

Inspection report
Mazahirul Uloom School
Independent school
DfES ref no: 211/6391

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 3 – 6 July 2006

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

Mazahirul Uloom School is an Islamic school for boys aged between 12 and 16 years, founded in February 2001. The school timetable includes Islamic study and many National Curriculum subjects at Key Stages 3 and at Key Stage 4, where pupils study for General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) accreditation.

The aims of Mazahirul Uloom are to:

- *provide an Islamic and academic education in an Islamic environment;*
- *set the foundation for the building of an Islamic personality;*
- *provide students with the highest standards of education, which will enable them to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;*
- *assist students to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the law;*
- *encourage students to accept responsibility for their behaviour, to show initiative and an understanding of how they can contribute to the community;*
- *provide students with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services, helping them to acquire an appreciation and respect for their own and other cultures, in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions; and*
- *help them become responsible and productive citizens who will confidently meet the challenges of the future.*

Summary of main findings

Mazahirul Uloom is a good school which provides pupils with an effective education. It is successful in achieving its aims, providing its pupils with a balanced education and opportunities to develop their intellect and skills. The quality of teaching is good and the boys' achievement and progress reflect this. The quality of teaching is enhanced by the effective monitoring now provided by its management. The curriculum has been organised wherever possible in such a way as to take an Islamic approach to the teaching of the subjects of the National Curriculum. The school has improved communication with parents and the provision of information for them. It takes good care of pupils' welfare, health and safety. The building lacks some important facilities.

What the school does well:

- teaching is well planned and effective;
- the curriculum integrates the Islamic and secular subjects throughout the teaching day; and
- the school successfully promotes its pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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

- provide sufficient washrooms for staff and pupils.

Next Steps

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

- when circumstances permit, put the proposed development plan into action;
- sample pupils' books more frequently to check the level of work and to evaluate how well the marking policy works; and
- broaden the pupils' access to stimulating extra-curricular activities.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The school's curriculum achieves its stated objectives. The curriculum policy is slightly different from those of other traditional Islamic schools. The whole curriculum policy does not divide the curriculum into secular and religious sections. Instead, the two aspects of the curriculum are integrated into a mixed timetable so that Islamic studies and other subjects are linked across the curriculum. The school considers that this makes study more enjoyable for its pupils. Its Islamic studies curriculum is conducted in English and is quite brief, comprising what is known as *tasheelaat*, a simplified programme. A particularly helpful aspect of this system is its step-by-step approach to studying, with the aim of making it less stressful for pupils. This aim is achieved. Pupils have more time to concentrate on the good provision of *tahfeez* (the memorisation of the holy Qur'an) and on the teaching of Arabic as a modern foreign language and of Bengali at GCSE level, to good effect. The school also offers basic *tajweed* (the rules for Qur'anic recitation). Urdu is only taught in Years 7 and 8. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught within the Islamic studies curriculum.

The school has a curriculum policy for every subject, outlining its aims and objectives clearly. All the subjects have effective schemes of work. The schemes and planning are consistent and relevant for pupils' ages and abilities. The modern foreign languages programme is well planned. The school provides sufficient hours of supervised education, and its pupils also benefit from extra support from teachers during their homework club time.

The pupils make good progress in Islamic studies, *tahfeez*, Arabic and Bengali. The school also provides a taster programme in Islamic art. It encourages pupils to take part in community events such as fund raising for charity, along with camping, football club and school council. Careers education and advice are provided and pupils are given information about future opportunities available to them including access to further and higher education and other vocational routes.

The quality of teaching and assessment

Most lessons are well planned and are well taught by teachers who combine appropriate expertise and enthusiasm. In most lessons, the purpose and aim of the lesson is shared with pupils, and class teachers ensure that they understand what they are doing and why. At the end of the best lessons, time is set aside for the class to evaluate how well they have achieved these objectives. In many of the lessons the work has a strong Muslim component, either in terms of the teaching methods, especially when working in groups to plan pupils' presentations, or explicitly in terms of content, as when topics are studied from a distinctly Muslim perspective. This was seen in Year 10 science where pupils prepared and made poster presentations on the early Muslim contributions to science. In Year 7 English, the Islamic concepts of *Emir* and *Shura* (leadership and discussion leading to a decision by the leader) were adopted by pupils when working in groups preparing

presentations on the structure of poetry. Pupils are clearly well used to working to a common educational purpose in groups and this was seen to be the case in a number of lessons from English, science and careers education, in the latter earning praise from the visiting speaker. Islamic art components are encountered and identified in mathematics where examples of tessellation and different types of symmetry are encountered. The Islamic studies curriculum provides links with other areas of the secondary curriculum. For example, in one English lesson, an Islamic poem was the topic for criticism and analysis.

Teaching in the Islamic studies curriculum is good; teachers are mostly young British imams, well qualified in their subjects. They apply modern teaching methods, linking the curriculum with other subjects to make learning more enjoyable. The pupils appreciate this greatly and they express their satisfaction. Most teachers have a very good rapport and the working relationships between pupils and teachers are very good. Teachers keep themselves informed of pupils' needs and their prior attainments. The mentoring of student teachers and subsequent links with the university education department have been a source of great mutual benefit to both school and pupils.

