

# Islamia Primary School

## Religious School

### Inspection Report

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**Local authority:**  
**Inspected under the auspices of: AMS-UK**  
**Inspection dates: 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024**  
**Lead inspector: Yusuf Seedat**

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary School
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary Aided School
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	419
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of Governors
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Sofia Moussaoui
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Alimuddin Shaikh
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 June 2015
<b>Address:</b>	129 Salusbury Road London NW6 6PE.
<b>Telephone number:</b>	020 73722532.
<b>Email address:</b>	admin@islamia.brent.sch.uk
<b>School website:</b>	<a href="https://www.islamia.brent.sch.uk">https:// www.islamia.brent.sch.uk</a>

Introduction

## **Inspection team**

Lead Inspector Yusuf M Seedat

Team Inspector Munir Vali

This inspection was carried out by two inspectors. They visited twelve lessons or parts of lessons including (collective prayer sessions and assembly.) They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of children. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including children's written work, teachers' lesson plans, the RE (Islamic Studies) curriculum, the school's self-evaluation documents and the school's Islamic Studies development plan.

The inspection team looked in detail at the following:

- The RE curriculum.
- The progress pupils make in religious education.
- The quality of teaching in religious education.
- Leadership and management for religious education.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including collective worship.

## **Information about the school**

Islamia Primary School, located in Brent, London, serves the Muslim community from various parts of the city. Founded in 1983 by Yusuf Islam (formerly known as Cat Stevens), it was the first Muslim school in the UK to join the Voluntary Aided sector, officially inaugurated by King Charles on May 10, 2000. The school has a diverse, multi-racial community with all 419 pupils being of the Muslim faith.

Islamia Primary is larger than the average primary school. Most pupils belong to the 'Any Other' ethnic group, with a significant number from Black or Black British African backgrounds. The school has a high proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, although it currently has no children looked after by the local authority or from service families. The majority of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and many speak English as a second language.

The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported by School Action is above average, while those supported at School Action Plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.

## Inspection judgments

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The achievement of pupils in their religious education.</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of teaching and learning.</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management of religious Education, including the role of the school's governing body in RE.</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the religious education curriculum meets pupils' needs.</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development including the daily act of collective worship.</b>	<b>1</b>

### **Overall effectiveness: the quality of religious education provided at Islamia Primary School is outstanding because:**

The school's religious education provision is effective, significantly contributing to pupils' overall achievements and personal development. The provision is good with outstanding features. Pupils perform well due to consistently good teaching, which ensures sustained learning over time. Their behaviour is excellent, and they demonstrate a positive attitude towards learning. Pupils are ambitious and set high expectations for themselves. Achievements are celebrated warmly in assemblies, including significant events such as the Ramadan Annual Quran competition and external competitions like the Apex School Quran Competition.

There have been numerous changes within the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) as members moved on for career progression. However, with the Headteacher now providing more stability, the school leadership is excellent and poised for further improvement. The Headteacher, along with school leaders and governors, is deeply committed to the Islamic ethos of the school. They actively work to enhance the curriculum, teaching, and learning, thereby securing better outcomes for all pupils. This dedication is evident in their continuous efforts to improve the quality of education and the strong emphasis on spiritual development through daily activities like salah (prayers) and duas (supplications). The quality of collective worship is outstanding, with pupils participating confidently and sincerely.

The school curriculum is closely intertwined with spiritual values and Islamic beliefs. It includes thematic connections, such as linking Black History Month to Islamic Black History and incorporating faith-based discussions during Book Week. The introduction of a new RE curriculum based on the London Borough of Ealing SACRE Syllabus ensures a broad and balanced curriculum catering to all pupils.

Islamic studies, religious studies, and Qur'anic studies are pivotal in promoting moral development and a strong sense of identity among pupils. The curriculum leader regularly reviews the curriculum to ensure its suitability for all students. It is also integrated with the Islamic calendar to incorporate key events and opportunities, such as Seerah Week, Community Iftar, and the Eid Festival, with active student participation.

Staff development is prioritized, with regular opportunities for professional growth. Middle leader professional development and whole school inset days, such as the "Curriculum Development" session delivered by an external speaker, enhance teachers' preparedness to uphold the school's vision and values. Weekly spiritual development sessions for staff further reinforce this commitment.

