

Darul Uloom Al Arabiya Al Islamiya

Holcombe Hall, Holcombe, Bury, Lancashire, BL8 4NG

Inspection dates

4–6 November 2014

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

1

Leadership and management

Outstanding

1

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Outstanding

1

Quality of teaching

Outstanding

1

Achievement of pupils

Outstanding

1

Sixth form provision

Outstanding

1

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding school because

- The outstanding leadership, management and governance by the proprietor has ensured that students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and behaviour have remained exemplary since the previous inspection. Furthermore, teaching and achievement have improved from good to outstanding.
- Students' outstanding achievement prepares them extremely well for the future. The majority make outstanding progress, including in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). This ensures that students are very well prepared for their future economic well-being.
- Outstanding teaching ensures that students acquire knowledge and understanding rapidly in academic and Islamic subjects. Students say that they love the very well-rounded education they receive.
- Students' remarkable personal development and behaviour make a very positive contribution to their learning. The school is a very orderly, safe and peaceful community. Students respond very quickly to the school's high expectations regarding behaviour and blossom into caring young citizens who want to take their place in modern Britain by making a significant contribution to the community.
- Students in the sixth form achieve as well as younger students because teachers plan their learning activities and subjects very effectively.
- Unity of purpose pervades the whole school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day’s notice. It was an inspection of the education provision only and did not include an inspection of the boarding provision.
- The inspectors observed 17 lessons taught by 17 members of staff and scrutinised samples of students’ work in many subjects. Discussions took place with staff including trustees, the senior leadership team, teachers and students.
- The views of parents and staff were taken into account through looking at the results of school and inspection questionnaires. Inspectors took account of questionnaire returns from 56 parents and six staff. There were no responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire (Parent View).
- A number of school documents were examined. These included the school’s prospectus, information about students’ progress, the school’s own evaluation of its work and students’ workbooks. Records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also scrutinised.
- A material change application to the school’s registration was assessed regarding the school’s capacity (the school wishes to increase the number of students it is registered to admit).

Inspection team

Saleem Hussain, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Yusuf Seedat	Additional Inspector
Paul Rafferty	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Darul Uloom is an independent residential educational institute for Muslim boys set in a rural location within a few miles of Bury town centre.
- The school opened in October 1979 and caters for students in the age range 11-23 years; it offers both secondary secular and further education as well as advanced Islamic education.
- The school is registered to take up to 370 boys. Currently, there are 374 students on roll aged from 11 to 23 years. Fifty-two students are in the sixth form.
- None of the students on roll has a statement of special educational needs. None of the students is disabled. Most students come from Bangladeshi, Indian or Pakistani heritages. All students speak English as a first language.
- The school does employ teaching assistants.
- The last inspection of the education provision took place in March 2011 and the most recent social care inspection was in October 2013.
- A new headteacher took up post in September 2014.
- The school strives to promote and cultivate outstanding behaviour, a moral life and respect and tolerance of other faiths and cultures. It aims to ensure that students achieve the best in terms of their faith responsibilities and their role as active citizens in the community. The aim of the school is to produce young talented individuals who play a positive role in their communities and become exemplary British citizens.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attendance rates for day students by working more closely with the small number of parents and students concerned.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leaders have successfully created a culture where everyone is focused on maintaining very high academic standards within a very strong Islamic setting. Staff morale is very high, students say that they are happy and everyone shares a common purpose. The effectiveness of leadership and management can also be seen in the improvements since the previous inspection, most notably to achievement, teaching and the school's arrangements to ensure students' welfare. These were all strong areas of the school's work at the time of the last inspection and are now outstanding.
- Leaders regularly review the excellent quality of learning activities on offer to ensure that these best prepare students for their future economic well-being and for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders communicate very high expectations and ambition frequently to all staff. Leaders and managers at all levels have very clearly defined roles and lead by example.
- Leaders plan school development actions astutely. Policies and schemes of work are of a high quality. As a result, teachers are clear about what is expected of them to help students to achieve as well as they can.
- The school has developed an insightful and accurate self-evaluation of its work, including strengths and weaknesses.
- The leadership of teaching is very strong. Members of the leadership team are very active in checking the quality and effectiveness of teaching. They regularly observe lessons to ensure that standards of teaching and learning are very high. There are good arrangements in place for the further training of staff.
- Responses to the inspection questionnaire from staff, and parents' views indicate that they are pleased with the quality of leadership. All parents indicated that they are happy with their children's experience at this school.
- Leaders have created many opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, students' develop excellent attitudes towards learning and behave impeccably.
- In relation to the school's application to increase its capacity, inspectors recommend to the Department for Education (DfE) that the change is approved. The current accommodation and other relevant arrangements have been considered by inspectors and were found to meet requirements for an increase in the school's capacity to a maximum of 500 students. The school's current capacity to accommodate boarders is not affected by this recommendation.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The board of trustees holds the school to account stringently. The trustees are very familiar with the quality of teaching in school and how well the school is doing overall. The board receives regular reports from senior leaders and satisfies itself that there is compliance with all the independent school standards, including those related to safeguarding. Working closely with the school's senior leaders, trustees ensure that the premises are maintained to a high standard. They also ensure that information provided for parents and others is comprehensive and there are suitable procedures in place to manage any complaints. The trustees also ensure that financial resources are managed very effectively and very good value for money is received from expenditure.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' behaviour is outstanding. Students have a great thirst for academic and religious learning and do not waste time. Minor disruption during lessons, prayers and at other times is extremely rare. These factors make a very strong contribution to students' progress and to the very peaceful atmosphere in school where students can concentrate on studying, achieving their best and practising their faith.
- Students consistently demonstrate a love of learning. They are very keen to learn across all subjects, years, and with different staff.
- Students are very well-mannered and respectful. For example, they always open doors for adults and let them pass first if there is a bottle-neck and often where there is not.
- Relationships are excellent at all levels, including between adults and between different groups of students. For example, in a science lesson seen, students enthusiastically paired up with 'talking partners' to share facts about inheritance and genes.
- Students say they enjoy school life and this is reflected in high levels of attendance and punctuality. However, the attendance rates of residential students are extremely high, whereas for day students,

