

## School inspection report

8 to 10 May 2024

### **Al-Ashraf Primary School**

Al-Ashraf Cultural Centre

Stratton Road

Gloucester

GL1 4HB

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

## Contents

<b>SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....</b>	<b>4</b>
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS .....	4
<b>SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....</b>	<b>5</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE .....	6
<b>SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....</b>	<b>7</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION .....	8
<b>SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING .....</b>	<b>9</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING .....	10
<b>SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....</b>	<b>11</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY .....	12
<b>SAFEGUARDING .....</b>	<b>13</b>
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING .....	13
<b>SCHOOL DETAILS .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>INSPECTION DETAILS .....</b>	<b>16</b>

## Summary of inspection findings

1. Al-Ashraf is a vibrant school that has strong links with parents and its locality. Most families live in the heart of Gloucester, within walking distance of the school. There is a strong sense of community with parents and pupils. They have a deep appreciation for the school and its leaders.
2. Leaders clearly articulate the aims and ethos to provide an academic education which is based on the national curriculum and in keeping with Islamic morals. They prioritise wellbeing and are effective in nurturing pupils.
3. Leaders and governors work well together to evaluate the school's performance and are clear and ambitious for its future development. Governors have close oversight and are supportive of leaders' ambitious plans.
4. The curriculum provides an effective academic education focused on mathematics, English and Islamic studies. Pupils develop strong numeracy and linguistic skills. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use an appropriate range of resources and methods to enable pupils to make typically good academic progress. Pupils are well motivated and interested in lessons. They benefit from regular feedback, especially verbal, in most lessons. Leaders make effective use of assessment data to check and support pupils' progress.
5. Pupils' aesthetic and creative skills are less well developed because there are relatively few opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to develop them.
6. There are a limited range of extra-curricular activities at lunchtime with relatively few pupils taking part.
7. A well delivered personal social and health (PSHE) programme promotes online safety, relationships, tolerance and individual liberty, preparing pupils well for their futures in a culturally diverse society. Pupils speak openly and eloquently about the need for mutual respect and consistently demonstrate the school's values of kindness and tolerance. Standards of behaviour are high.
8. Premises and buildings are well maintained. There are effective systems in place for health and safety, fire safety and first aid. The school keeps meticulous records of regular internal and external audits of provision.
9. Pupils feel happy and safe in an environment where the school, families and the community have shared values and mutual respect. Pupils' understanding of social responsibility is promoted well through good links with many of the city's organisations, including local charities, the civic trust and sports clubs.
10. The school has a firmly embedded culture of safeguarding, which reflects its ethos of promoting the care and welfare of each pupil. All appropriate recruitment checks are carried out and recorded. Staff have a thorough understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures, which link effectively with local safeguarding agencies.

## The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

### Recommended next steps

The leaders should:

- improve pupils' aesthetic and creative skills by including more opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to develop them
- create a co-ordinated programme of extra-curricular activities which better prepares pupils for life beyond school.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders and governors work closely together to ensure that the school consistently delivers an education in line with its aim of providing an academic education in a nurturing Islamic environment. Pupil wellbeing is at the heart of school decisions and there is a genuine care for the welfare of each individual. Leaders highlight the importance of wellbeing through assemblies and PSHE lessons and by linking the school with external wellbeing organisations such as the Gloucestershire Healthy Living and Learning charity.
12. Governors have a suitable system of committees which maintain good oversight through regular visits to see the school in action. Leaders provide governors with detailed reports which include compliance checklists. These reports are scrutinised and allow governors to challenge and support leaders effectively. Governors know the school well, are supportive of leaders' ambitious plans and proactive in communicating with parents and the community.
13. The school is very well organised and led. Leaders show tenacity and cohesiveness in managing the school. Development planning is robust and sensitive to the needs of the community. Leaders have a depth of knowledge about the school's effectiveness and are proactive and transparent about they can continue to develop. Since the previous inspection, pupils' literacy skills have been improved, which has been achieved by teaching a more rigorous writing skills programme across subjects. Curriculum planning is also more structured. This has enhanced provision across subjects and improved pupils' skills and knowledge in such areas as history, geography and art. There is an effective process of review and evaluation that underpins the school's on-going development.
14. Policies and procedures are well written and implemented effectively. External specialists are used to audit the quality of the provision and to provide expert advice where necessary. This is the case in areas such as safeguarding, special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and health and safety. Any recommendations for improvement are implemented promptly and effectively.
15. Areas of risk are comprehensively managed. Leaders identify and mitigate against any potential risks to pupils on site and for activities outside school. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly and adapted as necessary.
16. Complaints from parents are relatively few, but those that do emerge are handled sensitively through effective communication and by following the school's clear and robust complaints policy. Most concerns are resolved informally at an early stage.
17. Parents and prospective parents are provided with plentiful information, via a parents App and an informative website. Information to parents and prospective parents did not include the address and telephone number of the school's education trust. This omission was corrected promptly during the inspection. Regular communication with parents, in writing and in-person, ensures that they are well informed about pupils' progress and achievements. Parents play an active role in school life and this helps to create a close community ethos.
18. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Pupils are well aware and sensitive to the needs of others. The accessibility plan provides a framework to deliver equality and inclusivity.
19. The clear, consistent and empathetic approach of leaders and governors creates a strong sense of community in which pupils and parents feel valued and the independent school standards are met.

