



Office for Standards
in Education

Inspection report
Jaamiatul Imaam Muhammad Zakaria School
Independent school
DfES ref no: 380/6109

Dates of inspection: 17– 21 May 2004

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Introduction and summary

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Jaamiatul Imaam Muhammad Zakaria School is a well established girls' boarding school situated in Clayton on the moor on the outskirts of the City of Bradford. It provides full-time Islamic and secondary education for nearly 500 girls aged between eleven and nineteen. The school aims to provide an education where girls can attain the "...highest levels of spiritual, moral and Islamic awareness...and in close conjunction to this ...physical and intellectual achievement ...". The extensive Victorian buildings and large grounds provide a pleasant environment. However, the number of pupils on roll has outgrown the present classroom accommodation. A new extension is being built to further extend the accommodation and facilities at the school.

Summary of main findings

Jaamiatul Imaam Muhammad Zakaria School is a good school. It provides a secure Islamic environment in which all girls can learn and make progress. It is a happy community where relationships are very good, and this is characterised by much good humour and enthusiasm for study. The welfare, health and safety of girls are well promoted. Girls experience a wide-ranging Islamic and generally broad secondary curriculum. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is one of the strengths of the school and a clear reflection of its ethos.

The management of the school has the overwhelming confidence of parents and pupils. The school works well with other agencies, for example the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and is well regarded in the local community. There is a very strong commitment to improvement; the school is well organised and led effectively by a dedicated head teacher supported by enthusiastic staff and Trustees.

What the school does well

- pupils of all abilities achieve well and make good progress. Examination results are continually improving;
- teaching is good in all aspects of the curriculum;
- pupils' personal development is very well promoted and they are confident and highly motivated to learn;

- the Islamic ethos and values encourage girls to be assured, caring and responsible young British Muslims;
- the Islamic curriculum is rigorous, wide-ranging and well taught; and
- the managers of the school are thoughtful and continually seeking ways for improvement for the benefit of the girls' learning and personal development. For example, in the innovative work being done to integrate the Islamic and secondary strands of the curriculum.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations

- provide a programme of careers education for all pupils as they move through the school;
- build on the general studies and tutorial work to provide a fuller programme so that girls can gain a broad knowledge of the wide range of services, as well as institutions in England;
- devise a written policy relating to the health and safety of the pupils on activities outside school;
- attend to the regulations concerning the premises and accommodation as listed in section 5 of this report; and
- amend the information available to parents, as outlined in section 6 of this report, in order for it to comply fully with the regulations.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The school achieves its aim to provide an education that focuses on Islamic study taught alongside a generally broad range subjects from the National Curriculum. The Islamic curriculum is taught in the morning and the secondary curriculum in the afternoon, which on occasion extends into the evening.

The Islamic curriculum is very broad and balanced, providing links with all the other areas of the secondary curriculum and offering students the unique opportunity to attain a very high standard of Arabic and Urdu. It is also pluralistic in that the study of Islamic jurisprudence embraces all Sunni schools of jurisprudence and is an intensive and comprehensive five-year programme of studies leading to a degree in Islamic Theology, examined and awarded by the school. This course includes Qur'anic recitation, commentary of the Qur'an, principles of jurisprudence, study of the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence, Islamic history and detailed biography of Prophet Muhammad, main collections of hadith (accounts of what Prophet Muhammad did and said), principles of faith, Arabic grammar and Qur'anic Arabic as well as Urdu language. The texts studied are essentially in Arabic; a few are in Urdu which is also the teaching medium, with additional use of English, to ensure full comprehension, and Arabic, where reference is made to the text and Islamic terminology.

Within the secondary curriculum all girls study English (including English literature), mathematics, science (double award), Urdu, Arabic and design technology – textiles. All these subjects are examined at the end of Key Stage 4. Results at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) are steadily improving: they are above the national average for five or more passes at A*-C grades and well above for five or more passes at A*-G grades. Girls do particularly well in GCSE Urdu and Arabic. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is taught throughout the school, and girls do very well in the ICT - Computer Literacy and Information Technology examinations. All girls also take part in physical education (PE) and a weekly tutorial session in which the programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught in both Key Stage 3 and 4. A general studies course is taught in Key Stage 3, which covers aspects of British and world history and geography. This could usefully be extended to include more recent events. The course also includes units of religious education, which provide girls with a good overview of the main tenets of the major world religions. This course is complemented by aspects of Islamic studies courses.

