

Iqra Islamic Primary School, Slough

Review of quality and standards

Carried out by Andy Downing and Gloria Walker, November 18th & 19th 2014.

Brokered by Slough Borough Council on behalf of Iqra Islamic Primary School

Introduction

This two day review of quality and standards has validated the school's own judgements with regard to the quality of education at Iqra Islamic Primary School.

This is an outstanding school.

Achievement

Outstanding

Attainment throughout the school is in line with or above national averages. This picture represents a very significant trend of improvement over the past three years.

EYFS

Within this phase 96% of pupils have English as an Additional Language (EAL). Although many of them have benefitted from Nursery education their attainment on entry is low. By the end of EYFS the proportion of children achieving a good level of development is almost matching the local Slough average. The percentage achieving or exceeding expected levels in all goals was just marginally above the local Slough average. Progress last year in EYFS was outstanding.

Year 1 Phonics Check

Phonics provision is very good and the percentage meeting the expected level far exceeds local and national averages.

Key Stage 1

Outcomes for reading, writing and maths are above national for both L2+ and L3 and the APS is significantly above for all subjects, writing and maths. These outcomes represent a steady and sustained improvement in all subject areas over the past three years.

The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally has closed very significantly in all areas to within 1ppt.

Key Stage 2

A similar trend of sustained and significant improvement can be seen at KS2 where average points are higher than national in all subjects and significantly so in all subjects combined; writing, maths and SPAG (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar). All areas have increased APS year on year since 2012 with the exception of a 0.3ppt drop in reading from last year.

In 2014 boys and pupils in receipt of FSM performed better than national in all subjects combined and separate subjects of reading, writing and maths.

The inspection report of 2012 cited specific Pakistani groups and Black Somali pupils as under-achieving. These groups have made very significant improvements since then. The attainment of Pakistani pupils has increased quite dramatically over the past three years and they now perform in line with national averages for Level 4+. Iqra Pakistani pupils attain significantly higher than national Pakistani pupils at Level 5+ in RWM (Reading, Writing and Mathematics); Writing and SPAG (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar).

The attainment of Black African (mainly Somali) pupils has shown similar improvements such that they now attain significantly above national Black African pupils at both L4+ and L5+ in all subjects.

The attainment of all identified groups of pupils in Iqra is at least in line with national averages with many attaining above this.

The school has been rightly acknowledged for its excellent provision for disadvantaged pupils supported by the Pupil Premium. The attainment of pupils entitled to FSM (Free School Meals) has risen significantly over three years and the gap between them and their peers is closing. FSM pupils in Iqra attain significantly above national FSM pupils at L4+ and L5+ in all areas.

The gap between SEN (Special Educational Needs) and non-SEN pupils is also closing significantly. SEND pupils are monitored extremely accurately and many interventions and programmes are in place to support not only their learning but their social, personal and emotional development. This is evidenced through case studies, detailed provision maps and meticulous record keeping. Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) receive excellent training, are fully involved in monitoring pupil progress and leading work with parents to support the development of the whole child. Parents are fully involved in discussions and decisions relating to their child, and all parents are welcomed into the school community.

Progress of groups and individuals is tracked forensically and as a result of outstanding teaching and timely, targeted interventions it is outstanding. The percentage of pupils making expected progress from KS1 to KS2 (2 levels) is above national for all subjects and is also above for those exceeding expected progress (3 levels) in writing and maths.

Value added is significantly strong in RWM combined and in writing and is above national maths. It is marginally below national in reading.

In reading fewer lower ability pupils than national make expected progress and fewer pupils make greater than expected progress.

The attainment and progress indicated by test data is well reflected in pupils' books and in their progress within lessons. Pupils are given the opportunity to master and consolidate new skills and then to apply them in a meaningful way in problem solving and writing tasks across the curriculum.

The school has a relentless drive for further improvement and would benefit from further development of reading to bring progress into line with maths and writing.

Quality of teaching

Outstanding

Almost all pupils, including those with SEN (Special Educational Needs), disadvantaged pupils and the most able, are making sustained progress that leads to outstanding achievement.

Teachers have a very good understanding of what pupils know, understand and can do and plan their lessons according to the needs of their pupils to enable them to learn exceptionally well across the curriculum. Planning is very well matched to the differing needs of ability groups and individuals within the class to ensure that all pupils can make rapid progress from their different starting points.

