

Al-Falah Primary School

48 Kenninghall Road, Clapton, London E5 8BY

Inspection dates

4–6 July 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Systems to manage the safeguarding of children are not thorough enough. Not all of the necessary vetting checks of staff have been carried out. The recording of these checks is also poorly maintained.
- Leaders have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met consistently.
- Leaders' grasp of the school's performance is poor because systems to monitor the quality of the provision are weak.
- Some teaching does not serve the needs of lower-ability pupils well. Not all teachers regularly check that pupils understand what they are being taught.
- Pupils' presentation of their work is too untidy. The quality of their handwriting is not consistently good.
- Leaders compromise pupils' welfare because they are not diligent enough in the maintenance of the building and the assessment of potential risks.
- Senior leaders do not hold middle leaders to account to check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Governance is too weak. Governors have allowed the school to decline since the previous inspection. They do not hold the senior leaders to account.

The school has the following strengths

- Most pupils typically experience good-quality teaching which contributes towards their positive outcomes, although lower-achieving pupils could do better.
- Pupils behave well and attend school regularly.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils have a good understanding of fundamental British values.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure urgently that robust systems are put in place to manage safeguarding procedures by:
 - conducting all necessary checks on the suitability of staff, and recording these correctly on the school's single central register.
- Strengthen leadership and governance by:
 - regularly checking the school's compliance with the independent school standards
 - establishing systems to manage the performance of senior and middle leaders to ensure greater accountability
 - making sure that all leaders know what they are expected to lead on
 - adopting a more evaluative approach towards measuring the school's effectiveness through regular monitoring and review activities
 - ensuring that governors are provided with essential information about the school's performance so that they can challenge and support leaders
 - producing an up-to-date accessibility plan.
- Improve teaching and pupils' outcomes by:
 - ensuring that lower-achieving pupils' learning is consistently stretched and challenged through their learning
 - checking more regularly that pupils understand what they are learning so that fewer pupils fall behind with their learning
 - making sure that pupils' presentation of their work and their handwriting improves.
- Promote pupils' welfare more effectively by:
 - ensuring that the school environment is safe by carrying out a review of the accommodation and producing a schedule of checks and repairs, including the windows on the upper floors
 - securing areas which should not be accessed by pupils because of hazardous materials and equipment
 - carrying out the necessary checks with regard to the Fire Safety Order (2005)
 - consistently implementing the school's health and safety policy.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor ensures that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and that such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraphs 7(a) and 7(b)). The proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy (paragraph 11).
- The proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (paragraph 12).

- The proprietor ensures that the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified (paragraphs 16(a) and 16(b)).
- The proprietor ensures that no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction (paragraph 18(2)(b)).
- The proprietor ensures that the standard in this paragraph is met in relation to an individual ("MB"), not being the Chair of the school, who is a member of a body of persons corporate or unincorporate named as the proprietor of the school in the register or in an application to enter the school in the register, if MB is not barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act where that individual is or will be engaging in activity which is regulated activity within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 4 of that Act; and does not carry out work, or intend to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction; subject to sub-paragraphs (7) to (8), the Chair of the school makes the following checks relating to MB where relevant to the individual, an enhanced criminal record check; checks confirming MB's identity and MB's right to work in the United Kingdom; and where, by reason of MB's living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining an enhanced criminal record certificate is not sufficient to establish MB's suitability to work in a school, such further checks as the Chair of the school considers appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State; and, where an enhanced criminal record check is made, the Chair obtains an enhanced criminal record certificate relating to the individual; and subject to sub-paragraph (8), where the Secretary of State makes a request for an enhanced criminal record check relating to MB countersigned by the Secretary of State to be made, such a check is made (paragraphs 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(b)(iii) and 20(6)(c)).
- The proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question which records that a check was made to establish whether a member of staff is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction; and that checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(e), including the date on which each such check was completed or the certificate obtained; and in relation to each member of staff ("S"), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed; whether the checks referred to in paragraph 20(6)(b) were made, the date they were made and the date on which the resulting certificate was obtained; whether each check referred to in sub-paragraph (6) was made; and whether an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained, together with the date on which any check was completed or certificate obtained (paragraphs 21(1), 21(3), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(viii), 21(3)(b), 21(6), 21(7), 21(7)(a) and 21(7)(b)).

