

Inspection report

The Olive Tree School

Independent school

DfES ref no: 209/6363

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 14 - 17 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 continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

The Olive Tree School is an independent Islamic day school for boys and girls aged 5 to 11 years. It was set up in September 2003. It is situated in Lewisham and serves the diverse local community. It is housed on the ground floor of the Lewisham Islamic Centre. There are 26 pupils grouped into four classes. Pupils attend school for four full days and a half day on Friday. At the time of the inspection, there were five pupils of reception age, nine pupils learning English as an additional language and no pupils identified as having special educational needs.

The school provides most subjects of the National Curriculum within an Islamic environment. It aims to *'encourage the building of a strong moral character, together with sound academic performance'* amongst its pupils. For this purpose, it seeks to equip them with *'skills to face the challenges of today's changing world by encouraging communication, personal growth and confidence at all levels'*.

Summary of main findings

The Olive Tree School provides a sound education for its pupils. It is a calm, orderly community with a family atmosphere. The headteacher's thoughtful leadership has a positive impact on the high quality of the Islamic ethos. Teachers are good role models who promote well pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has made sound progress in some aspects of its provision in the last year and good progress in others. The curriculum has been broadened for pupils of compulsory school age, but it still lacks sufficient rigour to ensure continuity and progression of learning for the mixed age classes. The curriculum for the reception class is still at an early stage of planning. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with examples of good and outstanding practice. Assessment is a strength of teaching and is used effectively to raise standards. Class management is good and pupils behave well. The school has worked hard to build a good partnership with parents and provides them with a good range of information.

What the school does well:

- it creates a family atmosphere in which pupils can flourish and enjoy learning;
- it promotes pupils' moral, social and cultural development well and is particularly successful in promoting their spiritual growth;

- it offers a broad curriculum and plans useful links between subjects, including Islamic studies; this reinforces the Islamic ethos, gives unity to the curriculum and makes learning more meaningful;
- it ensures that effective procedures are in place to assess pupils' work and monitor their progress, and that assessment is used to inform the planning of future lessons;
- its teachers are good role models who manage their classes well; as a result, pupils behave well and have a mature attitude to learning; and
- it provides a good range of information to parents and enjoys their overwhelming support.

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

- improve the planning of the curriculum as described in section 1 of this report;
- address the two issues of welfare, health and safety listed in section 3; and
- provide pupils with safe outdoor play as indicated in section 5.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum has been broadened during the last year for pupils of compulsory school age but it lacks a systematic approach to planning a two-year curriculum cycle for the mixed age classes in Key Stages 1 and 2.

The school teaches all the subjects of the National Curriculum except for music to pupils from five to eleven years, with the addition of Islamic and Arabic studies. Social studies include elements of early Islamic history. There is an appropriate allocation of time for the different subject areas. Pupils have opportunities for singing *nashid* (Islamic songs) but this area is under-developed. Information and communication technology (ICT) has been introduced successfully. The curriculum is enhanced by the personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship programmes. Provision for physical development (PE) is unsatisfactory because there is no balance between the strands of the programme and the staff's knowledge of the subject is not sufficiently secure. The school has planned effective cross-curricular links that give coherence and added meaning to the pupils' learning experience. Throughout the school there is a strong emphasis on English and mathematics to establish a secure base for the curriculum. Pupils' achievement at the end of Years 2 and 6 in these subjects is in line with the national average.

In Key Stages 1 and 2 there is no clearly defined structure to ensure continuity and progression in what pupils are to study and to avoid repetition for pupils in mixed age groups. Continuity of learning in English and mathematics is helped through the use of suitable commercial schemes and study guides. In general, medium-term planning does not reflect the demands of teaching classes with a wide age and ability range. It does not always contain sufficient detail of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding to be taught progressively through the school. As a result, these medium-term plans do not inform teachers sufficiently well to plan their lessons for the mixed age groups they teach and meet the specific needs of each pupil.

