

Section 14 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

**Assessment of Education
in places other than Recognised Schools**

**Independent School
Review Assessment Report**



Name of School

Shaheeda Zainab Independent Muslim Primary School

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Name of Principal/Director

Dr. Taufiq Sattar

Name of Assessor/s

Lisa Duffy
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Date of Assessment

29th February 2024

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Section 1 Background Information

1.1. School Hours

Opening Time:	08:30		
Closing time:	16:00		
Main breaks during the day:	10:00	to	10:15
	12:00	to	12:30

Is school in operation for more than five years?

Yes

If no, please give date on which school commenced operation

00/00/0000

1.2. Name(s) of principal and/or other teacher(s) interviewed

(Normally interview should take place with the principal)

Dr Taufiq Sattar (principal) and the administrator

1.3. Sources of evidence on which report is based

This assessment report is based on the following sources of evidence:

- Information furnished in form R2 completed by the principal
- An interview with the principal and the school administrator
- Classroom visits
- Observation of a sample of learning tasks completed by the pupils
- Observation of the educational materials in use
- <https://szainabschool.weebly.com/>

Section 2 General Information and School Context

Shaheeda Zainab Independent Muslim Primary School is a co-educational, fee-paying primary school situated in Blanchardstown in West Dublin. It was established in 2014 by Dr Taufiq Sattar and caters for pupils from the Muslim community, with many pupils coming from a Somali, Sudanese or Pakistani background. The school ethos statement states that the aim of the school is “To provide a comprehensive Islamic Religious and Curricular Studies to an exceptional Islamic Standard with an environment suitable to any child irrespective of race, origin or background at an affordable fee that ensures and reflects the Islamic nature of the school.” Pupils from junior infants to sixth class are enrolled in the school. Class sizes are small, and enrolment levels are stable. There is capacity for the school to grow from its present size up to approximately 90 pupils. It is planned that a private Muslim secondary school will be established on site in the future. For the purposes of registration there are 50 children, aged 6 and over, enrolled in the school.

Dr Taufiq Sattar is the school's owner and principal. The administrator in the school, acts as a deputy in his absence. Dr Taufiq Sattar and two other community members constitute the Board of Management. The board meets several times per year, and the minutes of these meetings are recorded.

Positive home/school links are valued and appreciated. Parents are included in school events, such as the annual Sports' Day, food fairs and the annual school show. Clear procedures have been established, and communicated to parents, to ensure the safety of pupils is prioritised. WhatsApp is used as a means of communication between parents and teachers, with English used as the language of communication within the school. The school operates an open-door policy, and parents are encouraged to meet with teachers, by prior appointment, to discuss concerns which they may have about their child. The parents' association meet on a monthly basis, and support the school by assisting at fundraising, donating educational resources or assisting with supervision on school outings.

Section 3 The Principal and Staff

Dr Taufiq is the principal and owner of the school. He, and his wife, live on the campus and are readily available to make decisions relating to the school. His wife also oversees Islamic Studies and Quran. The administrator has been working in the school since it opened in 2014. She demonstrated an excellent understanding of the policies, procedures and the daily running of the school during the assessment.

There are currently six teaching staff, covering Arabic and Islamic Studies in the morning, and four staff members covering Curriculum Studies in the afternoon. The junior classrooms and class 1/2 also benefit from having a classroom assistant. External staff teach a variety of extra-curricular activities. All staff members have received Garda vetting.

Communication is a key strength in the school, with staff members communicating frequently with each other about matters relating to the pupils and the school. Whole school meetings take place once per month. There are also regular separate department meetings. Staff members submit their plans of work in advance to the administrator, who then disseminates them to the parent body.

As indicated on the R2, eight staff members have up to date first aid training.

Section 4 Time Devoted to Education

A copy of the school's calendar for the current school year was provided with the application, with the academic year similar in length to the mainstream academic year. The school opens its gates at 08:30 and staff members meet the children here, supervising them as they assemble. The children receive a staggered 15-minute mid-morning break and a 30-minute lunch break during the day. Junior infants and senior infants finish at 14:45, while the rest of the school finish at 16:00. Attendance levels are described as very good, and a record of attendance is maintained on *Aladdin* software.

