

24 November 2015

Rt Hon. Nicky Morgan MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
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Sir Michael Wilshaw
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Dear Secretary of State

Advice note from Sir Michael Wilshaw, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, on the inspection of schools previously inspected by the Bridge Schools Inspectorate

I wrote to you on 26 November 2014 to report on the inspection work carried out by the Bridge Schools Inspectorate (BSI) for the academic year 2013/14.¹ In my letter, I raised a number of issues about the quality of BSI inspection and reporting, particularly relating to the criteria for making judgements, notice periods for inspections and the suitability of inspectors.

On 30 September 2015, the BSI ceased to be an approved inspectorate for independent schools.² At the start of this academic year, Ofsted became responsible for inspecting schools previously inspected by the BSI.

Following a review of the timing of previous inspections, I commissioned Her Majesty's Inspectors to carry out inspections of all 17 schools that the BSI had not inspected since September 2012.³ In addition, the Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ofsted to inspect a further five schools formerly inspected by the BSI. All of these 22 schools have a faith designation: seven are Christian and 15 are Muslim.

All inspection reports have now been published on Ofsted's website.

¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/bridge-school-inspectorate-bsi-annual-ofsted-report-letters.

² For the purposes of the inspection of independent schools under the Education and Skills Act 2008.

³ When inspecting independent schools, Her Majesty's Inspectors use the non-association independent school handbook, which incorporates judgements from the common inspection framework with the independent school standards. www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/3283/contents/made.

I set out below a summary of the main findings of these inspections, together with my conclusions and recommendation.⁴

Main findings

1. Of the 22 schools inspected, Her Majesty's Inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of:
 - one school as outstanding
 - four schools as good
 - eight schools as requires improvement
 - nine schools as inadequate.

Over half of the schools failed to meet a number of the independent school standards

2. Of the 22 schools inspected, 14 failed to meet at least one of the independent school standards and 11 did not meet the standards in four or more areas.⁵
3. Specifically:
 - 12 of the schools did not meet the standard for leadership and management
 - 10 failed to meet the standard for the curriculum
 - 10 did not meet the standard for teaching
 - eight failed to meet the standard for safeguarding
 - eight did not meet the health and safety standards
 - four failed to demonstrate that they promote fundamental British values.

The effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, was inadequate or requiring improvement in 17 of the 22 schools

4. In 10 schools, leaders and managers failed to meet the independent school standard for the curriculum. These schools were not providing a sufficiently broad curriculum. As a result, pupils did not receive sufficient opportunities to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to make good progress in a wide range of subjects.
5. For example, at four schools – Bury Park Education Institute, the Cornerstone School, Al-Ameen Primary School and Jameah Academy – leaders and managers have not provided a curriculum that enables pupils to develop their aesthetic and creative knowledge and skills. At Al-Ameen Primary School, Her

⁴ Annex A: the schools inspected.

⁵ All non-association independent schools are inspected against the independent schools standards; www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389467/Revised_independent_school_standards.pdf.

Majesty's Inspectors found that, while much time was given to English, mathematics, science and Islamic studies, too little teaching of aesthetic and creative subjects has been provided. The Cornerstone School was not promoting school sport well and pupils have not had the opportunity to learn drama, dance, music, technology or art during school time. At the Jameah Academy, Her Majesty's Inspectors judged that the curriculum was narrow and has not provided sufficient opportunities for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 to develop their creative knowledge and skills. Pupils would like to have studied subjects such as cookery and art, but have not been given the opportunity to do so.

6. Leaders and managers were not monitoring pupils' progress and academic outcomes effectively in 15 schools. The management of teachers' performance by leaders and governors in these schools was ineffective. They have not had robust systems in place to challenge poor practice.
7. The work of governors was poor in 12 schools. Governors were not familiar with the requirements of the independent school standards and did not hold leaders to account in meeting these standards. Governors lacked sufficient information to hold headteachers to account for pupils' progress. They have relied too heavily on information provided by leaders and been too trusting of the information they received. For example, at the Cornerstone School, governors did not routinely challenge leaders about the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress. Systems were not in place to performance-manage teachers and help them to improve.

Safeguarding arrangements in eight schools were ineffective

8. Eight schools were failing to meet two or more standards for safeguarding and statutory requirements were not met. The inadequacies included: an absence or haphazard recording of checks about the suitability of staff to work with children; errors or poor recording in pupils' attendance records; and ineffective training to ensure that all staff know how to safeguard pupils. Her Majesty's Inspectors found that proprietors were not ensuring that the pupils were protected from risk and were not paying due regard to the guidance issued in 'Keeping children safe in education' from the DfE (DfE 2015). At Leicester Islamic Academy, the designated person for child protection had not updated their training in the last five years.

9. In the following four schools, standards relating to ensuring the suitability of staff and maintenance of the single central register were not met. For example:
- at Springfield Christian School, checks to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children were not carried out effectively and adults had commenced employment pending the required checks and with poor references
 - at Palfrey Girls' School, leaders had not carried out appropriate checks on whether staff would be 'disqualified by association' when working with the under-fives
 - at Darul Uloom Islamic High School, checks made on new members of staff were disorganised
 - at the Covenant Christian School, leaders ensured that the majority of checks were made when recruiting staff, but systems for doing so were not well coordinated and record keeping was inaccurate.
10. Al-Ameen Primary School and Palfrey Girls' School had inadequate systems in place to verify that pupils who leave the schools do not go missing from education. As a result, the schools could not be sure that pupils who leave to be educated elsewhere were not being exposed to harm, exploitation or the influence of extremist ideologies. At the Covenant Christian School, risk assessments to protect children were poor and not checked robustly by senior leaders.