although attendance is good, it is not as good as for residential students.

- The school nurtures outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. There are many opportunities for personal development through Islamic studies, religious education lessons and personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons.
- Students develop their self-confidence through taking up responsibilities which they actively seek. For example, they lead *adhan* (the call to prayers) regularly, act as prefects or represent their classes as members of the school council.
- Students are taught to respect the civil and criminal law. The school has developed an excellent link with the police. For example, the police recently made a presentation focusing on child protection, community harmony and how students can play their part in preventing criminal activity.
- Students' excellent social development is the result of participating in team sports, group tasks and a good number of opportunities to interact with the wider community through visits and visitors to the school. Students often take part in community projects such as re-cycling. The distribution of Christmas cards within the community provides a further example of how leaders actively promote the development of strong community relations.
- Many opportunities are taken by the school to promote British values such as democracy. Students develop high levels of appreciation and respect for different cultures, traditions and customs. For example, religious education includes good attention to developing students' understanding of major world faiths. School trips have included a church and a number of visits to different places of worship are to take place shortly.
- The school also provides students with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England. Trustees and other leaders take positive steps to ensure that partisan political views are not promoted in school.
- The school's work to keep students safe is outstanding. Arrangements for safeguarding are rigorous. All staff are appropriately trained in child protection procedures, including designated officers. A very high proportion of staff have received extensive training in administering first aid.
- The school's behaviour policy is very effective. Students like the system of reward for achievement, good attendance and outstanding behaviour.
- Students say that bullying is not a problem for them and that they feel very safe at all times. They demonstrate a very good awareness of different forms of bullying including cyber-bullying. They are very confident that they can always approach staff if they feel bullied or have any concerns for their safety.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is outstanding and enables students to make excellent progress with their academic and religious learning.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge in many areas including English, mathematics, science, ICT and Islamic studies. This knowledge is used very effectively in planning learning activities and is a key factor in students achieving as well as they can.
- Teachers are eager to improve their practices and frequently discuss what can be done better with leaders evaluating their teaching.
- Teachers have high expectations of what they want students to learn in each lesson and over the passage of time in subjects. As a result, all groups of students including day and residential students, students originating from different ethnic backgrounds and students of differing ability, achieve equally well.
- As with the least able, the most able students are identified very early on and provided with suitably challenging opportunities and learning targets. In appropriate cases, students are earmarked to take public examinations earlier than would be expected.
- Teachers question and prompt students very skilfully and this works very well in challenging different groups of students. It ensures that all students maintain their concentration at all times and encourages them to organise their ideas, develop their oral answers and to think more deeply about their ideas before writing.
- Teachers provide opportunities in different subjects for students to develop their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. For example, there are opportunities in modern foreign languages, history and geography lessons for reading aloud and writing. There are also opportunities for students to write poetry and to develop skills in calligraphy. Basic skills in mathematics are also taught comprehensively. For example, complicated mathematical formulae are explained until students understand the principles involved.

