

Al-Ikhlaas Primary School

35 Norfolk Street, Nelson, Lancashire BB9 7SY

Inspection dates

11–13 July 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher, well supported by governors and senior staff, provides ambitious leadership. Pupils make excellent progress in their learning because of leaders' work to secure outstanding teaching.
- Leaders are passionate, and care deeply about pupils. They give close attention to the individual learning needs of each pupil so that all have the chance to experience success.
- The carefully planned curriculum provides pupils with many exciting opportunities to learn how to make a positive contribution to their community. Pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Provision for children in the early years is outstanding. Strong leadership and high-quality teaching enable children to make exceptional progress.
- Pupils make rapid progress. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well above the national average at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- Leaders are highly successful in combining the Islamic ethos with pupils' outstanding personal development.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Teachers build very secure relationships and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Safeguarding is very effective.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and appreciate the hard work of staff. They are very positive about the progress made by their children. Very good communication with parents is a priority of the school.
- Leaders seek external advice to challenge their performance. A key feature of the school's improvement is the willingness of staff and governors to actively pursue opportunities to work with other schools to improve and share their own practice.
- Teaching across a wide range of subjects is highly effective, although there is scope to improve the way that pupils' reasoning skills are developed in mathematics.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are extremely positive. They show respect for adults, and for each other. They are very proud of their school and their work. There are a few occasions where the presentation of pupils' work dips in quality in subjects other than English.

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?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - enabling pupils to deepen their understanding of mathematics by explaining their answers and their thinking behind the methods they have chosen
 - extending the high standards of handwriting and presentation in pupils' English work more consistently in other subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The school is exceptionally well led and managed. Senior leaders have a clear vision for the school, pursuing academic excellence through a strong moral ethos. They have been successful in sharing this vision with the whole school community and use it to improve all aspects of their work.
- School leaders precisely check on the progress of each pupil, and any who is not on track to meet the high expectations is given extra support.
- Performance management is used very effectively to help further improve teaching. Staff development, and support, have a high profile in the school and leaders make sure that everyone stays up to date with training. Leaders provide a broad range of opportunities for teachers to experience, or to enhance, their practice. They observe and help each other to improve. They have made strong links with other schools across the area and beyond, so that staff can observe and share their own outstanding practice with others.
- Leaders carefully plan activities to nurture pupils' personal qualities, such as empathy and responsibility towards those who are less fortunate. Pupils are encouraged to make their own choices and taught to understand how they can contribute to their communities as well-rounded British citizens. Through assemblies and media programmes, they are frequently exposed to topical news events and given opportunities to discuss and debate issues that arise. Pupils design, organise and run fundraising projects to support victims of international disasters and to aid local charities. One of the many examples includes raising funds for a water-well in the Philippines and linking this to a whole-school topic about the water cycle.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. It is very effectively promoted through assemblies, prayer and Islamic studies, and is also skilfully woven through the curriculum. Teachers pay much attention to ensure that all pupils learn about a variety of cultures and traditions. Through the school's well-considered community links, including trips to a local day-care centre for the elderly, pupils develop a deep awareness of the needs of different members of the community. Events are carefully planned so pupils gain an understanding of religious beliefs from across the world, as well as the Islamic faith. The multi-faith day the school organised included representatives from Christian, Buddhist and Jewish faiths.
- The curriculum is very well organised, with detailed plans setting out the high expectations for pupils' learning. The school's vision and values permeate all aspects of the curriculum. For example, in their Islamic studies pupils learn about caring for the environment and taking pride in their country. They are taught to act responsibly and complete annually a 'Clean the street project', to put their learning into action.
- The curriculum is further enriched with many opportunities for pupils to engage in experiences beyond school, including residential trips, which motivate and challenge pupils to raise their aspirations and build their confidence.
- The school's partnership with parents and the local community are notable strengths. Parents value the detailed information they receive about the progress their children

make. Typically, parents comment that their children are exceeding academically beyond expectations, and pupils are safe and happy.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information, presenting documentation on its website and making it readily available to parents upon request.

