

Rawdhatul Uloom Islamic Primary School

184 Whalley Old Rd, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 5NZ

Inspection dates

21–23 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Senior leaders do not have an effective procedure to plan for school improvement.
- Senior leaders do not systematically check the quality of teaching and learning or make recommendations for improvement. They do, however, carry out informal visits to observe classroom practice.
- Pupils in Year 2 make slow progress because the quality of teaching and learning is not strong enough.
- Teachers do not consistently provide challenging work for the most able pupils.
- Teachers do not consistently apply the school's marking and feedback policy. As a result, pupils sometimes do not know how to improve their work.
- Less than half of the children in Reception achieved a good level of development in 2016. Current children's progress is not good. In writing, for example, progress is slow because they have few chances to write independently.
- The trustees do not have a secure understanding of the quality of education provided at the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders have created a safe and welcoming environment for their pupils.
- Senior leaders are honest and open about the school's shortcomings and are eager to improve.
- Pupils are well behaved and typically have good attitudes to learning.
- Most pupils in Year 1 and in key stage 2 make good progress across a range of subjects.
- Leaders have made sure that the independent school standards are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that school leaders develop effective systems that:
 - clearly identify strengths and weaknesses of the school
 - set actions to tackle weaknesses and secure improvement
 - identify success criteria that are related to pupils' achievement.
- Ensure that senior leaders systematically check the performance of teachers and identify areas for development so that:
 - the quality of teaching, learning and assessment becomes at least good
 - pupils in the current Year 2 quickly make stronger progress.
- Make sure that the trustees of the school develop a clearer view of the quality of education that the school provides by stringently challenging senior leaders on the effectiveness of the actions they take in securing good or better achievement for pupils.
- Consistently provide work that challenges the most able pupils and enables them to make more rapid progress.
- Ensure that pupils know how to improve their work and understand the next steps of their learning by making sure that teachers consistently apply the school's marking and feedback policy.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders are open and honest about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They recognise that they do not have a systematic approach to checking the quality of teaching and learning. While the headteacher carries out informal visits to classrooms periodically, he does not have a procedure by which teachers can share good practice or he can evaluate the performance of each teacher and make sure that teaching improves where necessary. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent, with teaching in Year 2 being a particular weakness.
- The senior leadership team does not have a clearly focused action plan or self-evaluation documents that recognise where the school needs to improve and how leaders will bring those improvements about. Although leaders provide some training for staff that allows them to follow their own development interests, such as training in speech therapy, it does not relate to an overall improvement plan for the school. During the inspection, senior leaders drafted a plan that identified appropriate areas for improvement, but they have yet to put this into practice. Similarly, they are taking steps to develop a formal procedure for the performance management of staff.
- Senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards and the statutory requirements for the early years have been met.
- School leaders work hard to ensure that there is a strong ethos and clear moral purpose to the school. They provide a curriculum that is suitably broad and balanced and they promote fundamental British values well. The curriculum, including the provision for religious education, fosters pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, encouraging tolerance of other faiths and teaching pupils to respect people's differences. They enhance it by, for example, arranging visits to school, such as from the army, and by developing links with a nearby Christian church school.
- Senior leaders have organised after-school clubs in the past and are making efforts to introduce them again. However, they say that limited funding is a barrier, along with the fact that large numbers of pupils attend religious education lessons elsewhere after school and would therefore find it difficult to participate in after-school clubs.
- Leaders have secured a good quality of teaching in most classes, especially in key stage 2. The majority of staff focus well on their responsibilities and are keen to make sure that they provide the best education for their pupils that they can.
- The school does not have any pupils who have been identified as disadvantaged, nor does it have any pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The majority of parents are very positive about the education that the school provides. They especially value the family ethos, the way the school responds to concerns or requests and the good behaviour of pupils. Typical comments included opinions that the staff 'do a fantastic job'.
- The school made a request to the Department for Education to increase its capacity from 95 pupils to 145. The accommodation is suitable for this new total and the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the change is implemented.

