

Al-Madinah School

500 London Road, Derby, Derbyshire DE24 8WH

Inspection dates

1–2 February 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not been successful in ensuring that teaching and pupils' outcomes are consistently good.
- Governance is undergoing a period of transition. Currently, governors do not have the necessary skills and knowledge to hold leaders fully to account.
- Middle leaders do not check the quality of work in their areas with sufficient rigour. They do not always know which areas need further improvement.
- At key stage 2, pupils' attainment is below average. This does not represent good progress from their starting points.
- Teaching is not consistently good in all areas of the school. Pupils do not achieve as well in history, geography and science as they do in English and mathematics.
- Teachers provide too few opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills in subjects other than English.
- Pupils do not always understand how to write effectively, because teachers do not always provide clear models for them.
- Teachers provide too few opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in contexts in other subjects.
- Pupils' attendance remains well below the national average for primary schools. The attendance of those pupils who are persistently absent from school is not improving quickly enough.
- Not all teachers intervene quickly enough when pupils lose concentration in class. At times, this affects the learning of others.

The school has the following strengths

- Current leaders have brought about significant improvements. They have created a harmonious school, and have won the trust of the local community.
- Provision for the early years is good. From low starting points, children now make good progress as a result of good teaching.
- Pupils' personal development is good. The school's work to teach pupils British values is effective. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is highly effective. Pupils are thoughtful, reflective and respectful.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum
 - teachers ensure that pupils know and understand how to write effectively for different purposes
 - teachers give pupils more opportunities to practise their mathematical skills in a range of different contexts
 - teaching in history, geography and science enables pupils to develop skills and knowledge in these subjects that are appropriate to their age.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - working closely with parents of pupils who are frequently absent from school to improve their child's attendance
 - ensuring that all teachers and teaching assistants intervene more quickly when pupils lose focus in class.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that governors have sufficient breadth of skill and expertise to hold leaders effectively to account
 - developing the role of middle leaders, so that they monitor their areas more rigorously and are able to hold teachers in their areas accountable for improvements.
- Improve the early years by:
 - increasing the number of opportunities for parents to engage with their child's learning.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have not done enough to ensure that all aspects of the school's work are consistently good. Ongoing weaknesses in teaching mean that pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- Improvements to teaching have not yet resulted in consistently good teaching throughout the school. Better teaching in English and mathematics is leading to faster progress in these subjects. Improvements are less evident, however, in other areas of the curriculum, such as history, geography and science.
- Leaders have not been successful in improving attendance. A range of strategies are in place to encourage and reward better attendance, but these have not been effective in improving the attendance of those who are most frequently absent from school. Not enough has been done to ensure that these pupils and their families understand the importance of good attendance.
- Middle leaders are not fully involved in checking and evaluating the quality of work in the areas they lead. They play a supportive role in improving the quality of teaching but they do not all have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their areas. They are not able to hold teachers to account for improving pupils' standards.
- Systems introduced by leaders are not yet fully in place across the school. For example, some policies are still under review and have not been implemented. This slows the progress the school is able to make.
- Leaders and staff have too few opportunities to learn from best practice elsewhere and to contribute to partnerships with other schools themselves. Some links have been made with local schools, for example to moderate pupils' work, but these are few in number and are not well developed. Leaders acknowledge that other schools could learn from the many successful aspects of their work, such as the promotion of British values, and that they have much to learn from others.
- The use of the pupil premium funding has not been consistently effective. The impact of actions to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is clear in the early years and in key stage 1, but less so in key stage 2. Leaders do not analyse the impact of the spending in sufficient detail, however, so it is not always clear which of their actions have been most effective. The school has not used this funding well enough to tackle the poorer attendance of disadvantaged pupils.
- Despite these weaknesses, current leaders have brought about many significant improvements. The headteacher leads with vision, determination and clear vision. Although only in post for a year, many positive changes are evident. Staff, parents and the older pupils speak highly of the transformations that current leaders have brought about. After a turbulent past, they have won back the trust of the local community.
- The school now has a positive identity with a coherent set of values underpinning its work. Staff, pupils and parents feel a strong sense of belonging to a harmonious community. They are proud of the progress that has been made. As one parent wrote,

'I have seen a significant change and, most importantly, I feel we are united.'