Inadequate practice in promoting fundamental British values in four schools was of serious concern

11. It is worrying that in four schools, leaders and managers were not promoting the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. During the inspection of Darul Uloom Islamic High School, the actions of governors did not model the promotion of mutual respect for men and women.
12. In three schools, Her Majesty's Inspectors judged that pupils had insufficient opportunities to study other faiths. In these schools, the culture and poor curriculum were not preparing pupils for life in modern Britain. For example:
- at Al-Ameen Primary School, inspectors found that pupils were not taught to understand different faiths and beliefs; as a result, pupils had a superficial understanding of Christianity, Judaism and Sikhism
 - at the Cornerstone School, pupils were not given sufficient opportunities to learn about different cultures and the perspectives of others

- at Leicester Islamic Academy, pupils had insufficient opportunities to learn and understand about other faiths and cultures.
13. At Al-Ameen Primary School, inspectors found that pupils had little understanding of British institutions or the democratic process. Many older pupils did not know the term 'government' or understand its role in a democracy. Very few could name any political parties.
 14. Leaders and managers at the Cornerstone School, a school of a Christian character, have not ensured that pupils are receptive to the views of people who may have different beliefs and values to their own. Pupils said that they had a limited view of the world because their education was not providing them with sufficient opportunities to learn about people with differing backgrounds and perspectives to their own.
 15. Leaders and managers at Al-Ameen Primary School were not protecting pupils from reading inappropriate literature about extremist, sexist or partisan views. Her Majesty's Inspectors found that inappropriate books in the school library were freely available to pupils. For example, the library contained a book asserting that women are less reliable than men as witnesses. Other books included information that was not age-appropriate for pupils. The headteacher agreed with inspectors that some books were inappropriate and should not be freely available.
 16. At a meeting of Her Majesty's Inspectors and governors to gather evidence about the impact of governors' work at Darul Uloom Islamic High School, the only female governor sat out of sight of the male governors in an adjacent room to the main meeting. As a result, she could only contribute to the meeting through a doorway. Governors told inspectors this was their usual arrangement. A senior HMI has pointed out to the school that this practice is unacceptable as it fails to show proper respect for women. The values and behaviours modelled by the governing body, including respect for women, will be a primary focus of the subsequent monitoring of this school by Her Majesty's Inspectors.
 17. Her Majesty's Inspectors found that most of the schools inspected were engaging with the Prevent strategy. The schools were implementing this by working with external agencies and providing training for staff. However, the work of governors at Al-Ameen Primary School was poor, and leaders and governors were not ensuring that the school fulfils its responsibilities set out in the Prevent duty.

Conclusions

18. Of the 22 schools inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectors, only five were judged to be providing a good or better standard of education. As a result, more than 2,000 pupils are being educated in 17 schools where the education was judged not to be good enough. Of these, 1,019 pupils are in schools that Her Majesty's Inspectors have judged to be inadequate.
19. Leaders, managers and governors in 12 schools were failing to meet the independent school standards for leadership and management. It is seriously concerning that 630 pupils attend eight schools judged not to be meeting the statutory requirements for safeguarding.
20. While the majority of the schools inspected were promoting fundamental British values, four schools were not. Seven hundred children attend schools where inspectors considered that pupils were not being adequately prepared for life in modern Britain. This is deeply worrying given our national focus on this work over the past year. Equally worrying is that efforts to promote and embed these important values within the curriculum were undermined by the failure of leaders to model good practice, for example through the work of governors.

Recommendation

21. Ofsted has committed to inspect all non-association independent schools under the common inspection framework by August 2018. My serious concerns and conclusions based on these recent inspections lead me to recommend to you that DfE and Ofsted officials work together to prioritise the inspection of the remaining schools previously inspected by BSI. This will be to ensure that these inspections take place as early as possible within the three-year window.

Yours sincerely



Sir Michael Wilshaw

Annex A: the schools inspected

School name	URN	Inspection date	Overall effectiveness judgement
Al-Ameen Primary School	130244	30 September – 1 October 2015	Inadequate
Al-Aqsa School	134809	14–16 October 2015	Requires improvement
Al-Khair School	134585	30 September – 1 October 2015	Good
Bethany School	107168	14–16 October 2015	Good
Bury Park Educational Institute (Al - Hikmah Secondary School)	134807	29 September – 1 October 2015	Requires improvement
Covenant Christian School	106158	6–7 October 2015	Inadequate
Coventry Muslim School	103753	6–8 October 2015	Requires improvement
Darul Uloom Islamic High School	103586	13–15 October 2015	Inadequate
Emmanuel Christian School	134595	30 September – 2 October 2015	Requires improvement
Ghausia Girls' High School	131337	30 September – 2 October 2015	Inadequate
Islamic Preparatory School Wolverhampton	134422	7–8 October 2015	Requires improvement
Jameah Academy	133349	6–8 October 2015	Requires improvement
Jubilee House Christian School	131998	21–24 September 2015	Inadequate
Leicester Islamic Academy	120335	7–9 October 2015	Inadequate
Madni Institute	136955	29 September – 1 October 2015	Requires improvement
Manchester Islamic High School for Girls	130318	29 September – 1 October 2015	Outstanding
Manchester Muslim Preparatory School	105598	13–15 October 2015	Good
Palfrey Girls' School	104267	29 September – 1 October 2015	Inadequate
Palm Tree School	131983	7–9 October 2015	Good
Springfield Christian School	132110	13–15 October 2015	Inadequate
The Cornerstone School	125438	29 September – 1 October 2015	Inadequate
The King's School	116585	7–8 October 2015	Requires improvement