



# Jamea Al Kauthar

Independent Boarding School

Inspection report

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DfES Registration Number 888/6034  
Unique Reference Number 131355  
Inspection number 296320  
Inspection dates 24-25 January 2007  
Reporting inspector Mrs Honoree Gordon HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Age group 11-20	Published 19 February 2007	Reference no. 296320
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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

Jamea Al Kauthar is a Muslim boarding school for girls aged 11 to 20, founded in 1996, providing both an Islamic and an academic education. There are 417 girls on roll, a number which has risen significantly recently. There is a continuous programme of refurbishment of the premises to meet this rise. The school occupies the former Royal Albert hospital buildings, an historic site with extensive grounds not far from the centre of Lancaster. It comprises the boarding house, the school buildings and the *madrassah*, where the Islamic curriculum is taught. The school operates an admission policy of selection by ability.

## Evaluation of the school

Jamea Al Kauthar school has improved significantly in recent years. The school meets nearly all the regulations. The quality of education is satisfactory, with the *madrassah* curriculum a particular strength. The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is outstanding. The parents and the girls are delighted with the education and care the school provides. The school meets the national minimum standard for boarding schools.

## Quality of education

The quality of education is satisfactory, as is the curriculum. It is broad and well balanced with the *madrassah* (traditional Islamic sciences) programme in the morning and National Curriculum subjects in the afternoon. The *madrassah* curriculum meets the school's aim of providing 'opportunities for students to acquire an in-depth understanding of the *Deen* (way of life). It comprises two distinct levels. The first gives pupils a solid foundation in Arabic, Urdu and basic Islamic subjects over two years. Pupils then begin a four-year course leading to an *alimah* (Islamic scholar) diploma in Islamic theology or, in some cases, sixth form students follow a shorter course. Pupils can memorise the whole Qur'an through the *Tahfeez ul Qur'an* programme.

In Years 7 to 9 pupils also study English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), humanities, art, physical education, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. They sit the national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9. In Key Stage 4, pupils

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take up to seven GCSE subjects. Through partnership with Preston College, the school offers a number of AS and A levels, including English, religious education, Urdu, mathematics and biology.

The curriculum policy does not specify the subjects to be taught, the methods to be used nor how subjects will be assessed. It does not give the rationale for the overall curriculum, nor indicate how the *madrassah* curriculum and the afternoon curriculum are to be linked. It does not outline a coherent strategy for raising standards of literacy and numeracy across the school. Planning for National Curriculum subjects is satisfactory, but planning for the *madrassah* curriculum does not show how, or through which subjects, the specific skills that the school wishes to develop are to be taught. The school is addressing this. The curriculum is adequately resourced and the school has benefited from recent investment in new textbooks.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory. Some lessons are good and a few are outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers communicate knowledge effectively and promote good intellectual development, as in some subjects of the *madrassah* curriculum. All staff show the utmost dedication, earning them the respect of all the pupils. They foster excellent attitudes to learning. The teachers use an appropriate level of questioning that encourages pupils to think for themselves. They give pupils many opportunities to solve problems in pairs or groups, to discuss and argue points and so develop their confidence and speaking skills. The teachers usually manage lesson-time very well, but in a small minority of lessons, insufficient learning takes place.

Pupils make at least satisfactory progress over time. Parents, pupils and the school management express a high level of satisfaction with the pupils' achievements in the *madrassah* curriculum. Pupils' performance at GCSE over the last four years is above local and national averages. However, the data that shows pupils' starting points indicate that some of them are capable of even higher achievement. The teachers are suitably qualified for the *madrassah* curriculum, but they do not have the same in-depth specialist knowledge of the National Curriculum subjects they teach. Consequently, in those subjects, they do not always have the skills and strategies required to enable all pupils to reach their full potential. The school is remedying the situation by putting in place a programme for continuous professional development.

There is a good range of strategies for testing and assessing pupil's progress. However, the school does not make good use of this information. As a result, most teachers do not have sufficient knowledge of what the pupils already know and can do and so the planning for lessons does not focus on what the pupils need to do next. The systems for assessing pupils' learning and for monitoring their progress are not rigorous enough to inform the school of how best to improve the teaching and learning. The school has made a start on improving its assessment procedures.