The school provides numerous opportunities for pupils to develop as British citizens and demonstrate their understanding of Islam through practical experiences. Visits to various places of worship and interactions with speakers of other faiths are frequent. Collaboration with local mainstream schools and quality assurance of teaching and learning with other faith schools are facilitated by a Brent School Partnership consultant, ensuring a comprehensive educational experience.

In the Autumn term, a learning walk by Islamia's Brent School SIP yielded positive feedback, reflecting the school's commitment to continuous improvement. The safeguarding policy is up to date, complying with the latest "Keeping Children Safe in Education" guidelines. Weekly safeguarding briefings ensure a culture of vigilance, and safeguarding posters throughout the school provide clear guidance for pupils.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

To further enhance its provision, the school should focus on developing the skills of middle leaders in effective monitoring and impact measurement. Additionally, creating a more cohesive curriculum that facilitates meaningful cross-curricular links and deeper knowledge would strengthen the overall educational experience. Increasing engagement with parents will help them understand and appreciate how the school is working to nurture their children's character development and support them in reaching their full potential.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school in their religious education is good because:**

The achievement and progress of pupils in their Religious Education at the school are judged to be good, with all pupils making significant progress from their starting points. In Qur'anic studies, progress is meticulously tracked, and interventions through booster classes are implemented as needed. Strong teaching in Quran and Arabic ensures consistent progress throughout the school, while effective staff training guarantees accurate assessments. During Deen (Islamic Studies) lessons, pupils effectively learn their duas and can read them in context. Understanding is regularly checked in lessons to

ensure comprehension, with targeted support provided to enhance learning outcomes. A dedicated tracker monitors pupils' attainment and progress in RE and Deen would benefit from similar strategies.

In Quran lessons, pupils start decoding the Arabic alphabet from Reception, progressing through the Qaidah in Years 1 and 2, and the beginning of Year 3. They then move on to reading verses from memorised surahs, focusing on fluency and applying tajweed skills. The goal is for pupils to memorise Juz Amma by Year 6, with higher-attaining pupils in Years 3 and 4 challenged to memorise Surah Yaseen, and in upper Key Stage 2, Surah Al-Kahf.

In Arabic lessons, pupils develop all four language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In Key Stage 2 (KS2), the structured scheme of work provided by the Language Nut website enhances lesson delivery and supports Arabic homework. By Year 6, pupils are expected to read more advanced words, phrases, and sentences.

The school employs teaching assistants with specialist knowledge in Quran and Arabic to support pupils within lessons and provide additional interventions for those with Additional Educational Needs (AEN) and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). These interventions are meticulously documented and progress is carefully tracked.

Reading is integrated into RE and Deen lessons, and to promote wider reading linked to Islamic values, the school has introduced new books as part of the English curriculum. For instance, in Year 3, during Black History Month, "The Proudest Blue" by Ibtihaj Muhammad was selected for its strong themes of Muslim identity, pride, and difference. Additionally, Year 2 pupils performed "Handa's Surprise" by Eileen Browne in Arabic during World Arabic Day. During Book Week, Year 6 pupils read "The House of Ibn Kathir" and "An Andalus Adventure" by S N Jalali, which enriched their awareness of Islamic history.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Develop summative assessments for Deen (Islamic Studies) and create knowledge organizers to identify both disciplinary and substantive knowledge.
- Source high-quality fiction and non-fiction reading texts for Deen and RE.

### **The quality of teaching and assessment in the school is good because:**

The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in delivering the Religious Education (RE) curriculum at the school is good, contributing to high standards of behaviour. The recently introduced RE curriculum, based on the London Borough of Ealing SACRE Syllabus, aims to provide a broad and balanced education that prepares pupils to live in a pluralistic society by learning about other faiths. This curriculum offers a clear and coherent progression, building upon prior knowledge. Pupils learn about various world

faiths and demonstrate good knowledge, making connections between the Abrahamic religions and discussing similarities and differences with other faiths. Class teachers teach these lessons.

