

# Al-Markaz Academy

SM Complex, Beckside Lane, Off Beckside Road, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD7 2JX

## Inspection dates

19–21 September 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	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Teachers' planning does not sufficiently take into account pupils' prior learning. As a result, lower attaining pupils sometimes struggle with tasks and the most able pupils sometimes find work too easy.
- Pupils' progress is variable across different subjects. Lower attaining pupils' progress is not strong enough in English. Higher attaining pupils' progress is not strong enough in mathematics.
- Opportunities for pupils' involvement in practical science activities are limited and pupils' skills in this subject are not well developed.
- Pupils do not receive up-to-date careers advice to help them make informed choices about future education, training or career destinations.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured that all the independent school standards are consistently met.
- The headteacher is new to the role. Along with the proprietor, she is keen to bring about improvements to the school. However, information gathered by checking on the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes has not been analysed carefully enough.
- Leaders' guidance to teachers is not specific enough to help them promptly improve the quality of teaching.
- Leaders, including the proprietors, have not fully addressed the areas for improvement at the previous inspection. However, their actions to introduce assessments that are more regular and to improve the quality of spelling have had a more positive effect.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, proprietor and staff have created a compassionate, supportive and nurturing culture. Pupils feel safe and cared for.
- Behaviour across the school is good. Pupils are courteous and well mannered and behave well in lessons and at social times.
- Pupils are keen to come to school and their attendance levels are high.
- Since opening, the school has grown in popularity and has the maximum number of pupils on roll.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - leaders use the range of information available to arrive at accurate judgements about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
  - leaders provide teachers with more specific guidance on how to improve their practice
  - the quality of the impartial careers advice and guidance provided to pupils improves and that this helps them to make informed choices about next steps in their education
  - there are more opportunities for pupils to develop their practical experience and understanding of other world faiths.
- Improving the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - developing opportunities to develop pupils' practical scientific skills
  - planning more effectively for lower attaining pupils to ensure that they make good progress, particularly in English
  - using questioning to deepen pupils' learning and providing them with the time to respond to questions
  - widening the range of mathematics teaching skills to provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills and to ensure that the most able pupils are challenged.

### The school must meet the following independent school standards

#### Part 1. Quality of education provided

- The proprietor must ensure that pupils receiving secondary education have access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that is presented in an impartial manner so that they are able to make informed choices about a broad range of career options, and that helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential (paragraph 2(2), 2(2)(e), 2(2)e(i), 2(2)e(ii) and 2(2)e(iii)).
- The proprietor must ensure that the teaching at the school enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught; involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time; shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(c) and 3(d)).

#### Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are consistently met (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a) and 34(1)(b)).

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The leaders and managers have not been effective in ensuring that the quality of teaching is good across all subjects. As a result, lower attaining pupils are not making enough progress in English and the most able pupils are not progressing quickly enough in mathematics. Leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The headteacher is new to the role. While she is keen to bring improvements to the school, she is still developing her skills in checking on the quality of teaching and identifying priorities for improvement.
- The headteacher and proprietor have been overly positive in their overall judgements of the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. While they have systems to record pupils' progress information and approaches for checking on the quality of teaching, they do not use these effectively enough to arrive at accurate conclusions.
- The school's curriculum provides breadth and balance and is effectively planned around a range of national curriculum subjects. Across the year, pupils have visits that enrich the curriculum and add to their social and physical development. For example, pupils were keen to tell the inspector how much they had enjoyed their visits to the theatre, a trampoline park and an adventure theme park. Coverage of scientific knowledge is thorough, but opportunities for developing practical scientific skills are more limited.
- The inspector who considered the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development found that this is effective. Leaders and staff have created a culture of respect and tolerance in this welcoming and friendly school. The school's curriculum enables pupils to gain an understanding of different faiths and an appreciation of different cultures. However, leaders recognise that pupils' practical experiences of world faiths through visits to a range of places of worship or through visitors to the school are not well developed.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils develop their understanding of democracy through activities such as the school council. The ethos and curriculum of the school help pupils develop a good understanding of right and wrong and the importance of rules and laws. Pupils recognise the importance of contributing to the local and wider community and are involved in charity events that help to support others in need. Discussions with pupils demonstrated that they had a clear understanding of the need for respect for others who may come from a different background from themselves.
- Leaders' plans for improving the school aim to address many of the aspects that require improvement, including those identified at the last inspection. In some aspects, such as addressing pupils' weaknesses in spelling and improving assessment approaches, there is evidence of the effect of leaders' focus on bringing about improvement.
- Performance management systems are in place and staff value the regular development and training meetings where they have opportunities to share effective practice. Feedback from leaders is not specific enough to ensure that the quality of teaching improves sufficiently.

