

Jamea Al Kauthar

Ashton Road, Lancaster, Lancashire LA1 5AJ

Inspection dates

13–15 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the boarding provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school provides effective Islamic and secular education in a well-planned curriculum. Its Islamic ethos shapes all aspects of its work.
- Leaders, including governors, know the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have improved the school. However, planning does not take a sufficiently long-term view.
- Leaders carefully audit how well the school meets the independent school standards (ISS) and the national minimum standards for boarding (NMS). These standards are met.
- The new governing body provides very effective governance. The proprietor is highly respected and challenges leaders.
- While leaders have clear roles, some are new to their roles and are still developing their skills.
- Pupils do well in internal tests and external qualifications. They are very successful in most subjects. While results in mathematics have improved, these lag behind other subjects.
- Teaching is effective overall. However, there is some variability, for example when teachers do not challenge pupils well enough or build on pupils' oral skills in learning. Homework is set but not recorded clearly.
- Relationships in the school are strong. Pupils have confidence in their teachers. Pupils are looked after very well in school and boarding. Safeguarding is effective, and pupils feel safe.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good indeed. Bullying is almost unknown.
- The sixth form is effective and improving. Students are successful in their learning and wider development. The school's link with Preston's College strengthens teaching.
- Boarding works well for pupils. However, as in the rest of the school, record-keeping is not streamlined. Boarders are sometimes not given opportunity to take safe risks. The boarding accommodation is suitable but rather austere.

Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for boarding schools

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards'), the national minimum standards for boarding and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership further by:
 - leaders refining improvement planning so that plans provide a longer-term view and clearer evaluation of the impact of actions
 - building the skills of leaders so that they take an even greater role in driving and sustaining school improvement
 - leaders reviewing policies, procedures and record-keeping to ensure that these provide a streamlined system for making sure that pupils receive the best possible provision, including in boarding.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - teachers ensuring that learning challenges groups of pupils of different abilities
 - leaders and teachers further improving the impact of mathematics teaching so that attainment and progress in mathematics match the high levels of success in other subjects
 - teachers capitalising on pupils' oracy skills to help pupils to develop their thinking, particularly in mathematics
 - leaders ensuring that teachers follow school policy concerning teaching and learning, including how homework is recorded.
- Improve boarding by:
 - leaders improving systems to better capture the impact that boarding has on the experiences and progress of pupils
 - leaders continuing to improve the homeliness of boarding, including considering how to introduce soft furnishings in the common areas
 - staff to further improve boarders' understanding of how to take safe risks, to better equip them for independent living.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers in the boarding provision	Good
How well children and young people are helped and protected in the boarding provision	Good

- Leaders, including the proprietor and governors, have ensured that the school has undergone significant improvement since the previous inspection. A key development has been the introduction of a highly effective governing body. The senior leadership team has been extended and senior leaders' roles made clearer. These changes to leadership have, in turn, meant that the school has been able to further develop many aspects of its work, including teaching, learning, assessment and the boarding provision. Pupils' achievement has increased, and their attitudes and behaviour have become even better.
- The school's Islamic ethos is reflected in every aspect of school life. Leaders have very high expectations of staff and pupils. They ensure that these are met in the ways people relate to each other and pupils' approach their studies. Leaders and other members of staff are dedicated to providing the best possible care and education for pupils and work very hard to ensure that this happens.
- Senior leaders' impact has increased because individual leaders' focus on the different aspects of the school's work is sharper. Each important aspect of the school's life has a senior leader who pays this particular attention. As well as the headteacher, who is also head of boarding, senior leaders have responsibility for the secondary school, the sixth form, the madrasa (Islamic education provision), teaching and learning, health and safety, and safeguarding. Some senior leaders are relatively new to aspects of their roles. This means that they are less confident in initiating change and development. Governors address any uncertainty in leadership through their close working with senior leaders.
- Middle leadership in the school is similarly well organised. The school has used its links with other effective Islamic schools to provide subject-specialist support for English, mathematics and science. These links also allow leaders of other subjects to raise and discuss any issues they have about effective teaching and learning. Most teachers are unqualified but these arrangements for external support also allow the school to provide relevant training to help teachers in their work.
- Senior leaders have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths. They are also clear in identifying and planning to address weaker aspects. The school's self-evaluation document is accurate. The success of the school's approach to improvement planning is indicated by the recent improvements. The next stage is to build on these improvements. While the school improvement plan is detailed and clear, it does not cover a long enough time period to ensure that some aspects of improvement are sufficiently embedded. In addition, the plan does not make evaluating the success of actions as straightforward as possible. Leaders prepare additional plans for the improvement of specific aspects when they decide that this is needed, for example in the long-term maintenance plan.
- A further example of the leaders' systematic self-evaluation is in their recent auditing work to check that the ISS and NMS are properly met. The school's evidence to confirm

this is summarised in a concise document. While this document is helpful, it sometimes lacks precision in matching particular pieces of evidence to specific parts of the standards. The school meets the ISS and NMS.

