

Islamic Shakhshiyah Foundation

Lion House, Petersfield Avenue, Slough, Berkshire, SL2 5DN

Inspection dates 14–16 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Teaching is good overall and pupils from an early age learn effectively. Pupils achieve particularly well in speaking and listening. They write confidently for a wide range of purposes.
- The school successfully meets its stated aims. Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. Their Islamic personality is very effectively supported by the well-organised *Halaqah* curriculum.
- Procedures and practices to promote the welfare and safety of pupils, including safeguarding, are very rigorous. Staff know their pupils extremely well.
- There is a strong drive by senior leaders to improve the school's effectiveness. Teaching is improving and pupils achieve well.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Some teaching is adequate rather than good. In a few lessons, pupils do not complete as much work as they could do.
- The mathematics curriculum is not always giving pupils enough practice to consolidate and secure their knowledge and understanding.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection took place with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed 18 lessons or parts of lessons and activities. They had specific discussions with pupils from Years 4 and 6 and listened to pupils reading from Years 1 and 2.
- It was not possible to gather information from the online Parent View survey, though a small randomly chosen group of parents and carers, representing different year groups, met with the lead inspector.
- Inspectors reviewed key documents and policies and scrutinised pupils' books and the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress.
- Inspectors had discussions throughout the inspection with senior leaders and other staff and trustees.

Inspection team

Daniel Towl, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Emma Ing	Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Islamic Shakhsiyah Foundation primary school was opened in 2002 in central Slough. It has a partner school in Haringey with which it shares its senior management team.
- There are 122 pupils on roll aged from 3 to 11 years. Twenty-four pupils attend part-time in the Tifly nursery.
- The school has a strong Islamic ethos reflecting the principles of Shakhsiyah education which underpins its curriculum and teaching approaches.
- The school aims to develop 'each child's Islamic personality in partnership with parents' and for children to '...reach a high level of academic achievement'.
- A very small number of pupils have special educational needs. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school was last inspected in January 2009.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Quickly improve any teaching that is less than good by ensuring that the activities planned are strongly focused on clear objectives, taught precisely and are well managed to ensure that learning is brisk and effective.
- Ensure that the mathematics curriculum provides more opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their skills, especially for the higher attaining pupils.
- Clarify the wording and specific terms used in curriculum documents to ensure that the intended learning from the study themes is clear and the approaches taken in lessons are fully in line with the school's aims and objectives.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Pupils' achievements are good both in their academic and Islamic studies. By the time they leave in Year 6, they have made good progress from their starting points and are reaching or exceeding levels that are expected for 11 year olds. This reflects the mostly good teaching. Pupils do particularly well in developing their speaking, listening and thinking skills because the curriculum is designed to give pupils daily opportunities to take part in discussions, express their own views and listen to and consider the views of others. This is a strength of the school because these activities are taught effectively and support pupils' academic and personal development. Pupils are motivated to learn and 'take part' with interest in their activities. The few pupils with special educational needs make equally good progress as other pupils.

Children in the Early Years Foundation stage settle quickly and develop good learning skills. By the time they enter Year 1, they have achieved well in nearly all areas of learning. They develop confidence in their literacy skills using their phonic knowledge (the sounds letters make) effectively to read key vocabulary. They are prepared to 'have a go' at writing. They make least progress in their creative skills although they enjoy painting and making things. Two children, for example, were observed enjoying making their own books.

Older pupils become confident readers. Appropriate attention is given to helping pupils improve and develop their reading skills in Key Stage 1, and in Key Stage 2 they are using their skills to good effect to support their all-round learning. Pupils are confident to read unfamiliar words. The best readers in Key Stage 1 use punctuation effectively to bring expression to their reading. Pupils knowledge of the Qur'an and their abilities in Arabic develop well.

Pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2 write interesting accounts about the various topics they study. Older pupils can successfully write extended narrative and factual accounts. The content of pupils' written work shows thoughtfulness and an ability to develop ideas, but they do not always pay enough attention to the accuracy and neatness of their day-to-day writing in workbooks.