A post-16 curriculum is offered in the afternoons where students gain valuable life skills in Asian cooking and healthy eating, Asian dressmaking and ICT. Courses in fire safety awareness and basic food hygiene are offered and students also achieve first aid qualification. These courses are much appreciated by girls and parents alike. Advanced level (AL) General Certificate of Education (GCE) Urdu and Arabic are also offered and students do extremely well in these subjects achieving high grades. There are some weekend extra curricular

activities, such as sport and an art club, with plans to increase the range when the new facilities are open.

PSHE is taught through the Islamic curriculum as well as through the weekly afternoon tutorial lesson. In Arabic and Islamic studies worthwhile topics discussed include health and fitness; relationships and the environment. The GCE AL Urdu course covers such topics as health and drugs, marriage, women's rights, youth issues, child abuse, and racism in Britain.

Girls have high expectations for their futures. The school prepares them well for the responsibilities of adult life and the role many will play as teachers and leaders in their communities. However, the school does not yet have a systematic programme of careers education so that all girls are made aware of their choices in the range of occupations and training available to them in the future.

The policy for both the Islamic and secondary curriculum is set out clearly with details of its aims and content, together with the opportunities for assessment. It is well supported by schemes of work and lesson planning throughout the school.

The school is thoughtful about the curriculum it offers and how to make it relevant to the girls. The head teacher and the school development officer ably lead the ongoing debate within the school about the relationship between the Islamic and secondary curricula. The school is taking positive steps to map the whole curriculum, making more explicit the inter-relationship between morning and afternoon learning, and the ways in which the Islamic and secondary parts of the curriculum can complement and support each other still further. This is beneficial in reinforcing what girls learn.

The quality of the teaching and assessment

The overall quality of the teaching is good, and there is some very good teaching in the school. A very few lessons were unsatisfactory. In the good and very good lessons the teachers demonstrate a secure knowledge of their subject. A suitable range of teaching styles is used. Lessons are well planned, managed and organised, and the girls are encouraged to think for themselves. Effective questioning ensures that all pupils make good progress. Lessons are planned to take account of the range of ability among the girls. For example, in a lesson in jurisprudence the girls had to consider a range of conditions and calculate Zakat (the Islamic tax on property). The difficulty of the calculations was graded to meet all levels of ability. The closing sessions of lessons such as those seen in science and English ensure that pupils' learning is consolidated.

In a minority of lessons the objectives were too limited and the girls were insufficiently challenged. In some cases the pace of the lesson was too slow. The teacher's subject knowledge was not sufficiently secure and relied too prescriptively on progress through the text book. Monitoring of teachers' planning and lesson observation would ensure that teachers' knowledge and expertise could be developed.

Relationships between the teachers and the girls are excellent. The girls are keen, interested and motivated learners who apply themselves very well to the tasks they are given. They use their initiative, respond well in class, concentrate and work hard. This enables them to achieve well.

Classroom resources are adequate and are used effectively to support teaching and learning. In particular the library needs significant extension if it is to be a suitable resource to support research.

In both the Islamic and the secondary curricula, assessment and recording are thorough and are used very well to inform both the teaching and the planning of the next stage of learning. A marking policy provides clear guidance for the marking of work in each of the subjects of the secondary curriculum. Marking of work in the Islamic curriculum is done well. Assessments are also used effectively to inform setting arrangements in both the curriculum strands. These arrangements successfully enable teachers to plan appropriate tasks which match the pupils' abilities.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The quality of education provided by the school meets all but one of the requirements for registration.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- provide a programme of careers education for all pupils (paragraph 1(2)(g)).

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is one of the strengths of the school and a clear reflection of its ethos. The strong Islamic ethos of the school and the teachings of the Islamic curriculum, permeate the secondary curriculum also. This is visible in the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils both in and out of lessons. Their behaviour is excellent, and girls of all ages are very confident, highly motivated and have high self-esteem.

Girls develop self-knowledge through the school's challenging Islamic curriculum extended by such regular activities as the halaqa (group discussion on religious themes touching on spiritual, moral, social, and cultural aspects). Girls are very proud of and confident in their Islamic identity.

