

A report on

ILM Primary School

Merthyr Street

Cathays

Cardiff

CF24 4JL

Date of inspection: June 2025

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education

and Training in Wales

About ILM Primary School

Name of provider	ILM Primary School
Proprietor status	Registered charity
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Independent Primary
Residential provision?	No
Number of pupils on roll	125
Pupils of statutory school age	120
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	{PreviousInspectionDate}
Start date of inspection	16/06/2025

School context:

ILM primary school (formerly Cardiff Muslim primary school) is an independent day school, registered to educate pupils from 4 to 11 years of age. At the time of the monitoring inspection the school had 125 pupils on roll, in reception to Year 4 only. The school was founded in 2006 and is registered as a charity.

The school has a Muslim ethos, and the curriculum includes the teaching of Arabic, the Qur'an and Islamic studies. The school accepts pupils of all faiths and none. Currently, all pupils and staff follow the Islamic faith.

The school is situated close to the centre of the city of Cardiff. Most pupils live in Cardiff and the surrounding area. Many pupils join the school at different stages either from other schools or from overseas. The school operates through the medium of English although very few pupils speak English as their first language at home. Almost all pupils come from minority ethnic groups, with the majority from Asia and the Middle East. Their home languages include Arabic, Bengali, Somali, Urdu and a range of Pakistani dialects. There are no pupils at the school receiving public funding.

The school was last inspected in June 2022, and this is the school's first monitoring inspection.

Since the core inspection a new headteacher has been appointed (October 2022), there has been significant changes to the board of trustees and the school has changed its name.

Summary

ILM primary school is a vibrant, secure, and supportive school. The school's leadership and staff foster a culture of mutual respect and kindness. Staff uphold high standards for behaviour and manners, and prioritise pupil well-being, resulting in enthusiastic and engaged learners.

ILM primary's curriculum is thoughtfully designed to capture pupils' interests and facilitate steady skill development. Reflecting its Islamic foundation, the school integrates Arabic, Islamic Studies, and Qur'anic education, supporting pupils on their spiritual journeys.

The school is notably outward facing, actively seeking enriching educational experiences beyond the classroom. Collaborations with Cardiff University and a local media company combine environmental education with creative expression.

Classrooms are characterised by exemplary behaviour, attentive listening, and collaborative learning, with pupils often assisting peers and celebrating collective achievements.

Most teaching is characterised by clear articulation of learning objectives and success criteria, often developed collaboratively with pupils. A majority of lessons include engaging, well-structured activities that stimulate interest and participation. In these lessons teachers use effective questioning and timely feedback to deepen understanding. Established routines and high expectations create an atmosphere that encourages pupils to reach their full potential.

Teaching assistants play a pivotal role, offering targeted support and challenge within a safe environment, ensuring that pupils receive necessary guidance without fostering dependency.

The school complies fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 and related regulations: the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

The quality of education provided by the school

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

The suitability of proprietors and staff

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

The provision of information

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

On the basis of this inspection, there is no evidence that the school does not comply with this Standard.

Recommendations

We have made two recommendations to help the school continue to improve:

- R1. Ensure that all staff consistently plan for and deliver stretch and challenge opportunities, tailored to pupils' individual needs and abilities
- R2. Ensure that planned opportunities are provided for pupils to apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum

What happens next

Estyn advises the proprietor to amend its current development plan to show what actions the school intends to take in response to the recommendations. It is also advisable to circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents/carers at the school.

Main evaluation

Strong leadership of ILM primary school ensures it is a happy, safe and nurturing learning environment. Leaders and staff are positive role models and foster a respectful and friendly ethos. Staff develop highly effective working relationships with pupils, have high expectations for manners and behaviour and provide strong support for pupils well-being. As a result, nearly all pupils across the school have positive attitudes towards their learning. Pupils feel supported, valued and motivated.

Leaders and staff at the school are extremely outward looking, they work hard to provide a wide range of interesting learning experiences for their pupils often using links beyond the school community. For example, links with Cardiff University have led to the development of a well-being garden on the school site as part of the 'Green Cathays' project. In addition, a local media company are working with older pupils to produce films about the hedgehogs that are visiting the garden.

Staff have positive working relationships with pupils based on respect and trust. They provide a curriculum that engages pupils' interest appropriately and supports them to make secure progress in their skills over time. All pupils study Arabic, Islamic studies and the Qur'an, which reflects the Islamic context of the school and supports pupils well on their faith journey.

