

School inspection report

13 to 15 February 2024

Kassim Darwish Grammar School for Boys

Hartley Hall

Alexandra Road South

Chorlton-cum-Hardy

Manchester

M16 8NH

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for later life in line with the school's Islamic ethos. Governors provide effective oversight and ensure leaders are knowledgeable and promote a secure learning environment. This is achieved through the consistent implementation of robust welfare and safety procedures and effective pastoral support for pupils.
2. Leaders and governors are reflective and regularly evaluate the school's provision to identify areas for development. Leaders have secure understanding of risk management, including contextual risks. They readily engage with external agencies to extend their knowledge of current issues and promote pupil safety and wellbeing.
3. Leaders prioritise safeguarding training for all staff and governors so that staff are knowledgeable and vigilant. Staff are confident they know what to do should there be a concern about a pupil or an adult.
4. Leaders provide a suitable curriculum that promotes pupils' learning across a range of areas, including their understanding of the Islamic faith. Pupils demonstrate clear communication, numeracy and analytical skills which enable them to develop a secure understanding of how business and enterprise work. Pupils and teachers have a positive relationship and pupils seek help if they do not understand a task. Pupils are well motivated and keen to learn and improve in their work. Results in public examinations have improved in recent years. Teachers have good subject knowledge and prepare pupils well for examination requirements. Overall, pupils make good progress.
5. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported and also make good progress. Leaders have identified the need to further develop teaching strategies and this is having a positive effect on pupils' learning. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) rapidly develop their fluency in English, which helps them to make good progress in their other subjects.
6. There is a whole school assessment and tracking system. However, this uses a limited range of data to inform teachers' planning. Pupils are not always fully aware of their personal targets as they are not involved in the creation of them.
7. An extra-curricular programme supports pupils' learning outside the classroom, covering a range of activities such as football, chess and Qur'an and Hadith circle. Pupils are not always involved in deciding what is offered, and some older pupils feel their choice is limited.
8. Leaders have put in place effective programmes to support pupils in their personal development. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme informs pupils well about topics such as respect, spiritual and moral understanding. Pupils are positive about relationships and sex education (RSE) teaching and understand important issues such as consent and healthy relationships.
9. Behaviour is generally good. However, in a few lessons, low-level disruption and inconsistent use of the behaviour management system can affect pupil progress. This has been identified by leaders.

10. Pupils know to approach staff if they have a concern and there are other ways of communicating with leaders, including a 'worry box'. However, not all pupils are clear about these processes.
11. Leaders ensure that pupils understand the need for respect for diversity and for individual characteristics. They have a well-developed spiritual dimension to their lives. This is because their faith and the values are present throughout the school.
12. Pupils learn about British values and democracy through PSHE and assemblies. This enables them to understand life in wider society and how they can play an important role in adult life as responsible, contributing members of society.
13. Promoted by their faith, pupils demonstrate care and a sense of duty towards others. This is reflected in pupils' work in the local community and further afield, as in the sponsorship of orphaned children.
14. The careers programme provides effective guidance and support for pupils as they consider the next stage in their education. This enables pupils to make well informed choices. Pupils have clear financial awareness and understand money management.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- develop the assessment and tracking systems to inform teachers' planning more effectively and ensure that target setting is relevant to pupils
- develop the management of extra-curricular provision so there is greater alignment with pupils' interests
- improve the effectiveness of behaviour management systems, so they are consistently applied by all teachers to help pupil progress, especially in lessons
- strengthen pupils' awareness of processes to communicate any concern they wish to raise.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