Through Qur'anic studies and the study of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), pupils are taught to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the law. In an Islamic jurisprudence lesson about various levels of criminality, girls were taught the details of establishing the responsibilities and rights of all parties and encouraged to appreciate that a legal opinion is rooted in a base of evidence (Qur'an and Hadith).

The school works hard to make this teaching relevant to the pupils' daily lives. Useful links could also be made to general studies and citizenship. The school has reviewed its scheme of work for general studies to incorporate elements of citizenship, and is arranging a course of appropriate lectures on British government. The school should build on the valuable work begun in general studies and in tutorial sessions to ensure that all girls have a fuller, more

structured citizenship programme, covering a wider range of services and public institutions in England. Educational visits within the locality would be one way to broaden girls' knowledge and understanding. The questionnaires indicated that parents would greatly welcome such activities.

The various roles the pupils play in the school – class monitors, prefects, helping at annual functions, fulfilling domestic tasks, organising halaqa – as well as the discipline system, encourage them to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute to community life.

Pupils learn to appreciate and respect their own and other cultures through both the Islamic and the secondary curriculum. Their knowledge of Urdu and Arabic gives them access to most cultures of the Muslim world and the secondary curriculum provides an experience of British culture. For instance, in an Arabic class, post-16 students learnt about the Islamic heritage of Spain through a text on Toledo and extended their learning to the whole of Andalusian art, from calligraphy to architecture. Through general studies and the post-16 Arabic curriculum, girls learn to appreciate and respect the major world religions. However, social and cultural development would be further enhanced through links with other schools, the local community and educational visits.

The impact of the school's ethos on girls' personal development was well illustrated in Year 9. Here, girls prepared two stage versions of selected scenes from Macbeth. One group acted Shakespeare's text with great enthusiasm and confidence, showing appreciation of setting, characterisation and plot. They demonstrated very good speaking skills as well as creativity and initiative in their imaginative use of scanty resources. They used tone and accent effectively and displayed knowledge of stage conventions. The other group experimented boldly with a modern interpretation of Macbeth, showing creativity, imagination and initiative in their representation of the Shakespearian text. When asked what they had learnt through this activity, the pupils said they had grown more confident, patient with each other and had learnt about team work.

The organisation of the halaqa further enhances personal development. Each group is led by two leaders who display organisational, thinking and strategic skills when steering the group discussion on the given subject. Girls of all ages discussed the hadith "He is not a Muslim, he whose neighbour is not safe from his tongue and his hands" very effectively, at varying degrees of depth, and relating the message to their personal lives successfully. The privilege granted to the oldest students to lead such discussion groups is a highly valued position to which all girls aspire.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but one of the requirements for registration.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

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- build on the work begun, to provide pupils with a broader general knowledge of public institutions and services in England (paragraph 2(d)).

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The girls' welfare, health and safety are promoted effectively. There are clear policies for child protection, bullying and health and safety which are known to both the girls and the staff. There is a sensible written policy to promote good behaviour which sets out the sanctions to be adopted. The girls said they are treated fairly and with respect and that they consider the school rules to be sensible and appropriate. Relationships between the girls and the staff and the girls themselves are very good indeed and the girls are well supported. A group of Year 10 girls spoke very warmly of tutorial lessons in which they discuss such issues as bullying. The Islamic curriculum makes a very important contribution to the welfare, health and safety of the girls.

Health and safety procedures are generally thorough. There are clear procedures for risk assessments, including fire risk assessments, which are carried out regularly, and a suitable written record is kept of these. Fire drills are held regularly. Girls and staff have been given training on fire safety by a retired fireman. There are some outstanding recommendations from the fire officer. These have been allocated to phases for action with agreed dates for the completion of each phase. The fire officer inspected very recently and was satisfied with the completed phases to date.

There is no written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school.

The girls are supervised in an appropriate way throughout the extensive site and great care is taken to assure their well being, health and safety at all times.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but one of the requirements for registration.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- devise a written policy relating to the health and safety of the pupils on activities outside school (paragraph 3(2)(c)).

