

# Darul Uloom

Darul Uloom, Holcombe Hall, 149 Holcombe Old Road, Holcombe, BURY, Lancashire, BL8 4NG

|  |             |          |
|--|-------------|----------|
| <b>Inspection dates</b>                | 29/10/2013  |          |
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>           | <b>Good</b> | <b>2</b> |
| Outcomes for boarders                  | Good        | 2        |
| Quality of boarding provision and care | Adequate    | 3        |
| Boarders' safety                       | Good        | 2        |
| Leadership and management of boarding  | Good        | 2        |

## Summary of key findings

### The boarding provision is good because

- Students live in a well-ordered community where respect for themselves and others underpins the boarding ethos.
- Students benefit from living in an environment where they feel safe and are kept safe, with clear boundaries and expectations of behaviour clearly laid out for them, which they are comfortable and reassured by.
- Students live in an inclusive environment in which they have a deep sense of pride and where their views matter, achievement is celebrated and the promotion of equality and diversity is strong.
- Although the boarding accommodation has only been judged as adequate and meeting minimum standards, students do not view this as a concern and there is no evidence to suggest it has impacted negatively on students outcomes.

### Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools

## Information about this inspection

The school was first notified about the inspection at 08.55 on the 29/10/2013. This was followed up with an e-mail of confirmation which included greater detail about the inspection process. Inspectors undertook the following techniques to gather evidence; reviewing written policies, procedures and guidance for staff and students. Meeting and speaking with a range of staff who have responsibilities for overseeing and managing the boarding element of the school. Meeting, speaking and spending time with students during non-school hours. This included arranging meetings with age appropriate groups of students to meet and speak with inspectors, having a publicised session where students could meet inspectors informally, with inspectors touring the campus, visiting the boarding areas and engaging students in conversation and with inspectors sharing four meals with students in their dining area. Written survey responses from 60 students were received by Ofsted prior to the inspection. No responses were available from parents, so a number were contacted by telephone during the inspection for their views.

## Inspection team

|                 |                            |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Graham Robinson | Lead social care inspector |
| Shirley Bailey  | Social care inspector      |
| Ian Young       | Social care inspector      |

# Full report

## Information about this school

Darul Uloom Al Arabiya Al Islamiya is an independent boarding school for boys providing both Islamic studies and secondary education. The school caters for pupils of secondary school age as well as senior students.

All the boarding accommodation is located on the school site, within the main building. Currently the school has a total of 396 pupils, 134 who are day pupils and 262 who board. Of those boarding, 121 are under 18.

The boarding provision was last inspected in March 2011.

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

- Continue with the on-going programme to improve the standard of accommodation and general appearance of the boarding accommodation with a view to moving it away from the current adequate judgement.
- The school should consult with Bury Safeguarding Children Board to review and update both its child protection procedures and guidance in the staff handbook, so that it is in line with the latest edition of Working Together to Safeguard Children.
- Written references could be clearer on the designation of the referee, to ensure clarity on who is providing the reference, and on what basis.
- Written records whilst of an adequate standard do not always reflect the level of oversight or the detailed understanding that the leadership team has of the school's strengths and areas for development.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for boarders

### Good

Outcomes achieved by boarding students are good. The ethos, culture and working practices of the school create an inclusive boarding community, which is underpinned by strong, meaningful and supportive relationships. Individual differences are accepted and valued by all living and working at the school. This is recognised and appreciated by students. For example, one who had only been at the school for two months said; 'I have been made welcome and been well looked after by the staff and other students. I am happy to be here.'

Students take great pride and have a strong commitment towards their school. This was evident in their positive response towards the inspection team, along with their enthusiastic participation with the inspection process. Students like living at the school and are enthused and stimulated by their secular and religious studies. The school has developed good relationships with a number of outside bodies, such as local primary schools who bring their own pupils to the school for educational visits. These and educational visits organised by the school for their own students, assist them in developing a sense of self-worth, tolerance and empathy towards others.

Students are satisfied with the levels of on-going consultation between themselves and staff. For example, they cite the genuine open door policy of the headteacher, the suggestion box and role of prefects and senior students as routes for consultation. However, boarders understand and have the confidence to speak directly with staff and senior students who they trust and respect. This results in on-going consultation which allows students to contribute positively to the boarding element of the school. Students also take on a variety of roles and responsibilities within the school. For example, in keeping rooms tidy through to serving food in the dining hall and mentoring younger students. This creates a real sense of community, fostering relationships and respect throughout the boarding population.

