

Imam Muhammad Zakariya School

Independent Primary School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	888/6047
Unique Reference Number	132738
Inspection number	316839
Inspection dates	23-24 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Arthur Ivatts AI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE
T 08456 404040

www.ofsted.gov.uk



Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Imam Muhammad Zakariya School was opened in 2000 in response to local parental demand for an independent Muslim school in the locality of south central Preston. The school was registered in 2002 and is an institution with a distinctive religious affiliation. The school makes provision for girls and boys aged between 4 and 11 years and at the time of inspection there were 96 pupils on roll. At age eleven pupils transfer either to maintained local secondary schools or regionally based independent Islamic schools.

The school is near to the centre of Preston and is accommodated in an old school building dating from the latter part of the nineteenth century. Pupils are mainly from the locality and all are from Muslim religious backgrounds. The school describes itself as a learning community founded on Islamic values and committed to educational excellence. There are no pupils with special educational needs. This is the school's first published inspection report.

Evaluation of the school

Imam Muhammad Zakariya School provides a good level of education for its pupils. The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005. The ethos of the school has allowed it to become an institution that successfully combines good academic education within the intellectual and spiritual framework of Islam. As a result of good curricular provision and teaching, pupils make good progress and their outstanding behaviour is reflective of their good motivation to work hard and do well as evidenced by the results in public examinations. The parents evaluate the school as good.

Quality of education

The curriculum provision is good. It meets the needs and interests of pupils well and is broad and balanced. Planning is of good quality overall. This ensures that there is good and progressive learning as pupils move through the year groups at the school. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship education are good. Consequently, pupils mature well and learn about the essential ingredients of a positive and successful life. Good citizenship is taught especially well through the Tarbiyah which gives pupils a very strong moral framework for their behaviour and conduct.

Provision for literacy and numeracy is good and this ensures that pupils make good and sometimes very good progress in these subjects. However, resources for science and information and communication technology (ICT) are only satisfactory. The school is refurbishing its computer suite. Resources are generally adequate to gain some ICT skills. However, ICT is not used systematically across the curriculum. Modern Arabic is taught in school. This supplements pupils' knowledge of the Arabic they learn through reciting the holy Quran. By the time pupils leave the school, many can converse in very simple terms in Arabic.

A good number of educational visits help to enrich learning. For instance, the pupils have been to a museum to see a display about 'the Egyptians' and have also visited a Second World War museum as part of their history course. Visitors, such as the community police and fire officer, regularly visit the school and talk with pupils about safety and good citizenship. Excellent links with the local mosque include a weekly assembly in school led by an Imam.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Consequently, pupils achieve well, make good progress and show good attitudes to learning. Pupils respond well in lessons because they are frequently praised for effort and good work. Excellent behaviour management ensures that there is always a positive learning atmosphere in the classroom and discipline is very good. Relationships between adults and pupils are outstanding. Teamwork and respect for others are promoted well. Adults work effectively together to ensure that pupils do well. Resources are limited, although they are used well by the teachers and teaching assistants to support effective learning. Independent learning is promoted well through skilful questioning and prompting, and through the organisational structure of most lessons.

Teaching in the Foundation Stage is very good. This ensures that the youngest children get the best possible start to school life. Personal development is nurtured especially well and this stands children in good stead as they move on to the next stage of their education. An outstanding numeracy lesson in Reception was particularly effective because work was tailored to children's needs especially well.

Lessons are structured well with good opportunities for pupils to assess their own work. For instance, pupils in Year 6 were invited to review their learning at different stages of the lesson as they learnt about planning and writing a biography about the life and times of Bob Marley. Lesson planning is satisfactory but a little thin at times in regard to challenging the pupils of higher attainment. Also, worksheets are used too often and this reduces the progress made by many pupils, especially where they provide little challenge.

The use of assessment information to increase progress is developing positively. Marking is thorough and gives pupils good guidance about how they can improve their work and positive encouragement when they have done well.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and this is a strength of the school. The secular curriculum and the strong religious ethos of the school are very successfully integrated to ensure that pupils learn and make good progress within the moral and spiritual context of a well-ordered Islamic educational institution. Teachers and teaching assistants take every opportunity to stress the importance of developing good social skills that betray respectful attitudes and relationships with others and moral responsibility towards the world around them, born of sound religious knowledge and a genuine inner faith.