Governance

- Governors make a significant contribution to the outstanding leadership of the school. The chair of the governing body, who is also the proprietor, works tirelessly in a voluntary capacity to make sure that the provision at the school is consistently of a high standard. He is driven by strong moral purpose to instil in the pupils the need to live harmoniously within the community. Governors work closely with parents and others to prepare pupils to be responsible, peaceable citizens. A strong focus is placed on fundamental British values.
- Governors are highly ambitious to improve the school continuously. They regularly seek out best practice in other schools and compare their own school's performance against those standards. Reports from external auditors are used to validate their judgements and demonstrate the commitment to continuous improvement.
- Governors bring their expertise and experience to bear in supporting different aspects of school life. For example, one governor has developed the school website and supports the implementation of information and communication technology in the school.
- The proprietor and governors make careful checks that the school continues to meet all of the independent school standards. They have established effective monitoring procedures and work closely with the headteacher to keep all aspects of the school's work under regular review.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors take their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding very seriously and practice is robust. Leaders are acutely aware of different risks posed to pupils, including risks associated with extremism. Leaders ensure that all staff are alert to potential issues.
- Governors examine the school safeguarding procedures and records of checks on the suitability of staff regularly. Policies are comprehensive and records are fit for purpose.
- The school's safeguarding policies reflect the most recent statutory guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education' (2016) and 'Working together to safeguard children' (2015). They contain helpful references and contact details for a range of external agencies. The school works well with the local authority's safeguarding team.
- All staff training, including that for the designated and deputy safeguarding lead, is up to date. Rigorous recruitment and induction procedures mean that all staff are well prepared to follow the school's detailed safeguarding policies. School leaders regularly check the understanding and practice of staff in relation to safeguarding, through questionnaires and discussions.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They ask questions to check that pupils understand what they are learning and give precise feedback to help pupils improve their work. Such ongoing assessment in lessons is a key strength of teaching in the school.
- Skilled teaching assistants support individuals and groups of pupils in class and are quick to notice when pupils need to move on. They work closely with teaching staff and have a positive impact on the progress that pupils make.
- Typically, the pace of learning in lessons is brisk. Teachers' enthusiasm and the exciting activities they plan motivate pupils to do their best. All pupils, not only the most able, are challenged in lessons because staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The level of support and challenge is carefully matched to pupils' needs and contributes to the strong progress that pupils make.
- In mathematics, teachers promote skills systematically, with excellent opportunities to develop pupils' mental and written skills. Pupils relish the opportunities to share their learning. While there is evidence of much challenge, opportunities for pupils to develop reasoning by explaining their thinking and the methods they choose to solve problems are not as frequent. They are not always given time to reflect upon and deepen their learning.
- Pupils learn phonics very rapidly because they are taught accurately and consistently well. By the end of Year 1, pupils' reading skills are well developed. In key stage 2, pupils are further supported by very effective strategies to teach important reading skills, such as inference and deduction. Pupils quickly develop an enjoyment of reading as a result, and read widely and often.
- Teachers plan a wide range of interesting activities to promote early literacy skills that contribute to the rapid progress that pupils make. In Year 1, pupils explore rhythm in verse, through hearing Jamaican Patois poetry. They have fun demonstrating their understanding by trying to convey meaning through movement and actions. As pupils move through the school, their writing becomes increasingly sophisticated. They are encouraged to use ambitious vocabulary and more-complex sentences to make their writing interesting. This was ably demonstrated when Year 4 pupils were asked to describe the most inspirational women in their life and give reasons for their choices.
- One of the reasons why pupils make outstanding progress is because of the excellent relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils' behaviour is impeccable and staff are consistent in the high expectations that they set for behaviour. Classrooms are orderly places to learn, pupils are eager to please and work exceptionally hard.
- Regular homework consolidates and deepens pupils' learning. Opportunities are provided during the school day for pupils, who do not have access at home to the school's online learning homework programmes, to complete tasks.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The school ethos is founded upon identifying and nurturing the skills and talents of

individual pupils, so that they can achieve high standards in their learning, behaviour and moral understanding. Islamic tradition is intrinsically linked with strong British values to promote social responsibility, cultural diversity, tolerance and inclusion.

