



Al-Mu'min Primary School

Inspection report

This inspection was carried out under section 162 (A) of the Education Act 2002 as amended. Bridge Schools Inspectorate (BSI) has been approved by the Secretary of State in the Department for Education (DfE) to undertake inspections in designated independent schools within membership of the Christian Schools Trust (CST) or the Association of Muslim Schools UK (AMSUK).

DfE number: 380/6117
Association: AMSUK
Date of inspection: 6th-9th December 2010
Lead Inspector: Mr M Thirkell
Team inspectors: Mr Y Seedat
Mrs J Purnell

Age range of pupils: 4-14 years
Number on roll: 125
Full-time: 55 boys 70 girls
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need: 0

Proprietor: Mr S Islam
Head teacher: Mr M Azam
Address of school: 15-17 Spring Gardens
Bradford
BD1 3EJ

Telephone number: 01274 733150
Email: amps786@btconnect.com

The purpose and scope of the inspection

The main purpose of the inspection is twofold. It is to advise the DfE whether the school continues to meet the requirements for registration, and to determine whether the school's religious ethos continues to meet the expectations of its association. Ofsted monitors the work of independent inspectorates, including a sample of inspections, and you can find the latest evaluation of the work of The Bridge Schools Inspectorate on the Ofsted website.

Information about the school

Al Mu'min School is an independent non-selective day primary school recognised by the DfE as having a special religious character. It was established on its present urban site in 2003 a little way from the centre of Bradford. The school is registered for 140 pupils and there are currently 125 boys and girls attending between the ages of 4 and 11 years of age, 19 of who are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) of their education and attend the school's Reception class. There are no pupils with statements of special educational need and the school indicates that there are no pupils who require individual support for learning difficulties or because English is not their mother tongue. Following permission received from the DfE, the school has opened a Year 9 class this academic year in response to parental demand. There are six pupils in Year 9. At the same time it sought authorisation to open an additional secondary part of the school in nearby buildings. This will be considered when the process of developing the site is completed.

The school's core aims are: *'to educate pupils within the teachings of Islam; to provide a caring, safe and well ordered environment for pupils to develop their educational skills and practice Islam; to ensure that learning is demanding and enjoyable; to promote academic and moral excellence in a caring Islamic environment; and to teach each pupil to be well mannered, honest and truthful'*. The school emphasises that its provision is based on the National Curriculum and the government guidance provided by Every Child Matters.

This is the school's first inspection by the Bridge Schools Inspectorate. The last inspection, which was conducted by Ofsted, was in December, 2007.

Evaluation of the school

Al Mu'min School is a happy school where pupils are encouraged successfully to enjoy learning. It provides a good quality of education for pupils of all ages and abilities, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), supported by the hard work and dedication of its entire staff, and the clear vision provided by the school's leadership. Relationships between teachers and their pupils and between pupils are very positive. Pupils say that the school provides a 'together' atmosphere and that their teachers treat them 'like their own children'. Parents unanimously agree that their children are happy at the school and that they are well cared for. The developing academic skills achieved by pupils, their good manners and their growing knowledge of their faith, confirm that the school is successful at meeting its

core aims. Teaching is good overall and outstanding in aspects of the Islamic curriculum. Pupils of all ages and abilities receive good support and make good progress. Parents express their satisfaction with the progress their children are making, sometimes in contrast to previous educational experiences. The school has established good systems for monitoring the progress of pupils which they are in the process of improving further. The quality of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, reflecting in particular, the school's high expectations with respect to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding, supported by the high quality of relationships in the school. Welfare is good and careful systems for safeguarding pupils are established appropriately. Careful monitoring by the school ensures that pupils attend regularly, but during the week of the inspection some lateness was caused by severe weather conditions. The recent addition of a Year 9 class in response to parental demand has been accomplished successfully in most respects, but although pupils have physical education (PE) and games as part of their curriculum it is not yet a sufficiently regular part of their activities. The school has continued to develop since the last inspection and has made progress in a number of respects, for example in its systems for monitoring and assessing the progress of its pupils. It meets all but one of the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education provided

