

## School inspection report

30 April to 2 May 2024

# **Birchfield Independent Girls' School**

30 Beacon Hill

Aston

Birmingham

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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'.

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## Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders are experienced, committed and ambitious in their aim to develop the whole child in a dynamic, spiritual and purposeful community. They work towards meeting this aim by providing an effective academic curriculum that also reflects the school's Islamic ethos.
2. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school through site visits, learning walks, regular meetings with reports from senior staff and the management of building projects such as the refurbishment of the science laboratory. This oversight ensures that the school meets the Standards.
3. Teaching is well planned, and teachers have good subject knowledge. The most effective lessons feature engaging teaching and communication with the pupils, which motivates them to develop their knowledge and progress rapidly. However, teaching is not consistently effective across all areas of the curriculum.
4. Pupils who have educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported, and their individual needs are met sympathetically and effectively. Leaders monitor their progress and provide additional support when required.
5. The school has a robust and effective approach to safeguarding. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that they have a trusted adult to turn to and that their concerns will be taken seriously. Staff and governors receive appropriate safeguarding training. Governors monitor the school's safeguarding arrangements effectively, including through an annual safeguarding audit.
6. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons, which are topic based and adapted to cover current issues in society, provide pupils with an understanding of the responsibilities of British citizens.
7. Leaders and staff consistently have high expectations of behaviour throughout lessons and activities. As a result, pupils take responsibility for their behaviour in lessons and in unstructured time.
8. Pupils are prepared for the next stages in their education through the comprehensive PSHE programme, including relationship and sex education (RSE), and effective careers education.

## 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

Leaders should:

- ensure that teaching across all subjects enables pupils to make as much progress as possible.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Leaders have the necessary knowledge skills and understanding to carry out their roles effectively. The senior leadership team works collaboratively and sets high expectations, engaging with pupils and parents to successfully communicate their aim to develop the whole child in a dynamic, spiritual and purposeful community.
10. The school has a deeply embedded ethos to provide an Islamic education intended to develop the whole child in a dynamic, spiritual and purposeful community. This ethos is communicated clearly through inset sessions, weekly staff meetings, assemblies, form times and is modelled by the leadership team. The ethos of the school informs all aspects of strategic decision-making. Leaders have a comprehensive school development plan which covers all areas of school life and has detailed actions, responsibilities and timescales. The plan is subject to regular review with monitoring of progress towards the success criteria.
11. Governors have effective oversight through visits to the school, meetings, and monitoring of policies and their implementation. The safeguarding governor is in regular contact with those with designated safeguarding responsibilities, as a source of advice and support. The oversight of health and safety takes the form of regular on-site meetings and the organisation and effective monitoring of building projects.
12. The school has appropriate links with relevant outside agencies to promote the wellbeing and progress of pupils. Leaders ensure that they work closely with external agencies in their management of health and safety and fire, reacting appropriately to any recommendations that external specialists make relating to these.
13. Leaders ensure that appropriate policies are in place and implemented effectively. They check that staff and pupils understand their relevance and carry out their obligations responsibly. All staff receive annual safeguarding and health and safety training.
14. Leaders have a detailed understanding of the risk associated with the school and the particular contextual risks of its location. The induction programme for new staff covers risk assessment and all staff receive annual update training. Risk assessments identify potential risks carefully and mitigate against these. They are stored centrally and are monitored by leaders and governors. All areas of the site and activities are risk-assessed. Staff visit off-site venues before a visit with pupils to check their suitability.
15. All required information is made available to parents and prospective parents, including through the school's website. Parents receive regular reports on their child's progress which include target grades and guidance on how to improve.
16. Leaders implement a suitable complaints procedure effectively. Complaints are responded to promptly and in detail. Records are kept of all formal complaints and the stage that they were resolved, along with any actions taken. Governors have oversight of the complaints received and review the complaints log in terms of patterns of complaints, actions taken and future adjustments in procedures.
17. Leaders ensure that the requirements of the Equality Act are met by ensuring that policies and procedures reflect these effectively, and through the promotion of mutual respect between all

groups of pupils modelled by the teaching staff. There is a detailed accessibility plan in place which includes appropriate actions to ensure access to the school's provision for any pupils with a disability.