## The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

**20. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Leaders have designed and implemented an effective programme based on the national curriculum that provides an academic education focused on mathematics, English and Islamic studies.
22. Pupils develop strong numeracy and linguistic skills by the end of Year 6. Daily mathematics and English lessons are well planned, delivered with pace, a good range of resources and include the effective use of technology. Year 6 pupils, for example, can confidently add and subtract using fractions and decimals, and write persuasive speeches using alliteration and rhetorical questions.
23. Since the previous inspection the school has strengthened its approach to the teaching of writing by prioritising it in the curriculum and creating a clear framework for pupils to develop their writing skills across subjects. Pupils' achievement in writing is now typically, in line or above national norms.
24. Daily lessons in Islamic studies enable pupils to develop a deep understanding of Islam and Islamic culture. The teaching of Islam is established in school life.
25. Curriculum planning has been improved since the previous inspection and now most subjects have a rigorous and coherent scheme of work. As a result, pupils' skills develop well through the school. Schemes of work accommodate the ages, aptitudes and needs of the pupils.
26. The early years curriculum meets national requirements and is appropriate for the age and aptitude of the children. Children typically make good progress. Teaching is well planned and has good pace. Teachers create an environment where children are keen to participate, including plenty of opportunities for independent and collaborative imaginative play both in classrooms and outdoors.
27. Children who speak English as additional language (EAL) develop appropriately in their language skills, and particularly well in their speaking and listening skills, because teachers encourage conversation and discussion. Children are keen to speak and engage with each other and staff.
28. The curriculum is enhanced by the teaching of topics across subjects. For example, the theme of 'the environment' links the creation of tree images in art with both a science topic on deforestation and English lessons on poetry about the Amazon rainforest. Pupils enjoy this thematic approach and are effectively motivated to learn and to develop the knowledge and skills they need across a range of subjects.
29. Pupils' aesthetic and creative skills are less well developed because opportunities in these subjects are relatively few and often limited to a few school events such as house competitions and assemblies performed to parents.
30. The school is effective in identifying those pupils who have SEND using their internal system of assessment as well as advice and guidance from external specialists. The needs of these pupils, including those with an education health and care (EHC) plan are met effectively through a clear framework of support that is used. Leaders use advice and support from external agencies where appropriate. Pupils who have SEND typically make good progress.
31. The vast majority of pupils in the school speak English as an additional language. Teachers are effective in adapting their lessons to the language needs of pupils. They include the use of additional support from teaching assistants, a special phonics programme and a well-planned and rigorous

writing programme that links with other subjects to support pupils well. Consequently, these pupils make good progress.

32. Pupils are generally focused and motivated in lessons, particularly when teachers provide challenging activities that are adapted to the learning needs of the pupils. Generally, a respectful and purposeful atmosphere pervades lessons. However, in a few lessons in the younger age groups, a lack of appropriately challenging tasks hinders pupils' progress.
33. Teachers use a range of feedback approaches to provide pupils with clear guidance on improving their work. Pupils speak of how useful they find teachers' feedback, particularly the detailed verbal advice which helps them to understand their progress and next steps in their learning. Leaders' analysis of assessment data is used effectively to identify learning needs, evaluate pupils progress and inform planning and teaching.
34. In recent years, leaders have recognised the need to broaden pupils' skills by strengthening the extra-curricular provision. Lunchtime clubs such as French, debating and computing have been introduced. However, extra-curricular opportunities are still limited with relatively few pupils taking part.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation**