The quality of the school's curriculum, including the Islamic curriculum, is good overall. It is supported effectively by a clear policy, schemes of work and detailed plans. Planning is supported by a wide range of National Curriculum related documentation. The quality of medium and short term planning by teachers reflects their strong commitment to the school. The range of learning opportunities provided is based on the subjects of the National Curriculum and the progressive development of Islamic Studies and is suitably matched to the needs of pupils of all ages and aptitudes. Although there are no pupils with statements of special educational needs and are none identified by the school as having specific special educational needs currently, the curriculum provides appropriate opportunities for pupils of all ages and abilities to learn and make progress. Art, science and information and communication technology (ICT) provide an adequate range of technological experiences for pupils, but there is limited opportunity for boys and girls to experience designing and making in resistant materials. Art lessons throughout the school reflect an appropriate emphasis on developing drawing skills from observation. Good use is made of Islamic heritage in art and design, for example in a Year 2 class which focused on symmetry in designing tile patterns. PE and games effectively support the pupils' physical development and the use of a nearby sports centre augments the school's own facilities. Textbooks throughout the curriculum guide provision, ensure consistency and support progression. In Year 9 Urdu is taught as a modern foreign language. ICT is used well to support and enhance learning.

Literacy and numeracy is developed well throughout the school. A substantial investment in resources to support literacy and numeracy has recently been made. Regular discussions that take place in classes between teachers and pupils supports their developing communication skills, aided by the positive learning atmosphere that pervades generally. Pupils are encouraged to take an active role in discussions

where appropriate and are encouraged to listen to the views of one another. Teachers listen closely to what their pupils have to say in response to their questions. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship are provided for all pupils from Year 1 and delivered across the curriculum and through the Islamic *tarbiyah* (upbringing) programme. Relevant opportunities for introducing each aspect of PSHE into subjects have been clearly identified by the school and included in their planning. By Year 6 the pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Careers education is provided in Year 9 through an appropriate course linked to Connexions learning materials. The school provides some extra-curricular activities for pupils, such as a whole school visit to a nearby museum and art gallery, but a majority of parents indicate that they would like to see a wider range.

The good quality of the Islamic curriculum supports the school's aim of 'educating pupils within the teachings of Islam in accordance with the Qur'an and *sunnah*' (the practices of the Prophet). Pupils study the Qur'an, and all learn Arabic notation and the correct pronunciation of the language through Qur'anic recitation and *tahfeez* (memorisation of the Qur'an). In addition, the study of *hadith* (the practices of the Prophet) supports their developing understanding of its teachings about the moral and social aspects of life. Provision also includes *fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) and *aqeedah* (theology). The study of *Seerah*, (the life of the Prophet), *adab and Ikhlaq* (Islamic etiquettes) and the lives of the prominent companions of the Prophet and Islamic history are covered appropriately at each stage of pupils' development as they progress through the school. A newly developed course, supported by suitable textbooks in English have recently been introduced which provides pupils with improved access to the meaning of verses from the Qur'an. The well planned programme provided by the Islamic curriculum enables pupils to make effective progress over time and provides good support to their spiritual and moral development in particular. By Year 6 all pupils progress to being able to recite the Qur'an fluently and to memorise at least that portion of the Qur'an required for daily worship. Some, who have the ability, embark on memorising the whole Qur'an. The school has so far had four pupils who have completed memorising the whole Qur'an.

The overall quality of teaching is good throughout the school in both National Curriculum and Islamic curriculum lessons. The teaching of the Qur'an is often outstanding supported by good assessment strategies, including suitable tasks set for pupils of different abilities. The good quality of teaching overall, including the quality of marking and feedback to pupils about their work, is supported effectively by regular monitoring undertaken by the head teacher. Teachers plan their lessons well overall, although written reference to tasks provided for the pupils' different abilities seen in practise is not yet consistently indicated in written lesson plans for all subjects. Nevertheless, teachers are well qualified in the subjects that they teach and know their pupils well. They take great care to ensure that all pupils are involved in learning and that the structure of lessons and the organisation of classrooms meet the needs of pupils of all abilities. Teaching assistants in the Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classrooms provide valuable support. They plan and work well with teachers to ensure that pupils are provided with the guidance they need relative to their abilities.

Questioning is used well in general to challenge the most able and to support and encourage those pupils who take more time to learn. In a Year 2 numeracy lesson questions addressed to pupils were well pitched to each pupil's ability; good use was made of mental arithmetic during questions that reviewed learning completed previously. Ability groupings are used constructively to ensure that less able pupils receive appropriate opportunities for individual support and to encourage the more able to work independently. The organisation of groups is guided by teachers' good knowledge of their pupils and supported by the information that is made available to class teachers about their attainment and progress from school records. Resources are used well by teachers; interactive white boards which are available in four classrooms currently, including the Reception class, are used well by teachers to enrich pupil's learning experience, to increase their understanding and interest in their work and to broaden their experience and knowledge through a range of exemplar material. Display is generally used well in classrooms to reinforce and support learning. Opportunities for cross-curricular links are sometimes well used, for example in a Year 6 geography lesson where ICT was used as an effective tool to re-enforce and support learning activities through the use of desk top publishing.

