

Al-Madinah School

1 Nelson Street, Midland House, Derby, DE1 2SA

Inspection dates

3–4 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The standards pupils reach by the end of Key Stage 1 are significantly below those expected for their age in writing and reading, although early signs suggest attainment is rising quickly.
- Attainment in mathematics in Key Stage 2 is below age-related expectations because pupils' knowledge of basic mental calculations is not secure.
- The progress made by pupils across all key subjects is improving but is still too variable.
- The quality of teaching is improving, but remains too inconsistent. Teachers do not always assess pupils accurately and set work at the right levels for pupils' abilities.
- Some teachers do not build on pupils' prior learning well enough or ensure that pupils respond to their marking.
- New leaders and managers have not carried out their monitoring duties as effectively as they should and have not had time to make an impact on school improvement work.
- Work undertaken to engage parents is still at a developmental stage.
- The school's systems to ensure pupils' safety require improvement because not all teachers are sure about their responsibilities to assess the risks for pupils, especially regarding outdoor provision.
- Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although improved considerably compared to last year, still requires improvement. Opportunities available to develop basic skills in all areas of learning outside are not fully developed. Transition arrangements between pre-school settings and the school are limited.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders' work to ensure the pupil premium funding is spent effectively is leading to accelerated progress and positive outcomes for these pupils.
- The support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is very effective. The gap in attainment between these pupils and others is narrowing fast.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimension of the curriculum is strong. Pupils have a good understanding of faiths and cultures other than their own. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- The behaviour and conduct of pupils is good.
- The headteacher has played a critical role in driving improvements. The strength of her leadership and clear vision have ensured that the school now no longer requires special measures.
- The governing body trust continues to provide effective support and challenge to the school; and also provides a strong strategic steer for the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in 14 lessons. Four observations of learning were carried out jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors made short visits to all classrooms and learning areas, including the 'nurture room' and the library.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and formally interviewed groups of pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2. They spoke with pupils about their work during lessons and at play times.
- Pupils' workbooks were examined by inspectors during lessons and inspectors sampled work from the Early Years Foundation Stage and the most-able pupils in Key Stage 2.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of students at break and lunchtimes and evaluated the safety of the site.
- Inspectors met with key leaders in the school, including the headteacher, the assistant headteacher and lead teacher for Quranic and Islamic studies, the deputy headteacher, the external adviser for the Early Years Foundation Stage, The Chair of the Governing Body Trust and the Director of Education from the Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust.
- Inspectors examined a range of school documentation, including the headteacher's report to governors, the school's self-evaluation, teachers' assessment information, external review reports, behaviour and accident logs, monitoring of the quality of teaching information and staff files.
- Inspectors took account of the 38 responses to the staff questionnaire and parental surveys carried out by the school. Insufficient responses were received from Ofsted's parental survey, Parent View, for these to be made available to inspectors.

Inspection team

Zarina Connolly, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jeremy Spencer

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lynn Lowery

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- Al-Madinah is an Islamic faith free school, which opened in 2012. It is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. The Department for Education instructed the closure of the secondary phase of the school in August 2014.
- The school operates under a funding agreement made with the Department of Education.
- Currently pupils on roll are from Reception to Year 5 (with five Year 5 pupils taught in the Year 4 classes). The Early Years Foundation Stage provision is full-time.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium is almost a third higher than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is slightly smaller than the national average.
- Almost 100% of pupils are from Pakistani heritage and the proportion of pupils for whom English is not their first language is much higher than the national average.
- The school has not been established long enough to have a full set of examination results in Key Stage 2.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and further raise pupils' achievement in mathematics, reading and writing by ensuring that:
 - all teachers assess pupils' performance accurately to ensure that work is pitched at the right level
 - pupils are given sufficient and regular opportunities to practise their mental mathematics skills
 - pupils respond to teachers' marking and are given sufficient time to do so.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders, other than the headteacher, carry out their monitoring duties effectively, and play a more active role in driving improvements
 - leaders work more effectively in partnership with parents and carers to help them better understand how to support their children's learning
 - all staff make an active contribution to ensure that all parts of the school are as safe as they possibly can be.
- Improve the quality of leadership, and the quality of teaching, in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - ensuring that leaders work more effectively with early years providers, and parents and carers, to better prepare children for transition into school
 - facilitating more opportunities for children to learn effectively, and develop basic skills, when working outdoors.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders have not secured good-quality teaching across the school. Some leaders too readily accept assessments of pupils' work without careful checking.
- New leaders and managers do not always carry out their duties rigorously enough to ensure that initiatives are implemented well. For example, leaders' sampling of pupils' workbooks to check on the quality of marking has failed to identify where marking does not ensure that pupils can make the progress they should.
- Literacy has been a key focus across the school and much has been done to drive improvements in pupils' reading and writing skills. However, leaders have not ensured that good literacy skills are modelled around the school and there continue to be spelling and punctuation errors on wall displays.
- Not all classrooms have the same resources for pupils to develop their enquiry skills, despite this being the intention of leaders. 'Help stations' introduced in September, containing challenging tasks to further pupils' thinking skills in mathematics and literacy, are only fully available in Year 1 and 2 classes.
- Leaders are in the early stages of developing different ways to improve partnerships between parents and carers and the school. Too few parents engage with the school about their children's progress. Parents surveyed by the school are positive about the education provided for their child.
- Leaders have not ensured that safety around the site is monitored as carefully as it should be. The physical safety of pupils is not always seen as the responsibility of all teachers to address. In some outdoor areas, risks have not been assessed well enough. Too many accidents occur in the playground.
- Leaders of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have been successful in improving these pupils' progress. The alignment of systems to record, support and monitor the behaviour and progress of these pupils is at a developmental stage.
- The headteacher, has set up strong systems for tracking pupils' progress. These are supported by strengthened moderation activities, which validate assessment information recorded by staff. Assessment systems introduced to support the new National Curriculum requirements are coherent and implemented fully.
- Systems for managing teachers' performance are clear and linked to the *Teachers' Standards*. The monitoring of teachers' performance is appropriately linked to school priorities for improvement. Training and development for teachers support the performance management process well. There are well-established opportunities for teachers to learn from others to help improve their own practice.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. The strength of the school's Quranic and Islamic Studies department drives a strong ethos of tolerance and respect in every aspect of the school. The leader of this department provides a positive influence, both in the school and among the local community. He demonstrates a clear understanding of the dangers of extremism and actively challenges any extremist views through his assemblies, prayers and lessons. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimension of the curriculum is a strength of the school.
- The school has a range of opportunities for pupils to gain a good understanding of faiths and cultures other than their own, including visits to holy places of worship and other faith schools. Pupils spoke passionately to inspectors about the recent school commemoration of Remembrance Day. Pupils are being well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The primary sports funding has been used to good effect. New equipment and a specialist teacher have