Teachers have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve over time and within lessons and plan to maximise progress at all times. The school has collaboratively developed a common format for planning which ensures that in all lessons there are clear objectives and success criteria; defined key vocabulary; grammar, spelling and SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) links; and a clear outline of the lesson shape. However, it is clear that this approach to planning for learning is a framework and guide to teachers and not a straightjacket. It is evident that leaders have given teachers the professional confidence to develop and adapt their teaching to meet the needs of their own children. Most teachers teach lessons on the basis of the learning that they see in lessons and they adapt accordingly.

Twenty three parts of lessons were observed of which the overwhelming majority demonstrated very effective practice. The findings from these lessons matched the evaluations of senior staff. Teachers demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of pedagogy, as well as effective classroom management. In the most successful classrooms, the lesson was interesting, stimulating and pace was very good. In less effective lessons, pace was slower because pupils were less receptive to swiftly following classroom protocols and were not always on task.

In all classes observed, questioning was effective and pupils were generally able to articulate their ideas and respond appropriately when they were asked to answer. Very clear classroom protocols, particularly when working with talk partners and on the carpet, were demonstrated in KS1 lessons. In a Year 1 Maths lesson, the teacher checked constantly that pupils were understanding both the terminology used and the methodology required, and pupils made accelerated progress in their basic number work. In other classrooms, support alongside mainstream pupils was appropriate both for a pupil with hearing impairment and for an autistic pupil.

In the best lessons teachers have an excellent understanding of when to teach directly, when to allow pupils to develop their own ideas and when to intervene according to group or individual need. In two lessons observed teachers kept a very low profile with limited interruption to pupil activities. In another lesson a teacher kept pupils totally engaged by explanation, probing questions and suitable interactions. In all three of these examples pupil learning and progress was very evident. This exemplifies how teachers have the knowledge and confidence to understand how best to use their time to promote learning because they were continually assessing progress and modifying their approach accordingly. In less effective lessons, teachers made unnecessary interruptions to introduce new activities which prevented pupils fully developing their written response.

In all classrooms the learning environment was interesting and stimulating – even to the extent that in one room, it was difficult to find the learning objective, because of the quantities of other information on the wall. The school does need to continually be mindful that pupils are able to access the key information which is made available to them on classroom walls. In corridors pupils' work is displayed with pride. Whiteboards were used in all classrooms to good effect, particularly video clips as a stimulus for writing and a cartoon in science which made the digestive system very easy to understand. In the majority of lessons observed, all pupils were engaged, interested and excited by their learning. Pupils spoke with excitement about recent visits to a church and to a local Sikh school. Respect and tolerance are clearly paramount to learning in this school. Teachers select and use resources very effectively to promote learning.

The quantity of work in exercise books in this the 10th week of term is praiseworthy, and demonstrates teachers' determination to embed concepts as well as offering opportunities for extended writing. Work in topic books and RE books demonstrated the breadth of the curriculum and the learning opportunities offered to pupils in these lessons. In the vast majority of books consistently high quality marking provides feedback based on the intended learning objectives together with next steps focussed on specific skill development. In a small minority of classes these next steps are not consistently used and do not sufficiently indicate what pupils need to do to move to the next level. Marking is generally thorough, with some good examples of peer marking, but the school needs to consider how it can further develop spelling through effective marking.

Teaching is equally effective in the foundation subjects as well as in the core which reflects the schools ambition to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

Outstanding

Without exception, pupils observed in lessons were engaged in their learning, and aware of expectations with regard to classroom behaviour. These expected behaviours and routines for learning start from Reception. Pupils' attitudes to learning are of a very high standard in all areas. They are keen, motivated and diligent in their studies with a thirst for learning.

Pupils demonstrate a huge pride in their school and volunteer positive views without even being prompted. This is so apparent that they will even refer to the four key principles of respect, co-operation, honesty and compassion. This is further reflected in their views gathered through pupil surveys which show that 95% enjoy school and value their education. This was endorsed by the school council who spoke articulately and enthusiastically about their role and the opportunities provided by the school to learn, lead and inspire.