The Deen curriculum, which covers aspects of Islam such as aqeedah, seerah, salaah, and Prophets, is delivered by a specialist teacher. Together, the RE and Deen lessons provide a comprehensive religious education using diverse teaching strategies, including drama, oracy, discussion, and comparative analysis. The high quality of teaching and assessment ensures that all pupil groups achieve well, with teachers displaying strong subject knowledge and enthusiasm. According to the school's Ofsted report, recent CPD focused on RE planning using the Ealing Syllabus and the incorporation of retrieval tasks to aid knowledge retention. Lesson observations and learning walks indicate that lessons effectively build on prior learning, with teachers using quizzes and other retrieval tasks to consolidate and embed knowledge.

Pupils receive weekly homework for Quran and Arabic, which in KS2 is completed using the Language Nut platform. In lessons, pupils exhibit good learning behaviour, and teachers use open and targeted questioning to elicit information, promote higher-order thinking, and extend learning. Praise and encouragement help build pupils' confidence, and teachers frequently use Islamic terms, duas, and vocabulary. Teachers are deeply committed to ensuring pupils' success both academically and spiritually. Learning walks have shown that pupils are enthusiastic and motivated in RE and Deen lessons. They are confident in their Muslim identity while understanding the importance of respect and tolerance towards those of different faiths.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- To enhance the accuracy of assessing pupils' progress in lessons, further development of Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies is needed to better gauge pupils' starting points. There is a planned Professional Development Meeting (PDM) for the summer term, focusing on the use of hinge questions and other AfL techniques.
- Additionally, monitoring of students' books has revealed that the effectiveness of feedback through the current marking policy requires improvement. This includes implementing more live marking, diagnostic marking, as well as encouraging peer and self-assessment.

**The effectiveness of leadership and management of Religious Education is good because:**

The quality of leadership, management, and governance of Religious Education at Islamia Primary School is characterized by several key strengths and a commitment to continuous improvement. Despite several changes in the Senior Leadership Team within the last academic year, including the appointment of a new Headteacher in May 2023, Deputy Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher, and SENDCo, the school has maintained stability and focus on its priorities.

A significant focus for this academic year has been the review and implementation of new schemes of work. Leaders have been committed to promoting British values and have targeted RE provision for further development. They have aligned planning with the new Ofsted framework, emphasizing knowledge retention and ensuring that the teaching of Deen and RE provides a broad and balanced curriculum that prepares pupils for life beyond primary school.

Professional development is a cornerstone of the school's strategy to improve teaching and learning outcomes. Leaders have invested considerable time and resources into bespoke, regular, and ongoing CPD for all staff, including specialist teachers. Weekly PDMs and external CPD sessions, aligned with the school's development plan and informed by monitoring activities, ensure that staff continuously develop their skills. Leaders have established a comprehensive monitoring schedule, including book scrutiny, pupil voice, learning walks, and lesson observations, to identify areas for improvement.

The development of subject leads has been a key focus. Weekly Middle Leader sessions, led by the curriculum lead, provide CPD and guidance. These sessions have helped middle leaders create action plans, identify priority areas, and engage in challenging conversations. Peer reviews between Islamia and other schools have facilitated deep dives into subjects like English and Science, with plans to extend this to RE. This process will inform the school of its strengths and areas needing further improvement.

Support staff also benefit from regular professional development opportunities, enhancing their subject knowledge, spirituality, and contribution to the school's Islamic ethos. New staff are supported through a thorough induction program, including Islamic induction sessions. Twilight sessions and access to online Islamic CPD further develop staff knowledge and skills.

Leaders have prioritized fostering strong relationships with parents by hosting regular school events showcasing pupils' enthusiasm and learning. Many parents, who are alumni, actively contribute to the school community. The school provides up-to-date information through an online portal, My School App, and regular communication via an online news forum. Parents are invited to participate in morning dua recitations, attend workshops, and join regular coffee mornings.

Safeguarding practices are robust, with a culture of vigilance embedded within the school. Weekly safeguarding briefings, led by the Designated Safeguarding Lead, and comprehensive training on updated guidelines ensure staff are well-informed. Safeguarding posters and booklets for visitors reinforce the school's procedures. Senior leaders involved in recruitment have received safer recruitment training.

