

Rochdale Girls School

Greenbank Road, Rochdale, Lancashire OL12 0HZ

Inspection dates

20–22 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school has improved significantly over the three years since the previous inspection thanks to the headteacher's good leadership and governors' high expectations.
- All of the standards for independent schools are now met. The trustees, governors and senior leaders have created a clear vision and ethos with pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development at its heart.
- Pupils make good progress, particularly in Years 9 to 11, and there is little difference between boys and girls. They start school with skills and knowledge that are average for 11- and 12-year-olds. Attainment in 2015 and 2016 was well above the national average, particularly in English, science and religious studies (RS).
- Pupils in Years 7 and 8 get off to a slow start in English and mathematics because they learn about, and repeat, many of the activities and topics they completed in primary school.
- Teaching is effective. There is a good rapport between the teachers and pupils who have a strong determination to succeed and improve their work and grades. The assessment system is effective in helping teachers to plan well-constructed lessons.
- Some teachers are better than others in challenging the most able pupils to extend their answers, to deepen their thinking and to apply their knowledge.
- Pupils feel safe. They are taught how to stay safe from extremism in all of its forms, from mental illness and from dangers when socialising with friends online.
- Attendance is above the national average and pupils are punctual despite some having to travel long distances. They are polite, friendly and well-behaved.
- The curriculum has improved. There is a greater range of subjects including art and design and three separate sciences. The curriculum, compared with most schools, is limited because there is no chance of studying some key subjects such as music, performing arts and design and technology.
- A significant strength of the school is the way in which the curriculum develops pupils' British values and sets them up well for life in modern Britain and for their future. All pupils in the last two years have progressed to further education, training or employment.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable all pupils, particularly the most able, to extend their answers and deepen their thinking by:
 - asking pupils to explain their thinking and methods fully
 - asking pupils to refer to evidence and references in texts or sources to justify their ideas and opinions
 - extending their written answers to questions so that they are more detailed and comprehensive.
- Make better use of the information from primary schools to challenge Year 7 and Year 8 pupils by:
 - finding out what pupils have covered in primary school, the methods they have been using and the quality of their work
 - starting Years 7 and 8 with work and activities that will build on what pupils already know and can do.
- Broaden the range of the curriculum so that pupils have a wider range of subjects to study and greater choice for their future careers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher provides good leadership. She has overseen and led improvements to the curriculum, to the quality of teaching, to pupils' outcomes. She has developed a culture of increasingly higher expectations of teachers and pupils which has raised pupils' expectations and aspirations for the future. She has made sure that the school now meets all of the independent school standards.
- Staff morale is high and they are well motivated. Staff expectations of pupils and their own practice has increased. They are well supported through training, coaching and through peer reviews to help them improve their practice. There is an effective system of checking on the quality of teaching through observing lessons, looking at pupils' work, asking pupils for their thoughts and through learning walks. This results in a teacher receiving personal feedback and a plan to improve further.
- The school works well with other specialists and agencies. The mathematics and English leaders, for example, regularly meet other specialist teachers in Rochdale local authority to make sure that they are up to date with latest guidance and practice. Teachers from the boys' and the girls' sites work closely together to improve and amend the assessment systems and the system to check on how well pupils are progressing.
- The curriculum is organised around the availability of staff and of resources, which means, for example, that history and geography are taught on one day a week and pupils are not taught English or mathematics daily. Leaders and governors continually review and reflect on the effectiveness of the curriculum on pupils' progress, which has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils now study art and design and have just started learning in the three different sciences rather than combined science. This will improve their prospects if they want a career in, for example, medicine or pharmacy. The range of subjects meets the standards. However, there are no opportunities for talented musicians to learn music or any of the performing arts such as dance and drama. Similarly, budding engineers or workers in technology have no opportunities to learn about textiles, engineering, business studies, resistant materials or cookery.
- There is a wider range of trips, visits and visitors to the school which add breadth and depth to pupils' education. There are a few extra-curricular activities which add well to pupils' development and progress, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, swimming, table tennis and pool. The space for boys to play outside is limited. There is a concrete outdoor space with no markings and no equipment to play with. To mitigate this, they come to the girls' site on a Saturday morning and use the facilities at the neighbouring primary school to play sport and learn physical education (PE).
- The strength of the curriculum is its highly positive impact on pupils' personal, social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. The school is not afraid to teach about complex moral dilemmas and issues as well as making sure that the curriculum covers the full range of diversity found in modern Britain. There is a good focus, for example, on understanding and being respectful of people from different faiths, those with different sexualities and those from different cultures. In art, for example, pupils explore and create their own work after learning about a wide range of artistic styles and traditions, including cubism, pointillism, abstract art and still life. The curriculum also covers pupils'

mental health well by considering anxiety, depression, coping with disappointment and resilience. As a result, pupils are well prepared to be good, informed and respectful citizens of modern Britain.