There is a good policy on assessment and recording; it gives a clear rationale, guidelines and rules for what should be assessed and why. The system for assessment works smoothly and links well to reporting on progress. There is a clear marking policy but pupils' books are not taken in by the headteacher sufficiently frequently to check the level of work under way, or to help evaluate how well the policy works. Twice-yearly internal examinations are carried out in Years 7 to 10. On the basis of each internal assessment, targets are set for the pupils in English, mathematics and science. Pupils in Year 9 all take Key Stage 3 national tests in the three subjects of mathematics, science and English. In other subjects, the school's own end-of-unit tests are used.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school's ethos and its Islamic environment have a very positive impact on the lives of its pupils. As a result, their spiritual, moral and social development is good. Pupils greet each other, help each other and demonstrate great respect to their teachers and other fellow pupils. The school environment is friendly and caring. Members of the school council express their appreciation for the care, advice and support they receive from the teachers. Pupils conduct challenging debates with their teachers and ask searching questions, while clearly retaining great respect for their teachers. This shows the development of self-knowledge and appropriate assertiveness.

Pupils express their devotion and love for their culture and school. They demonstrate their self-confidence without arrogance, not least by how they talk about their desired changes for the school. They are involved in fund raising for Muslim Aid and other charities, and also are consulted in many decision-making processes.

Pupils clearly receive strong instruction from Islamic studies to enable them to differentiate between right and wrong courses of action. For example, in one lesson of *hadith* (the study of the actual accounts of actions, speech and statements of the prophet), pupils in Year 7 discussed the importance of proper greetings. Other aspects of Islamic studies educate pupils on the Islamic moral code and the problems of crime and drugs. In PSHE, many relevant topics are discussed, so that pupils' personal development is supported. Learning about other cultures is provided through citizenship education and also through other subjects including English, science and humanities. Pupils are provided with appropriate and useful knowledge about British national institutions and about other cultures. The local Member of Parliament has paid a visit to the school.

There is a school council, elected by the pupils. This council negotiates any issues which concern pupils. For example, the council negotiated for a particular session on the school timetable to be extended from 40 minutes to 50 minutes. Pupils are also given responsibility for running the tuck shop, producing a school magazine, helping to clean the mosque, and for school organisation during lunch time.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Mazahirul Uloom promotes the welfare and health of its pupils very well. Pupils feel safe in school. There are good policies in place relating to child protection, bullying, health and safety, including safety on out of school visits. These are all included in a comprehensive staff handbook. All members of staff are aware of the child protection policy and of what to do if an incident comes to light. All have attended a child protection course.

The school has a clear anti-bullying policy. Pupils understand both the types and the consequences of bullying and how to report it to staff; they confirm that the system is effective. There is detailed guidance concerning behaviour, discipline and sanctions, outlined in the staff handbook, including details of which sanctions are permitted and which are prohibited. The school keeps good records of sanctions imposed for serious disciplinary offences. Pupils are supervised well both in the school and when outside for physical education or for educational visits.

The school has an up-to-date fire risk assessment document approved by the local fire officer. The staff handbook includes details of what is expected of staff and pupils if a fire should occur. Regular fire practices are recorded. The school has a good First Aid policy with two trained First Aiders.

The admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with regulations.

The school has devised a three year accessibility plan which conforms to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, and forms part of the staff handbook.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

All except two of the teaching staff and other adults in contact with pupils have been subject to satisfactory clearance by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) at appropriate levels. Records show that requests for the remaining checks were appropriately made to CRB well before the staff members were due to be employed. Records of medical fitness and written references are checked and the outcomes recorded in writing.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school is located in a terraced property, which was formerly a university hostel. The building also houses a mosque on the ground floor. The school has a number of classrooms, each suitable for housing about twenty pupils, a computer room, but no science laboratory or library. The school uses a nearby park for physical education; there is no room for a play space on site.

The school has plans to refurbish and improve the school building including the provision of a specialist science laboratory, but no recent progress has been made on this development. The headteacher of a nearby Muslim school has offered the use of their laboratory at any time for the Mazahirul pupils for practical coursework.

The school has insufficient washrooms for the number of pupils on roll.

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:

- provide sufficient washrooms for staff and pupils, including facilities for pupils with special needs (paragraph 5(k)).

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

A good range of information is provided by the school for its prospective parents, pupils and others. It publishes a prospectus in which the objectives and aims of the school and other essential information are clearly set down. The school provides helpful annual and mid-year reports for parents of the progress and attainment of each pupil. The availability of particulars of academic performance during the preceding year, including GCSE results, is made clear in the prospectus.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The school's complaints procedure meets the requirements of the regulations. Although all the pupils who were asked said that they knew that there was someone they could turn to at times of trouble, the pre-inspection questionnaires show that parents have very limited knowledge of the complaints procedure. A quarter of the school's parents said they were unsure about the school's complaints system. Copies of the procedure are available for prospective parents, and the procedure is clearly referred to in the new prospectus. The school has a good system ready to record any complaints, but has received no formal complaints in the last year.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Mazahirul Uloom
DfES Number:	211/6391
Type of school:	Muslim
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	12 – 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Boys
Number on roll:	114
Annual fees:	£1,600
Address of school:	241 - 243 Mile End Road, Stepney, London E1 4AA
Telephone number:	0207 790 9806
Fax number:	0207 790 9806
Email address:	www.info@mul.org.uk
Headteacher:	Mr Imdadur Rahman Al Madani
Proprietor:	Mr Faruk Ahmed
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Neville Grenyer
Date of inspection:	3 – 6 July 2006

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