

Markazul Uloom

Park Lee Road, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB2 3NY

Inspection dates	28–30 January 2014	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
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

- Good leadership and management have improved several important aspects of the school's work since previous inspections. Leaders evaluate the effectiveness of the school's work well. This ensures that teaching is good and students achieve well.
- Parents and carers are very happy with the good secular education and excellent learning in Islamic studies.
- Extremely good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development results in students behaving outstandingly at all times.
- Teachers' high expectations and good subject knowledge ensure that students make good progress over time, including the development of basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Outstanding provision for students' personal development and their welfare, health and safety ensures that they feel very safe and know how to lead a healthy lifestyle.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Teachers do not always use stimulating classroom resources or make checks to ensure that students fully understand the work during every lesson.
- Although students develop basic skills in reading and writing well, there are not enough opportunities across the curriculum for them (especially boys) to achieve outstandingly in these areas.

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

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed 11 lessons taught by 11 different teachers. Meetings were held with leaders, staff and students.
- The school's documentation was checked including schemes of work, records of students' progress, the self-evaluation and the provision for students' welfare, health, safety and safeguarding.
- Although there were too few responses on Parent View for inspectors to take account of, several letters from parents and carers were received during the inspection giving their perspectives. Questionnaire responses from staff were also analysed.

Inspection team

Saleem Hussain, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jo Sharpe

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2001. It is located in Blackburn, Lancashire. The school is registered as an independent, day, Muslim faith school for up to 217 boys and girls aged from 11 to 19 years. Boys and girls are taught in separate buildings on the school campus with male staff teaching boys and female staff teaching girls.
- Currently, there are 142 students on roll comprising of 108 girls and 34 boys. This includes a small number of girls who are aged 17 or 18 years. There are no students with a statement of special educational needs.
- Students are of mainly Asian heritage. The school has an Islamic religious affiliation. Some students aspire to ultimately become religious scholars.
- The school follows the National Curriculum and provides GCSE courses. It works within an ethos of Islamic values, beliefs, culture and tradition. The school also aims to help students to acquire: 'knowledge, skills and qualities, which will help them to develop intellectually, emotionally, socially, physically, morally and spiritually, so they may become independent, responsible, confident and considerate members of the community.'
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school received its last full inspection of education in December 2010 when the overall quality of education was judged as satisfactory. An emergency inspection took place in November 2012 which identified a regulatory failure regarding outside play space.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding by ensuring that teachers always use stimulating classroom resources to support learning and make checks to ensure that students fully understand the work during each lesson.
- Develop more opportunities for students (especially boys), across the curriculum to develop outstanding basic skills in reading and writing.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Achievement is good because teaching and the curriculum are good. Based on their starting points, most students achieve well, including boys, girls, those of differing abilities and post-16 students. Teachers motivate students very well and present them with work that matches their needs and interests closely. Consequently, students gain knowledge quickly in different subjects. They develop and apply a range of skills well including those for reading, writing, communication and mathematics. Leaders recognise that although boys' skills in reading and writing are good, girls' achievements in these regards are better. Most students join the school in Year 7 and their attainment on entry is broadly in line with national expectations for their age. By the time students leave school their overall achievement is good, most notably in mathematics, science, ICT and Urdu. Students perform well in GCSE examinations compared to others in similar schools. The school provides excellent guidance and support in the classroom and through interventions, to help lower-ability students to close gaps in learning between them and similar students nationally. For example, case studies indicate that from low starting points, a number of students have gone on to make outstanding progress by achieving good grades in GCSE examinations. It is clear that students are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

Students' achievements in Islamic studies are outstanding. For example, the great majority of students make excellent gains in their knowledge of the Qur'an, Islamic principles and Arabic. It is very pleasing to note that many students have memorised the Qur'an since the school opened.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Students' behaviour, attitudes and personal development are outstanding. They are very well mannered, courteous and respectful towards others. Students' very thoughtful behaviour makes an excellent contribution to their learning. Relationships between different groups of students and between them and adults are excellent. Students' comments included 'everyone is treated like a brother or sister'. Attendance is very good and punctuality to lessons is remarkable. Students show much enthusiasm in lessons and work very hard. These factors reflect students' enjoyment of school life. The school is a very orderly community where exemplary behaviour is the norm. School records and discussions confirm that incidents of serious misbehaviour and bullying are extremely rare. All groups of students report that they feel safe at all times and know exactly what to do if they feel bullied.

Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Work in Islamic studies, assemblies, talks from visiting speakers and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) lessons enables students to blossom into wonderful ambassadors for the school and model young citizens. Students develop their self-confidence through reciting *Azan* (the call to prayers) and also reading the Qur'an or religious stories to their peers after prayers. Students also develop their spirituality through the secular curriculum, for example they learn about poverty, endurance and the inspirational nature of human achievement in history lessons. Students have a very clear sense of right and wrong. Their acts of kindness towards others and outstanding behaviour are frequently rewarded, for example by special mentions in assemblies and merits which culminate in treats at the end of the year. In a discussion about capital punishment, students showed that they are receptive to different opinions and able to make reasoned judgements whilst fully respecting opposite views.