Teachers provide excellent role models for promoting these positive and reflective attitudes by treating pupils always with courtesy and respect. This promotes trust and engenders positive responses from the pupils who wish to comply with the inherent religious and moral prescriptions of the school's culture as a whole. The wide range of activities provided through the curriculum, combined with the religious ethos of the school, results in the pupils' full enjoyment of their learning experiences.

Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and this is consistently maintained across all the activities in which they are engaged during the school day. Lunch times provide a good example of well behaved pupils who quietly eat their lunch in a relaxed and well mannered social context.

Religious education and PHSE make a particularly strong and constructive contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As pupils get older in the school they take on more formal responsibilities. There is a prefect system in place and senior pupils are frequently responsible for helping to organise collective worship and leading prayers. Smaller roles for responsible actions are also designated for younger pupils including the Reception Year with its named 'daily helpers'. Pupils are also encouraged to remember the needs of the wider community, including the developing world, and local and international charitable causes are frequently supported. The Eid Gift Project was a good example of how the school encourages pupils to show concern for the wider community. Pupils learnt that there are always people less fortunate than themselves and developed a better understanding of Zakat (poor tax) in Islam. In addition, children experience through the curriculum opportunities to learn about, and to respect, other cultures and cultural traditions, as for example, biographical work about the life and music of John Lennon.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

There is good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. The pupils are well cared for and all the required records and policies are in place. Health education is well embedded within the school curriculum. The basic principles of health, hygiene and safety are a stated objective within the school's curriculum policy. There is the

promotion of healthy eating on a daily basis with the provision of fruit to each pupil and an encouragement to bring healthy food for their packed lunches.

Pupils are supervised closely and good behaviour is promoted at all times. Pupils receive good support and guidance both in terms of their learning and personal needs, and through the Tarbiyah curriculum, how to keep themselves safe both on the roads and in the home. Pupils say that they feel safe and happy in the school and also that they feel confident that the staff will deal with any possible incidence of bullying.

The popular rewards system contributes significantly to boosting pupils' self-esteem and personal confidence. Healthy exercise is achieved on a reasonably regular basis despite the difficulties associated with no outside play space at the school. Local parks are visited for this purpose.

The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All the checks currently required to ensure the suitability of staff have been satisfactorily completed, including checks with the Criminal Records Bureau at an enhanced level and the maintenance of a single central register.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises occupy a listed school building which provides satisfactory accommodation for the current number of pupils on roll. Although it is a four storey building only the basement, ground and first floors are used for pupils. The classrooms are satisfactory although on the small side thus restricting, in some cases, the potential size of the class group. Classrooms are airy and provide bright and well decorated learning environments. The largest classroom accommodates the Reception Year group and this is well organised and makes a stimulating environment for the children. There is good display in classrooms with a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy.

The only specialist accommodation is in the form of two large halls, one used for school assemblies, prayers and lunch times, with the other reserved for games and physical education activities. One small room on the first floor is used as a school library.

Although the school has a small back yard which is not currently used other than for storage, there is no outside play space which is a disadvantage, although reasonable efforts are taken to ensure that pupils have access to open play spaces at nearby parks for sport and recreation. The school is conscious of this deficiency and has plans in hand to rectify the situation.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has a prospectus which provides all the information required for parents and prospective parents. It complies fully with the regulations.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's policy and procedures meet requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- increase opportunities for outside play.
- augment the teaching and learning resources, particularly those for science and ICT.

School details

Name of school	Imam Muhammad Zakariya School
DCSF number	888/6047
Unique reference number	132738
Type of school	Primary
Status	Independent
Date school opened	September 2000
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 43 Girls: 53 Total: 96
Annual fees (day pupils)	£500
Address of school	2 Bairstow Street Preston Lancashire PR1 3TN
Telephone number	01772881 968
Fax number	01772881 968
Email address	imzschool@hotmail.com
Head teacher	Mrs H Randerer
Proprietor	Mr Said Ahmed
Reporting inspector	Arthur Ivatts AI
Dates of inspection	23-24 October 2007