- The curriculum has a good focus on possible career options and the advice they receive is wide-ranging and impartial. The transition into further education is smooth, with lots of effective joint working with further education colleges.

Governance

- The trustees are ambitious and expectations of staff, pupils and the community are high. They are determined to have the highest outcomes for pupils possible. They have established, and follow up, their vision of enabling pupils to be well prepared for their futures in the community and importantly as good citizens of modern Britain. They have had a positive impact on raising the quality of the curriculum, teaching, assessment and school resources.
- The trustees and governors have an appropriate oversight over the independent school standards and they have ensured that they are all met. Some of the standards are met at a minimum level. There is a need, for example, to make that sure the accommodation for pupils to get changed and showered are more suitable and comfortable for secondary-aged pupils.
- The governing and trustee bodies have a good overview of pupils' outcomes and the strengths and areas for improvement in the school. For example, they knew about some of the limitations of a curriculum that is narrower than in most secondary schools and its impact on pupils. They are reflective and continually looking to improve. The governors also have an overview of the quality of teaching and of pupils' behaviour.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is an appropriate system in place to meet and greet visitors to the site, to sign them in and check their identity. The system to check on governors' and staff's clearance and suitability to work with children is effective.
- There has been effective training for adults to make sure that they know and understand their responsibilities regarding first aid, reporting incidents or allegations and reporting signs of extremism through 'Prevent'. The school's documentation is fit for purpose and well maintained but there are a few dates missing from the chronology of events. Leaders share information well and follow up any concerns.
- The governors and leaders have established a safeguarding culture in which pupils feel safe. They know the parents and families well, which means that they are well placed to work with them when there are lapses in pupils' attendance, grades or behaviour or if there are any other safeguarding concerns. There are good systems in place to track and follow up any pupil's absence.
- The school has a suitable safeguarding policy published on its website and leaders have worked well with safeguarding specialists in Rochdale local authority to ensure that the school meets the most recent government requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Most adults have good subject knowledge, which they use to good effect in constructing well-planned lessons and activities that help pupils to make good progress. Most use a range of activities to help pupils learn, for example using visual and practical resources in explaining the content of the lessons. They use their subject knowledge well, particularly in science, to make sure that pupils read, write and understand the technical vocabulary to a high level.
- One of the reasons why pupils make good progress is because they have a good rapport and trusting relationship with teachers and the lessons help them to be involved, busy and engaged in their learning. Homework adds to and consolidates pupils' learning.
- The teachers check pupils' activity and learning in lessons well and some make good use of pupils' answers to extend their understanding or knowledge further. There is a good focus on securing the foundations of understanding before asking pupils to move on to the next piece of work.
- A few teachers miss the chance to use what they have found to help pupils, particularly the most able, to extend their answers in more depth. Similarly some teachers miss the chance to ask pupils to reason, to explain their thinking or their findings or to deepen their understanding. Teachers in science and history ask pupils to explain their ideas and help them to think about their work more deeply. There are some missed chances for teachers to ask pupils to refer to evidence and references in texts or sources to justify their ideas and opinions and to extend their written answers to questions so that they are more detailed and comprehensive.
- Some teachers use questions well to assess what pupils can or cannot do or what they know or do not know. Other teachers miss the chance to find this out, which means that some teaching is not as challenging for some pupils as it could be. Pupils' work and knowledge is assessed frequently by teachers or other pupils. This is then used, particularly in Years 9 to 11, to plan lessons which build on pupils' prior knowledge.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. They have a good work ethic and are responsive and positive about teachers' feedback in helping them to learn and develop. They concentrate in lessons and spend time effectively helping other pupils who may be finding some parts of their work difficult.
- Pupils are active local and nationally in raising funds for good causes and helping to change things for the better. They actively and sensibly take on positions of responsibility such as through the school council.
- Pupils feel safe and they said they knew whom to go to with any worries or concerns. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe when reading messages on telephones or other devices and when playing games or socialising online. They said that bullying, including name-calling because of someone's race, perceived sexuality, beliefs or appearance, is very rare. The personal and social education at the school is high-quality

and helps pupils to develop resilience, self-awareness and understanding about people's differences. There is a good focus, for example, on healthy eating and keeping safe from peer pressure, anxiety and depression.