- Pupils have extensive opportunities to broaden and deepen their faith in the context of understanding how to be of service to others. They are taught to respect the rich diversity of their local and wider communities. For example, pupils are taught about the importance of being tolerant. They also learn that prejudice is harmful in their discussions about different family groups and homophobic bullying.
- Pupils are rightly proud of their school and recognise that they are helped to achieve their best. They demonstrate a deep understanding of rights and responsibilities. They are proud of their work and confident when discussing it with inspectors. Occasionally, standards of presentation are not as high in some subjects as they are in English. School leaders are aware of this and have plans to improve the consistency of pupils' handwriting next year.
- A notable aspect of the school's work is the attention it devotes to developing the personal qualities and moral principles of its pupils. Opportunities are designed for pupils to experience and demonstrate thoughtfulness, respect for differences, honesty and responsibility towards others and the environment. There are very many examples of this work, including hosting a vintage tea party at the school for residents from a local hospice.
- The school provides meaningful opportunities to help pupils build resilience and to take responsibility. Frequent events are carefully planned to enable pupils to organise and run projects, such as the annual sports day. The skills and talents of older pupils are put to the test when they are invited to apply for roles within the school as part of a work experience project. Pupils' confidence is nurtured when, after completing an application form and experiencing an interview, 'successful' candidates shadow a member of staff.
- Pupils have a strong voice in school and are outstanding ambassadors for the promotion of its values. Positions for the roles of school councillor and bully busters are popular and help pupils learn about democracy, while developing leadership skills.
- Opportunities for pupils to discuss sensitive issues are regularly provided and skilled staff help pupils explore their feelings. This attention to the well-being of pupils helps them to feel safe.
- Pupils and their parents confirm that they feel safe in school. Pupils have a good understanding of internet safety and know how to stay safe online. Visits from the police, fire service and health professionals complement the school's work.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They display highly positive attitudes towards their learning and value the efforts of their teachers to help them succeed. Pupils are routinely encouraged to do their best, to be adventurous and to work hard. When asked what they most liked about school, pupils agreed that it was their teachers who made learning fun.
- Pupils are polite and respectful towards each other, staff and visitors. When inspectors entered the classroom, they were welcomed. During class discussions, pupils take turns

and comment positively on contributions made by each other. On the playground, older pupils play happily with younger ones and act as very positive role models.

- The school's records show that incidents of poor behaviour, including bullying, are extremely rare. Pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed this. Pupils learn about different types of bullying through assemblies, personal, social and health education, and through their Islamic studies, but are adamant that bullying does not take place in school.
- Throughout the school, there is an air of calmness infused by an enjoyment for learning. Transitions between activities in lesson and around school are well ordered. Pupils value the school's many rewards they can earn for positive attitudes and hard work.
- Pupils enjoy school and as a result they are punctual and attend regularly. On the rare occasions when pupils' attendance declines, the school tackles this issue by providing support for families, and through very good communication with parents.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- As a result of excellent teaching throughout the school, pupils make outstanding gains in their learning in a range of subjects.
- The school's assessments show that most children start school in the early years with skills typical for their age. They make outstanding progress because of consistently strong teaching and highly effective targeted teaching. From 2015, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year was well above the national average. A substantial proportion exceed the level expected for their age in many of the early learning goals, and are ready to join Year 1 as confident learners.
- Children who do not speak English well when beginning school make especially good progress and very quickly acquire language skills to help them communicate confidently.
- Phonics is taught exceptionally well and the standards attained at the end of Year 1 are consistently well above the national average. These reading skills are further developed throughout the school, where pupils are encouraged to read widely and often, and the high standards of reading are maintained.
- Teaching in key stage 1 is well matched to meet the needs of individual pupils and builds on the excellent start they have made in the early years. Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics for the past two years. Pupils make excellent progress and are well prepared for their learning in Year 3.
- Pupils maintain their strong progress as they move through the school and for the past two years attainment at the end of key stage 2 has been very high. The proportion of pupils attaining or exceeding the expected standard in 2015 and 2016 was well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Provisional results for 2017, in reading, writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar, indicate that pupils attained similarly highly.
- The most able pupils achieve exceptionally well because they are identified early and given specialist support to help them make rapid progress, especially in English, mathematics and science. It is not uncommon, in this school, for the most able pupils to sit GCSE examinations in mathematics and achieve good results.

