

Kassim Darwish Grammar School for Boys

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	352/6049
Unique Reference Number	131979
Inspection number	320168
Inspection dates	22-23 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi

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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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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Kassim Darwish Grammar School for Boys is an independent Muslim school for boys aged from 11 to 16 years. Admission is by entry examination and interview. There are 153 students of various ethnic heritages who come from all over Manchester and neighbouring towns. Most students are either bilingual or at advanced stages of learning English as an additional language and none has a statement of special educational need.

The school is situated in a quiet residential area of south Manchester. It is housed in a Victorian Grade II listed building of great architectural interest. It was founded in 1999 by the Manchester Islamic Trust that also runs Manchester Muslim Preparatory School and Manchester Islamic School for Girls. This is the school's first published inspection report.

The school aims to '*promote the intellectual, moral, social and physical development of all students; encourage students to strive for the highest possible standards in all they do and to achieve their personal best; encourage a high standard of personal behaviour, high moral values, together with respect for and tolerance of other cultures in society.*'

Evaluation of the school

Kassim Darwish Grammar School for Boys meets its aims very successfully and provides an outstanding quality of education based on a curriculum that is directly relevant to students' needs and enables them to make outstanding progress, particularly in basic skills and personal development. Its care provision is good. The headteacher is an outstanding leader who leads a strong team of dedicated senior managers and teachers. The school complies with all the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. Its breadth and balance ensure provision for a wide range of basic skills that prepares students very well for the next stage of their education and future lives. In Key Stage 3, all students study Arabic and French in addition to most of the National Curriculum subjects and some also take up Urdu. The Islamic studies curriculum includes the study of the major world religions.

Qur'anic studies are centred on the explanation, memorisation and recitation of Qur'anic verses. In Year 9, science expands into separate biology, chemistry and physics. Students are examined in eight compulsory subjects at GCSE level and also in two options which they choose from Arabic, Urdu, French, art, history and geography. Two strengths of the curriculum are its planning and the monitoring of its relevance to the needs of the individual student. Potential problems are identified early and intervention measures are implemented to support those students who need it. Also, students who show high ability in Arabic, Urdu and mathematics are fast-tracked to take their GCSE examinations early. Provision for the more able students is exceptionally well planned in mathematics, where students who have taken their GCSE in Year 10 can then start an AS course in core mathematics, which enables them to take up further mathematics when they begin an A-Level course. The school plans to fast-track students in other subjects. Provision is also exceptionally good in English language and literature, the three sciences, Islamic studies, history, art and Urdu. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is good and ICT is used well in most subjects. Provision for physical education is satisfactory. The curriculum is generally well resourced. Teachers plan a wide range of cross-curricular links that make students' learning more meaningful and they promote the Islamic ethos of the school very successfully in and out of lessons. Personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is taught discretely and through subjects and it reflects the Islamic ethos of the school. Students receive good guidance to make informed choices about their future career paths. In the last three years, the school has developed a fairly rich and varied programme of extra-curricular activities and educational visits aimed at enhancing students' sports, creative, intellectual and communication skills. It has rightly identified the need to expand this provision further.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good, and has outstanding features. Senior managers and heads of department monitor the quality of teaching and learning very closely by observing lessons, monitoring homework and scrutinising students' planners and exercise books. They use the information they collect to inform the professional development of individual teachers and make improvements in planning and in assessment where relevant. There are effective systems in place to track individual students' progress rigorously.

A high proportion of the teaching is good or outstanding and there is a small minority of satisfactory teaching. Where the teaching is at least good, it has a confident style underpinned by expert subject knowledge and an excellent understanding of how to make the topic relevant to students' interests and experiences so that they become actively engaged and appreciate the practical application of their learning. This teaching uses its good knowledge of individual students effectively to plan activities that are well matched to their needs and also to stretch them. It promotes independent thinking and learning through a wide range of methods. The teaching is outstanding when it is dynamic and highly challenging, even at times passionate, engendering enthusiasm and a high level of enjoyment and creativity. When the teaching is not based on specialist knowledge of the subject or teaching

methodologies, lesson introductions sometimes lack clarity, and practical activities are not managed with sufficient confidence, resulting in only satisfactory learning. Staff establish excellent relationships with students in and out of lessons, which creates a relaxed but purposeful atmosphere driven by love for learning and a desire to excel. Students are shown exactly how to improve through constructive verbal feedback, generally good quality marking, the regular setting of challenging learning targets and frequent reviews of their progress.

