

Inspection report

Madrassa Islamia School

Independent school

DfES ref no: 821/6004

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 7 - 9 November 2005

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Madrasa Islamia School is an independent Islamic primary day school for boys and girls. There are 45 pupils on roll, aged between 6 and 11 years. No pupil has a statement of special educational need. The school is situated in the centre of Luton and opened in 1998. It provides an Arabic and Islamic education in addition to National Curriculum subjects. Pupils have Asian, Arab, European and African backgrounds. The school's main aim is *'to provide a good, balanced education in a caring and nurturing environment, to develop the character and personality of pupils according to the teachings of Islam'*.

Summary of main findings

Madrasa Islamia School provides a sound education for its pupils. It is a happy school where pupils are encouraged to develop a caring attitude to others. The pupils' personal development is promoted effectively through the school's religious ethos. The school has significantly improved most aspects of its provision over the last year. It has worked hard and successfully to meet all but two of the regulations for independent schools. The quality of teaching is good and the curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant. Pupils make good progress. Assessment of pupils' work has improved and this contributes to rising standards as pupils progress through the school.

What the school does well:

- its quality of teaching is good;
- it ensures good relationships between staff and pupils;
- it enables pupils to enjoy their time in school; and
- it takes good care of its pupils and provides well for their welfare, health and safety.

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

- ensure that classroom resources are of an adequate quantity and range and are used effectively; and
- provide appropriate arrangements for pupils to play outdoors safely.

Next Steps

Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- build further on the school's caring ethos to ensure that pupils who need extra support have individual education plans in line with the policy for pupils with special educational needs;
- develop further strategies to match lesson plans more closely to the full range of ability and need in mixed age classes;
- produce a whole-school handwriting style for teachers to use on whiteboards and in pupils' books;
- ensure that all opportunities to develop literacy in other subjects are exploited; and
- continue to develop strategies to promote good behaviour and positive attitudes to work.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The school meets its stated aim of offering a broad and balanced curriculum. In addition to the core National Curriculum subjects, it provides Islamic studies, Qur'an and Arabic. Pupils study both history and geography for half the academic year. Pupils have worthwhile aesthetic and creative experience through art and information and communication technology (ICT) lessons, as well as Qur'anic recitation. Technology is limited to ICT, although art provides opportunities for making objects using diverse techniques. No form of music is taught. The school implements the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies. It intends to open a reception class in January 2006 and to follow the Foundation Stage guidelines for this age group.

The school has a clear curriculum policy supplemented by a developing assessment policy. It has adapted suitable commercial schemes of work for National Curriculum subjects. Teachers' long- and medium-term plans are good and provide a firm basis for their daily planning. However, the quality of planning is variable. Provision for the core subjects is good. The school has yet to plan cross-curricular links, in particular with Islamic studies. There is provision to modify the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. Lesson plans usually indicate how the pupils' needs will be met and are often evaluated to inform future planning. Provision for physical education is just satisfactory, because of limited facilities and expertise. The school is forging links with other local schools with a view to using specialist facilities and sharing good practice. Overall, the curriculum is supported by the bare minimum of resources.

Pupils are taught in mixed age groups owing to the size of the school. Boys and girls in Years 1 and 2 are taught together by a class teacher. From Year 3, boys and girls are taught separately by specialist teachers. Pupils' progress ranges from satisfactory to good and is good overall. They take the national tests at the end of Year 6.

The school has put in place a suitable procedure to assess the needs of pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language and those of pupils with special educational needs, although at the time of the inspection, there were no such pupils on roll. The school has considered the importance of literacy and oracy and devised a whole approach to developing literacy in other subjects. However, this policy is not yet fully implemented. Pupils who receive extra support in lessons do not have individual education plans to structure the provision more precisely.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught within an Islamic framework, mainly through a planned programme of assemblies, as well as through science and Islamic studies.

The curriculum is enriched by a good range of educational visits. In the summer term, the school offers a wide range of activities after school hours. The limitations of the accommodation do not allow the school to run more than one club at lunch time.

The quality of teaching and assessment

Teaching is good, although individual lessons observed varied from outstanding to unsatisfactory. Lesson planning is conscientious, with learning objectives identified in all cases. However, these are not always shared with the pupils or are not specific enough. Planning does not routinely include sufficient detail of what pupils are expected to learn, focusing rather on what they will do in the lesson. Teachers have started to use evaluations of lessons to inform their future planning more precisely.