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

Thorough procedures for checking the suitability of staff are in place. A systematic log is kept at each stage of recruitment and appointment which complies fully with the regulations. New staff undergo induction so that they become familiar with, and understand the school's policies and procedures. Usefully, this is recorded on a personal induction plan which each member of staff maintains, and a copy is kept on file.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school is housed in extensive Victorian buildings which are situated on the moor on the outskirts of Clayton, and provide a pleasant and peaceful environment. The Trustees and school managers are tireless in their efforts to maintain the extensive buildings and to extend the facilities. However, the present number of pupils on roll has outgrown the classroom accommodation and facilities. Consequently an impressive new extension is under construction to provide extra classrooms, a gymnasium and large hall. A second science laboratory is also planned.

Currently several of the classrooms in the teaching block are too small for the size of the group. In this transitional phase, before the new building comes into use, the school should review the secondary curriculum room timetable to make arrangements that are more appropriate to the size of some group activities. Many classrooms and corridors are brightened with displays of girls' work, for example, lively travel brochures, attractive hats designed and made in textile classes and well researched project work in the science laboratory.

In the boarding accommodation girls make their bedrooms most attractive with personal items and suitable posters of Islamic poetry and places of significance to Muslims. The recent CSCI report indicated that there were insufficient washrooms facilities in the school. A programme of refurbishment and improvement is in hand for washrooms and wadu (ablution) areas along with action to increase the provision. Some floor covering is worn and requires repair. Several other matters raised in the report are being dealt with satisfactorily. The school has responded very positively to the CSCI recommendations.

The site has outdoor play space with both hard surfaces and grassed areas which the girls enjoy using at break time and at weekends. The construction work has restricted the use of some outside areas but arrangements have been made to guard pupils' safety. However, these "out of bounds" areas should be tidied up. There are also broken paving slabs and potholes in the outside surfaces making some areas of the play space potentially hazardous. These should be repaired urgently so the girls can play more safely.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- arrange the timetable so that all classrooms are of sufficient size for the numbers in the class (paragraph 5(j));

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- ensure there are sufficient washrooms for pupils by continuing with the refurbishment programme recommended in the CSCI report (paragraph 5 (k));
 - repair the frayed and taped carpeting in various areas of the boarding accommodation (paragraph 5(s)); and
 - ensure the outdoor space is safe for pupils to play (paragraph 5(t)).

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The school provides an appropriate range of information to parents and staff. A detailed prospectus provides most of the required information on the policies and procedures of the school. An attractive leaflet is used to inform a wider audience.

The school also provides a very comprehensive booklet for staff outlining their roles and responsibilities as teachers and residential staff, with particular focus on health, safety and welfare.

There are no formal meetings where parents can meet teachers because of the inconvenience this type of arrangement would cause parents who live a long distance away from the school, but there is a regular and ongoing flow of communication between the school and parents. Parents receive detailed annual progress reports on their daughters' education including curriculum profiles for both the Islamic and secondary curricula as well as personal development profiles. Through the questionnaires completed for this inspection parents say that they are kept well informed and show overwhelming support for the school. However, a number of them express their concern that there is a lack of school outings and educational visits.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but two of the regulations for registration.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- make known particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f)); and
- make it clear to parents that they can obtain details of the staff employed at the school, including a summary of their qualifications, on request (paragraph 6(2)(k)).

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

The school has produced a detailed and clear complaints policy and procedures that meet all requirements. A copy of the policy is kept in the school office and is available on request. There have been no complaints to date. A recent inspection carried out by the CSCI confirms

that the complaints procedure complies with Standard 5 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details

Name of school:	Jaamiatul Imaam Muhammad Zakaria School		
DfES ref number:	380/6109		
Type of school:	Muslim		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	11-19		
Gender of pupils:	Female		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys	, Girls 493,	Total 493
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys	, Girls	, Total 0
Number of boarders:	Boys	, Girls 493,	Total 493
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys	, Girls 0,	Total 0
Annual fees (day pupils):			
Annual fees (boarders):	£1,550		
Address of school:	Thornton View Road Clayton Bradford BD14 6JX		
E-mail address:	n/a		
Telephone number:	01274 882007		
Fax number:	01274 883696		
Headteacher:	Mrs Z Hajee		
Proprietor:	Board of Trustees		
Chair of the governing body:	-		
Lead Inspector:	Mrs M A Buckingham HMI		
Dates of inspection:	17 - 21 May 2004		

Notes