

Al Risalah Secondary School

145 Upper Tooting Road, London SW17 7TJ

Inspection dates

19–21 March 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement, because leaders have not ensured that all the independent standards are met.
- Leaders segregate pupils by sex without legal justification, which is in breach of the Equality Act 2010.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. However, most-able pupils are not routinely challenged in the tasks they are set. As a result, they are not consistently making the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers' use of skilful questioning is not consistent across all subjects. In some instances, teachers do not deepen pupils' knowledge as well as they could.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher sets high expectations for staff and pupils. He has established a cohesive and effective team who shares his vision for success.
- As a result of good teaching, pupils' attainment is above the national average across the range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Pupils behave well and are respectful to all. Attendance is above average.
- Governors' knowledge, skills and expertise contribute effectively to school leadership.
- Children in the nursery make a good start to their education. Teachers plan activities that engage children's interests and support their learning. They are well prepared for Reception year.

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 that leaders comply with the Equality Act 2010, by ceasing the unlawful segregation of pupils by sex.
- Ensure that teachers consistently set work that stretches and challenges pupils, particularly the most able.
- Ensure that teachers routinely use skilful questioning that deepens the knowledge and understanding of all pupils.
- Ensure that the school meets the independent school standards, as set out in the annex of this report.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher unites staff with a common sense of purpose in order to help pupils to achieve their very best. Adults model their high expectations for pupils through their own actions. As a result, there is a culture of mutual respect and high aspirations.
- The segregation of pupils by sex for all classes and activities in the secondary part of the school without legal justification amounts to unlawful discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. Consequently, leadership and management require improvement, because leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders know the school's many strengths and are honest about the priorities for development. They take helpful steps to address areas of relative weakness, which results in improvement. For example, since the previous inspection the school now has a well-stocked library with a range of genres. Pupils use the library enthusiastically and they clearly articulate their love of reading. This contributes to the strong progress pupils make in their learning.
- Leaders and teachers track pupils' achievements effectively. They assess pupils' progress and attainment carefully. As a result, leaders know which pupils are doing well and which are not. Where pupils need extra help, they receive appropriate support, which ensures that those who fall behind catch up quickly. In mathematics, the most able pupils study further mathematics at GCSE, thus extending their learning effectively.
- Leaders gather a wealth of useful information about the quality of teaching across the school. They use this information effectively to prioritise training and development. Teachers make good use of helpful opportunities to share their expertise within and beyond their subject areas.
- The curriculum, broadly academic, includes all the required areas of learning and supports pupils' aspirations. A high proportion of pupils study for the English baccalaureate; as a result, they are well prepared for the next stage in their education. The curriculum is supplemented by a range of clubs, visits and events to meet pupils' needs and interests.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of fundamental British values, such as respect and tolerance. They relish opportunities to develop their understanding of both British and Islamic values and to contribute to the life of the school. They successfully develop their understanding of other religious traditions. For example, strong links with the local Christian church result in visits to the church for pupils and visits to the school by Church of England priests.

The school's application to make a material change to its registration

- This inspection included a formal commission to consider the school's application to change, following separate registration of the boys' school, the number of girls on roll and children in the nursery. This material change comprises 130 girls in the secondary school and 90 children in the Nursery, 220 pupils in total. The school premises, including the separate Nursery site, are appropriate for the proposed number of pupils. Following

separate registration of the boys' school, all independent standards are likely to be met if the material change is implemented.

Governance

- The proprietor, director of education and governors are ambitious for pupils to become good British Muslims and contribute effectively to their school and community locally, nationally and globally.
- Governors have a strong and precise level of detail and knowledge about the school. Consequently, they have an insightful understanding of the strengths and the areas that need to improve. Information they receive from the headteacher allows them to challenge incisively all aspects of the school's performance.
- Governors understand that currently the school does not meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 regarding the unlawful segregation of pupils by sex. They have applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to register the boys' school separately. The DfE commissioned a pre-registration inspection of the boys' school to run concurrently with this inspection. The pre-registration inspection outcome is a recommendation to the DfE that the boys' school is separately registered.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors ensure that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and meet statutory requirements. For example, processes in place for vetting staff before they begin employment at the school are rigorous and thorough. The school has a safeguarding policy which meets requirements and is available to parents and carers on the school's website.
- Staff and those responsible for governance are well trained and know how to identify signs of neglect or abuse. They understand their responsibilities with regard to safeguarding, including in relation to radicalisation and extremism. As a result, staff are vigilant and ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for. Systems to report signs of abuse are clear, and records show that referrals to external agencies are timely and follow up is thorough. Staff understand the important role they play so that pupils feel safe and are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders and teachers demonstrate high expectations for all pupils. They are determined that pupils achieve well in their subjects. As a result, pupils engage enthusiastically with their learning and make strong progress across a range of subjects.
- Teachers' positive relationships with pupils enable pupils to learn and make progress. Pupils quickly respond to teachers' expectations and instructions. These positive relationships contribute strongly to pupils' progress and resilience when learning from their mistakes.