In the best lessons, teachers' subject knowledge is strong and they use questions and answers skilfully to extend pupils' skills and understanding. In these lessons, in science, for example, the teacher places emphasis on pupils' learning and uses carefully the specialist vocabulary of the subject. This helps pupils to become more precise in their thinking and more expert in their knowledge. Other strong features of the better practice are immediate feedback given to pupils, effective use of time and judicious use of praise and humour. Some lessons make good links between subjects, as in science, where pupils use bar charts to interpret their findings and in physical education, when pupils use their literacy skills to discuss the differences between jogging and running. The curriculum for religious studies is well structured with attainment targets which enable teachers to know what pupils are expected to achieve. They particularly encourage pupils to exceed the targets in Qur'an.

In the lessons where teaching is satisfactory, but no better, there are some common weaknesses. Planning usually fails to take full account of the differing levels of ability within the group so that more able pupils are not always challenged and do not make as much progress as they could. Sometimes the pace of the lesson is too slow so that time runs out and work planned is not covered or pupils fail to finish. Whereas in the best lessons teachers provide good models of how to think, the weaker lessons do not pursue issues in sufficient depth to show pupils how to improve the quality of their thinking. Where the teaching observed was judged to be unsatisfactory, health and safety issues are overlooked, class management was weak and time was not used wisely.

The teaching of literacy and numeracy has a high priority, but the impact of this is reduced because literacy is not sufficiently developed in all subjects. Opportunities are missed to promote literacy skills, as, for example, in an Islamic studies lesson difficult words in a story were not explained to pupils. Often teachers' handwriting on the whiteboards and in the pupils' books is untidy and does not provide a good model for pupils. There is as yet no whole-school policy to raise standards of presentation of pupils' written work.

Classroom resources are used effectively, but are at minimal levels in all subjects. In particular, the library is inadequate and requires immediate attention. The school has recently bought several published schemes of work, but lacks sufficient supporting materials such as dictionaries, art materials and science apparatus.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is satisfactory overall. However, they do not always listen attentively and many of the younger pupils call out whilst the teacher is speaking. Not all teachers or assistants make clear their expectations of how the pupils should behave. Pupils form good relationships with staff and are happy throughout the day. Homework is consistently set and builds on work covered in class, helping pupils to consolidate their learning and practise skills.

Assessment procedures have improved to a sound standard. The school has introduced a satisfactory marking policy which helps teachers in their day-to-day assessments of pupils' work. The teachers recognise success and identify areas in which pupils need to improve. Pupils are asked to correct mistakes. Marking also differentiates between attainment and effort. In discussion, pupils say that they appreciate the way in which teachers help them to improve their work through both verbal and written feedback.

A significant improvement in the development of assessment is the introduction of promising procedures to track pupils' progress throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. Staff have received recent training and the new system starts in January 2006. The school makes suitable use of the results of national tests to measure rates of progress. There are half-termly assessments in literacy, numeracy and science for pupils in Years 3 - 6. Each teacher has a mark book in which these details are noted carefully. Parents are given the results of national tests, which help them to be aware of their children's progress in relation to pupils nationally.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but one of the requirements.

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

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

- *ensure that classroom resources are of an adequate quantity and range and used effectively (paragraph 1(3)(f)).*

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

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The school is successful in providing a family atmosphere in which pupils feel happy and enjoy their learning.

The school enables pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence mainly through Islamic studies, PSHE and assemblies. There are missed opportunities to link the Islamic ethos of the school to the rewards and sanctions system and pastoral care. The school provides pupils with opportunities to speak and express their opinions in assemblies, but has not given enough thought to raising the standard of their speaking skills. The pastoral system is insufficiently developed to provide a wide range of lead roles to promote pupils' confidence and self-esteem, as well as their communication and interpersonal skills. The rewards

system does not provide sufficient incentives to have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils do not always behave as well as they should.

The staff create a fairly informal working atmosphere in which pupils consider their school as their extended family. Pupils enjoy coming to school. When asked what they liked best about their school, they said it was warm and friendly.

