

Inspection of Fitrah Sips

55 Northumberland Road, Southampton, Hampshire SO14 0EJ

Inspection dates: 16 to 18 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

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 are proud to attend Fitrah Sips school. They like learning about their Muslim faith and heritage. Pupils are passionate about 'putting our faith into action' through making a positive contribution to British society. They regularly raise money for local charities and are currently taking part in a 'green influencers' project by helping to improve the local community playground.

Pupils feel happy and safe in school. Pupils like the small class size because it means that they can be friends with everyone. They say that the school is like a family and call each other 'sister' and 'brother'. Pupils typically behave well. On the rare occasion that pupils fall out with each other, adults help sort it out.

Staff expect pupils to work hard, and to be polite and respectful of others. Pupils respond well. They focus on their work, listen to each other's opinions and are eager to contribute their own.

Leaders place a high priority on teaching about equalities. They make sure that pupils learn to understand that there are different ways to live a good life. For example, pupils learn about other religions and lifestyles.

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

Pupils follow a broad curriculum that is adapted well to match the needs and interests of pupils in this Islamic school. For example, in history, pupils enjoy studying Islamic history as well as British and world history. Pupils consider learning Arabic and the Qur'an as core subjects alongside the more traditional core subjects of English and mathematics.

Leaders have made sure that the curriculum in each subject is planned and sequenced so that pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), build up strong knowledge and skills over time. The English curriculum is a particular strength. Leaders recognised that pupils' reading had suffered as a result of the pandemic. They have therefore prioritised reading strongly, with more frequent practice in school and a sharper approach to making sure that pupils read regularly at home. Any pupil who struggles with reading gets extra support to help them. Leaders have chosen texts that reflect a range of cultures, religions and backgrounds. As a result of this focus, leaders have noted that pupils' reading has improved this term. Leaders are confident that pupils now read more fluently and are better able to talk about the books they read than before.

In mathematics, the order in which the curriculum is delivered has been adapted to fill gaps in learning caused by the pandemic. Pupils have started the year by focusing on geometry because leaders recognised that pupils were not accurate enough in their work when working from home. Leaders make sure that pupils get regular practice to revisit prior mathematics learning to help them remember their

number facts. However, the delivery of the mathematics curriculum is not always as efficient as it could be. Sometimes, pupils are given too long to explore different approaches to solving problems, which limits the time they have to spend on practising the most efficient method. This slows their learning.

Staff are dedicated to their work. Many are volunteers who devote their time to the school because of their strong moral beliefs that all pupils who wish to should be able to receive a good-quality Islamic education. Inexperienced teachers in particular are appreciative of the support they receive, which helps them to plan and deliver the learning in their subject. They adapt learning well to support the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders have purchased useful resources that help inexperienced teachers provide a curriculum that builds pupils' knowledge effectively. Teachers know where to find additional resources to augment the curriculum, for example in history and geography, where those in school are not as up to date as they could be.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils benefit from a range of enrichment activities, such as visits to a zoo and undertaking various community projects. The school's ethos that 'Muslim values are British values' is woven through the curriculum. Leaders have made sure that what they teach about relationships reflects how people live their lives in multicultural modern Britain. For example, in personal, social and health education (PSHE), pupils learn about different sorts of families and spoke confidently about the importance of understanding lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights. Pupils explained that whatever type of family you live in, it is really important that it is a happy and kind family.

Pupils develop a strong understanding of democracy and civil institutions. Before the pandemic, the school frequently welcomed visitors such as local councillors, firefighters and Members of Parliament to talk to pupils about their work. Pupils are able to make decisions about aspects of the school, such as which charities to support, and changes to how playtimes are organised.

Leaders and trustees have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met. The premises are well kept and maintained. Leaders have made sure that the curriculum remains broad, despite significant funding challenges.

Since the previous inspection, trustees have become more involved with the school. However, they rely on the headteacher to tell them about the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and there is no independent scrutiny that would help them to know whether the headteacher's views are accurate. This limits the ability of trustees to hold leaders to account for the school's improvement. Furthermore, the records that leaders keep about behaviour and safeguarding are often disorganised, and management systems are inefficient.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding. They know pupils well, which contributes strongly to their safety and well-being. Staff know how to report and record concerns about pupils' behaviour and safety. Leaders understand that these records can contribute to their understanding of pupils' safety. While their recording systems are a little disorganised, they do enable leaders to notice when a pupil needs extra help. Leaders liaise well with external agencies to help keep pupils safe.

Leaders follow proper procedures when recruiting staff and inviting visitors into the school. This includes checking adults' safeguarding understanding and that they are safe to work with children. However, records of these checks are not organised well enough.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The proprietor and board of trustees rely on the headteacher to keep them informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, there is no strategic or independent oversight of the school. The proprietor needs to make sure that there are clear and effective systems in place to enable trustees to hold the headteacher to account for improving the school.
- Some record-keeping and procedures for management oversight are inefficient and disorganised. This hinders leaders' ability to run the school efficiently and creates a potential risk to effective safeguarding. Leaders need to improve the quality and management of records so that they are better able to evidence the work they do, including when recruiting staff and keeping children safe.

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.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	136210
DfE registration number	852/6011
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10210233
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	11
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Sabir Amin
Chair	Sabir Amin
Headteacher	Anas Al-Korj
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,700
Telephone number	02380 570849
Website	www.FitrahSchool.com
Email address	office@fitrahsips.com
Date of previous inspection	21 to 23 May 2019

Information about this school

- Fitrah Sips is an independent day school. Pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds. All current pupils are Muslim, although the school admits pupils from any faith and none.
- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils attending the school has decreased substantially. At the time of the inspection, there were only pupils in Years 5 and 6, all taught together in one class.
- The school is governed by a board of trustees. The chair is also the school's proprietor.
- 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 that the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that account in their evaluation.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- The inspector spoke with the proprietor, the headteacher and other school staff.
- The inspector conducted deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and PSHE. In each subject, they met with the subject leader and teachers. They visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils about their learning.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector checked the school's safeguarding and related policies and documentation. She met with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSL. She talked with staff and pupils about safeguarding matters. The inspector checked the school's records of the suitability of staff to work with pupils, including recruitment records and the single central record. She also spoke to a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector also checked a range of other school policies and procedures, looked at pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, and spoke with pupils and staff about behaviour and personal development.
- The inspector considered the five responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and met with one parent who visited the school. The inspector considered the six responses to the questionnaire for staff and the six responses to the pupils' questionnaire.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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