Teachers have very positive relationships with the pupils. This ensures that lessons are generally conducted in a calm and positive atmosphere. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and reflects their enjoyment of learning. Overall teachers demonstrate good classroom management skills and the ability to engage pupils and where necessary re-engage pupils; lapses of concentration are rare.

Assessment is good with some outstanding features, such as the careful systems for monitoring of pupils' progress. Teachers have good opportunities to talk to pupils about their work and progress. Assessment is guided by a clear framework and policies for assessment and marking. The school develops good base line information about pupils' abilities and identifies where specific help is required beginning in the Reception class. This information is built upon as pupils move through the school to support procedures for tracking their progress. Teachers maintain meticulous records of pupils' achievements and progress through each aspect of their work. Completed work is marked thoroughly, conscientiously and consistently by all teachers in both National Curriculum and Islamic aspects of the curriculum. The good records of pupils' progress maintained by teachers and centrally by the school, is reflected in the high quality of reports to parents which are very clear about what each pupil has achieved in each subject and what they need to do to improve further. The school is in the process of transferring records of attainment, as well as the results of national tests and attendance to a central management information system to improve its ability to track pupils' progress even more accurately.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The quality of the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils of all ages clearly like their school and say that they enjoy their education. The school's aims and its Islamic ethos are evident throughout the school and in the Islamic Studies curriculum, in particular through the Islamic *tarbiyah* policy which focuses on beliefs, values, manners, rights, responsibilities and morals. The *tarbiyah* framework which is embedded in the

curriculum as a whole is about being a Muslim instead of just teaching about Islam. It effectively supports pupils in the development of self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-confidence and contributes significantly to the progressive development of pupils' understanding of the concept of spirituality.

The head teacher and staff provide good role models for Islamic life and this has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual and moral development. Their spirituality is enhanced through regular congregational prayers performed in school. *Dhuhr* (prayers at mid-day) include teachers and pupils praying together in the school hall and the *Asr* (afternoon prayers) are performed in the individual classrooms led by pupils providing good opportunities for developing responsibility and leadership qualities. By being given the opportunity to call out the *adhzan* (call for prayers), besides the development of spirituality, pupils have a significant opportunity to gain in self-confidence and self-worth.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They are encouraged to develop a clear sense of right and wrong through positive role models provided by teachers and verbal reminders to be respectful of others, to show good manners and to be honest. Their ability to make moral judgements and to develop social responsibility is supported through the curriculum, including *tarbiyah* and PSHE and assemblies, and their understanding of the law by regular visits to the school by a local community police officer. They learn about British institutions and services in England through studying British history as part of the curriculum. Pupils take part enthusiastically in their class activities and present their work with pride. The school aim of nurturing pupils in developing morals and manners is met extremely well and the behaviour of pupils in classrooms and around the school is outstanding. They greet visitors to the school with good manners and are keen to talk about their experiences at school and their pride in their own community. The pupils show their awareness of the global community through their efforts to raise money for the less fortunate, for example recently they have raised funds for the Pakistan floods and Haiti.

In Islamic Studies lessons pupils learn about different faiths and cultures which help them to understand the nature of life in a multicultural society. An open day shortly to take place in school is designed to provide pupils with opportunities to hear presentations by persons of different faiths and cultures about their beliefs. As a result, pupils become tolerant and respectful toward those with different views and lifestyles. The community cohesion project, initiated by the school and supported by the community police officer, involves forming links with other schools whose pupils are from different faiths and cultural heritages or ethnic background which further increases pupils' opportunities of acquiring an appreciation of their own and respect for other cultures. Overall pupils are keen to contribute to the school and wider community and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contributes well to preparation for their future lives and well-being.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The quality of provision for all pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The Islamic ethos of the school is reflected in the full range of written welfare policies. The policies are clear and include annual dates for review. The strong Islamic influence of the school promotes respect, care and consideration between pupils, teachers

and parents. The school is successful in establishing a caring, safe and happy environment in which the pupils feel safe and where their welfare, health and safety are carefully promoted. Pupils are well supervised to ensure their safety. They are overwhelmingly supportive and positive about their school and confirm that they feel 'very safe'. Pupils feel confident in their ability to speak to 'all of the teachers' in confidence and feel that their teachers treat them 'like they would their own children'.

