

Imam Muhammad Zakariya School

2 Bairstow Street, Preston, Lancashire PR1 3TN

Inspection dates

10–12 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Imam Muhammad Zakariya is a very welcoming school. School leaders share a strong vision to educate pupils in such a way that they are well prepared to make a valuable contribution as citizens in modern Britain.
- Islamic values of tolerance, respect, kindness and honesty are at the heart of all this school does and contribute to the very strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have the full commitment of an enthusiastic and motivated staff.
- Senior leaders and the trustees know the school's strengths and weaknesses, are conscientious and ensure full compliance with the independent school standards.
- Assessment has much improved since the previous inspection. Consequently, leaders and teachers know their pupils' capabilities well. Achievement is good throughout the school.
- Pupils rise to the high expectations that teachers successfully model and they benefit from the good teaching they receive.
- Leaders are attentive in their responsibilities around safeguarding. Pupils feel very safe in school.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about how well the school teaches, supports and looks after their children.
- Nurturing pupils' personal development and welfare is very evident in all aspects of school life and is a strength.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are gracious and extremely respectful to adults and their peers. They take pride in their appearance and are very proud of their school.
- Parents and pupils value education highly. As a result, absence is rare.
- Children settle well in the early years and make a good start to school life. However, the use of the outdoor space does not maximise opportunities for pupils to play and learn.
- The achievement of the most able pupils, and that of all pupils in writing, needs to improve further.
- Opportunities to extend and challenge pupils, particularly the most able, are sometimes missed. As a result, these pupils do not always make the gains of which they are capable.
- Younger pupils are not always given enough opportunities to solve mathematical problems and to think more deeply about their work.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and the associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise all pupils' achievement in writing, particularly in key stage 2, and ensure that the most able pupils make the further gains, in reading, writing and mathematics, of which they are capable.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by ensuring that teachers:
 - maximise opportunities to extend and challenge pupils, particularly the most able
 - offer younger pupils opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to solve problems and extend their understanding of mathematical ideas.
- Improve the early years provision by ensuring that the quality of learning for children outdoors is as strong as it is indoors.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Imam Muhammad Zakariya is a good school. The commitment of the headteacher, other senior leaders and the trustees of the school to provide high educational standards for their pupils is paramount. Their vision and hard work have led the way so that, together with staff, they provide good opportunities for pupils to achieve and develop as well-rounded individuals.
- The school weaves the Islamic faith values of tolerance, respect, kindness and honesty through every aspect of school life. Through these, leaders promote equality and diversity exceptionally well. There is a strong culture of celebrating differences in people, religion and beliefs that results in pupils who are caring, considerate and respectful of each other and the wider community.
- Leaders inspire the total commitment of staff, parents and pupils. Staff are enthusiastic and motivated to make sure there is continual improvement. Relationships between staff are strong; they are proud to work at 'IMZ'. All feel well supported and that the school is led and managed well.
- Senior leaders and the trustees of the school have been diligent in ensuring that all the independent school standards are met and are up to date. This has been achieved through good-quality procedures and checks which are monitored regularly. Policies mirror closely the day-to-day working and ethos of the school.
- The premises of the school are tidy, clean and well organised. Resources are plentiful and appropriate for the varying ages of pupils and to spark their interest, curiosity and learning.
- The outdoor space in which pupils play and receive physical education has limitations. The school often uses the school hall for the pupils' physical education. However, leaders make up for this by arranging weekly visits to the local sports hall and frequent visits to the local park. School leaders have invested in a range of external sports provision to support this aspect of pupils' development. For example, all pupils learn to swim. Pupils of all ages recognise the value of physical activity as a part of being healthy.
- Senior leaders know their school well. The strengths of the school and areas for improvement are clearly identified in their self-evaluation, which is accurate, honest and reflective. Checks on the quality of teaching and learning are thorough.
- The headteacher is very outward looking in regard to offering staff opportunities to learn from the latest educational practice. To this end, staff benefit from regular training from an external consultant. Staff are encouraged to work together to develop the school, resulting in staff that feel motivated and part of the school's ever-growing success.
- Improving outcomes for pupils is a constant focus. Senior leaders have worked successfully to improve the way pupils are assessed and their progress is tracked. Assessment information is used regularly by senior leaders to talk with teachers about pupils' learning and to plan opportunities to help pupils catch up if needed.
- There are no pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, the provision for the small number of pupils who need some support in their learning is effective. Identification of need is appropriate and resources are of a good

standard, ensuring that these pupils succeed in their learning and their personal and social development.

