

# Nishkam High School

Great King Street North, Birmingham, B19 2LF

**Inspection dates** 30 April–1 May 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Respect for everyone in the school community guides the work of this free school, which has students in Years 7 and 8 and the sixth form.
- Students achieve exceptionally well.
- Nearly all of the teaching is consistently good or outstanding.
- The effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding and students have courses tailored to their needs which enable them to develop their talents.
- Behaviour is exceptional. Students show respect for everyone they meet, irrespective of beliefs or culture, in this multi-faith school community which is built on Sikh values.
- Students know how to keep themselves safe and have a deep understanding of right and wrong.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted outstandingly well. Students and teachers worship and dine together as a 'family'.
- School leaders, including governors and trustees, are an inspiration to all and consistently model the school motto, 'Be humble to be wise'.
- Outstanding leadership is already having an impact on raising achievement through rigorous checks of students' progress and teaching.
- The school provides a rich education for students that include library lessons and opportunities for them to engage in public speaking, as well as providing an extended school day.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 parts of lessons taught by 22 of the 25 teachers employed by the school, including four that were observed jointly with senior leaders. They also observed a literacy support lesson, an assembly, breaks and lunchtimes and visited a library session.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior and subject leaders. The lead inspector spoke with the executive principal of the trust, the Chair of the Governing Body and an external partner who has worked closely with the school.
- Inspectors spoke with a small group of parents at the school gates as they collected their children at the end of the school day.
- Three groups of students talked with inspectors in meetings, and inspectors spoke with students at other times, in lessons and around the school at breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took account of the 23 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire. They also considered the school’s own analyses of the views of parents.
- A variety of information was analysed about examination results, students’ progress, their attendance and behaviour. The inspection team also considered a range of documents including the school’s self-evaluation, the school development plan and records relating to safeguarding of students.

## Inspection team

Denah Jones, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Rosemary Myers

Additional Inspector

Jeremy Seymour

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Nishkam High School opened as a free school in September 2012. The school forms part of the multi-academy trust of schools known as the Nishkam School Trust. Nishkam High School is a Sikh ethos multi-faith school.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school and currently has students in Years 7 and 8 and a small sixth form. In time the school will grow to the full secondary age range.
- The school has its own headteacher, in addition to the executive principal who works across other schools in the trust. There are no unqualified teachers in the school and all teachers are specialists in the subjects they teach.
- Nishkam High School moved into its new building the day before the start of the inspection, moving out of a newly built temporary school building on the same site. The temporary building is quite remarkable in that it was built over a period of 60 days by volunteers from the local community which included teachers, parents and sixth form students.
- The school receives support from teachers at King Edward VI High School for Girls, Birmingham, such as for the teaching of master classes and preparing sixth form students for university entrance exams.
- The school does not make use of any alternative or off-site provision, apart from where sixth form students have requested a work experience placement.
- Almost all of the school population are from minority ethnic backgrounds, which is well above average. The largest ethnic group is Indian which makes up almost 90% of the school population. About 40% of students in the school speak English as an additional language, which is above average.
- Almost a third of the students in the school are supported by pupil premium funding, which in this school provides additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- There is a smaller than average proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action and a very small proportion who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain students' exceptional achievement, and the outstanding quality of teaching, as the school grows in size and new teachers join.
- Make sure that all teachers consistently use the high quality information available on students' attainment in planning to build on what students have already learned.
- Refine the school development plan to include more detail so that:
  - monitoring activities are undertaken more frequently to gauge the impact of the school's actions
  - school leaders know who is responsible for leading the actions and priorities for further improvement.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Achievement is outstanding because students make rapid and sustained progress across subjects and achieve exceptionally well, particularly in English and in mathematics, from broadly average starting points when they join the school.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' achievement and typically expect students to make one whole national curriculum level progress across each school year, which is well above the average rate of progress seen nationally. Students respond well to this challenge and work hard to improve their skills and to achieve better than this minimum expectation.
- Students in Year 8 are making exceptional progress in mathematics and in science where around two-thirds of the year group are 'on track' to have made at least one whole national curriculum level progress each year since starting at the school. In English, this same rapid progress is seen in a third of the year group.
- Students in Year 7 are making even more rapid progress than the already successful Year 8. In mathematics and science, around three quarters of the Year 7 group are 'on track' to have made at least one whole national curriculum level progress over their first year. In English, about half of the Year 7 group will have achieved this standard.
- Inspectors noted the marked improvements in students' work as they practised their skills in response to advice given by teachers. In a Year 8 Punjabi lesson, students very enthusiastically joined in with speaking practice as they tried hard to perfect their pronunciation. In a Year 7 music lesson, students used their voices and tapped out rhythms for a piece of music before playing this on recorders. In both of these cases, and many others seen, there were rapid gains in learning.
- More-able students are given opportunities to develop other skills such as in coaching other students. This was seen in a sixth form mathematics lesson where an 'expert' worked in pairs with a student who needed more support in that area. This had a profound effect on the progress of both partners. One more-able student explained that she had to make sure she knew how to score maximum marks for the question before she started to explain it to anyone else.
- Students in Year 8 who are supported by the pupil premium and are now making better progress than previously. The slow start was mainly due to a delay in the school receiving information on which students were eligible for pupil premium funding. Steps taken to raise attainment for students in Year 7 entitled to this funding are now proving very successful and there is no discernable gap in attainment or progress for these students compared with others from the same starting point.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are extremely well supported and make at least the progress expected from their starting point, and often better.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is being used effectively to fund a programme to accelerate reading for those students who start in the school with low literacy levels; and a mathematics programme to support those with low numeracy levels. The school has received funding for the current Year 7 but no funding was provided in the previous year for this group.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good and is improving. AS level results in 2013 indicated

