

Islamiyah School

Willow Street, Little Harwood, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB1 5NQ

Inspection dates	18–20 November 2014	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school because

- Outstanding leadership and management have ensured that pupils' behaviour has remained impeccable since the last inspection, and many aspects of the school's work have improved including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leadership and governance have improved from good to outstanding as have the arrangements for the overall welfare, health and safety of pupils.
- Pupils' good, and occasionally outstanding, achievement prepares them well for their future economic well-being. The majority make good progress, including in English, mathematics and science.
- Good, solid teaching ensures that pupils acquire knowledge and understanding securely in a wide range of academic subjects. Parents are pleased with the balance that the school provides between academic and religious learning opportunities. Excellent teaching in Islamic studies has ensured that pupils achieve outstandingly in this area of their learning.
- Pupils' excellent personal development and behaviour make a very positive contribution to their learning. The school is an orderly, calm and safe place. Pupils learn very well about the importance of integrating successfully into the school and wider community. They become very mature and can hardly wait to take their place as young citizens in modern Britain. They already make a significant contribution to the local community in which they live.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers are not making best use of their assistants to help all groups of pupils to make outstanding progress in lessons.
- Marking in workbooks does not always inform pupils about the steps to take in order to make their work outstanding.

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 was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspectors observed 12 lessons taught by 12 members of staff and scrutinised samples of pupils' work in many subjects. A 'teaching and learning walk' was also undertaken by an inspector, briefly observing several lessons. Discussions took place with staff including the headteacher and the two other members of the senior leadership team. A meeting took place between governors and the lead inspector. Inspectors also had discussions with teachers, teaching assistants, other staff and pupils.
- The views of parents and staff were taken into account through inspection questionnaire returns from 52 parents and 19 staff. There were not enough responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) for inspectors to be able to check views expressed online.
- Many school documents were examined. These included the school's prospectus, information about pupils' progress, the school's own evaluation of its work and pupils' workbooks. Records relating to behaviour, sanctions, attendance and safeguarding were also checked.

Inspection team

Saleem Hussain, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lubna Aziz

Additional Inspector

Jo Sharpe

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Islamiyah School is an independent Muslim day school for girls aged between 11 and 16 years. The school is non-selective. It is located in the Little Harwood district of Blackburn. It was opened in September 2000 and registered in 2003.
- The school is registered to take up to 270 pupils. Currently, there are 256 pupils on roll.
- The school was last inspected in May 2011.
- None of the pupils on roll has a statement of special educational needs. None of the pupils is disabled.
- All pupils are British and mostly of South Asian origin. Most pupils come from Pakistani, Indian or Bangladeshi heritages. All pupils speak English as a first language.
- A significant proportion of pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds and are eligible for free school meals.
- The school offers both secondary secular as well as Islamic education.
- The school aims 'to provide excellence in education, in a caring, friendly environment. Each individual is nurtured and shaped by the values of the Islamic Faith, is given an opportunity to achieve her full potential and to develop a passion for life and for learning'.
- The school has recently received a nationally recognised Fairtrade Award. The headteacher has recently received an award for strength in leadership from the Association of Muslim Schools (Transformational Leader of the year).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that teachers make best use of their assistants to help all groups of pupils to make outstanding progress in all lessons
 - ensuring that marking in workbooks always informs pupils about what they must do to make their work outstanding.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher has focussed unshakably on making improvements to achievement, personal development, teaching and other key areas of the school's work since his appointment approximately two years ago. He is supported by very able members of the senior leadership team and very active governors. The leadership as a whole demonstrates an uncompromising and relentless drive to become outstanding.
- Leaders and managers at all levels, including middle managers, know the school very well. They have clearly defined roles and lead by example. They promote successfully pupils' equality of opportunity, foster good relations and tackle discrimination should it arise.
- Staff morale is very high. Pupils are happy and everyone shares a common purpose.
- Many improvements have taken place since the previous inspection. These include much additional opportunity for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, more effective leadership and better safety arrangements. The school has developed a remarkable number of high quality community links which benefit pupils very positively. The school has also fully addressed several specific areas for improvement that were suggested in its previous report.
- Leaders have implemented high quality policies and schemes of work. As a result, academic achievement is good, including in literacy.
- Leaders regularly review the high quality of academic learning activities on offer to ensure that these prepare pupils well for the future and enable all groups of pupils to excel. Excellent improvements have taken place in relation to the Islamic education provided. Furthermore, excellence can also be seen in the school's development of opportunities to help pupils to integrate with the wider community and make a valuable contribution to it.
- Leaders communicate very high expectations and ambition frequently to all staff. The leadership of teaching is very strong. Teachers are visited regularly by leaders and their astute evaluations are shared constructively with teachers. There are good arrangements in place for staff training and induction. As a result of these factors, the overall quality of teaching is consistently good and improving.
- Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The school's written self-evaluation is clear, well detailed and accurate. It is used very effectively for school development planning. The headteacher has a wealth of expertise regarding the independent schools standards. This is used well to ensure compliance. For example, swift action was taken recently to ensure compliance with the new regulations regarding pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There are many opportunities for promoting personal development. As a result, pupils develop a thirst for learning and behaviour is exemplary.
- Discussions with pupils indicate that careers education is very effective and pupils' aspirations for the future are highly laudable.
- Leaders ensure that all safeguarding requirements are fully met, information for parents and others is of a high quality, any complaints are managed effectively and the premises are maintained to a high standard.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The board of governors is rigorous in holding the school to account. Governors offer a high level of support as 'critical friends'. Governors frequently attend the school for their meetings and also to monitor the quality of education provided. They visit lessons and talk with staff and pupils to ensure that everything is going smoothly, pupils are benefiting from the learning activities and that they are both happy and safe. Governors receive regular reports from leaders and check that there is compliance with all the independent school standards and that the school provides very good value for money.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Minor disruption to lessons and misbehaviour in any form is extremely rare. Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes towards learning and enjoy applying themselves wholeheartedly to their work across all subjects, years, and with different staff. These factors make a very strong contribution to learning.
- Pupils are very polite and respectful towards everyone.