- Senior leaders are in the final stages of completing a review and reorganisation of school documents. This has helpfully brought together policies, procedures and other records. However, the system is not fully refined to ensure ready access to information. For example, risk assessment information is held in different files.
- The school day is split into two halves. Pupils work in the madrasa each morning and study secular subjects in the afternoons. The curriculum is well planned to ensure that pupils succeed in both aspects. Leaders have recently changed the structure of the secular education so that pupils spend two years in key stage 3 and three years studying GCSE courses in key stage 4. This approach is intended to allow pupils more time to fit in the extra demands of studying Islamic and secular subjects as examination courses. It is too early to determine if this will add to or detract from pupils' overall success. Leaders' continuing review of the curriculum and its impact have led them to introduce GCSE history. This now means that pupils are gaining strong success in completing the EBacc group of qualifications.
- Leadership of boarding has improved significantly since the last inspection. Regular reports from the head of boarding are diligently considered by the leadership team. The new governing body has strengthened oversight of the school development plan as it relates to boarding. This has supported continuing improvement. All recommendations from the last inspection have been addressed. Leaders now require an external reference for all applicants to work at the school.
- The parents and carers who made their views known to Ofsted were highly complimentary about the school's work. Their comments indicate that they are very satisfied with the education and care provided. All of the parents who completed Ofsted's Parent View survey would recommend the school. The members of staff who completed their survey were similarly highly positive about the school. Staff morale is high.
- The school has a detailed complaints policy for parents which clearly sets out how the school will follow up any concerns. On the very rare occasions when parents have had cause to make a formal complaint, leaders, including governors and the proprietor, have followed the policy to ensure that parental concerns have been properly considered. The record-keeping about such instances is comprehensive, although all relevant information is not filed together.

The school's application to make a material change to its registration.

- Leaders had identified that the school was operating outside of its registration agreement with the Department for Education (DfE) because the roll included pupils older than the school's currently agreed age range. They had written to the DfE twice this term to try to rectify this situation. However, this had not led to the necessary approval. Inspectors confirmed with the DfE that they should consider whether the school's provision is suitable for such, older, pupils. Inspection evidence confirms that this is the case. In addition, leaders have considered the potential risks of including adult students as well as younger pupils in the school.

Governance

- Governance is highly effective. The new governing body has been instrumental in supporting leaders to bring about the improvements to the school. All governors have relevant leadership experience in effective Islamic schools. Governors use their knowledge and experience to challenge other leaders. They blend this challenge with careful support. This work is made even more effective because governors have individual responsibilities for aspects of the school's work that broadly match those of senior leaders. Governors have taken a leading role in driving forward some of the recent improvements in the school. This approach has been successful. However, the improvements are now at a stage where they will become increasingly sustainable by senior leaders taking increasing responsibility for their success.
- Governors' meetings and the papers which support these are well organised. Governors have a systematic approach to ensuring that they gather the information they need about the school. Minutes of meetings of the governing body indicate that governors focus on the issues that are most important. As well as having an overview of the school and its work, governors also consider specific matters, such as how best to resolve concerns of individual parents.
- The proprietor is deeply respected by all members of the school community. He has a clear vision for the school. He knows the school well and provides continuing support through his daily contact with leaders. He arranged for the introduction of the governing body and trusts governors in their work.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and other staff take their responsibility to ensure that pupils are safe very seriously. They have ensured that the systems needed for safeguarding are in place. For example, the school's safeguarding policy reflects the latest national guidance and is available for parents and others on the school website. In addition, leaders have provided training for all staff so that they know what to do should a safeguarding issue arise. Senior boarding staff support new colleagues to be effective in fulfilling their responsibilities. Staff are kept up to date through additional briefings every fortnight. This approach has created a strong culture of awareness about safeguarding in the school.
- There have been very few serious matters requiring staff to take action to protect pupils. However, when these have arisen, the actions taken by staff have been appropriate and have included suitable liaison with partners outside the school.
- The arrangements for appointing staff meet the current guidance. The single central record of checks on new members of staff is complete and sufficiently detailed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The teaching provided in both Islamic and secular education is effective. Pupils are successful and learn well.
- The relationships between teachers and pupils are very positive. Pupils trust their teachers. Teachers' expectations about pupils' effort and attitudes are very high. These

lead to pupils enjoying their learning as well as making good progress.