exceptional performances in physics, mathematics and chemistry. The progress made by students in seven out of the 12 subjects available was very good or better.

### **The quality of teaching is outstanding**

- Almost all teaching in Years 7 and 8 and in the sixth form is strongly good and sometimes outstanding. There is very little teaching that requires improvement and no teaching which is inadequate. Inspectors' views on the strengths and weaknesses of teaching seen during the inspection, match those of senior leaders seen over time in the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors saw less outstanding teaching than would typically be seen in the school. For a few teachers, the lesson where they were observed was the first time they had met their class; and in most cases it was the first lesson in the new building and routines had not yet been established.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to target questions at particular students. For example, teachers regularly ask students to think deeper about their answers or to listen carefully to another student and then develop further the ideas expressed. This is having a positive impact on students' learning.
- Teachers' marking is outstanding. Students' written work is marked frequently and diligently by teachers. Misunderstandings are corrected, misspellings pointed out and copious written guidance is provided to students in red pen so that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Students respond in green pen, sometimes correcting their mistakes or answering further questions set by the teacher. This high quality dialogue between teacher and students greatly improves their learning.
- This is a relatively new school and teachers are still trying out and developing whole-school approaches to planning and assessing learning. Understandably, this leads to some inconsistencies between teachers, as they do not all take full account of the excellent information available to them about what students can already do when planning lessons. This means that sometimes students are given work that is too easy for them and their progress slows.
- There is a consistent approach to developing literacy skills across the school. Students know that any errors in literacy are marked and corrected in the same way in all subjects. All students are members of the school library and read enthusiastically during their library lesson each week. They know which books are appropriate for their stage in reading and they are rewarded as they read more books.
- Students' oracy skills are developed very well through lessons in public speaking and debating. Students were able to demonstrate this to a high standard in the recent 'BBC News School Reports'.
- Students greatly appreciate the support provided by the higher level teaching assistant who supports students in lessons. They listen carefully as she challenges them to look back at their work and to try to find their own solutions without being told the answers.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- The behaviour of students is outstanding due to the strong faith-inspired and values-based education that students experience at this school. This is built around the Sikh principle of being

'nishkam', or selfless.

