

Jamea Al Kauthar

Jamea Al Kauthar, Islamic College, Ashton Road, LANCASTER, LA1 5AJ

Inspection dates

15/11/2016 to 17/11/2016

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Requires improvement 3

The quality of care and support

Requires improvement 3

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement 3

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement 3

Summary of key findings

The boarding provision requires improvement because

- Although improvements have been made, leaders and managers, including trustees, do not yet operate robust monitoring of the boarding provision, to ensure that all the minimum standards are met.
- Boarders are confident that any complaints will be addressed but not all of their complaints are reviewed by senior managers. Records of complaints lack clarity regarding any management actions taken to improve matters.
- Arrangements for overseeing medication administration are insufficient to ensure all boarder's health needs are consistently met.
- Although there have been significant improvements in how the school provides opportunities for boarders to mix with and learn about people from other faiths, boarders have limited access to the local community for leisure or social integration.
- Although weekends offer plenty of free time, there is limited opportunity for younger boarders to have time to relax and play during the week, and limited activities for them to choose from.
- Boarding staff are largely inexperienced and unqualified. Insufficient detail is recorded about any evaluation of their practice following their induction.
- Some job descriptions do not capture all the elements of work for staff who combine roles such as secretary, boarding and medical oversight.
- The quality of recruitment checks is inconsistent leading to gaps and contradictory information being unresolved.
- External references are not routinely sought for applicants who are ex-boarders.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for boarding schools:

- 15.1 Any staff member or volunteer employed or volunteering in a position working with boarders has a job description reflecting their duties, receives induction training in boarding when newly appointed, and receives regular reviews of their boarding practice, with opportunities for training and continual professional development in boarding.
- 14.1 Schools operate safe recruitment and adopt recruitment procedures in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 18.2 The school's written record of complaints identifies those complaints relating to boarding provision, and action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld).
- 3.1 The school has, and implements effectively, appropriate policies for the care of boarders who are unwell.
- 10.4 Boarders have access to information about events in the world outside the school, and access to local facilities which are appropriate to their age.
- 13.4 The school's leadership and management consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met.
- 13.9 The issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action is taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers to review and update arrangements for ensuring school is engaged in local area initiatives to enhance school safeguarding practice.
- Review activity arrangements, to ensure younger boarders have sufficient free time to play and take part in a range of leisure activities.
- Review arrangements for supporting boarders to enjoy a healthy and balanced diet.

Information about this inspection

The school was contacted on the morning of day one by the lead inspector to announce the inspection. The inspection took place over three days with feedback provided throughout and on day three. During the inspection records and documentation were examined. Interviews took place with boarding pupils of all ages, head of boarding, the principal and staff to secure their views upon the quality of care provided. Parent View responses were also considered. Discussions took place between inspectors and external professionals who know the school. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, including any plans for enhancing the provision. A tour of the premises and grounds was undertaken. Inspectors joined boarders at mealtimes.

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------|----------------------------------|
| Denise Jolly | Lead social care inspector |
| Elaine Clare | Social care regulatory inspector |
| Louise Redfern | Social care regulatory inspector |

Full Report

Information about this school

Jamea Al Kauthar is a Muslim boarding school for girls, founded in 1996, providing both an Islamic and a secular education. There are currently 388 girls on roll, all of whom board, with some coming from overseas. The school is owned by the Al Badr Islamic Trust and the Chair of the Trustees is also the Principal.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Requires improvement

Boarders make academic and personal progress at the school, and work is being undertaken to improve the range of activities and learning available to six formers. They express great pleasure in boarding, and are keen to share with inspectors the benefits of living in a close-knit and supportive community. There are clear and well organised routines for attention to prayer and religious learning, but this means there is less time for boarders to relax and follow leisure activities. Young women from different countries and cultures learn to live together harmoniously under the guidance of staff, many of whom have previously been students at the school. Inspectors observed them helping boarders to enjoy their time at school, work hard, and learn to value and respect everybody's contributions.