Governance

- The school has no governors, but it has a board of trustees.
- Trustees are aware of the safeguarding procedures that are in place in school but they have not all received safeguarding training. They have not read and understood Part 1 of 'Keeping children safe in education' (2016), but are taking steps to remedy this.
- Trustees are keen to support senior leaders in providing the best education they can for their pupils and they receive regular reports from the headteacher about the performance of the school. However, they do not challenge leaders strongly enough in order to hold them to account and gain a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a suitable safeguarding policy in place, which is published on its website, and all staff have received appropriate training.
- Senior leaders have created an effective safeguarding culture. Staff understand the signs of abuse to watch out for and know how to report any concerns. The school's reporting system is suitable. While there have been no referrals by members of staff to the designated safeguarding lead, there are up-to-date records of communications with social care regarding cases initiated by that agency. Staff give pupils useful information on how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils understand the risks posed by the internet and are clear about how to respond to cyber bullying.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning requires improvement because it is inconsistent, with teaching in Year 2 being the least effective. Teachers in this year group do not consistently plan lessons that sustain pupils' interest and, as a result, pupils either misbehave and lose learning time or take a casual approach to work that is not demanding enough.
- While pupils in Year 2 read well and demonstrate some fluency, they do not have enough opportunities to answer more probing questions to test their level of understanding. Furthermore, in writing, teachers do not provide a planned approach that builds pupils' writing skills over time.
- Teachers do not follow the school's marking and feedback policy consistently, with the result that some pupils, especially in Year 2, are not clear about how to improve their work.
- Teaching in other year groups is effective and most pupils learn well, especially in English and mathematics. Teaching and learning is strongest in key stage 2. Pupils in Year 4 make slightly less rapid progress in mathematics than other year groups in key stage 2, but they are acquiring most of the knowledge, understanding and skills they need. Staff, including teaching assistants, have high expectations of behaviour and, as a result, pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and most make good progress over time.

- Teachers mostly plan lessons well, although they are not consistent in providing challenging work to the most able pupils. For example, in mathematics in Year 3, most-able pupils completed calculations that they found easy, but staff did not provide them with work that would stretch them and allow them to deepen their learning. Furthermore, in science in Year 6, teachers limited most-able pupils by structuring their work in such a way that they could not make their own decisions about its content and presentation.
- Teachers often question pupils well, probing their understanding and taking their learning forward. They also focus support well on pupils who are grasping concepts less quickly than others, so that they can make progress. For example, in mathematics in Year 6, adults asked effective questions that enabled pupils to understand fractions and their equivalent decimal numbers.
- Teachers give some opportunities in other subjects to develop skills that pupils have acquired in English and mathematics. For example, in science in Year 1, pupils wrote about what they liked and disliked as part of their work on the senses. In geography, pupils used mathematical skills to represent data about ways that pupils travel to school. There are, however, fewer opportunities to develop continuous writing and so allow pupils to make their own decisions about structure and content.
- Younger pupils make good progress in phonics. Teachers have a systematic approach to teaching the subject and pupils use their knowledge of phonics well to spell words such as 'pass', 'sail' and 'boat' correctly. Year 1 pupils can read with good expression, showing understanding of the text, and use phonics to help them read unfamiliar words.
- Teachers provide homework for pupils, including reading books and an online mathematics scheme. Pupils engage well with the tasks set. An online rewards scheme for pupils also allows teachers to keep parents informed about their child's work and attitudes to learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning, which helps the majority of them to make good progress. Attendance is slightly above the national average.
- Pupils are well aware of safety issues, such as cyber bullying and other risks associated with using the internet. They know how to stay safe online and what to do if they see inappropriate content.
- Pupils understand the different types of bullying that can occur, including racist and homophobic bullying. There are no recorded incidents of bullying in school. Presentation of work is sometimes careless and can produce inaccuracies, such as in mathematics, which shows some inconsistency in the degree of pride pupils take in their work.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.