- The proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured (paragraph 25).
- The proprietor ensures that it provides particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with EHC plans and pupils for whom English is an additional language; and details of the complaints procedure referred to in paragraph 33, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 32(3), 32(3)(b) and 32(3)(f)).
- The proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently; fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and actively promote the well-being of pupils (Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)).
- The proprietor ensures that arrangements are made to meet the requirements of paragraph 3 of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders have not ensured that safeguarding procedures are sufficiently robust in order to keep children safe at all times. Inspectors found a number of flaws in the systems, including carrying out all of the necessary vetting checks and following the guidance provided in the Department for Education (DfE)'s document 'Keeping children safe in education' (2016). Although some of these errors were rectified before inspectors left the school, others are still to be addressed.
- Leaders' self-evaluation of the school's performance is overgenerous. Inspectors did not find sufficient evidence to support the school's rating of its effectiveness. Although leaders identify what needs to be done to improve further, they omit to identify a number of other weaknesses. The self-evaluation documentation also states that all of the independent school standards are met, and this is not the case.
- Leaders and governors do not have a reliable evaluation of the school's current performance.
- Middle leaders who have responsibility for checking the quality of the teaching of literacy, numeracy and science are not held to account for their work. The headteacher has not got an up-to-date overview of the quality of the provision.
- The quality of action planning at middle leadership level is also too variable. English is monitored well, while other subjects are not. The detailed action plan for improvements in the teaching of English allows for the successful monitoring of proposed actions. However, other plans seen are simply lists of tasks with no means of evaluating whether they are successful.
- Leaders promote equal opportunities by providing both boys and girls with the same access to both Islamic studies and the secular curriculum.
- Leaders have not produced a suitable accessibility plan.
- The school has not made available to parents the number of complaints raised at the formal level in the preceding academic year. This is a requirement of the independent school standards.
- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school which is shared by staff, pupils and parents. Indeed, the responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's aims and objectives.
- The curriculum is well considered and secures positive outcomes for pupils. Leaders have made sure that the secular and religious content curriculum are suitably balanced, particularly as the school closes early on Fridays in order to allow pupils to worship at their mosque.
- Extra-curricular provision is adequate. Year 4 pupils recently visited the Tower of London, and Year 5 enjoyed their visit to the London Science Museum. Parents who responded to Parent View, and those who met with inspectors, expressed a desire for more after-school clubs, including a homework club.

- A particular feature of the school is the strong promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, coupled with pupils' understanding and modelling of fundamental British values. Pupils' discussions with inspectors demonstrated a deep understanding of these values and a tolerance of people who have protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act (2010).
- Communication between the school and parents is regular and informative. Pupils' progress is reported on regularly. The school operates an open-door policy to enable parents to make their views known.
- The school has a suitable safeguarding policy which is published on its website, and it is made available to parents on request.

Governance

- Governors do not hold the school's leaders to account for their performance and the quality of the provision with enough thoroughness. They are over-reliant on what they are told by the headteacher rather than testing things out for themselves.
- Governors do not have a deep understanding of how well different groups of pupils achieve. Apart from the public examinations taken by pupils at the end of Year 6, governors are provided with little information on the achievement of pupils in other years.
- Governors have not ensured that arrangements to manage the safeguarding of children have regard to legal guidance. They have not undertaken safer recruitment training and play no part in the appointment of staff, including senior staff.
- No systems are in place for the governing body to evaluate the headteacher's performance. This prevents them from holding him to account.
- The governors share the headteacher's vision for the school. This was echoed by the chair's comment that he does not want children at the school to be 'insular'.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- The school has not conducted all of the necessary vetting checks on staff. The school's single central register of checks of the suitability of staff is poorly maintained and is not compliant. Not all of the proprietors or members of the governing body have been included on the single central register.
- Staff have not been issued with Part One of 'Keeping children safe in education' (2016). This limits their awareness of matters relating to the safeguarding of children.
- Leaders are not aware of all of their responsibilities with regard to safeguarding. Staff have not been subjected to the disqualification by association checks which are required in primary school settings.
- Although staff have undertaken training in relation to the government's 'Prevent' duty, the school has not made use of information from the police or the local authority when putting together a risk assessment.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils typically experience well-planned and effective teaching. This ensures that they make good progress over time.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and convey enthusiasm for their subject. This enthusiasm engages pupils' interest and encourages them to want to broaden their knowledge of what they are being taught.
- In a Year 3 lesson on King Henry VIII's fourth wife, pupils enthusiastically talked about pregnancy, Henry's fickle views of beauty and his religious beliefs. Pupils articulated their own views on the rights and wrongs of divorce, and they drew their own conclusions on marriage and divorce by the end of the lesson.
- The teaching of Islamic studies is strong. Pupils are encouraged to deploy their literacy skills when reading and memorising the Qur'an. This also helps them with their mastery of the Arabic language and their understanding of grammatical rules.
- Teachers know the specific needs of individual pupils and group them together carefully in lessons. This enables teachers to plan learning activities which are better suited to pupils' abilities and are largely successful.
- Reading is taught particularly well. Pupils are routinely provided with opportunities to read aloud in class. This helps to develop their confidence and self-esteem.
- Teachers use assessment well to measure the progress pupils make across a range of subjects. However, senior leaders only make routine use of teachers' assessments in English and mathematics. Information on progress made in other subjects tends to remain with the teacher. This means that senior leaders and governors are unable to comment with confidence on achievement beyond English and mathematics. This is why inspectors felt it necessary to conduct a thorough scrutiny of pupils' books to support their judgement on pupils' outcomes.
- While most teaching is effective in ensuring that pupils make good progress, occasionally the progress of lower-achieving pupils is slowed down. This is because some teachers do not regularly check that pupils understand what they are being taught. By the end of the lesson, it is too late to pick up on any misconceptions.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- The school's leaders have not ensured that all staff employed at the school have routinely undergone the necessary vetting checks. This potentially compromises pupils' welfare.
- The day-to-day checking of the suitability of the building and associated risks is unsatisfactory. During their tour of the school, inspectors found bottles of bleach in the pupils' toilets, upper floor windows which could be fully opened and unlocked cupboards which contained hazardous tools.

