



Nishkam Primary School

3 -11 Soho Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B21 9SN

Inspection date	9 December 2014	
Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection	Not previously inspected
	This inspection	Outstanding 1
Faith Education	Outstanding	1
Collective Worship and pupils spiritual, social, moral and cultural development (SMSC)	Outstanding	1
Quality of Punjabi	Good	2
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

- Pupils make excellent academic progress overall and their personal development is exceptional.
- As a result of the school's focus on faith education, pupils develop a set of values that gives them a foundation for their lives and influences their homes.
- Pupils achieve high standards in Religious Education (RE) and their personal faith and belief are nurtured very effectively. As a result they develop excellent attitudes of respect for all faiths and learn to use the language of faith with confidence.
- Parents say that their children learn respect for all places of worship.
- Punjabi is well taught and pupils make good progress, whatever their starting points.
- Prayer and worship are woven throughout all aspects of the school's work and are evident in all aspects of its work. This leads to outstanding behaviour, positive relationships between and among adults and pupils and a shared commitment to living as a good human being.
- Parents say that the values their children develop have a positive impact on their lives at home.
- Leaders and governors know their school well and articulate an ambitious vision of excellence within a strong multi-faith ethos.
- Strong and developing links with the wider education community and local places of worship are enabling pupils have a positive influence beyond the school.

Information about this inspection

This 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. The inspection was carried out by two independent inspectors to a framework developed by the Nishkam School Trust.

Inspection team

John Viner	Lead inspector
Tajinder Kaur Jagdev	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Nishkam Primary School opened in September 2011 as a two-form entry Free School and 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, located close to the Sikh Gurdwara served by Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha and serving the communities of North-West Birmingham.
- Currently it has 360 pupils in full classes in the Reception Year and Years 1, 2, 3 4 and 5 with a small cohort in Year 6, and is housed in converted Grade II listed buildings which were formally residential.
- 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.
- On entry to the school only a small percentage of the intake come from *Amrit Dhari* (formally baptised) families.
- Currently, almost all of the 360 pupils 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.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are expected to be above the national average.
- The school was judged at its last inspection by Ofsted, in June 2013, to require improvement but in October 2013, at a monitoring inspection, was assessed as improving rapidly.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the provision of Punjabi to better meet the needs of the most able pupils.
- Make available a wider range of Punjabi reading material for all pupils including pupils for whom Punjabi is not their first language.
- Improve the policy for collective worship so that it identifies further opportunities to deepen pupils' spiritual experience, enable all pupils to experience Sikh worship and create opportunities for older pupils to plan and lead worship.

Inspection judgements

Provision of Faith Education Is outstanding

- In Religious Education (RE) pupils learn 'about religion' and 'from religion', while in Faith Development (FD) they learn what it is to be a person of faith. These two strands unite as Faith Education, which is at the heart of the school's work.
- The school bases its faith curriculum on the Birmingham Locally Agreed Syllabus of Religious Education and on key Sikh values. Standards in RE are well above those expected nationally and the way that FD nurtures all pupils, irrespective of their own faith, contributes to these high standards by promoting pupils' spirituality and deeper understanding of religion.
- Faith Education is fully inclusive and celebrates the diversity of faith. As a result, pupils quickly accept that people are different and develop high levels of respect for those of different faiths.
- They learn that all faiths have relevance in the modern world and draw on their knowledge of religions to make connections between them. For example, in a discussion about sacred texts, pupils could reference both the Sikh *Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* and the Muslim *Qur'an* and see the relevance of each.
- Pupils' understanding of the practice of faith is not prescriptive: the school nurtures it from first principles, so pupils first learn to be kind and to value each other. Pupils soon learn the important lesson that 'you do not need to be someone's friend to show them kindness'. This positive attitude motivates pupils to undertake good works and to become engaged in charitable support.
- The values that pupils learn enrich their lives so that they understand what it means to live as a good human being, to live a truthful life and to recognise the value of integrity.
- They understand and explain their spiritual development, saying that they learn stories of faith and from these stories they learn key values and these values they learn to apply to their lives. They say 'it gives us a head start' for living a good life.
- Adults are good role models for living a good life – the school has invested significantly in training all staff in the multi-faith and values-based ethos of the school, which ensures that a coherent approach is adopted to promoting the school's Sikh multi-faith ethos.
- The effective staff team is having a strong impact and, as a result, RE and FD are well taught by knowledgeable teachers, leading to pupils' rapid progress in all aspects of the faith curriculum.
- Both strands are strongly led and rigorously checked. Assessments take place frequently and are accurate so that teachers have a good understanding of the progress their pupils are making and how to plan to meet their needs.
- Parents are universally enthusiastic about the way the school is nurturing their children, helping them to achieve high standards and building strong foundations for their future lives. They even say that what their children learn in faith education influences home life and helps them to become better parents.