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

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

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

19. The school provides a curriculum through which pupils experience an academic education and develop linguistic, mathematical, scientific and technological skills. The curriculum is supported by detailed schemes of work for each subject in which key components, such as mutual respect and individual liberty, are mapped and cross referenced with the PSHE programme.
20. Results at GCSE are above the national averages at grades 9 to 4. The progress of pupils is tracked through two key pieces of work under test conditions each half term and end of term tests. Leaders use their evaluation of pupils' progress to identify where any additional support needs to be put into place to help pupils progress well.
21. Teaching ensures that pupils' experience of the curriculum takes into account their needs, prior attainment and age. The leader of provision for pupils who have SEND assesses their needs effectively to develop individual learning profiles which are made available to the teaching staff. Pupils who have SEND receive support in class or individual support as required. Their progress is monitored each half term through an individual interview with the leader of provision for pupils who have SEND and appropriate access arrangements are in place for pieces of assessed unaided work and for external examinations.
22. The leader of provision for pupils who have SEND provides pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) with effective additional support with vocabulary and other aspects of language when required.
23. Teachers typically plan and teach lessons well and include opportunities for pupils to challenge themselves by choosing 'bronze, silver or gold' level tasks supplemented by extension work. In the most effective lessons dynamic teaching, clear communication of good subject knowledge and a positive rapport with the pupils leads to rapid progress and high levels of engagement with learning. However, the effectiveness of teaching varies across subjects, with some lessons lacking stimulation or interest to the pupils, hence limiting progress.
24. There is a programme of academic boosters which cover particular topics requested by pupils and practice examination questions related to them. These sessions are well attended and build confidence and skills in these areas.
25. Verbal and written feedback from teachers indicates areas for improvement. As a result, pupils understand how to make progress and develop their work further.
26. The school ensures that pupils have the opportunity to develop their skills through a range of extra-curricular activities at lunch time, off-timetable days throughout the year, such as 'culture day', educational visits and a wide range of community and charitable projects. These opportunities allow pupils to develop their physical skills through activities such as kick boxing, creative skills through drama, confidence through public speaking and singing and an awareness of their responsibilities to the local community through involvement with local allotments and food banks.

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

#### 27. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

28. Pupils develop self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence through the effective application of the ethos of the school which is based on kindness and mutual respect. This is embedded in the school through all lessons where encouragement is given to pupils to express their views clearly and with respect and in discussions which are led by teachers ensuring that everyone is involved and that the views of quieter pupils are heard. Extra-curricular activities such as drama club and public speaking club offer further opportunities for pupils to develop their confidence and self-awareness.
29. An understanding of different faiths and their spiritual viewpoints is developed through the PSHE programme, in religious studies (RS) lessons, and in visits to local places of worship such as a synagogue and the celebration of religious events such as Diwali in assemblies.
30. The PSHE programme is arranged so that age-appropriate versions of the particular topic at hand are taught to all year groups at the same time. This enables discussion within and across year groups and opportunities for the topic to be consolidated in assemblies and workshops. The programme is divided into sections covering PSHE, relationships and sex education (RSE), health and wellbeing and living in the wider world, with each section divided into topics with specific content for each year group. The programme is adaptive and is adjusted to address current issues in society related to wellbeing, such as recent problems with vaping in the local area. The school responded by arranging a workshop so that the pupils were fully informed and able to make their own assessment of the risks involved.
31. The school supports pupils with their mental health through the provision of a specific mental health lead who has received training in this area. Pupils receive guidance on how to manage stress and anxiety.
32. RSE is taught as part of the PSHE programme. It is well planned, and parents are informed of the topics to be covered in advance. Topics covered in the course, such as consent, arranged marriages and respectful relationships, give the pupils the self-confidence to make informed decisions about their future relationships.
33. Leaders and managers promote positive behaviour by emphasising and rewarding good behaviour through praise, house points, 'student of the month' awards, emails home to parents, certificates and prizes. Misbehaviour rarely occurs and when it does it is often minor. Clear sanctions are applied fairly, and detailed records of incidents are kept and analysed for patterns. Prefects play a helpful role in supporting staff to maintain discipline and supporting teachers, fostering a culture of responsibility and teamwork.
34. There is a detailed anti-bullying policy which is implemented effectively so that there is little, if any, bullying. Pupils are taught about the harm that bullying can do, and the actions they can take to combat it.
35. The first aid room which provides a suitable environment for pupils who are injured or unwell. Medication is stored safely and administered effectively. Staff have up-to-date first aid training and a first aider accompanies every off-site trip.



36. Supervision of pupils throughout the school day is thorough and carried out with care and kindness. Staff are deployed effectively so that they are always available to support pupils.
37. Admissions and attendance registers contain all required information. Leaders inform the local authority of pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard times. Leaders promote high attendance by following up all absences and rewarding pupils with full attendance records.
38. Health and safety and fire safety measures are effective. Leaders arrange regular checks and maintenance on, for example, electrical and fire-fighting equipment. Staff receive appropriate fire safety training and fire evacuation drills take place at least once per term.
39. There is a suitable programme of physical education. Pupils are able to choose from a variety of activities such as football, kick boxing and mindfulness activities that develop physical health and stamina and specific sports-related skills. Pupils gain an understanding of the importance of a balanced diet through PSHE and food and nutrition lessons.