- The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum that engages pupils and contributes to their enjoyment of learning. Science is taught particularly well. Pupils benefit from having some subjects, such as art and information and communication technology, taught by subject specialists. The curriculum is also enriched by additional opportunities for pupils to visit places, such as museums, farms and libraries. Pupils' understanding of the wider world is also enhanced by visitors to the school, such as opticians and the community police.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and a strength of the school. As a result, the school is an extremely calm and welcoming environment where pupils mix happily together. In all aspects of the school day, including through assemblies and the curriculum, pupils learn about the wider community, tolerance and respect, as well as democracy and the rule of law. Pupils also enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as being members of the school council, and avidly contribute to charities, such as the 'bags of love' campaign for Syria.
- The opportunities to involve parents in the school and in their child's learning are highly valued by school leaders. All parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, or spoke to the inspectors, felt very positive about the school in every aspect. There was a great deal of praise for the hard work and commitment of staff. Parents felt that all staff are approachable and easy to talk to if ever they have a worry or concern.
- The school is linked with a local primary school. Pupils write to each other and opportunities are planned for staff to share and celebrate each other's practice.

Governance

- The governance of the school is good.
- The trustees know the school well and are meticulous in ensuring that the school keeps abreast of all independent school standard regulations and provides a high standard of education.
- The trustees have a good understanding of performance management procedures and support the headteacher in holding staff to account.
- Trustees have a reasonable understanding about the progress pupils make.
- The trustees are diligent in their responsibilities to safeguard pupils. Along with the headteacher, they are clear about their responsibilities with regard to internet safety and have ensured filtering measures are in place for the school's internet and online services.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Robust systems are in place, which are understood by all staff. Up-to-date and appropriate training for staff is undertaken and is regularly revisited. As a result, staff are clear about procedures and confident to act upon concerns if required.
- Safeguarding is a high priority in school. Aspects such as radicalisation and extremism are

taken very seriously and school leaders have taken effective action by making sure staff are well trained and vigilant regarding these issues. The school's safeguarding policy is made available to parents on request.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching and learning is good across the school. This has resulted in pupils making good progress.
- Staff model high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour. All pupils rise to these expectations by working hard and behaving extremely well. Pupils enjoy their learning, so much so that they are sometimes disappointed when lessons end.
- The relationship pupils have with teachers is characterised by warmth and high levels of respect. Pupils are patient, wait their turn, but they are also eager and have a thirst for learning. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons and it is fun to be at school. They say they particularly like their teachers because they 'help them learn new things' and will always 'listen if they are struggling'.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good, and is particularly strong in mathematics. Teachers provide good-quality learning resources and endeavour to make lessons interesting and fun. Teachers that are confident in their teaching ask the pupils questions to aid their thinking, draw out learning, and help them move on. However, sometimes teachers do not ask the apt questions or plan activities that are sufficiently demanding. When this occurs, pupils are not always challenged to develop their thinking and deepen their understanding of what is being taught. As a result, some pupils, particularly the most able, are not always learning as much as they could.
- Teachers and leaders check on pupils' learning much more regularly than at the time of the previous inspection. Overall, systems are clear, simple and effectively used by teachers. This makes an important contribution to the progress pupils make. Pupils have appropriate targets set for reading, writing and mathematics. They talk about these and discuss what they need to do as a next step in their learning.
- Where pupils struggle with their learning, support is quickly identified, often within the same lesson. There is an effective range of learning opportunities to help those that need to catch up.
- Teaching assistants in key stages 1 and 2 are deployed effectively. They are knowledgeable and skilled and make a good contribution to pupils' learning.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, in line with the school's policy. They make clear to pupils what they have done well and offer clear guidance to help them improve their work further. Pupils are keen to get their teacher's feedback and are enthusiastic about evaluating their own and each other's work.
- The teaching and development of pupils' mathematical knowledge are strengths of the school, particularly basic number facts, which are taught thoroughly and well. As a result, pupils are confident mathematicians. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are regularly offered opportunities to apply these skills in problem-solving activities. However, elsewhere in the school this is less evident. As a result, younger pupils do not always have sufficient chances to apply this learning to problem solving and other activities that offer chances to extend their understanding of mathematical ideas.