The quality of collective worship and the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding

- Collective Worship is an integral aspect of school life and plays a key role in developing pupils' personal spirituality through a sense of *sangat* (prayerful fellowship).
- At the start of each day, at the breakfast club and in classes, the whole school community joins in morning prayers and has a time for reflection. This reminds pupils that the school is a prayerful community and that worship is not a one-off event, but an ongoing part of life.
- Pupils agree that worship 'gives you a higher place of spirit and sometimes makes you happier'. The school community say prayers before lunch and, at the end of the day, prayer is used to mark the end of this stage in their spiritual journey.
- Pupils develop mature spiritual insight to the nature and purpose of prayer. They say that praying 'makes you closer to God and helps you to think about deep questions.' This has an impact on their work, attitudes and behaviour, as evidenced by one pupil who remarked that 'prayer helps me keep focused and clears all the bad things from my mind'.
- Weekly celebration assemblies, when pupils share their work, sustain the school's ethos of appreciating God's gifts of learning. A weekly multi-faith act of worship draws together key prayers from Sikhism, Hinduism and Christianity, which are read by pupils of those faiths.
- Pupils behave reverently, join in enthusiastically and sing tunefully. This act of worship focuses on the relevant value that pupils are learning and powerfully reinforces the multi-faith ethos of the school.
- However, pupils do not experience a distinctly Sikh time of worship, nor do older pupils have many opportunities to respond in leading aspects of worship independently. Nevertheless, the impact of worship on pupils' lives and the lives of their families is rich and deep. Parents say that the patterns of prayer that pupils develop at school influence those in their family and remind them of the importance of regular prayer.
- One parent reported that her family had re-introduced mealtime prayer because of the insistence of their children.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through every aspect of its work. Worship plays a significant role in this and the school uses every opportunity to celebrate religious festivals, national events and other significant occasions through times of worship and prayer. As a result, pupils develop excellent attitudes towards others and are motivated to make a contribution to society.
- The outstanding character of worship is summed up by the pupil who commented that it 'stops us thinking about the outer world and helps us think about the inner world'.

The quality of Punjabi is good

- Standards of attainment in Punjabi are as expected. Lessons are taught in mixed ability groups, and staff take great care to plan exciting lessons and make good use of the resources available.
- Pupils speak with great enthusiasm about the range of activities provided in Punjabi lessons. Year 3 pupils say that they 'love the fun games we play' while, in Year 5, pupils spoke enthusiastically about a recent lesson in which 'we did riddles about fruit'. As a result of this good teaching the majority of pupils are engaged in learning, make good progress and are eager to share their experiences.
- Great care is taken to focus on phonics (the sounds that letters make), and pronunciation is well taught. As a result, many pupils are confident in communicating in Punjabi. The majority of pupils observed in upper Key Stage 2 read compound words and simple sentences, while some also write fluently, using *gurmukhi* phonics (the script used in Punjabi and Sikh religious texts).
- Parents say because of the skills their children learn at school, they are able to participate in *Kirtan* (meditative singing) at the local Gurdwara.
- Lessons are well organised and effectively managed by teachers. Highly effective use is made of the additional staff, who are fully engaged in teaching Punjabi. Pupils are suitably challenged and well supported in their learning activities.
- Punjabi is taught using a nationally recognised programme, which provides an effective and progressive framework.
- Whilst lessons are well planned, those pupils who are more able and most confident in Punjabi are not always challenged to sustain the rapid progress of which they are capable. There are missed opportunities to extend the learning of high attaining pupils. The school has recognised this issue and has plans to help these pupils make more rapid progress.
- The current range of Punjabi reading material is too limited and does not always meet the needs of those pupils for whom Punjabi is not their first language.

The leadership, management and governance are outstanding

- Leaders and governors articulate a clear and ambitious strategic vision for this Sikh multi-faith ethos school, which is rapidly raising standards and establishing a reputation for excellence.
- Significant investment of time and finance has been committed to sharing this vision with staff so that everyone understands and is committed to the school's distinctive ethos. This shared commitment is characterised by a determined and successful drive for quality in every aspect of the school's work.
- There are rigorous systems in place that ensure that leaders and governors have a deep and secure understanding of the school's strengths, its future needs and its strategic direction. As a result they understand the priorities for action and plan accordingly. Since its foundation, the school has made significant improvements in all aspects of its work so that pupils' personal and academic development is now rapid and sustained.
- All aspects of the school's Sikh multi-faith distinctiveness are kept under review and this has ensured that the faith curriculum is taught to the highest standard while the sustained focus on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is woven throughout the life of the school.
- Staff are well supported, with close attention paid to their development needs. This has built a highly effective team and is particularly evident in the outstanding deployment of the associate staff responsible for delivering the Punjabi curriculum.
- The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship and RE.
- There are strong links with the adjacent independent Nishkam Nursery School, which ensure that children make a smooth transfer to the Reception Year and so are quickly settled and ready to learn.
- The strong and effective partnership of leaders and governors with the Nishkam School Trust has successfully built a community of faith that is touching the lives of pupils and their families.
- The school is proactively building powerful partnerships with a range of other schools and centres of worship. This goes beyond the Sikh community to include local Roman Catholic and Anglican faith schools, and to other communities of faith, with good links being established with local faith leaders.
- These partnerships are of substantial mutual value; they allow the communities of education and of faith to draw on the school's strengths in promoting spirituality and enable pupils to develop their sense of *nishkam sewa*, (selfless service for others). This work does much to promote the school's multi-faith character in the local 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 personal and spiritual development.
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 personal and spiritual development.
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 SIDEiNS 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 personal and spiritual development.

School details

Unique reference number	137492
Local authority area	Birmingham

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

Type of school	Primary, with a faith designation
School category	Academy free school
Sponsor	Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	N/A
Number of pupils on the school roll	360
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	N/A
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Brinder Singh Mahon
Headteacher	Palbinder Kaur Brom
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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