Some administration of medication and health awareness programmes fail to fully support boarder's wellbeing. Despite regular monitoring of the medical room, these shortfalls had not been identified, although staff sought to rectify the shortfalls immediately they were raised by inspectors. Boarders develop into young women who are confident, proud of their faith, and have a strong sense of community and responsibility.

Parents value the school, and say that staff exceed their expectations in providing trusted, warm and caring support for their children. Many cite as evidence of their satisfaction that they send more than one child to the school. This view is echoed by girls who say their older sisters had so much fun at school, they wanted to come too. Professionals are positive about how school works with them, although some links, such as with the local authority school safeguarding officer could be improved to enhance an understanding of wider safeguarding networks.

Boarders live in a safe and secure environment because managers have invested in improvements to site security. Staff know how to ensure boarders are kept safe, and the local area protection professional said that managers follow appropriate procedures when concerns are raised about staff. Elements of some records of recruitment are not robust enough to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working at the school.

The head of boarding and principal actively seek to improve the residential provision and have continued to develop and clarify the school development plan. Despite positive relationships, an improving environment, and improving understanding of how to develop residential skills in staff, some minimum standards have not been met regarding the health, safety and activities for boarders, staff development, and oversight of senior managers to ensure progress is sustained and even.

The quality of care and support

Requires improvement

Boarders say they feel safe and happy in boarding because staff listen to them, spend time with them, and provide them with help and guidance to learn about their faith, and about how to become a responsible citizen. They are very proud of their faith, and the

messages they are given about tolerance and helping others. Staff know them well, and demonstrate commitment to their safety and welfare. Boarders often use the phrase, 'They are like my family, I can speak to them at any time'. They use the suggestion box to record many notes of thanks for specific acts of kindness, such as helping them to find lost items, or helping them when they hear of sad news from home, or simply to remark on a member of staff's positive qualities.

Boarders demonstrate a strong sense of community and support for each other. Those who are new to school are partnered with an older, more experienced girl. This helps them to settle in after parents have left them for the first time, and the relationship helps them when they feel homesick or upset. School entry procedures assess their individual suitability for boarding, and ensure they understand the high expectations regarding their conduct and commitment to learning about Islam. Parents say they choose this school because of the strong guidance about their faith and the values they admire, as well as the academic opportunities available. Girls look forwards to their family visit weekends, and use telephones to stay in regular touch. The use of mobile phones is generally prohibited, but this rule is relaxed for overseas boarders, to facilitate ease of communication with their families.

Staff support homework sessions, to help girls to achieve their best outcomes in school work, and there are very clear routines for prayer and religious studies. All girls take part in some domestic activity. Younger ones help to keep their shared bedrooms clean and tidy, while older girls take turns in helping with dining duties such as serving food and helping to clear away, or cleaning the snack kitchens that are used for breakfast and supper. This leaves little time in the week for younger boarders to take part in leisure activity. Most relaxation during the week consists of chatting to their friends, although younger girls told inspectors excitedly about new art, internet and debate clubs that are soon to start. The school has made good progress in developing inter-faith links, and has hosted an event that enabled boarders and visitors to learn about other religions. Feedback from this event is being used to plan further activities that promote understanding between different faith groups.

Access to the local community for all ages is limited to weekend visits when they can be accompanied by their family, or activities organised during school time. Younger girls observed that they would love to explore the surrounding beautiful countryside because they have come from inner-city homes. Older girls said they did not feel confident to visit the local town because it might not be safe. This means the minimum standard is not met because boarders are unable to experience appropriate play, and there is limited engagement with the local community, and no organisation for informal visits to town to enable the students to learn about living in a mixed society, develop skills and leisure interests, and learn about how to keep themselves safe in the wider community.

Mealtimes are busy sociable occasions. Boarders gather to catch up with their friends, talk about their day, and enjoy food which they say has continued to improve since the last inspection. Food mainly reflects their culture, and a vegetarian option is always available. There is popular approval for pasta and pizza dishes, and fruit is available for dessert. However, because boarders provide their own snacks and use the tuckshop to supplement their stocks, they eat a lot of sweet and processed foods. While they demonstrate knowledge about healthy eating, they do not consistently use this to

influence their diet. School provides a 'healthy' tuck shop to encourage them, but boarders prefer pastry and cake to fruit.