## Governance

- The school has no governing body and the proprietors provide governance. The proprietors have ensured good support for pupils' personal development. They are keen to ensure that the school provides strong teaching and high academic outcomes and have started to put in place systems to help them evaluate the quality of teaching.
- The proprietors have ensured that the school building is of a good quality. The classrooms, hall and dining areas are well maintained. Several additional classrooms of a same standard are available for use.
- Currently, the school is at its capacity for pupil numbers and the proprietors are seeking agreement from the Department for Education (DfE) to double the allocated number of pupils who can attend the school. The proprietors have not implemented this material change. The availability of additional good-quality teaching space and additional toilet and shower capacity, combined with the proprietors' plans for increasing teaching capacity, mean that the school is likely to meet all the relevant independent school standards with regard to the material change application.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The proprietor, headteacher and staff have established a safe culture in the school. Relevant safeguarding training ensures that staff understand their responsibilities regarding safeguarding procedures. The proprietor has ensured that a suitable safeguarding policy, which takes into account current government requirements, is published on the school's website.
- During the inspection, some aspects of the school's safeguarding record keeping required refining. The proprietor was prompt to respond to these largely administrative shortcomings. By the completion of the inspection, all required records were in place.
- Pupils feel safe in this caring school and know that if they have any concerns that staff will help them to resolve these. School leaders have not needed to engage with parents and carers or other agencies in relation to safeguarding issues. However, the headteacher, proprietor and staff understand their responsibilities should they need to take action.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Teachers do not plan carefully enough to meet the learning needs of pupils. Sometimes the work is too easy for the most able pupils and they repeat work that they have already grasped. Equally, sometimes work for the less able pupils is too hard and they struggle to be successful. As a result, pupils' progress is variable.
- Teachers use questioning to check whether pupils have grasped the important knowledge or to make sure that pupils have understood instructions. However, teachers' questions do not challenge pupils enough to explain their thinking, and they miss opportunities to deepen pupils' learning.

- Regular, timetabled sessions at the start of the day aim to develop pupils' English and mathematical skills. These sessions are effectively supporting the school's focus on improving pupils' spelling and providing time to generate pupils' interest in reading. However, a review of pupils' English and mathematics books from these sessions shows a more variable effect on improving their grammar and punctuation skills and mathematical understanding.
- The teaching of scientific knowledge is strong and some consideration is given to providing a range of levels of challenge within lessons. However, opportunities for practical science are limited and this restricts pupils' development of scientific skills.
- Teaching in mathematics ensures that pupils get a good grounding in number knowledge. The development of reasoning and problem-solving skills is not as strong. As a result, pupils, including the most able, do not get the chance to use and apply their developing mathematical knowledge.
- In English, teachers use interesting contemporary reading books effectively to stimulate pupils' writing skills. This helps most pupils make good progress, although this is not as strong for the lower attaining pupils.
- Very positive relationships exist between staff and pupils, and among pupils and their peers. This provides a friendly working atmosphere within lessons. Pupils work well both on individual tasks or when working together in groups. For example, in a personal, social and health (PSH) education lesson, pupils cooperated well in groups when learning the importance of being a successful team member.
- Teachers take opportunities to build pupils' personal and citizenship development in lessons. For example, in a religious education lesson, pupils discussed, with insight and maturity, a range of equalities issues. Similarly, in a science lesson, pupils faced challenging ethical questions about stem-cell technologies.
- Staff provide pupils with appropriate homework, including research tasks that develop their independent learning skills. For example, pupils complete research about The Titanic to help provide them with important facts for their history lesson. Staff set high expectations for the completion of homework.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils develop self-confidence well. The supportive and nurturing environment where there are positive and mutually respectful relationships between staff and pupils encourages pupils to share their ideas.
- Pupils effectively develop their understanding of how to be a successful learner through group discussions, regular feedback from teachers and opportunities to complete independent research tasks.
- Pupils' physical and emotional needs are well catered for. Regular assemblies encourage

pupils to reflect on personal characteristics, citizenship and current events in the United Kingdom. Pupils know that their views will be considered through school arrangements such as the school council and the suggestions box. Discussions with pupils demonstrate that they have confidence that their teachers will support them if they have any concerns. One pupil described this as, 'like being in a big family'.

