

# Jamea Al Kauthar

Independent school inspection report

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URN for registered social care	SC 039275
Inspection number	344440
Inspection dates	21-22 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Gillian Smith
Social care inspector	Elaine Clare

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended. The inspection of boarding was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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Age group: 11-20

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A<sup>1</sup> of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005<sup>2</sup>, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000<sup>3</sup> having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.

## 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. It aims to instil religious and moral values and produce independent individuals who are sensitive to the needs of others. There are currently 401 girls on roll, of whom around half are above compulsory school age. These older students attend Islamic theology courses each morning and other courses provided by Preston Sixth Form College in the afternoon. 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. The school's previous social care inspection took place in December 2006 and its most recent inspection of education was January 2007.

## Evaluation of the school

Jamea Al Kauthar provides an outstanding quality of education and fulfils its aims exceptionally well. It has improved markedly in many areas of its provision since its last inspection and now meets all the regulations for independent schools. Inspired by an excellent curriculum and outstanding teaching, students work exceptionally hard and make outstanding progress in their learning. Procedures for safeguarding students and to ensure their welfare, health and safety are outstanding. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, along with their behaviour, is outstanding. The quality of boarding provision is good and the school meets almost all of the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

<sup>3</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga\\_20000014\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000014_en_1)

## Quality of education

The overall quality of education and the curriculum have improved since the last inspection and are now outstanding. The overwhelming majority of the education and care staff also reside at the school and their seamless collaboration and shared expectations underpin the school's outstanding success in meeting its aims. Parents and their children are rightly delighted with the excellent balance the school provides between Islamic and secular education. The madrassah (traditional Islamic sciences) programme is taught in the morning and National Curriculum subjects in the afternoon. The madrassah curriculum provides very good opportunities for students to develop an in-depth understanding of the Deen (way of life). It comprises two levels; the first gives students a very solid foundation in Arabic, Urdu and basic Islamic subjects over two years. Students then begin a four-year course leading to an alimah (Islamic scholar) diploma in Islamic theology. While some sixth form students follow a shorter course, a significant number of students are in the process of memorising the whole Qur'an through the demanding Tahfeez ul Qur'an programme.

The school's detailed curriculum policy and accompanying schemes of work provide a firm basis for subject and lesson planning. The school provides a very good range of experiences for students in all the required areas of learning. Throughout the school, literacy and numeracy are planned particularly well. Work in all subjects is very well-matched to the full range of students' abilities. Provision for physical education is good. Facilities, including the spacious sports hall, tennis court and extensive grounds, permit students to undertake individual and team sports such as basketball, netball and rounders. These activities make a good contribution to students' personal development. Work in art and design and technology within an Islamic context is outstanding. Visitors have included students from abroad as well as religiously contrasting maintained schools and these experiences support personal development very well.

Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is very effective. There is a vast array of opportunities in the Islamic and secular curricula for students to discuss important and relevant matters. This results in students developing exemplary manners and consideration for others. Good links with the careers service ensure students receive comprehensive advice on the options available when they leave. The range of extra-curricular activities has increased since the last inspection. Students participate in and help to organise a wide range of activities including sporting and fund raising events. Poetry is also encouraged and several students recently had their poems published as a result of entering a national competition. These experiences contribute very well to students' personal development and help to prepare them for the responsibilities and experiences they will have as adults. Care staff play their full part in supporting students' personal development.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding. Working within an extraordinary calm and supportive atmosphere these highly motivated students work very hard and make outstanding progress. The school has excellent systems to

record students' progress over time and these are used to demonstrate progress from their original starting points. Frequent review meetings ensure that any under-achievement is identified early and supportive strategies put in place. The quality of marking is excellent. Teachers' insightful comments ensure that students know exactly how well they are doing and how they can improve.

The overwhelming majority achieve high grades in English language, literature, mathematics and science at GCSE level. Sixth form students do very well in their studies and this includes good performance in information and communication technology (ICT) accreditation. Students also perform extremely well in gaining accreditations in Islamic studies. The range of learning resources is good overall. There are plenty of text books and students make good use of the computing facilities that are shared with post-16 students studying with Preston College.

There are many opportunities to gain nationally recognised qualifications. These include GCSE level courses, several short courses and Islamic studies courses. The range of accreditations has increased since the last inspection although Key Stage 4 students are unable to undertake a nationally recognized qualification in ICT. Through the excellent partnership with Preston College, the school offers a good number of AS and A levels including English, religious education, Urdu, mathematics and biology.

