

Darul Uloom

Holcombe Hall, 149 Holcombe Old Road, Holcombe, Bury, Lancashire BL8 4NG

Inspection dates

07/03/2017 to 09/03/2017

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good **2**

The quality of care and support

Good 2

How well children and young people are protected

Good 2

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good 2

Summary of key findings

The boarding provision is good because

- A new senior management team has successfully overturned the serious issues raised at an emergency inspection conducted in January 2016, at which a number of regulations and standards were identified as not being met.
- The excellent communication between pupils and staff promotes high levels of consultation, and boarding pupils have a voice and contribute regularly to certain aspects of the boarding provision. Making choices is well established in daily working practices.
- Although there is still work to complete through the ongoing rolling programme of refurbishment, significant improvements have been made to the boarding areas and around the campus in general.
- Boarding pupils are proud and feel privileged to be members of this school. They enjoy boarding and have excellent relationships with and respect for staff and senior students, and among themselves.
- The management of the school, including boarding, is good. Development plans, prepared by an ambitious management team, are central to the current development phase that the school is in while it looks for continued improvement.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- The school should continue with its rolling programme of refurbishment to support its continued efforts for overall improvement.
- Evidence the work undertaken by trustees in regard to their monitoring duties, as an area for improvement.

Information about this inspection

Notice of the inspection was by telephone call to the school, initially at 8.55 on the first day of the inspection. Details of the inspection were confirmed with the headteacher and followed up by an email, which also contained a letter of confirmation, a letter to parents (Parent View) and a copy of Annex A.

During the inspection, inspectors undertook the following activities: a tour of the campus, including the boarding provision, group discussions with boarding pupils and a drop-in at which pupils came and met with inspectors for more informal conversation. Informal discussions with boarding pupils took place during mealtimes and as inspectors toured the campus after school, in the early evening and early morning to observe routines and the interaction between boarding staff and pupils.

In addition to this, meetings and discussion took place with the headteacher and members of the senior management team, the head of boarding, boarding staff, two of the schools board of trustees and visiting external consultants appointed by the senior management team. Information was taken from the most recent surveys of boarders and parents undertaken by the school themselves, as well as comments made by parents using Ofsted's Parent View site. Contact with the local designated officer was made prior to the inspection commencing.

Inspection team

Graham Robinson

Lead social care inspector

Mark Kersh

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 349 pupils, 139 of whom are day pupils and 210 of whom board. Of those boarding, 108 are under 18. The boarding provision was last inspected in October 2013.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

When the school received its last full inspection of the boarding provision in October 2013, the overall judgement given was good. However, concerns were raised regarding the general physical condition of the boarding areas, which the school was asked to address. In January 2016, an unannounced emergency integrated visit to the school took place following a series of complaints. Although, generally, the complaints were not upheld, a number of regulations and standards were identified as not being met.

A further unannounced monitoring visit took place in October 2016 to check the progress of the action plan produced by the school following January's visit. Here, inspectors found that the school had progressed, having made some significant changes to the overall management of the school. For example, the new headteacher was now being well supported by a reconstructed senior management team and the board of trustees. As a result, a new rolling programme to refurbish the boarding provision was underway. Although there was still work to do, the progress made by October 2016 was enough for the school to meet all the regulations and standards identified as unmet at the January visit.

The boarding element is well integrated with the other aspects of the school. Inspectors received strong indicators from boarding pupils that they are happy, feel safe and enjoy boarding. For example, a pupil spoke for many others when telling inspectors: 'I have been here five years. This place is absolutely fantastic. We all look out for each other.' Another stated: 'I like it here. Boarding is really good. I like the school and feel that it is really safe as well. Everything is really good.'

Communication levels between pupils and boarding staff are high, resulting in pupils having a strong voice within the school. This allows regular consultation to take place. For example, pupils under 16 who have been elected by their peers meet daily with staff members. Here views, concerns, ideas and suggestions are shared and considered. Forums such as this, coupled with the high levels of communication around the boarding area, gives pupils involvement, ownership and a sense of responsibility. This adds to their positive experience of boarding and underpins the progress that they make in all areas of their lives.