15. Leaders, governors and staff are committed to promoting respect for individuals. This is promoted through the curriculum and the Islamic ethos, which is embedded throughout the school. As a result, pupils develop a deep understanding and respect for people's different characteristics both in school and outside in society. Pupils highlight the importance of the school's family atmosphere where they feel valued and have a sense of belonging. Non-teaching staff contribute to this atmosphere by working effectively alongside leaders and teachers in providing care for pupils.
16. Governors know the school well and provide a clear vision for delivering the aims of the school. They conduct regular oversight visits, including the chair and safeguarding governor, to give support and challenge to leaders. In board meetings the contents of leaders' reports are scrutinised for their effectiveness.
17. Leaders and governors are reflective and caring. They constantly seek to improve school provision with the wellbeing of pupils in mind. Warm relationships between teachers and pupils promote respect and trust, fostering a calm learning environment.
18. Leaders and governors are well aware of contextual risks. These are regularly discussed and analysed to mitigate risks posed to pupils, especially in relation to current social issues surrounding extremism, knife crime and domestic violence. In view of this there have been major improvements to site security with new fencing and gates, CCTV monitoring and key coded doors. Other risks such as those associated with trips and visits are carefully monitored and reviewed.
19. The school has appropriate policies in place. These are regularly reviewed by leaders and governors for effectiveness of implementation. Where the need for improvement is identified, as in improving the quality of teaching, leaders take action. They undertake rigorous self-evaluation exercises and external consultants are engaged to help leaders understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. This has made tangible difference to the quality of teaching.
20. Leaders and governors are highly conscious of their safeguarding responsibilities. Governors conduct a rigorous annual audit of the school's current practice and are pro-active, constantly seeking ways to further enhance pupils' wellbeing. A weekly safeguarding question and answer session for all staff ensures that safeguarding is always at the forefront of staff's minds.
21. Leaders engage effectively with others outside the school and in the wider community. The school has close links with its sister school for female pupils. Leaders stay up to date in relation to matters of pupil safety and communicate regularly with the local authorities to seek advice, including the police.
22. The accessibility plan is regularly reviewed and minimises any barriers encountered by those with disabilities. A pupil risk assessment identifies pupils for whom actions are required to enable them greater accessibility. As a result, staff are well informed of what is required and pupils are well supported.
23. Leaders provide the required information to parents using the school's website. This includes details of the safeguarding and behaviour policies. Parents receive regular reports each year that detail information about their child's attainment and progress.

24. Complaints are taken seriously, addressed promptly and managed in accordance with the school's appropriate policy. Regular reviews of complaints are undertaken and discussed at board level, showing reflective practice to support pupils' wellbeing.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

25. Leaders plan carefully so that there is an appropriate curriculum which enables pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects. Leaders monitor and evaluate teaching standards by undertaking regular observations, reviewing pupils' work for progress, talking to pupils and reflecting on feedback from parents.
26. Pupils are confident communicators. They explain their work clearly, both written and orally, as a result of the opportunities and encouragement provided by teachers. In a GCSE history lesson pupils graphically described the consequences of the Wall Street Crash, clearly understanding its impact on society.
27. As a result of leaders' specific focus and planning in this area, pupils display effective numeracy and analytical skills which are reflected in their growing business acumen. Through careful planning and well-chosen tasks, teachers ensure that pupils understand the concepts of profit and loss, market segmentation and how to target this to gain competitive advantage.
28. Pupils are well motivated, taking pride in the presentation of their work, meeting the high expectations from their teachers. Pupils act upon teacher feedback to improve their work. By carefully following the teacher's advice in a GCSE Spanish lesson, pupils' greater focus on grammatical accuracy resulted in a more accurate and fluent piece of written work.
29. Leaders' focus on strengthening teaching and learning enables pupils to achieve well in GCSE examinations, with an improvement in results over recent years. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and leaders promote a range of professional development opportunities. Carefully chosen options in science support pupils of different abilities to achieve success. In Year 11, pupils are helped with examination technique, supported by additional classes in each subject. This means that pupils are well prepared for public examinations.
30. Positive relationships between teachers and pupils and amongst pupils themselves allow pupils to confidently ask for help if they do not understand a task. In lessons, teachers show patience, explaining carefully how to improve skills, as in a hockey lesson centred on creating space and passing. As a result, pupils respond positively and are motivated to learn.
31. Pupils work effectively both independently and collaboratively, as in the learning of the Qur'an and in a GCSE mathematics lesson focused on trigonometry. Pupils eagerly helped each other by testing each other's understanding rather than just providing the answers.
32. Pupils who have SEND are well supported and make good progress across the curriculum. As identified by leaders, teaching in lessons is now adapted more effectively to meet the needs of pupils. Pupils who have EAL make good progress in their fluency of English through a carefully designed curriculum in order to develop their vocabulary and skills in sentence construction. These pupils are also encouraged to develop their creative skills through a range of different media and rapidly gain confidence.
33. There is an assessment and tracking system in place with targets set, though pupils do not take part in the dialogue. Pupils are not always aware of these targets or the basis for them. Leaders are planning a further development of the system, including active pupil involvement in measuring their

own progress, to inform teachers' planning more effectively, and engage pupils' interest and promote further effort.