Curricular provision in the reception class is at an early stage of development. The school development plan indicates that it is a priority area for the current year. The curriculum mirrors that of the rest of the school. While appropriate emphasis is given to pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, the development of pupils' independence through investigation and experimentation is given less prominence.

The school has the procedures in place to assess the needs of pupils with special educational needs. It uses a nationally recommended framework to assess the linguistic capability of pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. It seeks to meet their needs and those of pupils at more advanced stages of learning English through individual support and through developing literacy and oracy in all subjects. However, not all teachers are consistent in their strategy and provide constant visual support. Sometimes teachers are not sufficiently aware of the difficulties a few pupils are experiencing and remove support too soon.

A high priority is given to the development of pupils' personal and social skills. PSHE is taught mainly through Islamic studies and the themes studied reflect the caring ethos of the school. Pupils are introduced to a variety of topics to help to develop their self-knowledge and an understanding of how people live in society. Some topics, such as healthy eating, are part of the science programme.

Pupils' work is supported by regular homework. The majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that homework builds successfully on their children's learning in class.

The curriculum is enhanced by educational visits to such places as the Natural History Museum. It is not possible to organise after-school activities at present because the mosque is used by the community at the end of the school day.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching has improved over the last year and is now satisfactory. As a result, pupils make satisfactory progress. In almost 40 per cent of lessons seen, the teaching ranged from good to outstanding. The teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory in a small minority of lessons.

The quality of assessment is good and is a strength of the teaching. The school has a good assessment framework in place, closely monitored through staff meetings. Teachers assess each pupil early in the new academic year. This provides a useful basis from which they can monitor each pupil's progress. Good procedures are in place in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 to assess pupils in each subject and ensure that these assessments inform teachers' future planning. The system used is simple and allows teachers to track the progress of each pupil effectively. This means that teachers know their pupils really well. In the reception class, the teacher has recently started to follow the national Foundation Stage guidelines to assess her pupils and this area is still under-developed. In all lessons observed, teachers used effective questioning to assess pupils' learning. Teachers generally implement the marking policy consistently. Pupils feel that teachers show them how to improve, mostly through verbal feedback.

All teachers are good role models and have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work. As a result, pupils are motivated and do their best. The reward system is implemented consistently by all staff and pupils respond well to it.

In lessons where the teaching was outstanding, the teachers communicated enthusiasm very effectively and had a warm and caring relationship with pupils. They had planned stimulating tasks that matched pupils' abilities very closely, provided the right level of challenge to stretch every pupil and used a wide range of methods to match their various learning styles. As a result, pupils were completely engaged in their learning and rose to the challenge of finding things out for themselves. They checked their progress through self- and peer-assessment and enjoyed learning. In a few lessons, the teaching was good rather than outstanding because of some inconsistency in class management or shortcomings in the use of resources.

In most lessons where the teaching is satisfactory, there are weaknesses in lesson planning. In such lessons, learning objectives are not sufficiently well defined or differentiated to meet the varied needs of a group of pupils of mixed age and ability. Teachers rely too much on textbooks and lose sight of some of the learning objectives. As a result, they do not develop their pupils' skills in specific aspects of the subject in a systematic and gradual way. In some lessons, the teacher uses methods that are mainly dependent on the teacher and offer pupils little scope for independent work. Pupils are not engaged in a sufficiently active way and do not develop their thinking skills as well as they might.

The unsatisfactory teaching was observed mainly in PE, owing to insecure subject knowledge and poor planning. The warming up introduction is not firmly in place; strategies are limited and pupils' skills remain under-developed despite their innate abilities and potential. In another lesson, teaching was unsatisfactory because of poor time management.

The school has made good progress to improve the quality of teaching. However, it has yet to plan a coherent training programme to develop teaching skills throughout the school. There are good procedures in place to monitor the quality of teaching and learning but no lesson has been observed in the first half of this term. Although teachers work in close cooperation, insufficient time is allocated to the sharing of the good practice present in the school. Where teachers are supported by other staff, the roles are not defined clearly enough, which sometimes hinders the progress of the lesson.

