

# Al Jamiah Al Islamiyyah

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Willows Lane, Bolton, Lancashire BL3 4HF

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this boarding school

- Al-Jamiah Al-Islamiyyah was established in 1993 and is an independent boys' day and boarding school with a clear Islamic ethos and religious purpose. Almost all pupils speak English as an additional language. The majority are British Muslims of Bangladeshi or Pakistani heritage, although some attend the school from other European and international countries.
- The school's stated mission is, 'To motivate, inspire, educate and rekindle the spark within the hearts of those youth who are growing up within this country. It aims to provide both religious and secular education to Muslims in an environment which is conducive to their learning and spiritual being.'
- The school is led by an executive principal who has oversight of all aspects of the school's provision. The secular curriculum is led by the school's headteacher.
- The curriculum comprises Islamic studies, which are taught in the morning, and a secular curriculum, taught in the afternoon. The Islamic curriculum includes Quranic exegesis, Arabic literature, Hadith, theology and jurisprudence as well as the study of Arabic. The secular curriculum is taught in English and covers most national curriculum subjects.
- Many pupils remain at the school following their post-16 studies in order to complete their higher-level Islamic qualifications. These prepare them to become Imams and religious leaders within their home communities.
- There is no pupil currently at the school with a statement of special educational need or an education, health and care plan. There are currently 135 boarders at the school.

**Inspection dates:** 16 to 18 May 2017

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The boarding school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** requires improvement

**Date of last inspection:** 8 March 2016

## Key findings from this inspection

This boarding school is good because:

- The effective senior leadership team work well together. The team models the ethos and attitude of continual learning through active monitoring and evaluation in order to improve practice. This includes a positive attitude to compliance with previous unmet national minimum standards.
- Pupils are supported by committed staff, who are being trained to diploma level, and who know the boarders very well. Staff enjoy their work and celebrate and take pride in boarders' achievements.
- Pupils make good progress both academically and personally. They make good use of the wide range of opportunities offered to expand their knowledge, skills and interests. As a result, they build their self-esteem and grow in confidence.
- Pupils speak extremely positively about their boarding experience; they enjoy being part of a 'big family' and the unique experiences of developing their Islamic theology in a boarding school environment.
- The senior leadership team has worked hard to improve the boarding provision and address the previously identified areas of development.

The boarding school's areas for development:

- During the monitoring of the boarding, the trustees could gather views and thoughts of young people and staff on what works well and what could be improved.
- Encourage healthier eating, including fruit and vegetables, less fried food and reduce the use of oil in food. Pupils are asking for more pasta dishes.
- Information on application forms and references need to be more detailed to

provide better evidence with regards to employment gaps and work history.

- The boarding principles and practice need to describe accurately what the school is doing.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

This is a boarding school where pupils are highly motivated and fully engaged in their education. Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils enjoy the experience of meeting others from a range of backgrounds and from European and international communities.

Pupils are motivated in their learning, and their attendance at the school is excellent. Pupils speak positively of their house supervisors and like the way in which the staff look after them. A pupil said, 'The staff are amazing. They made me feel as if I was at home. They offered me help whenever I needed it.'

Pupils are able to participate in activities in the local area, organised by the school. The school has appointed a social activity co-ordinator who, in turn, has instigated the election of representatives from the boarding houses to develop links with the local community. The pupils have come with their suggestions and these have then been actioned by the school. The pupils explore the local area as well as other places of interest further afield. They are members of the Bolton Lads youth club. Pupils spoke positively about using the football facilities at the club on a weekend. Older pupils have taken part in the National Citizen Service programme, a combination of residential and community work helping others, as well as developing new skills and confidence. The school has registered to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and pupils have undertaken a residential canoeing event in the Lake District. These are significant changes made by the senior leadership team to give the pupils a much wider experience in and around their local community.

The pupils experience home-cooked food and eat together as a whole school. Pupils speak positively about the arrangements for eating together, but would like to see more healthy options available. Dietary needs are well met and the kitchen and dining room staff are aware of any pupil allergies.

The school provides internet access for the pupils in the IT suites. Pupils say how much they appreciate this, and how they are able to easily contact their friends and local or overseas family members using Skype, and other forms of social communication. A pay phone is also available for pupils to use.

