

Abrar Academy

34–36 Garstang Road, Preston, Lancashire PR1 1NA

Inspection dates

29 November–1 December 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that documents and the school website are up to date. This makes it difficult for parents to be fully informed.
- Leaders' and teachers' assessment and analysis of pupils' progress from their different starting points is underdeveloped.
- Record keeping and policies concerning the boarding provision are not always well thought out.
- Leaders accurately recognise the strength of provision for Islamic education. However, they are overgenerous in their evaluation of the school's overall effectiveness, which has declined since the previous inspection.
- Teaching in secular subjects does not help pupils to learn as well as in Islamic subjects. Teachers' expectations are not as high in secular learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The proprietor, senior leaders and other staff have established a very positive school ethos.
- Pupils' attainment over time is high.
- Pupils behave well during the school day. Their attendance is high and their punctuality good.
- The sixth form is effective and meets students' needs and aspirations.
- Boarding pupils are well cared for and supported. They confirm they feel safe and enjoy the experience boarding gives them. The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools.
- Leaders are willing to act to ensure that improvement happens. This meant that the school met the independent school standards by the end of the inspection.

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') and the national minimum standards for boarding schools and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that leadership and management have the most impact by leaders:
 - keeping school policies and other documents up to date and readily available for reference by parents, staff and others
 - updating the school website so that it provides the most recent versions of policies, including the child protection policy
 - precisely and accurately evaluating the school's effectiveness, so that they develop well-defined actions for improvement which, in turn, contribute to leaders making the best use of their available time.
- Ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in secular education is consistently as effective as in Islamic education by:
 - leaders continuing the training of teachers with new roles in the school
 - leaders and teachers using information available from assessment of pupils' learning to raise expectations and set clear and demanding targets which are used by pupils and teachers
 - teachers planning pupils' learning to match the needs of groups of pupils with different starting points including the most able
 - teachers demanding even higher standards of behaviour, effort and presentation in secular subjects so that these match those in Islamic subjects.
- Leaders and other members of staff should sharpen their record keeping relating to the boarding provision by:
 - ensuring that all records linked to medication are fully complete at all times with signatures instead of ticks being used to confirm daily administration of prescribed medication
 - ensuring that the evidence retained on staff files matches the information shown on the checklist of completed tasks that appears at the front of each staff file
 - considering the introduction of separate records concerning school and boarding provision
 - keeping a record of all contacts made between parents and boarding staff.
- Leaders should ensure that specific reference is made to the boarding provision in policies and procedures which relate to both the school and boarding.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers in the boarding provision

Requires improvement

How well children and young people are protected in the boarding provision

Requires improvement

- The proprietor, principal and headteacher ensure that values such as tolerance and respect underpin all aspects of the school's work. These help to ensure that pupils grow in maturity and understanding as well as in their academic success while at the school. Leaders' expectations are high, particularly in relation to all aspects of Islamic education and concerning pupils' conduct and attitudes. However, their expectations about pupils' progress in secular subjects could be raised further.
- While senior leaders are reflective about their work, their evaluation of the effectiveness of secular education is sketchy. The brief school improvement plan includes a number of issues also identified during the inspection. However, it does not provide enough detail to ensure that important developments happen within the school's planned timescale. The longer-term plans for developing boarding in the school have been managed well so that future growth does not compromise the positive ethos in the boarding provision.
- The capacity of senior leaders is constrained by the time they have available. Each has multiple roles and responsibilities. Senior leaders have identified a need to increase the number of leaders but plans for this are at a very early stage of implementation. Recent changes of personnel have led to gaps in the school's systems and mean that some policies and records are not readily available. This restricts their usefulness to staff, parents and others. The school website has not been recently updated which also means that it is less helpful than possible.
- While the school met the independent school standards by the end of this inspection, leaders completed changes to the complaints policy and ensured that a number of maintenance issues were addressed in order for this to be the case. Most significantly, the installation of a monitoring and filtering system for the school's internet system was brought forward to allow pupils to be better protected when using the school's computers.
- Each school day is divided between Islamic education in the morning and secular education in the afternoon. The afternoon lessons focus on English, mathematics and science but also provide opportunity for pupils to study a range other subjects, such as information and communication technology and Urdu. This provides a suitably balanced curriculum for faith and secular study. The school provides sufficient resources for lessons including textbooks and the opportunity to use computers in learning. While practical work in science is possible in the school's laboratory, leaders and pupils confirmed that such learning is infrequent.
- School leaders and other members of staff are very aware of the risks of radicalisation which some young people face. The school's culture is open. This allows pupils to talk about any concerns they may have. One pupil talked eloquently to an inspector about how the school helps pupils to understand why ideologies such as those held by extremist

groups are wrong. This is one example of the school's effective development of the skills and values pupils need to be successful members of the British society now and in the future.

