

ZAYTOUNA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Religious School

Inspection Report

Local authority: Derby
Inspected under the auspices of: AMS-UK
Inspection date: 30th April 2025
Lead inspector: Yusuf Seedat

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

Type of school	Primary School
School category	Free School URN 138776
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	mixed
Number on roll	417
Appropriate authority	Board of Governors and Academy Trust (Transform Trust)
Chair	Abdul Bassit Jabbar
Headteacher	Aaron Bird
Date of previous school inspection	March 2017
Address:	500 London Road, Derby, DE24 8WH
Telephone number:	01332383379
Email address:	office@zaytounaprimery.co.uk
School website:	https://www.zaytounaprimery.co.uk/

Introduction

Inspection team

Lead Inspector Yusuf M Seedat

Team Inspector Hasina Varachia

This inspection was carried out by two inspectors. They visited eight lessons or parts of lessons including (collective prayers session 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

Zaytouna Primary School is a larger than average Islamic faith school in the city of Derby. The school's popularity has grown in recent years and it is currently well oversubscribed. Located in a commercial district of the inner-city area, the proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is well above average. This percentage has increased significantly over the past four years. Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a high proportion speak English as an additional language. Pupil mobility is high with only two-thirds of pupils joining the school in Reception. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) including those with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) is below the national average. The school is part of the Transform Multi Academy Trust which comprises twenty-six primary schools across the Nottingham and Derby area. The school also works in partnership with several organisations within the local community. The school's ethos is reflected in its core values of 'Peace, Unity and Equality', which are at the heart of all aspects of school life. The school places high importance on the concept of 'community' and that everyone is a learner and a leader. The senior leadership of the school has experienced significant change over the past year. The headteacher was appointed in September 2023 and a new deputy has been very recently appointed.

Inspection judgments

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

Overall effectiveness: the quality of religious education provided at Zaytouna Primary School is good with outstanding features because:

The school provides pupils with a foundation in both Religious Education and Islamic Studies, equipping them with the knowledge, understanding, and skills required to contribute meaningfully to their communities and broader society. As an Islamic faith school, all pupils share the same religious background, which can limit their prior exposure to other world religions. This places significant importance on the school's role in introducing pupils to a broad range of beliefs, traditions, and worldviews.

All Leaders, especially the Headteacher, are committed to a holistic approach that nurtures pupils' minds through a broad, balanced curriculum, their bodies through enriching sports and activities, and their souls through a meaningful Islamic education. This unified vision is clearly reflected across all aspects of leadership and school planning.

The RE curriculum plays an important role in promoting the school's ethos and values of Peace, Unity and Equality. It is thoughtfully designed to enhance pupils' personal reflection, spiritual development, and appreciation of religious and cultural diversity. The

teaching of RE is well-integrated with wider curriculum areas such as PSHE and SMSC, helping pupils to explore the significance of religion on personal and communal levels.

The Islamic Studies curriculum is fully aligned with the wider curriculum and is delivered without adherence to any specific Madhab, ensuring inclusivity while building pupils' Islamic identity and respect for other faiths. Quranic reading and recitation are an integral part of this offer. Pupil progress in Quranic studies is monitored well by QIS (Quranic and Islamic Studies) staff, with targeted support provided to prevent any pupil from falling behind.

RE lessons are delivered using the PlanBee scheme alongside QIS, ensuring cohesion between the two subjects. Curriculum planning is centralised, enabling all staff to access detailed learning objectives and progression documents. The curriculum has been adapted to meet the specific needs and sensitivities of the school community, supported by embedded Islamic guidance for teacher subject knowledge.

The school enriches the RE curriculum through hands-on learning and first-hand experiences, including visits to places of worship, collective worship events, inter-school projects and festivals such as harvest celebrations. These experiences enhance pupils' cultural capital and deepen their understanding of others. Strong staff-pupil relationships and a culture of mutual respect support the successful delivery of these aims.

Pupils make consistent progress across a broad range of subjects within Religious Education, as reflected in the quality of their work. Teachers set ambitious expectations and deliver well-planned lessons that effectively deepen pupils' knowledge, enhance their understanding, and develop a wide range of skills across the RE curriculum.