Safety is prioritised and promoted well. It is an area that has improved significantly since the visit to the school by Ofsted in January 2016. For example, the school has reviewed and updated its own policies and procedures to ensure that they are fully up to date. Staff demonstrate an understanding of their own role in keeping pupils safe. When the school recognises that it may not have the expertise in some areas, consultants are brought in to advise accordingly. As a result, pupils feel safe and valued.

Boarding is well organised and managed. Since January 2016, there has been a continual focus on improvement. Parents recognise this and are happy for their sons to be in boarding. One summed up the feelings of many when he said: 'My son is very happy at this school and with boarding. I was very concerned before I sent my son to this school. He has just gone into Year 7 last September 2016. Since my son has been

there, he has been very happy and is eager to learn, and he has progressed more than I had expected. I am extremely happy and relaxed now to know that my son is achieving well and progressing well in all subjects.' Another parent said, 'My son has been attending Darul Uloom for over three years. He has built his self-confidence, has good manners and high aspirations. I am very happy with this school and promote it to other parents.'

The quality of care and support

Good

Boarding pupils receive a good standard of care. A combination of dedicated boarding staff and senior students provides pupils with high levels of support and guidance. Parents are confident that their sons are being well looked after, helped by the good levels of communication in place. For example, one parent stated, 'My child's needs are always taken care of immediately, and if I have any concerns we're informed of whom to contact, and this will always resolve the issue immediately.'

Pupils develop a strong sense of friendship and loyalty to each other. One summed this up by telling inspectors, 'It's really good, we are like brothers and a family living together 24/7. We are never bored and there is always someone to talk to.' As well as developing a strong sense of community, a number of pupils raised the subject of cohesion with inspectors, demonstrating their well-rounded view of the world and others. For example, one stated, 'I have been to other institutes. This one is the best, because of togetherness, community cohesion and integration, all of which are pushed by teachers. I very much enjoy it here.' Another took this a step further by telling inspectors, 'It will be our generation that changes things, as we push for integration. Particularly around issues of Islam. I have never met anyone in school who wants to radicalise. Those who do are uneducated and are trying to give Islam a bad name.'

Boarding pupils' health needs are supported positively. All pupils are registered with either their own or a local doctor, with arrangements in place for them to attend the local health centre at which everyday health needs can be addressed. The school has facilities for pupils who become unwell and may require rest. There are appropriate arrangements for storing, administering and recording medication. Immediate action was taken to strengthen recording, following a discussion with inspectors. This quick response reflects the school's positive attitude and commitment to developing practice further.

Pupils enjoy the food provided and are given choices at mealtimes. The quality of food served is excellent. Meals are nourishing and food is plentiful. The menu includes suggestions made by pupils. For example, following consultation, fish and chips has now become a regular feature on the menu at weekends, complementing the usual Asian cuisine served. All dietary needs can be catered for.

Since January 2016, significant improvements to the quality of the boarding accommodation have been achieved. This is due to the creation of a rolling programme of refurbishment that is now well advanced. This committed the school to making a significant financial investment. Work remains to be completed, as reflected in the recently produced development plan that goes through until 2018.

Currently, boarding pupils are benefiting from having had their bedrooms upgraded and refurbished. In addition, new shower and toilet facilities have been created. New carpets are being laid to complement many of the areas that have recently been repainted. Externally, the appearance of the whole school campus has improved due to a determined effort to improve general health and safety issues, for example, the removal of dangerous items from the grounds.

Boarding pupils enjoy their free time and make full use of the recreational facilities provided. They describe a number of activities that they can become involved in and enjoy at weekends, confirming that there is enough to do. Weekend activities are an area being looked at by trustees, and one has taken on some responsibility for organising these.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

The arrangements to protect and keep pupils safe are good. The practices adopted by the school are underpinned by policies that have recently been reviewed and updated. The school has strong links with local safeguarding agencies and also takes specialist advice from consultants. Training for staff in a range of safeguarding areas is up to date. The staff understand their responsibilities, and have the capabilities and knowledge to keep pupils safe.