- The curriculum is sufficiently well balanced. The school successfully blends its Islamic ethos and teaching with the requirements of the national curriculum. In addition, pupils have the opportunity to learn art, music and sport. The programme of after-school clubs, visits and visiting speakers complements the taught curriculum, and contributes effectively to pupils' personal development and well-being. One or two parents expressed their concern, however, about trips being cancelled through a lack of funds.
- Staff are well motivated and committed. They describe senior leaders as approachable and supportive, and speak highly of the opportunities they have in school to improve their practice. One wrote, 'I have renewed my love of teaching since coming to this school.'
- The use of the primary physical education and sport premium has been effective in increasing the range of sports clubs on offer after school and at lunchtime, and in purchasing additional equipment. Pupils have a range of opportunities to take part in competitive sports with other schools and very much enjoy this aspect of their curriculum.
- The school council has been instrumental in working with leaders to develop and promote British values in school. Leaders have a clear commitment to ensuring that pupils understand what it means to be British Muslim, and are well prepared for the challenges and opportunities of life in modern Britain.
- The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is a strength of the school. Opportunities for prayer and religious observance are used well to promote pupils' spirituality. In addition, they are encouraged to reflect on, and learn from, wrongdoing. Pupils have a good understanding of other faiths and cultures.
- Leaders ensure that they accurately identify pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and put the correct support in place through effective use of the funding intended for this group. They acknowledge that not all teaching staff are equally well trained in this area.
- Leaders have successfully managed the move to a new building. Older pupils in particular appreciate the better space they have to play and learn.
- Some parents expressed to inspectors their ongoing concerns about the parking arrangements at the school. While they understand that they cannot park on the school site, they are not happy with the need to walk along a busy road. When inspectors observed the arrangements, there was good supervision by school staff. Notwithstanding these concerns, parents are very happy with the school and its leadership. The overwhelming majority would recommend this school to another parent.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school is in a state of transition. The chair and vice-chair of the governing body resigned in December 2016. A new chair has been appointed. Governors recognise that, currently, they do not have the necessary range of skills and expertise to hold leaders fully to account. They are in the process of recruiting new governors.
- Governors are enthusiastic and keen to ensure that the school improves. They have

taken up training opportunities to increase their skills and understanding.

- Governors recognise that they need more information to ask the necessary questions of leaders. For example, they have challenged leaders to provide detailed information about pupils' attendance.
- Currently, there is a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities. For example, it is not clear in the school's documentation which governor has responsibility for safeguarding. Leaders acknowledge that the information provided for parents is not clear enough.
- The school currently has an imbalanced budget. Governors have worked with leaders to put a recovery plan in place.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders work well with families and other agencies to ensure that pupils' welfare is safeguarded. They keep accurate and timely notes of any concerns and the follow-up actions taken.
- The school's 'Childwatch' system means that leaders are able to keep a close eye on pupils about whom there have been any concerns, including changes to behaviour. This highly effective system means that staff from different areas are prompted and encouraged to share information and monitor the ongoing welfare of pupils. Leaders agree that this is one aspect of their work that they could helpfully share with other schools.
- The deputy designated safeguarding lead, who carries out much of the day-to-day aspects of safeguarding, has a very clear understanding of the risks to which pupils may be vulnerable. She knows the local community well, and is effective in encouraging parents to take up help at an early stage. She has ensured that staff understand potential risks such as female genital mutilation and forced marriage. Staff are very clear about the actions they would take if they were worried about a pupil.
- Leaders remain alert to any potential signs of radicalisation and extremism. They and staff are well trained in this area, and now share their expertise by delivering training to other schools and organisations.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers provide too few opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum. Teachers do not always correct pupils' spelling and grammar errors or ensure that pupils use their knowledge of how to write well in subjects other than English.
- Pupils do not have a secure understanding of how to write effectively for different purposes. Teachers provide success criteria of the individual components that pupils need to include, but not all teachers provide clear models of what effective writing looks like. Pupils are then at a loss to know how to compose and construct their own pieces well.

- In mathematics lessons, there are now more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge to solve real-life problems. Outside of the mathematics curriculum, pupils have few opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge, however. They do not develop a secure understanding of how mathematics is used in the real world.
- The teaching of history, geography and science is not consistently good. Pupils do not develop the skills and understanding typical for their age in these subjects.
- Although there are some ongoing weaknesses, the teaching of English and mathematics has improved. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that teachers have increasingly high expectations of what pupils can achieve in these subjects.
- Teachers act swiftly to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge in English and mathematics, and work effectively with support staff to help pupils catch up.
- Teachers and support staff who lead intervention sessions have good subject knowledge. They provide clear explanations and use questioning well to ensure that pupils have understood the learning.
- Classrooms are well organised and well resourced. 'Learning walls' provide helpful reminders of key words and of the grammar and punctuation that pupils should be familiar with.
- The teaching of reading is effective. Pupils who read to inspectors did so with expression and fluency, and used their phonic knowledge to decode unfamiliar words.
- Teaching in the Islamic curriculum leads to good rates of progress in these subjects. Teachers measure and track pupils' knowledge and understanding carefully.
- Pupils enjoy warm and supportive relationships with their teachers and teaching assistants. Staff know the pupils and their families well. They ensure that pupils feel safe and supported.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils aspire to be good ambassadors for their faith in modern British society. They respect others' views and opinions and have a secure understanding of the diverse community in which they live. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well together.
- Teachers and leaders instil in pupils a keen sense of right and wrong. Staff model the values of the school effectively and consistently, so that pupils have a very clear understanding of what their school stands for.
- Leaders' work to support pupils who face difficulties is highly effective. Staff keep a very close eye on all pupils about whom concerns have been raised, no matter how trivial. Parents who spoke with inspectors were full of praise for this aspect of the school's work. Some spoke very movingly of how staff had helped them through difficult times.
- Teachers encourage all pupils to have high aspirations for their future and are keen to

dispel the stereotypes about what jobs boys and girls can aspire to. Having noticed that pupils had a limited understanding of the opportunities open to them, leaders arranged a highly successful science and engineering project. This was successful in raising pupils' aspirations for their own futures.