Pupils develop good arithmetical skills and can apply these in problem-solving activities. However, they do not always have enough opportunities to practise their skills in different contexts to consolidate and extend their knowledge further, especially those pupils who are good at mathematics. Pupils successfully develop a broad understanding of some key events in history, other countries and environmental issues.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school has a calm atmosphere and learning takes place uninterrupted. The daily *Halaqah* (circle of learning) sessions are very effective in helping them develop a strong and deep understanding of their Muslim faith. Pupils successfully explore what it means to be a good Muslim and also learn in depth how Islam has developed over the centuries. They learn to appreciate the views, assertions and key tenets of other faiths and openly discuss issues related to being a Muslim in Britain. They know and respect that others may have different views and they know the importance of being tolerant.

Teachers are successful in developing an ethos where pupils feel safe to express their views. In one lesson, pupils discussed the differences between special and sacred symbols and, in another outstanding lesson, older pupils discussed issues to do with stereotyping of individuals and groups in society. The planned curriculum ensures that pupils learn about some British traditions and history and older pupils are able to describe what it means to be democratic. Pupils are

encouraged to bring controversial issues forward for discussion which they may have seen in the media, and do so. Teachers do not shy away from allowing pupils to discuss controversial issues and they take appropriate steps to ensure that issues are represented in a balanced way.

By the time pupils leave in Year 6, they have developed the confidence and self-esteem which enable them to be confident in their next steps in education. Year 4 pupils were able to talk enthusiastically about their work and could say what sorts of skills they would need for the careers they were currently interested in following. Pupils who spoke with inspectors were aspirational. Parents and carers commented very favourably on how well their children were prepared for their secondary schools.

Pupils develop a broad knowledge of British society. They have talks from adults who work in local services such as the fire service and some parents and carers have attended school to talk about their jobs, which have included accountancy, retailing and website development. Other visitors, for example an architect and a documentary producer, have also spoken about their work. Visits to the library, museums, local parks, farms and other places of historical interest give pupils experience of public institutions and the broader community. Pupils are involved in community events. For example, the school organises an annual Islamic inventions fair in the main town library.

Attendance is average. It has recently been adversely affected by a spate of illnesses and some families taking unauthorised extended holidays. Not all pupils are regularly punctual.

Quality of teaching

Good

Teaching is mostly good. This means that pupils make good progress over time. Teachers carefully plan a range of interesting activities which engage and interest pupils. They use the curriculum, including Arabic, to effectively plan integrated and coherent themes.

Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and make it clear to their pupils that they expect them to concentrate and persevere to complete their tasks. Relationships in classrooms are good. Teachers know their pupils well and use this information to good effect in most lessons by giving individual additional support when pupils need it. Teachers' good questioning and discussion activities provide pupils with many occasions to respond and give their ideas. This means that all pupils are able to contribute meaningfully to lessons, especially in the *Halaqah* sessions.

Some teaching lacks a precise focus on learning objectives. Instructions and objectives are not suitably clear. As a result, pupils in these lessons are not learning as well as they could. They make adequate rather than good progress.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers encourage children to do things for themselves. They carefully note the small steps children make. They use this information well to develop a helpful record of children's progress in the expected stages in learning. In Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers regularly assess how well pupils are doing and measure their progress against the expectations of the school aims and against national levels. Teachers regularly mark pupils' work and sometimes make comments to help pupils improve. However, they are not always diligent in ensuring that pupils are spelling key vocabulary correctly. Older pupils were able to tell inspectors about targets that they were working towards.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The curriculum is good. It is carefully planned and gives pupils broad experiences, which are reflected in pupils' books and attractive displays around the school.

There is a strong focus on personal development and language and literacy, especially reading. This has a very positive impact on pupils' learning. The overarching curriculum for the *Halaqah*

sessions is the backbone of the learning programme because it is through these sessions that the school's Islamic ethos is established and maintained. The *Halaqah* also very effectively contributes to the good development of pupils' key communication, thinking and reasoning skills. Activities from *Halaqah* sessions frequently lead into other areas of the curriculum. Pupils' key learning experiences are linked together well. It is very clear from the overall curriculum plan what is to be taught and when. The curriculum plan ensures that all the required areas of learning are represented.

