

# Madrasatul Imam Muhammad Zakariya

Independent school light-touch inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Honoree Gordon HMI

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

This was a light touch educational inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding students and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

## Information about the school

Madrasatul Imam Muhammad Zakariya is an independent Islamic day school for girls aged from 11 to 19 years situated in a residential area near the centre of Bolton. There are 123 students on roll. No students have a statement of special educational needs. As the school is at its current maximum permitted capacity, a small group of A level students are being taught in 'twilight' sessions.

The information provided by the school states its commitment to offer 'a religious education that permeates all aspects of a young person's life'; and a 'school experience that encompasses the best of the National Curriculum and that of an Islamic curriculum.' To this end, the school provides 'an environment in which students are encouraged to adopt, through understanding, Islamic codes of practice.' Amongst its stated aims are that, 'students develop an awareness and respect for differing cultures that are around us.' The school day is divided into two parts: a morning session for the Islamic curriculum and an afternoon session for the secular curriculum. The school opened in 2000. Its previous inspection was in 2007.

## Evaluation of the school

The quality of education is outstanding. The school has maintained the high standards noted at the time of the previous inspection. The curriculum, teaching and assessment; the provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and students' behaviour are all outstanding. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong feature underpinning the school's success. The Islamic and secular parts of the curriculum link particularly well together to meet students' needs. The school meets its stated aims exceptionally well. The installation of a new suite for information and communication technology (ICT) since the previous inspection has enabled the school to improve still further the range and relevance of its curriculum. The school meets all but one of the

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

regulations for independent schools: it does not have a playground. All the requirements for safeguarding are met.

## Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding, with an excellent balance between the Islamic and the secular curriculum, which meets students' needs particularly well. The girls get a thorough understanding of their own religion and are well prepared for further study when they leave. The curriculum develops their confidence and enables them to have the maturity to contribute effectively as future citizens in both the wider British and Muslim communities. Students say that they enjoy their education, especially the subjects covered in the Islamic curriculum.

A very few responses to parental questionnaires were negative on how well the school prepared students for their future lives. Students the inspector spoke to felt well prepared. They appreciated the very good grounding they receive in mathematics and English. They feel also that their ICT skills are directly useful to their future lives. There is little, however, in the curriculum about the world of work.

This inspection did not look in depth at the Islamic curriculum. However, the inspector discussed the curriculum with senior staff and observed some aspects. These included a thought-provoking lesson on Islamic jurisprudence where the girls were considering the difference between arranged and forced marriage and what the Qur'an told them about this, referring closely to the original text in Arabic. The teacher considered with the girls the different cultural approaches to this issue and also what British law, and the guidance for schools, say. This example is indicative of the many ways in which both parts of the curriculum are carefully planned to link up.

The school's secular curriculum closely follows the National Curriculum. There are very good opportunities for accreditation: all students follow courses that lead to GCSE in English, mathematics, science, ICT, Arabic, Urdu and design and technology (textiles). Some students also study English literature. Subjects, such as geography and history, are covered across both parts of the curriculum. There are opportunities for students to be creative through, for example, writing poetry which was inspired by an anti-bullying week; or at parents' events, performing scenarios or formal recitations. These imaginative approaches add greatly to students' enjoyment of school. At A level, students follow courses in English, Arabic and Urdu.

The school has identified some appropriate ways in which it could enhance the curriculum still further, for example by providing more opportunities for both staff and pupils to use their ICT skills more across subjects; and by providing additional GCSE courses. Students in Year 9 have begun to study GCSE statistics.

Opportunities for physical education (PE) remain limited, as at the time of the previous inspection, as there is no outside area. The school uses a local community centre on a weekly basis for PE.

Teaching and assessment are outstanding. The school has maintained the high standards noted at the time of the previous inspection. The dedication and enthusiasm of the teachers lie behind the outstanding progress the girls make. The results of the vast majority of the students in the statutory attainment tests at the end of primary school are average. They go on to reach above average and, in several subjects, well above average standards by the end of Year 11.