- Pupils know how to stay safe, including online. Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, but report that this does not happen in their school.
- Pupils have benefited from a range of visiting speakers. These have provided advice and information about staying safe and involvement in charity work, for example.
- In Year 8, pupils are given some limited careers guidance. However, a well-structured, impartial careers programme is not in place and the school has no reading materials to help pupils consider future career, training and education routes.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are courteous and polite and show respect to one another, and to adults and visitors.
- In lessons, pupils listen attentively. They are keen to learn and work hard.
- At breaktimes and lunchtimes, pupils behave well and engage in sociable activities. Most pupils chat with friends in small groups, while others opt for a more lively game of football.
- Pupils show pride in attending the school. For example, the wearing of uniform is well adhered to right across the school and pupils are well organised with the resources they need for lessons. Teachers set high expectations for punctuality and attendance. As a result, pupils' attendance is good and above the national average.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Although many pupils make good progress across a wide range of their work, outcomes require improvement because in some subjects, the lower attaining and the higher attaining pupils do not make good progress.
- Lower attaining pupils do not make enough progress in writing. Furthermore, teachers do not give enough consideration of these pupils' weaker reading skills when teaching other subjects such as science. As a result, they struggle to make progress in understanding scientific principles and completing their work successfully, as the text is too demanding for them to access.
- The level of challenge for the most able pupils is sometimes too low in mathematics. They are completing work that is not appropriate for their age and ability. Therefore, they spend time completing work that is too easy and not facing more challenging work to ensure that they make good progress.
- Pupils are making good progress in their Arabic studies. The pupils' books show developing knowledge of basic Arabic vocabulary and grammar. In lessons, pupils complete activities that develop their speaking skills effectively.

- Leaders have recently introduced a new system for end-of term assessments that they aim to be better matched to national developments in assessing pupils' attainment. It is too early to discern the effectiveness of this approach.
- Pupils leave the school at the end of Year 8. The school's pupil attainment information shows that pupils were well prepared for starting the Year 9 curriculum when they left in 2017.

## School details

Unique reference number	141316
DfE registration number	380/6010
Inspection number	10040147

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	11 to 14
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	20
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietors	Zaroon and Asam Hussain
Headteacher	Razia Akhtar
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,750
Telephone number	01274 270043
Website	<a href="http://www.almarkazacademy.co.uk">www.almarkazacademy.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:almarkaz@outlook.com">almarkaz@outlook.com</a>
Date of previous inspection	10–12 November 2015

## Information about this school

- Al-Markaz Academy is an independent Muslim school for girls. The school's welcome pack states that 'although Al-Markaz promotes an Islamic ethos it openly welcomes and admits pupils from all backgrounds regardless of their race, religion and ethnicity'.
- Since the last inspection, the age range of pupils has been extended to between 11 and 14 years.
- The school has changed its headteacher since the last inspection.
- The school uses part of a large former warehouse. After the school day has ended and



pupils have left the premises, the building operates as a madrasa. Otherwise, pupils and staff have sole use of the building. This arrangement restricts any extra-curricular activities from taking place at the end of the school day.

- The school aims include 'to promote Islamic morals, help pupils fulfil their academic potential in all subjects and to develop responsible citizens who can make a positive contribution to society'.
- There are no pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, or any who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.
- The school uses no alternative education provision.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out over two and a half days.
- The inspector toured the parts of the building used by the school, both inside and outside.
- The inspector, along with the headteacher, observed learning in nine lessons across a range of subjects. He also studied the work in books for all pupils.
- The inspector spoke to pupils on several occasions throughout the inspection. He also spoke to staff and considered their views. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, the staff survey or the pupil survey.
- The inspector held regular meetings with the headteacher throughout the inspection and met twice with one of the proprietors.
- The inspector examined school documentation, such as admission and attendance registers, and a number of policies, including those for behaviour, safeguarding, welfare, and health and safety, and all documents required as part of the independent school standards.
- As part of the inspection, the Department for Education (DfE) requested the inspector to consider the school's material change application. The school would like to increase the capacity of the school from 20 pupils to 40 pupils. Therefore, the DfE commissioned Ofsted to carry out this standard inspection earlier in the cycle of inspection than previously planned.
- As part of the inspection, the DfE also requested that the inspector consider issues around: the school's coverage of various aspects of British values; pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; delivery of personal, social and health (PSH) education, and rights of pupils in the school's care that were raised following a complaint received.

## Inspection team

Michael Reeves, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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