- Assessment is accurate from Year 7 upwards. The school makes use of nationally recognised measures to judge attainment on entry to the school in key areas of learning and then tests students frequently to track their progress over time. Marking and verbal feedback to students are very constructive. This ensures that students know how well they are doing and what they must do to improve their work.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students' achievement is outstanding. The majority enter the school with levels of attainment which are generally in line with other students of their age. The outstanding quality of teaching, very appealing learning activities and excellent quality of care, guidance and support enable students to achieve their best.
- Students love the balance of learning opportunities between academic and Islamic studies. For example, representative views included: 'What more could we ask for in a school? We have an oasis of chances to fulfil our ambitions and make our parents proud'. Students make rapid progress in many subjects over their time in school. Most reach high standards of attainment, including in English and mathematics, compared to what is expected for their age nationally at the end of Year 11.
- Progress across year groups in English, mathematics, science and ICT is extremely good because basic skills in these subjects are taught very thoroughly by teachers. The majority of students exceed nationally expected rates of progress from their various starting points and achieve outstanding results in examinations. For example, school records indicate that in each year since the last inspection, students have gained generally better and better grades at GCSE level examinations, including in English, mathematics, science, ICT and modern foreign languages. A small number of students take examinations earlier than would be expected for students of their age. Examination results in these cases justify early entry.
- Students are encouraged to develop a love of reading in lessons and through using computers and the school's academic and Islamic studies libraries. These factors help students to attain very high standards in reading.
- All groups of students, including the most able, make very strong gains in their knowledge and understanding in most subjects and in all year groups. Evidence in workbooks, records of progress and accreditations gained demonstrate that students achieve outstandingly over the passage of time in school.
- Achievement in relation to the five pillars of Islam is outstanding. The Islamic course covers higher Islamic Studies including study of the *Qur'an*, *Hadith* (sayings of the Prophet), *Tafseer* (meaning of the Qur'an) and *Fiqh* (Islamic laws). A six-year course leads to a degree in Islamic theology, which is recognised by some universities.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- Leadership of the sixth form is very effective. All of the evidence, including discussions with staff and school records, indicates that the achievement of students in the sixth form is outstanding because teaching for this age group is consistently outstanding.
- Students' needs are closely met by teachers who know the students' prior learning and preferred learning styles very well. Based on records of attainment and progress in earlier years, teachers plan very challenging activities for all groups of students including the most able.
- Students follow study programmes that build on their prior achievement and ensure high levels of success with academic and Islamic studies. Success at 'A' level and in Islamic studies demonstrates that students are exceptionally well prepared for the future. For example, most students attain good passes in 'A' level English, Law, Urdu and Arabic to add to their previous accomplishments.
- Achievement in relation to Islamic theology, Aalim (Islamic scholarship) and the school's Hafiz (memorisation of the Qu'ran) programme is excellent. For example, many students have graduated as Aalim or Hafiz since the last inspection.
- Students in the sixth form make an excellent contribution to the life of the school. They often help younger students with their learning by listening to them read or in relation to their Islamic studies.
- Opportunities for personal development are outstanding and students demonstrate very mature attitudes towards learning. Discussions with students and staff indicate that students use their independent study time very wisely.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

Unique reference number	105372
Social care unique reference number	SC008476
Inspection number	447246
DfE registration number	351/6007

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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.

Type of school	Muslim secondary school
School status	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	11–23
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	374
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	52
Number of part time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	242
Proprietor	Board of Trustees
Chair	Mr H H Patel
Headteacher	Mr Mohammed Atcha
Date of previous school inspection	1-2 March 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£900
Annual fees (boarders)	£1,900
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