- Pupils say that there is very little bullying in the school, and that it is always dealt with well. They trust their teachers to resolve any worries that they have. Their knowledge of how to stay safe, including online, is secure.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Attendance at the school remains well below national levels, and is not improving quickly enough. Leaders have not successfully tackled the poor attendance of those pupils who are frequently absent from school.
- At times, pupils lose concentration in class. Not all teachers intervene quickly enough to re-focus pupils on their learning.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming. They engage in discussion readily and confidently, and are proud of their school.
- Pupils' conduct around school is good. They open doors for each other, move sensibly between classrooms and generally behave well at playtimes.
- Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and to learn the lessons of behaving poorly. As one said, 'We know we are all one big family, and know the consequences if we don't treat each other well.'

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016, standards at the end of key stage 2 were below national levels. There were too few pupils in this year group to note any differences between the achievement of different groups.
- The attainment of pupils currently in key stage 2 continues to be well below the expected level. Many of these pupils are now making accelerated progress, but their current attainment does not represent good progress from their different starting points at the end of key stage 1. A legacy of poor teaching has meant that there is too much ground to make up to ensure that these pupils are well prepared for secondary school. This includes some pupils with high prior attainment.
- Many pupils join the school midway through the school year. Leaders track their progress carefully, and intervene quickly to ensure that these pupils receive appropriate help and support. Nonetheless, the school's tracking information shows that despite these interventions, these pupils have ongoing gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- In key stage 1, the most able pupils are making good progress. Many are well on their way to achieving the higher levels in their different subjects. This includes the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- In the lower part of the school, disadvantaged pupils are making good progress, and

are achieving in line with other pupils nationally. In key stage 2, disadvantaged pupils are now making better progress, but are not catching up with their peers or making the same progress overall as others do nationally.

- Standards in reading show steady improvement. The proportion of pupils that achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 has risen steadily over the past three years and is now in line with the national average.
- In key stage 1, pupils have made good progress from their different starting points at the end of the Reception Year, with the majority now at age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. For the lowest-attaining pupils, this represents particularly good progress. Differences between the attainment of boys and girls have diminished, especially in writing. Pupils leaving Year 1 are well prepared for key stage 2.
- On the whole, pupils achieve less well in subjects other than English and mathematics. Their knowledge and understanding of history, geography and science are not consistently secure.

Early years provision

Good

- This aspect of the school's work is good, because improvements in the early years have been more rapid and have been sustained.
- Children join the early years with skills that are below those seen typically at their age. Their skills in reading, writing and mathematics, and knowledge and understanding of the world, are particularly low. From these starting points, they make good progress.
- The proportion that achieved a good level of development in 2016 was well above the national average, and showed a significant rise on the previous year. The proportions reaching the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics were at least in line with national averages. The children were well prepared for Year 1.
- In class, children cooperate well. They enjoy their learning, seek out new experiences readily and are safe. They form good relationships with each other and with staff.
- Leaders set high expectations for pupils' learning. Staff work well together to plan learning that meets children's needs. The curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced. Learning journeys show that teaching is effective in ensuring that children make rapid progress.
- Pupil premium funding is used well in the early years to ensure that disadvantaged children make the same good progress as others.
- Currently, staff do not consult widely with parents before children start school. On the whole, parents do not contribute well to their children's learning.

School details

Unique reference number	138776
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	10023095

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	277
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Arran Whitehouse
Headteacher	Jackie Stephenson
Telephone number	01332 383379
Website	http://almadinahschool.co.uk/
Email address	enquiries@almadinahschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 December 2014

Information about this school

- Al-Madinah is an Islamic faith free school. At the time of the previous inspection, the school was supported by the Greenwood Dale Academies Trust. This arrangement came to an end in January 2016. It is now run by the Al-Madinah Education Trust.
- The school has recently expanded its pupil numbers, and is now an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- All pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Almost all of them speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is also below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils that leave and join the school throughout the year is much

higher than that seen nationally.

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website about pupils' attainment and progress at the school or its accessibility plan for pupils with disabilities. The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies and free schools should publish about its equality objectives.
- In 2016, there were too few pupils in Year 6 to state whether the school met the government floor targets. These are the minimum standards for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders and teaching staff. The lead inspector spoke with a school improvement officer from Derby local authority. Inspectors met formally with four groups of pupils, and spoke informally with others in class and at lunchtime. An inspector listened to two groups of pupils reading. Inspectors spoke with parents as they brought their children to school.
- A range of documentation was considered, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body, monitoring records, records of behaviour, bullying and attendance and safeguarding information. Inspectors looked at information about the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils and looked at the work in a range of pupils' books.
- Inspectors considered the 17 responses to the free text service and the 17 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, alongside the school's own survey of parents' views. The 22 responses to a staff survey were taken into account. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Deirdre Duignan, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Heather Hawkes	Ofsted Inspector
Roary Pownall	Her Majesty's Inspector

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