- There are few qualified teachers in the school. However, this does not limit their impact. Teaching is particularly successful in English and many of the Islamic subjects taught. There is some variability in the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics. For example, pupils sometimes do not develop their mathematical reasoning as well as possible because they have limited opportunities to discuss their ideas.
- Teaching is well organised. Teachers and leaders have prepared suitable schemes of work. These schemes of work contain helpful details which support teachers by giving structure to pupils' learning. Teachers carefully follow the schemes of work. This helps them to make sure that pupils' learning ensures that they have covered the topics needed for school and external testing. However, teachers sometimes do not use their knowledge of how well pupils are learning to provide work which challenges different groups well enough to reach even higher standards.
- Pupils are provided with opportunities to develop the skills they need in their learning and for the future. For example, they use computers with confidence and practise reading.
- Teachers encourage pupils to develop their independent learning skills, for example when pupils complete homework. This is set regularly, and time is allocated each evening for it to be completed. However, pupils frequently do not identify which work in their exercise books is done in class or by themselves. This creates a risk that some pupils may revise from less certain work when preparing for the regular end-of-topic tests set by teachers.
- The school's assessment system has been revised. Following each of the end-of-topic tests, teachers are expected to provide advice to pupils. This identifies what pupils have done well and how they can improve. However, this advice is sometimes the same for all pupils. This limits its challenge to pupils whose achievement is different. Leaders collect assessment information from teachers each term and use this to check that learning is effective. The use of this information is well established for the Islamic subjects. It is at an earlier stage for secular subjects. When teachers identify that a pupil is falling behind in their learning, additional teaching is provided. Pupils told inspectors that this helps them to improve their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school has strong and highly effective systems for looking after pupils. Pupils are very well known to staff and have confidence that they will be listened to. Pupils told inspectors that they would be happy to talk with any member of staff if they had a concern or were unhappy.
- Relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils are very positive. Pupils get along very well together. Matters like this are shaped by the school's ethos and expectations. Respect for others is a key principle within the school. Pupils understand this and are highly respectful, showing extremely mature attitudes. School policies and actions demonstrate that equal treatment of different people is given very high priority. Pupils are open and accept others, including those of different race, religion or sexuality.

- Instances of poor behaviour, including bullying, are very rare indeed. Many pupils could not recall any at all. If any bullying does occur, staff response is prompt and thorough. They take an appropriate disciplinary, educational and restorative approach to ensure that pupils, when in school and boarding, learn from their mistakes and understand the impact of unkind words and actions on others.
- Pupils are taught about how to keep safe and to minimise risks they may face, including those when they are using computers. Mobile phones are not allowed in the school or in boarding. However, pupils are not naïve in their excellent understanding that these must be used carefully to reduce risk.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a clear strength of the school. The school's careful teaching of knowledge about Islam and Islamic values, together with the daily routine of prayer, gives pupils a very secure grounding of spiritual experience. However, it also underpins pupils' highly effective moral development. Pupils have a powerful sense of right and wrong. In comparison, pupils' cultural development, outside of their Islamic experience, is somewhat less strong. Where this fits in with other learning, pupils are given opportunities to visit places outside school. These have included, for example, Lancaster Castle and Christian churches.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Inspectors saw pupils behaving impeccably. They are friendly, confident and very polite. One example of this was in the gracious way pupils served inspectors with refreshments, always being attentive to inspectors' needs.
- Pupils move around the school, and between the school and boarding, without fuss or delay. The school is a calm and pleasant place.
- Pupils behave very well indeed in class. This helps them and others to learn. Pupils accept and follow the school's very high expectations about their conduct. Inspectors saw no instances of disruption to learning of any kind.
- Pupils' attendance is very much higher than the national average. The care provided by staff, together with pupils' commitment to get the most they can out of school, means that any who are unwell return to school as quickly as they can.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress in both Islamic and secular learning. The improved quality of teaching in secular subjects since the previous inspection has meant that pupils' achievement in those subjects has improved.
- While full information about GCSE results in 2018 has not yet been published, early information indicates that Year 11 pupils in 2018 did better than in 2017. This was particularly the case in science and mathematics. Pupils' results in mathematics matched those typically achieved by pupils across the country. In science, pupils' attainment and progress have become similar to those found in the other strong subjects in the school, including English language and literature, religious studies and Urdu. Results in these subjects were above the national averages.
- The school's introduction of history as a GCSE subject meant that Year 11 pupils

completed the EBacc group of qualifications for the first time in 2018. The proportion of pupils achieving this benchmark was higher than the national average.

