

The British Muslim School

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Latifah Fultali Complex, Lodge Road, West Bromwich B70 8NX

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

The school is an independent boarding and day school for male Muslim children aged between 11 and 16. There are 76 students on roll, 36 of whom board. There were 32 students in residence during this inspection and the school is approved for 40 students to board. Parents pay the costs of education and boarding and students attend from all areas of the country. There are currently no students with education, health and care plans.

Inspection dates: 24 and 26 May 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

The boarding school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 10 March 2020

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Staff warmly welcome students into the boarding provision. The school invites students to attend an open day and an induction day before they start at the school. The boarding manager meets with the students when they arrive at the school to ensure that they know who they can talk to if they have a worry or concern. As a result, students know that prefects, staff and the independent listener are all there to support them from the outset.

In contrast, staff and leaders have not ensured that the boarding accommodation is of a good standard. Leaders have invested in some areas of the boarding house, such as new mattresses for students. But, in places, the accommodation remains dirty and in poor repair. For example, the shower-room wall has many holes in it and there is graffiti on walls and the ceiling. As a result, it is not the homely or inviting environment that staff want for students.

Students can share their views in regular meetings. However, it is not clear that their views are consistently acted on. For example, the students have asked for more leisure and sports equipment; however, this has remained an ongoing action for over a year. Students have limited activities outside school time. This is partly because they only leave the school under the supervision of staff. Staff prepare students for their futures through lessons, but there are very limited opportunities to develop this in practice due to the restrictions on independence. In addition, the limited staffing hinders students' opportunities and choices. Governors have committed to addressing this to develop the school further.

Students learn about a range of issues that support their development. For example, students understand the risks the internet may pose, and about topics such as bullying and diversity. Staff positively reinforce this in the boarding provision, where there is an expectation of kindness and tolerance. As a result, students are keen to support each other, and older students and prefects are role models.

Students get on well with each other. On the rare occasions when there are difficulties, students sort this out among themselves, or they seek support from staff. Staff work hard to help students settle into the school when they are homesick. On a small number of occasions, when students do not settle, the school collaborates with parents and the students to decide whether boarding is right for them. These decisions are taken with the students' best interests at heart.

Staff celebrate students' time at the school when they leave. This includes trips out and celebration events to commemorate their time at the school. Staff commit to doing this as they take great pride in students' achievements and hard work.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Leaders and staff do not ensure that the boarding accommodation is safe from fire risks. For example, evacuation routes were partially blocked by furniture during the inspection. Inspectors raised this concern and staff cleared these routes. Some students told inspectors that they had not completed fire evacuations since the beginning of the school year. Staff were able to show records that indicate evacuations are happening; however, students could not recall taking part in them. This means that staff cannot be assured that students know what to do in an emergency. Some students were worried about the lack of clarity of what they should do if there was a fire. In addition, not all fire doors safely close and some fire doors have holes in them. While this is being addressed, this shows that fire safety is not as embedded as it needs to be. This compromises students' and staff's safety.

Leaders are inconsistent in how they apply safer recruitment principles and statutory guidance. For example, references for new staff are sometimes gained only from family members, and not from previous employers. This weakens the objectivity of those references. In addition, some staff employment histories are incomplete. Leaders addressed this during the inspection, but it remains a weakness in recruitment practice.

Leaders seek and follow advice from statutory partners if there are any concerns about staff. They do this promptly and with the aim of keeping students safe. However, records relating to concerns are not well-maintained and are incomplete. Leaders do not have clear systems in place to monitor safeguarding. This limits opportunities to develop safeguarding practice in the safeguarding lead team. Furthermore, where students have specific safeguarding risks, leaders have not put written procedures in place to mitigate these. However, staff are vigilant to these worries, which helps to keep students safe.

