



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

A report on
Ummul Mumineen Academy

142 Penarth Road
Cardiff
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by

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and Training in Wales

About Ummul Mumineen Academy

Ummul Mumineen Academy is an independent day school educating girls from the age of 8 to 16 years, situated near the centre of Cardiff. The school has its origins in Ummul Mumineen Girls' Centre, which was opened in 2007 to support home education for girls. The school opened in 2016 and is registered as a Community Interest Company.

There are currently 40 pupils in the school. This includes eight pupils in the primary phase and 32 pupils in the secondary phase. Pupils are mostly from the local area in Cardiff.

Currently, in the primary phase there are two classes, a discrete Year 4 class and a joint Year 5 and 6 class. In the secondary phase there are discrete Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9 classes and a joint Year 10 and Year 11 class.

Almost all pupils come from minority ethnic groups including Arab, Pakistani, Somali and West Indian. A few 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 is non-selective, and entry is based upon the school's ability to meet the needs of the pupil. It provides an education with a Muslim ethos and a curriculum that includes the teaching of Arabic, the Qur'an and Islamic Studies. The school's motto is 'Learn, Enhance, Achieve'.

The headteacher has been in post since the school opened in 2016.

Summary

The headteacher has a clear passion and vision for the school, which is sharply focused on enabling girls to thrive and learn. Many pupils make strong progress in their knowledge and skills during their time at the school. Most show a sound recall of previous learning and apply their learning to new contexts well.

Pupils demonstrate strong social skills and encourage each other to achieve their best. This approach reinforces the effective nurturing character of the school. Pupils develop a good understanding of the school's Islamic ethos, different cultures and faiths, and values such as care and respect, which prepare them effectively for their later life.

The bespoke curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs, reflects the Islamic context of the school and enriches the learning experiences of pupils. The curriculum is supported comprehensively by a range of valuable educational visits.

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

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Good
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Good
Teaching and learning experiences	Good
Care, support and guidance	Good
Leadership and management	Good

Recommendations

- R1 Develop the role of the committee of advisers as a critical friend to the school
- R2 Share the existing good practice in written feedback to support pupils' independent learning further

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.

Estyn will invite the school to prepare a case study on its work in relation to removing barriers and raising aspirations for girls' learning, for dissemination on Estyn's website.

Main findings

Standards: Good

Pupils join Ummul Mumineen Academy with a broad range of abilities and prior educational experiences. During their time at the school, many pupils make strong progress in developing their knowledge and skills. Most pupils show a sound recall of previous learning and apply their learning to new contexts well.

Nearly all pupils listen well to both their peers and teachers, for example when pupils recite verses from the Qur'an. Most pupils speak clearly and with confidence. They are eager to share their knowledge, ideas and opinions with their peers, teachers and visitors to the school. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 enjoy delivering a lesson to their peers to help them to practise their skills in mathematics. In Years 10 and 11, many pupils use correct scientific vocabulary to explain their understanding of the conversion of gravitational potential energy to kinetic energy, and the effect of friction.

Most pupils in the primary phase are fluent readers. These pupils read clearly and use their basic reading skills assuredly, for instance to follow instructions in a text book. However, their higher order reading skills are less well developed. Many older pupils read with accuracy, fluency and understanding, for example when Year 7 pupils read the poem 'Differences'. Nearly all pupils in Year 10 and 11 skim and scan texts confidently to read and follow instructions to help them conduct science practicals competently.

Many pupils enter the school with weak writing skills. As they progress through the primary phase, pupils develop these skills suitably. By the time they reach the secondary phase most pupils have a strong grasp of the rules of spelling, punctuation and grammar, shown by Year 7 in their writing of thoughtful poems about 'what it means to be a Muslim'. In Years 10 and 11, pupils write accurately and at length for a range of purposes.

Across the school, most pupils develop their numeracy and mathematical skills at least in line with their age and ability. In the primary phase, many pupils develop an appropriate understanding of number. They use this knowledge suitably to solve simple problems. For example, pupils in Year 4 round numbers accurately to find the distance between world cities, and order large animals correctly by comparing their weight. In the secondary phase, most pupils apply the strong numeracy skills that they develop in their mathematics classes effectively in different subject contexts. For example, in science, pupils use their measuring skills assuredly to set up accurate investigations such as measuring the height of ramps and length of string around pulleys.

Pupils across the school use information and communication technology (ICT) beneficially to support their learning in other subjects. For example, in the primary phase, pupils use tablet computers confidently to record their practical work on replicating the digestive system, and laptop computers to research facts for their history work on the Vikings.

