

A report on

ILM School

**ILM Schools
Raglan House
Malthouse Avenue
Cardiff
CF23 8BA**

Date of inspection: December 2025

by

**Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

About ILM School

Name of provider	ILM School
Proprietor status	Registered charity
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Independent
Residential provision?	No
Number of pupils on roll	140
Pupils of statutory school age	140
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	n/a
Start date of inspection	03/12/2025

School context

ILM School (formerly Cardiff Muslim High School) is an independent day school educating approximately 140 pupils from 9 to 15 years of age at premises located within the Cardiff Gate Business Park.

The school was initially registered by Welsh Government in February 2024 to educate 80 pupils from 9 to 13 years of age at an address in central Cardiff. In September 2024 the school applied to the Welsh Government for permission to relocate the school to its new premises in Cardiff Gate, increase the number on roll to 150 and to extend the age range to 16 years of age. Following a reapplication in September 2025, this request was approved in December 2025.

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, nearly all pupils and staff follow the Islamic faith.

A new headteacher was appointed in October 2025 and follows changes to the school's board of trustees.

This is the school's first inspection since it was added to the register of independent schools.

Summary

Nearly all pupils are enthusiastic ambassadors for their school and take pride in being part of its community. They are welcoming, articulate and most pupils are highly focused in lessons. Nearly all pupils make effective use of their social and communication skills and are beginning to influence school life through the school council, contributing to initiatives such as playground improvements and weekly 'Stories of the Prophets' assemblies.

Recent changes to governance, including the appointment of new trustees and an executive headteacher, have strengthened leadership, oversight and administrative systems. Record-keeping, particularly regarding complaints, is now more robust. Leaders have developed a secure culture of safeguarding, with well-understood reporting procedures and regular staff training. Behaviour is managed with increasing consistency, supported by clear routines, supervision and monitoring of reported incidents. Nearly all pupils who spoke with inspectors feel the system is fair and that serious issues are dealt with promptly.

The school provides a well-planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum that supports pupils' understanding of healthy relationships, online safety, well-being well. This enriches their Muslim identity within the context of Welsh society. Nearly all pupils feel safe and able to discuss concerns with staff.

Nearly all teachers model the school's values well and create calm, respectful classrooms. Teaching is most effective in around half of lessons, where teachers' strong subject knowledge enables well-structured activities that support the progressive development of pupils' skills. In a few lessons, probing questioning and high-quality feedback contribute to strong pupil progress. However, in a few lessons, weaker subject knowledge, inconsistent challenge and an overreliance on teacher-led exposition limit pupils' progress. Approaches to pupil feedback are also inconsistent and do not always help pupils to know how to improve their work.

A few issues relating to policy and the provision of information were successfully addressed during the inspection and there is no evidence to suggest that the school does not meet the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

Main evaluation

Nearly all pupils are enthusiastic ambassadors for their school, embodying its aims and ethos. They take pride in being members of the school and its wider community. Many pupils demonstrate a desire to succeed that results in high levels of focus and attention in lessons. Nearly all pupils are welcoming and engaging when speaking to their peers, their teachers, and visitors. They put their conversational and social skills to highly effective use, speaking lucidly about their learning and experiences.

Pupils are beginning to influence the work of the school through their membership of the school council. These pupils value the opportunity to contribute to the development of their school, for example, by improving resources in the playground, introducing a school football kit and contributing to weekly 'Stories of the Prophets' assemblies.

There have been changes to the governance arrangements at the school recently and the newly appointed group of trustees are making significant efforts to communicate their vision for the school with the community, for example through initiatives such as 'tea with the trustees'. Aligned with this, the appointment of a new executive headteacher in October 2025 has resulted in a strengthening of educational oversight and operation, in particular record keeping and administration. For example, records of complaints, particularly those initially raised informally with the school, are now collated more effectively. This supports leaders' oversight of complaints and their ability to identify any commonality between issues reported. At the time of inspection the school reported that they had not received any formal complaints to date.

Leaders are developing a sound culture of safeguarding at the school. There is a well-understood system to report safeguarding concerns relating to pupils and staff. All members of staff receive regular safeguarding training from the designated safeguarding person (DSP), as well as completing a useful online course. Nearly all staff understand their role in ensuring the safety of the pupils in their care.

Leaders have established an increasingly consistent and well-understood approach to managing behaviour. Clear routines and predictable responses help staff to maintain a calm, well-organised environment and to manage infrequent incidents of poorer behaviour.

High-quality, detailed recording and reviewing of information regarding behaviour is a notable strength. As a result, staff and leaders are able to spot patterns and take effective action to reduce the risk of unwanted behaviour going unnoticed. In addition, staff supervision at break and lunch includes attention to inclusion and vulnerable pupils, reducing opportunities for peer harm during less structured times.

Clear communication with parents is helping to build shared expectations of pupil behaviour between home and school. There are clear rewards and consequences, and nearly all pupils who spoke with inspectors feel that the system is fair and caring. They are confident that serious matters are handled promptly and effectively.

The school delivers a well-planned commercial PSHE programme that addresses important issues such as healthy relationships, online safety and cultural awareness. Pupils across the school receive informative weekly PSHE lessons and consider issues such as 'what it means to have a Muslim identity' and 'what can we do for our mental health?' As a result of this, nearly all pupils feel confident that they can discuss any issues relating to their well-being with staff. In addition, the school is outward looking and ensures that pupils understand their place within Welsh society, which enriches their strong Islamic ethos and Muslim identity.

Teachers embody the values and vision of the school and, as a result, are effective role models for their pupils. They establish strong, effective working relationships and classrooms are generally calm, purposeful places characterised by high levels of respect and trust.

Teaching is most effective in around half of lessons across the school and results in pupils rapidly developing their thinking skills, oracy and subject-specific technical knowledge. This is because teachers apply their strong subject knowledge to plan and deliver well-structured, purposeful activities with clearly defined success criteria. These lessons sit within well-structured plans and effectively support the progressive development of pupils' knowledge and skills. Additionally, a few teachers use their strong subject and pedagogical knowledge to ask probing, open questioning, to act as effective language models, and to provide meaningful verbal feedback.

In a few lessons across the school, pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable because the subject knowledge of staff to support both planning for progression and classroom teaching is underdeveloped. In addition, levels of challenge encountered by pupils are inconsistent. For example, in a minority of lessons, opportunities for pupils to actively engage in their learning are limited by the extent of teacher-led explanations.

Across the school, approaches to marking and feedback are inconsistent. Written and verbal feedback do not always enable pupils to clearly identify next steps and potential improvements to their work. As a result, opportunities to improve are missed.

In many lessons, when given the opportunity, pupils put their numeracy, reading and writing skills to effective use in a variety of contexts, and most develop these suitably over

their time at the school. However, both within and between year groups, the clarity and presentation of written work is inconsistent.

A few issues relating to policy and the provision of information were raised with the school and successfully addressed during the inspection. As a result, there is no evidence to suggest that the school does not meet 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.

New recommendations

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

- R1 Improve the quality and consistency of teaching across the school
- R2 Ensure that pupils receive feedback on their work that identifies clearly ways to improve

Safeguarding

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not give any cause for concern.

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.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from parent/carers 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

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