



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Cardiff Muslim Academy
The Old Convent
47 The Walk
Cardiff
CF24 3AG**

Date of inspection: May 2019

by

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

About Cardiff Muslim Academy

Cardiff Muslim Academy is a co-educational independent day school educating pupils from the age of 3 to 16 years, and is situated near the centre of Cardiff. The school opened in 2014 as Ihsan Academy and was renamed in February 2018. The Academy is registered as a Community Interest Company.

There are currently 74 pupils in the school. This includes, 45 pupils in the primary section and 29 pupils in the high school. There is little difference in the total number of boys and girls although this varies in particular year groups across the school. Pupils are mostly from the local area in Cardiff or short term international placements attending the school while their parents study at local universities.

In the primary section there are four classes, which contain pupils from more than one year group. In the high school there are two key stage 3 classes and discrete Year 10 and Year 11 classes.

Almost all pupils come from minority ethnic groups including Arab, Pakistani, Somali and Bangladeshi. Many pupils speak English as an additional language. No pupils speak Welsh as a first language and the school does not aim to make pupils bilingual in English and Welsh.

There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school has identified a few pupils with special educational needs. The school offers additional learning support to these pupils, mainly to support their literacy development. The school is non-selective, and entry is based upon the school's ability to meet the needs of the pupil. The school's mission statement is 'Developing through Faith', and it provides an education with a Muslim ethos and a curriculum that includes the teaching of Arabic, the Qur'an and Islamic Studies.

The headteacher has been in post since March 2019 and is the third headteacher since the school opened in 2014.

This is the school's first core inspection.

Summary

Cardiff Muslim Academy is a caring school where nearly all pupils feel happy and safe in a nurturing faith environment. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is generally good. However, during lessons the majority of pupils do not make enough progress in developing their knowledge and skills. This is especially the case for pupils who are more able and those pupils who require extra support.

The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their technology skills. The quality of teaching is variable and, in a majority of classes, teachers do not plan activities for pupils at an appropriate level. They give pupils too few opportunities to make meaningful choices about what and how they learn and do not promote their development as independent learners well enough.

Over time, leadership has not provided suitable strategic direction or communicated high expectations clearly enough to improve provision and raise standards. The proprietor is supportive of the school but does not provide effective challenge regarding shortcomings in its provision and pupils' performance.

The school meets most of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Adequate and needs improvement
Teaching and learning experiences	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement
Care, support and guidance	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement
Leadership and management	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

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 2003. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

The quality of education provided by the school

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets many of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- Ensure that the curriculum is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work. [1(2)]
- Provide appropriate careers guidance for pupils receiving secondary education. [1(2g)]
- Ensure teaching fosters in pupils the application of intellectual, physical or creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves. [1(3b)]
- Ensure teaching involves well planned lessons, effective teaching methods, suitable activities and wise management of class time. [1(3c)]
- Ensure teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils and ensure these are taken into account in the planning of lessons. [1(3d)]
- Demonstrate that there is a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from such assessments to plan teaching so that pupils can progress. [1(3g)]
- Ensure that an effective education is provided for all pupils within a class to make progress. [1(5)]

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- Enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. [2(a)]

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- Strengthen the anti-bullying policy, with regard to circular 23/03. [3(2a)]
- Strengthen the educational visits policy, specifically relating to completing risk assessments. [3(2c)]
- Ensure that the school provides Welsh Government, with a copy of the recent fire risk assessment. [3(5)]
- Ensure the school maintains an admission register and an attendance register in accordance with the Education (pupil Registration) Regulations 1995. [3(9)]

The suitability of proprietors and staff

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- Ensure that there are appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill in accordance with the 1999 Regulations. [5(1)]

The provision of information

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- Ensure that it is able to provide the particulars of academic performance, including the results of any public examinations [6(2i)]

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Recommendations

- R1 Comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003
- R2 Raise pupils' standards
- R3 Improve the quality of teaching
- R4 Establish robust quality assurance and improvement planning arrangements
- R5 Improve procedures for assessing and tracking the progress of pupils
- R6 Develop leadership capacity
- R7 Provide opportunities for pupils to develop as independent learners

What happens next

Since the school does not meet the standards required for registration, the National Assembly for Wales will require the proprietor to submit an action plan within a specified period of time. This plan will set out the steps that the school will take to meet the standards, and the timescale within which it will complete each step.

