

Inspection of Markazul Uloom

Park Lee Road, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 3NY

Inspection dates: 16 to 18 April 2024

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are not safe at this school. They are exposed to an unacceptable level of risk due to the decrepit and potentially hazardous nature of the school's premises. Added to this, weaknesses in the culture and practice of safeguarding mean that the school does not fulfil its duties to protect pupils from harm. Despite these failings, many pupils told inspectors that they are happy at school. These pupils are simply unaware of the dangers that they face.

Although most pupils said that they feel safe, a minority of pupils do not share their positive views. They told inspectors about the bullying and poor behaviour that happens at times when they are unsupervised by staff. Moreover, some pupils are concerned by the poor conditions of the school building. Pupils are not encouraged to share their worries with staff. This compounds staff's inability to tackle such issues.

The school has high expectations of pupils' academic achievement. Typically, pupils learn well. They attain qualifications that enable them to move on to suitably ambitious college courses. However, the school has prioritised this aspect of pupils' education at the expense of others. The range of subjects that some older pupils study lacks sufficient breadth. This means that some pupils do not learn all that they need in order to live healthy and successful lives in modern Britain. For instance, pupils in key stage 4 are not taught age-appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The proprietor has failed to uphold its legal duties. It has not ensured that the school meets the statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils and promoting their well-being. Nor has it made sure that the school meets all of the independent school standards (the standards). The proprietor has not adopted all of the recommendations made by external agencies, such as the fire and rescue service and the local authority. For instance, in October 2023, the fire and rescue service raised concerns about the risk of fire at the school. This service made recommendations which included replacing fire doors and updating the fire alarm system to cover the first floor. At the time of this inspection, the proprietor had not acted on these recommendations.

Inspectors found several other potential hazards in the school building, including unsafe electrical repairs. For example, a loose electrical socket had been reattached with decorator's filler. Other areas of the school premises were dirty and unhygienic. The proprietor does not have effective systems for identifying and managing these risks. Many of the standards remained unmet at the end of the inspection. This poses a serious risk to pupils' welfare, health and safety.

The school is ambitious for its pupils. Staff want pupils to achieve well in their secular education in addition to completing their Islamic religious studies. In the

main, they do. Pupils typically gain GCSE qualifications that comprise the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects. However, the curriculum that older pupils study lacks the breadth that pupils up to Year 9 usually experience. Pupils in key stage 4 do not experience any aesthetic or creative education, nor any personal, social, health and economic education.

In some subjects, the curriculum is well designed. The school has set out what pupils need to learn, and the order in which they should learn it, so that pupils build up a secure body of knowledge over time. This helps them to learn well in these subjects. In other subjects, the curriculum lacks coherence. Staff are not clear about the knowledge that pupils need to acquire. This means that pupils' learning is less successful in these subjects.

Teachers' subject knowledge varies. For the most part, teachers deliver the curriculum faithfully. They use assessment strategies to check that pupils are learning what they should. At times, however, some teachers' lack of subject-specific expertise means that they do not choose the most effective ways to teach subject content. This compounds the uneven experience that some pupils have of the curriculum.

There are very few pupils whom the school has identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school's approaches to identifying and assessing pupils with these needs, as well as the needs of pupils who may find reading difficult, are underdeveloped. So far, these approaches have not been put into practice effectively. That said, most pupils read confidently and accurately.

Pupils understand the school's expectations for their conduct. Most pupils follow the school rules. On the whole, this leads to behaviour that is calm and respectful. Pupils typically learn without disruption. On the occasions when this is not the case, the school's actions are inconsistent. A small number of pupils described the bad language and bullying that they experience when they are left unsupervised at breaktimes. Staff do not know that this is happening. The school's systems to record and analyse any patterns of poor behaviour are insufficient to enable them to tackle it. For example, the school is unaware of any reasons why most of the poor behaviour is concentrated in a single year group.

Most pupils attend school regularly. However, a minority of pupils have lengthy periods of absence. The school does not take sufficient action to address this issue. Pupils' reasons for missing learning are often unchallenged. Furthermore, when pupils do not attend, the school's procedures for checking on their welfare are lax.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development is not equitable. Pupils in key stage 4 are denied the breadth of experience that the school provides at key stage 3. Younger pupils learn about healthy relationships, fundamental British values and the dangers of drugs and alcohol. They also learn about the differences between people and the importance of respect and tolerance. In stark contrast, older pupils are not provided with any further information about any of these important aspects. Instead, they must rely on what they can remember from when they were younger.

This leaves them underprepared for adulthood. For instance, pupils in Year 11 struggled to recall what they had learned in Year 9 about consent and sexual harassment.

Pupils in all year groups do not have the opportunity to participate in extra-curricular sports or clubs. This limits their social and cultural development. Pupils do not receive a programme of careers information, advice and guidance. This hinders the decisions that they make about their next steps.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. There is a plan to improve how well disabled pupils can access the school's provision. Given the current state of the premises, inspectors were unconvinced that this plan reflects a realistic aim.

The school keeps parents and carers informed about pupils' progress at school. For example, parents are invited into school for twice-yearly review meetings.

The school does not have a website. The proprietor has ensured that policies and a complaints procedure, which meet the current statutory requirements, are available to parents on request. However, many of these policies do not reflect the school's practice. They are not implemented in the school effectively.

Staff are typically positive about working at this school. Many told inspectors about how the school supports them to manage their workload. In some instances, however, this reflects a lack of accountability. Too little is expected of staff. For example, in subjects where pupils achieve less well, teachers are not offered support or training to help them to improve. As a result, the quality of education offered by the school is not likely to improve.