In nearly all lessons and during salah (formal worship) pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They listen extremely respectfully to staff and their peers. Nearly all pupils work well together in pairs or small groups, often explaining a task or supporting others in their learning. Pupils care for each other and are keen to celebrate when others do well, for example when working in teams on their enterprise projects.

In most lessons, the clear sharing of learning objectives and success criteria, often collectively designed, help bring about a clear pathway for pupil learning.

In the majority of lessons, teachers foster an engaging and dynamic learning environment by producing thoughtful, well-planned activities that spark pupil interest and participation. Effective questioning and timely verbal feedback gauges pupil understanding and allows teachers to encourage deeper thinking and progression. In these lessons, clear routines and high expectations help pupils thrive by providing structure while challenging them to reach their full potential. Opportunities for independent learning help pupils take ownership of their learning. For example, pupils confidently accessed manipulatives in the classroom to help problem solve and the youngest pupils confidently develop their writing skills.

In a minority of lessons, pupils are not always clear about what the task requires of them, the pace of learning may be too slow, or the level of challenge is not high enough. In these cases, pupils do not always make the progress they are capable of.

The majority of teachers use questioning effectively to deepen pupil learning and also to assess understanding in real time. Self-assessment and peer assessment opportunities allow for pupils to reflect on their own learning and give feedback to one another, fostering a positive, collaborative learning environment. Positive verbal feedback is regularly used, helping pupils to celebrate achievements.

The strategic use of teaching assistants further enhances teaching provision, ensuring all pupils receive the guidance they need. These staff are skilled in providing both support and challenge to pupils in a safe environment, without creating a culture of over reliance.

The school has robust safer recruitment and safeguarding processes. All staff complete training regularly and understand their role in safeguarding the pupils in their care.

A few issues were raised with the school leadership during the inspection relating to the strengthening of policy to reflect Welsh legislation. This work was completed and ensured that the school complied with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

Progress in addressing recommendations from previous inspection

R1.Ensure that teachers plan activities that challenge more able pupils to achieve as well as they can

Since the core inspection the school has made limited progress towards this recommendation.

Very recently, staff have been provided training in identifying and challenging more able pupils and using effective questioning. This training has been useful in raising the awareness of staff.

Where a pupil is identified as particularly gifted in a curriculum area the school has been very flexible in allowing them to work in classes above their chronological age.

There is, however, limited evidence of ‘challenge’ activities in pupils’ books and little effective challenge was observed in lessons during the inspection.

As a result, whilst training has recently been provided, teachers’ planning for challenge is not embedded across the school.

R2.Improve the provision for the teaching of ICT skills

Since the core inspection, senior leaders have introduced a new scheme to assist teachers in their delivery of ICT skills. In addition, all staff have been provided with useful professional learning opportunities to increase their confidence in the delivery of ICT. Recent training focused on e-safety and the effective use of emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence.

ICT is taught as a discrete lesson and pupils from Year 1 start to develop their typing skills. In addition, teachers in all years groups plan useful opportunities for pupils to use and develop their ICT skills in a relevant context. For example, pupils in Year 3 use stop-frame animation to complement their work on Egypt and in Year 4 pupils use coding to programme a digital character and use green screens when producing advertisements for the products they will be selling in enterprise week.

As a result, both the provision for ICT and the skills of the pupils have improved since the core inspection.

R3.Increase opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in meaningful contexts at the same level as in their mathematics lessons

Since the core inspection, the school has made limited progress towards this recommendation.

Leaders have focused their efforts on the teaching of mathematics using a new scheme and the development of pupils' mathematical skills within these lessons remains secure. Staff at the school are continuing to adapt the use of these materials. However, teachers' planning of opportunities for pupils to exhibit these skills in subjects other than mathematics remains in its infancy.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and support staff through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors/proprietor(s), leaders and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit lessons and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school had taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body (where appropriate), information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Appendix 1: Numbers – quantities and proportions

The report makes references to different quantities and proportions e.g. '*most pupils...*' or '*very few pupils...*'. We use these terms to describe quantities and proportions as outlined in the table below:

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>)

The report was produced in accordance with section 163 of the Education Act 2002. The main purpose of inspection under this section is to report on compliance with the Independent Schools Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024. In schools that provide non-maintained nursery education, this report also satisfies the requirements of Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website:

<http://www.estyn.gov.wales/>