improved the range and sporting skill development of pupils. For example, staff trained to deliver gymnastics and outdoor adventurous activities, now provide more opportunities for pupils to engage in different types of physical activity. After-school clubs are popular and well attended. All pupils in Year 2 have swimming lessons.

- The school has used the pupil premium funding to provide a range of appropriately targeted support and enrichment opportunities. These have resulted in rapid improvements in the achievement of pupils supported through the pupil premium.
- The headteacher has provided consistently good leadership. She communicates a clear vision of high ambition and expectations. As a result, the school has made significant improvements. The staff overwhelmingly trust and support her.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have been key to ensuring the success of the school. The members of the trust board are skilled and knowledgeable. They have high ambitions and hold leaders rigorously to account through their fortnightly scrutiny committee meetings.
- The Chair of the Governing Body Trust spends two days per week at the school to provide support for the headteacher and school. He has drawn upon specialist advisers from the Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust to support key areas of the school. This has been so successful that only 'light touch' support is now required by the headteacher.
- Governors have ensured that there is sound oversight of the school's financial responsibilities. Through excellent management and efficient resourcing, they have ensured that the school is now operating efficiently.
- Governors have promoted a strong ethos of tolerance and community cohesion across the school. They have recently ratified a comprehensive new policy to help prevent extremism and radicalisation.
- The headteacher is held rigorously to account through a strong performance management process.
- The Governing Body Trust ensures that government funding to support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, those supported by the pupil premium and primary sports funding, is used effectively.
- They ensure that statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding pupils, are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils conduct themselves well around the school and in the classroom. They show a high degree of respect for each other and for adults.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is evident in their improved attendance this year. The school's work to ensure pupils are in school to learn regularly is effective. There have been no exclusions.
- Incidents of poor behaviour have decreased over recent months. Positive rewards for good behaviour, and clear codes of conduct developed by pupils themselves, have improved relationships between pupils and adults. 'Green for growth' rewards are valued by pupils.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare but they are confident that any incidents would be dealt with effectively, by any member of staff. Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying. One pupil remarked that, 'There is now no meanness in the school.'
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are mostly positive; most show a high degree of respect their peers and adults. They are keen to learn and they are proud of the work they produce, which is usually presented with pride and care.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement.