Students are settled into a well-ordered environment where boundaries are clear and expectations of behaviour high. They are comfortable and fully accepting of this, which results in them exercising their own strong sense of self-discipline. Behaviour around the campus is excellent. Students are responsive to each other's needs and treat each other with sensitivity, respect and understanding. This tolerance for fellow peers leads to the strong sense of community that exists within the boarding provision. As one boarder says, 'This is an excellent school which provides all the necessary things needed in a boarding school. This school is a very blessed and safe place to be.'

Students have to go through a rigorous application process before a place in the school is offered, giving them an early sense of achievement. They receive good levels of support, which promotes their resilience, self-esteem and independence. This gives them the foundation to go on to prosper socially, emotionally, physically and educationally. This view was supported in the positive feedback received from parents.

### Quality of boarding provision and care

### Adequate

The overall judgement of the boarding provision and care has been judged as adequate. This is due to the quality of the boarding provision. Despite an on-going programme to upgrade and refurbish boarding areas, parts are still waiting for the programme to have an impact. For example, with a minority of bedrooms and a number of corridors and stairwells located within the boarding areas.

Areas of work that have been completed since the last inspection consist of the upgrading to a large proportion of bedrooms in the under 16 accommodation which includes; creating ventilation

to combat damp, plastering and painting walls, the fitting of new electric sockets, fitting of new window blinds along with some rooms benefitting from new beds, carpets and wardrobes. However this work remains in progress, due in the main to a delay caused by the school having to prioritise emergency repairs elsewhere. Senior staff recognise the shortfall regarding the overall quality of accommodation and have plans in place to rectify this.

Some improvement was noted in the general appearance of the whole campus, which is clean, tidy and free from hazards. The majority of students share bedrooms and have the responsibility for keeping them tidy. They can personalise their own space if they choose to do so. Appropriate service contracts are in place for fire, gas and electrical equipment. Students understand the procedures to evacuate the building in case of fire.

Students enjoy good health and a healthy lifestyle; their health needs are promoted positively. Those who are some distance from home are registered with community-based health services to access day-to-day health support. There are appropriate systems and facilities to store, record and administer both prescribed and non-prescribed medication. The school has improved the medical room since the previous inspection by relocating to a larger room that provides improved facilities.

Boarders maintain healthy lifestyles through diet and exercise. The dangers of adopting a lifestyle which may include tobacco, drugs and alcohol is a consistent message given to boarders through education, general social interaction and underpinned by their faith. As a result, students benefit from experiencing good general health and fitness levels.

Students actively engage in a range of activities, individual interests and leisure pursuits which take place during out of school hours. For example, the school has designated outdoor areas located on campus, which facilitate a whole range of physical activities, popular with students. Ideas to improve these facilities identified by students were fed back to senior staff during the inspection.

Feedback from students regarding the quality, quantity and choice of food was overwhelmingly positive. For example, all students who completed surveys either agreed or strongly agreed that food in the school is good. This was backed up in conversations inspectors had with students when sharing meals with them. For example, one student summed up their views by saying; 'The food is very good. We have a balanced diet that includes fruit and vegetables as well as a choice of meat or vegetarian option. The quality of food is excellent and we are served with good portions.' Menus include foods from other cultures and cuisines. Festivals and religious events are celebrated.

Students are well looked after and cared for. The only weakness linked to quality of care, centres on the overall quality of the boarding accommodation. This is located in an old building that requires constant and consistent maintenance to meet the minimum standard. However, students enjoy their life in the school and do not see this as a drawback or as an area of concern.

Students work towards greater independence by taking on shared responsibilities within the school and by extending their outlook externally by participating in community based activities. As a result, students gain a positive view of themselves and others, coupled with a deep sense of pride they have about themselves and their school.

## **Boarders' safety**

## **Good**

Students safety is good. Robust arrangements are in place for their protection. The designated teacher is well trained and knowledgeable on child protection processes, and he maintains appropriate contact with the local safeguarding board, particularly the designated officer. He has

recently proactively ensured that colleagues are suitably trained in recognition and awareness of child protection issues. This is supported by overarching child protection procedures, together with guidance published in the staff handbook, although these have not yet been updated in line with the latest edition of Working Together to Safeguard Children. This level of activity has not yet resulted in a child protection referral, and the effectiveness of the system is therefore untested.

Compliant systems are in place for the recruitment and selection of staff, within the context that many members of staff have been members of the community for many years. Review by inspectors of the files of the most recently appointed staff indicates they are basic but meet statutory requirements. As references are customarily taken from members of the school community, written references could be clearer on the designation of the referee, to ensure clarity on who is providing the reference, and on what basis.

