

Nishkam High School

Great King Street North, Birmingham, B19 2DD

Inspection date	26 June 2015	
Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection	Not previously inspected
	This inspection	Outstanding 1
Faith Education	Outstanding	1
Collective Worship	Outstanding	1
Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development	Outstanding	1
Leadership, Management and Governance	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

The overall distinctiveness and effectiveness as a Sikh multi-faith ethos school

are outstanding

- Leaders and governors share and articulate an ambitious vision for the school in which the pursuit of excellence in academic studies is matched by a deep commitment to creating socially responsible citizens who put others first.
- The values that the school promotes define every aspect of its work and equip its students with secure foundations for their life.
- As a result of the school’s commitment to excellence, students make outstanding progress in their academic and personal development.
- The Faith Curriculum is well taught and ensures that students acquire deep learning about religion and understand how to apply this to their lives.
- Collective worship is the heartbeat of the school. It is inclusive and, affirms all who attend. As a result, students develop thoughtful attitudes to faith and the relationships between and among adults and students are exceptional.
- The promotion of students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. As a result the school is a harmonious learning community where students are moved to take compassionate action in their support of good works, both locally and globally
- The inclusive nature of the school combines with an outward facing attitude that embraces the wider community so that there is mutual benefit from these links.

Information about this inspection

The inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in a process intended to complement an 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

Tajinder Kaur Jagdev

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Nishkam High School opened in September 2012 as a four-form entry Free School, which is a part of the multi-academy trust of schools known as the Nishkam School Trust.
- It is a Sikh school with a multi-faith ethos, housed in modern purpose-built premises, located in Hockley and serving the communities of North-West Birmingham.
- Around an eighth of the intake are *Amritdhari* (formally baptised) Sikhs.
- Currently the school has 300 students in Years 7, 8 and 9 and a further 36 in the sixth form. About 80% of the students on roll are from Sikh backgrounds, with an above average proportion who speak English as an additional language. There is a lower than average proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium or with special educational needs.
- Currently, students are drawn from Sikh, Christian, Muslim, Hindu and secular traditions.
- The school exercises open enrolment, with 50% of its places open to non-Sikh families from any background. It is a part of the Birmingham Local Authority Co-ordinated Admissions Programme.
- A-level results are currently around the national average with those for A-level Religious Studies (RS) above the national average.
- The school was judged by Ofsted to be outstanding in April 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the opportunities in Faith Development for students in the sixth form to prepare for the challenges they will face in the next phase of their life so that they can make their contribution to their own community while being more fully prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Improve teachers' feedback in Religious Studies so that students have a clear understanding of their next steps.

Inspection judgements

Provision of Faith Education is outstanding

- Students achieve high standards in Religious Studies with accelerating and sustained improvements in A-level courses. This reflects the school's commitment to academic excellence in all subjects. At the time of the inspection, girls slightly outperformed boys in Religious Studies.
- Through the excellent quality of the faith education curriculum, students develop mature attitudes to faith and belief. They make excellent progress from their starting points. Students who have joined from other schools comment positively about how much they are enriched by learning about religion and faith.
- Students have many outstanding opportunities to discuss issues of personal faith and belief at a deep level. Sixth form students are able to explore those values that they will draw on as young adults beyond school. These discussions do not yet fully address their dual responsibilities both to their communities and to modern British society.
- Faith is nurtured and students are inspired to become people of faith who understand the value of faith and belief in society, even when individuals' belief systems do not include a deity. As a result of their confident understanding, students develop excellent attitudes of respect that supports even the students who display the most challenging behaviour voluntarily modify it. Students and staff recognise that this helps to make the school a harmonious learning community.
- The faith curriculum has a high profile in the school and, as a result, students rapidly develop their understanding of the Sikh *Dharm* (spiritual tradition) and a broad range of faiths in a multi-faith context.
- Teaching of Religious Studies and faith development leads to outstanding progress and personal development overall. Teachers know their students well and most teaching is of high quality and inspirational. However, teachers' written feedback is sometimes too variable so that students do not always receive consistent guidance on how to improve their work or further develop their understanding.
- The faith curriculum is expertly led and leaders have a clear appreciation of the key priorities for development. The plans to unite Religious Studies and Faith Development around a common provision are carefully designed to further raise standards across the faith curriculum by strengthening students' learning about religion and making more specific what they learn from it.