- Access to an external area where rubbish was kept was insecure. This area was hazardous because it contained a stepladder and two gas bottles which were fully functional.
- Inspectors also found fire doors to be bolted and a lack of fire evacuation signage in the classrooms. Of greater concern is the fact that no fire risk assessment has been carried out within the required time frame. The fire alarm system has not been tested weekly, and the emergency lighting has not been tested as often as required.
- Despite many weaknesses in leaders' promotion of pupils' personal development and welfare, pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are friendly, courteous and polite. They socialise with one another well both within and beyond the classroom, and they have a strong work ethic. They were welcoming to the inspection team, and keen to talk about their school.
- Bullying is extremely rare and incidents of unacceptable behaviour are few and far between. Fixed-term exclusions are not commonplace, and there has been only one permanent exclusion since the previous inspection.
- Pupils attend school regularly and persistent absence is low. They arrive punctually to their lessons at the start of the day, and after their breaktimes.
- Occasionally, when teaching fails to meet their needs, a few pupils display low-level disruptive behaviour. This is managed well by teachers through effective implementation of the school's classroom code of conduct system.
- Pupils' presentation of their work is often untidy and handwriting is poor. Pupils still use pencils when writing up to the time they leave the school. They told inspectors, 'If we make a mistake, it's easier to rub it out and start again.' However, this does not prepare them well for their secondary education. The school has identified handwriting as an area for improvement in its self-evaluation documentation.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress from their different starting points. They join the school in Year 1 with average levels of prior attainment. They achieve well as a result of effective teaching and positive attitudes towards their learning.
- The school conducts the phonics screening check in Year 1 and this is assessed internally. School achievement information shows that 83% of pupils achieved the required standard in Year 1 in 2017.
- Pupils in key stage 1 make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils in key stage 2 maintain the good rate of progress overall. They are well prepared academically for their transition to secondary school.
- Provisional end of key stage 2 results for 2017 became available during this inspection. In 2017, the proportion achieving the expected standard was 93% in mathematics, 85% in reading and 93% in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Teachers' assessment for writing was not made available.

- An intensive scrutiny of pupils' books and observations of learning show that the needs of the most able pupils are well met through the quality of teaching. This same scrutiny confirms the school's view that pupils' progress in both key stages is good across a wide range of subjects beyond reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils are encouraged to read widely, although the school's library is not regularly used. Instead, they visit the local public library. Pupils who read to inspectors read with impressive fluency and expression. They spoke enthusiastically about their favourite authors from a range of genres.
- Pupils enjoy and achieve well in their Islamic studies lessons. Because these are taught through the medium of English, this provides them with additional opportunities to develop and strengthen their literacy skills.
- Pupils who have lower prior attainment and need to catch up make progress, but this is not always as rapid as that of their peers. This is also the case for pupils who have additional learning needs, and it is linked to a few teachers not regularly checking for understanding as the lesson progresses.

School details

Unique reference number	133449
DfE registration number	204/6410
Inspection number	10034443

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent Muslim day school
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Al-Falah Educational Trust
Chair	Imtiyaz Hajat
Headteacher	Mohammad Abu Hussain
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,400
Telephone number	020 8985 1059
Website	www.alfalahschool.org.uk
Email address	info@alfalahschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 July 2014

Information about this school

- Al-Falah Primary School is an independent Muslim day school. It opened in 2001 as a boys' primary school and it extended its provision in 2005 to admit girls as well as boys. The school provides an Islamic curriculum in addition to all subjects of the national curriculum. The school aims to give equal significance to both areas, integrating 'Islamic values into our pupils' social and moral education'.
- There are currently 88 pupils on roll aged from 6 to 11 years, with slightly more boys than girls. The school is registered to admit a maximum of 120 pupils. A below-average

proportion of pupils have additional learning needs. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

- All current pupils are Muslims, although the school's admissions policy is welcoming to pupils of all faiths and none. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. While English is often not the only language spoken at home, it is fluently spoken by all pupils.
- The school has been inspected three times before – in 2007, 2010 and 2014. At the time of the previous inspection, the school's overall effectiveness was judged to be good.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted with no notice at the request of the Department for Education.
- Inspectors observed learning in all year groups and across a range of subjects. Senior leaders declined inspectors' requests to observe some lessons jointly. Inspectors also looked at a wide range of pupils' books across all year groups and including a range of subjects.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, the chair of the governing body, parents and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised school improvement documents, policies, information on progress, records of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and information on pupils' behaviour and attendance. They also listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors considered 23 responses to Parent View. They also took account of 17 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- On the final day of the inspection, pupils were not in school because they were taking part in a school trip.

Inspection team

John Daniell, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Milan Stevanovic

Ofsted Inspector

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