- Relationships are excellent between adults and between different groups of pupils. For example, views from pupils included: 'we're like a family, our classmates are like sisters and we all like each other and want each other to enjoy life and learning'.
- Attendance and punctuality are good in comparison to all secondary schools.
- The school has developed excellent, very high quality opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development since the last inspection. There are many opportunities for personal development through participation in community initiatives, religious education (RE) lessons, personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) and educational visits. As a result of the school's work, pupils mature very quickly into confident, thoughtful and considerate young people who are very well motivated to lead productive lives in modern Britain.
- Pupils develop their aspirations and self-confidence very effectively through taking up responsibilities which they actively pursue. For example, many pupils act as prefects, monitors and librarians doing sterling work in these regards.
- Leaders actively encourage pupils to care about the community and community relations. Correspondence from many sections of the community pays tribute to the work pupils do to support their community. For example, a 'food bank' for Christmas time, fundraising for many good causes, a 'buddies' scheme for the elderly and Remembrance day activities are highly valued by the community.
- The school provides pupils with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England. Pupils learn to respect the civil and criminal law. Governors have taken very positive steps to ensure that extreme political views are not promoted in school.
- Many opportunities are taken by the school to promote British values such as freedom of speech. The school council not only gives pupils the opportunity to influence school improvements, but also gives them chances to gain first hand experiences of how a democracy works. Pupils develop very high levels of appreciation and respect for different cultures, lifestyles and religious beliefs. For example, the school has a clear 'multi-faith enrichment programme'. This enables pupils to develop their awareness and understanding of major world faiths through well planned activities. School trips have included different places of worship.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is outstanding. Arrangements for safeguarding are rigorous. Comments from the police include: 'constabulary engagement staff have been delighted to work with Islamiyah School on a number of safeguarding projects'.
- All staff are appropriately trained in child protection procedures, including four designated officers. A good number of staff have received advanced training in first aid.
- The school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies are very effective. Pupils say that bullying is not an issue in school and that they feel very safe at all times. They demonstrate a very good awareness of different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying.
- A theatre group recently performed plays in school helping pupils to learn about extremism and what to do if they come across it.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is good in a wide range of subjects. As a result, all groups of pupils including pupils from different ethnic heritages, those of differing ability and disadvantaged pupils make good progress in their learning.
- Pupils' comments about teaching included: 'teachers and assistants are full of personality, they make learning enjoyable by presenting work in an interesting way'.
- Teachers have high expectations of what they want pupils to achieve in lessons and over their time in school. They set challenging and realistic learning goals for different ability groups, including the most able.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge in many areas including English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). This knowledge is used well in planning stimulating learning activities which are often practically based.
- Teachers question pupils skilfully. Questioning is carefully targeted so that all groups of pupils, including the most able, participate fully and make good progress. Many opportunities are provided in lessons for pupils to learn through 'talking partners' and peer evaluation. For example, in an English lesson seen about the introductory parts of written work, the teacher provided a number of opportunities to learn by asking pupils to appraise each other's choice of words in their writing.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to learning by supporting lower ability pupils in lessons very actively. Discussions and school records indicate that these pupils benefit very positively and this is