Teachers structure their lessons well and take great care to ensure that all the students understand a point before moving on. Resources are good and kept up to date. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent. As one student typically commented: 'It's like a family here; my second home.' This encourages students to learn. Work is carefully and regularly marked. Termly, and for the Islamic curriculum monthly assessments, provide regular feedback to parents and carers on progress.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils**

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Students' spiritual development is key to achieving this outcome. Their attitudes, beliefs and moral development are very effectively shaped by their Islamic faith. This assures students' personal development according to a strict moral code that is understood by all. A particular strength of the curriculum is the distinct lessons for personal, social and health education, and for citizenship. These programmes are very well planned and are highly relevant to the lives of young people. The content is wide ranging and contributes very effectively to the girls' confidence and self-belief.

Older girls were observed leading mixed-age groups of younger girls who were discussing the major festivals in different religions. This activity showed the depth of their knowledge and understanding and the interest they had brought to independently researching these topics. Students are developing very well their understanding of other cultures and faiths. In so doing the school is promoting very effectively tolerance and cooperative attitudes. Students are clear that their duty of care for their neighbour is rooted in Islam.

These sorts of opportunities within the curriculum further enhance students' social skills and their skills in speaking and listening. They add greatly to the girls' enjoyment of school. Students are encouraged to set themselves high standards. This inspires their evident self-confidence and enthusiasm for learning.

Students' cultural development is good. The school draws well on the different cultural traditions that exist within its community. The girls and their parents and carers raised over £10,000 for an appeal to help people living in Gaza. Students said that they would like to undertake more visits out of school, for example, to museums or other places of interest related to their studies, if these could be safely arranged. They enjoy an annual fun day with other schools, which adds to their social awareness.

The school council provides an effective channel for students to express their views and for older girls to counsel younger ones. The school has plans to extend students' community involvement and to develop leadership skills further. Attendance is well above average and behaviour is outstanding. Students are eager to learn; they work hard in their lessons. Students' enjoyment of school is echoed in one comment: 'I love coming to school; if I am ill, I really miss it.'

## **Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety**

The school's practice and procedures for safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety procedures are good. Safeguarding checks are robust: the school has conducted all the checks on staff that are required and has appropriate arrangements in place for child protection. All staff are suitably trained in child protection procedures. The school maintains a single central register of all checks on staff as required. Students say that they feel safe at school and their parents and carers agree. The questionnaires for the inspection verified that the vast majority of parents and carers are totally satisfied with the education that the school provides.

The staff take great care to look after the girls and they supervise them well. The school has involved parents and carers in working together in ensuring their safety and well-being, for example, through providing advice on internet safety and in anti-bullying weeks. Students' awareness of health and well-being is fostered well through following a unit of accreditation from the Association of Qualifications Alliance (AQA) related to health and well-being. A unit related to the dangers of illegal drugs further contributes to helping the girls to keep themselves safe. The school effectively promotes healthy eating and implements its policy, for example, with checks on the content of lunchboxes.

Opportunities for physical education remain limited. Students go weekly to the local community centre to play handball, rounders and badminton. This is adequate and meets requirements. A small number of parents and carers expressed concerns in their questionnaires at the lack of regular physical exercise. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.<sup>3</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made)

- provide an outside area for students to play in (paragraph 23(s)).

## **What the school could do to improve further**

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- extend the opportunities for students' and staff to use their ICT skills across different subjects
- building into the curriculum opportunities to learn more about the world of work.

## Inspection judgements

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education	√			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	√			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs	√			
How well students make progress in their learning	√			

### Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	√			
The behaviour of pupils	√			

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		√		
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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Muslim day
<b>Date school opened</b>	September 2000
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11-19 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0      Girls: 123      Total: 123
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0    Boys: 0    Girls: 0    Girls: 0    Total: 0    Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0      Girls: 0      Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£900
<b>Address of school</b>	Keswick Street Bolton Lancashire BL1 8LX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01204 384434
<b>Email address</b>	mimz.keswick@btinternet.com
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Amena Sader
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mr Mahmood Chandia