

# Al-Aqsa Schools Trust

The Wayne Way, Leicester, Leicestershire LE5 4PP

## Inspection dates

28–30 November 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The recently appointed headteacher and deputy headteacher have rapidly identified the strengths of the school. They have prepared a suitable programme for the further development of teaching and learning.
- Staff share the vision and ambition of senior leaders. They make a strong contribution to the leadership and improvement of pupils' learning and personal development.
- The quality of teaching is good across the full age range of the school. Pupils make good progress with their learning and are prepared well for further education and employment.
- Effective arrangements for the assessment of pupils' work enable teachers to plan activities that contribute well to pupils' good progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They demonstrate respect towards staff and positive attitudes to learning.
- The school's safeguarding policy is comprehensive and is implemented effectively. Pupils are safe in school and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- Children in the early years have a good start to their learning, personal development and independence skills.
- Staff understand how to identify and support pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. At present, there are limited resources and time allocated to meeting these needs.
- Senior leaders have an increasingly good understanding of how pupils' progress compares with that of other pupils nationally. This understanding is not widespread across all staff.
- The chair of the governing body has a good understanding of the day-to-day work of pupils and teachers. The governing body is kept informed appropriately by senior leaders, but members do not have a sufficiently detailed understanding of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- The governing body and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop arrangements for the assessment of pupils' progress to make sure that:
  - senior leaders have access to accurate and comprehensive information about any differences in progress across year groups and subject areas
  - staff understand how pupils' progress compares with national averages.
- Review arrangements for the accurate identification of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities, in order to:
  - provide effective individual support to accelerate their learning
  - make sure that their progress consistently matches that of other pupils in the school.
- Review arrangements for the governance of the school to make sure that governors have sufficient time and information to:
  - make well-informed decisions that support senior leaders in their responsibility to continuously improve the school
  - hold senior leaders to account more formally for the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' progress across the full age-range of the school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leadership arrangements have been unsettled since the previous inspection. However, staff have maintained a clear vision and sense of direction. Senior and middle managers have accepted responsibility and demonstrated strong loyalty and partnership working.
- The recently appointed headteacher and deputy headteacher have rapidly gained the respect and support of the staff. They have established robust strategies for effective self-evaluation and clear plans for the further development of the school. They have identified appropriate priorities and set out suitable timescales for continuous improvement.
- Senior leaders have, for example, identified the need to improve information from assessment in order to support their evaluation of pupils' progress across different subjects and year groups.
- Staff believe the school is well led and managed and look forward to a period of stability and progress. Leaders and staff demonstrate high expectations for what pupils can achieve and are working together to maintain and build on the good-quality teaching and learning.
- The school's procedures for the management of staff performance include effective arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment of pupils' progress. These build on, and extend, existing good practice.
- The curriculum ensures that all pupils have access to the required areas of learning. Pupils enjoy and benefit from the opportunity to study art alongside their academic subjects. The school's further plans include the review of the range of subjects taught to GCSE level.
- The school celebrates Islamic values and promotes pupils' understanding of British values. Pupils have access to a balanced range of experiences that prepare them effectively for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils in Year 11 speak passionately about the recent opportunity provided to organise a 'general election' within the school.
- The curriculum and the quality of pupils' relationships with staff raise pupils' aspirations. They enjoy opportunities to take part in work experience and appreciate the range of further education courses available to them. They value the careers guidance the school provides and each pupil in Year 11 is clear about her preferred pathway through further and higher education towards an ambitious career.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the diversity of beliefs, cultures and lifestyles within the local community and in wider society. They are committed to overcoming the risks and challenges presented by discrimination and inequality.
- The school strongly supports the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. This is particularly evident in the pupils' mature reflections and the way they internalise the school's values and take responsibility for the care of others.

- Senior leaders demonstrate vision and commitment to the ethos of the school. The proprietors have made suitable leadership appointments to ensure that the school's positive progress continues.

