

Inspection of The Wisdom Academy

Sycamore Road, Aston, Birmingham, West Midlands B6 5UH

Inspection dates: 16 to 18 November 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to Wisdom Academy. They appreciate the individual care and support they receive from staff. The school's Islamic ethos plays a central role in school life. Leaders set high expectations for pupils to achieve academic success and become role-model Muslim citizens of the future. Many pupils rise to this.

Pupils behave extremely well. They smile and greet visitors politely. In lessons, pupils show a keen desire to do well and listen carefully to their teachers. Pupils feel safe in school and know who to go to if there is a problem or concern. Bullying is dealt with quickly when it occurs.

The curriculum is suitably broad and varied. Pupils study a range of subjects and topics from the primary through to the secondary phase. In many subjects, pupils do well. However, the curriculum that children experience in the early years is not as well planned as it could be.

Leaders provide many ways for pupils to broaden their horizons and pursue their talents and interests. Pupils take part in activities such as coding, cricket and calligraphy clubs. They benefit from a range of trips to local attractions such as the Botanical Gardens. Staff also run a popular residential trip to Snowdonia.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have ensured that pupils study a range of subjects across both the primary and secondary phases. Leaders have carefully considered how the teaching of Islamic studies and Arabic support the delivery of the secular curriculum. In many subjects, the curriculum is carefully planned and sequenced so that pupils build on what they know and remember. By the end of the secondary phase, many pupils achieve well in a range of GCSE qualifications.

Leaders know how important it is for every child to learn to read quickly. They have put in place a well-structured phonics programme that begins in the early years and builds successfully into key stage 1. Teachers provide daily opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their phonics. They assess pupils regularly to check what sounds and letters pupils know and remember. This helps to identify those that may be falling behind. Where pupils do start to struggle, leaders provide clear and targeted support to help them catch up. Teachers ensure that the books that pupils read match the sounds they know. This includes in the regular family reading sessions in school. Parents and carers value this time to see how pupils are taught to read and how they can best support their child at home.

Teachers use their subject knowledge well to deliver the curriculum. Where this is particularly strong, such as in art in the secondary phase, teachers use this knowledge to help structure lessons effectively. These teachers also provide subject-specific feedback to pupils so they know how to improve. This helps pupils to make

good progress. However, the way teachers check understanding of pupils' learning is not consistent and this does not always pinpoint gaps in knowledge.

Leaders provide time for staff from both the primary and secondary phases to work together to discuss the curriculum. Subject teachers collaborate cross-phase to ensure that pupils are building on what they know over time and can remember more of what they are taught. Additionally, staff are given time to develop their knowledge of how best to teach individual subjects. As a result, in many subjects, pupils are confident in their learning.

Children in the early years enjoy a spacious classroom with a range of resources that are appropriate to their stage of development. Children are taught to share and take turns and do this successfully. They listen carefully to their teacher and have warm, friendly relationships with staff. However, the curriculum in early years is not coherently structured. It is not clear how teachers build on what children know and how they are prepared for their next stage of learning. In addition, teachers do not precisely check what children know and can do. This does not help to identify misconceptions so that teachers can then adapt their teaching.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are provided with appropriate support to access the school's curriculum. Leaders have put in place individual education plans for those pupils who need additional help. These plans are checked regularly and include meetings with parents. However, the implementation of strategies to support pupils with SEND is not always consistent.

Leaders have implemented an appropriate personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum. Pupils' work in both PSHE and citizenship helps to enhance many aspects of their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Leaders have thought carefully about the balance of teaching in Islamic studies and PSHE to support pupils' understanding of a range of issues. This includes topics such as different types of relationships and consent. Leaders have placed particular emphasis on pupils' mental health and well-being. Pupils are taught about where they can seek help if they have worries or anxieties. However, on some occasions, the PSHE curriculum is not always implemented as well as it could be.

Leaders provide effective support and guidance around careers. Every year, the school runs a careers day which is open to all pupils. In Year 10, all pupils undertake work experience and go to a range of places beyond the local area. In Year 11, pupils have a careers workshop and a further two interview sessions. Pupils value the many different opportunities they are given to engage with the world of work and understand the routes that are available to them when they leave school.

The proprietor has a knowledgeable background in education and a clear vision for the school. He has a secure understanding of many of the independent school standards. However, the school's admission policy does not allow boys to be admitted at key stages 3 or 4 which is in breach of the school's registration status as a mixed school.

Leaders are not monitoring and evaluating closely enough some aspects of their work, including the way teachers implement the PSHE curriculum. Leaders are mindful of staff's workload and are considerate of their well-being. The school is compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Parents are extremely positive about the school. They recognise that leaders have high aspirations for their children and want them to achieve well. Parents are appreciative of the feedback that staff provide about their child's progress.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a suitable safeguarding policy that is published on its website.

Leaders ensure that they undertake all appropriate checks on staff before they are appointed. This includes checks for those staff who have worked abroad.

Leaders have a clear system in place for staff to record a concern about a child. Records kept by leaders show that these are up to date and they act in a timely way to get pupils the help and support they need. Staff receive regular training on safeguarding, including training relating to the annual update to government guidance. Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe through form time, assemblies and the PSHE curriculum.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The early years curriculum is not coherently planned and structured. This means that teachers are not building carefully on what children know and can do, and this slows their learning. Leaders should ensure that the early years curriculum is sequenced effectively so that children are better prepared for future learning.
- Teachers in the early years do not check children's learning carefully enough. This means that misconceptions and errors sometimes go unspotted and are not addressed quickly. Leaders should ensure that teachers check learning systematically so that they can adapt teaching to help support and address gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Leaders are not closely monitoring and evaluating specific aspects of their work. This means that there are inconsistencies in the way key areas, such as the PSHE curriculum and support for pupils with SEND, are being implemented. Leaders should ensure that they carefully check all aspects of their work in order that the school continues to progress and move forward.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	135882
DfE registration number	330/6206
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10220404
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	225
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Dr Saeed Al-Ghadie
Headteacher	Sakhawat Ali
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,200
Telephone number	0121 572 1447
Website	www.thewisdomacademy.co.uk
Email address	admin@thewisdomacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 to 3 May 2018

Information about this school

- The school was found to be in breach of its registration agreement as a mixed sex school for its cohort of secondary pupils. The school's admissions criteria have been reviewed by the Department for Education (the regulator) and the school has taken swift action to ensure that its registration status is compliant with requirements. On this basis, we have determined to not factor the registration breach as part of our inspection judgements.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has closed the Nursery provision.
- The school has a new single proprietor Dr Saeed Al-Ghadie. He was previously the chair of the United Children's Foundation Trust which was responsible for governance.
- The school has an Islamic ethos.
- The school's last standard inspection was on 1 to 3 May 2018.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the proprietor, the headteacher and other senior leaders. Inspectors also met with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics, art and design and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors considered the school's curriculum documentation, visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work. Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their learning in these subjects. Inspectors also spoke to pupils about their wider experiences of school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including school policies, risk assessments, attendance information and behaviour logs.
- When inspecting safeguarding, inspectors looked at the school's procedures for recruiting staff, the quality of staff's training and the procedures that are in place to keep pupils safe. Inspectors also considered the suitability of the school buildings and leaders' work to reduce the risks that had been identified.

Inspection team

Mark Howes, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Russell Hinton

Ofsted Inspector

Sarah Ashley

Ofsted Inspector

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