

Nishkam Primary School Wolverhampton

Brickkiln St, Wolverhampton WV3 0PR

Inspection date	11 July 2023
Previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
This inspection	Outstanding

Faith Education	Outstanding
Collective Worship	Outstanding
Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development	Outstanding
Leadership, management and Governance	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

The overall distinctiveness and effectiveness as a Sikh multi-faith ethos school	are outstanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders and governors share and articulate an ambitious vision for the school underpinned by the Sikh multi-faith ethos and shared common core values. It is focused on educating pupils to become good human beings and lies at the heart of the school. It gives pupils confidence and a secure preparation for their lives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The virtues that underpin the school shine through every aspect of its life and work, so that all members of the school community articulate them confidently and regard them as natural.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collective worship lies at the very heart of the school, uniting pupils and adults in a deeply spiritual daily celebration of faith and respect. As a result, they are affirmed and encouraged within their own faiths and respect other faiths, regardless of their personal faith and belief. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school's culture is one of the highest expectations of behaviour and attitudes. This has created a consistently calm environment where pupils understand their responsibilities to each other and act kindly. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is embedded in their faith education and in the wider work of the school with many opportunities for taking responsibility.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils of all faiths and none benefit from the comprehensive faith education curriculum, developing knowledge of and respect for a wide range of faith and beliefs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders and governors have secured excellence in the faith education programme, in its effective monitoring and the ongoing professional development of staff.
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Information about this inspection

The inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in a process intended to complement Ofsted inspection by reviewing those elements of the school's work that define its faith school character. This inspection was carried out by two independent and experienced inspectors to a framework developed by the Nishkam Schools Trust.

Inspection team

John Viner	Lead inspector
Palbinder Kaur Brom	Additional Inspector
Raminder Kaur Bahra	Additional Inspector

Information about this school

- Nishkam School Wolverhampton opened as Anand Primary School in 2013, joining the Nishkam Schools Trust in 2014.
- It is a Sikh school with a multi-faith ethos, currently housed in substantial Victorian buildings, enhanced by a large modern extension.
- Currently the school has 420 pupils from Year R to Year 6. Although there is a policy of open enrolment, the majority of pupils on roll are from Sikh backgrounds, with an above average proportion who speak English as an additional language. There is a significantly higher than average proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium or with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Around two thirds of pupils are from *Amritdhari* (formally baptised) Sikh backgrounds. Others represented in the school community include those from Christian, Muslim, Hindu and secular traditions.
- Pupils join the school with below average attainment but make excellent progress so that the academic standards they attain by the time they leave the school are well above national averages.
- In 2020 the school was judged by Ofsted to be good with outstanding elements

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In learning about recurring key festivals, ensure that pupils understand that they are building on their prior learning.
- Ensure that pupils appreciate the links between principles of democracy and their responsibilities as citizens.
- Provide new governors with training about the multi-faith, virtues led approach to education that underpin the school and Trust.
- Further engage with parents to deepen their understanding of the faith curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Provision of Faith Education is outstanding

- Pupils make excellent progress in all aspects of faith education and this can be seen in their thoughtful, articulate responses, their ability to ask deep questions that probe for an increasingly developed understanding as they move through the school.
- They declare that Religious and Faith Education is their favourite subject. They say that teachers make learning fun and that they always know what they are learning and why it is important. An exception to this is sometimes when they celebrate a recurring faith festival, such as Easter or Vaisakhi, which they say can seem repetitive. This is because they are not always clear enough that they are building on what they previously learnt.
- Faith education has a high priority in the school. The curriculum is rich and varied, enabling pupils to develop a thorough knowledge of a range of faiths and worldviews. In this, pupils demonstrate deep respect for, and understanding of the faith of others.
- When pupils learn about their own faith, in faith development lessons, they deepen their personal understanding and appreciate that all faith is important.
- In Religious Education lessons, they can identify and explain similarities and differences in belief and respond with their own thoughts in a way that demonstrates a spiritual maturity beyond their years.
- Teaching is highly successful because teachers have excellent knowledge of the faiths they are teaching and, where they require advice, this is readily at hand through the effective support of the skilled and knowledgeable subject leader.
- Lessons are specifically linked to the virtues of the Nishkam Passport so they quickly learn and apply the language of faith. These values have a significant and impressive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, enabling them to articulate their learning in the whole context of the school's approach.
- Pupils say that they appreciate the way that the curriculum is enhanced by visits to local places of worship linked to the faiths studied. Although an in-person synagogue visit has not been possible, this was managed virtually.
- There are highly effective systems for assessing pupils' development in religious education so that teachers are clear when lessons must be adapted to meet the needs of those pupils who may not have understood as well as their peers. As a result, all pupils, including those with

special educational needs or disabilities, make at least good and sometimes excellent progress from their starting points.