The proprietor has not acted in the best interests of pupils. It has overseen a rapid decline in the quality of education and standards of pupils' welfare, health and safety in the school. Furthermore, the proprietor has not ensured the development of expertise within the school which could bring about improvements. This is compounded by a lack of effective oversight of the school's actions. Overall, there is no one responsible for the running of the school who appears to have the knowledge or capacity to drive the immediate changes that are needed to secure pupils' safety.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The culture and practice of safeguarding in the school are poor. Despite receiving training, many staff do not have a clear understanding of their responsibility to keep pupils safe. Often, they do not recognise the signs that a pupil may be at risk. If staff do spot any such signs, there is no effective process to report their concerns. This means that referrals to external agencies, such as the police or the local authority, are not made.

A minority of pupils told inspectors that they do not feel safe at school. Some of their views reflected the poor state of the school buildings. Other pupils said that they do not have confidence to share any worries that they may have with staff. Furthermore, staff are unaware of incidents of bullying and poor behaviour that occur when pupils are unsupervised. This means that pupils' concerns are unlikely to be addressed.

The administrative aspects of safeguarding are lax. Records of concerns are not kept. Information regarding pupils at risk of harm cannot be connected together. This makes it more likely that the school will miss opportunities to protect pupils. In addition, the single central record of pre-employment checks carried out on staff was incomplete. The school rectified this during the inspection. Furthermore, checks on visitors are insufficient. There is no accurate record of the identity of adults who are on the premises, nor whether they are suitable to work with children.

The proprietor's risk assessment policy is too generic to be implemented effectively. While appropriate action has been identified to reduce some potential risks, some others have been overlooked.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The school's safeguarding arrangements are ineffective. This means that pupils are at potential risk of harm. The proprietor must urgently address the weaknesses in the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- The proprietor has not ensured that the school meets all of the standards. Pupils receive their education in a learning environment that is not safe or suitable. The proprietor must ensure that the school meets all of the standards consistently and securely.
- The provision for pupils' personal development, particularly for pupils in key stage 4, is weak. A significant proportion of pupils do not learn about diversity in society or fundamental British values, nor do they learn age-appropriate RSE. The school must ensure that the programme to support pupils' wider development is improved so that it is equitable for all pupils and well suited to what they need to know as they grow older.
- Pupils do not receive a formal programme of careers education, advice and guidance. This means that pupils are not well informed about the range of possible post-16 options that are available to them. The school should ensure that all pupils have the knowledge and support that they need to successfully move on to appropriate education, employment or training.
- Older pupils do not experience a broad enough curriculum. This limits their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. It does not prepare them well for adulthood. The school should ensure that the breadth of the curriculum offered to key stage 3 pupils is also experienced at key stage 4.
- Some staff lack the subject knowledge that they need to deliver the curriculum successfully. This hinders some pupils in learning as well as they should. The

school should ensure that staff receive the guidance and support that they need to deliver the curriculum well.

- A small number of pupils are persistently absent from school. This means that they miss out on important learning, making it harder for them to achieve well. The school should maximise its efforts to ensure that all pupils are helped to attend school regularly.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	133541
DfE registration number	889/6009
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10334438
Type of school	Other independent faith school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Markazul Uloom
Chair	Muhammad Bilal Bawa
Headteacher	Sajid Bargit
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,800
Telephone number	01254 660026
Website	None
Email address	info@muloom.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 to 15 October 2021

Information about this school

- Markazul Uloom is an Islamic faith school for boys. The school provides both a religious and secular education for its pupils.
- The school operates from two buildings situated at Park Lee Road, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 3NY. There are also several unoccupied buildings on the same site.
- At the same location, the proprietor also operates a school for girls, called Noorul Uloom. The girls' school is registered separately with the Department for Education (DfE). It was not considered during this inspection.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place from 13 to 15 October 2021.
- The school is registered to admit up to 217 pupils aged from 11 to 19. At the time of the inspection, there were 39 pupils on the school roll. No current pupils are older than 16.
- The proprietor is a registered charity, Markazul Uloom. The chair of the proprietor body is one of the six trustees of the charity. The proprietor is not recorded on the DfE's 'Get Information about Schools'.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- The DfE instructed Ofsted to carry out this standard inspection earlier in the cycle than planned. This was due to concerns raised with the DfE about pupils' welfare, health and safety.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other leaders and staff throughout the inspection. The lead inspector spoke with a member of the board of trustees by telephone.
- The lead inspector also held telephone conversations with representatives of the local authority, and with a representative of the Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service.

- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including that relating to the standards and the curriculum.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the checks that had been carried out on staff to ensure their suitability; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents expressed through Ofsted Parent View. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's survey for staff.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils. During the inspection, inspectors spoke with almost all available pupils about their work and their experiences of school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at social times, in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages. They met leaders and teachers and visited a sample of lessons. Inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning in these subjects. They also considered the curriculum across some other subject areas and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- The lead inspector made a tour of the school premises.

Inspection team

Ben Hill, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Amanda Downing

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work-
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
 - 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are-
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives all pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;
 - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which
 - 2(2)(d)(i) reflects the school's aim and ethos; and
 - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act;
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that-
 - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential.
- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor-
 - 2A(1)(b) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with secondary education at the school is provided with relationships and sex education, except in so far as the pupil is excused as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2).
 - 2A(1)(d) in making arrangements for the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) or (c), has regard to any guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 that applies in relation to the provision of education by maintained schools.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school;
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that-
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively; and
 - 9(c) a record is kept of the sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious misbehaviour.

- 10 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that bullying at the school is prevented in so far as reasonably practicable, by the drawing up and implementation of an effective anti-bullying strategy.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 14 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of school staff.
- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that—
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school—
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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