Resources are good in quality and just adequate in quantity and range. The school has recently purchased six computers and the ICT suite is due to be fully operational by April 2006. It does not have a television with recording facilities and other audio-visual equipment to support the curriculum. It is building up an appropriate range of multi-cultural resources including ethnic toys and dual language books. The staff use the available resources effectively most of the time. Teachers are restricted in the organisation and display of resources as the premises are used by other parties after school hours. However, they have not given enough thought to alternative arrangements to enable them to use resources more effectively so as to support learning and encourage pupils' independence. Also, the spacious hall is under-used, particularly by the reception class.

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:

- *write appropriate schemes of work for the reception class, draw up two-year plans for the mixed classes in Key Stages 1 and 2 and ensure that they are implemented effectively (paragraph 1(2));*
- *ensure that the subject matter is appropriate for all ages and aptitudes of pupils (paragraph 1(2)(b)); and*

- *provide a programme of activities for pupils below statutory school age that is appropriate to their needs (paragraph 1(2)(h)(ii)).*

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

The provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. The school is particularly successful in nurturing pupils' spiritual growth. It meets its stated aim of '*encouraging communication, personal growth and confidence at all levels*'. Pupils are confident about their Islamic identity and are given good opportunities to develop the skills and understanding they need for life in a multi-faith, multi-cultural society.

The Islamic ethos permeates the whole day. The daily morning Qur'anic sessions held in the mosque hall provide a calm and reflective start to the day. The specialist Qur'an teacher is very skilful at ensuring that all aspects of the session are conducted in a gentle voice. As a result, an atmosphere of peace prevails; individual pupils recite the verses learnt quietly and concentrate; and those who read silently do so without distraction. Pupils are very receptive to this moment of stillness and behave very well throughout.

Pupils' personal development, self-confidence and self-esteem, are promoted mainly through Islamic studies, PSHE, citizenship and planned opportunities for speaking and listening. For instance, in the daily interactive assemblies, pupils listen to each other with courtesy, listen carefully to the teacher leading the assembly, and patiently take turns to express their views. The school has planned a few leadership roles for its pupils but pupils have yet to experience regular leadership of an assembly.

Teachers are good role models: they promote moral and social education by leading by example as well as reinforcing the Islamic ethos in numerous ways. Helpful notices are displayed in each classroom to remind pupils of the Islamic code of conduct and their accountability to God. Teachers have yet to develop a whole-school approach to pupils' emotional development.

Teachers implement the behaviour policy consistently and liaise promptly with parents when necessary. Consequently, pupils behave well in lessons and assemblies. However, pupils have not yet developed a strong sense of self-discipline. They have helped raise funds for charities but have not yet been encouraged to contribute actively to the community. They demonstrated that they could take sensible initiatives when given the opportunity, as in an unplanned discussion with a Church of England bishop and a local vicar.

Pupils learn about British institutions through PSHE and citizenship. Their understanding of the law, the health service and political systems is enhanced by visits from relevant professionals.

The school offers good quality provision for preparing pupils to live in a multi-cultural society. Pupils benefit from the rich inter-faith programme of activities run by the mosque. They have regular discussions with people from other faiths. They look at other religious points of view than their own in Islamic studies and citizenship. During the inspection, the school clearly demonstrated that it seized every

opportunity to engage pupils in inter-faith discussions in a way that promotes respect, tolerance and harmony. Pupils' cultural experience is enriched by visits to museums and educational places such as the Centre for Visual Islamic Traditional Arts.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory overall. A range of comprehensive policies that take account of national guidance and set out appropriate procedures for staff is in place. These address all aspects of pupils' welfare, health and safety. Although the school has a suitable policy on the safety of pupils on educational visits, it does not carry out rigorous risk assessments to identify potential sources of danger. It meets fire regulations fully.

The school is an orderly community. Routines for moving around the school are firmly established and as a result, pupils move through the building responsibly and calmly. The behaviour policy reflects a determination to promote and achieve high standards of behaviour amongst pupils and it is implemented consistently. The need for sanctions is rare.