34. There is a programme of extra-curricular activities to support pupils in their learning outside the classroom. Activities include football, chess, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE), and Qur'an and Hadith circle. Pupils enjoy working together in physical activities and developing their skills and interests. However, some older pupils feel that the programme has limited choices, and do not fully engage in the activities provided.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

35. Leaders promote pupils' wellbeing through a programme of physical, personal and health education appropriate to the needs of pupils. As a result, pupils develop secure sense of self-esteem supported by their faith values. Leaders have created a respectful and tolerant school culture where pupils think empathetically so they understand how damaging discrimination is. Pupils are respectful and aware of their responsibilities towards others.
36. Behaviour is generally good, although in a few cases low-level misbehaviour can affect progress in some lessons. Some pupils feel that the implementation of the behaviour management system is inconsistent amongst some teachers. Leaders are aware and are working to address this.
37. Pupils understand the need for respect concerning areas such as disability, faith, race and gender identity. Through RSE pupils develop a knowledge of topics such as consent and the importance of healthy relationships. Work in PSHE and workshops on discrimination have resulted in pupils having a better understanding of the impact of unkind words, leading to fewer incidents of inappropriate language amongst pupils.
38. The school is aware of social media pressures on young people and will adapt the curriculum in response to current trends. This includes youth violence, domestic abuse, knife and drug crime. This means pupils are informed and aware of risks and dangers in society. Leaders work effectively with parents, including workshops and online, to ensure they understand the importance of these topic areas and support their children in their learning and development as young adults.
39. Pupils have a well-developed spiritual dimension, underpinned through their Islamic faith, which is clearly evident in all aspects of the school, and an appreciation of the non-materialistic aspects of life. Pupils speak openly about their faith and world religions, and appreciate that other faiths share many of the same moral values. Pupils display the ability to reflect, look beyond themselves and give thoughtful answers. In a whole school assembly on the history of clocks and time, pupils enthusiastically engaged, referencing the Muslim faith together with Chinese, Egyptian, Roman and Anglo-Saxon cultures.
40. Staff know that they can be approached by any pupil who has a concern and there is a worry box. However, some pupils feel that staff are constantly busy, so would welcome an additional mechanism to make them more confident should they need support and wish to readily communicate with an adult. Regular school council meetings and coffee mornings with senior leaders enable pupils to ask questions about the school and facilitate change, as in recent adjustments to food menus and the acquisition of new sports equipment.
41. There are trained staff in mental health first aid with access to local professional counselling services. Mental health awareness is promoted through the PSHE programme, supported by assemblies. In answer to an identified need, leaders have recently introduced Track, Reflect, Adapt, Connect, Kindness (TRACK) to further support pupils' mental health. With the help of a visiting former pupil, pupils have developed effective strategies to manage anxiety through a spiritual approach, using prayer and meditation, especially before examinations.

42. Pupils appreciate the need for exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils keep active through physical education and an activity programme which includes basketball, football and hockey. Leaders recognise the importance of healthy eating for pupils. To reflect this, all pupils and staff eat a freshly cooked lunch together every day.
43. Pupils lead whole school prayer, assemblies and act as mentors for younger pupils. This enables them to develop confidence. The house system based on qualities in accordance with the teaching of Islam, trust, talent and tenacity, enables pupils to strengthen their sense of identity. As a consequence, there are healthy relationships amongst different year groups, as observed in free time when pupils play and socialise together harmoniously.
44. Pupils know themselves well and are determined to improve their capabilities as observed in their progress over time in a range of written work and in learning the Surahs from the Qur'an. By being resolute and not giving up to achieve their aim, pupils learn the value of resilience.
45. Pupils are knowledgeable about bullying and know how to keep themselves safe online. Bullying is rare but when it occurs leaders act promptly to resolve any issue. The school has recently received a national award in recognition of its work on anti-bullying.
46. The school building and surrounding grounds are secure and well maintained. Access to the school is carefully controlled. Health and safety procedures are effectively implemented. There is regular monitoring and review by leaders with effective oversight by governors. Precautions are taken to reduce risks from fire, with training for staff and termly fire evacuation drills undertaken.
47. There is a suitable medical room and trained first aid staff to provide immediate care for any unwell or injured pupil. Leaders ensure that there are always appropriate numbers of staff on duty to supervise pupils during breaks and lunchtimes, as well as at the start and end of the school day.
48. Admission and attendance registers are kept appropriately, and staff are vigilant concerning any pupil absence. The school informs the local authority of any pupils who join or leave in line with local authority requirements.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