Section 5 The Learning Environment

The school is situated in the grounds of Warrenstown House, a former HSE facility, located in Blanchardstown, Dublin 15. The learning environment has been carefully created to provide students with a safe and supportive learning environment. Currently, the school comprises of buildings and prefabs which have been adapted for school and office use. These buildings are situated around an enclosed and securely gated courtyard, which functions as the children's play space. Child friendly murals adorn the walls of the courtyard. The school consists of five classrooms, an office, a kitchen/staff room and a library. Each classroom contains supplies of additional teaching resources and learning aids. All classrooms are equipped with an interactive white board and a school laptop. Pupils' work, and previous projects, are displayed on noticeboards throughout the classrooms. There are ample car parking spaces onsite, and appropriate signage directs visitors to the main gate of the school.

The Shuhada foundation is in the process of erecting a new school building, and it is hoped that these will be available for use in September. It is envisioned that in time, the current school will become a secondary school. A new mosque is almost completed, and it is hoped that the construction of an onsite community centre will begin soon. This centre will be available for school use. There is an Asian Halal food shop on the campus.

Section 6 The Educational Activities

6.1. General information

As stated on the school website, "At Shaheeda Zainab School we balance our curriculum between Islamic & Quran studies and (the) Irish National Curriculum." Arabic, Quran and Islamic Studies take place in the mornings, with Curriculum Studies, informed by the *Primary School Curriculum*, commencing late morning. Approximately two and a half hours are spent on Arabic, Quran and Islamic Studies each week with the remainder of the learning time spent on Curriculum Studies. An array of Irish publications are utilised to offer a broad and balanced provision in Curriculum Studies. Teachers follow a timetable, which were submitted with the R2 application form. Homework is assigned, with teachers in both departments coordinating to ensure that children do not get too much homework in either learning area.

Monthly assemblies take place, led by a different class each month. However, all classes partake in assemblies relating to important events, such as Ramadan. Important links have been established with the local community, with external visitors such as the Gardaí, invited to speak to the children. A very good relationship has also been cultivated with the local secondary school.

6.2. Language and literacy skills

The programme for language and literacy is comprehensive and aims to develop oral, reading and writing skills. *Jolly Phonics* is utilised, with a particular focus on phonics and blends in the junior rooms. Oral work is an integral part of the curriculum. Pupils read a wide array of authors, experience a variety of writing genres, and are exposed to a diverse collection of poetry.

Grammar, punctuation and parts of speech are taught, using the *Starlight* series, which is aligned to the Primary Language Curriculum. Key concepts are revised and practiced using *New Wave English in Practice*.

A school library, as well as individual classroom libraries, are well established in the school. A mobile library, operated by Fingal County Council, also regularly visits. A reading buddy system is established, and children from different grade levels enjoy pairing up for reading time. Pupils partake in World Book Day events.

Pupils in Shaheeda Zainab Independent Muslim Primary School also learn Arabic, and by 6th class are able to read and write in this language. Some pupils can also speak Arabic by the time they complete primary school.

6.3. Numeracy

All strands of the *Primary School Curriculum* are covered, using *Planet Maths* to support and guide learning. *New Wave Mental Maths* is used to revise and consolidate concepts. Educational posters and learning aids are available in each classroom.

6.4. Irish

Irish is taught in all classes, and content is guided by the *Primary School Curriculum*. The *Abair Liom* series is used to support learning. There is an emphasis on oral language development in the junior class, and on activity-based learning.

Children attending an Independent School should be afforded opportunity for the study of Irish, however the study of Irish is not a requirement for registration under Section 14 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. Where Irish is included in the provision, an Independent School may identify students attending that they consider would qualify for an exemption from the study of Irish. Independent Schools can make decisions in consultation with parents regarding arrangements for these children. Any arrangements made in relation to the study of Irish does not entitle students to an exemption from the study of Irish in the event of a subsequent enrolment at a Department of Education recognised school.

Parents of children attending an Independent School should be informed of and acquaint themselves with implications of not taking Irish and/or having a second language. Parents seeking information should consult with the Department of Education www.education.ie and/or the State Examinations Commission www.examinations.ie with regard to the requirement for Irish and/or an additional language.

6.5. Other areas of learning

Pupils are provided with a full and varied curriculum in Shaheeda Zainab Independent Muslim Primary School.

Social Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE): The *Explorers* series of textbooks is used as a support in this learning area, and an integrated, thematic approach is used to explore concepts. Hands-on science experiments are undertaken during Science Week, helping pupils to develop the skills of observation, questioning, predicting, and recording. Pupils also undertake projects at home and present them to the class.