Staff actively challenge stereotypes and foster an inclusive school culture through planned and incidental learning opportunities, assemblies, and whole-school events. A supportive and respectful environment, underpinned by strong staff-pupil relationships, enables pupils to engage confidently with diverse perspectives.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To develop formal assessments to capture quantitative data for Religious Education
-The school is already working alongside other schools and RE leaders from across Transform Trust to achieve this.
- To ensure consistently high standards in RE, continued development of teacher subject knowledge remains a priority. While current teaching is strong, ongoing professional development will ensure that the quality of delivery moves consistently towards outstanding across the school.

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

Achievement and progress in Religious Education (RE), Islamic Studies, and Quranic reading at Zaytouna Primary School are consistently good with notable outstanding features. Pupils make strong progress due to a well-sequenced curriculum from EYFS to Year 6, high-quality teaching, and effective assessment and feedback systems. The curriculum ensures a clear progression of knowledge and skills—for example, pupils begin learning about wudu in EYFS and build on this practically in Year 1. Similarly, cross-curricular links enable deeper understanding, such as exploring Jesus (Esa/Isa) across both RE and Islamic Studies in different year groups.

Assessment is robust: Islamic Studies is assessed at the end of each unit, RE through regular quizzes, and Quranic reading via ongoing individual monitoring with feedback recorded in planners to support home learning. Innovative teaching, including 1:1 iPads and personalised Islamic dictionaries, helps pupils revisit and consolidate learning. Showbie is used effectively for feedback, which pupils find motivating and constructive. Teachers provide immediate, purposeful feedback and adapt teaching based on regular data analysis. Lessons are inclusive, with tailored strategies and specialist support for SEND and EAL pupils, including the Ark provision led by language assistants. Quranic reading is delivered by skilled teachers and assessed in real time, ensuring accurate progress with tajweed. The rigour and value placed on Islamic Studies assessments match that of core subjects, reflecting the school's strong commitment to religious learning and holistic development.

Overall, pupils' achievement and progress in RE, Islamic Studies, and Quranic reading at Zaytouna are a testament to a strong curriculum, expert teaching, purposeful assessment, and inclusive support. While the school already demonstrates many outstanding features, its commitment to continuous improvement and collaboration ensures it is well-positioned to raise standards even further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

One area identified for improvement by the school is the development of more formalised quantitative assessment systems for RE. The school is actively working on this in collaboration with other schools and RE leaders across the Transform Trust, to ensure consistent data collection and evaluation methods.

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

Teaching and learning in Religious Education (RE) at Zaytouna Primary School are of a high standard and reflect the school's strong commitment to ensuring all subjects are taught with the same rigour as core subjects. Leaders have clearly articulated what effective learning looks like and ensure that all teaching staff are supported through high-quality professional development. This includes CPD around effective teaching practices and the barriers that some children may face, such as trauma, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), attendance challenges, and social, emotional, and mental health needs. A broad range of data, including attainment, behaviour, attendance, and Leuven scale measures, is used by leaders to inform a holistic understanding of each pupil's development and academic performance.

The RE and Qur'anic and Islamic Studies (QIS) curriculum is well designed and implemented with a clear focus on progression from EYFS to Year 6. It builds year-on-year so that pupils develop a deep and connected understanding of key concepts. For example, learning about *wudu* in EYFS progresses to understanding how to perform it in Year 1, while RE topics about prophets in Christianity are expanded through deeper exploration of Prophet Isa in Islamic Studies in Year 5. The careful sequencing of content supports the development of both academic knowledge and personal reflection, enabling pupils to explore complex and multi-religious themes confidently.

Teachers have good subject knowledge, and their enthusiasm and commitment foster high levels of interest and enjoyment among pupils. In most lessons, activities are thoughtfully planned to support the needs of all learners, including those with SEND and EAL. Lessons are engaging, interactive, and often delivered with a brisk pace and imaginative teaching methods that encourage full participation. Pupils respond positively to this, showing curiosity, engagement, and a willingness to share their thoughts and ideas openly. Teachers ask pertinent questions and manage time effectively to ensure that lessons are purposeful and productive. Independent learning is actively encouraged, empowering pupils to take ownership of their learning journey and develop critical thinking and personal responsibility.