The quality of collective worship is outstanding

- Collective worship is the very heartbeat of the school. It takes place daily and has a high priority in the lives of pupils. It is an anchor point in the busy school day, a chance to re-affirm the values of the school and deepen knowledge and experience of faith for all who attend, both adults and pupils.
- Pupils are united in their enthusiasm for the outstanding worship, or assembly programme, regardless of their own faith or belief. They say that they love assembly because ‘we can all worship together and strengthen our own faith’. They say they are always allowed to ask questions and that worship helps them to think about wider things. Consequently, their appreciation and application of the concepts of equality and forgiveness is greatly enhanced.
- There is a weekly pattern of worship, giving pupils a balance of whole-school and class assemblies. The weekly faith assembly is led by staff and based on a value, carefully linked to events in the faith calendar. Twice a week teachers deliver class-based sessions around the Virtues Passport, with excellent and meaningful opportunities for pupils to engage in worship that deepens their spiritual understanding.
- Pupils say that they like the weekly singing assembly and that, here they learn a lot about God. They also welcome the weekly assembly, led by senior leaders and celebrating pupil achievement.
- Because worship is carefully planned and integral to the life of the school, there are clear and specific links with the Nishkam virtues and with the whole experience of faith education. This is summarised by the pupil who, when asked if worship helped him feel closer to God, replied, ‘not much, because we feel close to God everywhere.’
- Through worship pupils link their personal values with ethical issues and understand the importance of faith and belief. One Year 2 pupil reported, ‘it doesn’t matter what religion you are; it’s about being kind to everyone – I learnt it in assembly.’ This is echoed by older pupils who explain that, through worship, they deepen their understanding of what they are learning in class.
- There is a dedicated and deep-rooted focus on prayer, which permeates throughout the school. Before commencing work at the beginning of school, or after any break, there is an opportunity for pupils to unite in reciting prayers from the different traditions represented in the school. Pupils take this time very seriously and adopt prayerful postures, appropriate to each tradition. They join in with the prayers as they wish, regardless of their own faith.
- The school has introduced carefully planned weekly faith-based prayer sessions before school, which are run by approved community volunteers from each faith. These are well-attended, and pupils follow a respectful etiquette of head-covering and posture, as appropriate. These prayer sessions are rooted in religious scriptures, develop pupils’ knowledge and understanding of their personal faith and make a highly positive contribution to the school’s multi-faith ethos.
- Collective worship unites adults and pupils in deepening their own personal spiritual journeys and plays a valuable role in the pervading culture of the school. Worship permeates other areas of the curriculum and so enhances the strong progress that pupils make.

The quality of the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**is outstanding**

- The shared Nishkam Virtues, underpinning the school are inexorably linked with its excellent promotion of all aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils develop a deep understanding of what it means to be a spiritual person, they are excited to ask and answer deep questions about faith, belief and spirituality. Because of the excellent faith education programme, pupils have the tools to shape their questions and respond with increasing maturity.
- They consistently demonstrate the virtues which they learn, and this is seen in their excellent understanding of respect for others and in their friendships based on trust, loyalty, and an understanding of their common humanity where forgiveness matters.
- Pupils have a developed awareness of right and wrong, they keep to the rules because they want to and not because they must. This leads to a harmonious school community where there are warm, trusting and respectful relationships between and among adults and learners.
- There are many excellent opportunities for pupils to take on positions of responsibility in school and discharge their duties diligently. An example of this can be seen in the polite, respectful and enthusiastic work of the class ambassadors who greet visitors and explain the context of their lessons.
- This school is characterised by the high levels of racial and religious harmony, where shared values unite pupils in a mutual enthusiasm for different faiths and beliefs in the context of shared humanity.
- Faith education plays a key role in developing pupils' cultural awareness and the Trust's faith calendar ensures that important dates and occasions are recognised and celebrated so that pupils experience a culturally rich and inclusive environment.
- Pupils understand how this equips them for life in modern Britain, although they do not always clearly enough link their understanding of democracy with their responsibilities as citizens.

The leadership, management and governance of the school as a faith school**are outstanding**

- Leaders and governors articulate an uncompromising and ambitious drive for excellence in all aspects of the school. This is demonstrated in their shared commitment to the virtues that underpin the school and their desire to secure, through these, the highest levels of achievement and personal development for all pupils. They know the school and its pupils well and work together to sustain success.
- 'Golden threads' of love and forgiveness vs enmity/hate; peace and collaboration vs blame/war; and forgiveness, and trust in God are woven into the whole curriculum so that the Nishkam Trust virtues can be seen in every aspect of the school, securing excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils.
- Governors successfully hold leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance. However, for new governors, the deeper understanding of Nishkam virtues is currently limited.

- Faith education is expertly led by a knowledgeable and committed subject leader. There is a highly effective system for termly monitoring of the quality of teaching by the faith lead and senior leaders. Observations are triangulated by reviewing pupils' books and discussions with pupils about their learning. Outcomes from monitoring are explained to teachers so that they can make any necessary adjustments.
- Through this regular monitoring leaders are always aware of the quality of teaching and learning and are able quickly to support any colleague requiring support. Teachers have confidence in their leaders and are quick to seek advice as necessary. There is a highly developed and relevant programme of professional development involving a weekly briefing on the 'virtue of the week' and training sessions to support teachers' substantive knowledge of RE.
- Early Careers Teachers are thoroughly prepared for their role. A teacher explained that, not previously having had the experience, the virtues and values faith offer has helped. They explained, 'the Passport, the virtues, were all new to me and it became part of my own spiritual journey'. Another explained that studying the Passport, helped in understanding how the virtues impacted the pupils.
- The focused, regular and effective programme of professional development ensures that teachers' knowledge and skills continue to develop over time.
- Parents are kept informed about the work of the school and the progress of their children. They speak very highly about the way the school is organised and run, they feel very welcome, say that leaders listen to them and are always prepared to help. They understand and value the core Nishkam values, which are evident in all aspects of the school and would appreciate further information about the school's comprehensive programme of faith education.
- The partnerships with local communities of faith, and in particular, their engagement in the weekly faith-based prayer sessions is richly beneficial to the school and strengthen its multi-faith character.

What inspection judgements mean

School Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their faith journey.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their faith journey
Grade 3	Requires Improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full SIFEiNS inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school is inadequate when it is failing to provide its pupils with a Sikh multi-faith education that prepares them for the next stage in their spiritual journey

School details

Unique reference number	139274
Local authority area	Wolverhampton

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary school with a faith designation
School category	Academy free school
Sponsor	Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha
Age range of pupils	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	N/A
Number of pupils on the school roll	420
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	N/A
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Soumya Suresh
Headteacher	Harmander Singh Dhanjal
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01902 537970
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