

Inspection report
Imam Zakariya Academy
Independent school
DfES ref no: 316/6063

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 13 – 16 March 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

Imam Zakariya Academy is an independent Islamic day school for boys and girls aged between 5 and 11 years. It was set up in September 2003 and is situated in Forest Gate where it serves the diverse local community. It is housed within the premises of Forest Gate Mosque. There are 91 pupils grouped into five classes. Pupils attend school for four full days and a half day on Fridays.

The school provides National Curriculum subjects within an Islamic environment. It aims to '*help each child to learn and develop true Islamic values and good character*'. The schools' philosophy is centred on the principle that the memorisation of the Qur'an empowers the brain to learn more effectively.

Summary of main findings

Imam Zakariya Academy provides a sound education for its pupils and is achieving its Islamic aims. The curriculum adopted is broad and fairly balanced. The teaching and assessment are satisfactory overall with a significant proportion of teaching being good. It is a happy, peaceful and mutually supportive community, and it provides very good spiritual development for its pupils. It communicates well with parents and promotes pupils' welfare, health and safety satisfactorily.

What the school does well:

- teachers have good relationships with pupils and as a result pupils enjoy learning and want to achieve well;
- spiritual development in particular, is a strength and pupils enjoy learning about Islam; and
- communication with parents is good.

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

- maintain a fully detailed admission register; and
- adopt a more rigorous recruitment procedure.

Next Steps

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

- continue to develop, implement and rigorously monitor its assessment, recording and reporting policy;
- develop the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum;
- review the curriculum in order to provide greater access to the programmes of study for science; and
- further develop the school improvement plan.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The school provides a broad and fairly balanced curriculum. Throughout the week, morning lessons include English, mathematics, science, ICT, history, geography, art and physical education (PE). History and geography alternate half way through the term. The balance of the curriculum is adversely affected by the insufficient time allocated to science. Technology is limited to ICT although art provides opportunities for making objects using diverse techniques. Art is developing and incorporates elements of Islamic art. Afternoon lessons are dedicated to a well thought-out Islamic programme that includes Qur'anic recitation and memorisation and Islamic studies. The school intends to open a reception class in the very near future and to follow the Foundation Stage guidelines for this age group.

The school has a clear curriculum policy supplemented by an assessment policy which is undergoing development. It has adapted suitable commercial schemes of work for National Curriculum subjects. It implements key aspects of the national numeracy and literacy strategies. Teachers' long and medium-term plans are good in core National Curriculum subjects and provide a firm basis for their daily planning. However, the quality of planning is variable in foundation subjects. The school has begun to plan meaningful links between the Islamic programme, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. It has yet to plan closer links between Islamic studies and literacy, history and geography. In Islamic studies, the plans focus on the topic content and do not identify the skills to be developed. The best lesson plans indicate how the needs of pupils of various abilities will be met and how the evaluation of the lesson informs future planning. The school has not given sufficient attention to planning the use of ICT across the curriculum. Provision for PE is just satisfactory, owing to limited facilities. Overall, the curriculum is supported by resources that are just adequate in range, quantity and quality.

Pupils from each year group are taught in separate classes, apart from Years 5 and 6 who are grouped together. They are taught by specialist teachers in Islamic subjects where they make satisfactory progress. In Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress in English and mathematics considering their starting point when they join the school. In Key Stage 2, they make satisfactory progress. However, not all teachers include girls in all stages of the learning process when they are a small minority in the class. Year 6 pupils will take the national tests for the first time this summer.

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 (EAL) and those of pupils with special educational needs. At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils in the early stages of learning EAL and no pupils with a statement of special educational need. Most pupils are bilingual and at various advanced stages of EAL. To meet their needs fully, the school has considered the importance of literacy and oracy. However, it has yet to devise a systematic approach to developing literacy in all subjects.

PSHE is taught within an Islamic framework, mainly through Islamic studies, science, discrete lessons and assemblies. The school has introduced a citizenship programme and planned a holistic approach to PSHE and citizenship across the curriculum.

The school endeavours to enrich the curriculum with educational visits. Members of the school council are actively involved in the planning of school outings. There are no after-school clubs.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory with a significant proportion of good teaching. The quality of teaching and assessment of younger pupils is better than that of older pupils. Where lessons are well planned they systematically build on pupils' prior knowledge, having clear objectives that are communicated well to pupils. Pupils are set work that matches their abilities and takes their learning forward. These activities excite pupils and capture their interest. Teachers are keen to develop their skills and have recently received some training. They use a range of strategies including clear explanations, demonstration and good questioning designed to improve pupils' levels of understanding. Pupils make considered contributions to class discussions and demonstrate very positive attitudes to their work. During the inspection, for example, pupils made some excellent suggestions in a science lesson on how to conduct an investigation into evaporation. Resources are also selected wisely to maximise the use of time. However, insufficient attention is given to the sharing of these elements of good practice present in the school.

In lessons that are satisfactory rather than good, pupils do not achieve as well as they could owing to insufficient opportunities to think and learn for themselves. In these lessons teachers do not employ a wide range of methods and spend too long introducing a new topic. In weaker lessons, pupils are not always sufficiently involved in their learning and are not challenged appropriately. Where teachers' strategies to manage the class are weak, pupils' behaviour deteriorates, which adversely affects their learning.

