



Kassim Darwish Grammar School for Boys

Inspection report

This inspection was carried out under section 162 (A) of the Education Act 2002 as amended. Bridge Schools Inspectorate (BSI) has been approved by the Secretary of State in the Department for Education (DfE) to undertake inspections in designated independent schools within membership of the Christian Schools Trust (CST) or the Association of Muslim Schools UK (AMSUK).

DfE number:	352/6049
Association:	AMSUK
Date of inspection:	24 th -27 th February 2014
Lead Inspector:	Mr C Barnett
Team inspectors:	Mr I Hewitt Mr D Robotham
Age range of pupils:	11-16 years
Number on roll:	135
Full-time:	135 boys
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	0
Proprietor:	Manchester Islamic Educational Trust Ltd
Head teacher:	Mr C Mills
Address of school:	Hartley Hall Alexandra Road South Chorlton-Cum-Hardy Manchester M16 8NH
Telephone number:	0161 8607676
Email:	admin@kdgrammar.co.uk

The purpose and scope of the inspection

The main purpose of the inspection is twofold. It is to advise the DfE whether the school continues to meet the requirements for registration, and to determine whether the school's religious ethos continues to meet the expectations of its association. Ofsted monitors the work of independent inspectorates, including a sample of inspections, and you can find the latest evaluation of the work of The Bridge Schools Inspectorate on the Ofsted website.

Information about the school

Kassim Darwish (KD) Grammar School for Boys is an independent Muslim day school for pupils aged from 11 to 16 years; it is located in Chorlton-Cum-Hardy near Manchester. Pupils are drawn from a particularly wide catchment area which includes Oldham, Rochdale, Blackburn and Huddersfield. The school was founded in 1999 by the Manchester Islamic Educational Trust Ltd, a body which also runs two other Muslim schools in the area. The school is inclusive and pupils of any faith are welcome so long as they are willing to respect the school's values. It was last inspected by Ofsted in October 2010 and transferred to the Bridge Schools Inspectorate in 2013. At present there are 135 pupils on roll; all are British Muslims from different ethnic heritages. Although there is a selective entrance examination, the overall ability of pupils on entry is average. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs but the school has identified four pupils who are in need of additional learning support in literacy. At the end of Year 11, all pupils go on to local school sixth forms or further education colleges.

The school believes that '...an excellent education, delivered in a safe caring Islamic environment, gives each pupil room to grow and develop as an individual. Our school strives to create a harmonious balance between academic demands, sporting and cultural activities and community life. We encourage students to be intellectually inquisitive and socially conscious'. While seeking to provide high quality education, the school believes it is equally important for pupils to develop values which prepare them to be caring adults who contribute to society. Its mission is to ensure that all its pupils '...make significant progress in knowledge, understanding and skills; in attitudes and values, as social beings and as lifelong learners. Through the teaching and practice of Islam, in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah, we aim to help our pupils to develop a love for Allah (SWT) and confidence in their identity as young Muslim men'.

Evaluation of the school

KD Grammar School is a good school. Since its last inspection in 2010, it has undergone a period of transition with the appointment of a new headmaster in September 2012. Since then, some significant improvements have been made. The curriculum is now broad and balanced. The quality of teaching is good but there are relatively few references to Islamic perspectives in the daily life of the school. Pupils enjoy school; they like their teachers whom they find approachable and supportive. They value the friendships that they have made and in lessons they work well together. Overall, behaviour is good. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and the provision for their welfare, health and safety are good.

So, too, is the attendance rate. The incidence of pupils' late arrival at school and poor punctuality at the start of lessons is being addressed as a result of strenuous efforts by the school. The premises are well maintained; there are areas in need of refurbishment but pupils' access to these is restricted. The outside recreational space is limited but the school makes good use of off-site facilities for physical education (PE) and games. Classrooms and corridors contain many colourful displays celebrating pupils' achievements but there is less evidence of displays proclaiming the Islamic faith. All the necessary checks on staff and trustees have been completed and the school's complaints procedure meets requirements.

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headmaster is outstanding and he is well supported by an efficient and effective administrative team. At the time of his appointment, the headmaster identified a number of key priorities for the school's development. These included the reinforcement of the school's Islamic ethos, raising academic standards, an improvement in the quality and consistency of teaching and learning, an overhaul of the curriculum, the development of the extra-curricular programme especially sport, the expansion of links with the local community and the development of charitable activities. There has been a particular emphasis on building the capacity of senior and middle leadership and to this end a programme of lesson observations and professional development based on a team of staff coaches and the judicious use of outside consultants has been introduced. This is beginning to pay dividends although the school acknowledges that there is still some way to go before the priorities identified in 2012 are achieved. The process of agreeing key strategic aims and setting in motion the means to achieve them has undoubtedly galvanised the school. It is fully endorsed by a very active body of trustees and by the parents who are highly supportive of the direction that the school is now taking.