49. Leaders' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) curriculum teaches pupils how to be moral citizens and active participants in society. Pupils respond positively to the challenge to broaden their perspective on life by learning about different cultures and religions in religious studies. For example, younger pupils can explain clearly the difference between liturgical and non-liturgical worship and what this means for the worshipper. This enables pupils to develop a broad understanding of the world, people's cultures, beliefs and traditions in preparation for life outside school.
50. Underpinned by the code of conduct and strong belief in their faith, pupils develop an understanding of right from wrong. Pupils can talk meaningfully about morality, displaying maturity and sensitivity when discussing how having different opinions should not be a barrier to friendship. Pupils understand it is fine to be different and why it is important that people get on well with each other.
51. Pupils are taught about laws and institutions and the concepts of democracy through the curriculum. Pupils learn about the importance of respect for diversity through interactive workshops to encourage discussion. Pupils find this effective in developing their understanding of these concepts.
52. Leaders successfully enable pupils to learn about British values and tolerance through the PSHE programme. The school's Living Islam programme and the Islamic society enable pupils to learn about others and their traditions. This promotes pupils' awareness of the differences and complexities in society, and as a consequence enables them to be prepared well for life in line with the school's aims.
53. Links with local schools enable pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of others and different religions. Inter Faith Week is celebrated to bring a range of faiths together so that pupils can ask questions and gain insight into the lives of others.
54. Pupils show a sense of duty and care towards others, including younger pupils. They regularly visit the local sister prep school to give talks and take responsibility for Friday Sermon. Pupils have a well-developed sense of social service. In the local community pupils help at food banks, undertake environmental projects such as the planting of trees, perform voluntary work as part of the DofE scheme and fundraise for charities. Pupils are well aware of the difficulties others face, as demonstrated by a recent initiative developed together by leaders and pupils where each form group has committed to sponsoring an orphan child in Pakistan. As a result, pupils learn social responsibility and the value of teamwork to achieve their goal.
55. Careers guidance provides effective support as pupils consider the next stage of their education. The school organises careers events and visits from colleges to help pupils make informed choices and decide what is best for them. This is highly valued by pupils. Pupils learn how to manage finances such as student loans and mortgages. In enterprise pupils demonstrate clear awareness and understanding of financial concepts such as profit and loss and product viability. As a consequence of leaders' work, pupils are well supported in their ambitions for the future.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

56. Leaders and governors promote a positive safeguarding culture. As a result, pupils feel safe in school. Leaders promote an awareness amongst staff that ‘it could happen here’ and that everyone is responsible for acting on concerns. Leaders take concerns seriously and record these in appropriate detail, taking suitable action when required.
57. The written safeguarding policy includes all the latest relevant information and guidance. The governor responsible for safeguarding frequently meets with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and undertakes checks. There is effective oversight of safeguarding policies and their implementation through discussion with leaders, regular reports to the board and governors’ visits to the school.
58. Staff, including governors, receive regular training in safeguarding. Staff are knowledgeable and confident about the procedures to follow should there be a concern about a pupil, including child-on-child abuse or a member of staff, including a low-level concern.
59. Pupils are taught how to be safe, including online. There is a robust filtering system which is carefully monitored by leaders and governors.
60. The induction process for new staff is rigorous. Training includes the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. Leaders and governors analyse and assess contextual risks, regularly reviewing these to safeguard pupils. Documentation is thorough and detailed.
61. Leaders have established an effective working relationship with local external agencies and the police. Leaders are pro-active and constantly seek advice on how to improve their practise for the safety and wellbeing of pupils. Referrals to children’s services and the police are made promptly.
62. Leaders and governors are trained in safer recruitment. Safer recruitment checks are completed for all staff, volunteers and governors and a suitable central record of appointments is maintained.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Kassim Darwish Grammar School for Boys
Department for Education number	352/6049
Registered charity number	1073862
Address	Kassim Darwish Grammar School for Boys Hartley Hall Alexandra Road South Chorlton-cum-Hardy Manchester M16 8NH
Phone number	0161 8607676
Email address	admin@kdgb.miet.uk
Website	www.kdgb.miet.uk
Proprietor	Manchester Islamic Educational Trust Ltd
Chair	Mr Farroukh Zaheer
Executive Head	Mrs Mona Mohamed
Age range	11 to 16
Number of pupils	144
Date of previous inspection	4 to 6 February 2020

Information about the school

63. Kassim Darwish Grammar School for Boys is an independent day school for male pupils aged 11 to 16 years. There are two classes per year from Year 7 to Year 11. The school is owned by Manchester Islamic Educational Trust Ltd, and is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. The trustees form the governing body of the school.
64. The school has identified 52 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
65. English is an additional language for 70 pupils.
66. The school states its aims are to create a caring warm Islamic atmosphere within which pupils can feel safe, healthy and happy, enjoy learning, achieve and succeed, be able to contribute to their school and society and so be prepared for a life in the 21st century.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

13 to 15 February 2024

67. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

68. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the deputy head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

69. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
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Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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