- 35. All the relevant Standards are met.**



## Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

36. Leaders provide a stimulating and coherent PSHE curriculum, which includes a relationships and health education (RSE) programme. Pupils discuss and study topics such as growing up, relationships, online safety and anti-bullying. The programme enshrines Islamic values and covers principles of tolerance and individual liberty, preparing pupils well for their futures in modern Britain. Pupils speak maturely and with empathy about the rights of individuals in society. Tolerance is reinforced by the teaching of Christianity and Judaism, and from a range of diverse visiting speakers including representatives from a Cheltenham synagogue and a local Church of England vicar.
37. Islamic spirituality is at the heart of school life. Leaders and staff instil a deep understanding and appreciation of Islam through daily lessons on the theory and practice of the religion. At the beginning of each day, leaders warmly greet the pupils and then speak to them collectively about the importance of the school values. This ensures that spiritual values are well embedded in everyday life. Pupils demonstrate this in the way they conduct themselves and relate to others.
38. Pupils are typically warm and friendly. They demonstrate high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem, speaking openly and freely with each other and their teachers. Pupil-elected wellbeing ambassadors in Years 3 to 6 promote wellbeing and kindness. They support pupils in the playground and help to resolve any unhappiness or conflict that arises. Pupils complete their classroom charts to indicate their emotional wellbeing, helping staff to identify and resolve any unhappiness quickly. Adults provide effective supervision in the playground and around the building. Pupils say they are well supported and can turn to an adult for help if necessary.
39. Mutual respect between staff and pupils and clear protocols for conduct ensure that standards of behaviour are consistently high. Pupils are kind to each other. They say that on the very few occasions that poor behaviour occurs, it is resolved quickly and appropriately by staff. The school has an extensive system of rewards, including house points, stickers, certificates and regular awards in assembly for kindness, all of which are effective in promoting high standards of behaviour.
40. Bullying is extremely rare. Each class has a pupil who is trained to act as an anti-bullying ambassador. These pupils assist staff in resolving any minor issues before they become serious. Pupils speak positively about the effectiveness of this system. Appropriate online safety lessons are provided in PSHE lessons and assemblies, which help pupils to develop a good understanding of how to stay safe whilst using their devices.
41. Pupils' roles of responsibility include heads of school, school council, wellbeing and anti-bullying ambassadors. Pupils are proud of these roles, which develop a sense of responsibility and self-esteem.
42. Pupils' physical wellbeing is suitably developed through weekly PE lessons, comprising a range of sports including gymnastics, swimming, rounders and tennis. Year 5 pupils benefit from horse riding lessons at a local farm. The physical and mental health of early years children is well developed through access to an effective range of activities in a free-flowing outdoor play area adjacent to their classroom as well as weekly visits to a local woodland park.

43. The spacious buildings are maintained to a high standard. Health and safety checks are carried out regularly and appropriately, and meticulous records are kept. Staff training in first aid, fire safety, risk assessments, educational visits and health and safety is thorough.
44. The school makes good use of external specialists to audit and provide advice on health and safety and fire safety. Prompt action is taken to remedy any issues raised. Fire drills are carried out regularly and appropriately.
45. Suitably trained staff administer first aid in a prompt and effective manner using the well-equipped first aid room. In the early years, parents are informed swiftly of all accidents and injuries using accident forms. Parents of older pupils are informed by email with accompanying information.
46. Admission and attendance registers are maintained appropriately and meet all required standards. Attendance rates are high and parents are contacted quickly in the case of any unexplained absences.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing**

- 47. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

48. Al-Ashraf has with close links with parents and local organisations. Most families and staff live within walking distance of the school. A strong community ethos enables parents and pupils to have a deep appreciation and great respect for its leaders and their values. This impacts very positively on the pupils' social development.
49. Leaders have created links with the local community that are well integrated in the curriculum. Children in early years regularly use a local woodland area for outdoor learning lessons. Orienteering lessons in Gloucester allow older pupils to develop an appreciation of the city. History lessons cover the siege of Gloucester and tours of the city by the civic trust, and geography lessons include topics on the local waterways. Representatives from the county cricket club, rugby club and local football teams provide sports coaching that both develops pupils' physical skills and encourages them join community sports clubs. Pupils are proactive in supporting local charities such as *deaf awareness* and the city's food banks. The school's good links with the local community contribute positively to developing pupils' social and cultural understanding.
50. Democratic values are at the heart of the school's ethos. Adults listen to pupils and take on board their views and opinions. Pupils also have their voices heard through the pupil-elected school council, assemblies, debating clubs and newsletters. School council members have been instrumental in decisions about acquiring new playground equipment and an outdoor library.
51. History lessons cover the rule of law, and crime and punishment over the ages. There are effective links with Gloucestershire police who visit, present assemblies on law and enforcement and train pupils as 'mini-police officers'. Pupils speak eloquently about British law enforcement and the need for rules, rewards and sanctions.
52. Pupils show great tolerance to each other and when speaking about individual differences in people. Religious education lessons cover a range of world religions. Pupils develop a broad understanding and appreciation of Britain's culturally diverse society through visits to synagogues, links with a Church of England school and visits from speakers of different religions to discuss such matters as the holocaust and the importance of Christmas to Christians.
53. Pupils learn about economics and finance through lessons in mathematics which cover topics such as interest rates and mortgages. Older pupils enjoy developing their entrepreneurial skills through the *make £10 grow* challenge, in which they create and manage their own small businesses.
54. Children in early years discuss their ideas and thoughts freely, collaborate well in the classroom and playground. They demonstrate strong social skills for their age.
55. Leaders provide a career day when pupils can talk to a range of professionals including police officers, lawyers, firefighters and pharmacists. This helps pupils to develop an understanding of potential career choices.