As a result of the outstanding curriculum and good teaching and assessment, students make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points. In the Key Stage 3 national tests, their performance is exceptionally high in mathematics. A very high proportion of students attain at least five A* to C grades in English language and literature, mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, ICT, Islamic studies, history, art and Urdu. This trend has been maintained over the last three years. The school ranks amongst the four top schools in Manchester for the value it adds to students' achievements.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

Provision for students' personal development is outstanding. The vast majority of students love their school, as reflected in their very good attendance. When asked what they like best about their school, they reply *'the secure Islamic environment, the relationships based on mutual respect, the friendly atmosphere, the good quality teaching and the individual attention afforded by small classes.'* A Year 11 student expressed most eloquently his peers' views when he said, *'I am a Muslim because I was born into a Muslim family. This school makes you realise what Islam is, makes you feel it. I now know why I follow Islam.'* A Year 8 boy explained how students gain spiritual fulfilment, confidence and independence by taking part in the annual *umrah* (lesser pilgrimage) trip. Students are helped to develop their spirituality through daily discussions around the *'hadith* (saying of Prophet Muhammad) of the day' and through weekly after-school sessions in which they explore the deeper aspect of prayer. Islamic and Qur'anic studies, PHSCE, assemblies and the reward system make a strong contribution to moral education. As a result, students' behaviour is outstanding. They are respectful of others, considerate and friendly. They are encouraged to develop a strong sense of brotherhood free from racism, in the confidence that the school will deal robustly with any unacceptable behaviour.

Students' cultural awareness is fostered extremely well by several areas of the curriculum and by enrichment activities. For example, students took part in a national art competition and had their work exhibited in a public gallery. They gain a practical understanding of cultural and religious diversity by visiting places of worship and through interfaith exchanges with a local Christian school.

Students have opportunities to contribute to school life and develop leadership skills by becoming prefects or members of the students' council. Although they have contributed to improvements around the school through the council, students have yet to make contributions of a higher order and shoulder wider responsibilities. The

citizenship programme gives them a broad overview of public institutions and services and the opportunity to contribute to the local community, for example, by participating in the restoration of a monastery.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

This aspect of the provision is good. Students develop a good understanding of how to be healthy and stay safe through the curriculum, Islamic guidance and the vigilant supervision of caring staff. Most students choose to eat the nutritious and well-balanced meals cooked on the premises. However, the school does not discourage the consumption of crisps sufficiently robustly at break time. Opportunities for physical exercise have recently improved with the addition of two all-weather pitches and cricket practice nets. All the policies and procedures aimed at minimising risks and safeguarding students in all circumstances are in place and implemented. The school has a zero tolerance of bad behaviour and instances of bullying are very rare. Consequently, students feel safe and they enjoy learning in an orderly and friendly environment. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has carried out the necessary safeguarding checks on all staff and the single central register of these is maintained as required.

School's premises and accommodation

The school uses the Victorian premises creatively to provide safe and suitable teaching accommodation within the limits imposed by the listed buildings regulations. Plans to improve the premises further are at hand and include the development of the play area.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Parents and others receive a wide range of accurate information. Parents and students are consulted regularly via questionnaires and meetings. Parents have two formal opportunities to meet their sons' teachers to discuss their progress. They receive two detailed reports that are of fairly good quality. However, not all teachers' comments are subject-specific. Consequently, not all parents feel sufficiently well informed of their sons' progress.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has suitable procedures to handle complaints fairly and promptly.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

What the school could do to improve further

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

- improve to good the small proportion of satisfactory teaching
- expand further the enrichment programme
- raise the profile of the students' council
- improve the quality of reporting to parents.

School details

Name of school	Kassim Darwish Grammar School for Boys
DCSF number	352/6049
Unique reference number	131979
Type of school	Muslim day school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1999
Age range of students	11-16 years
Gender of students	Boys
Number on roll	153
Annual fees	£5,170 (plus £390 with meals)
Address of school	Hartley Hall Alexandra Road South Chorlton-cum-Hardy Manchester Lancashire M16 8NH
Telephone number	0161 860 7676
Fax number	0161 860 0011
Email address	pa@kdgrammar.co.uk
Headteacher	Mrs Mona Mohamed
Proprietor	Manchester Islamic Educational Trust Ltd
Reporting inspector	Mrs Michèle Messaoudi
Dates of inspection	22-23 January 2008