities to discuss moral issues in a variety of contexts. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong and are polite and respectful towards each other and in their dealings with teachers, other adults and visitors. Pupils' behaviour within lessons and around school is very good.

The provision for pupils' social and wider cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils say they enjoy school and are keen to contribute. They welcome taking part in the elected student council; being prefects and organising fund raising activities. However, such opportunities are limited and do not enable pupils to develop consistently leadership skills. Pupils gain a sound general knowledge of public institutions and services in England through the citizenship course. Visiting speakers have given them some insight into the National Health Service, the regional Fire Service and the local South City College. This helps them also to understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Pupils have recently visited an art gallery, BBC radio; Think Tank museum and the Shakespeare theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. Through the citizenship programme they gain some awareness of the wider society and are taught the importance of respectful treatment of others who may have different beliefs to their own. However, there are rare opportunities for pupils to meet at first hand with people of cultures different from their own, as represented in the wider society in the United Kingdom today. In a discussion with pupils, they said they would welcome this opportunity, to gain a better understanding and enable them to interact more effectively with other people.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school makes satisfactory provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. The vast majority of parents reported in the questionnaires given at the time of inspection that their children feel safe and well cared for in school. Staff and pupil relationships are good and there is a welcoming atmosphere within the school for visitors. The school is aware of safeguarding matters; safer recruitment training has been undertaken by the head teacher. Appropriate training has been undertaken by the safeguarding link governor and staff on child protection matters. The head teacher and the other designated safeguarding lead teacher are aware of the new DfE guidance. The school plans to give staff training in relation to the relevant part of the guidance. The child protection policy has been very recently updated but has yet to be signed by the proprietor.

All the regulations are met which is an improvement on the last inspection when the school did not have a suitable admissions register. Both the admissions register and the attendance registers are appropriately maintained, the latter being kept electronically. Records are kept of pupils arriving late in the morning but the school needs to be continually vigilant in following these up in an attempt to improve punctuality. Attendance is well below what would be expected nationally. The school reports that the main reason for this is that parents persist in taking their children out of school during term time for holidays abroad.

Health and safety policies are written in accordance with the five outcomes contained within Every Child Matters. The behaviour and discipline policy are effectively implemented resulting in the very good behaviour of pupils in class and around the school. The school uses individual behaviour monitoring forms to record warnings and other sanctions. There is a clear and effective policy to guard against all forms of bullying. The pupils reported that there is no bullying in school and were confident that if it should occur, teachers would tackle it swiftly. Several displays around the school support the teaching on anti-bullying.

Two staff have up-to-date training in first aid and the school now has a first aid policy. All pupils attended a Lifeskills course run by the West Midlands police when the pupils were trained in how to handle emergencies in real life situations, for example, road safety, fire safety and first aid. At the time of the inspection a commercial firm visited the school to arrange an updated fire risk assessment during half term the following week. The governors must ensure this is acted upon speedily and kept up-to-date. Ten staff members are suitably trained to assist in taking preventative and protective measures in fire safety, one being a fire marshall. Regular fire drills are recorded and all fire equipment is maintained by a commercial firm.

The school promotes healthy lifestyles through teaching and displays. Pupils may order a hot halal lunch cooked on site by a person trained in food hygiene or they may bring their own packed lunches.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

The required checks are made on staff, including the proprietor and governors. These are recorded appropriately on a single central register that meets requirements.

Premises of and accommodation at schools

The school occupies rooms in premises that are part of a mosque. The accommodation is clean and tidy and well looked after by pupils and staff. Classrooms are suitably sized. Display celebrates the pupils' work and reflects the Islamic ethos. Pupils have access to a dining room for break and lunchtimes. A significant improvement since the last inspection is the outside play space, although the surface is uneven and needs attention. Pupils enjoy PE outdoors but do not have access to this space during break times. In conversation with pupils, they would like to be able to use the outdoor space, not just for PE, but also for break

times to provide fresh air and exercise. Inspectors agreed that this space should be made available during break times.

Provision of information

The school provides all the required information to parents and prospective parents through the recently updated prospectus and the informative website where the school's aims, vision and ethos are clearly stated. All the required policies are available on the website and the school makes it clear that copies of other policies and information are available on request. Parents who came to a meeting with the lead inspector were very supportive of the school. They feel that the school has a good balance and develops positive values in keeping with their faith, as well as National Curriculum subjects. The questionnaires showed that parents were very positive about all aspects of the school except for the limited range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits; inspectors would agree. The vast majority of parents feel that they are treated as partners in their child's education and upbringing in faith. Several newsletters are sent each term to parents informing them of news and events but more immediate communication takes place through texting. Most parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or concerns.

An annual progress report is sent to pupils' parents. Reports are clear and informative and refer to pupils' efforts and achievements. They are discussed further at the parents' meeting enabling parents to clarify and question staff about them.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school complaints procedure is detailed and meets requirements.

Compliance with the regulations

The school meets nearly all of the regulations for registration.

In order to meet fully the regulations in **part 1**, quality of education provided, the school must:

- put in place a planned curriculum, and written scheme of work for personal, social and health education for all pupils (Regulation 2(2)(f))
- provide an appropriate planned programme of careers guidance for all pupils (Regulation 2(2)(g))

The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Meeting the expectations of AMSUK

The school's religious ethos continues to meet the expectations of AMSUK.

What the school could do to improve further

As part of future development the school might wish to consider:

- improving the quantity of resources, including fiction and non-fiction books
- undertaking further analysis of the assessment data to track pupils' progress
- providing training for staff to support pupils who require additional help to learn English
- giving pupils more responsibilities to contribute to school life
- giving pupils opportunities to meet with people of different faiths and backgrounds
- reviewing policies and schemes of work to ensure that they more closely reflect the school and its Islamic ethos.