- Pupils know what they need to do to improve in their different subjects. They find their homework is valuable and supports their learning in lessons. Pupils engage purposefully with the beneficial feedback they receive from teachers, which is in line with the school's policy. This enables pupils to make good progress over time.
- Pupils value the opportunity to develop their reading skills. Year 7 pupils who read to an inspector did so with confidence and listened respectfully to each other.
- Pupils' exercise books show that the vast majority of pupils take pride in their work. Handwriting is neat, and pupils make a good effort in completing their work. This indicates pupils' positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Most teachers use skilful questioning to check pupils' knowledge and understanding, particularly in English, mathematics and history. This leads to strong and sustained levels of knowledge and understanding. In many instances, teachers in different subjects reshape explanations or tasks so that pupils' misconceptions can be addressed and corrected. However, because of some inconsistencies in the quality of some teachers' questioning, pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of across all subjects.
- Teachers do not consistently plan opportunities for pupils to work at different levels and to think more deeply. As a result, pupils, particularly the most able, are not always directed precisely to work that matches their different starting points.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. The school's otherwise effective work in this area is undermined by the unlawful segregation by sex. Pupils are not able to work or socialise with the opposite sex. Girls and boys arrive and depart at separate times, are taught in separate classes and do not share the same breaks.
- Strong, caring relationships permeate the school. Pupils are kind to each other, friendly and articulate. They are interested in learning. Pupils' positive attitudes mean that they listen carefully to their teachers and take pride in their work.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and are safe. In addition to being taught about keeping safe when online, pupils are aware of the dangers posed by radicalisation and extremism. They are aware of the different forms of bullying that can take place. Pupils told inspectors that bullying is rare and that, if it were to happen, pupils feel confident that teachers would deal with it quickly and effectively. Pupils have confidence in and trust staff. They believe that staff genuinely care for them and their well-being.
- There are a range of opportunities for pupils to develop their sense of responsibility. They actively demonstrate their support for the Islamic and British values of respect, excellence, dignity, honesty and community. The school is a beacon school in holocaust education; as a result, pupils have a strong understanding of, and respect for, faiths other than their own. Pupils learn about people with protected characteristics. Pupils who spoke with inspectors demonstrated their respect for difference and diversity.

- Leaders invest in preparing pupils for their next steps. Pupils experience an effective range of careers information and guidance that fuels their ambition and raises their aspirations. Year 11 pupils have clear plans and value the support they receive to aid their decision making.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves around the school with lively maturity. They are courteous and polite to adults and visitors. Pupils are self-aware and understand how their conduct has an impact on others. Pupils' behaviour contributes to the safe atmosphere in the school.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well in lessons and are keen to learn. They respect the views of others and listen carefully to instructions. They help each other and rarely distract others or misbehave.
- Pupils value their education and are proud of their school. As a result, pupils' attendance and punctuality to school are high and above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Attainment in 2017 and 2018 was well above the national average across the full range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- School performance information and pupils' work show that the progress of pupils currently in the school is strong across a range of subjects and years. Teachers' focused support of pupils ensures that any areas of weakness are readily resolved.
- Pupils' literacy skills develop well over time. Teachers concentrate on ensuring that pupils acquire skills in punctuation, spelling and grammar. As a result, pupils can write at length in a wide range of subjects with technical accuracy. Pupils also use and apply subject-specific vocabulary well in the subjects they study. Teachers make every effort to support pupils' literacy skills and develop their vocabulary.
- The most able pupils make good progress across the school. Nevertheless, they do not always make the progress of which they are capable, because teachers do not routinely set them work that challenges them to think more deeply.
- Leaders' actions ensure that pupils make positive decisions about their futures after they finish Year 11. As a result, the proportion of pupils who proceed to post-16 education is above the national figure.