The quality of collective worship is outstanding

- Collective worship is the heartbeat of the school. It runs through every aspect of school life like a golden thread. Students understand its importance, both to the school and to them as individuals. They learn the nature and purpose of prayer and have many excellent opportunities to apply their learning to their lives, irrespective of their personal faith or belief.
- Through collective worship students develop thoughtful attitudes to life and faith and learn to be kind, considerate and courteous individuals. As a result, the behaviour of students around the school is outstanding and the strong, trusting relationships between and among adults and students are exceptional. Students say that, 'this is not just a school; it's a home.'
- Acts of worship are movingly inclusive. Students are actively and enthusiastically engaged in planning and leading worship. The Faith Mentors, who are elected by their peers, play a key role in promoting the common values of the school. They speak of worship as 'life-changing' and say that, 'every time we reflect, we become better people.'
- One element of collective worship is the assembly, which takes place in the hall and which can be very thought-provoking, making an excellent contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Further, when worship take place in the sacred space, which is at the physical heart of the school, it takes on a deeply reverent quality which affirms all who attend, adult or student, irrespective of faith.
- Students experience prayers from their own and other faiths and do so with deep reverence and respect. The growing Faith Team of adults make a remarkable contribution to worship by being role models and guides for students who share their particular faith. They play a key part in leading worship and nurturing students' personal faith.
- The regular opportunities for students to reflect on deep questions at the beginning or end of the day enable students to develop spiritual insight. Staff leading these times are themselves encouraged to share their experiences of faith and life in a weekly staff reflection. This builds the capacity of all adults to deepen the thinking of students.
- The weekly faith group sessions, led by the Faith Team, for the faith groups that make up the school's student body, provide excellent opportunities for individual students to work as part of a group to develop their knowledge and gain an appreciation of their faith in practice. Students speak passionately about their experiences of these sessions. They say that it gives them a 'real' connection the local and global faith communities.

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

- The twenty four dispositions and attitudes that the school promotes, underline its work, define its life and are evident in all aspects of its operation. As a result, the promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Students develop a genuine spiritual personality so that they appreciate beauty, develop a sensitivity to others and a confidence in the language of faith.
- Parents say that the values and moral code that the school promotes complements the values their children learn at home. The compassionate understanding they demonstrate at school is reflected in the behaviour and attitudes that they display in life outside school. Pupils say that they appreciate that 'The Nishkam Family' is important to them and that they treat their teachers with respect because they are like their parents, whom they honour.
- The friendships that students develop are based on trust and loyalty, drawing on the attitudes that the school promotes which recognise that others are entitled to hold different opinions. As a result, they look out for one another, are respectful of difference and resolve conflicts intelligently.
- There are many excellent opportunities for students to take on responsibilities and they do so willingly because the school is grounded in a deep appreciation of *sewa*, or service to others. Students are frequently moved to take compassionate action in their support of good works, both locally and globally. Notably, the partnership with Sikh Help is making a significant contribution to local people in need. Parents say that, at this school, their children learn that responsibility goes beyond that to themselves outwards to the wider community.
- As a result of the school's outstanding promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, students develop a deep understanding and respect for democracy and the rule of law so that they themselves promote these values. This makes them well prepared for the next stage in their development and for life in modern Britain.

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

are outstanding

- Leaders and governors are united behind an ambitious and uncompromising vision for the school that is rooted in the pursuit of excellence and the development of good human beings. This defines the work of the school, the drive of the leaders and the commitment of the governors.
- The school's newly established senior leadership team is engaged in purposeful and determined action to bring about a culture of sustained improvement against a background of the school's underlying values. Their work builds on best practice to give students a rich learning experience and a spiritual foundation for their lives. Leaders say that it is a privilege to lead this excellent school while students agree that the school appears to be more organised and focused on their academic achievement and personal development.
- Sixth form students say that, having come from a variety of different schools, they recognise that this school has high expectations of them, both personally and academically. As a result, they make excellent progress and thrive on the key message that they should 'be humble to be wise'.
- Governors know the school well. They are committed to its mission and actively engaged in its operation. They work closely with school leaders and robustly hold them to account. As a result, they keep the school's Sikh multi-faith character under constant review and are resolute in their strategic plans for the school's future development.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the leadership of the faith curriculum, collective worship and the promotion of students' spiritual, social and moral and cultural development is secure and successful. Because of this, students understand the high expectations that the school has of them and the value that it places on them as individuals.
- Partnership working is a key strength of the school. Leaders and governors constantly pursue opportunities to share the excellent practice of the school more widely. Students are proud of their school and share this commitment. This leads to some exceptionally effective work with Nishkam Primary School and a number of other schools, places of worship and organisations in the joint development of excellent practice. These links are richly beneficial to the school and its wider community.

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	138586
Local authority area	Birmingham

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

Type of school	Secondary High School with a sixth form
School category	Academy free school
Sponsor	Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha
Age range of pupils	11-18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	336
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	36
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Brindar Singh Mahon
Headteacher	Damien Kearns
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0121 348 7660
Email address	enquiries@nishkamhigh.org