

Al-Aqsa Primary School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	856/6017
Unique Reference Number	134809
Inspection number	316895
Inspection dates	7-8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Jane Melbourne HMI

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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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

Al-Aqsa is an Islamic faith primary school established in 1998. There are currently 222 pupils who travel from a wide catchment area across Leicester City and beyond. Staff and pupils are currently all Muslims, but due to their varying backgrounds and countries of origin, the school is multi-racial and multi-cultural in nature. The majority of children speak English as an additional language or are multi-lingual. The school aims to help pupils develop their Islamic personality through having an awareness and understanding of the role of Islam in their lives. It occupies the former Coleman Road Infants School building. The school is run by a group of trustees who delegate the responsibility for the running of the school to the head teacher. There are currently eight pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities on register, including three pupils who have a statement of special educational need. This is the school's first inspection with a published report.

Evaluation of the school

Al-Aqsa Primary School provides a satisfactory quality of education. There are, however, some shortcomings in some areas. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning, although they are not always doing as well as they should. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and is a stronger feature of the school. The school meets all the regulations.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. It is based on the National Curriculum and incorporates all the required elements, including the teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy. The school allows some pupils, for example in the reception class, to use information and communication technology (ICT), but its use to enhance other curriculum areas is not fully developed. The school has recently acquired additional equipment to make ICT available to more pupils. The school follows Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) schemes of work to guide practice but this is not always adapted specifically to ensure consistency and continuity across the whole school. Planning is improving. It is currently more effective in Key Stage 2 and less effective in the Foundation Stage.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory. Lessons are broadly matched to pupils' needs as teachers sometimes adapt the activities for groups of pupils.

Pupils make satisfactory progress overall. However, pupils do not all make as much progress as they are capable of in lessons as staff still do too much whole class teaching before progressing to the activities. Younger pupils are not routinely told about the lesson objectives and, across the school, pupils' current targets are not always shared with them. Teachers do not always make their expectations clear enough to motivate pupils. For example by providing a deadline time to finish a piece of work or by explaining what is acceptable in terms of presenting their work. More able pupils are rarely challenged effectively. Teaching and learning sometimes lacks pace. In some lessons pupils become disinterested because they are sitting and listening for too long, but the school has begun to introduce more opportunities for active learning and problem solving and here pupils' enjoyment is high. Insufficient time is spent on extending pupils' oral communication skills. Resources are satisfactory, although the limitations of the accommodation restrict the possibilities for physical education (PE).

Pupils' assessments when they first enter the school are not sufficiently accurate or thorough to determine their exact knowledge and skills upon entry, although regular assessment enables staff to monitor pupils' progress over time. Staff are beginning to make more use of assessment information to guide their practice, although this is at an early stage.

Pupils are achieving satisfactorily in tests overall, but their results are not consistent from year to year or in each subject area. Work in lessons and in books also shows satisfactory achievement, but standards in science are too low. Although not all pupils make the academic progress they should, teaching does encourage pupils to behave responsibly. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are satisfactorily supported and most make reasonably good progress according to their abilities. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent across the school and it rarely gives advice on how to improve.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Pupils can differentiate between right and wrong. Behaviour throughout the school is good. Pupils relate well to each other and to staff, although some lack confidence in communicating with others. Older pupils are keen to talk about school. Pupils learn about cultures other than their own and the importance of tolerance. The lack of excitement and challenge sometimes means that pupils do not always enjoy their lessons. However, they are happy overall and they make a positive contribution to the school and wider community. They particularly enjoy visits out and educational trips. These visits, together with visitors to the school from public services, ensure that pupils are gaining knowledge about public institutions. Pupils' spiritual development is enhanced through religious learning and prayer times. Time for reflection is also provided through circle and story times and assemblies. Pupils know the school rules and appreciate the need for order and routine. They are obedient and self-disciplined.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The staff know the pupils well and ensure that they are well supervised at all times. Staff have received the required training on child protection and safeguarding children.

There are adequate risk assessments for activities and visits away from the school. The school has sufficient staff trained in first aid. Arrangements relating to the administering of first aid are satisfactory. Due care and attention is given to fire safety and regular fire drills take place. The school promotes some aspects of healthy living. Work in science and personal, social and health education have enabled pupils to understand the importance of exercise and the effects of smoking. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of healthy eating; few pupils bring 'unhealthy' snacks or items in their lunch boxes. The school provides good opportunities for exercise with the daily use of the outdoor area, but PE is a weaker aspect of the school.

The school complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. It has considered ways in which the access to the building can be improved and is working through the plan to achieve this.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Procedures at the school for checking the suitability of staff, trustees, volunteers and others fully comply with requirements. The school has a central register of checks on all staff and volunteers.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation are generally satisfactory and in an acceptable state of repair. Most classrooms are enlivened by visually stimulating displays to enhance learning. There is a separate medical room for pupils who may become ill. There have been some modifications to the building to accommodate disabled pupils, such as ramps to provide access to the four terrapin classrooms, which house the Key Stage 2 pupils. All other classes are in the main school building. Despite having a playground and a school hall, there are limited facilities for the delivery of PE, and in particular for pupils in the Foundation Stage to fully develop their climbing and balancing skills. This is due to the size and shape of the playground and hall, the extensive use of the hall for prayer so that equipment cannot be left out and the lack of large physical play equipment. Whilst there are sufficient washrooms to comply with regulations, there are too few washrooms for pupils to use in preparation for prayers.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information for parents, carers and others is satisfactory. The school has recently alerted parents to the range of information available, for example, it is

now clear in the prospectus that parents may request information on the number of registered complaints made under the formal procedure in the preceding school year.

Parents of all pupils receive reports in the summer term commenting on the progress their children are making. These incorporate the results of end of year tests for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. Parents receive other information on their children's progress at the twice yearly parents' open afternoons.

Procedures for handling complaints

The procedure for handling complaints is clear and meets requirements. Some parents are uncertain of the procedure, so this has now been added to the prospectus.

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:

- further develop the curriculum for, and teaching of technology across the school and ensure that all pupils have regular technological experiences across a range of subject areas
- raise standards in science by ensuring it is consistently well taught and allocated sufficient time within the timetable
- develop the teaching of PE, particularly in the Foundation Stage, and with particular regard to providing further climbing and balancing opportunities
- plan the teaching and learning more specifically to children's needs and raise expectations to ensure that all pupils, including the more able pupils, are sufficiently challenged and reach their potential.

School details

Name of school	Al-Aqsa Primary School		
DCSF number	856/6017		
Unique reference number	134809		
Type of school	Primary day school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1998		
Age range of pupils	3-11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 67	Girls: 111	Total: 178
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 20	Girls: 24	Total: 44
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 2	Girls: 1	Total: 3
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 30	Girls: 40	Total: 70
Annual fees	£ 1,400		
Address of school	The Wayne Way Leicester Leicestershire LE5 4PP		
Telephone number	01162 760953		
Fax number	01162 769791		
Email address	alaqsa@tiscali.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr I Hewitt		
Proprietor	Mr I Waraich		
Reporting inspector	Jane Melbourne HMI		
Dates of inspection	7-8 November 2007		