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 findings

Standards: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Over time, pupils at Cardiff Muslim Academy do not make enough progress in developing their knowledge and skills.

Pupils enter the school throughout the academic year, with a wide range of prior educational experiences and a broad range of abilities. A minority of pupils develop subject knowledge appropriately, have suitable recall of their previous learning and use this to help them in their current work. However, the majority do not make enough progress, including more able pupils and those who require extra support. This is frequently because learning activities do not meet pupils' ability levels well enough.

Pupils' listening skills develop suitably across the school, and in the high school nearly all pupils listen well to both their teachers and their peers. However, pupils' speaking skills are under developed. Across the school, although many pupils chat enthusiastically with each other informally, the majority of pupils do not speak clearly or with confidence in group or class discussions.

In the primary phase of the school many pupils do not read with expression or always understand what they have read. In key stage 2, pupils' reading skills of skimming and scanning are insecure. In the high school, a few older pupils show evidence of higher order reading skills such as inference and deduction in key stage 4 Islamic Studies.

In the primary phase, pupils write for a wide range of purposes. For example, Year 2 pupils write short letters to a giant after reading Jack and the Beanstalk and Year 6 write a factual police report about a possible UFO sighting. In the high school, a minority of pupils write well independently. For example, in key stage 3, these pupils produce suitably structured accounts explaining how organisms and species adapt to their environment. However, throughout the school, in their writing many pupils make frequent spelling and punctuation errors. This includes repeated mistakes in spelling commonly used words and subject specific terminology. A majority of pupils do not take enough care with their handwriting and the overall presentation of their work.

Across the primary phase, overall standards of numeracy are below those expected for pupils' age and ability. Most younger pupils lack a basic understanding of number and do not apply their limited numeracy skills well enough across the curriculum. In the high school a majority of pupils develop secure number skills. However, at key stage 3 their ability to accurately analyse data or complete numerical reasoning activities is less well developed. A majority of pupils in key stage 3 do not apply their mathematical skills accurately in numeracy related tasks across the curriculum. A majority of key stage 4 pupils apply their numeracy skills accurately in lessons other than mathematics, for example when calculating the payback time for the installation costs of solar panels, or plotting a graph to show how wave speed changes with the depth of water.

When given the opportunity, pupils apply their thinking skills creatively such as when Year 1 and 2 pupils work out how to free an alien from a block of ice in a science lesson. In key stage 3, a minority of pupils write imaginative accounts of space travel to another planet to collect rock samples, using relevant scientific knowledge such as the forces encountered. Across the school, pupils do not develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills appropriately.

Due to the small number of pupils in key stage 4 over the last three years, it is not possible to report on the school's performance or trends over time.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Across the school, nearly all pupils feel safe and secure in a nurturing, faith environment. Nearly all pupils have sound levels of wellbeing and generally positive attitudes to learning.

Most pupils know who to talk to if they have any problems, including if any bullying occurs, and they are confident that the school will deal with any issues promptly. Yet, nearly all older pupils have a limited understanding of how to stay safe online.

Many pupils feel that they are treated fairly and with respect by teachers and other adults in school and most show understanding and respect for others. Most pupils behave well in class and during break and lunchtimes. They are polite and respectful to adults and other pupils. Most pupils have a secure understanding of the school's expectations for high standards of behaviour. However, pupils do not have positions of responsibility or leadership roles and therefore do not influence the work of the school.

Many pupils understand how diet can affect their health, but they do not always apply this knowledge in practice. A majority of pupils engage positively in the school's limited range of physical activities, including football and netball.