All staff make safeguarding a high priority for each pupil. They understand the risks and vulnerabilities, especially for pupils from overseas. Key staff have regular welfare meetings to ensure the ongoing well-being of pupils. Pupils enjoy positive and constructive relationships with the adults around them. They identify those individuals they can speak to about any concern. They have daily dialogue with staff

in a relaxed format over meals.

Staff seek pupils' views more formally as well, for example, through the school council and with evaluation questionnaires. However, the school had some difficulty evidencing what they had done in light of the suggestions for improvement made. For example, the school has recently introduced a 'buddy system' to help new pupils settle into their new learning environment. The pupils were very positive about the experience and suggested that the buddy and mentor could spend the day together on an activity that would allow them to get to know each other better. This has yet to be implemented by the senior leadership team, but it would be something the team would consider.

All pupils spoken to highlighted differing staff that they would talk to if they had any concerns. These included supervisors, the pastoral team, or the independent listener, whose information is posted on school noticeboards. This range of individuals shows that there are many adults across the school site that have formed positive and trusting relationships with the pupils. Pupils are aware of the complaints policy and how to make complaints, including using an anonymous complaints box, worry box or suggestion box. No formal complaints have been raised since the last inspection. Pupils have highlighted disagreements between themselves on occasion and have reported some night-time antics. However, these have been addressed by the principal speaking to parents of those pupils concerned.

There are clear behavioural boundaries for pupils. Arrangements to respond to issues such as bullying or poor behaviour are good, and this is supported by the good relationships that are in place between pupils and the staff team.

Pupils are well supported with their education and there is a high expectation of achievement in all areas from the staff team. A monitoring visit completed by an education inspector at the time of this inspection stated that the progress of pupils had shown improvement, particularly in English. Levels of attendance are high due to the boarding provision and the staff's encouragement of the pupils to go to school.

Staff have systems to safely store and administer medication. Illness and health concerns are monitored and recorded. This includes a review of the school's practice around pupils who have asthma. All pupils have a yearly medical check-up and staff have undertaken training around the use of inhalers. This guides staff in their care of pupils. Staff know all of the pupils well. This helps staff to closely monitor the pupils' emotional well-being and mood. Extra support is signposted for those pupils under exam pressures or feeling homesick.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Pupils say that they feel safe, and are safe. Pupils know how to complain and information about the process is easily accessible. Pupils say that there is always someone to talk if they are worried or upset. Pupils trust the staff and the night system of support works effectively. A pupil commented, 'We don't have to go to

them when we're upset; they notice and come to us.'

The designated lead for safeguarding has the necessary training and experience for the role. All staff receive safeguarding training that is commensurate with their duties in the school. As a result, staff understand their role in promoting the welfare of pupils and know how to identify and respond to any concerns that they may have or that pupils bring to them. The comprehensive safeguarding policy has been further updated in the light of new statutory guidance.

Child protection concerns are managed well. There are open lines of communication that support consultation and information sharing with the relevant people in the local authority and other parties. Written records are of a good standard and are held securely. Staff are vigilant and share concerns with colleagues and other professionals as required.

Pupils, who come from a variety of backgrounds, demonstrate an awareness of difference. They give examples of how low-level bullying is addressed by staff, and one pupil said 'they [staff] get to the bottom of things'.

E-safety is well set out in the written guidance, is understood by staff and pupils, and is implemented in practice. Pupils are aware of the importance of the safe use of electronic devices and social media, and understand that there are specified sanctions for breaches of the policy or procedure.

Risk assessment processes are well understood and applied when necessary, for example before undertaking off-site visits. The principal is developing an ongoing framework to enable pupils to take age-appropriate risks, such as going to the local youth club.

Pupils are very knowledgeable about the boundaries and rules, and acknowledge the reasons for them. Pupils are well-behaved, know what acceptable behaviour is, and understand the consequences that staff may give them should they fail to meet the standard. Pupils say that sanctions are applied fairly and consistently and include writing lines, detention, or a phone call home. There has been no recorded instance of the use of physical intervention by staff to ensure the safety of others. Boarding staff record both major and minor sanctions.