Staff adhere to clear procedures when students feel unwell or need medical advice. Staff are aware of individual students' medical needs and manage these well. Records are accurate and staff administer medication correctly. However, staff do not keep a record of the balance of medication held in the boarding provision. As a result, staff cannot know for certain how much medication is stored in the school or whether any is missing.

Staff respond swiftly on the very rare occasion that students go missing from the school. They call on extra staff as needed and those staff help quickly. When students return, staff meet with them to understand why they left the school. They also talk with parents to share understanding of any worries and provide extra support if needed. This means that students do not go missing again.

Staff and students understand expected behaviours in boarding. Staff and leaders encourage and celebrate positive behaviour. On the rare occasion that students have been unkind to each other, this is promptly addressed. However, records do not

always capture the good work that staff complete with students to help them to make better decisions. This is a missed opportunity to record learning for students and staff to help them in the future.

Students care about each other and talk to staff if they have concerns about their friends. Students are not given responsibility to keep each other safe, but the care and concern they show are an additional safeguard for students who board.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The principal shows strong commitment to students having a positive experience of boarding. He has high expectations of what he wants students to achieve and he and the staff are aspirational for students' futures. The principal is well regarded by students, staff and governors. Despite this, there are areas of leadership that require improvement, such as in monitoring systems, training, recruitment and oversight of health and safety. The principal is aware of shortfalls and is committed to developing those areas.

Leaders can talk about the boarding provision and students in detail. However, monitoring systems are underdeveloped in most areas relating to boarding. For example, there is little evidence of monitoring of, or learning from, safeguarding concerns, incidents, accidents or sanctions, or of this information being shared effectively with governors to aid their oversight and challenge to the school. Leaders and governors are seeking to increase the senior leadership team to support further developments.

Governors have strong loyalty to the school, with some having been in place since the school opened. They are enthusiastic about the school and the vision of its purpose – for Muslim boys to develop academically and within their faith. They are also aware of some shortfalls, for example in the school environment. However, they have not challenged the school to develop enough in all areas. As a result, this limits students' experience of boarding at the school.

Staff have access to basic training, but this is not sufficiently focused on the specific needs of students. For example, staff have not received training in working with students with additional neurodevelopmental needs. However, staff are happy to develop their knowledge so that they can better support the students in their care. Staff are also not all trained in first aid, fire marshalling, and health and safety. This limits the skills and knowledge of staff on duty at times.

Staff are clear about their responsibilities. They feel supported by the principal, each other and the wider school community. Despite the noted shortfalls, the community feel is a central tenet of the school. This augments the family-like experience that leaders and staff aim to provide for students while they are in their care.

Students have good relationships with staff, overall. They can name staff they can go to with any concern. Students are clear that they benefit from staff who role-model the values of their faith. This helps them with their personal and spiritual development. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the boys in their care. They are ambitious for them and want them to succeed in all areas of their lives. Staff make meaningful gestures to students that typify the kind and respectful care they offer, and students appreciate this. As a result, there is a culture of mutual respect in boarding.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard(s) for boarding schools:

- 5.4 Boarding houses and other accommodation provided for boarders is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained, and reasonable adjustments are made to provide adequate accessible accommodation for any boarders with restricted mobility.
- 7.1 The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 10.1 There is an appropriate range and choice of activities for boarders outside teaching time, including sufficient and suitably timed free time each day. Suitable risk assessments are in place for any activities which may put boarders at risk of harm.
- 13.1 The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 15.3 The staff supervising boarders outside teaching time are sufficient in number, training and experience for the age, number and needs of boarders, and the locations and activities involved.

Recommendations

- Ensure that appropriate recording systems are in place for the list of issues to be monitored by the school contained within the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015, and any other areas that are monitored by the school relating to boarding.

- Ensure that the school holds accurate records of any stocks of students' medications.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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: 1267532

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mohammed Kadir Al Hasan

Type of school: Boarding school

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Inspectors

Karol Keenan, Social Care Inspector

Louise Battersby, Social Care Inspector

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