

Al-Muntada Islamic School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Judith Charlesworth

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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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Al-Muntada Islamic School is an independent day school for boys and girls of Islamic faith, aged from four to sixteen years. It was founded in 1989 by the Al-Muntada Al-Islami Trust which shares its headquarters in Parsons Green with the primary and Early Years Foundation Stage departments of the school. The department for pupils of secondary age is for girls only. It opened in 2003 and is now housed in former office accommodation in Ravensbourne Park. Both locations are in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. The two departments function as entirely separate schools and do not work to the same policies or procedures.

There are currently 198 pupils; 52 are of secondary age and 146 pupils are of primary and reception age. There are 23 children in the Reception class. The school is registered for 211 pupils, of whom 40 should be of secondary age. The pupils are of diverse ethnic heritages. Most are bilingual or at an advanced stage of learning English. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs and no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage receive government funding. New leaders and managers in both departments took up their posts in the autumn of 2010. The overall aim for both departments is, 'to provide an outstanding academic and Islamic education, aiming to create an encouraging atmosphere for Muslim children to realise their full potential.' The school was last inspected in January 2008.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality of education and has maintained this standard since the last inspection. It complies with most, but not all, of the regulations for independent schools. Many improved policies and practices have recently been introduced and the school is well on the way to meeting its challenging aims. The curriculum is satisfactory, but the quality of teaching and assessment is good and pupils make good progress. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory, although children make good progress in some areas of learning. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and personal development and their health, safety and welfare, including their safeguarding, is good.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory. All the required areas of learning are included and there is a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Pupils take the national tests in English and mathematics at the end of Years 2 and 6 and achieve well. The school uses the National Curriculum as the basis of its primary and Key Stage 3 curriculum, and a number of GCSE courses are offered to pupils in Key Stage 4. In addition, all pupils learn Arabic and follow a curriculum for Islamic education. The secondary curriculum is enriched by additional subjects such as business studies and psychology. However, it does not include a programme of careers guidance as required. Good provision is made for personal, social and health education (PSHE) in subject-specific lessons and through other subjects. For example, 'becoming an adult' is taught in Islamic studies, biology and religious education. Homework is used well to reinforce and extend pupils' learning.

Curriculum planning is good and forms a good basis for teaching and learning. Each subject has detailed plans which allow pupils' skills and knowledge to be developed systematically. However, in a small number of subjects, these are not always fully implemented. Information and communication technology (ICT) is underemphasised in the primary department, and ICT is not sufficiently used by pupils as a resource in other subjects. Throughout the school, pupils' artwork and display are insufficiently vibrant, with too much use of felt-tip pens and colouring of pre-prepared designs. Curriculum enrichment is limited. Pupils make some educational visits and visitors come into school to give talks, for example personnel from Travel for London. However, there are very few after-school clubs. Inspection questionnaires indicate some dissatisfaction with the trips and extra-curricular activities provided.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory in the Early Years Foundation Stage and good in the rest of the school. Throughout the school, staff have high expectations of pupils to apply themselves and behave well. In most lessons, there is a lively and interesting interchange between teachers and pupils. This also helps teachers to assess pupils' understanding and adjust the lesson if necessary. Learning in lessons is enhanced by the use of teaching strategies, for example the use of 'talk partners' in the primary department. New digital whiteboards are beginning to be used effectively to motivate and engage pupils. Teachers explain work well and demonstrate activities so that pupils know what they are expected to do.

Relationships between staff and pupils are good and occasional restless behaviour is managed well. Lesson planning is consistently good. All lessons have clear learning objectives, which are shared with pupils so that they know what they are learning. These are helpfully related to assessments of pupils' levels of attainment in the secondary department. Occasionally, higher attaining pupils do not have work that is sufficiently challenging. However, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well by specific targets to achieve, and by well-directed support from teaching assistants. Pupils of all ages settle well to their tasks and work hard.

Assessment is developing well and is beginning to be used effectively to inform teaching. Primary and secondary pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress overall. Pupils' work is regularly assessed using National Curriculum level descriptors, and pupils take frequent tests which are graded. Currently, attainment information is kept by class and subject teachers and is used to identify weaknesses, set targets and report termly to parents and carers. This assists pupils' good progress in English, mathematics, science, Arabic and Islamic studies. However, detailed assessment does not yet extend to other subjects and the marking of pupils' work does not always help them to know how to improve. Appropriate new systems are just being implemented to track pupils' long-term attainment and progress in order to improve planning and target setting at a whole-school and individual level.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

This aspect of pupils' development is good overall, and their spiritual and moral development is a particular strength. From the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils' personal development is very well supported by the Islamic ethos and the staff's high expectations of pupils' conduct. Pupils' behaviour is good and pupils are polite, friendly, sociable young people who enjoy school. They enjoy talking to adults and speak freely to them. Pupils are generally attentive in class, express their views confidently and clearly want to do well. They make good friends with one another. Bullying and harassment are rare and they feel safe, happy and secure in school. Almost all pupils who returned the inspection questionnaires said that they enjoy school. Attendance in the primary department is satisfactory but the attendance of some girls of secondary age fluctuates, often due to family arrangements. The school has made a determined effort to influence the attitudes of families toward maintaining high attendance and this is having a significantly positive effect but there is still some way to go.