Strong relationships between teachers and pupils underpin the success of the RE curriculum. These relationships enable teachers to provide immediate, useful, and personalised feedback, leading to successful learning outcomes. Feedback is offered both in real time and through the school's digital learning platform, Showbie, where pupils

receive ongoing feedback that reinforces strengths and supports further improvement. Teachers regularly analyse pupil performance and share insights across the staff team, allowing for focused planning and responsive teaching.

The school's agreed lesson design approach provides a consistent framework for teaching, while also giving teachers the confidence to innovate and try new methods. The RE and QIS curriculum is enhanced further through the use of technology, particularly in Key Stage 2 where 1:1 iPads support learning. Pupils can revisit previous lessons and fill any knowledge gaps independently, which supports deeper learning and allows them to track their own progress over time. They also build personal Islamic dictionaries and use voice recordings to reinforce pronunciation and vocabulary.

Behaviour in lessons is exemplary, and pupils are regularly acknowledged for their positive conduct. They are respectful, courteous, and consistently show good manners. This strong behaviour climate contributes significantly to the learning environment, allowing all pupils to thrive.

The delivery of the RE and QIS curriculum prepares children exceptionally well to live and participate in multi-religious and multi-secular societies. Pupils demonstrate respect, interest in others' beliefs, and engage meaningfully with ethical and philosophical discussions. Although quantitative data on further educational destinations is not yet available, anecdotal evidence from families suggests that many pupils go on to undergraduate study, attributing their success to the strong foundation they received at Zaytouna.

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in RE at Zaytouna is good with many outstanding features. The school's ambition to ensure all subjects are taught with high expectations is clearly evident in the planning, delivery, and outcomes in RE and QIS.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

To further improve, the school is focused on enhancing subject knowledge across all teaching staff so that teaching is consistently outstanding in every classroom.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of Religious Education is outstanding because:

The school's Islamic distinctiveness is the golden thread woven throughout its mission and day-to-day life. Leaders at all levels are deeply committed to nurturing pupils through a holistic approach—developing the mind through a broad and balanced curriculum, the body through a wide range of enrichment and sports opportunities, and the soul through a rich and meaningful Islamic education. This shared vision is evident in every aspect of school leadership and planning.

There is a clear and ambitious focus on achieving excellence, particularly in RE and Islamic distinctiveness. Leaders at all levels are passionate in their commitment to becoming one of the best Islamic faith schools. This is exemplified by the leadership of the RE subject leader, who brings expert knowledge and strategic oversight to the role. Regular engagement with Transform Trust networks, a consistently reviewed RE development plan, and thoughtful adaptations to the PSHE curriculum to align with Islamic guidance all demonstrate a careful and responsive approach. Additional resources created by the subject leader, including vocabulary lists and tailored terminology, further support teachers and deepen pupils' understanding.

Governance plays an active and highly effective role in supporting and challenging the school's religious provision. Governors are ambitious for the school's continued success and show this through regular visits, focused discussions in half-termly meetings, and prioritisation of Islamic distinctiveness as a standing agenda item. Their commitment is also reflected in their approval of the necessary resources, including budgeting for staffing to sustain high-quality delivery of both RE and QIS curricula.

Teaching and learning across RE and QIS are guided by a clear, research-informed pedagogy rooted in Rosenshine's principles of effective instruction. The school's teaching and learning policy applies to all subjects and provides a structured lesson design that is understood and applied consistently. Leaders prioritise professional development for staff, ensuring a balance of theoretical understanding and practical application through briefings, INSET sessions, and ongoing coaching. Lesson observations, work scrutiny, planning reviews, and data analysis are used systematically to support teacher development. This triangulated monitoring approach ensures continuous improvement while maintaining teacher wellbeing and manageable workloads.

Leaders recognise that staff are at different points in their professional journey. As such, a well-established package of support is swiftly implemented when concerns arise. This includes mentoring, coaching, and focused interventions led by both middle and senior leaders. Staff feedback confirms the value and impact of this support system in helping improve the quality of teaching and sustaining high standards across the board.

The school's success is also built on strong partnerships with parents and the wider community. Parents express deep appreciation for the school's faith-based ethos and inclusive environment, regularly participating in events such as Parent Forums and school Iftars. Feedback from families is overwhelmingly positive; one parent, during a recent Iftar event, shared, "We do not have family here, but the Iftar has made us feel like we are with our family in school." This sense of belonging contributes to the school's strong reputation and oversubscription status, driven in part by parental advocacy.