In lessons, most pupils are ready to learn quickly and listen attentively to questions and instructions from their teacher, for example when making clocks in Year 1 and 2, and when learning holiday vocabulary in key stage 3 Arabic. Most older pupils show consideration and listen respectfully to the ideas of others, for example in group work discussing poetry terminology in key stage 3 English.

Many pupils engage appropriately with learning activities. However, a majority of pupils lack confidence, particularly when discussing their work with adults or trying new experiences. When given the opportunity, in the high school a majority of pupils work well independently and concentrate in lessons for sustained periods of time. A minority of pupils, however, lose focus when they are not fully engaged in work or when they are not directed in an activity. Furthermore, a majority of pupils, particularly in the primary phase, rely too heavily on adult support when they find tasks challenging, rather than thinking things through for themselves.

Teaching and learning experiences: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum in line with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. The inclusion of Islamic studies, Arabic

and the Qur'an reflects the faith-based context of the school and enriches the learning experiences of pupils.

Overall, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their technology skills. ICT provision is underdeveloped, particularly in the primary phase. The school provides pupils with very limited opportunities to extend their learning and develop a range of personal and social skills through a suitable variety of extra-curricular activities.

Staff establish caring and supportive professional relationships with pupils. During many classes across the school, teachers' effective management helps ensure pupils remain attentive and on task. In the primary phase, most teachers give pupils appropriate verbal praise and encouragement. Support staff are suitably employed to help individuals and small groups with their work. In the high school, teachers' strong subject knowledge ensures good use of relevant concepts and principles and helps to consolidate pupils' understanding.

However, across the school, schemes of work, lack detail about subject content and progression. In many lessons, there is an over-reliance on the use of text books, which limits the range of learning activities and restricts pupils' progress. Teachers do not plan activities effectively to meet the needs of all learners, particularly the more able and those pupils who require extra support.

Teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation of work, its content and the accuracy of spelling and grammar are very low. Overall there is insufficient challenge for pupils. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to learn independently, to discuss their ideas with others and to develop their thinking skills. Many teachers only use closed questioning and do not target questions at an appropriate level to help all pupils to progress and to make a positive contribution to their learning. As a result, pupils in these classes do not make the progress of which they are capable.

The majority of teachers provide useful oral feedback to pupils during lessons. However, the quality of written feedback is poor across the school. Constructive advice to pupils on how to improve their work is limited and spelling and punctuation errors are only occasionally identified. There is no expectation for pupils to follow up on these comments or complete corrections. Across the school, teachers test pupils' understanding periodically. However, teachers do not use this information well enough to inform future planning. Overall, teachers' assessment and feedback does not contribute well enough to improving the quality of pupils' work.

Care, support and guidance: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

The school provides pupils with a welcoming environment where staff promote a family atmosphere underpinned successfully by its Muslim ethos. Many members of staff deal well with any instances of poor behaviour or bullying using a whole school approach. However, the school does not teach pupils well enough about how to stay safe online.

Leaders have recently introduced an electronic system to track pupils' skills development. This work is at a very early stage, particularly in the high school. Across the school, leaders do not monitor the accuracy of teachers' judgements or

track pupils' progress with rigour. In addition, teachers do not use performance information to inform their planning.

There are inconsistencies in how well staff assess the language levels of pupils with English as an additional language. They do not always arrange effective additional support to ensure that these pupils improve their English language skills in a timely manner.

The school has identified a few pupils as having special educational needs. Leaders organise suitable literacy support for these pupils in the primary phase by setting pupils for phonics lessons. However, across the school, teachers do not ensure that they regularly identify and support these pupils' individual needs well enough, such as through the use of individual education plans or tailored activities.

Staff provide pupils with valuable opportunities to take part in regular charity events. For example, pupils throughout the school raise money to support the education of children in Africa and Asia, and older pupils help distribute winter kits to homeless people in Cardiff. These activities enable pupils to gain a valuable understanding of people less fortunate than themselves. There are a few opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures, for example in geography lessons.