Through the Islamic curriculum and prayers, pupils learn right from wrong. This is reinforced well by the secular curriculum and the school's clear reward and sanction systems. The school is a harmonious multicultural community. Through the curriculum, in particular, pupils are helped to understand and respect people from other faiths and backgrounds. However, opportunities are missed due to the absence of a more formalised approach. They come to understand the democratic society in which they live through outings, visitors and subjects such as history and citizenship. Pupils learn about other faiths and cultures, for example studying the rites of passage for Jewish children and the significance of Black history. Opportunities to contribute to the school community are improving, but there are too few to help pupils contribute to the wider community. The curriculum and everyday life of the school effectively support pupils' future well-being and preparation for the next step in their lives.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils in both the primary and secondary departments. All required staff training is up to date. Good arrangements to safeguard pupils are supported by a range of appropriate policies and practices, for example to prevent bullying, to promote good behaviour and to ensure child protection. These are well written, properly implemented and the systems run smoothly. Although infrequent, careful records are made of incidents and the action taken. Fire prevention practices are good, and very careful, safe, staff recruitment practices assure that pupils are safeguarded. Suitable risk assessments are made for activities on and off the school sites. The secondary department does not have a suitable three-year accessibility plan for the premises as required by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Good consideration is given to individuals' needs and well-being. A newly appointed 'inclusion' teacher in the primary department organises effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The curriculum supports pupils to lead healthy lives, but the school's everyday practice is not sufficiently strong to reinforce this important message effectively. For example, secondary girls are not given enough access to fresh air at break times, and the lunches prepared for primary pupils do not include enough healthy options. However, the school's efforts and curriculum are effective in teaching pupils to stay safe. Older girls, for example, showed clearly that they understand the dangers of social networking internet sites in presentations they had prepared for their class.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All the relevant checks have been made of the proprietor, staff and volunteers to ensure their suitability to work with the pupils. These are recorded as required.

Premises and accommodation at the school

Both the primary and secondary departments provide suitable premises and accommodation that enable safe, effective learning. Both locations have a full ICT suite, and the secondary accommodation includes a purpose-built, modern science room. There are adequate toilet facilities for the primary and reception children, but insufficient facilities for the number of girls of secondary age. The playground for primary and reception pupils is adequate. However, arrangements for secondary pupils are inadequate. The secondary location has no playground and arrangements to take the pupils to the nearby local park are insufficiently frequent.

Provision of information

The primary and secondary departments each have a clear, accurate and up-to-date prospectus which gives all the required information and informs parents and carers of the additional documentation that is available on request. There is also a separate prospectus for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Detailed termly reports are

provided to parents and carers about their children's attainment and progress in the secular curriculum, Arabic, Islamic education, and aspects of personal development. However, the grades, codes and percentages given are not always easy to interpret.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

Appropriate arrangements are in place to deal with any complaints and all of the relevant regulations are met.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the setting is satisfactory, as are the provision and outcomes for children. Staff are appropriately qualified and trained to provide a caring educational environment in which children are safe, happy and keen to learn. Children's welfare and safeguarding requirements are adequately met, and positive partnerships are established with parents and carers. Children have good relationships with one another and with adults. Support for their personal, social and emotional development is good, ensuring good progress in this aspect. The provision emphasises the development of English literacy and numeracy skills, Arabic language and Islamic education, and children make good progress in these areas. They enjoy reciting verses from the Qu'ran. Most children know their letter sounds, and a few can write simple sentences on their own. They are developing a good understanding of numbers and their use, for example counting up to and back from 10 and mathematical concepts such as repeating patterns. Children's progress in other areas of learning, such as knowledge and understanding of the world, and creative and physical development is satisfactory but less well developed. Children's physical development, for example, is hindered by the lack of a designated outside area although they do have access to the hall and playground and make satisfactory use of these. Children do not always have enough opportunity for independent choices and investigation. Overall, therefore, children make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals. Leadership and management are satisfactory. A number of appropriate improvements have been initiated recently, such as the recording of assessment information in all areas of learning and its use to inform planning. Although the positive impact of these is now emerging, there is still further to go in improving everyday practice.

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.³

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- set out a curriculum policy in writing which is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the whole curriculum, and implement it effectively (paragraph 2(1))
- provide appropriate careers guidance for pupils receiving secondary education (paragraph 2(2)(g)).

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

- provide sufficient washrooms for staff and pupils in the secondary department, including facilities for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, which take account of regulations 3 and 4 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(j))
- make appropriate arrangements for providing outside space for secondary pupils to play safely (paragraph 23(s)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended, the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan for the secondary premises.⁴

What the school could do to improve further

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

- In the primary department, implement the planned curriculum for ICT in all classes and improve its use in other curriculum subjects, and in Key Stages 1 and 2, improve the provision in aesthetic and creative areas of learning.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, use the information gained from tracking pupils' attainment and progress to inform planning for provision and pupils' progress and, in particular, develop systems to track pupils' attainment and progress in other subjects, to complement those in English, mathematics, science, and Arabic and Islamic education.
- Improve children's experiences in the Early Years Foundation Stage by extending provision for knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development, by ensuring more opportunities for child-initiated learning and by providing better outdoor provision.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, strengthen the observation and recording of children's developing skills in both focused activities and continuous

⁴ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga_19950050_en_1

provision, to inform planning for provision and for children's progress.

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 pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' 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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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage			✓	
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage			✓	
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage			✓	
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage			✓	

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Islamic day school		
Date school opened	1989		
Age range of pupils	4–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 73	Girls: 125	Total: 198
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,500		
Address of school	7 Bridges Place, Off Parsons Green Lane, London SW6 4HW		
Telephone number	020 7471 8283		
Email address	headteacher@almuntadaschool.org		
Headteacher	Mr Ziad Chehimi (primary), Ms Agleema Rahmaan (secondary), Mr Saeed Alghadie		
Proprietor	Al-Islami Trust		