Attendance, currently at 94.4%, has improved, but the school recognizes the need for further improvement to enhance attainment and progress. Punctuality procedures are being developed to address this issue.

The Governing Body is deeply committed to maintaining the school's Islamic ethos. Governors regularly attend school events and collaborate with leaders to advance the school's vision, as outlined in the SDP. Last Spring, a visit from Al-Noor's Quran and Arabic Department provided positive feedback, and this year, QAD staff at Islamia will visit Al-Noor to share best practices.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- To improve further, the school should enhance summative assessment strategies for Deen and develop knowledge organizers to identify both disciplinary and substantive knowledge. Additionally, sourcing quality fiction and non-fiction reading texts for Deen and RE will enrich the curriculum. Continued focus on CPD, particularly in using AfL strategies and improving feedback effectiveness, will support sustained improvement in teaching and learning.
- Also, enhance the development of Middle Leaders in effective subject leadership.

### **The extent to which the religious education curriculum meets pupils' needs is outstanding because:**

Islamia Primary is a school where Academic Excellence, Character Education and Islamic Values, based upon the life of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), and a love for learning all come together.

The school has a mix of children from different backgrounds with varied starting points, many of whom start the school with considerably basic Arabic and Islamic knowledge. With the help of a well-planned curriculum, learners are quick to pick up and progress on the core aspects of RE.

The school aims to foster a love for learning, encourage critical thinking and nurture each and every child's holistic development in a strong, academic and spiritually enriching environment. This, in turn, will equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive and succeed in the modern world whilst remaining firm on the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. A supportive and inclusive environment enables children to thrive, and parents feel confident that their child is receiving a well-rounded academic and morally focussed education.

The day begins in a calm, thoughtful way with a collective du'a' (prayer) in which many parents participate. Midday Dhuhr prayer is conducted daily in congregation for pupils in Key Stage 2, along with Asr (mid-afternoon) prayer during the winter months.



Jumu'ah, (Friday prayer) is offered at the school, with teachers taking turns to give the khutbah (sermon) on different relevant topics, and pupils making the supplication. Pupil leadership is promoted as children take turns to call the adhan (call to prayer). The end of the day is closed with a collective du'a' in the school yard.

Whole school assemblies are led by the Headteacher, whilst the pastoral lead and pupils are given the opportunity to recite surahs, chapters from the Qur'an and deliver short speeches. Pupils partake in Qur'an competitions and perform exceptionally well, both within the school and at events around London.

For the RE curriculum, Senior Leaders have a clear vision, with specialist teachers being involved in creating a bespoke curriculum for Qur'an, Nasheed/Music, Arabic and Deen. Whilst using elements of the Ealing SACRE syllabus, the school has also utilised aspects of the Brent syllabus to enhance the learning experience of the young learners and to improve outcomes.

During their years at Islamia, pupils learn about all world faiths whilst the school continues to maintain good relationships with organisations of different faiths. The school has links with the local schools - Salusbury Primary School, Christ Church CE School, Oliver Goldsmith Primary School and helps in the planning of events such as the Community Iftaar during Ramadhaan 2023 and 2024. Pupils have visited Northwest London Jewish Day School to understand the similarities and differences between Judaism and Islam. Followers of other faiths are invited to come to speak to pupils in different year groups and further trips to various places of worship are planned for the coming months.

Middle Leaders receive weekly CPD and guidance for their subjects and create action plans to be reviewed on a termly basis. Interviews with pupils also help to inform next steps.

The Safar Academy's scheme of work provides pupils with knowledge and understanding of Imaan (faith), Ibaadah (actions), Seerah (life of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)), stories of the Prophets and hadith (sayings of the Prophet (pbuh)), as well as Islam in a cross curricular focus.

The music curriculum focuses on learning Islamic nasheeds and the school has a choir which performs in whole school events. After school clubs include Taekwondo, cooking, Quran and choir.

The school calendar includes Islamic key dates and events as well as other national dates such as Book Week, Mental Health Week and Refugee Week. During Book Week, Muslim authors are invited and during Refugee Week pupils learn about the plight of refugees, whilst linking this with the migrations of early day Muslims to Abyssinia and to Madinah. These provide regular reminders and opportunities to foster a sense of Islamic identity and to understand the difficulties faced by such peoples.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

Whilst pupils are making good progress in RE, maximum implementation of the Brent SACRE schemes of work will further enhance their knowledge and will assist all groups of learners in their educational journey.