All students surveyed and spoken to by inspectors say that they feel safe. Many mention the recently upgraded CCTV system, which is external to the accommodation, in helping to keep them safe. They are able to describe the suitably clear arrangements in place for them to speak to adults about any concerns they may have. This would customarily be to designated prefects who would draw the matter to the attention of staff members. A formal arrangement is in place for a suitably qualified and experienced Independent Listener to visit regularly, and he is accessible to students to discuss and deal with any issues of concern.

Behaviour management strategies are clear, and regarded by students spoken to as being applied fairly. There is strong and well embedded culture of role modelling amongst the older members of the community and one younger student commented; 'Prefects and staff are our brothers, they care about us.' Good behaviour is therefore the norm, and consideration of the sanctions log indicates that they are only applied occasionally for minor misbehaviour, such as persistently missing prayers. This is customarily dealt with by detention, conducted on a Saturday, although it is not held routinely as there is not sufficient misbehaviour to warrant a weekly session.

A rigorously monitored anti-bullying policy is a significant strength of the school and rare incidents of bullying are negligible and dealt with immediately and appropriately. Bullying is contrary to the values of the school community, and all students and staff members spoken with are able to describe the 'zero tolerance approach' that would be taken if an incidence of bullying occurred. However, all students say they were safe from bullying. This is supported by the addition of a helpful information sheet on the school's approach to bullying contained in the student handbook, which includes the contact details of Childline. The minimal level of bullying within an all-male boarding environment is a major achievement and testimony to the peaceable ethos of the school.

Suitable consideration is given to students' physical safety. A rudimentary but satisfactory system ensures that members of care staff are aware of students whereabouts, with set times for return agreed when they leave the school at weekends. The premises are appropriately equipped with fire escapes and students spoken with are aware of their location and use. The school meets the national minimum standards for the safety of boarders, and in some cases exceeds them, such as when promoting positive behaviour.

## **Leadership and management of boarding**

**Good**

The leadership and management of the boarding provision is good. The headteacher is an effective leader well supported by senior staff: as a result boarding students thrive academically and socially in a supportive and caring environment.

The school has acted on the recommendations of the previous inspection of boarding and has

made good progress in improving the standard of the boarding accommodation. Significant further improvements to the building are needed and work is on-going. It remains a key priority for the leadership team supported by the board of trustees.

The school's boarding principles are clearly understood and owned by students, parents and staff. They work well in practice and the school effectively meets its aim of providing students with a high quality Islamic education that enhances their spiritual and moral development.

The boarding accommodation is suitably staffed by a stable work force with substantial experience. Staff have received recent appropriate training in relevant areas such as fire safety, first aid and child protection. Prefects provide positive role models to younger boys who are appreciative of their help and see them as older brothers.

It is a significant strength of the school that staff demonstrate a high degree of personal accountability and commitment to the welfare of students. This creates a strong sense of community that students respond well to: they behave responsibly and are supportive to each other. Many told inspectors they consider the school to be part of their family.

The school takes into account the views of students through the use of a suggestion box and the headteacher operates an open door policy. Complaints are few and minor in nature. They are dealt with fairly and efficiently. All the students spoken with during the inspection felt listened to within an environment of mutual tolerance and respect.

The headteacher maintains a good level of managerial oversight of all aspects of the school's functioning. Boarding is an integral part of school life and the headteacher and other senior staff visit the boarding areas on a regular unannounced basis. An additional layer of external challenge and scrutiny is provided by the board of trustees.

Written records whilst of an adequate standard do not always reflect the level of oversight or the detailed understanding that the leadership team has of the school's strengths and areas for development.

Relationships with parents are very good. Parents highly value the ease of communication with the school and how thoughtfully the transition from home to boarding is managed enabling their child to get the most out of the boarding experience and flourish in the school environment. One parent described the school as; 'The Eton of Islam.'

Relationships with the wider community are positive. The school is proactive in making links which allow the students to broaden their understanding of other ways of life whilst maintaining a distinct spiritual and cultural identity.

## What inspection judgements mean

| Grade   | Judgement   | Description  |
|---------|-------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements. |
| Grade 2 | Good        | A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.                      |
| Grade 3 | Adequate    | A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.        |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate  | A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.        |



## School details

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 105372   |
| <b>Social care unique reference number</b> | SC008476 |
| <b>DfE registration number</b>             | 351/6007 |

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                       |                    |
| <b>Number of boarders on roll</b>           |                    |
| <b>Gender of boarders</b>                   |                    |
| <b>Age range of boarders</b>                |                    |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                          | Mr A R Limbada     |
| <b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b> | 01/03/2011         |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                     | 01706 826106       |
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