- The development of reading and writing skills is important. Reading texts are used in classes to create a range of interesting and stimulating activities that help pupils to learn and practise their skills. This also provides pupils with a stimulus for writing. However, developing reading comprehension and writing skills at higher levels across school has been less effective. This is because teachers have less confidence in providing lessons that challenge pupils to understand and deepen their learning in these areas.
- The importance of the teaching of phonics is prominent in school. It is consistent and strongly linked to the good development of reading skills. As a result, pupils enjoy reading in school and talk enthusiastically about books. Leaders and pupils are rightly proud of their new library. Pupils who struggle with reading have support to practise their skills and are able to talk about the progress they make.
- In other subjects across the curriculum, pupils benefit from good-quality teaching in a range of subjects, for example history, geography, science, physical education, art, information and communication technology and Arabic. The quality of teaching in these subjects helps ensure pupils make good progress. Teachers ensure that every opportunity is taken to extend and practise reading and writing across the curriculum, and a consistency of expectation and standards is evident in pupils' books.
- Parents who responded to Parent View, or spoke with the inspectors at the time of the inspection, overwhelmingly felt that their children were taught well and made good progress in school. They said that they were well informed about how their child was doing in school and that they received this information on a regular basis.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The importance placed on pupils' personal development and welfare is central and very visible in school. Staff and governors are conscientious in their responsibility to ensure that the school provides a safe, nurturing environment. As a result, pupils grow confidently in their learning.
- Staff treat pupils with consideration and ensure that the school makes everyone feel welcome and valued. Staff model a strong moral code of respect, tolerance and thoughtfulness to others, to which pupils respond well. As a result, pupils are thoughtful and compassionate citizens.
- All parents spoken to by inspectors, and those that responded to Parent View, expressed enthusiastic praise for the school and the work of the staff. All parents felt that their children were happy and looked after well. They also felt that they were receiving a well-balanced education. The curriculum is taught through the Islamic faith, with a strong emphasis on the importance of making a valuable and responsible contribution as a citizen in modern Britain.
- The vast majority of pupils are confident learners and are happy to talk about their learning. Pupils told inspectors how proud they were of their school and how they felt well looked after by adults. They also talked with pride about helping each other in their learning and around school.
- Pupils spoken with during the inspection were very clear about what bullying was and

said that such incidents were unheard of. They were confident that teachers dealt with any unkind or negative language towards pupils quickly, but said that this behaviour was rare. Pupils were unanimous in their view that they felt safe in school and pupils of all ages know how to keep themselves safe, personally and online. All parents who responded to Parent View felt confident that the school would deal appropriately with bullying, should it occur. However, the overwhelming majority were not aware of any bullying towards their child.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils conduct themselves to a high standard around school. They are extremely polite and well mannered, and take great pride in their appearance. Staff and pupils know each other very well and are friendly and supportive. As a result, school is a calm, orderly and purposeful place to learn.
- Teachers place importance on offering pupils a range of experiences celebrating aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and work related to developing British values. They weave these effortlessly into the curriculum.
- There is a productive atmosphere in the classrooms. Pupils are attentive and eager to participate in lessons. They see learning as being very important to them, while visibly enjoying their lessons and activities. Pupils have an excellent attitude to learning, typified by pupils expressing disappointment when it was time for lunch and they were unable to finish their work at the end of a lesson.
- Pupils are fully aware of how to behave and of the consequences of poor behaviour. However, incidents of inappropriate behaviour are very rare, dealt with quickly by teachers, and responded to by pupils appropriately. Pupils are responsive and highly respectful both to adults and to each other.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is demonstrated by their high level of attendance, currently running at above that of other pupils nationally. The systems for monitoring absence are effective. Good attendance is rewarded and has a high profile in school. There are no pupils who are persistently absent and absence during term time is minimal.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' achievement throughout the school is good. Senior leaders have high expectations for all pupils to do well. There is an emphasis on offering good-quality teaching in all subjects and, as a result, the vast majority of pupils make good progress.
- At the end of key stage 2 in 2016, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in mathematics was well above that found nationally. In grammar, spelling and punctuation, the proportion was above that found nationally and in reading it was similar to the national picture. In writing, though, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard was just below the national average. Other than in reading, the proportion of pupils achieving higher standards was comparable to that of pupils nationally.
- Achievement is good at the end of key stage 1, with a large majority of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils achieve particularly well in mathematics. Pupils achieve less well at higher than the expected standards identified in the new national curriculum.

- The school's in-year checks on progress, and the work in pupils' books, confirm a positive picture of progress throughout school, with particular strengths in mathematics.
- Although the school does not participate in the national screening check for phonics, they do assess pupils' phonics skills. The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard at the end of Year 1 is well above average.
- The most able pupils are identified and checked to ensure that they make good progress through school. At the end of key stages 1 and 2 in 2016, the most able pupils made at least the progress expected in reading, writing and mathematics and some attained higher levels. Leaders are aware, however, that more pupils could achieve these higher standards across both key stage 1 and key stage 2 in all subjects. To this end, they have put strategies in place to ensure that the school's most able pupils make the further gains of which they are capable.
- Although the school does not receive pupil premium funding, nor are there any pupils identified in school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, the pupils that are identified as benefiting from additional support, or who have vulnerabilities, make good progress throughout key stages 1 and 2.