Procedures for safeguarding pupils are well established. The school's child-protection policy is available in a very detailed handbook and is also included on the recently developed school website, along with the complaints policy. The procedures to be followed are set out in detail. The child protection officer has been suitably trained and the whole staff instructed on appropriate child protection procedures. Currently, three named members of staff have relevant and up-to-date first aid training and all members of staff have been informed about their role in emergencies. Policies and procedures are appropriate and up-to-date with regard to fire protection and fire records show that fire drills are regularly carried out.

The school behaviour policy is written in line with the Islamic ethos of the school and is based on its aims of encouraging and providing 'tolerance, guidance, praise, security, approval, acceptance and fairness'. The policy states that it 'wants to foster, in children, responsibility for their own actions and a responsibility towards others'. In this respect it is successful in meeting its aims. Good behaviour is encouraged and reinforced by class merit charts and by pupils being given special responsibilities, earning certificates of merit, end of year prizes and verbal affirmation by teachers who act as good role models and are respected by their pupils.

The school's admissions and attendance registers are carefully maintained on an electronic registration system which has the enthusiastic support of teachers. Pupils' attendance is carefully recorded and now forms part of the school's systems for monitoring progress. Attendance is generally good, although during the inspection severe weather conditions did have an impact on lateness.

Healthy eating is actively promoted by the school, demonstrated by a range of posters, letters to parents regarding the content of lunch boxes and guidance in the prospectus. Pupils have access to a satisfactory outdoor space and make use of a good range of PE equipment at lunch and break times in the large school hall which further promotes a healthy lifestyle. During the inspection use of the school's outdoor play areas was impossible due to ice and severe weather conditions.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

The school has a thorough understanding of the latest requirements with respect to checking the suitability of all staff. The completed checks are appropriately recorded in a register.

Premises of and accommodation at schools

The premises and accommodation are suitable in most respects and enable effective learning. The school buildings are well maintained, kept clean, secure and in a safe condition. The good use of display enhances pupils' learning and reflects the Islamic

ethos of the school. Classrooms are overall of an adequate size for current pupil numbers, although one or two classrooms, including the EYFS classroom are nearing their maximum capacity. There is a specialist ICT room and the multi-purpose school hall which is well used for assemblies, congregational prayers, eating packed lunches and as a play area. The school has established suitable strategies for ensuring the safe use of the limited outside space and the hall for pupils by staggering lunch times and breaks for each age range and class. There are appropriate facilities in place for evacuation which have been subject to suitable checks and supported by risk assessments provided for each area of the school. Despite the careful use of its accommodation, the school does not have adequate facilities for the pupils who may become ill during the school day and subsequently does not comply with the requirements in this respect.

Provision of information

The school provides a good range of information for the parents. The prospectus includes all relevant information for new parents, including the aims and ethos of the school. A detailed, accessible and informative website has recently been developed which contains all the school's policies. Parents of all pupils, including Reception class pupils, are provided with specific additional information in the form of a carefully prepared document which includes an explanation of each of the areas of the EYFS curriculum. It includes useful information about how parents can support their children. Termly curriculum guides inform all parents of the aims and objectives for the National Curriculum subjects as well as for Islamic development and Islamic history studies.

Parents say that they feel welcome at the school supported by the 'open door' policy. An overwhelming majority of parents felt comfortable about approaching the school with suggestions, problems or complaints. To further encourage a good working partnership both parents and school enter into a detailed written home school agreement in line with the religious ethos of the school. Parents confirm that they are kept well informed and are treated as partners in their child's education and upbringing in faith. Teachers make themselves available at the beginning and end of each school day to communicate with and share their observations with parents, and to answer any questions they may have. Two formal meetings are provided during the school year when parents can discuss their children's progress with their teachers.