Physical Education (PE): PE for pupils comprises of a variety of outdoor activities. An outdoor basketball net is available in the school yard, as well as an array of PE equipment. Swimming lessons are offered to pupils from senior infants to sixth class. External coaches are engaged to teach GAA and badminton. An annual Sports' Day takes place in the school and parents are welcome to attend this event.

The Arts: Pupils engage in weekly art lessons, and work with a wide range of materials, including paint, clay, and fabric and fibre. Artwork, which enhances the learning environment, is on display throughout the school. Drama is used as a methodology and an annual show also takes place in a nearby hall. Pupils engage in song singing within the classroom.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE): *Primary SPHE -Social, Personal and Health Education for a Happy and Healthy Life* is used as an aid during SPHE classes. Senior pupils learn about online safety and aspects of the *Stay Safe* programme are also taught. Arabic teachers teach relationship and sexuality education to senior pupils. Class rules are on display in the classrooms.

Quran and Islamic Studies: Pupils' moral development is catered for during the study of the Quran and during Islamic Studies classes.

Information Technology (IT): A specialist teacher facilitates a six-week block of coding classes to children from first class upwards each year.

6.6. Special educational needs

Shaheeda Zainab Independent Muslim Primary School is a small, independent school and as such does not have the resources to accept children with complex educational needs. However, children with mild special needs are enrolled, if the school feels that the individual needs of the child can be met. The administrator has a level 6 qualification as a Special Needs Assistant.

Section 7 Assessment and Record Keeping

A comprehensive system for assessment is in place in the school. *Drumcondra* standardised tests in English and Mathematics are administered to all pupils from senior infants to sixth class. Junior infants undertake the *Belfield Infant Assessment Profile*. Termly assessments in mathematics and English are administered and weekly spelling tests are also undertaken. Parents are informed of their child's progress during parent-teacher meetings, which take place twice per year, and a written progress report is provided in December and in June.

Section 8 Other Relevant Information

All staff members have been Garda vetted and have received training in Children First guidelines and in the implementation of the Child Safeguarding Statement. There is an appointed Designated Liaison person (DLP) and Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL), and notices have been prominently displayed in the school office.

Section 9 Evaluation of the Education Provision and Recommendations

In my opinion, pupils attending Shaheeda Zainab Independent Muslim Primary School are in receipt of a standard of education, intellectual, physical, moral, and social that meets requirements for Section 14 registration for pupils attending the school. The reasons I have formed this opinion of the education provision in this school are as follows:

- The quality of the information provided by both the principal and the administrator during the review assessment.
- The commitment of the principal and staff to delivering a comprehensive education, based on the Primary School Curriculum and on Islamic beliefs and principles.
- The learning environment, which consists of interlinked classrooms, a secure outdoor play area and an onsite mosque.
- The positive relationship with parents and the regular communication with them regarding their children's learning.
- The effective implementation of school policies and procedures, resulting in the smooth running of the school.
- The effective communication practices within the school.
- Teacher's curricular planning, which is shared with the parent body.

The findings of the assessment were discussed with the participants on the date of the assessment. The participants were advised that the decision regarding registration would be made by Tusla – the Child and Family Agency: Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service (AEARS).

Following the assessment, a draft report is provided to the principal, along with a Factual Accuracy and Feedback Form, which may be submitted within a specified timeframe, in response to the content of the draft report. The report, along with any information provided on the feedback form for consideration, is brought to the AEARS Registration Panel. The Registration Panel make decisions regarding registration of children in receipt of the education at the Independent School.

Section 10 Discussion of Finding of Report with Principal

The report was discussed with the principal and the administrator at the conclusion of the visit on the 29th February 2024. We discussed the procedures that would follow. It was stated that the recommendation would be to register and retain the pupils of Shaheeda Zainab Independent Muslim Primary School on the register. The final decision regarding registration will be made by the Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service (AEARS) Tusla, Child and Family Agency.

Section 11 Outcome

Outcome of Tusla Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service Panel Regarding Requirements for Section 14 Registration of Children Attending the School

Following the Review Assessment, the Registration Panel decided that children attending Shaheeda Zainab Independent Muslim Primary School will be registered and retained on the register of children receiving an education in a place other than a recognised school as required by Section 14 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.

Registration is subject to a periodic review by the Child and Family Agency