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

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Parents are delighted with every area of the school's work. They especially appreciate the way the school meets its aims in helping their daughters to develop into responsible, self-assured young adults. Students share these very positive views and regard the school as a second home. Their moral and social development is outstanding. One student commented, 'Jamea is a place of love and harmony, I've never felt so much peace anywhere else in my life. It's a place of sisterhood and unity. I love it here.'

Students' strong work ethic and outstanding attitudes are instilled most effectively through the school's clear and very consistent expectations. Provision for students' personal development is most effectively reinforced by exceptionally close collaboration between school and boarding provision. These two elements of school life dovetail to provide a nurturing environment which develops students' sense of personal and social responsibility most effectively. All adults provide outstanding role models and promote tolerance and harmony between different cultures exceptionally well. Students are extremely proud of their school and Islamic identity and develop into impeccably behaved young adults. Students' attendance is outstanding. While their ready participation in daily prayers contributes significantly to their spiritual development, they retain the ability to understand and empathise with those who hold opposing cultural and religious views. Visitors from the community, such as the careers service and health workers, inform students about public institutions and

services. Students contribute very well to the school community through activities, such as helping to organise the weekly Nadia talent shows, tennis and netball matches and debating at the Dawah preach forum. Students also make articles to sell for charity and support others at the Sister Circle drop in sessions. These activities also equip students exceptionally well for the challenges they may meet after they have left school.

## Welfare, health and safety of the students

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. Parents express entirely positive views about the care the school provides, with one parent commenting, 'If I had 10 daughters, I would send them all to Jamea Al Kauthar.' Students share this view and say they feel exceptionally safe within the school premises. There is very little bullying. They feel very well supported by all adults and through, for example, the Sister Circle peer mentoring group that operates at the weekend. Students know what they should do in order to lead a healthy life style and the school council, for example, led an initiative which resulted in the provision of a wider range of fresh fruit and vegetables at meal times.

The school runs very smoothly and the school has all the required policies and procedures in place. Comprehensive risk assessment procedures highlight potential hazards in relation to premises and activities and the school acts quickly on any findings. Child protection and fire safety procedures are in place and staff training is fully up to date. The school has a three year plan that fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act (2002).

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school's recruitment procedures are rigorous and consistently implemented. The school meets all regulations regarding staff checks and maintenance of the single central register.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school's extensive premises provide good accommodation that provides a safe and suitable environment for effective learning. The on-going repair and refurbishment programme is upgrading many facilities, such as the bathrooms and showers, as well as the flooring within boarding and school accommodation. The imposing main building accommodates school offices and the main dining room, four spacious boarding houses (Dars), classrooms for older students who are studying with Preston College and specialist ICT and science rooms. National Curriculum lessons and Islamic theology lessons take place within a separate, soundly maintained single storey teaching block and the stone built madrassah. The school is located within 20 acres of landscaped gardens and these are used well for relaxation, exercise and lessons such as practical elements of science.

While the school continues to refurbish the boarding accommodation, there remain some areas for improvement identified which the school should address. These are explained in the section on the effectiveness of boarding provision.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides all the required information for parents and prospective parents and also includes valuable information about boarding. Information is clearly presented, accurate and up to date.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a fair and comprehensive process for handling complaints. Parents have access to a formal hearing with the governors if required. No complaints have proceeded to this formal stage in the last 12 months.

## Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The quality of boarding at this school is good and meets almost all the required national minimum standards. The school is well run and managed and its good improvement since the last boarding inspection is reflected by the fact that it has addressed all the recommendations made. Clearly written policies and procedures underpin the school's good practice and the school provides a wide range of useful information for boarders and their parents. Parents are very pleased with the way the boarding side of the school looks after their daughters. Typical responses included comments such as, 'I'm happy with all that Jamea offers my child and I thoroughly hope that they will keep it up. A fabulous place with fabulous people'.

Boarders feel safe and a strong sense of community pervades everyday life at this school. Students and boarding staff get on extremely well with each other and students repeatedly mentioned this strong mutual support during discussions. Overseas students are integrated and feel well supported. Boarding staff have undertaken bullying awareness training and students' questionnaires indicate that bullying is not an issue.

Child protection and medical procedures are fully in place. The school has an excellent working relationship with the local surgery and qualified first aid staff are always available on site. Clear procedures are followed for the management and administration of medication and appropriate records are kept. Boarders are well looked after when ill. One boarder wrote, 'When I need something they always help me and listen to my problems'.

This school gives a high priority to the provision of healthy meals and takes professional advice to ensure the diet provided is balanced and nourishing. Whereas some boarders prefer to eat in their bedrooms, the majority join their friends in the main dining room. Boarders eat their meals in the Islamic manner and this reinforces

their understanding and knowledge of their religious heritage. Boarders fully understand the importance of a healthy diet and lifestyle and appreciate the way the school listens to, and acts upon their views.