Leaders consistently seek ways to celebrate and enrich the Islamic ethos through events and wider opportunities. Recent examples include a successful World Hijab Day, where staff and pupils celebrated the day with pride and reflection, and a visit by Muslim author A.M. Dassau, who led workshops exploring themes of identity and challenging hate through literature.

Zaytouna's leadership demonstrates unwavering dedication to delivering a high-quality RE provision embedded in Islamic values. Through strategic vision, responsive governance, strong parental partnerships, and a nurturing ethos, the school continues to exemplify best practice in faith-based education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

To further enhance the provision, the school aims to strengthen links with other Islamic faith schools and actively explore opportunities for curriculum moderation and collaboration around standards of learning. This will support the sharing of best practices, promote consistency, and drive continued improvement in the quality of education provided.

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

The Islamic curriculum at Zaytouna Primary School is outstanding, with the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship (salat) fully embedded into daily school life. From EYFS to Year 6, Religious Education (RE) and Quranic and Islamic Studies (QIS) are prioritised and taught through a well-structured, progressive scheme of learning. Weekly lessons are enriched with engaging resources including songs, rhymes, PowerPoints, and interactive tools, supporting both knowledge retention and enjoyment.

The curriculum is coherently sequenced to ensure logical progression, with clear links made across RE, QIS, and the wider curriculum. Retrieval activities such as 'last lesson, last term, last year' grids, and greater depth strategies like 'Pattern Spotter' and 'Explain It' are routinely used to strengthen understanding. Teachers check for understanding throughout lessons and adapt teaching accordingly.

Islamic Studies is delivered using modern, engaging approaches that incorporate technology and creative teaching methods to enhance learning. Quranic reading is taught by skilled staff who offer personalised one-to-one support, ensuring pupils develop accurate tajweed and pronunciation. Learning is scaffolded into manageable steps, and pupils benefit from personalised feedback.

Progress is clearly evidenced through children’s work in EYFS and KS1 big books, and digital records on Showbie in KS2. Weekly assessments and continual reviews of curriculum plans ensure responsiveness to pupil needs, while classroom displays and Islamic artefacts enhance the spiritual environment. Children’s achievements in RE and QIS are recognised through weekly assemblies and celebrated via ‘Guiding Lamp’ certificates, reinforcing Islamic values and the school’s ethos.

Spiritual development is a clear strength. Daily collective worship is a consistent part of school life, including daily du’as, Friday Jummah prayers, and Qur’an recitation. Pupils take on leadership roles in worship, including leading adhan and organising prayer spaces, aligning with the school mantra “Everyone a Leader.” Facilities such as a purpose-built prayer hall and wudu areas support worship, and both Muslim and non-Muslim staff and visitors are welcomed to observe or participate.

External validation from Challenge Partners in 2021 praised the quality of the curriculum and its leadership. Looking forward, Zaytouna aims to enhance its provision further through collaboration with other Islamic-faith schools, sharing best practice to ensure continued excellence and relevance in its Islamic curriculum.

The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding because:

The quality of spiritual, moral, social, and cultural (SMSC) development at the school is outstanding and is fully embedded in the daily life, culture, and curriculum. The school provides a rich, coherently planned and inclusive SMSC provision that goes significantly beyond statutory expectations. It nurtures the holistic development of pupils’ mind, body, and soul, fostering confident, reflective, and responsible young people. A wide and diverse range of enriching experiences, both within and beyond the curriculum, help children develop a strong moral compass, understand the world around them, and recognise their role within it.

The curriculum is the primary driver in shaping pupils as respectful and active citizens. Its strong focus on equality, inclusivity, and diversity ensures that all pupils—including those with SEND or from disadvantaged backgrounds—are given the opportunity to thrive in an environment that celebrates difference and encourages respect for all. Nearly 60% of disadvantaged pupils have taken part in at least one extra-curricular activity since

September 2024, reflecting high engagement and the school's commitment to equity of access.

Islamic values are seamlessly integrated across the school's ethos and curriculum, strengthened through partnerships with the Association of Muslim Schools and collaborations with local faith-based and non-faith schools. These links foster interfaith understanding and appreciation. Shared collective worship with Church of England and Catholic schools, and annual visits to a Mosque, Gurdwara, Church and Temple, promote a deep and respectful awareness of different beliefs. Celebrations like Eid and Easter and initiatives such as World Hijab Day showcase the school's inclusive spirit and shared humanity.