The annual written reports sent to parents of pupils from Reception class to Year 6 are of excellent quality. The reports reflect the teachers' understanding of their pupils in terms of their character as well as their academic capabilities. The reports make comments on pupil progress and attainment in each subject, including their progress in Islamic studies. They identify carefully what each pupil has achieved and what they need to do to improve further. The scores from National Curriculum tests for reading, literacy and numeracy, which are marked by the school, are recorded in reports.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a complaints policy which is made available to parents. Full details are available on the school's website. There have been no formal complaints in the last twelve months.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The EYFS consists of 19 Reception pupils, taught by an extremely enthusiastic and competent teacher, ably supported by a teaching assistant. The environment for learning is bright and attractive, decorated with displays of pupils' work and rules for how to work well together. Pupils are taught in a positive, supportive and secure setting which supports the development of respect and moral values. High expectations of behaviour and clear routines have been established which are understood by pupils. The result is that pupils are friendly, confident and enthusiastic about their learning.

All areas of the EYFS curriculum are carefully planned, with the addition of Islamic development and Islamic history. There is a good balance between adult led and child initiated activities. The careful deployment of staff and the use of appropriate resources ensure that pupils are well supported in their progressive development towards the early learning goals. The class teacher plans daily sessions dedicated to communication, language and literacy and problem solving, reasoning and numeracy. Pupils enjoy the daily designated times for role play and providing them with opportunities to develop their skills using water, sand, construction and small world toys and other creative materials.

Pupils are largely confident learners who independently access toys and equipment and are given opportunities to work as individuals as well as part of a group. Pupils are given time each day to practise and develop their handwriting skills. New software to support learning through phonics is used effectively in conjunction with an interactive white board to provide effective support for pupils to learn the sounds of letters.

Pupils' personal development is good. They willingly offer to hold open doors for others and are willing to help hand out equipment. They are developing good relationships with each other and their teachers. Teachers encourage pupils to use good manners and to treat each other with respect. This was clearly demonstrated when a small group of pupils were reminded during a free play session that *'that caring means sharing'*. Later the same group of pupils were overheard reminding another group of this. Good behaviour is expected, communicated and rewarded by the teachers. Notable accolades being the 'star of the week' and 'being a good listener'.

The EYFS profile is thoroughly completed for each pupil and individual targets clearly recorded. Evidence for assessment is taken during focused and child initiated activities from a mix of anecdotal, observation, work samples and professional judgements, based on the teachers' good knowledge of her pupils. Parents are invited to discuss their child's progress at the end of the first term with the class teacher and shown the pupil profiles. These are available to the parents at other times when requested. In line with the rest of the school there is an 'open

door' policy for sharing information between pupils and parents. As parents leave and collect their children from the classroom there are plenty of opportunities for this which is encouraged by the class teacher. Written reports are sent to parents at the end of the academic year when a more formal parents evening gives opportunity for the profiles to be discussed.

Whole school health and safety policies meet the requirements for EYFS. In addition the Foundation Stage Reception Booklet further outlines to parents how their children will be kept safe and protected whilst in school. A daily risk assessment is carried out by the teachers who check the environment and equipment for potential hazards. Both practitioners have a current paediatric first aid certificate. Pupils' lunch boxes demonstrate how well the school's healthy eating policy has been communicated to parents. Pupils enjoy eating fruit at snack time and one boy said 'it's good for you'.

Pupils have access to a satisfactory outdoor space which leads off from the main hall. However, due to snow and ice it was unsafe for pupils to use this provision during the time of inspection. Pupils made good use of the large indoor hall area, where there is space for the pupils to run around and use equipment such as hoops, space hoppers, bats and balls, both during playtime and breaks as well as during organised PE sessions. These times ensure pupils have ample opportunities to improve their gross motor skills and physical development.

The leadership and management of the EYFS are outstanding. Teachers have a clear commitment to helping the pupils make good progress in their learning and development. The class teacher is enthusiastic in her approach to further extending her professional development and actively seeks out good practice. She has made good use of local authority provided courses and has established links with local maintained schools to help her further develop this. She does weekly written evaluations of her own teaching which are monitored by the head teacher and observed by other members of staff who give feedback on her teaching. The teacher and teaching assistant work well together.

Compliance with the regulations

In order to meet fully the regulations in **part 5**, premises of and accommodation at schools, the school must:

- Provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill (Regulation 23(k)).

The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Meeting the expectations of AMSUK

The school's religious ethos continues to meet the expectations of AMSUK.

What the school could do to improve further

As part of future development the school might wish to consider:

- increasing the range of extra-curricular activities available
- ensuring that the curriculum for Year 9 pupils includes regular timetabled opportunities for PE and games.