- Current pupils across the school are achieving excellent outcomes. Evidence from pupils' books, and observations of teaching, corroborates this. Staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- The school makes very good provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. It has been conscientious in designing policies and resources to meet their needs. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong progress, especially in reading and writing.
- The school does not receive additional funding from the government for disadvantaged pupils. However, the school has created its own systems to identify those pupils who are vulnerable. Some pupils have significant barriers to their learning. School leaders monitor these and all pupils closely. Any barriers to pupils' learning and social and emotional well-being are reduced.
- Pupils make very strong progress in other subjects, including science. Specialist equipment and expertise of staff from a local secondary school are used to accelerate the learning of the most able pupils. Exceptional progress is also evident in Arabic, and high standards are reached, as demonstrated by several pupils from Year 6 who have successfully passed their GCSE to a good level.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The early years provision is outstanding. The leader for the early years is an excellent role model for the staff she manages. She and her team constantly strive to make learning for children inspiring. This leads to rapid progress and children are very well prepared for their transition into Year 1.
- Children start Nursery at age three. When they arrive in school, adults assess their needs carefully and design activities to help them make the most of their time in school. A common theme across the Nursery and Reception classes is the fundamental importance of high-quality interactions between adults and children. This supports an accurate understanding of how to develop the individual skills and knowledge of each child. The tracking and checking of the progress that children make is effective. The results are shared with parents, who also contribute their own views about how to support the development of their child.
- The leader for the early years has built close links with the local authority leader in early years education and with a neighbouring primary school, to enable staff to share best practice. She ensures that staff qualifications and training are maintained to a high standard.
- The learning environment is stimulating and provides exciting opportunities to motivate children to explore and find out things for themselves. This is illustrated by the way adults follow children's interests and help to develop spontaneous learning by asking them, 'What would you like to learn about today?' Preparations are quickly organised, for example to enable children to make pizza dough. Learning is very well structured and resources, both inside and outside, are of high quality. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
- The very warm and supportive interactions between adults and children lead to children feeling secure and happy. Children work very well together, are engrossed in their

learning and show curiosity. They respond very well to adults' instructions and show a good understanding of the expectations and routines that are well established.

- Exceptionally strong links with parents help children to settle quickly when they enter the early years provision. Parents are encouraged to play a full and active part in school life. Opportunities for them to stay and play with their child are provided each day. Staff know children and their families well when they start school and this helps children to feel secure and confident.
- Safeguarding is highly effective. Staff are vigilant in safeguarding children and make swift referrals to the deputy headteacher if they have any concerns. The robust policy and procedures are well-known and understood by all staff, who receive frequent training in many areas.

School details

Unique reference number	136098
DfE registration number	888/6042
Inspection number	10034030

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	167
Number of part-time pupils	17
Proprietor	Fountains of Knowledge
Chair	Imran Ashraf
Headteacher	Khaleda Begum
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,400
Telephone number	01282 618899
Website	www.al-ikhlaas.org
Email address	headteacher@al-ikhlaas.org.uk

Information about this school

- Al-Ikhlaas is a Muslim primary school for boys and girls aged three to 11 years. The school is in Nelson in Lancashire and is owned by the registered charity, Fountains of Knowledge.
- The chair of the governing body is also the proprietor. There are a further four governors, who are also trustees of the charity.
- The board of trustees has recently submitted plans to purchase new premises and further extend the school to include secondary education.
- The aim of the school is to 'inspire children to achieve academic, behavioural and moral excellence, allowing them to live as successful, happy individuals'.

- The school opened in 2010. The school's most recent education inspection was conducted by the Bridge Schools Inspectorate in May 2014. That inspection judged that the school was providing an outstanding quality of education.
- There are no pupils who have a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities or an education, health and care plan.
- A lower proportion of pupils than average speak English as an additional language.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across all classes and key stages. Some observations were conducted jointly by inspectors and senior staff.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, subject leaders and the chair of the governing body, who is also the proprietor.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, scrutinised their work and talked informally with pupils during breaktimes and around school. They also considered pupils' views during more-formal discussions.
- Inspectors took account of the school's own surveys of pupils and parents.
- Inspectors studied a wide range of the school's own information and documentation, including: the school's assessment information; its self-evaluation and plans to raise attainment; records of the checks made on teaching and learning; and records of attendance, behaviour and documents relating to safeguarding.
- The opinions of staff were taken into account through formal and informal discussions, though there were no responses made to Ofsted's questionnaire, Parent View.
- The views of 39 parents who responded to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire were considered. Inspectors spoke to over 15 parents and parents' comments communicated via free text were examined.

Inspection team

Cathy Parkinson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mavis Smith	Ofsted Inspector

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