The ethos, culture, working practices and teachings of the school create an environment in which pupils look out for each other, creating strong bonds, friendships and a real sense of community. The whole school is well ordered. Differences are respected and pupils report a culture in which they feel safe and respected.

Bullying is not an issue of concern to pupils. They say that staff and senior pupils would intervene, should a bullying issue occur, although this rarely happens. A pupil told inspectors: 'I have been here for five years and there is always someone there to help you out. The memories that I have are excellent. We are more than friends: we are brothers.' Another said, 'This is my second year here. There are so many people from different backgrounds and cultures. I have never seen bullying or experienced it.'

All pupils live in a safe environment. Health and safety is an area that previously required improvement. To achieve this, the services of external health and safety consultants were brought in. As a result, significant improvements to all areas of the campus have been achieved. For example, routine checks take place to ensure that safety around the campus is maintained. Service agreements for a range of equipment are in place. Fire drills are timed to ensure that all residential pupils experience a fire drill out of school time. Risk assessments for hazards around the campus and for activities in the community are now in place.

Recruitment and clearance procedures meet with statutory requirement and guidance, with all levels of staff being suitably cleared before they take up their post. All students who are over the age of 18 are also cleared. The school is implementing its policy of rechecking longer serving staff every three years, which is deemed to be good practice.

A new headteacher, a reconstructed senior management team and a new addition to the board of trustees have all worked enthusiastically and energetically to move the school from the position that it found itself in following Ofsted's visit in January 2016 to where it is now. The school is in a transitional period and, although there remains much to do, the work completed has consolidated its position so that it can plan for the future with some confidence. Currently, the school is well organised and is being well managed.

Parents and pupils have retained their confidence in the school and remain supportive. For example, 48 sets of parents posted their views on Ofsted's Parent View as the inspection took place. All comments posted are positive. One represented the views of many by saying: 'My child has been studying here for over five years and has made immense progress. He has flourished, both academically and spiritually, and is looking forward to graduating and starting his university course. He has a strong British Muslim identity and is prepared to give back to society from what he has learned and achieved over the past five to six years. I commend the school for its strong values and ethos, and can positively rate the school highly for its commitment to educating our young boys and preparing them for life in Britain.'

The boarding provision is well organised and managed. Assisted by senior students, boarding staff are experienced and, according to feedback from pupils, helpful and supportive. Training has improved in its variety and regularity, and all boarding staff receive a termly appraisal. This enables them to refresh old skills and develop new ones, which leads to pupils receiving a high consistency of care.

Plans for the future have been thought through, and a written development plan taking the school from 2016 to 2018 is now in place. The strengths and areas for continued development are well understood and freely acknowledged by the senior management team. Alongside the rolling programme to refurbish the boarding areas, which now takes in other parts of the school, policies, procedures and working practices have been reviewed and revised. There is a bright, modern outlook to developing the school, while the culture, ethos and teachings that have been its strength in the past remain intact.

Senior staff and trustees all have responsibility for monitoring the boarding provision. Trustees meet regularly, both as a group and with senior management. They have a regular presence in the boarding areas which staff and pupils find supportive. However, the records of the meetings taking place are brief and do not evidence the work of trustees and the support that they are giving to the management team.

Currently, the school is on a journey of improvement. From the last full inspection of the boarding provision undertaken in October 2013 to the emergency visit conducted in January 2016, little progress had taken place. Indeed, in some areas there had been regression. However, since then there has been a desire, coupled with the energy and willingness to ensure initially that the school met the regulations and standards that it had failed before. Once these were achieved, plans to continue developing the school to and beyond 2018 have been laid. They are realistic and show genuine ambition, reflecting the pride that pupils and staff have in their school.

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

Unique reference number	105372
Social care unique reference number	SC008476
DfE registration number	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.

Type of school	Boarding school
Number of boarders on roll	349
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to 23
Headteacher	Mohammed Atcha
Date of previous boarding inspection	29/10/2013
Telephone number	01706 826106
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