Outstanding social development results from many opportunities to work with peers in lessons, participation in team sports and through mixing with different members of the community during school trips. Students make a valuable contribution to the school and wider community. They frequently visit a hospice to comfort people and also provide Eid festival gifts for those less

fortunate than themselves. The school provides students with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England. They learn about the work of the Houses of Parliament and the legal system. The proprietors have ensured that partisan political views are not promoted in school. Visitors including the police and legal professionals enable students to learn about the criminal and civil law. The student council enables students to give their views to leaders on school matters and to learn about democracy and British values. Students show very high levels of appreciation and respect for different cultures, beliefs and customs. They visit a cathedral each year to reinforce their very good understanding of Christianity and learn about the major world faiths in religious education lessons.

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of teaching is good. As a result, most students make good progress and achieve well over time. All teachers have established a calm, business-like atmosphere in their classrooms and this engages students effectively in lessons. Strengths in teaching include good questioning and prompting which ensures that students of different abilities work hard and learn to think for themselves. Teachers expect students to make good or better progress in every lesson. They use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons which challenge students effectively and enable them to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in all areas of study. Lessons start promptly and teachers waste no time in moving through the learning plans at a good rate. This ensures that students get through a good amount of work. Basic skills in reading, writing, communication, mathematics and ICT are solidly taught. Classroom resources are sufficient in range, quality and quantity. In effective lessons seen, teachers used stimulating classroom resources very well to enhance learning. Furthermore, teachers frequently checked that all students fully understood the work. Inspectors found that where these aspects of teaching were less strong, students did not achieve outstandingly.

Assessment is good. Students' key skills are evaluated accurately on entry to the school. Each student meets a senior teacher in the early part of the school year to discuss learning targets and develop a personal study plan. Ongoing tests and assessments are then carried out in all subjects to check progress. Marking is good. Written comments in students' workbooks ensure that students know how well they are doing and how to improve.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The curriculum and other activities are good with outstanding elements. This ensures that students enjoy their learning and achieve well. The curriculum is well planned and ensures that students benefit from a good range of experiences in all the required areas of learning. Schemes of work are detailed and provide for all students to be challenged and make progress. Provision for PSHCE is outstanding, making an excellent contribution to personal development. Opportunities to develop basic skills in English, mathematics and ICT are good, ensuring that students achieve well in these areas. However, there are not enough opportunities across the curriculum for students (especially boys) to achieve outstandingly in developing their reading and writing skills. The school has good arrangements in place to provide careers guidance and work experience. Islamic education is outstanding. The school implements an adapted *ders-e-nezami* (Islamic studies) programme which includes Qur'anic studies, *hadith* (traditions of the prophet) and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). The school also offers Arabic language and literature, *aalim* (Islamic scholarship) and *hafiz* (memorisation of the Qur'an) courses. Many opportunities exist for students to gain accreditations in a good range of secular and Islamic studies. Educational visits and visitors enrich learning. For example, students regularly visit a science and industry museum to support their studies. The provision for post-16 students meets their needs and interests well. For example, the current students enjoy their work including A Level courses.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety**Outstanding**

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. All of the regulations in these regards are met. The school has a very strong family atmosphere. Adults are highly committed to students' well-being and the quality of day-to-day care, guidance and support is excellent. Arrangements for staff recruitment are of a very high standard. The school carries out all of the required checks to ensure that all adults in school are suitable to work with students. Checks are recorded as required on a single central register. The designated officers for child protection and all other staff are appropriately trained regarding child protection. The school has a good number of staff trained to the standards of a designated officer: a reflection of the school's commitment to safeguarding. Safeguarding policies and procedures are regularly reviewed. The school's first aid policy is effective. Risk assessments are carried out for the premises and activities in and out of school. Any risks to safety are identified and there is clear guidance to staff on how to manage problems. Fire risk assessments are carried out regularly and the school meets all requirements regarding fire safety. The school's policy to promote outstanding behaviour is very effective. Staff manage students' behaviour outstandingly. The school's anti-bullying policy is very effective. An anti-bullying day was held recently in partnership with the police and this included many aspects of staying safe including dealing with cyber bullying and drugs education. Students say that they routinely enjoy healthy lifestyles and know how to stay safe in and out of school.

Leadership and management**Good**

Leadership and management are good. The effectiveness of the school's leadership can be seen in students' good achievement, outstanding behaviour and personal development, good teaching, strong curriculum and outstanding provision for welfare, health and safety. Leaders ensure that students make good progress in literacy, numeracy and ICT skills development. The proprietors, headteacher and senior managers work together harmoniously. They communicate high expectations and ambition at every opportunity. As a result, everyone shares a unity of purpose. Self-evaluation is very good and the school has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. Staff morale is high and teachers are pleased with the arrangements for their professional development. Leaders recognise that although the system of monitoring and evaluating teaching results in good teaching, there is still some way to go before the procedures result in an overall quality of teaching which is outstanding.

Leaders have made significant improvements since the last full inspection so that the overall effectiveness of the school is now good. For example, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is now outstanding and achievement is good. The school has a good capacity for further improvement. The proprietors have ensured that all of the independent school standards are met. The school has fully addressed the regulation failed at the emergency inspection regarding outside space for boys to play safely. The school's premises and accommodation are well maintained. All requirements regarding the provision of information for parents and carers and the manner in which complaints are to be handled are met. The school works closely with parents, carers and others to ensure that students achieve well. Parents and carers are rightly pleased with the quality of education provided.

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	133541
Inspection number	422755
DfE registration number	889/6009

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	Muslim faith school
School status	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	11–19 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	142
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Board of Trustees
Chair	Mr Ibrahim Raja
Headteacher	Mr Nu'amaan Limbada
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 December 2010 (full inspection of education)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,200
Telephone number	Girls - 01254 581569 Boys - 01254 660026
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