- Staff with boarding responsibilities provide pupils with a high level of care, consistency and support. This has contributed to the supportive culture which has been created in the boarding provision over the year since it opened.
- The general organisation and management of boarding is effective; however, the school's policies and procedures do not take sufficient account of the boarding provision. Records for school and boarding are integrated and kept at school, making the monitoring of boarding harder.
- While the inspection was brought forward because the Department for Education had received complaints about aspects of the boarding provision and teaching, inspection evidence did not support the concerns raised. Most of the parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, were supportive of the school and would recommend it to others.

Governance

- The proprietor does much to set the ethos of the school. He visits very regularly and knows staff and pupils as individuals. He is aware that his close family relationship with the principal could make it harder for him to provide appropriate challenge. Therefore, he has started to consider how to extend governance by establishing an independent governing body. The proprietor chairs a trust which also has responsibility for a girls' boarding school. The trustees support the current governance arrangements, for example, by sitting on complaints panels, should these be required.
- The school does not use a formal appraisal system as part of its work to ensure that staff do the best possible job. However, leaders regularly monitor the work of teachers and others. If teachers' work does not meet the high standards required, the proprietor and other leaders are willing to take further action to ensure that improvement happens for the benefit of pupils. There are a number of teachers of secular subjects new to their roles; they receive close monitoring, training and support from the headteacher.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils are known well by staff who are aware of how to respond should they become aware of any concerns about pupils' safety. Staff receive regular training to ensure that their knowledge about safeguarding is up to date. The school's child protection policy was revised to take account of new requirements from the start of this school year and is available for parents from the school. However, the version on the school's website still remains to be updated.
- The recruitment procedures for new staff meet with current guidance. The single central record of pre-employment checks is complete and gives sufficient detail. However, evidence in staff files is sometimes presented inconsistently.
- The rules and boundaries for boarding pupils are viewed by them as fair, providing them with a sense of security and helping them feel safe. Procedures are in place to protect

and safeguard boarders, although these procedures have yet to be tested as no safeguarding issues have arisen during the time boarding has been operational.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The teaching in Islamic studies is consistently effective. It ensures that pupils behave well and learn quickly. While much teaching of secular subjects is generally effective and has led to high attainment over time, it is of variable impact, for example, on the quality and depth of pupils' work in their exercise books.
- There is little evidence that pupils are challenged to avoid making basic errors in written English. Some pupils make the same mistakes repeatedly. There are stark contrasts in teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation in different subjects. Inspectors saw calligraphic writing and other indications of the strong self-motivation and effort of pupils in some Islamic studies books. However, the same pupils had been willing to present scruffy work in their other books and this had not been challenged by their teachers.
- Where teaching most successfully supports pupils' learning, teachers use their good subject knowledge to build on pupils' previous knowledge and understanding. However, this is not a consistent feature of teaching and learning across the different secular subjects. While teaching normally ensures that pupils are interested, sometimes less confident teaching leads to pupils being less engaged in their learning and not trying as hard. Where such features are identified through the headteacher's monitoring of teaching, advice is offered including discussion of effective practice. This has started to help teachers to develop their skills.
- Pupils' books seen by inspectors indicate that the most able pupils typically make faster progress in secular subjects than other pupils. In addition, pupils learn at different rates in their different subjects. For example, learning in mathematics is faster than in some other subjects, particularly for the most able.
- Assessment in Islamic subjects is closely built into teaching. Teachers use this assessment to understand how quickly pupils are making progress and how to speed this up further. Teachers use half-yearly tests in secular subjects to check how pupils are doing. However, some teachers do not use the information from these tests or from their continuing work with pupils as effectively as possible. The contribution teachers' marking makes to pupils' progress is limited because teachers do not apply the school's policy consistently.
- Teachers set homework regularly. This successfully builds on the work pupils cover in lessons. However, it is sometimes hard to distinguish written homework from pupils' other work in their exercise books.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils understand and accept the school's high expectations about their behaviour and attitudes. Teachers provide strong role models for pupils. Pupils exemplify the school's

positive values and openness. They demonstrate pride in the school in their conversations and in the way they wear their uniform.