Character education is a core priority. The school defines character as a set of positive personal traits and values that guide conduct, promote integrity, and foster resilience. Through its values-based approach and high expectations, children are supported to flourish as Muslims in Derby, and as future global citizens. Pupils are equipped with the qualities and virtues needed to thrive in modern society, reflecting wisely, behaving with empathy, and acting with responsibility.

Mental health is given a strong emphasis. A dedicated Health and Wellbeing Team and three trained Mental Health First Aiders—including the Headteacher—support the emotional and psychological needs of pupils and the wider school community.

From Early Years to Year 6, personal development is mapped across the curriculum and enrichment. Programmes like the SCARF PSHE curriculum and Complete PE embed development in relationships, health, fitness, and citizenship. Children develop an age-appropriate understanding of protected characteristics and demonstrate respect for all individuals and communities. The curriculum actively promotes fundamental British values—democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law, mutual respect, and tolerance. These are taught through assemblies linked to weekly themes, literature, and practical experiences such as Votes for School and events like Remembrance Day. Pupils understand how British values align with Islamic teachings and are encouraged to explore complex moral and ethical issues such as climate change, local environmental concerns, and global justice with empathy and critical awareness.

Pupil leadership is a cornerstone of school life. Opportunities include serving as Eco-Warriors, Prayer Leaders, Sports Leaders, Champions of Change, and representatives in the Transform Trust Children's Parliament. These experiences allow pupils to take initiative, develop leadership qualities, and understand the importance of civic engagement.

Enrichment is broad and carefully aligned with the curriculum. Activities range from Drumba, Arabic, Creative Club, Warhammer, and Dodgeball to more academic clubs like Science, Reading, and History. Initiatives such as Golden Enrichment Time, the Junior Duke Award, and Crest Science Awards support children in developing their talents and interests. Programmes such as Early Bird Enrichment and the Bagel Bar—where nearly two hundred bagels are served across two days—also promote healthy lifestyles.

The school's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is evident through the work of a dedicated diversity leaders' group, which helps ensure representation across the curriculum and school environment. Pupils learn about the nine protected characteristics in an age-appropriate way, and diversity is reflected in all leadership roles. The school's DEI efforts are regularly reviewed in collaboration with the Trust's "Every Voice Counts" programme.

Careers education, while still evolving, is already impactful. Pupils are exposed to a wide range of future pathways through events and partnerships with organisations like the NHS and Armed Forces, helping raise aspirations and connect learning to real-world opportunities.

The school's outstanding SMSC provision is recognised through multiple awards, such as the Music Mark and Excellence in Personal Development. Pupils are reflective, morally aware, and well-prepared to contribute positively to society, with SMSC forming a core part of the school's ethos and success.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

To further strengthen the provision:

- Embed the *Theme of the Week* more consistently across the curriculum and wider school life, ensuring Islamic values are clearly visible, regularly referenced, and meaningfully integrated into daily learning and routines.
- Introduce a more structured and consistent approach for all staff and pupils to engage in daily spiritual practices—such as beginning-of-day, end-of-day, and other key *dua 'as*—with adults modelling these practices to nurture pupils' spiritual growth and embed the school's Islamic ethos in everyday life.

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents are highly positive about the school's provision, ethos, and impact. One parent shared, "*My child has been attending since Reception and absolutely loves going to school. She respects and admires the teachers for instilling Islamic values,*

even though they may not share the same faith. She takes great pride in her role as a prayer leader and serves as a positive role model for her younger siblings.”

While feedback is overwhelmingly supportive, an exceedingly small minority of parents expressed a desire for additional extracurricular opportunities specifically related to Islamic learning—such as optional Qur’anic studies, Hadith enrichment, or Huffaz pathways. The school already offers a strong foundation in Islamic education through its RE and QIS curriculum and spiritual leadership roles like prayer leaders. However, leaders are exploring ways to further enrich this offer and provide even more optional opportunities for pupils who wish to deepen their engagement beyond the classroom.

Glossary

What inspection judgments mean

Grade	Judgment	Description
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.