Behaviour in the school is exemplary. Protocols and expectations in classrooms are mirrored as pupils move around the school with little apparent need to be supervised or corrected. A positive ethos pervades the way in which the school operates as a learning community.

Pupils feel safe and this is a priority of the school. It is evident that the school is continuously vigilant regarding pupil safety within school and during external activities. Staff briefings include a weekly update on an aspect of safeguarding. Pupils are aware of e-safety and the appropriate response to any form of discrimination or bullying. The issue of extremism is addressed through the PSHE curriculum and governors are rigorous with regard to safeguarding and child protection. All members of the GB have undertaken training and policies are reviewed regularly. Of particular note is the commitment of the Governing Body to the 'prevent' agenda, and they are leading a conference this week on 'Safeguarding our children and community and addressing radicalisation'. This conference is in conjunction with Thames Valley Police and the Slough cross-faith group.

The school fulfils all statutory requirements related to safeguarding.

Attendance is good being 96.3%, which is above national and persistent absence is below. The school has good procedures for following up attendance issues and has analysed absences by key groups in order to tackle any underlying issues. The attendance of FSM pupils is actually better than non-FSM.

Quality of leadership and management

Outstanding

The effectiveness of Leadership and Management in the school are evidenced by the rapid improvement in achievement and teaching over the past three years. The leadership of the Headteacher is outstanding, and he is empowering a very strong group of senior and middle leaders.

Senior leaders drive the pursuit of excellence, and this is demonstrated in their uncompromising culture of high expectations. The quality assurance systems are both detailed and comprehensive, and there is an expectation through the leadership structure and beyond, that everyone is accountable and the focus is continual school improvement. The school knows itself very well, through regular, systematic self reflection. This enables leaders to have a detailed understanding of the strengths and areas for developments of groups and individuals – both staff and pupils. From this, detailed planning to raise levels of achievement and improve the quality of provision is personalised and monitored for impact. As well as ensuring an appropriately differentiated curriculum offer is made for children, the school also recognises the need to provide staff development opportunities tailored to specific need. NQTs receive a well-structured and carefully monitored programme of support.

Targets set by senior leaders with regard to rates of pupil progress are beyond national expectations, but are not unrealistic. Meticulous detail in all aspects of school management mean that the rigorous implementation of well focussed improvement plans is based on robust self-evaluation. Evidence provided to the Governing Body (GB) by senior leaders is appropriately challenged, but in addition, Governors commission regular external validation of all aspects of the school's performance.

The school has a broad and balanced curriculum which ensures that pupils have the opportunity to make at least good progress across all areas of learning. Planning for the requirements of the new national curriculum is very well developed. Topics have been mapped out for each year group which ensures that all key objectives are met with meaningful cross-curricular links developed where appropriate. Further to this the school has developed its own assessment arrangements, which enables teachers to accurately reflect whether intended learning is emerging, at expected level or exceeded. This intelligence is then used to plan further provision at year group, class and individual level. The curriculum is enriched by a very comprehensive well-planned and targeted programme of educational visits.

An integral part of the planned and informal learning experiences in the school is the development of children's Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development. This is evidenced in classroom planning and practice as well as the way children conduct themselves and engage with peers and adults. Playtimes are well-managed and the number of incidents significantly reduced by the involvement of external support (50 – 50 Sync) as well as the school investing in appropriate play opportunities. This is appreciated by pupils.

The fabric of the building, the quality of learning resources and deployment of support staff, indicates that finances are managed well to support learning. Pupil Premium spending is carefully

targeted and impact monitored. Outcomes can be seen in the progress made by pupils in receipt of additional funding. The school has received a national award for use of Pupil Premium. Sports funding is equally well spent, offering sporting opportunities to pupils that would not otherwise be available. The school has received a Silver Mark for PE and is in the process of aiming for Gold.

The experienced GB play an important part in the leadership and management of the school. Governors are 'active' – they meet regularly and visit frequently, liaising with staff to both challenge and support. All meetings are minuted and link Governor visits recorded too. The Single Central Record and associated documentation is in place. The GB has the requisite skills and understanding to undertake their role very effectively, and a model is in place with regard to succession planning. The Governors believe that external validation is important to the effectiveness of their role, and this supports their monitoring and challenge programme. Iqra is keen to share expertise as well as working with and learning from other schools, and already has links beyond the Borough.