

Summarised inspection findings

Al Qalam Academy

Independent

1 November 2022

Key contextual information

The Scottish Ministers, in accordance with section 66(1) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (the 1980 Act), requested that HM Inspectors conduct a special inspection of Al Qalam Academy. The inspection was carried out from Wednesday 24 August until Friday 26 August 2022. During the inspection, HM inspectors focused on the school's provision in relation to safeguarding and child protection and governance, and in particular:

- the school's child protection and safeguarding arrangements;
- the school's child protection and safeguarding policy and its implementation;
- responding to child protection and safeguarding concerns;
- senior leaders and staff's understanding of their roles and responsibilities in terms of child protection and safeguarding; and
- school governance arrangements.

Background

Al Qalam Academy is an independent school located in Paisley, Renfrewshire. It is registered to provide education for children and young people from P1 to S2. The school has recently relocated to a new site. The school roll at the time of this inspection was seven children at the primary stages and no learners of secondary age.

1.4 Leadership and management of staff

good

This indicator highlights the importance of sound governance and fair and proper recruitment and selection of staff. It focuses on accountability, responsibility and shared values as important features of building and sustaining a highly-professional staff team. Effective empowerment of staff and partners with due regard to wellbeing and positive relationships is a key feature of a successful professional team. The themes are:

- Governance framework
- Building and sustaining a professional staff team
- Staff wellbeing and pastoral support

- Governance arrangements in the school are well established. The proprietor is highly visible in the school and works closely with a quality assurance executive (QAE), who has an extensive background in education leadership and quality assurance. They engage in all areas of school improvement alongside providing advice and scrutiny on finance and business matters. Both take a keen interest in children's progress and their achievements. An experienced teacher has the role of head of learning and teaching. He has the responsibility for day-to-day operational running of the school. He works closely with teachers and staff and is well known by children and families. The proprietor and QAE are clearly committed to providing help and support to the school.
- There are clear lines of accountability for the school's performance and quality. The QAE takes a lead role in monitoring the performance of the school. She systematically measures the quality of school improvement, curriculum development and pastoral support. A comprehensive quality assurance calendar is in place. The QAE leads on professional review and development. She undertakes lesson observations and provides teachers with purposeful feedback on the quality of learning and teaching. The proprietor and QAE should continue to monitor closely all aspects of school life, including procedures for child protection and

safeguarding. In doing so, they should ensure that all staff continue to understand fully their roles and responsibilities, and follow policies and procedures at all times.

- School leaders have produced a recruitment policy which is consistent with current legislation and takes full account of the context of the school. Appointment procedures give due regard to the skills, attributes and experience required to work at the school. New recruits engage in an induction programme and are expected to complete training upon acceptance of a post. This training includes child protection procedures and health and safety guidance. School leaders need to continue to perform stringent checks on temporary staff and new recruits, including the protection of vulnerable groups (PVG) disclosure. At the time of this inspection, all adults working or volunteering in the school had undergone an appropriate disclosure check.
- Teachers and staff benefit from regular career long professional learning opportunities. The QAE provides high quality advice and professional learning for staff. Teachers have engaged in recent professional learning on improving the classroom environment and on differentiating learning to meet children's needs. The proprietor uses other professional learning providers well to deliver effective staff training on first aid and health and safety. Staff currently have a strong focus on developing the environment at the new school site. They have recognised the extensive opportunities available within the new school grounds and local community. Children are very keen to make use of the outdoor spaces available at the new school accommodation. As a result, staff are undertaking professional learning to strengthen their approaches to outdoor learning and learning in the local community. Senior leaders and staff should continue to build partnerships with neighbouring schools and local businesses.
- The vision and values of the school place great importance on pastoral support and wellbeing for all members of the school community. The proprietor and all staff provide a caring and welcoming ethos at the school. All children, families and staff feel supported and that their needs are met well. Although the school has never received any complaints, there are clear policies and processes in place to deal with this. The proprietor and QAE are approachable and welcome staff's views on how to improve the school. Staff feel empowered to lead on aspects of school improvement and in designing the layout of the new school building. As planned, the head of learning and teaching should now reintroduce staff meetings and the pupil council. This will enable staff and children to contribute more fully to school improvement.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

good

This indicator focuses on the wide range of duties required of all staff and partners to ensure that all children and young people are safe, well cared for and enabled to flourish. This indicator looks to how the school takes account of statutory requirements in relation to child protection to ensure the needs of all learners are met. Safeguarding all children and young people requires strong partnerships to be established between the school and its local community. This includes well-planned progressive learning opportunities so that children and young people can become more resilient and develop a sound understanding of how they can keep themselves safe.

- Arrangements for safeguarding, including child protection
- Arrangements to ensure wellbeing
- National guidance and legislation

- Staff have recently refreshed the school's policies and approaches to safeguarding and child protection. The refreshed policy for child protection and safeguarding takes full account of current national guidance and legislation and reflects the context of the school's community of faith. School leaders with designated roles and responsibilities for child protection, the proprietor and QAE have participated together in appropriate training prior to the school opening for the new academic session. As a result of their training, school leaders are well equipped to respond to any potential child protection concerns. For example, staff have formalised and made improvements to how they will record any wellbeing or child protection concerns that may occur. School leaders should continue to build on the positive start they have made to making important links with partner agencies in their new locality. This will help to build further the skills and expertise of staff in responding to different types of potential child protection concerns.
- Staff have participated in recent professional learning that allows them to carry out well their roles in keeping all children safe. They have benefitted from training in first aid, health and safety at work and fire safety. This has been an important priority for the school community as they settle into their new school accommodation. Staff are vigilant in ensuring that the school accommodation is secure and safe for children. They employ external consultants and health and safety specialists to help to identify areas for further development and action.
- The school has a range of established procedures to ensure the wellbeing of children. This includes policies for anti-bullying and safe use of digital technology. School leaders and staff keep accident and incident logs and pupil records up to date on an electronic records management system. This comprehensive system allows the school's proprietor to monitor the quality and thoroughness of record keeping across the school. Staff should continue to refine their systems for record keeping, as the context of the school continues to change.
- Children say they feel safe and happy at school and have positive relationships with all staff. They feel they are listened to and that they can talk to the staff if they need help. Children have strong, positive relationships with each other. Parents and carers we spoke to feel that their children are happy and settled in school. A few commented that their children are upset if they have to miss school, as they enjoy and benefit from their time in class. Parents and carers feel that school staff respond very well to the needs of families. They spoke highly of how staff support them to deal with difficult situations. They feel that staff deal with concerns promptly and sensitively. The caring, positive relationships between staff, children and families helped children remain resilient through the recent period of change in school life.
- Staff use learning and teaching approaches appropriately, including through the Islamic faith, to talk to children about the wellbeing indicators and children's rights. Staff should continue to

build on this practice to promote further children's independence and participation in their learning. The wellbeing indicators are highlighted in all school policies relating to child protection and safeguarding. Wherever necessary, staff create appropriate plans to provide targeted support for children's wellbeing. Children have enjoyed contributing to the pupil council and would now welcome more opportunities to be involved in the life of their school. They particularly enjoy the outside space and have made suggestions to staff on how this could be improved.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

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|-------------------------|---------------|
| All | 100% |
| Almost all | 91%-99% |
| Most | 75%-90% |
| Majority | 50%-74% |
| Minority/less than half | 15%-49% |
| A few | less than 15% |

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.