Early years provision

Good

- Most Reception children start school with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age and make good progress. The vast majority speak English as an additional language.
- Adults have appropriately high expectations of children which ensure that they thrive and enjoy a very positive start to school life.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the individual needs of children, including the most able and those identified as vulnerable. As a result, children's achievement is good and they are well prepared and confident to start in key stage 1.
- The leadership of the early years is good. Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and are eager to continually develop. There is an enthusiasm for receiving good-quality training and development among staff, which ensures that all adults are well skilled and confident of providing the best learning opportunities for children.
- Safeguarding is effective and welfare requirements compliant. Risk assessments are thorough and the classrooms provide a safe environment for children. Children's behaviour is good, and adults are quick to provide support to children to help them understand the importance of being polite and treating one another with respect. This is often done through linking teachings within the Islamic faith to the good conduct and behaviour expected.
- Indoor provision is very well organised to create a stimulating learning environment for all children within the classroom. Enjoyable activities capture the children's imagination and allow them to practise their skills. Children have plenty of opportunity to explore with a range of equipment that encourages them to build, create and try out their ideas. As a result, children are motivated to learn and play together well.
- Children are offered outdoor provision and a range of activities are available to them. However, this space is too limited and the area is underdeveloped. As a result, it does not maximise the opportunities that children have to learn in an outdoor environment.
- The quality of teaching is good. Routines are well established. The gentle manner and

sensitive approach of adults is very conducive to helping children settle and thrive in their learning.

- Adults demonstrate good subject knowledge and a thorough knowledge of child development. The importance placed on reading, writing and mathematical skills is very evident, with regular chances for children to write, practise their letters and sounds, and use number. The development of language and speaking is a high priority.
- Adults capitalise on any chance to develop learning. They engage with children very well and are skilled at asking questions to draw out children's understanding and encourage them to talk. For example, while playing a phonics game that blended random sounds together, the children were excited by the nonsense words sounding like imaginary dinosaurs. Children had great fun describing their make-believe dinosaurs to one another.
- Teachers' assessment of children's learning is of a good quality. The assessments carried out are detailed and demonstrate that adults know as much as possible about the progress of children. It also ensures that adults effectively plan a curriculum that is both interesting and relevant. Parents contribute to assessments and praise the school for how well they nurture and support their children. They say that adults are always available, if needed, to support them in helping their child in their next steps of learning.
- The strong emphasis on creating a caring and nurturing environment is evident from the very positive relationships adults have with children, and children have with each other. Staff have strong relationships with parents. Parents describe the early years as 'welcoming', and 'approachable'. Parents are full of praise for how well their children have settled into school and the progress they have made.

School details

Unique reference number	132738
DfE registration number	888/6047
Inspection number	10007709

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	86
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Imam Muhammad Zakariya Trust
Chair	Bilal Nakhuda
Headteacher	Ayesha Desai
Annual fees (day pupils)	£900
Telephone number	01772 881 968
Website	None
Email address	admin@imz.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 April 2012

Information about this school

- Imam Muhammad Zakariya is an independent Muslim day school for boys and girls aged from four to 11 years, who come from different Asian heritages, but all of whom have an Islamic background.
- The school opened in 2000 and was registered by the Department for Education for up to 150 pupils. There are currently 86 pupils on roll.
- There are no pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school does not receive additional government funding to support disadvantaged children.
- The school is owned and operated by a charitable trust. All staff on the site are employed

by the trust. The Imam Muhammad Zakariya Trust sets out to 'offer children the opportunity to acquire an academic education within an Islamic atmosphere in a safe, secure and friendly environment.'

- The school does not have a website; however, it meets requirements on the publication of specified information by making documentation readily available to parents upon request.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in all classes. They also observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and assessed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They observed pupils in the playground and during lunchtimes.
- The inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books and in the learning journeys of children in the early years. An inspector also listened to a number of pupils read.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, pastoral leader, early years leader and curriculum leaders.
- The inspector met with a member of the trustees, and spoke on the telephone to an external consultant.
- A group of pupils discussed their opinions about the school and their learning with an inspector. Inspectors also spoke informally with pupils around school.
- The lead inspector took account of 18 responses to a questionnaire by staff.
- The lead inspector considered the 15 responses from the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also talked briefly with parents before school.
- School policies and other documents were examined to check compliance with the independent school standards, and to provide other inspection evidence, including: minutes from meetings of the trustees; information on pupils' attainment and progress; the school's evaluation of its own performance and its development plan. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Sue Eastwood, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Shutt

Ofsted Inspector

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