

Al-Falah Primary School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	204/6410
Unique Reference Number	133449
Inspection number	316829
Inspection dates	31 October-1 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Al-Falah Primary is an independent Muslim school that provides full-time education for boys and girls of the Islamic faith. This is the first full inspection of the school since it opened in September 2001. The school is registered to take up to 60 pupils and is seeking to extend this to 85. There are 79 pupils currently on roll and the school is now mindful of the need to clarify details of its registration with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). There has been a change of proprietor since the school opened and this also needs to be confirmed with the DCSF. The school is a registered charity. It moved to its current premises in February 2004 and within the past year the first floor has been opened up to provide additional accommodation for an increase in the number of pupils. The majority are from a range of Asian cultures and from Somalia. Twenty two pupils have been admitted to the school during this term. Most do not speak English at home but the majority are at an advanced stage of speaking English. The school aims to provide education both in National Curriculum subjects and in Islamic studies.

Evaluation of the school

The school provides a satisfactory level of education and care for its pupils. There is a very strong sense of purpose to foster Islamic values throughout the school day. The pupils are happy at school and keen to learn. The majority of staff do not have formal teaching qualifications but they are enthusiastic, very supportive of one another and keen to improve the provision further. Over the past 18 months the headteacher and principal have improved the accommodation and established a range of policies to support the work of the school effectively. Changes have been made to the way in which the curriculum is organised and the pupils are now taught in single year groups. The school meets most of the regulations for registration but there is more to be done to improve the quality of the curriculum, which is unsatisfactory. In addition, urgent improvements are required to ensure that background checks on staff are systematically sought and carefully recorded.

Quality of education

The curriculum is unsatisfactory. Although there are satisfactory policies in place for most subjects of the secular curriculum, not all schemes of work are in place. In addition, whilst the curriculum is broad it is not balanced so that not all subjects receive suitable amounts of time across the year groups. The curriculum policy

identifies the subjects taught and the rationale for teaching them but this is not followed through consistently.

The content of the curriculum is mainly derived from the materials of commercially-produced teaching schemes and this ensures an effective coverage of the National Curriculum and Islamic studies. Most subjects of the National Curriculum are taught. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught within an Islamic framework. The teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) is supported by an ageing suite of computers. There are no opportunities to develop ICT skills in other subjects. Physical education (PE) includes a balance of skills and games. However, outdoor sports are restricted due to the lack of suitable facilities. Afternoon lessons are devoted to the teaching of the Islamic curriculum. This curriculum covers the essential areas of study effectively. The knowledge of traditions and moral values is also developed throughout the secular curriculum. While Year 1 pupils went on a trip to the Museum of Childhood during the inspection the school does not organise sufficient educational visits to enhance the curriculum. Pupils' work is supported by regular homework.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and conscientiously plan appropriate activities for pupils to achieve the objectives for the lessons. Sessions often include a final plenary to check what has been learned. Weaknesses exist in the way in which teachers impart knowledge, skills and understanding to the pupils and opportunities to involve the pupils in their own learning are often missed. There are few strategies to help pupils know how to learn and to make connections in what they have learned. Similarly, teachers do not always explain what the pupils are required to do clearly enough, nor provide examples to help them present their work well. As a result, the focus of the lesson is sometimes lost, the pupils lose concentration and they become restless. Senior staff are aware of the need to develop teaching skills and the school's action plan appropriately identifies professional development for teachers as a priority for the coming year.

Assessment is satisfactory. The school has a framework in place to assess pupils' achievement. The assessment framework for Quranic studies is outstanding. However it is not always implemented by all members of staff. Regular assessments for National Curriculum subjects are made at the end of each unit of work to record the pupils' understanding. These assessments are not used effectively enough to show how the pupils make progress throughout the year. National tests are used to assess the standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 and there are plans to do the same for those at the end of Year 2. National tests and unit tests linked to National Curriculum levels show that the pupils attain average standards and this represents satisfactory progress from their individual starting points. Whilst most pupils demonstrate a good command of English there is a minority who struggle from time to time with their understanding of the language for some subject

material. The school does not have a system to assess these needs and lesson planning does not focus sufficiently on improving their speaking and listening skills.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The Islamic ethos of the school promotes their spiritual and moral development well. The pupils understand the school rules and can distinguish right from wrong. However, staff do not always take advantage of opportunities to reinforce guidelines for good behaviour. The pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is satisfactory. Their relationships with each other are not always positive, although most show consideration and courtesy. Despite the limited size of the playground, breaktimes provide enjoyable social opportunities. Most pupils play together well but they would benefit from more to do on the playground.