Boarders are encouraged to keep in close contact with their families. Some visit the school every fortnight, while some boarders travel home once a month. Several easily accessible payphones ensure boarders can make phone calls whenever they want. International and other students can also use office phones to accept or make phone calls. Boarders do not have access to mobile phones or email facilities.

Boarders feel fairly treated, 'listened to' and say members of staff are approachable. They confirm that links between the boarding and educational sides of school life are very close and that all members of staff work together to provide a good standard of care and support. Good arrangements to secure students' views of school life include weekly meetings of the student council and a recent survey. Boarders also benefit from monthly visits by the school's independent listener. Boarders have a pocket money system where money is banked and a tuck shop is available. Boarders are not allowed off the premises after school or at weekends and must remain within the grounds of the school at all times.

Boarding accommodation is extensive and the premises are of a satisfactory standard overall. The school is proactive about improving the standard of boarding accommodation and, while the school attends to points raised on the defects list, a number of areas inevitably await their turn. For example, some bathrooms have yet to be refurbished and some carpets await replacement. The fabric of the building is in satisfactory condition, but water access from the past has resulted in some very minor damage to paint and plaster work in a few areas of the boarding provision. The school is aware of these issues and has satisfactory arrangements for maintenance. There are regular checks on fire equipment; fire drills are carried out during the school day and not at other times. Two fire exits are obstructed. The accommodation, facilities and staff afford appropriate levels of privacy and are well suited for the needs of boarders. Boarders have responsibility for maintaining cleanliness within their accommodation and perform the task well.

Levels of staffing at the school are appropriate and they meet the needs of boarders well. Many of the staff are ex-students and the school undertakes all the required recruitment checks. Newly appointed staff undertake a comprehensive induction programme which includes guidance on child protection. Communication between boarding and educational staff across the school is good and contributes effectively to the welfare of boarders. However, minutes of staff meetings reflect only the subject headings and do not detail the ensuing discussion. Although staff training has improved since the previous inspection, there has been no formal staff training on equality and diversity, though the subject has been discussed during induction.

Boarders have long school-days during the week and there are, therefore few organised evening activities. At the weekend there is a satisfactory number of



activities, including painting, running a peer support group, organising the weekly Nadia talent competition or participating in religious debates. However, not all students want to take part in these activities and one student commented, 'My prayers are enough for me'. The school offers no organised programme of off site activities and trips for weekends.

There is good provision for the effective monitoring of the welfare of boarders. This includes some internal monitoring by the school's principal but he does not regularly monitor the frequency and nature of any complaints made or accidents incurred.

While the school meets most of the required national minimum standards, it is recommended that the school addresses some of the minor contributing aspects as detailed below.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

The school meets almost all of the national minimum standards for boarding schools and associated regulations. To fully meet the national minimum standards the school should:

- implement fire drills within boarding time which include early morning and late evening and ensure that fire exits are not blocked (breach of national minimum standard 26)
- ensure the principal regularly monitors the school's records of complaints and accidents (breach of national minimum standard 23)

## What the school could do to improve further

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

- introduce a recognised form of national accreditation for ICT at Key Stage 4
- ensure indoor and outdoor areas used by, or accessible to, boarders are free from reasonably avoidable safety hazards
- extend the range and choice of activities for all boarders outside teaching time
- continue to implement the rolling programme of refurbishment to ensure all boarding houses and other accommodation provided for boarders, including bathrooms, are appropriately lit, heated, suitably furnished and adequately maintained

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of students	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs	✓			
How well students make progress in their learning	✓			

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of students	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of students

The overall welfare, health and safety of students	✓			
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The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision		✓		
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## School details

Name of school	Jamea Al Kauthar	
DCSF number	888/6034	
Unique reference number	131355	
Type of school	Muslim Boarding School	
Status	Independent	
Date school opened	September 1996	
Age range of students	11-20	
Gender of students	Girls	
Number on roll (full-time students)	Girls: 401	Total: 401
Number of boarders	Girls: 401	Total: 401
Number of students who are looked after	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (boarders)	£ 2,300	
Address of school	Ashton Road Lancaster Lancashire LA1 5AJ	
Telephone number	01524 389898	
Fax number	01524 389333	
Email address	admin@jamea.co.uk	
Headteachers	Mrs Aneesa Soheil and Mrs Zeinab Bikha	
Proprietor	Albadr Islamic Trust	
Reporting inspector	Mrs Gillian Smith	
Dates of inspection	21-22 January 2010	