**The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is Outstanding because:**

Whilst offering a suitable facility for performing salaah, the school provides ample opportunities for spiritual, moral and cultural development of Islamia pupils and their families.

Pupils embrace new experiences, develop their characters and take part in building communities.

During the Seerah Week, pupils displayed their work and parents, governors and guests were invited to the exhibition.

Each year group explored different aspects of "Why was Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) the best of mankind," his life, his mercy towards animals, his ascension to the Heavens and being a world leader. The exhibition highlighted 3D sculptures, written work and artwork and was very well received by parents.

Khayal Theatre performed to KS2 classes and delivered CPD to staff.

Year 5 pupils performed, 'Aisha in Wonderland' at the Arts Depot Theatre. The performance, alongside nasheeds, was part of a collaboration between Barnet Hill Academy and Harmony Primary School – attended by almost five hundred parents. The performances were crafted around classic fables which creatively intertwine Islamic themes and ideas with familiar characters and storylines including Choudhury and the Chocolate Factory, Aisha in Wonderland and Maryam Poppins.

Two Muslim authors visited the school during Book Week. Year 6 pupils read the books of author S N Jalali and interviewed her, whilst KS2 learned about her journey to becoming an author.

Aaliyah Umm Raiyaan, a Sunday Times best-selling author, spoke to pupils and parents about du'a' (supplication).

A spoken-word artist parent performed poems about Muslim identity and Seb Townsend delivered a story-telling workshop to Year 2. The Islamia Book Award was launched, to promote a love of reading and inspire pupil leadership, and the first winning books which were chosen by the panellists had strong Islamic themes or values.

International Food and Culture Day was an opportunity for children to celebrate difference and diversity. Pupils explored how Islam is represented differently in various countries and how Muslim identity is diverse and unique. Pupils challenge racism by participating in events such as Black History Month and Food and Culture Day.

During Ramadhan, Islamia hosted its annual community iftaar, to which local community and leaders were also invited.

The children are given the opportunity to partake in a number of competitions, including the adhan competition where the winners become the school's Muezzins and call the daily adhan, the World Arabic Day, the Ramadhan Qur'an competition and the Logo competition. In the Autumn term, Islamia took part in and won an external Qur'an competition hosted by Apex.

As part of a unit on animals for their Arabic learning, Year 3 pupils visited a farm and learned the names of animals in Arabic.

The Eid Festival attracted almost one thousand visitors. Upcoming events include a Nasheed Concert, in collaboration with other Muslim Faith Schools, to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the school.

Pupils participate in various sporting events including friendly football fixtures at Wykeham Primary School and the Brent Cup Quarter finals and the Girls' Football League. The pupils also participated in the Brent Cross Country challenge, a Tag Rugby tournament and a Tennis competition.

Pupils demonstrate concern and compassion for others and have raised funds for various causes, including the Pakistan floods, Morocco, the Syrian-Türkiye earthquake appeals, and for the displaced in Palestine. They have also raised the cost of replacing the carpet in the school's prayer area.

Activities lined up for the final half-term include the Hajj Week, Refugee Week, a residential for Year 6, Sports' Days and trips for classes.

Parents were also invited to attend an Internet Safety coffee morning and are encouraged to join the discussions during the Parent Coffee Mornings which happen every 3 to 4 weeks.

The learning environment has a variety of displays which remind pupils to look after their faith, their health and their communities. Each class has its own 'Charter.'

The children in the School Council appreciate their voices and opinions being heard but would prefer a bigger play area and more facilities for sports and other activities, whilst they appreciate the constraints of the estate.

### **Views of parents and carers**

Overall, parents are supportive of the school. However, a significant minority believe the school should be more approachable and improve communication with parents. The school is aware of this concern and now regularly hold coffee mornings to enhance engagement and participation. During the inspection, this event was held and strategies for increasing parental involvement were discussed.

## Glossary

What inspection judgments mean

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgment</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Requires Improvement	A school requiring improvement is not providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.