Arrangements for healthcare of boarders is organised well, with staff identified to work as medical officers so that there are clear lines of responsibility and accountability in this important area. Staff are trained in medication administration, first aid, and record keeping. The head of boarding regularly monitors how well staff look after boarder's health and wellbeing. However, inspectors found that one young person was not being given eye drops in line with the doctor's instructions, and that another young person who had been self-administering medicated cream was not being monitored sufficiently to ensure it was effective. A third boarder was under the care of a specialist regarding weight management, but there was no health plan in place to ensure school supported her consistently to improve. This fails to meet the minimum standard for ensuring staff effectively implement health policies so that boarders get the medication and health support they need.

Boarders, and the majority of their parents, say that they are very happy in boarding, enjoy being with their friends, and have little to complain about. They were keen to emphasise that they make far more compliments than complaints, and that their concerns are always responded to. They regularly use a suggestions box that is overseen by the student council, who undertake to represent their views to senior staff. Without exception, boarders say they value the approachable nature of the head of boarding. However, records show that not all complaints raised by boarders are referred on to senior staff. Recording of how complaints are resolved is sparse. Managers therefore fail to meet the minimum standard to oversee all complaints to identify and address any trends or patterns.

How well children and young people are protected

Requires improvement

School leaders have invested in an electronic fob system which has greatly improved the security of boarders. Entry to the residential accommodation is limited to those who have access approved, and all movement is recorded electronically. This is extremely popular with boarders. They expressed their delight to inspectors, saying they feel much safer, and like the way that even their parents do not routinely enter their boarding provision. This enhances their privacy as well as their security. Older girls have successfully negotiated early morning exit from the residence, so that they can participate in healthy jogging activity at the start of the day, and all feel that they are being appropriately consulted in the implementation of this scheme.

The managers responsible for health and safety on site take their role seriously, and there are appropriate risk assessments and monitoring systems in place to ensure any hazards or faults are identified, and action is taken to remedy shortfalls. Drills and equipment tests are routinely practised to ensure the boarders know how to act in an emergency. Staff and boarders understand the importance of reporting any environmental concerns, and use established recording systems to highlight any problems. Records show that maintenance is carried out in good time, with an emphasis being placed on effective long-term solutions rather than 'quick fixes'. For example, while removing condensation mould from some bedrooms, the maintenance team is also

exploring how to improve ventilation so that the problem is diminished.

Staff have participated in on-line training programmes about a range of child protection and safeguarding matters, such as helping to prevent extremist influences, forced marriage and other forms of exploitation, as well as raising awareness of how to identify bullying and emotional vulnerability. The head of boarding ensures staff have understood the main elements of their training by regularly testing their knowledge during weekly staff meetings. This helps to improve their capacity to help and protect boarders. Boarders say they feel that staff are 'there for them, understand their needs, and always take the time to spend with them when they need support.' Girls easily identified the 'bullying champion', but said that most issues are low level, easily resolvable, and their anxieties are listened to and acted upon by staff. Records show that school rules about bullying are rigorously implemented. There is an immediate response by senior staff to allegations of bullying, and zero tolerance to physical bullying that ensures the safety of all. Boarders value the input of the independent listener, who now visits school weekly, and plays an active role in supporting girls to understand the impact of their behaviour upon others, and making amends when necessary. Due to consistent application, coupled with a practical approach to mediation and reconciliation and a clear sense of community, there has been a clear reduction in incidents that occur mostly within the younger boarders.

Boarding staff are primarily recruited from within a pool of ex-pupils, and as such are known to the head of boarding and senior managers. Records show that recruitment checks are not always robust enough to identify shortfalls such as an incomplete personal history, or a qualification grade that was claimed as having been achieved but not confirmed by the certificate. Most references are written by staff from within the school, even when employment history shows there to be an alternative. This fails to demonstrate that every effort is made to ensure that all staff are suitable to work in boarding, and does not meet the minimum standard for ensuring safe recruitment.