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## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. The school's aims emphasise acquiring an in-depth knowledge and love of Islam and on instilling religious and moral values. The morning Islamic curriculum and the 24-hour community life as boarders develop this very well. The school actively promotes tolerance of other races and religions, for example through the PSHE and citizenship programme and through invited speakers explaining their beliefs. This awareness prepares pupils well for their future life in a multicultural society. The curriculum develops individuals who can think for themselves, whilst also considering the needs of others. Through living together as a community and through their opportunities to have a say in life in school, pupils are learning how to make a strong and positive contribution to society. Many pupils are motivated through their experience at Jamea Al Kauthar to go on to choose careers in teaching.

The recent welfare inspection report by the Commission for Social Care Inspection talked of 'an orderly community' and 'a nurturing environment'; this inspection agrees. The views of parents and the discussions with pupils back this up overwhelmingly. The pupils are confident and cheerful. The trust and respect which exist between pupils and staff encourage outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning. An Islamic code of behaviour is followed at all times. A merit system encourages good behaviour, with clear sanctions if behaviour falls below the expected standard. One parent's comment summed up the views of the parents well, complimenting the school on 'turning out beautiful human beings'.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good and meets all the regulations. The systems for safeguarding pupils are robust. All the required policies to underpin this are in place. The school meets its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

A Health Promotion Officer is driving forward the school's work towards the Healthy School Standard, with a particular focus on pupils' emotional well-being, but also with initiatives aimed at a healthy lifestyle. Links with outside agencies such as the medical and dental services and the police reinforce teaching about health and hygiene and raise pupils' awareness of how to keep themselves safe.

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This is a close-knit community, where pupils support one another and older pupils help younger ones. Pupils are able to have a say in matters relating to their welfare and to put forward suggestions for consideration. Parents' and pupils' questionnaires, without exception, said they had no concerns over pupils' welfare, health and safety. One pupil's comment was typical: 'I have everything I need here'. Many commented that it was as if at home.

### Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school meets the regulations. All the required checks are completed on staff appointed to the school, including a check with the Criminal Records Bureau.

### School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises are good. There are classrooms, *the madrassah* and some specialist rooms. A link with Preston College has provided a science room and an additional ICT room on site. There is a prayer room and two large, multi-purpose halls used for talks, prayer, drama and meals. The school is, for the most part, spacious, warm and comfortable. The pupils benefit from the extensive gardens surrounding the school for some practical work related to lessons and for relaxation and exercise.

The four boarding houses (*Dars*) have benefited from considerable recent improvement and now provide satisfactory accommodation. Some rooms have been recently upgraded. The *Dar Apas*, who run the boarding houses, comment on the extent to which the accommodation, facilities, decoration and care have improved since they themselves were pupils at the school. There are some deficiencies in bathrooms but the school's continuous programme of refurbishment is dealing with this.

The school's management have attended to any matters brought to their attention by previous inspections. For example, the kitchen and the cleaning are now satisfactory and the recommendations of the fire service have been completed before the due date.

### Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has a clearly written prospectus which sets out all the information required for parents. It lists what additional information can be obtained by contacting the school. Parents receive written reports on their children's progress twice per year. A programme permitting some weekends home for pupils and visits by parents to school allows for good communication between school and home.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The procedures for handling complaints meet all the regulations. There have been no complaints in the last year.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum, teaching and assessment (standard 1) and must:

- provide details in the curriculum policy of which subjects are to be taught, how skills are to be developed across the different subjects and how the two parts of the curriculum are linked (paragraph 1(2))
- ascertain pupils' prior attainment and aptitudes in all subjects and use the information to plan lessons which build on this (paragraph 1(3(d)))
- develop more rigorous systems for assessing the progress of individual pupils and analyse this data this to determine the school's plans for how to improve teaching and learning (paragraph 1(3)(g)).

## What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following point for development:

- establish a formalised strategy throughout the school for the development of literacy.





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## School details

Name of school	Jamea Al Kauthar		
DfES number	888 6034		
Unique reference number	131355		
Type of school	Muslim Boarding School		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1996		
Age range of pupils	11-20		
Gender of pupils	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 417	Total: 417
Number of boarders	Boys: 0	Girls: 417	Total:417
Annual fees (boarders)	£2,000		
Address of school	Jamea Al Kauthar Ashton Road Lancaster Lancashire LA1 5AJ		
Telephone number	01524 389957/389898/389595		
Fax number	01524 389333		
Email address	admin@jamea.co.uk		
Headteacher	Ms Anisa Soheil		
Proprietor	Albadr Islamic Trust		
Reporting inspector	Mrs Honoree Gordon HMI		
Dates of inspection	24-25 January 2007		