**The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society**

**56. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Safeguarding

57. Pupils' welfare is promoted through a strong culture of care and highly effective safeguarding arrangements which follow statutory guidance.
58. Staff have a thorough understanding of the school's safeguarding processes and are confident about how they ensure the safety and wellbeing of the pupils. Leaders, staff and governors are appropriately trained. There are regular updates at staff meetings, training sessions and through a weekly staff bulletin. This includes online safety, which together with an appropriate internet filtering system, contributes to keeping pupils safe online. Prevent training is thorough and effective. Staff are fully aware of the school's appropriate policy and procedures for mitigating the risk of extremism.
59. The school operates an effective system of recording and managing safeguarding concerns that aids communication and helps to keep pupils safe. Detailed and extensive documentation for concerns is kept, and monitored effectively. Staff have a clear understanding of the school's code of conduct, whistleblowing policy and safeguarding processes and are confident and well equipped to use them. Suitable arrangements for the handling of allegations against staff are included in safeguarding procedures.
60. Leaders respond well to any safeguarding concerns. They liaise with relevant external agencies when appropriate. There is an immediate response policy for pupils missing from school which ensures staff manage concerns about absence promptly and effectively. Attendance rates are high. Leaders and staff know the contextual safeguarding risks facing pupils beyond the school and are effective in mitigating them.
61. Staff listen carefully to the views of pupils. Pupils also have the opportunity to share concerns confidentially via a worry box system but typically, prefer to talk to adults or pupils who act as wellbeing ambassadors. Pupils say they feel safe and valued.
62. The record of staff appointments is very well maintained. All appropriate pre-employment recruitment checks are carried out and recorded. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) plays a key role in the recruitment of new staff including additional safeguarding training as part of the induction programme.
63. The safeguarding governor works closely with the DSL and has the relevant background and experience to carry out this role effectively. Governors regularly review the school's safeguarding work to ensure that everyone follows appropriate procedures whenever safeguarding concerns arise.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

**All the relevant Standards are met.**

## School details

<b>School</b>	Al-Ashraf Primary School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	6081
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1134963
<b>Address</b>	Al Ashraf Primary School Al Ashraf Cultural Centre Stratton Road Gloucester GL1 4HB
<b>Phone number</b>	01452 503533
<b>Email address</b>	apatel3@al-ashraf.gloucs.sch.uk
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://al-ashraf.org.uk/primary">https://al-ashraf.org.uk/primary</a>
<b>Proprietor</b>	Al-Madani Educational Trust
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Abdullah AH Patel
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Abdullah AS Patel
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 11
<b>Number of pupils</b>	162
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	10 to 12 March 2020

## Information about the school

64. Al-Ashraf Primary School is an independent co-educational day school situated in the heart of Gloucester. Founded in 2006, the school is under the proprietorship of the Al-Madani Educational Trust and is administered by a board of governors. The school operates a model of four mixed-age classes: early years, Years 1 and 2; Years 3 and 4; Years 5 and 6.
65. There are 53 children in the early years setting, which is situated on the main school site.
66. The school has identified 11 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Few pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
67. Most pupils speak English as an additional language.
68. The school states its aim is to provide an education based on the national curriculum, in keeping with Islamic morals. It seeks to foster a nurturing Islamic environment that cultivates academic excellence, spiritual and personal growth, with pupils who will grow to reach their full potential, benefitting the community and wider society.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

8 to 10 May 2024

69. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

70. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

71. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.



**How are association independent schools in England inspected?**

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **[www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net)**.

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