Nearly all pupils develop their creative skills successfully across the school. For example, pupils in the primary phase use nature as a stimulus to plan a sculpture to enhance a local courtyard. In the secondary phase, pupils design detailed henna patterns for decoration.

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: Good

Across the school, nearly all pupils demonstrate strong social skills and encourage each other to achieve their best. For example, older pupils take time to listen to the younger pupils to ensure their personal wellbeing. This approach reinforces the strong nurturing character of the school.

Pupils actively contribute to the spiritual ethos of the school through daily prayers and studies in Arabic and Islamic Studies. Supporting their beliefs, pupils proudly engage in worthwhile charitable activities. For example, nearly all pupils took part in a recent reading challenge to raise money for a national heart charity.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school and know whom to talk to if they have a concern. Pupils are comfortable in an all-girl environment and are committed to learning. They work well together in the 'Digital Leaders' group to complete learning activities associated with digital safety. Nearly all pupils have a suitable awareness of online safety.

Across the school, nearly all pupils have opportunities to contribute meaningfully to pupil voice strategies. For example, pupil roles include the head girl, the 'Helpful Understanding Girls' (HuG), 'Student Observers of Learning' (SOL) and the 'Playground Pals'. The feedback from the SOL group led to the school developing additional support materials for iGCSE English. However, several groups are in the early stages of development and consequently have not had time to influence school life.

Many pupils show positive healthy eating habits and take part in the school's weekly smoothie day when they make and sell healthy fruit drinks. Many pupils participate eagerly in physical activities at lunch time and benefit from their weekly physical education lessons at a local sports centre.

A majority of pupils in the primary phase develop their independent learning skills suitably. In the secondary phase, many pupils build their confidence and develop their independent learning skills successfully. For example, pupils work independently in English lessons to analyse and develop comparisons between two different texts for aspects of audience and purpose. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 value their reflective journals as a process of documenting learning, eating and sleeping habits to monitor the impact on their academic progress. These elements of independent learning help pupils to develop confidence and resilience.

During lessons, most pupils work effectively with each other in a variety of pair, small group and whole class activities. Most pupils are respectful, caring and supportive to each other and act in ways that are positively encouraging to others in the school

community. For example, the young members of the 'Motivating Active Mentors' group smile supportively to encourage others, and the weekly 'Reading Buddies' group reinforces pupils' reading skills.

Teaching and learning experiences: Good

Pupils at Ummul Mumineen Academy study a highly tailored curriculum, including Islamic studies, Arabic and the Qur'an alongside the required areas of learning in the curriculum. This bespoke curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs, reflects the Islamic context of the school and enriches the learning experiences of pupils. Overall, the school provides a curriculum that is broad and balanced and meets the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

The school curriculum is well supported by a wide range of interesting educational visits including to the Senedd, a local university and the costume department of the Welsh National Opera. These experiences develop pupils' confidence, widen their aspirations and support their understanding of Welsh culture.

Across the school teachers know their pupils particularly well. This knowledge enables them to have strong working relationships that support each pupil's progress and wellbeing purposefully.

In the most effective lessons teachers show energy and enthusiasm and plan engaging, interactive activities. In many lessons teachers share learning objectives with pupils and have a clear structure to their lesson. Learning activities build progressively upon each other and lessons move at a good pace. Where teaching is strongest, teachers use questioning particularly well to support or extend pupils' understanding. As a result, in these lessons, pupils make strong progress. However in a very few lessons, teaching does not meet the needs of all learners, the pace of the lesson is too slow and activities are not explained clearly enough.

Across the school, teachers assess pupils' understanding frequently. The outcomes of formal assessments are used effectively to support pupils' learning. Teachers track individual pupils' progress and wellbeing carefully at regular meetings. In most lessons, teachers monitor pupils' work closely and provide swift, useful verbal feedback that helps pupils to improve aspects of their work. However, the quality of written feedback is too variable. Often, written feedback focuses only on the strengths of a piece of work and does not suggest clearly how pupils could improve their work.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The school provides pupils with a caring, family environment where everyone is valued. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of the needs of each pupil and place a great emphasis on fostering positive working relationships within a strong Islamic culture.

When they join the school, all pupils undertake a baseline assessment in English and mathematics. In addition, pupils complete regular standardised assessments to help staff monitor their progress. Leaders use the information from both formal assessments and teachers' judgements to provide useful interventions in

mathematics and English for pupils who require extra support. In addition, the school arranges enhanced emotional support for identified pupils. All older pupils have fortnightly individual meetings with a member of staff to discuss their learning and wellbeing. These meetings make helpful links between pupils' wellbeing in and out of school, for example through linking their sleep patterns and diet to their progress in school. This holistic pastoral support is a strength of the school.