## **Governance**

- The chair of the trustees, who is also the chair of the governing body, has a strong first-hand understanding of the school. He is supportive of senior leaders and staff and ensures that resources are available to support school improvement.
- The governing body raises appropriate questions about important aspects of the curriculum and external examinations. However, governors do not currently have sufficient time available to understand important details of teaching, outcomes and pupils' personal development.
- The chair of the governing body has started to prepare appropriate plans for the re-organisation of the school's governance arrangements and to create a stronger understanding between the governing body and trustees.
- The governing body oversees arrangements for the appraisal of senior leaders and staff. They manage the resources available to support staff recruitment and training. These arrangements are also currently subject to review, in consultation with senior leaders.
- The school provides good opportunities for staff training, including arrangements to ensure that the school's statutory safeguarding responsibilities are fulfilled effectively. Some members of staff have improved their qualifications and teaching skills as a result of effective training. Future plans include intentions to link staff training more precisely to individual appraisal.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's safeguarding policy reflects the latest government guidance and is available, as required, on the school's website. All staff are trained to recognise signs of abuse and to understand the safeguarding risks that pupils may encounter.
- Pupils have a good understanding of risks related, for example, to sexual exploitation, radicalisation and online abuse. Pupils in Year 11 speak highly of the openness with which they are encouraged to discuss and respond to local and national concerns and issues.
- Senior leaders are trained to an appropriate level to take the lead on all safeguarding matters. They have a good understanding of the support available to staff and parents and of where advice may be obtained when required. They work effectively with parents and external services to manage any concerns related to individual pupils.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- The good quality of teaching is based on effective planning and teachers' strong subject knowledge. Teachers plan learning activities that engage and interest pupils. They make good use of time and ensure that pupils are continuously involved in effective learning.
- There is a good level of challenge in tasks set for pupils. Staff provide pupils with targets that require continuous development of their knowledge, understanding and individual

learning skills. The extent of challenge accelerates appropriately as pupils progress through the year groups.

- Teachers expect high standards of behaviour and attention to learning. In the great majority of lessons, particularly with older pupils, staff do not need to correct behaviour because pupils are respectful and cooperative. They do not waste time with off-task distractions.
- In a number of subjects, pupils research ideas and information successfully and present their findings to others. For example, in science, Year 10 pupils explored different aspects of the water cycle and presented these in imaginative ways to their peers.
- Teachers monitor pupils' learning continuously. They ensure, through the quality of their questioning, that pupils' knowledge and understanding are deepened and extended. They are aware if any pupil is at risk of falling behind or uncertain about how to complete their work.
- Staff ensure that pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy are used and reinforced across the full range of subjects studied. For example, pupils in Year 6 demonstrate the ability to complete complex calculations, working with appropriate independence or cooperatively as the various tasks require.
- Pupils are confident to read aloud and the majority do this fluently and with expression. Younger pupils are taught to use phonics to develop their independence in reading. They also learn to apply these skills in developing their writing. For example, pupils in Year 4 write legibly and pay attention to sentence structure, grammar and punctuation.
- The school has recently introduced arrangements for the additional support of pupils with identified SEN. These pupils are provided with effective small group or one-to-one support during some lessons. Currently, the focus of this additional support is in key stage 2. These arrangements have not been in operation long enough for a full evaluation of their impact or for extension to additional year groups.
- Pupils value the recognition of their good work and teachers' identification of areas for improvement. Pupils understand their learning targets and, generally, their work shows a positive response to teachers' advice.
- Teachers use homework effectively to extend pupils' learning and to prepare for next steps in their learning. For example, pupils in Year 9 English prepared effective individual presentations about war poetry and shared these with the class.
- Subject reports to parents provide helpful information about each subject being studied and judgements about pupils' progress in each subject. Parents, in their response to the inspection questionnaire, state that they receive helpful information about their children's progress.
- Teachers use regular assessment to judge the quality of pupils' achievement. While this assessment helps to identify next steps in learning, teachers do not use consistent methods for recording outcomes or evaluating the extent of pupils' progress. Senior leaders have taken immediate steps to improve the consistency of assessment testing and grading across the full age range of the school.

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils develop confidence in themselves and in their ability to respond to the challenges provided for them. They are proud of their work, their achievements and their school.
- Teachers expect pupils to develop independence and take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils respond positively and recognise the level of application and determination that is required to achieve the best from their education.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are respectful and mutually supportive. Pupils appreciate the time and effort that staff give to make their learning successful and productive.
- A major strength of pupils' personal development is their ability and willingness to listen with respect to the ideas and contributions of others. They develop the ability to present balanced and well-reasoned views about social and moral issues. Pupils in Year 11, for example, demonstrate maturity and consideration for different viewpoints as they consider moral dilemmas in religious education.
- Pupils are aware of different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying. Pupils of various ages state that they have no concerns about being bullied.
- Pupils state that they are confident that each pupil can identify adults who will listen to their concerns and support them to find a resolution.
- Older pupils value the advice they receive about future career opportunities and courses of further study. They appreciate the opportunity to learn about the expectations of the workplace as they take part in work experience placements.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They talk in an informed manner about e-safety, risks to their well-being in wider society, and the visiting speakers who have taught them about how to respond to threats to their welfare. Parents agree that their children are safe in school.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' attitudes to learning are almost entirely positive. Occasionally, but rarely, pupils may engage in off-task distracting behaviour. However, they respond appropriately to instructions from staff and quickly re-engage in effective learning.
- Pupils are punctual to lessons and ready to work without wasting time. Their overall attendance is in line with the national average. Parents and pupils treat attendance at school seriously. Attendance in the early years is a little below that in other year groups despite the school's expectations of full attendance by all children. Senior leaders are diligent in their commitment to addressing any issues of unexplained or unnecessary absence.

