

Jamea Al Kauthar

Jamea Al Kauthar Islamic College (Charity)

Jamea Al Kauthar Islamic College, Ashton Road, Lancaster LA1 5AJ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Jamea Al Kauthar is an independent boarding school for girls. It educates girls aged over 11 in a Muslim tradition. The school currently has 258 pupils, all of whom board. Some students are aged between 21 and 25. The main building forms the central accommodation at the boarding school with separate wings designated for separate boarding houses. The madrasah and school are situated in two separate buildings. The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 February 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The boarding school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 13 November 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children told inspectors that they liked living in the school community and were proud of the way that they were developing in both their faith and character. They said that boarding school life teaches them about the importance of making a positive contribution, encourages them to become independent in their life skills and in their relationships and, best of all, helps them to understand the importance of their faith. They said that this was why they were delighted to be at the school.

Children demonstrated a warm, confident, engaging approach to interacting with inspectors. They were curious, and eager to take part in the inspection, often seeking inspectors out to share their views.

Children were very clear about the support and care that they receive from each other and from staff, right up to the head of boarding. The sense of living in a positive and respectful community is strong; children laugh and have fun as well as study hard and care for each other well. They develop as individuals with a good understanding of British values, such as respect and tolerance for others including those of different cultures and faiths. This is a foundation stone of the school's ethos.

Children's opportunities and experiences have been limited through the pandemic, but now school is reviewing how to build up children's interaction with the community again. Children told inspectors that they see the boarding experience as a place of security and comfort and refer to it as a second home and their other family.

Children of all ages are confident in their identity. They demonstrate aspirations to pursue a wide range of educational opportunities and professional careers. They demonstrate a deep sense of commitment to and trust in their faith and are proud to share their values. They see growing up within the boarding community as a journey into a positive future. Children talked together about how they help each other through difficult patches, and how staff are on hand to offer their wisdom when children are struggling with academic or personal problems.

A personal development programme is a work in progress. This includes secular experiences such as the introduction of mobile phone technology, visits into the community and life skills.

The elected school council regularly offers its views for school leaders to consider, and all children confirmed that their suggestions and criticisms about boarding life are taken seriously and responded to promptly.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Children said they felt very safe. They enjoy warm relationships with boarding staff and with teachers, who they described as positive and supportive influences on their lives.

Children said that they could talk easily to staff about concerns, knew how to raise a complaint and felt that any complaints were dealt with fairly. Children knew how to keep themselves safe in the community and online and knew the rules about items they could bring into school and those they could not. Some children felt concerned about whether their private diaries were being read or confiscated, but inspectors found no evidence of this. Leaders were made aware of this during the inspection and undertook to build children's confidence in their right to privacy. Children can create a secure, lockable space in their bedroom if they so wish, and many take advantage of this extra security.

The independent listener and an anti-bullying officer help children to think about their emotional health and mental well-being and promote positive relationships. Children were happy to openly share with inspectors their lived experience of boarding, including the ups and the downs. Children are helped to understand their emotions and seek help when necessary.

Children understand the clear sanctions policy and share a strong ethos of warm and respectful behaviour. They said, 'We know what must do before we come and we know what happens if we get it wrong.' This provides a strong foundation for children to thrive.

One incident of children going missing from home was well managed to ensure that children were located as quickly as possible. Leaders explored children's feelings and reassured other girls about sharing feelings of being homesick. Children who were new to school this academic year described how staff and other children offered sensitive and caring support to help them to settle into boarding life, and how open visiting for parents really helped them in the first term.

Child protection referrals are prompt and reflect appropriate procedures. Staff who are responsible for safeguarding are robust in their knowledge, and this is shared effectively with all staff so that they know what to do when they are worried about children's safety. Leaders take advice from professionals to ensure that their practice continually improves.

Children enjoy good health and are supported well by a highly organised and knowledgeable healthcare team. Arrangements for minimising cross-infection during the pandemic were effective, and this meant only a few school and boarding days were lost due to illness.

Staff recruitment is generally in line with government guidance, but in a minority of cases emailed references from known persons are not verified. Leaders undertook to rectify this shortfall in safer recruitment immediately.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The headteacher, who is also the head of boarding, has a strong and clear vision for the school. She is immensely respected by staff and children. They understand her vision for the school and this is evident in children's expectations, behaviour and development, and the way staff support them.

Leaders share one faith and religious approach. They use this well to maintain consistent leadership that reflects their value base. They reflect continually on whether children are comfortable with the balance of faith and secular interests and support them to make independent decisions about their choices.

Leaders are creating an aspirational system of teaching and support to help children to make good progress in independent life skills and to be prepared for their futures. They encourage children to consider professional careers as well as opportunities to further develop their faith.

Leaders understand what children think about their school experience and how to make it better. Communication is improved through the elected school council and pupil suggestion boxes. A merit system includes rewards that reflect children's interests. Leaders have improved communication with parents through increased support and challenge to involve them with their child's boarding experience. This has included increased opportunities for family visiting, especially during the pandemic.

Staff enjoy their jobs. Most have been boarders themselves and champion improvement for children's boarding experience. A thorough induction and regular support ensure staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. They are and further trained specific to their responsibilities, such as that of medical officer. External professional support and liaison enhance staff's capabilities so that children are cared for well.

Oversight of health and safety is well organised, and work is continuous to improve the building and comfort for children. Some minor repairs had not been completed and some mattresses were in poor condition. Although these shortfalls were identified in the building development plan, they had not been addressed in a timely way to maintain appropriate comfort for children.

Governance is strong. Clear and aspirational development plans are regularly presented and overseen at governor meetings. Governors, some of whom are external professionals, support and challenge staff to promote continuous development of boarding.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve? Recommendations

- The registered person should implement plans to provide activities and support to help children to take safe risks and explore the local shops and recreational areas.
- The registered person should consistently carry out telephone verification of references.
- The registered person should improve reporting of issues with the environment by staff and children so that all accommodation is suitably maintained in a timely manner.

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: SC039275

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Aneesa Soheil

Type of school: Boarding school

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Inspectors

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