The school's curriculum and wider work help to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development well. For example, teachers use personal and social education lessons to explore and discuss issues about animal welfare and children's rights, and in religious education to teach pupils about different faiths and cultures effectively.

Teachers provide pupils with beneficial opportunities to be active citizens. For example, girls are working with the local police force to help design a new uniform for female Muslim police officers. Pupils take part in charity events regularly. The school holds an annual charity week where pupils sell goods to raise money for local and international causes, for example the Yemen Appeal. Older pupils also recently raised money to make useful packs to distribute to homeless people. This work helps pupils to understand that there are people less fortunate than themselves and their responsibility for assisting them.

Teachers promote the benefits of a healthy lifestyle well. Younger pupils take part in a brisk walk each morning. All pupils have weekly physical education lessons, including self-defence fitness training, basketball and football at a local sports hall. Teachers encourage pupils to bring healthy food to school for their lunch and snacks. The school teaches pupils appropriately how to stay safe, including when they use the internet.

The school offers pupils of all ages a wide range of opportunities to belong to representative groups such as the 'Health Squad' and 'Motivating Active Mentors'. Through this work, pupils are beginning to influence the work of the school, for example by giving feedback to teachers on the most motivational reward systems.

Teachers have high expectations of how pupils can succeed in life. They provide older pupils with beneficial opportunities to attend local careers events to enable them to gain information about possible career options.

The school provides a beneficial programme of educational trips and visitors to promote the arts and local culture well. For example, pupils make regular visits to local theatres and places of interest such as The Wales Millennium Centre, The Royal Mint and The National Museum of Wales.

Teachers work very closely with parents to help them support their children. They provide parents with regular opportunities to visit the school to meet with teachers and to see how well their child is progressing. Annual reports to parents are detailed and informative. They provide parents with useful advice on how their child can further improve their work.

The school's safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Good

The headteacher has shared her clear passion and vision for the school successfully, which is sharply focused on enabling girls to thrive and learn within an Islamic ethos. Teachers and leaders have a strong moral purpose to serve the different cultures that make up the local community.

Leaders promote and model high expectations of all members of the school community. Together, leaders have developed and engaged a well-motivated staff team. There are strong channels of communication and clear roles and responsibilities. Regular meetings ensure that everyone is aware of leaders' expectations, issues that could affect pupils' progress and wellbeing, and school events.

Self-evaluation processes ensure that teachers and leaders have a broadly accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The headteacher devises appropriate improvement priorities, taking account of pupil outcomes, the quality of the classroom provision, and stakeholder feedback. The current plan includes many priorities. However, leaders do not always develop a cohesion between the different areas for improvement and prioritise those that are most urgent. Over recent time, improvement activities have helped to raise pupils' outcomes, for example through improved iGCSE outcomes.

Leaders receive valuable and worthwhile support and suggestions from a committee of advisers, who have an appropriate range of expertise and experience in education. However, the committee's role as a critical friend, for example to challenge the school and hold leaders to account for its outcomes, is still at an early stage of development.

There is a beneficial appraisal process that supports teachers to reflect on and work to improve their own classroom practice. Leaders have recently strengthened this process by listening to feedback from teachers. Together, they have devised ways to make appraisal a continuous professional learning conversation, rather than a single event. As a result, the appraisal process now takes good account of a wide range of information, including pupil progress, feedback from learners through the SOL team, teachers' self-evaluations and professional reflections, and the outcomes of leaders' monitoring.

Leaders provide a robust training and induction programme particularly during the probationary period for teachers new to the school. There are worthwhile opportunities for all teachers to observe their colleagues, to learn from the strong classroom practice that is developing across the school. Teachers welcome professional mentoring visits from external advisers, including leaders from other schools. In addition, many teachers visit schools to reflect and learn from good practice in different, contrasting contexts. This outward-looking ethos is a strength of the school.

There are useful training opportunities that enable teachers to access online training, for example relating to safeguarding and child protection. Leaders promote and model a culture of professional accredited study to support teachers to develop their own expertise and practice.

The school makes good use of its resources and the limited accommodation available, to provide a safe, stimulating learning environment. The school complies with all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from parent 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 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' wellbeing, 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

Copies of the report

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

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

Excellent	Very 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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