- The school's regular testing shows that current pupils, in general, attain high marks in faith subjects. Leaders have not yet collected data from the first planned round of overall testing in secular subjects for this school year. However, inspection evidence, including scrutiny of pupils' written work and observation of learning, indicates that while pupils generally make strong progress across their secular learning, there is some variability, particularly in mathematics.
- Pupils have opportunities to extend their reading and become increasingly successful readers throughout the curriculum. This includes in English and other secular subjects. In addition, pupils develop wider skills as they learn to read in Urdu in both secular and faith classes, and in Arabic in Islamic lessons. Pupils are confident in using their oral skills. However, this is sometimes not capitalised upon by teachers in developing pupils' mathematical understanding.
- Pupils' successful achievement prepares them well for the next steps in their education as they move through the school. The careers education provided means that pupils gain awareness of opportunities available to them. Some pupils continue in the school after they are older than the normal sixth-form leaving age. However, at whatever age pupils leave the school, they are knowledgeable about and have a deep understanding of their faith while being equipped to contribute to wider society.

Sixth form provision

Good

- The sixth form provides positive experiences for students. It enables them to continue and complete their Islamic education in school while also ensuring that they can gain appropriate secular qualifications.
- Leadership of the sixth form is effective. It has improved since the previous inspection. Improvements include the introduction of A-level mathematics and increases in students' attainment and progress, particularly in secular subjects. Many of the systems used in key stages 3 and 4 continue in the sixth form. These include leaders' regular collection of assessment information from teachers and the use of this information to plan additional teaching for any student who appears to be falling behind. Staff set challenging targets for students' achievement. Students respond by working hard to meet these targets. They value the feedback teachers give them about their success.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum meets students' needs and interests. The range of subjects offered is fairly limited. However, it allows students to continue to degree-level study of secular subjects, should they wish. The new A-level mathematics course was introduced, in part, in response to students' wishes. Students who have not been successful in GCSE mathematics have classes that give them a further chance to be successful in this examination. Success rates in GCSE mathematics in the sixth form are higher than typically seen in other post-16 settings.
- Teaching in the sixth form helps students to learn well. Students make particularly strong progress in A-level English and the BTEC, vocational, courses offered, for example in science, and health and social care. These BTEC courses are taught by staff employed by Preston's College who work part time at the school. Teaching is confident and teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use this well to give students confidence in their

learning.

- Students have very positive attitudes towards their studies. They try hard and take great pride in their work. Relationships between staff and students are strong. As for pupils elsewhere in the school, students' attendance and punctuality are high. Safeguarding in the sixth form is effective.
- Students gain wider experiences in the sixth form. They are provided with opportunities to undertake work experience. However, this is completed within the school. This limits the challenge to students of relating to people in an unfamiliar situation. Within the school, sixth-form students are expected to take on leadership roles for younger pupils.
- Retention rates in the sixth form are high. Students rarely drop out of courses once they have started. Careers guidance is effective. This includes careful preparation for application to university, when this is relevant. All students who leave the sixth form continue in further or higher education, or employment. Some students combine employment with further study when they leave. In 2017, this included some who took up apprenticeships.

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the boarding provision

Good

- Overall, the experiences and progress of pupils in the boarding provision have continued to improve since the previous inspection. Boarders say that they feel safe and happy, and that they enjoy the range of opportunities and activities available to them. They feel well prepared for their futures. Boarders form a happy, resilient and confident community.
- Boarders are enthusiastic about their boarding experience. They describe a strong, supportive family atmosphere that enables them to focus on spiritual development and increasing independence and social confidence. Parents value the positive impact boarding has on their children's lives.
- Boarders are confident, eager communicators who demonstrated respect, curiosity and warmth in their interactions with inspectors. They say that staff always listen to their point of view. They identified and chose the rewards available in a new and very popular behaviour support system that has community cooperation and respect at its heart. This approach has continued to reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour and broken boundaries, which are minimal in occurrence.
- There is better quality recording about boarders' lives and, consequently, a greater understanding of any themes and patterns arising from sanctions, complaints and health needs. New systems are in their infancy and greater streamlining of these records will ensure that all related actions are captured in one place. However, there is insufficient recording about the impact of boarding on pupils' progress and achievements.
- New boarders quickly acquire practical life skills in being organised, looking after themselves and taking care of others. Older boarders attend local college events to help them to think about their futures. There is a thriving programme of pupil-led presentation and debating events that help boarders to think about important social issues, such as poverty and mental health. They have increasing opportunities to visit the local town and parks. They visit their neighbours, and local community, to increase their understanding of the world outside school.