- Almost all pupils show good manners and are courteous. Their conduct around school is good and they are confident enough to approach trusted adults and speak to them.
- Teachers demonstrate good behaviour management. Pupils have warm and friendly relationships with each other and with members of staff.
- Senior leaders keep thorough records of the rare examples of serious misbehaviour. They use record cards to keep a check on pupils whose behaviour has fallen short of the expected standard until they demonstrate improvement. Records indicate that these pupils do not repeat their misbehaviour.
- Occasionally, pupils' misbehaviour results in lost learning time, such as in Year 2. This happens when teachers do not plan demanding or interesting enough lessons.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils in Year 2 do not make strong enough progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. In writing, for example, teachers do not give pupils the chance to apply their skills by, for instance, independently writing sustained pieces with a variety of purposes. Teachers set work that is not demanding and often consists of writing no more than a few words or a phrase in response to questions.
- Most pupils in other year groups make good progress from their starting points. In Year 6, for example, there is evidence of sophisticated use of language and sentence structure, with pupils writing sentences such as: 'Mrs Jones told me that her late husband, Mr Jones, would have just stood there doing nothing about this developing situation.'
- Most pupils in year groups other than Year 2 are acquiring the appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills for their age and stage of development.
- The majority of pupils read well for their age and ability. The younger pupils use phonics to help them read unfamiliar words when needed and most-able pupils read with good expression and fluency. They take books home from school with them and say that they enjoy reading.
- The school's own assessment information shows that a majority of pupils are making good progress towards the expected standards for their year group. In Year 6, for example, three quarters of pupils have already reached the expected standard in English in the school's assessment tests, with a few pupils exceeding this standard
- Teachers do not consistently provide most-able pupils with work that stretches them. As a result, these pupils do not make the progress or attain as well as they should. In mathematics in Year 1, for example, the most able easily complete tasks that less-able pupils have attempted, such as writing missing numbers in calculations using numbers up to 30. Teachers, however, do not then provide tasks that allow them to deepen their knowledge, understanding or skills.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Recent assessment information shows that, in 2016, less than half the children in Reception achieved a good level of development and were not ready to start Year 1.

Since children enter Reception with knowledge and skills that are broadly typical for their age, this does not represent good progress.

- Leaders do not have a systematic process for evaluating the effectiveness of the early years provision, but rely on informal visits, as in the rest of the school. This means that they cannot identify precise areas for development in order to secure continuous improvement.
- Senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards and the statutory requirements for the early years have been met.
- The early years teacher now has an effective online system for tracking and recording the progress of current children, which keeps parents informed about their child's development. There are some aspects of children's development which demonstrate steady progress. For example, children can use their knowledge of phonics to make plausible attempts to spell words such as 'smmr' ('summer'). In number work, children can do simple additions to 10 and can find 'one less' than a given number. However, most-able children are not challenged to try harder number work and there is little evidence of teachers providing opportunities for children to try writing independently.
- The welfare and learning requirements of the early years foundation stage are met.
- Staff have appropriate safeguarding training and knowledge. Children show that they feel safe through their good behaviour and their confident relationships with adults in the setting.
- The learning environment is bright and there are good resources to support imaginative play and practical learning, such as toy cars and a water tray. There are examples of language and number on display to support children's learning.
- Teachers provide a broad range of learning experiences for children, who demonstrate excitement and interest. For example, all children joined in enthusiastically with stories and poems that the teacher read out to them, such as 'We're going on a bear hunt' by Michael Rosen. They enjoyed playing on wheeled vehicles to assist their physical development and they showed good independence as they tidied up.

School details

Unique reference number	119848
DfE registration number	889/6003
Inspection number	10026006

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	143
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Siddiqiyya Educational Trust
Chair	Mr AW Wasway
Headteacher	Mr Hamza Mala
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,140
Telephone number	01254 670017
Website	www.gardenofknowledge.co.uk
Email address	info@gardenofknowledge.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21–23 January 2014

Information about this school

- Rawdhatul Uloom is an independent Muslim school which is registered to provide full-time education for girls and boys between the ages of four and 11 years. The school opened in 1992.
- There are currently 143 pupils on roll, none of whom has a statement of special educational needs.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection, which was in January 2014.
- The school uses an off-site facility for some of its physical education activities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection took place over two-and-a-half days with two inspectors in total.
- The inspection team visited a number of lessons or parts of lessons in a range of subjects. The inspectors also looked at pupils' work in books.
- Inspectors observed pupils moving around the school as well as at breaktimes. They spoke to pupils during breaktimes and in meetings.
- The views of parents were also taken into account. There were eight responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Furthermore, six parents expressed their views by speaking informally to the inspection team.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of documents, including the school's safeguarding records, policies, procedures and records of attendance and achievement.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and the business manager throughout the inspection. They also met with two of the trustees, including the chair, and with members of staff.
- At the same time as the standard inspection, the lead inspector carried out a material change inspection. This was because of a request to the Department for Education by the school for an increase in capacity from 95 to 145 pupils.

Inspection team

Mark Quinn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Shutt

Ofsted Inspector

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