Well-designed assessment sheets for monitoring progress of the memorisation of the Qur'an are both child- and parent-friendly. Teachers make effective use of these sheets to ensure that pupils are making progress at an acceptable rate in the Islamic curriculum.

Assessment for National Curriculum subjects is at an initial stage and is not yet rigorous. Marking is not always helpful to pupils in understanding what they have achieved. Where marking is good teachers frequently provide helpful comments showing pupils how to improve. The assessment policy is not implemented consistently by all staff to ensure that there is uniform practice in assessment and record keeping. A number of tests were seen in pupils' workbooks and folders but these are not recorded systematically.

All teachers know their pupils well and relationships are open and friendly. As a result, pupils acquire the confidence to ask for support or clarification and develop

respect for their teachers. Pupils enjoy coming to school and concentrate well in lessons.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. The school places great emphasis on the spiritual development of its pupils and prayers are an integral part of the school day. The well-structured Islamic and Qur'anic Studies curriculum makes an important contribution in this regard and is the most enjoyable part of the day for many pupils. Pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong and apply this in their relationships with each other. All adults in the school work hard to build the self-confidence and self-esteem of the pupils.

Pupils take on more responsibility as they grow older and in doing so make an important contribution to the life of the school. They relate positively to each other and to members of staff. Adults provide an excellent example to pupils by treating each other with respect and consideration. A relatively new feature of the school is the school council. This is beginning to act as a channel to bring the concerns of the pupils to the attention of the school management. The prefect system also encourages older pupils to take greater responsibility in school.

Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. An appreciation and respect for their own and other cultures is provided through the geography and English curriculum. Pupils' awareness of different faiths is developed in Islamic Studies lessons. This promotes understanding and respect for different religions and cultural traditions. Trips to local museums are organised and the school has invited various speakers from public institutions and services to talk to pupils.

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 satisfactory. The school has appropriate policies and procedures in place to minimise health and safety risks to pupils. Health and safety issues are further reinforced in lessons. The school has a written First Aid policy and suitable procedures to deal with accidents and emergencies. Three members of staff are First Aiders. Pupils feel safe and well cared for and know who to turn to if they have any concern.

The behaviour policy is implemented consistently throughout the day by the vast majority of staff. Pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly fashion. Pupils appreciate the reward system and the need for sanctions is rare.

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

The school maintains the attendance registers in conformity with regulations. However it does not enter details of the previous school attended by pupils in the admission register. It meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and has prepared an improvement plan showing how it can improve access to the physical environment and the curriculum.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all but one of the regulations for registration.

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:

- *maintain an admission register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (paragraph 3(9)).*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

Despite the high turnover of staff, the school has ensured that all staff have undergone proper checks with the Criminal Records Bureau prior to appointment. Whilst staff references are taken up and recorded in writing, as well as medical fitness verified, this is not always done prior to the confirmation of their employment.

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 prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, appropriate checks have been carried out to confirm their identity, medical fitness, previous employment history, character references and, where appropriate, qualifications and professional references and that this information has been taken into account in determining whether their appointment will be confirmed (paragraph 4(c)).*

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school is housed within the Forest Gate Mosque. The teaching accommodation is adequate and the school also has access to the two modest-sized prayer halls of the mosque. The computer suite, which has recently been refurbished, is small but adequate.

The standard of decoration is satisfactory and the school is clean and tidy. Classrooms are maintained to a reasonable standard and enhanced by the display of both pupils' work and informative posters. There are adequate facilities for pupils who are sick. Toilet and ablution facilities are also adequate.

The playground is of adequate size for the number of children that use it at any given time. However, opportunities for physical development through the provision of physical education lessons are limited due to the small size of the playground and the lack of equipment.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The school communicates well with parents and others. A detailed prospectus clearly defines its Islamic ethos. An appropriate range of documents is available to parents upon request and parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem. Once pupils have enrolled, parents receive frequent information via letters and personal messages concerning the education and welfare of their children. The school invites them to an annual general meeting to discuss matters of school development. These meetings are well supported, clearly indicating a strong community spirit.

Parents' consultation meetings are held twice a year in the evening. In the autumn term, parents have the opportunity to find out how their children are settling in their new classes. In the spring term, they review their children's progress with the teachers. On those days, they are welcome to visit their children's classes in action. In July, parents receive an annual report that informs them of their children's progress. The report provides parents with clear information about what their children can do in English, mathematics, science and the main strands of the Islamic programme. Comments about what the pupils cannot do, and need to do to improve, are not provided consistently. Teachers also make comments about the pupil's behaviour and attitude to work. 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

Parents are aware that there is a written complaints procedure. This procedure meets all of the requirements for registration. The vast majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt comfortable about approaching the school if they wished to raise a concern.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Imam Zakariya Academy
DfES Number:	316/6063
Type of school:	Islamic primary day school
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	5 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 55 Girls: 36 Total: 91
Annual fees (day pupils):	£1,400
Address of school:	447 – 451 Romford Road Forest Gate London E7 8AB
Telephone number:	0208 555 6258
Fax number:	0208 555 6258
Email address:	info@iza.org.uk
Headteacher:	Mr Mian Aslam
Proprietor:	Mufti Zaki Ahmed
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Israr Khan
Date of inspection:	13 – 16 March 2006

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