At the time of the last inspection, the school did not meet four of the regulations: three related to the welfare, health and safety of the pupils and the fourth area of non-compliance related to the premises and accommodation. Since then these areas have been addressed and the school now meets all the statutory requirements.

Quality of education provided

The overall quality of education is good. Curriculum planning is related explicitly to the school's commitment to educate the whole individual and emphasises the importance not only of fostering their intellectual and physical development but also their moral and social awareness through the inculcation of Islamic values, an understanding of right and wrong, truth and fairness. The curriculum aims to enable each pupil to fulfil his innate potential, to appreciate the importance of lifelong learning, to value each individual's rights and the need for collaborative working, to appreciate Britain's cultural heritage, and to understand the importance of caring for the environment. By this means the school seeks to help its pupils to become positive and self-confident citizens able to live and work co-operatively with others and to prepare them for adulthood in a knowledge-based economy.

The quality of the curriculum is good. It has recently been reviewed to ensure that it is broad and balanced. This was not the case when the current headmaster was

appointed in September 2012; the changes that have taken place since then include the reintroduction of history and the replacement of economics by business studies at GCSE, which meets one of the areas for development identified at the time of the last inspection. At Key Stage 3, pupils now take English, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, history, religious studies, information and communication technology (ICT), Qur'an, Arabic, Urdu, French, personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), PE and games. There is a particular emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. In response to the recently-introduced changes in the GCSE English language syllabus, the school is working with an external consultant to raise the standard of literacy and in particular the quality of the boys' writing and comprehension skills. As part of the Islamic ethos, Urdu and Arabic are taught in Key Stage 3; many pupils continue to study Arabic to GCSE level as a modern foreign language. IGCSE Islamiyat (combining Arabic with a study of the Qur'an) has recently been added to the range of optional subjects in Key Stage 4. In Year 11, all pupils are expected to take a minimum of eight GCSE including English, mathematics, Islamic Studies and ICT; most take ten. Each year, some Year 10 pupils take GCSE early in subjects such as mathematics, Arabic, religious studies, Urdu and English. In 2011 and 2012, a small group of pupils also sat A-levels in one or two subjects.

Nearly all subjects are taught by specialist teachers. This includes PE and games the development of which, along with after-school clubs and activities, has been a particular focus in the last two years. As a result, there has been a notable increase in pupils' participation in activities such as badminton, table tennis and fitness training; the school is planning to broaden further the range of extra-curricular activities, for example by introducing archery. There has been an improvement in the standard of football played at the school. Under the guidance of a qualified coach, the school now holds its own with other Manchester schools and, in 2013, was runner-up in a national tournament for Muslim schools. The school is also expanding its range of outside trips and other visits. As part of its commitment to serving its local community and preparing its pupils for adult life in a diverse, multi-cultural society, it has forged an important link with a local Jewish school.

An important priority identified by the headmaster in his review is embedding engagement with the Islamic faith within each subject and affording opportunities in lessons for teachers to refer to Islamic values. However, only a few subject schemes of work show any evidence of the Islamic perspective being incorporated in long and medium term planning. Some draw heavily on generic schemes of work with little or no adaption to the specific needs of KD Grammar School. Generally, the schemes of work are well laid out and sequential with appropriate references to prior learning, teaching strategies, expected learning outcomes and resources so that they provide a sound basis for lesson planning. The best ones identify assessment opportunities. The PE and games schemes of work emphasise the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles. Only a few subjects, for example Urdu, Islamiyat, geography, religious studies, PSHCE and modern foreign languages, identify opportunities for relating subject content to Islam.

All pupils are taught PSHCE for one period a week; the programme includes the opportunity for outside speakers to visit. The syllabus covers a wide range of topics from issues relating to adolescence, lifestyles, relationships and personal safety to

time and financial management, prejudice and discrimination, globalisation, the way in which Britain is governed, and the world of work. All of these are relevant to a young person growing up in contemporary Britain and good opportunities are taken to relate these topics to Islamic values.

The careers co-ordinator works closely with the PSHCE and English departments to offer a programme aimed at preparing pupils for the world of work. Key Stage 3 pupils participate in the Lionheart business enterprise challenge to develop their awareness of the commercial world. Year 10 pupils go on a work experience placement for a fortnight at the end of the summer term; they are encouraged to find their own placements and the school supports them in approaching employers. As their post-work experience debrief and self assessment show, they gain excellent experience in writing letters of application, working with adults and interacting with members of the public. Year 11 pupils are supported in their sixth form and career choices by an external company which provides outside interviewers who scrutinise their curriculum vitae and conduct a personal interview to help them identify the right career path for their interests and strengths. Follow-up interviews and help with letters of application and personal statements are also offered. This is supplemented by a programme of outside speakers from local sixth form colleges and the professions. There are plans to develop the programme further.