- Staff know pupils as individuals and relationships between staff and pupils are very strong. These help pupils to have confidence that any concerns they may have will be listened to and acted on.
- The pupils who spoke to inspectors said that instances of poor behaviour, including bullying, are rare. Pupils also told inspectors that they feel safe in school. The small number of maintenance issues attended to during the inspection increased the safety of pupils.
- The school pays sufficient emphasis to helping pupils to understand risk. Assemblies, presentations from external speakers, including the police, and lessons in personal, social and health education, and other subjects, are used to teach pupils about how to keep safe when they are online. Such risks are also reduced by teachers' close supervision of pupils when they are using the school's computers. While plans had been prepared to install suitable filtering of the school's internet systems, these had not been implemented before the inspection. Computers and mobile phones are not allowed in the boarding house.
- The strong development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding as part of the faith curriculum and in other subjects helps pupils to understand others, for example through visits to Christian faith schools. This further supports their personal development.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is very orderly. Inspectors saw pupils behaving very well in their social time and as they moved around the building. The behaviour exhibited by pupils in the boarding area during the whole inspection was exemplary. Pupils are courteous, polite and respectful to each other and visitors.
- Pupils' behaviour during lessons is generally good. However, it is sometimes less positive when teaching fails to fully motivate pupils. When teaching is most effective, pupils show resilience and a willingness to learn from any mistakes they make as they develop their knowledge.
- Pupils are lively, full of character and punctual to lessons. Their attendance is high. This reflects their desire to be at school to learn. It also indicates the school's systematic approach to contacting the family of any pupil who is absent without a known reason.
- Rates of exclusion from school are high. This results from leaders' high expectations and consistent application of the school's behaviour policy. Leaders ensure that parents are involved in discussion at the earliest possible stage so pupils can improve their behaviour and so avoid exclusion.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Students in the school learn well and make rapid progress. Pupils say that this is particularly so in their Islamic studies. Leaders confirm that this is the case. Formal

external accreditation is not used for this part of the school's work. However, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their Islamic study at the school or elsewhere, if that is the course they wish to follow.

- Year 11 pupils' attainment in secular subjects has been typically very high over time. This reflects, in part, pupils' generally above-average starting points. In 2015, all pupils gained at least five GCSE passes including in English and mathematics at grade C or above. However, specific issues related to examination entries mean that the comparable figure for 2016 when published will be very much lower. The reason for this has been investigated, understood and acted on in order to ensure that in the future pupils' examination results truly reflect their learning. While there is significant strength in pupils' attainment overall, the proportion of the most able pupils gaining the highest, A* and A, grades is relatively lower.
- Leaders place less emphasis on pupils' progress than their attainment. While leaders have information about pupils' starting points in English, mathematics and science and record these in long-term tracking of pupils' achievement, they pay little consideration to how quickly pupils move from these starting points. The data confirms that pupils generally make rapid progress across all years in English, mathematics and other subjects. However, similar information is not as readily available about pupils' achievement in other secular subjects. This makes it harder for leaders and teachers to know that groups of pupils are making the fastest possible progress. The rates of progress for boarders and other pupils are similar.
- The school makes effective provision for the development of pupils' wider skills, for example in reading. This is a fundamental part of pupils' Islamic education, for example as they memorise the Qur'an. Reading in English is developed well in lessons and enhanced through the range of modern teenage fiction and non-fiction books available in the school library. The records maintained by pupil librarians indicate that there is potential for the library to be used even more.
- No pupils are formally identified as disadvantaged because none receive free school meals. However, if circumstances mean that a family cannot afford the pupil's school fees, confidential arrangements are made to allow these to be reduced. Such pupils, including the most able, achieve similarly to others in the school.

Sixth form provision

Good

- The sixth form is still at a relatively early stage of its development. Only two students have so far completed their post-16 study and moved to the next stage of their education.
- The leadership arrangements for the sixth form are not separate from the rest of the school. The main focus of the sixth-form curriculum is on Islamic education, with students continuing the seven-year programme which they start earlier in the school. Some students add to this study with A levels chosen from a fairly narrow range. Open and independent advice is provided to students as they enter the sixth form. Students are supported to continue their studies elsewhere if this best meets their needs, for example, if the school cannot offer a student's preferred A-level choice. Students' needs are also met by additional provision for resit study of GCSE where needed, for example, in

mathematics this year.

- Students' attitudes to their learning are very positive and rates of progress are high. As elsewhere in the school, students value their Islamic education highly. Teachers successfully focus on meeting students' learning needs and encourage them to do well. One sixth-form student told an inspector how he had initially been uncertain about whether he should stay at the school to join the sixth form but was now very pleased at the choice he had made.
- Leaders confirm that students learn well and make rapid progress in their Islamic studies. As the sixth form is relatively new, no students have completed their full A-level study programme so far.
- Pupils' attendance in the sixth form is high and very few pupils leave the sixth form before completing their courses. This reflects the high value students see in their study, their keenness to learn and the school's successful building of their characters.
- A small number of pupils are over the usual sixth-form age range. These students are supervised when in the presence of younger pupils. While they work in mixed-aged classes so that their needs can be best met, these only include pupils aged 16 or over. This approach provides safety and security for younger pupils and also protection for the sixth-form students themselves.
- Students are given the opportunity for wider development through taking responsibility in the school, for example, in doing duties and looking after visitors. However, there are limited opportunities for them to take part in wider learning experiences. Leaders judge that any such potential narrowness is offset by the broad applicability of students' Islamic learning.