- Risk assessments around the school site are not carried out as rigorously as they should be. Some areas of the school present a potential risk to children, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Accident logs show a large number of minor incidents in the playground over a short period. While these types of incidents have decreased recently, due to new initiatives' leaders have not ensured that all teachers are vigilant about potential risks to the physical safety of all pupils.
- The school ensures that all staff are trained to ensure the safeguarding of all pupils. Safeguarding logs are kept centrally but not all information is recorded in line with the school's agreed procedures.
- The school has introduced a number of effective methods which allow pupils to report concerns they may have about their safety and well-being, including a 'worry box' in every classroom and a book of views and questions placed in corridors for pupils to use during break and lunch times. Pupils feel safe at the school.
- Pupils are aware of how to keep safe when using the internet. They receive regular guidance about e-safety through assemblies and lessons.
- Pupils are protected well from extremist ideology. Through the Islamic faith, pupils are encouraged to display attitudes of tolerance and moderation; strong values are promoted of respect for oneself, others and the laws of the country in which they live.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because some teachers do not accurately assess pupils' learning. Consequently, some teaching materials and tasks do not match the ability profile of the class, especially for the most able and the least able.
- Teachers do not always build on pupils' prior knowledge or correct pupils' misunderstandings. This causes some pupils to repeat the same mistakes over and over again.
- Teachers do not always follow the marking and feedback policy. They do not give pupils in some classes sufficient time to respond to feedback and correct any mistakes they make. The most-able pupils are rarely asked to think more deeply about their work, or given opportunities through the marking to extend their learning.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) has improved across the school. This has led to improved reading attainment for many pupils. Teaching assistants have been trained well to deliver effective sessions, especially for younger pupils.
- The teaching of writing and mathematics has improved recently. Pupils are making more progress in these subjects than before and the gaps are closing between current attainment and age-related expectations. In Key Stage 2 mathematics, however, the teaching methods used to develop mental mathematics skills and rapid recall of simple times-tables is not as effective as it could be. Similarly, teaching of writing is hampered because pupils have not been taught spelling techniques effectively to help them decode and spell unfamiliar words. The damage that poor teaching has done in the past has not been fully erased.
- Teaching assistants work well with disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs because they have a thorough knowledge and understanding of these pupils' individual learning needs.
- Teachers now consistently ensure that learning intentions are fully shared with the class. Pupils use this information to plot their learning journey through the lesson. They find it helpful and note it as being an important difference in the way they are now taught.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because the standards pupils achieve in Key Stages 1 and 2 for mathematics, reading and writing are below national expectations. The school is able to show some considerable improvement from pupils' low starting points in all subjects since the 2014 assessments, but pupils are still not reaching expected standards for their age.
- . Pupils' attainment in mathematics is higher than in writing and reading. However, due to previous poor teaching, gaps in pupils' knowledge and mathematical skills remain, which means they are still below age-related expectations, especially in Key Stage 2. For example, some of the school's most-able pupils still struggle with simple mental mathematical calculations and problem-solving tasks.
- In 2014, only 23% of pupils in Year 1 passed the phonics screening check. There has been an increased focus on phonics teaching since this time. Consequently, pupils' reading skills are now improving quickly. After nearly a term since the first phonics screening check, most pupils are on target to reach expected standards, but some pupils still display gaps in their understanding of letter sounds.
- There is no distinguishable difference in achievement between boys and girls in writing and mathematics but boys still lag behind girls in reading. Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as other pupils in the school.
- In 2014, a very small proportion of pupils achieved the highest levels at the end of Key Stage 1. This is because too many underachieved previously. The vast majority of most-able pupils are now making expected progress and many are exceeding expectations. However, too few pupils achieved the highest levels in writing. New teachers now have higher expectations of pupils but gaps in reading and writing skills still exist.
- Reading is encouraged consistently across the school and most pupils have reading books appropriate to their ability. The library is now well stocked, but it is not always used during break and lunchtimes. There is little or no expectation that pupils read at home or read to their parents; this was evidenced in their reading record cards and by speaking with pupils.
- The school sets aspirational targets for pupils' achievement. This has helped to raise expectations and accelerate progress, and goes some way to address pupils' previous underachievement.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium funding attain higher standards than their counterparts nationally. They also achieve better than other pupils in the school. Compared to all pupils nationally, these pupils are slightly behind, but the gap is narrowing quickly. This notable success is due to much-improved targeted personalised tuition and support.
- This year, there is a more precise method of identification of pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs. These pupils are making good progress and the gap between their attainment and other pupils in the school is narrowing fast, especially in reading and writing.

The early years provision requires improvement

- Early years provision requires improvement because the quality of teaching is not consistently good.
- Teachers do not gather a sufficient range of evidence about children's learning so that they can plan for their next steps. They are not always vigilant about safety risks in the outdoor play area.
- Opportunities for children to develop their basic skills are not fully developed in the outdoor play area. Currently there are no tracking systems in place to check children's experiences when they choose activities for themselves.
- Information about children's progress is not fully shared with parents, although steps are being taken to

improve parental engagement. Limited guidance is given for parents on the school's website.

- The school does not develop links with pre-school provision effectively enough to ensure a smooth transition for children to the school.
- New phonics teaching methods are effective and, as a result, children are making good progress in this key skill. Children eligible for pupil premium funding, and disabled children and those who have special educational needs, make as much progress as others.
- Assessments are becoming more accurate and reliable. School leaders identified that assessments last year were overgenerous and they put in support to ensure better reliability of achievement information. Current data shows that most children are making good progress in all areas of learning. Pupils with particularly low starting points are accelerating their progress.
- Children enjoy their learning, behave sensibly and show good manners. They happily take responsibility to tidy away and always say please and thank you. Adults model positive behaviour effectively and children enjoy positive and nurturing relationships with staff.
- Children's improving basic skills, and their positive attitudes to learning, ensure that they are adequately prepared for the next phase of their learning at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138776
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	447472

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	School free school
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	159
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Day
Headteacher	Suzanne Sutherland
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2014
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