- The pupils receive impartial information and careers guidance. All pupils transferred in the last two years to further education, training or employment. There are many opportunities to think about potential careers through visiting careers fairs and speaking with external independent visitors.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils said that lessons are not disrupted by poor behaviour and that they can concentrate on their work and learning. During the inspection pupils responded respectfully to teachers' requests and to their teaching. They spoke favourably about the rewards system and felt that the system of sanctions is effective. In class pupils are quiet and keen to learn and listen.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and articulate. They mix well and collaborate well together. When asked to work alone they work independently and with purpose.
- Pupils' attendance is above average. Pupils are punctual, which, given the distance some pupils have to travel, is highly positive. They present themselves well and adhere to the school's code of conduct and values. They are self-disciplined and self-regulating. Girls' presentation of work is better than the boys' presentation.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils start school with skills, understanding and knowledge that are average for pupils who are 11 or 12 years old. They make good progress across subjects, particularly in Years 9 to 11, and there is little difference between boys' and girls' progress.
- Attainment in 2015 and 2016 was well above the national average, particularly in English, science and RS. In English, for example, in 2016 almost every pupil attained an A* to C GCSE in language and literature. Similarly, almost every pupil attained a GCSE grade A* to C in RS. In science, approximately three quarters of pupils attained a GCSE grade A* to C in core and additional science. This was above the national average.
- In other subjects there has been a significant improvement in 2016. In 2015 attainment was well below average in mathematics and history but in 2016 almost every pupil in mathematics attained a GCSE grade A* to C and in history attainment rose to be near the national average. Attainment in 2016 was also above average in computing and Urdu.
- Pupils in Year 7 and 8, however, get off to a slow start in English and mathematics and make slow progress because they learn about, and repeat, many of the activities and topics they completed in primary school. This means that their learning is not being deepened or stretched as well as it could be. Teachers do not get the information they need from primary about what has already been covered, what methods have been used or what level they are up to in each of the subjects.
- In contrast, in history, science and art, pupils make quick gains in their skills and knowledge because expectations are much higher. They learn to use historic and scientific terms confidently and quickly gain new knowledge. In art, pupils develop quickly their

skills of painting, drawing, and use of the colour palette and shading. They develop creativity and skills of interpretation by studying a range of western artists and then interpreting their styles into expressing themselves through their art and design.

- The most able pupils make appropriate progress but in some subjects such as mathematics, history and English there are some missed opportunities for pupils to develop their answers, methods and explanations further. They sometimes are allowed to answer a question in writing with only a basic answer when an elaborated answer would provide more depth to their work. In mathematics, pupils in Years 7 and 8 are not asked frequently to explain their methods or their thinking or to reason mathematically or to solve the full range of problems.
- Pupils read widely and often. They raised funds to replenish stocks of reading books, to decorate and furnish the library for which they are rightly proud. They have a positive attitude to reading a range of books and authors.

School details

Unique reference number	134575
DfE registration number	354/6006
Inspection number	10034026

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

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	164
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Muslim Education Association
Chair	Mr Shazad Malik
Headteacher	Mrs Aishah Akhtar
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,400–£1,700
Telephone number	01706 710184
Website	http://rochdalegirlsschool.com/home/girls-school/contact-us/
Email address	admin@rochdalegirlsschool.com
Date of previous inspection	12–14 May 2015

Information about this school

- Rochdale Girls School opened in 2003. It is an independent day school for secondary-aged girls and boys. It is a member of the Association of Muslim Schools UK and is an Islamic independent school.
- In September 2013, the girls' site moved to new accommodation, which is a purpose-built single-storey school, previously owned by the local authority. It is located next to a maintained primary school. There are currently 107 girls at this site in Years 7 through to Year 11. The boys' site opened in 2014 and is housed in the former girls school

accommodation, a short walk away. There are currently 57 boys at this site in Years 7 to 10. The school rents physical education facilities from the primary school.

- Leaders do not make use of off-site provision in alternative providers.
- At the time of the inspection there were no pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Similarly, there were no pupils who received free school meals or funding because they are identified as disadvantaged.
- The previous full inspection was in May 2015. The school was judged to require improvement. It was monitored by Her Majesty's Inspectors in March and then in November 2016, at which it was judged to be meeting the standards.

Information about this inspection

- At the time of the inspection, there were no Year 11 girls because they had left the school, returning to take their GCSE examinations. Inspectors observed teaching at both sites in a range of subjects, including science, English, mathematics and physical education. They looked through pupils' work from Year 7 to Year 10.
- Inspectors held discussions with members of the governing body and with trustees.
- No parent completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Inspectors sought their views by speaking to some parents formally and by meeting some parents as they dropped off or picked up their children.
- Inspectors met groups of pupils and spoke with pupils informally throughout the inspection.
- Thirteen members of staff returned an Ofsted survey and these were considered by inspectors.

Inspection team

Allan Torr, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sue Lomas

Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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