The report to the trustees fails to include any review of safeguarding policy and practice, and this also limits the development of independent review of how well children are helped and protected by the school.

There has been one, unfounded allegation made against staff, and one external matter of concern that may affect the suitability of a member of staff in a non-regulated post. Both matters are appropriately investigated and suitably overseen by external protection professionals and the police. The head of boarding has appropriate training to undertake the responsibilities of being the lead for safeguarding, but has limited contact with the local authority school safeguarding officer. This limits her understanding of the wider context of local safeguarding initiatives to ensure school operates within up to date local guidance and practice.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement

The head of boarding has taken great strides in assessing the development needs of the boarding provision. She has set out her vision for improvement in a wide-ranging

development plan, which she advises is still a work in progress. She has enrolled on a diploma in boarding management, and is using her learning to modernise the statement of boarding principles, by making it more inclusive and reflective of British values while retaining the important elements of an Islamic school. Her proposals and changes have not yet been considered by the trustees, although the principal plays a daily role in the life of the school. In general, trustees have remained distant from monitoring the quality of boarding provision and records, although there is now a clear plan in place for increased engagement and evaluation of their role in school improvement. However, it is early days in this improvement, and it is too soon for there to be any impact, particularly regarding the shortfalls identified in this inspection, and is identified as a shortfall in meeting the minimum standard for robust management oversight.

Staffing levels provide high quality supervision and accessibility to boarders, and relationships are warm and attentive. New staff undertake an improved induction that covers all essential elements with regard to providing safe and appropriate care. Following the initial period, oversight of boarding practice is informal, and takes place within group staff meetings or one-to-one conversations that are not recorded. At present, staff do not undertake any child care qualification, and are largely inexperienced in providing care to boarders. This limits their capacity to make good progress in acquiring the skills necessary to provide high quality care. Because senior staff do not identify and address development need in a timely way. Due to the efforts of the head of boarding and senior boarding staff, there was no evidence that this impacted upon the quality of care and relationships experienced by boarders, but it fails to meet the minimum standard for ensuring there is appropriate staff supervision and training.

Leaders and managers demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement in the fabric of the school and boarding. Boarders cite many examples of improvement over time related to the comfort of boarding, food quality and choice, and a safer environment. They believe this is because managers listen to them, and want the best for them. All recommendations made at the last inspection have prompted improvement, although the availability of community based activity and social interaction remains limited. However, the shortfalls found during this inspection indicates that progress is patchy. The drive for improvement set out within the development plan and the quality of recording requires more monitoring and analysis, and further discussion and agreement at senior level, to ensure progress continues evenly across all areas of development need.

There is seamless communication between school and boarding staff, to ensure that girls receive care that meets their needs and helps them to make academic and social progress within their community. This helps new pupils to settle in well, and understand what is expected of them because they receive consistent messages about expectation and support throughout their day.

External professionals who work with school, such as the nurse practitioner attached to the local surgery, specialist school technology consultants, and the independent listener are enthusiastic about how well staff promote the safety and welfare of boarders, and their willingness to adapt boarding practice to respond to need, such as increasing the amount of time the independent listener visits school to improve her accessibility to boarders, as well as supporting her to achieve additional qualifications in specific

counselling skills to better support individual young people. Most parents say that staff are accessible, provide a welcoming environment, and support their child to grow and develop into mature and happy Islamic young women.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework.

| Judgement | Description |
|----------------------|---|
| Outstanding | A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced. |
| Good | A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted. |
| Requires improvement | A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good. |
| Inadequate | A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress. |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 131355 |
| Social care unique reference number | SC039275 |
| DfE registration number | 888/6034 |

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.

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| Type of school | Independent Boarding School |
| Number of boarders on roll | 388 |
| Gender of boarders | Girls |
| Age range of boarders | 11 to 20 |
| Proprietor | Mr Fazl Wadee |
| Head of Boarding | Mrs Aneesa Soheil |
| Date of previous boarding inspection | 2-4 June 2015 |
| Telephone number | 01524 389898 |
| Email address | admin@jamea.co.uk |

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