- Students are taught to develop honesty as one of these values supported through the 'unsupervised' honesty tuck shop, which relies on students paying for what they have taken.
- At lunchtimes, teachers and students sit together to share a meal as a family. Sixth form students serve the food to Years 7 and 8. All eat together and chat sociably in a calm and caring environment which encourages the development of social skills. After the meal, students from Years 7 and 8 wash the hands of other students and willingly help to clean the tables.
- Students are polite and courteous to adults and to each other. They stand whenever an adult enters the room as a sign of respect. This respect extends to the school facilities. One student, when asked by an inspector why there was no litter around the school site replied, 'because that would be disrespectful to the building that has been built for us'.
- Highly positive attitudes to learning were seen in lessons. Students do not talk about targets, as they believe this suggests an end point to their learning. Students want to succeed and work hard to achieve as far as they can go. They work together exceptionally well in pairs or in small groups as was seen in a physical education lesson where students readily listened to, and acted on, the instructions given by a self-appointed leader during warm-up routines.
- There are very few incidents of unacceptable behaviour. Exclusions are extremely rare.
- The school's work to ensure that students are safe and secure is outstanding. Students know how to keep themselves safe and understand the threats that can be posed by gang culture and knife crimes. In a sixth form personal, social, health education lesson, students took part in a 'Prevent' presentation from the police to increase their awareness of extremist views.
- Students who met with inspectors said that bullying was extremely unusual. They know about the different forms of bullying including cyber-bullying and homophobic and other prejudice-based bullying.
- Attendance is above the national average and school leaders rigorously monitor attendance. Very few parents take their children on holiday during term time as all requests for holidays have to be presented by parents at a governors' meeting.

### **The leadership and management** are outstanding

- The way in which school leaders develop a culture of serving others without expectation of reward or recognition is an inspiration to all who visit the school.
- Staff, parents and students are extremely proud of their school and speak highly of the work of the senior leaders in improving the school. School leaders have secured a strong reputation for the school in the community and the school has been over-subscribed in Year 7 since it opened.
- School leaders rigorously check on the progress being made by students every six weeks. The sharp self-evaluation by the headteacher means that teachers know which individuals or groups are falling behind and use this information to intervene swiftly to support students further.
- Teachers have ensured their assessments are accurate and information on student performance is robust. This has included checking of attainment levels by other schools in the area and by a

range of educational consultants. Teachers regularly check their marking and assessments internally and subject leaders keep detailed records of these procedures. Many sixth form teachers are also examiners so know the standards expected at that level.

- Senior leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching is rigorous and observations of all teachers take place formally every six weeks, in addition to other less formal observations. Judgements are accurate and have been confirmed by educational consultants.
- Teachers are very well supported in their professional development through a whole-school focus on improving teaching which extends to schools across the trust. Teachers readily share their practice with other schools and take part in additional sharing practice sessions on a weekly basis in the school.
- Selected teachers are encouraged to improve their practice through a support programme and weekly monitoring. Teachers talked favourably about the support they had received and noted improvement in their skills as a result.
- School leaders have developed a highly imaginative curriculum which is tailored to students' individual needs. Students experience a longer than average school day which includes library lessons, public speaking and debating, additional time for English and mathematics, two hours of physical education for all students including sixth form, language development in French and Punjabi, and opportunities for instrumental tuition in addition to other enrichment activities such as clubs and visits.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form is outstanding and students receive a rich educational experience which includes opportunities to improve their English and mathematics, develop work-related skills, attend a work experience, take part in master classes and attend study visits to universities. The curriculum meets the needs of students very well and they have all been successful in gaining offers of places at university to study courses such as teaching, law, pharmacy, sciences, mathematics and engineering.
- Opportunities for students to experience spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are rich and varied and make a profound difference to the lives of students at this school. Students are able to take part in worship through Sikh, Hindu and Christian prayer which all choose to do.
- The school's improvement plans accurately reflect the key areas that need further development. Sometimes the timescales for making checks are too wide and it is not always clear which member of staff is responsible for leading, or driving, the improvement across the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is strong, well informed and is focused on the needs of the community. Minutes of meetings show that governors ask challenging questions of school leaders on the performance of students and monitoring by subject leaders. They also make weekly visits to the school and see the students at work. Pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is used effectively and evaluated for impact. Deficiencies in the school website identified at the start of the inspection were very quickly addressed. Teachers' progression through the pay scales and their monitoring of performance is rigorous. All staff are appointed on a 12 month probationary period and use this time to decide if this is the most appropriate school for them. Good teachers are rewarded through an excellence award. The governing body ensures that all requirements related to safeguarding are met in full.

## 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 education, training or employment.
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 education, training or employment.
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 inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138586
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	426898

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	255
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	55
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Brinder Mahon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Herminder Channa
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 348 7660
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