- Pupils behave well throughout the day, including in the playground and shared areas of the school. Staff ensure that pupils understand what is expected of them and give timely reminders if behaviour slips below the school's high expectations. One young pupil observed, 'This school is strict!'

### Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils enter the school with a variety of starting points. Over time, they make consistently strong progress. Senior leaders' recent analysis of teachers' assessments indicates that progress is good in all year groups and across all subjects. Evidence from the observation of learning, scrutiny of work in pupils' books and discussions with pupils confirm this view.
- Pupils make good progress from a variety of starting points. The school's recent analysis indicates that the most able pupils make particularly strong progress. Only small numbers of pupils have completed Year 11 courses and GCSE examinations to date. Increasing numbers, as larger year groups progress through the school, will enable leaders to make increasingly secure judgements about the reliability of their assessment procedures.
- Pupils' progress across the full age range of the school is good. Arrangements to date, for the analysis of assessment information, do not provide sufficient clarity about any differences in the rates of progress between subjects and year groups.
- The progress of pupils with SEN and/or disabilities is broadly comparable with that of their peers.
- Overall, pupils' rates of progress in English and mathematics are good. Pupils develop secure skills in reading and writing and are able to apply their understanding of numbers to increasingly complex calculations and problems.
- The small numbers of pupils who have studied key stage 4 courses and entered for GCSE examinations achieved success across a range of subjects, including higher-grade results in English, mathematics, science, Spanish, sociology, religious education and information and communication technology.
- All pupils who have left the school at the end of Year 11 in the last two years have moved on to suitable placements in further education, including A-level courses.

### Early years provision

**Good**

- Most children enter the early years with skills below what might be expected for their age. They make good progress with their learning and development. By the time they move into Year 1, the majority have achieved a good level of development.
- The quality of teaching is good. Children generally listen attentively when being taught as a whole class and they learn to communicate well with adults and with each other. They are confident and well settled in school. Older children can apply their phonetic knowledge to write independently.
- Classroom routines are well established and children generally respond well to staff expectations. During their time in the early years, children improve their listening skills and concentration.
- Children play and work well together. The majority are interested and engaged, for

example when making confident choices in outdoor activities. They develop an increasing sense of the feelings and needs of others and behave well.

- In both year groups, children explore their learning environment productively. They are aware of shape, size and quantity and can distinguish between natural and manufactured objects.
- Staff have developed a strong partnership with parents and with support services outside the school. This helps staff to manage any challenges children might face. The school meets the welfare requirements of the early years foundation stage and the independent school standards.
- The school's early years arrangements provide children with a good foundation for their education. They have appropriate independence in their learning, which contributes effectively to their personal development and confidence.
- The early years arrangements are well led and managed. This contributes, together with effective teaching, to positive outcomes for children. Children's basic skills in literacy and numeracy are promoted well, as in the main school.
- Relationships between staff and children are strong. Children are well cared for and all aspects of their welfare are paramount.

## School details

Unique reference number	134809
DfE registration number	856/6017
Inspection number	10039187

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	Islamic primary and secondary school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	277
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Al-Aqsa Schools Trust
Chair	Ibrahim Hewitt
Headteacher	Amina Patel
Annual fees (day pupils)	Primary: £1,700 Secondary £1,900
Telephone number	0116 2760953
Website	<a href="http://www.alaqsaschool.co.uk">www.alaqsaschool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:headteacher@alaqsaschool.co.uk">headteacher@alaqsaschool.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	14–16 October 2015

## Information about this school

- Al-Aqsa is a non-selective independent school, which promotes an Islamic ethos.
- The school is located in a residential area close to the centre of Leicester.
- The school admits girls and boys into the early years and primary department, up to the age of 11 years. Girls aged 11 to 16 years are admitted into the secondary department.
- The school is registered to admit up to 292 pupils. There are 277 pupils currently on the school roll.

- The early years and primary pupils are taught on a separate site, in the same street as the secondary pupils.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative organisations as part of the curriculum.
- The previous standard inspection of the school was in October 2015. A progress monitoring inspection took place in July 2016.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning and looked at samples of pupils' work across the full age range of the school. Observations included learning in the early years and a wide range of subjects in the primary and secondary departments of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the chair of the trustees, who is also the chair of the governing body, the headteacher and deputy headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and teaching staff. These meetings considered the school's arrangements for checking the quality of the curriculum, teaching, academic results and the safety of pupils.
- The inspectors held discussions with a number of pupils and staff. They considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, submitted by 33 parents, and Ofsted's questionnaire completed by 32 staff.
- The inspectors scrutinised a number of school policies, procedures and records of evidence in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

## Inspection team

David Young, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Aileen King

Ofsted Inspector

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