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum meets requirements. There is an appropriate balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities. Appropriate opportunities are taken to effectively link children's play with more specific learning, for example learning initial letter sounds of animals while playing with toys in the sand.

The mathematics curriculum is not always providing pupils with enough opportunities in lessons to consolidate the skills learnt, and the scheme of work for physical education (PE) lacks some detail about how basic sports skills will be systematically developed. The school regularly uses off-site sports expertise and facilities for PE.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

Provision to maintain pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. All the independent school standards in this aspect of the school's work are met. There are very rigorous procedures to ensure that pupils are safeguarded. The designated person for child protection has received the appropriate training. All the required checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are carried out and diligently recorded on the required single central register. Appointment procedures for staff are robust and rigorously followed. They take full account of national guidance. All the welfare requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage are met.

Other health and safety procedures are very well documented. All the required risk assessments are undertaken. Fire regulations and first aid requirements are fully met. A suitable number of staff have the right level of first aid training. Roles and responsibilities of all staff are very well documented in the comprehensive teachers' handbook.

The school operates in a very orderly way. Pupils are well supervised at all times. Older pupils told inspectors that they feel very safe and that they are not concerned about bullying because it is rarely an issue in school. They were very confident that if they had concerns, these could be raised with an adult and they would be dealt with. There is much harmony and respect in this small community and this underpins the calm and safe environment. A small group of parents who spoke with inspectors had no concerns about the school's approach to welfare and safety. They reported that pupils of all ages were very well behaved on outside visits.

Pupils bring healthy lunches to school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage eat a good amount of fruit during their snack times. Health matters are discussed with pupils in *Halaqah* sessions and other lessons such as science. Pupils conduct themselves safely around the school because they are well behaved and courteous and considerate to each other and adults.

Leadership and management

Good

Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders have strong principles which are reflected in the key aims of the school. All the independent school standards are met. Trustees meet regularly. They have a good overview of the school's work because the school community is close and communication is good. However, trustees have not yet developed very rigorous practices to both support and challenge the school leaders in equal measure. A small group of randomly chosen parents told inspectors that they had much confidence in the school and

its leaders. Returned questionnaires from staff show that they are fully supportive of the school's management.

There is a firm drive from senior leaders to improve the school and especially further develop the curriculum and improve teaching. Teachers are encouraged to gain relevant qualifications and the school has good links with educational organisations in order to be up to date with teaching methods and curriculum organisation and to add additional external scrutiny of the school's work.

Senior leaders observe and monitor teaching, the outcomes of which are used as part of teachers' performance management. Teaching has improved as a result and senior leaders are aware that it needs to improve even more if the school is to become outstanding. Pupils' progress is monitored carefully and the outcomes discussed with each teacher to determine what needs to be done to ensure that all pupils are learning as well as they should. Parents and carers who have children who have previously been through the school are very pleased with the way that they confidently moved to their secondary education. Procedures to address complaints and to provide parents with the required information are clear, meet requirements and are followed appropriately.

The curriculum is well organised. There is a good amount of detail in the documents especially linked to aspects of Islamic curriculum. However, some of the terminology used in the documents is not as well explained as it could be. This means that learning intentions from pupils' activities sometimes lack clarity and expected approaches are open to too wide an interpretation. School leaders are in the process of updating the curriculum, especially that which relates specifically to the development of pupils' Islamic faith and personal development through the *Halaqah* sessions.

The school's premises are adequately maintained and of a suitable size for the number of pupils at the school. The school environment is made more welcoming and supportive of learning through attractive displays of pupils' work and other supportive materials. The trustees are actively seeking larger premises.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	134085
Inspection number	420986
DfE registration number	871/6003

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Islamic Primary
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	112
Number of part time pupils	24
Proprietor	Islamic Shakhsiyah Foundation
Headteacher	Mrs Farah Ahmed
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2009
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,700–£3,360
Telephone number	01753 518000
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