Older pupils recently attended workshops to promote their understanding of equality and how to make informed choices. However, generally, the school does not provide enough suitable opportunities to help pupils prepare for the experiences and responsibilities of adult life. It does not offer pupils the chance to take on additional responsibilities or to contribute to making decisions about the life and work of the school. Further, the school does not give pupils of all ages a broad and balanced personal and social education programme. Although pupils in Year 10 visit a local university to learn about possible career choices, overall, staff do not provide pupils in the high school with sufficient advice on career options.

The school does not teach pupils about the benefits of healthy lifestyles well enough. Although staff encourage younger pupils to bring healthy food to school, this message is less secure for pupils in the high school. In addition, the school provides pupils with limited opportunities to be physically active.

Annual reports provide parents with helpful information on their child's achievements as well as useful targets for improvement.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not meet requirements. A few safeguarding issues were raised with the school at the time of the inspection related to the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations. The school will produce an action plan to show how these issues will be addressed.

Leadership and management: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Leadership over time has not provided suitable strategic direction or communicated high expectations for staff and pupils clearly enough to improve provision and raise standards.

The proprietor and leadership team have been successful in establishing an evolving school that supports pupils' learning, wellbeing and personal development suitably

within an Islamic faith context. The recently appointed headteacher promotes a safe, welcoming and caring learning environment where staff and pupils feel valued and supported as part of a cohesive family. She embraces a shared vision to develop pupils' self-confidence and to foster respect and tolerance towards others. Staff show a strong commitment to the school. School leaders encourage parents and carers successfully to meet them whenever they feel the need to ask questions, discuss suggestions, and address problems or concerns.

Across the school, leaders do not set out expectations clearly enough. Staff do not have personalised job descriptions that indicate roles and responsibilities precisely. Although there are regular staff meetings, outcomes of discussions at these meetings and planned actions are not recorded consistently or communicated effectively. As a result, teachers are uncertain of the school's expectations and requirements for key aspects such as the assessment of pupils' work and tracking of their progress. Line management arrangements lack rigour. Although there is a suitable leadership structure, there is no formal programme of meetings between staff and their line managers. Leaders do not hold staff to account appropriately for the quality of their work or provide necessary support where relevant.

The school's arrangements to quality assure its work are weak. Leaders have not established a systematic programme of subject reviews, lesson observations or work scrutiny. As a result, they do not monitor provision rigorously, promote particular strengths in teaching and learning or identify specific areas for improvement. Leaders do not use assessment evidence and progress measures robustly or take sufficient note of the views of parents and pupils when evaluating the quality of provision. As a result, the school does not identify relevant improvement priorities and plan specific actions to achieve desired objectives.

The proprietor displays a strong commitment to the school. He articulates the school's ambition to create a culture which recognises that everyone is unique and seeks to celebrate diversity and to provide support for each other. The proprietor provides helpful assistance and guidance to the school, particularly in aspects related to health and safety as well as for improving the physical environment and resources. However, the proprietor has a limited understanding of the school's strengths and specific areas for improvement. He does not contribute to reviews of the school's work and does not challenge the school effectively to ensure that outcomes and provision are of a suitable standard.

Staff professional learning opportunities are underdeveloped. The school is beginning to encourage staff to reflect on their work and experiences as part of an emerging approach to performance management. However, at present performance management arrangements are embryonic. They are not effective in helping leaders and staff to identify specific performance objectives and to consider relevant professional learning priorities. Where staff request assistance to attend training that is relevant to their work, the school considers the request supportively. There is not a strong culture of promoting best practice either within the school, or through working with other organisations.

The headteacher and proprietor monitor all proposed expenditure carefully. All requests for funding require approval from the headteacher and, where more substantial, from the proprietor. The school uses its resources to best effect to

create a suitable learning environment. Leaders are developing useful arrangements with neighbouring providers to have access to specialist facilities and additional resources to support pupils' learning.

The school meets most of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

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 Regulations 2003. 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 going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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