The PSHE scheme is organized in a structured framework, aiming for planned progression in pupils' personal and social skills and their awareness of health-promoting issues. Plans are afoot to address the need to provide the pupils with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services, but the school does not yet meet this requirement. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. The school promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions through its Islamic studies curriculum, although currently there is only a limited range of resources available to support cultural development.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils, staff and visitors is satisfactory. Staff are diligent in ensuring that the pupils are well supervised and that they take responsibility for ensuring that one another behave sensibly when moving around the building. A range of appropriate policies is in place to ensure health and safety and many policies give good attention to promoting moral and spiritual needs as well as caring for one another according to Islamic principles. Procedures and practices for child protection are in place and training is up-to-date. The pupils are encouraged to bring healthy packed lunches and snacks. Opportunities for physical exercise at breaktimes and during PE are limited. There are long term plans to improve access to the building in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act (2001).

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school does not meet the regulations for the appointment of staff and this needs to be addressed urgently. Although there is a policy for staff recruitment, it is not followed consistently and as a result staff records do not include the required checks. Some staff do not have a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check relevant to this school, nor does the proprietor. A single central register to show the required range

of checks prior to employment is not sufficiently detailed and is not systematically kept. There are no contracts of employment or records of interviews.

School's premises and accommodation

The school occupies a three-storey terraced house on a busy main road. Since moving to the current premises much has been done to improve the accommodation. Recent changes include the refurbishment of rooms to provide a small library, a headteacher's office and a staffroom. The classrooms and other facilities are suitable to accommodate the 85 pupils that the school wishes to take. The school is generally clean and the classrooms are tidy. Some of the chairs and tables are in a poor condition. There is a concrete surface on the playground that is in need of resurfacing and this is the current fund-raising project for the school. There is no grass area and although pupils occasionally use the local park for PE, opportunities for regular exercise and purposeful play are too limited. The headteacher's office doubles up as the medical room and this does not meet the requirement for appropriate provision for those who are ill.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school brochure and welcome pack provide families with a range of useful information. They have details of additional information that can be requested and this is readily available with the exception of the number of staff and a summary of their qualifications. Annual reports to parents and carers are sufficiently detailed although there are inconsistencies in the way in which pupils' attainment and attendance are recorded. Over two-thirds of the parents and carers responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and show that they are very supportive of the school. A small proportion would like more opportunities for communicating with staff and indicate areas of the school's work that they do not know enough about. Some parents and carers are hesitant to approach the school with any questions or worries and some are concerned that the children are not respectful enough to the staff and towards one another. These comments reflect those found by the school's own surveys and a regular newsletter has been established to acknowledge and address these views.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's complaints policy meets all of the required regulations. The school reports that they have received no complaints within the past year.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- establish appropriate plans and schemes of work for all subjects (paragraph 1(2)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (standard 2) and must:

- provide pupils with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England (paragraph 2(d)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff carry out appropriate checks to confirm their identity, medical fitness, right to work in the United Kingdom, previous employment history, character references and, where appropriate, qualifications and professional references and use this information when determining whether their appointment will be confirmed (paragraph 4(2)(a))
- ensure that the proprietor obtains an enhanced CRB certificate relating to this school for all members of staff before or as soon as is practicable after his/her appointment (paragraph 4(2)(b))
- ensure that the proprietor of the school has been subject to an enhanced check by the Secretary of State confirming his identity, right to work in the UK, enhanced CRB check, or where appropriate confirmation that he does not contravene section 142 of the 2002 Act(a) (paragraph 4B))
- establish a single central register of staff to show checks made (and certificates obtained where relevant) of: his/her identity; qualifications (where required); whether an enhanced CRB check was obtained, or where appropriate, that he/she is not working in contravention of section 142 of the Education Act 2002 (List 99); the right to work in the UK and, where relevant for those who have lived outside the UK, suitability to work in a school, including the date on which each such check was completed or the certificate obtained (paragraph 4C)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l))

- ensure appropriate arrangements for providing outside space for pupils to play safely (paragraph 5(t)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide particulars of the number of staff employed at the school and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k)).

School details

Name of school	Al-Falah Primary School		
DCSF number	204/6410		
Unique reference number	133449		
Type of school	Muslim primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 2001		
Age range of pupils	5 – 11 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 52	Girls: 27	Total: 79
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,000		
Address of school	48 Kenninghall Road Clapton London E5 8BY		
Telephone number	0208 985 1059		
Email address	Alfalahschool@hotmail.com		
Headteacher	Mr Khalil Goddard		
Proprietor	Mr Mohammed Zaki Ahmed		
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI		
Dates of inspection	31 October -1 November 2007		