Moral education is taught mainly through Islamic studies, PSHE and assemblies. In PSHE and assemblies, pupils discuss appropriate moral choices. Spiritual development is fostered through congregational prayers, assemblies and Islamic studies.

Pupils show initiative when given the opportunity. For instance, they have made sensible suggestions to improve their school uniform. They have also participated in several events to raise funds for the Pakistan earthquake appeal. They contribute to a weekly event to raise funds for the school.

Pupils gain knowledge of public institutions and services in Britain mainly through the 'People who help us' topic and a few citizenship units in Key Stage 2. For example, they discuss rules and laws, local and central government, children's rights and human rights, and the media. Their understanding is further enhanced by visits to places of interest and from professionals who visit the school.

The school's provision for cultural education and preparation for life in a multi-cultural society is sound. For example, pupils gain an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures by learning how Christians, Jews and Hindus fast and what they believe in. The school has insufficient resources to help pupils learn about their own culture and that of others as well as they might.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The school has effective policies and procedures in place to minimise health and safety risks to pupils. Health and safety issues are further reinforced in assemblies. The school has a written First Aid policy and has suitable procedures to deal with accidents and emergencies. Two members of staff are First Aiders. Pupils feel safe and know who to turn to if they have any concern.

The behaviour policy is reinforced through assemblies and Islamic studies. The school recognises that partnership with parents needs to be strengthened to improve the behaviour of a few pupils.

The school meets fire safety regulations. It carries out and records termly fire drills and weekly fire alarm tests.

The school maintains the attendance and admission registers in conformity with regulations. It meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and has prepared a thoughtful plan showing how it can improve access to the physical environment and the curriculum.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has put in place a rigorous recruitment procedure. Prior to the appointment of staff, checks are made to confirm their suitability to work with children, their prior experience, medical fitness, identity and qualifications.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are suitable for their purpose. The school is situated in a Victorian building, dating from the turn of the 20th century, which was originally a cinema. There are sufficient classrooms and a large hall which is used as a mosque each afternoon. The hall is also used for physical education and assemblies each morning. Boys in Key Stage 2 use the mosque as their classroom every morning. During the afternoon session when prayers take place, the boys use classrooms in the school area. This is an appropriate arrangement in view of the public use of the mosque. A suitable ICT suite has been upgraded recently which accommodates ten pupils each session. Some classrooms are small, although adequate for the current number of pupils using them. All classrooms are maintained to a reasonable standard both in decoration and fittings. They are enhanced by attractive and informative displays of pupils' work.

There are appropriate toilet facilities for staff and pupils, although the single toilet and washbasin for boys just meets requirements for the current numbers on roll. The facilities for pupils who are ill are adequate.

There is no outdoor play space. The pupils spend breaks in the large hall or classrooms. Weather permitting; the pupils are taken to the local park for sporting activities. The school's mini-bus is used to take the pupils further afield. The school is actively seeking new premises because of the lack of outdoor play space.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but one of the requirements.

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

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

- *provide arrangements for the pupils to play outside safely (paragraph 5(t))*

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The school provides a suitable range of information for parents and prospective parents. The recently revised prospectus is informative and provides all the required details. It provides a thorough insight into the nature of the school, including appropriate contact details, the school's stated aims, ethos, curriculum content and admissions, discipline and exclusions policies. Parents are informed that school policies and procedures are readily available to see on request. At present, the school does not provide regular newsletters.

Informative reports on individual pupils' progress are sent home once a year. Parents are welcome to discuss any concerns on an informal basis at any time and have the opportunity to discuss their children's progress at a more formal parents' consultation evening.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school has recently updated its complaints policy. The procedures now comply fully with the regulations and specify clear time scales for the informal and formal stages of a complaint. There is also provision for a hearing panel of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, including at least one person who is independent of the running and management of the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Madrasa Islamia School
DfES Number:	821/6004
Type of school:	Islamic primary day school
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	6 - 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 12 Girls: 33 Total: 45
Annual fees:	£1,300
Address of school:	116 Bury Park Road Luton Bedfordshire LU1 1HE
Telephone number:	01582 416940
Fax number:	01582 416940
Email address:	-
Headteacher:	Mr Tariq Rasul
Proprietor:	The Trustees
Reporting Inspector:	Mrs Cecile Corfield
Date of inspection:	7 - 9 November 2005

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