Early years provision

Good

- The Nursery manager is enthusiastic and ambitious for the success of the Nursery. Children enter the Nursery with starting points generally below those typical for their age. The vast majority of children speak English as an additional language. An effective assessment system means that children's weaknesses when they start school are well understood. Parents play a significant role in contributing to the initial assessment.

- Children's progress is accurately monitored through regular observations and assessments. Staff plan activities that engage children's interest and support what they need to learn next. As a result, children make good progress and are well prepared for transition to Reception Year.
- As a result of highly effective opportunities in speaking and listening, both in Arabic and English, children make good progress in the development of their language skills.
- Staff are strong role models. They are caring and attentive to children's needs. Children are happy and settled. They form secure relationships with adults and positive friendships with other children. They play cooperatively, learn to share, take turns and develop understanding of how to be kind to each other.
- The learning materials provided both indoors and outdoors are vibrant, interesting and constructive. Nonetheless, the Nursery manager recognises that the limited outdoor space hinders the scope of the children's learning activities.
- Links with parents are strong. Parents are provided with useful information on the progress of their children. Parents have opportunities to contribute to the information on children's progress. Staff ensure that children settle into routines quickly. Parents are provided with guidance on how they can support their children's learning at home.
- Staff are alert to children's welfare and respond sensitively to their needs. There are no breaches of statutory welfare requirements. All independent school standards are met in relation to the nursery provision.

School details

Unique reference number	101090
DfE registration number	212/6396
Inspection number	10054283

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 school
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	305
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Al-Risalah Education Trust
Chair	Yunus Bobat
Headteacher	Suhayl Lee
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,100 – £3,500
Telephone number	020 8767 6057
Website	www.alrisalahschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@alrisalahschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–17 December 2015

Information about this school

- Al-Risalah Secondary School is an independent Muslim day school run by the Al-Risalah Education Trust. The school has a Nursery section for children aged 3 to 5. The secondary phase is for pupils aged 11 to 16.
- The secondary phase is located in a converted cinema, and the nursery is housed in a renovated residential building, 10 minutes' walk from the secondary school. Pupils use a local leisure facility for physical education and enrichment.
- The school's last standard inspection took place in December 2015, when the school was judged to be good.

- The school operates a policy of segregation by sex in the secondary school. The boys' department is located on the opposite side of the building to the girls. Boys and girls arrive to, and depart from, the school at different times. Pupils are segregated for classes and all other activities. The policy causes the following detriment to pupils: boys and girls cannot learn and socialise together. Given this detriment, the policy constitutes direct discrimination, contrary to the Equality Act 2010.
- Leaders intend to de-amalgamate the departments into separate schools. They intend to do this by summer 2019. At the time of the inspection, leaders had started the formal process of de-amalgamation. A separate inspection, commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE), for the registration of the boys' school took place at the same time as this inspection. In addition, the DfE requested that an application for a material change to the numbers in the girls' school and Nursery be considered as part of this inspection.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classes in all year groups, including the Nursery provision. Some of these visits were made jointly with the senior leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of governors, the director of education for Al-Risalah Education Trust and the chair of trustees for Al-Risalah Education Trust.
- Inspectors listened to Year 7 pupils read, talked to pupils in classes and at breaktime and met formally with two groups of pupils. There were no responses to the Ofsted pupil survey.
- There were seven responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View. All the written comments that were included on Parent View were considered. There were no responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation, including records relating to safeguarding, behaviour, health and safety, the curriculum, teaching and pupils' attendance and progress.
- The Department for Education commissioned inspectors to consider the school's application for the following material change to its registration: the change in roll capacity for the girls' school and Nursery following the separate registration of the boys' school, to 130 girls in the secondary school and 90 pupils in the nursery.

Inspection team

Carolyn Dickinson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alison Moore	Ofsted Inspector
John Daniell	Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 3(j) does not discriminate against pupils contrary to Part 6 of the 2010 Act [10].

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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