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

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

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

41. Teaching supports values of democracy, rule of law, liberty, respect and tolerance as these are taught explicitly through the academic curriculum in such subjects as history and geography, PSHE, tutor periods, enrichment activities and Islamic studies. The PSHE programme covers life in British society and democratic values through such topics as extremism, criminal law, and hate crime. This is supported by weekly online current affairs lessons, where pupils discuss and vote on current issues in society, and talks by outside speakers, whose presentations are inspected in advance to ensure a balanced perspective. Pupils are alert to national and local political issues and are able to speak sensitively and articulately about them. Pupils understand the importance of learning about the lives and beliefs of people of different faiths and cultures as covered in the PSHE programme, RS lessons, assemblies and tutorials. Such measures successfully foster a positive environment of mutual respect and pupils' appreciation of diversity.
42. Economic education is taught effectively in the PSHE programme through topics such as managing a budget and opening a bank account. Pupils gain practical experience in their fundraising initiatives, where they purchase materials, set competitive prices and calculate their profit which they donate to charities.
43. Leaders have expanded careers provision to ensure that pupils have access to information about a wider range of careers through specific careers days in schools, talks on careers by outside speakers and activities in school in 'National Careers Week'. Pupils receive specific support towards writing a letter of application and advice from a careers advisor on how to write a curriculum vitae. This advice is supported by visits to local sixth-form colleges and attendance at a careers fair. The school runs public speaking classes to build confidence and all Year 10 pupils undertake work experience. As a result, pupils gain an understanding of the world of work and a broad range of possible career and educational choices.
44. Pupils develop leadership skills through roles such as being members of the school council, head of house, prefect and head or deputy pupil. All positions are voted for by a class or the whole school. The school council has two pupils from each year group for which the pupils apply and give a presentation to the class as to what they would bring to the role. The council has been instrumental in changing the system for library days, supporting 'World Earth Day' and being involved in decisions about renovations in the information and communication technology (ICT) room. Older pupils act as academic and pastoral mentors for younger pupils having received guidance on their safeguarding responsibilities in this regard.
45. Pupils are taught about the role of law in addressing wrongdoing in society. Their understanding of the responsibilities of living in a democratic society is honed throughout the PSHE programme and academic lessons.
46. Pupils support their local community by donating to foodbanks, inviting the local community into school during and following religious festivals, and supporting senior citizens with technological skills. They choose and raise money for local and national charities, such as through bake sales. Through involvement in the local community, such as helping in local allotments and foodbanks, pupils develop their social skills, their confidence in building respectful relationships and their sense of responsibility towards others.

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

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

## Safeguarding

48. The school has a robust and comprehensive approach to safeguarding. Governors maintain effective oversight of safeguarding procedures through regular contact with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and scrutiny of regular safeguarding reports and an annual safeguarding audit. The safeguarding policy reflects local arrangements as well as current statutory guidance and is reviewed annually by the governing body. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding undergo regular update training to equip them for their role.
49. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities respond appropriately to any safeguarding concerns that are raised, including through requesting advice from and referring to relevant external agencies when this is required. Leaders maintain a suitable and secure log of safeguarding concerns and the actions taken in response to these and submit an annual safeguarding review to the local authority.
50. Staff training on safeguarding takes place annually and in inset sessions throughout the school year. New staff undergo comprehensive safeguarding training on joining the school. There is a low-level concerns policy which is understood and used appropriately by staff. Staff are kept aware of any contextual safeguarding risks identified by the local authority and undertake appropriate training about the 'Prevent' duty.
51. Leaders encourage pupils to share any worries that they have. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that they have a trusted adult that they can talk to and that their concerns will be taken seriously.
52. The school undertakes all required safer recruitment checks on new employees and records these accurately in a single central register of appointments. Safer recruitment training has been undertaken by staff and governors who are involved in recruitment.

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

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

## School details

<b>School</b>	Birchfield Independent Girls' School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	330/6083
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1053283
<b>Address</b>	Birchfield Independent Girls' School 30 Beacon Hill Aston Birmingham B6 6JU
<b>Phone number</b>	0121 327 7707
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<b>Website</b>	www.bigs.bham.sch.uk
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mr Mohammed Rahman
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Mohammed Rahman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Rehana Mogra
<b>Age range</b>	11 to 17
<b>Number of pupils</b>	133
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	11 to 13 February 2020

## Information about the school

54. Birchfield Independent Girls' School is an independent day school for female pupils located in the centre of Birmingham. The school was founded in 1990 and the current proprietor took over the school in 2015. The school is overseen by a board of three governors, the chair of which is the proprietor. The school was previously inspected by Ofsted.
55. The school has identified two pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
56. English is an additional language for 10 pupils.
57. The school states its aims are for all round excellence through Islamic education, that aims to develop the whole child in a dynamic, spiritual and purposeful community. The school motto is 'in the footsteps of Aisha (RA)', whom the school describes as the mother of believers renowned for her passion for education and excellence in manners and conduct.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

30 April to 2 May 2024

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

59. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussion with the chair of 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.

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

61. This is the first inspection of the school by ISI.

**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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