- Boarders demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They know how to share any concerns about their friends. A typical comment to inspectors was, 'Being a friend sometimes means you have to tell someone else, even if they don't want you to. They will understand in the end.' Staff provide good advice, information and support to help boarders to think about the potential risks they may encounter, but they have limited opportunity to test out their knowledge because staff are always close at hand to resolve their difficulties.
- Highly effective supervision and appraisal systems underpin the high quality of care and support boarders receive. Staff value the regular opportunities for training, reflection and challenge about their role. The head of boarding inspires staff to care for boarders with warmth and compassion.
- Boarders' physical, emotional and mental well-being is a priority. A well-being champion, a skilled independent listener and a medical resource staffed by dedicated and knowledgeable staff support boarders. They help boarders to learn the importance of staying fit and healthy, and to take appropriate responsibility for their own health needs.
- Leaders continue to invest in the premises. Improvements to bedrooms, boarding décor and on-site leisure facilities are identified within the development plan. New beds and laundry facilities have enhanced pupils' experiences. The large common room lacks any soft furnishings to help boarders to relax in a cosy and homely place other than their bedrooms.

School details

Unique reference number	131355
Social care unique reference number	SC039275
DfE registration number	888/6034
Inspection number	10067890

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	11 to 20
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	333
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	85
Number of part-time pupils	None
Number of boarders on roll	333
Proprietor	Fazl Wadee
Headteacher	Aneesa Soheil
Annual fees (boarders)	£3,000
Telephone number	01524 389898
Website	www.jamea.co.uk
Email address	admin@jamea.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–27 April 2017

Information about this school

- Jamea Al Kauthar is a Muslim boarding school for girls. The school is registered for up to 500 girls aged from 11 to 20 years old. Some students are aged between 21 and 25.
- The school opened in September 1997. It is owned by the Al Badr Islamic Trust. The school has a sole proprietor who is one of the trustees of the Al Badr Islamic Trust. The proprietor is also the school's principal.
- Since the previous inspection, a governing body has been appointed. There have also been some changes to teaching staff. Senior leadership roles have been extended by introducing two new areas of responsibility. These are a head of teaching and learning and a head of the secondary school provision. The school's mission is to provide 'an Islamic environment which is safe, vibrant and enriching. The school aspires to cultivate a strong sense of spirituality, morality and scholarship within the students, inspiring learners to graduate as able confident citizens and outstanding role models.'
- The school is non-selective.
- The school provides both an Islamic and secular education. Pupils attend Islamic lessons in the morning and secular lessons in the afternoon. There is a compulsory homework session each evening.
- Pupils are taught mainly by female staff. Many of the teachers are former pupils at the school.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school does not have any pupils who have identified special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupil has an education, health and care plan.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was requested by the Department for Education earlier than usual in the inspection cycle to provide up-to-date information about the school. As part of the inspection activity, inspectors considered how the school handles complaints from parents.
- The school has made a request to the DfE to extend the school's age range. The suitability of this proposed material change was considered during this inspection.
- An education inspector toured the school site and social care inspectors toured the boarding accommodation. During these tours, inspectors were accompanied by the senior leaders.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school. An inspector visited an assembly. Inspectors observed pupils' conduct in lessons, during movement between lessons, during their social time in school and in the boarding house.
- Inspectors held meetings with the proprietor and governors. Inspectors also met with the senior leaders and other members of staff. They met formally with groups of pupils to discuss their school and boarding experience. They spoke to others during lessons, at other times during the school day and to boarders during the early evening.
- Inspectors examined pupils' books during lessons and in a scrutiny of samples of written work across a range of pupils and subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed documents to confirm compliance with the ISS and NMS, and to provide other inspection evidence. These documents included policies, health and safety records and other safeguarding information, the school's self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan, evaluation of examination results, minutes of meetings, and the attendance and admissions registers. Inspectors examined the school's website.
- Inspectors considered the 24 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 10 additional written comments from parents. In addition, inspectors reviewed information from nearly 400 responses to Ofsted's recent point-in-time survey for boarding pupils. Inspectors received 21 responses to an inspection survey for staff.

Inspection team

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Denise Jolly	Social Care Regulatory Inspector
Helen Humphreys	Her Majesty's Inspector
Karen Forster	Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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