The staff are very caring, know the pupils well and provide them with a safe and secure environment. Discussions with pupils show they feel secure and can turn to a number of adults for help and advice. Pupils are good at taking care of each other. The school has updated its child protection policy to conform to the latest legislation. It has recently nominated a new person with responsibility for co-ordinating the action and liaising with the appropriate authorities. As yet, she has not received appropriate training to carry out her duties effectively.

The admission and attendance registers are maintained in the required format. Attendance is good and the majority of pupils arrive promptly. The school has produced a detailed curriculum access for pupils with disabilities. Adaptations have been made to the building to accommodate pupils with mobility difficulties. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 for the current teaching accommodation on the ground floor. It will need to review its provision when it expands its accommodation to the top floor.

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:

- *ensure that all staff, particularly those with delegated responsibility for child protection, carry out their duties effectively (paragraph 3(2)(b)); and*

- *undertake thorough health and safety risk assessments for trips off site (paragraph 3(2)(c)).*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school is owned by the Lewisham and Kent Islamic Centre and managed by a board of governors. Governors have ensured that staff are recruited through a rigorous procedure that confirms, prior to their appointment, their identity, qualifications, medical fitness, professional experience and suitability to work with children.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school is housed within the Lewisham mosque. It has the use of the main hall but this is timetabled in such a way that pupils are never in contact with members of the public. The teaching accommodation is compact, consisting of two classrooms of a suitable size for the number of pupils using them. However, the partitions that divide the rooms are ill-fitting so that on occasions, lessons can be disturbed by the noise from the other room. The school has arranged to fit acoustic doors by end of term. The reception class occupies a small area screened from a corridor by curtains. This is a temporary location until planning permission is granted for modifications to the building. The lack of space in this area can sometimes inhibit the practical aspects of learning in some subjects. The ICT room is a valuable resource which enhances teaching and learning. However, it is not used fully because the room also functions as an office. There is a plan to transfer the office to the second floor. The hall provides a useful focal space for assemblies, Qur'anic studies and for PE lessons.

The accommodation is well maintained, cleaned to a high standard and well cared for by staff and pupils. The lighting and ventilation in the reception area are just adequate. Washroom facilities are sufficient for pupils and staff. There are appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill.

There is no outdoor play provision for pupils. The school does not make sufficient use of the local park situated very close by.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all the requirements except one.

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:

- *provide outside space for pupils to play safely (paragraph 5(t)).*

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The school provides a good range of information to parents and others. A detailed prospectus clearly defines its Islamic ethos. An appropriate range of documents is available to parents upon request and regular notices are posted on a board placed at the entrance. Once pupils have enrolled, parents receive frequent information via a 'messenger book' that includes details of school routines and newsletters, as well as personal messages concerning the education and welfare of their children. However, not all parents make full use of this vital link between school and home. As a result, opportunities to raise the standard of education of their children or improve their welfare are lost. The headteacher makes himself available to meet parents whenever they request it and the vast majority of parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem.

Parents receive a curriculum overview at the beginning of every term, and, at the end, a report that informs them of their children's progress. The reports provide parents with detailed and clear information about what their children can do and need to do to improve. Parents are also invited to meet their children's teachers the following week to discuss any issue concerning their development. During this meeting, they also receive a summary of their children's achievement, targets for improvement and advice on specific areas of development. The overwhelming majority of parents feel well informed about their children's progress.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school has an effective policy in place to deal with complaints that includes an informal and a formal stage. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, the majority of parents said that they understood the complaints procedure.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	The Olive Tree School
DfES Number:	209/6363
Type of school:	Islamic day primary
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	5 - 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 17 Girls: 9 Total: 26
Annual fees (day pupils):	£1,500
Address of school:	363 - 365 Lewisham High Street London SE13 6NZ
Telephone number:	020 8314 0169
Fax number:	020 8692 0552
Email address:	Gshabbir@aol.com
Headteacher:	Mr Ghulam Shabbir
Proprietor:	Lewisham and Kent Islamic Centre
Reporting Inspector:	Mrs Michèle Messaoudi
Date of inspection:	14 - 17 November 2005

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