Staff recruitment is generally sound. The effective implementation of the policy ensures that suitable people are employed. The new application form and reference pro-forma ensures that a robust approach is taken to ensure that staff members are suitable for the position. However, on one occasion an employment history was not fully completed and gaps in employment had not been explored. This could potentially leave pupils vulnerable, if a potential employee's extensive work history and/or gaps in employment are not adequately explored or explained.

Staff training is thorough, comprehensive and covers a range of areas that ensures staff are equipped with the skills to support boarders. Staff meet regularly as a team to identify any concerns or issues arising, and support is provided to individual staff members. Fifteen members of staff are undertaking the diploma in boarding and residential with children and young people. Alongside this course, some staff, who

have not obtained GSCE in English and maths, are also completing the maths and English functional skills award. This aids staff members' personal development and demonstrates how much the school places value on encouraging this.

Routine maintenance, testing and servicing of equipment provides pupils with a well-maintained, safe and secure physical environment. Health and safety processes are robust, underpinned by detailed risk assessments which are updated to reflect changes in legislation. There have been visits from professionals and advice is sought as necessary to ensure the school is compliant with the necessary regulations.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

Pupils comment positively on the community and family feel of the boarding provision. The boarding provision is integral to the school, as the majority of the children and young people board. The head of boarding of the school oversees the management of the boarding with the support of the principal of the school. This provides accountability and line management for staff.

The aims of the school are evident, and children and young people have high aspirations. They demonstrate tolerance and acceptance. Staff have high expectations and they have created an environment where there is a focus on schoolwork, personal integrity and kindness among children, young people and staff.

The principal provides strong and effective leadership. He has a good grasp of the national minimum standards for boarding. There is a culture of high expectations, and pupils respond positively to this. The pastoral care team ensures that pupils are well cared for and can focus on their education.

The principal has clear plans for improvement, such as identifying the training needs of key staff. Staff are motivated to meet the needs of the pupils. Staff demonstrate a commitment to the pupils, such as making themselves available after hours when a pupil asks for advice or guidance.

The chair of governors is a regular visitor to the school. He holds the principal to account and acts as a critical friend. There are written records of the chair's oversight of the effectiveness of the leadership and management; however, he makes no reference to what the pupils and staff think about the boarding provision when he visits. This does not give pupils and staff the opportunity to raise any concerns, or reflect on their positive experience in the boarding house.

Staff have received a wide range of training. These include both face-to-face and online training, thus raising the staff's awareness of differing subjects including safeguarding, female genital mutilation, and fire safety. The management team has also visited other independent boarding schools to develop both residential and educational staff's awareness of necessary school support systems. As a result, staff are now increasingly able to talk about differing procedures that are in place to help pupils who need support.

The majority of the staff have been previous residents at the school. This has the effect of increasing the feeling of consistency and stability at the school. Staff

turnover within the boarding provision is low and staff report that they enjoy working at the school. Staff have a good knowledge of the different pupils and they have helped to support older students with their studies, and new pupils with getting used to living away from home.

The school's statement of boarding principle does not give a good summary of the residential provision. The principal has introduced so many changes, including developing pupils' interest in sport within local community facilities that these need to be reflected in the statement. The principal spoke about the plan to update the statement and publish it on the website ready for the new intake in September 2017. The statement does detail the ethos of the school and gives good guidance for pupils and parents regarding the residential experience. Staff consistently show a positive view of residence and there are high expectations for the future prospects of the pupils. This is then reciprocated by the aspirations of the pupils, who have ideas of their career progression, including one pupil who stated that he wants to study engineering.

Significant improvements have been made to the physical environment of the boarding houses over the past year. New UVPC casing around the windows has resulted in a decrease in dampness in bedrooms and allowed for all bedrooms to be painted. The pupils all have new lockers, which now have a place to hang clothes and shelving. Pupils report that they like the new décor, highlighting that rooms are now a lot warmer. They personalise their bedrooms appropriately and this reflects their personal choice.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

## Boarding school details

**Social care unique reference number:** SC009423

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Mr S Masters

**Type of school:** Boarding school

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## Inspectors

Elaine Clare: social care inspector

Miss Maria McGranaghan: social care inspector



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