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

Requires improvement

- Although the boarding provision is still in its relative infancy, staff have established working practices that provide a good standard of care. However, leaders have still to ensure that policies, procedures and records fully represent the practice in the boarding provision. Records of contact with parents are maintained, but these sometimes do not allow for a series of contacts to be easily understood as a whole.
- The boarding experience enhances pupil's daily living skills, providing them with experiences to develop greater self-discipline, maturity and respect for themselves and others. Inspectors saw boarders behaving very well, including when they were not under direct supervision.
- Pupils say they feel listened to and that staff are responsive to their requests and suggestions. Leaders have provided additional sporting equipment in response to pupils' requests.

Quality of care and support in the boarding provision

Good

- Staff act as good role models, creating strong relationships between themselves and boarding pupils. This creates a warm, relaxed and happy atmosphere throughout the boarding provision. Pupils are proud to be boarders and act as good ambassadors for the school.

- Appropriate facilities are offered for boarding pupils. The boarding house is kept suitably warm and the food provided is liked by pupils.
- Boarders have good facilities that allow them to engage in a wide variety of activities, both sporting and cultural. For example, football and other activities are arranged by pupils on Saturdays in partnership with a local sports club.
- The general health needs of pupils are met through registration with local health care services. Appropriate procedures for administering medication are followed, although the records of these do not provide as precise information as possible.

School details

Unique reference number	135822
Social care unique reference number	1183931
DfE registration number	888/6109
Inspection number	10026012

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 21
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	106
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	23
Number of part-time pupils	0
Number of boarders on roll	44
Proprietor	Fazl Wadee
Headteacher	Anayath Chowdhury
Annual fees (day pupils)	£1,300
Annual fees (boarders)	£2,300
Telephone number	01772 828732
Website	www.abraracademy.com
Email address	info@abraracademy.com
Date of previous inspection	5–7 February 2014

Information about this school

- The school opened in March 2009 with boarding facilities available from September 2015.
- The school is registered as an independent boarding Muslim faith school for up to 220 boys aged from 11 to 21 years. The boarding accommodation is registered to accommodate up to 68 pupils aged up to 16. No boarders are aged over 16.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the teaching staff and a new office manager has been appointed. The sixth form has been established and the boarding provision opened.
- Currently, there are 106 pupils on roll, with roughly one quarter in the sixth form. Just under half of pupils board, staying in premises about five minutes' walk from the main school site.
- There are no pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupil has an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- Pupils are of mainly Asian heritage. All pupils speak English as their first language.
- Admission to the school is selective, with consideration being given to academic criteria. The range of pupils' academic starting points has been broader for pupils admitted recently.
- The school aims to 'provide an opportunity to study the traditional Islamic sciences alongside secondary education (GCSE) and to educate boys over the age of eleven in a safe, secure, happy and Islamic environment'.
- Some pupils aspire to ultimately become imams and scholars.
- A nearby park is used by the school for physical education, including sports such as cricket, football and cross country.
- The school received its previous standard inspection from 5 to 7 February 2014. The boarding provision received a pre-registration inspection on 25 August 2015. This is the first full inspection of the boarding provision.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted with no prior notice to the school. It included the first inspection of the boarding facilities since these opened for pupils. It was requested by the Department for Education earlier than usual in the inspection cycle because complaints had been received about the school.
- Inspectors toured the school site accompanied by the headteacher and the boarding accommodation accompanied by the head of boarding.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school. An inspector visited an assembly conducted by pupils. 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 principal, who is also the head of boarding. Inspectors also met with the headteacher, the proprietor and a group of teachers. They met formally with groups of pupils at school and in the boarding house. They spoke to others during lessons, at other times during the school day and to boarders during the evening and at breakfast time.
- 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 independent school standards and the national minimum standards for boarding, and to provide other inspection evidence. These documents included policies, health and safety records and other safeguarding information, the school's own evaluation of examination results, development planning, minutes of meetings, and the attendance and admissions registers. Inspectors examined the school's website.
- Ten responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were received over the inspection period.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Bernard Robinson

Ofsted Inspector

Graham Robinson

Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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