reflected in some outstanding progress made by this group. Leaders acknowledge that teachers are not making best use of their assistants to help all groups of pupils to achieve as well as they can.

- Teachers provide opportunities in different subjects for pupils to develop their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. For example, teachers make a point of developing writing skills in subjects such as ICT and science. A love of books and reading is encouraged in many subjects. Basic skills in mathematics are also taught well. For example, different ways of solving problems are discussed in depth so that pupils can develop their awareness of alternative techniques they can use.
- Assessment is accurate. The school makes use of nationally recognised measures to gauge attainment in different subjects. Marking and verbal feedback to pupils helps them to develop a good awareness of how well they are doing. However, marking does not always inform pupils about what they must do to make their work outstanding. As a result, a valuable opportunity is lost to raise standards.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils' achievement is good. The good quality of teaching, attractive learning activities and excellent day-to-day guidance and support available for pupils enables them all to achieve well in their academic learning. Typical comments from pupils included: 'when I first started school, my standards in English and mathematics were not good but teachers have inspired me and through their guidance and help I am now on course to do well at GCSE level'.
- Pupils and parents say that they are pleased with the balance of learning opportunities provided by the school between academic and religious education.
- All of the evidence including in pupils' work and from school records, indicates that pupils of all abilities, including those who are disadvantaged achieve well over time from their different starting points in relation to other pupils both in the school and nationally. From generally average attainment on entry to the school, the proportions of pupils making expected progress, including in English and mathematics, are usually above national expectations. Pupils are encouraged to develop their reading skills through using computers or the school's library to read widely and often. Progress in ICT has been good for most pupils over the years but for some pupils it has been outstanding. These factors ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. For example, school records indicate that all leavers last year went on to take up places in further education establishments.
- School records indicate that in the last couple of years, a good number of pupils have achieved good passes at GCSE level including in English and mathematics. Many pupils have achieved excellent grades in Urdu over the years since the last inspection. Results in ICT in 2014 were excellent.
- The most able pupils make good progress. These pupils have the opportunity to take examinations earlier than would be expected for pupils of their age. For the most part, they achieve grades that are commensurate with their ability and they can then go on to study for further qualifications. Alternatively, if they have not done as well as they might, they have the chance to re-sit their examinations to get a better grade.
- Pupils achieve outstandingly in relation to their Islamic education. They have opportunities to start and finish their lessons with *duas* (prayers and supplications). Their participation in prayers and reading the Qur'an enhances their spiritual development greatly. The effectiveness of the school's programme of *tajweed* (Qur'anic recitation) has improved notably since the last inspection. The school still offers Islamic studies as part of its religious education (RE) programme. Almost all pupils taking RE as a GCSE subject in the last three years achieved a very high grade, clearly demonstrating outstanding learning.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement
	Grade 1	Outstanding
	Grade 2	Good
	Grade 3	Requires improvement
	Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

Unique reference number	132749
Inspection number	447244
DfE registration number	889/6007

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted 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 secondary school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	256
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Masjid-e-Sajedeen Islamiyah
Chair	Yunus Ravat
Headteacher	Yusuf Seedat
Date of previous school inspection	18 May 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,300
Telephone number	01254 661259
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