The school's special educational needs (SEN) policy and prospectus make it clear that the school is not equipped to cope effectively with pupils with SEN statements. The school does place a commendable emphasis upon ensuring that every pupil has access to all elements of the mainstream curriculum. The recently-appointed SEN co-ordinator, who is working closely with an external consultant, has started using Key Stage 2 data and the scores from cognitive ability tests (CATs) taken on entry, to develop an effective procedure for identifying pupils with additional learning needs and for monitoring their development. As a result, the school has identified four pupils with mild learning difficulties. An action plan based on their pupil profiles aims to raise their literacy levels by six months in six weeks. However, lesson plans rarely refer specifically to the needs of these pupils and in general there is little evidence of planning to meet the differing needs of pupils in classroom practice. A start has been made on identifying gifted and talented pupils but lesson planning often makes no reference to them.

Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good; some outstanding lessons were seen. The small group sizes mean that teachers can pay close attention to the needs of individual pupils. The pupils themselves say that they enjoy their lessons and appreciate the help that they receive from their teachers; they find them approachable and their views are valued by them. Teachers and pupils generally work well together and pupils collaborate effectively in paired and group work; this was the case in a Year 10 Arabic lesson, in which pupils shared their knowledge of vocabulary in a group task on travel and transport. In general, the pupils' respect for their teachers ensures that most lessons are conducted in a purposeful atmosphere. In a few lessons, the teacher's classroom management is less secure leading to some younger pupils in particular, losing concentration and direction.

The specialist knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject displayed by most teachers ensure that many lessons are characterised by high levels of challenge.

For example, in an outstanding Year 9 English lesson on persuasive writing techniques, the teacher made excellent use of open questioning to prompt the development of pupils' higher order thinking skills. Pupils react well to the high expectations and brisk pace of these lessons. Teachers generally use praise and encouragement effectively to develop their pupils' self-confidence; they give them time to think through their answer before responding.

The best lessons are well structured and use a range of tasks and resources, including the interactive white board, to engage and stimulate the pupils, as was the case in an excellent Year 10 geography lesson on river landforms. These lessons build effectively on the pupils' prior knowledge and use homework tasks to consolidate and extend learning; in a Year 7 ICT lesson, a desktop publishing exercise had been divided into manageable units and then linked together. Lesson objectives are made clear from the outset, as in a Year 9 English lesson, pupils deduced them from the starter activity and revisited them in the course of the lesson to enable the teacher to check pupils' understanding. The teacher's planning in these lessons also provides opportunities for peer and self-assessment, for example in a Year 10 business studies lesson on supply and demand. Pupils make clear and demonstrable progress in the development of knowledge, skills and understanding: in a Year 7 PE lesson, there was a well-thought out progression of single to multiple hockey skills and simple to complex applications.

In view of the school's focus on developing literacy across the curriculum, there are relatively few opportunities for pupils to make oral presentation to the rest of the class. Whilst they are often encouraged to share ideas in pairs, there are few occasions when pupils can take part in a more formal discussion. In pupils' exercise books, there is little evidence in subjects other than English of marking aimed at improving standards of literacy. More generally, the quality of marking for improvement is variable; it is good in English, French, religious studies, the sciences and history but elsewhere the implementation of the school's detailed marking policy is inconsistent. Similarly, opportunities are missed to relate lesson content to the school's Islamic values and teachers sometimes appear reluctant to explore faith issues that are not directly covered in the syllabus.

Planning to meet the differing needs of pupils is inconsistent. Extension activities are sometimes included in lesson plans but are rarely made available in practice; a Year 9 chemistry lesson on copper extraction was a notable exception. Generally, teachers do not make the most of the chance to challenge more able pupils who finish the main task early. Likewise, the provision of planned support for those of lower ability is rarely evident in practice; there were very few examples of writing scaffolds to support written answers or of tasks that were graded in terms of difficulty. Whilst the small class sizes enable teachers to spend time helping those who are struggling this is often at the expense of stretching the more able.

Overall, teaching resources are good. Most classrooms and the corridors have examples of pupils' work and other displays celebrate pupils' achievements. A television screen in reception shows, amongst other things, a thought for the day drawn from the Islamic scriptures but in general there are relatively few displays that affirm the school's spiritual mission.

In lessons seen and in the work reviewed during the inspection, pupils generally make good progress. GCSE results at 5+ A*-C grade over the last four years have varied from 75% in 2010 to 88% in 2011, 62% in 2012 and 95% in 2013 when the school was the top performing boys' school and the second overall in Manchester. Although nominally selective, the school's intake, as indicated by the limited CATs assessment data available, is at best comprehensive. In 2013, the average GCSE grade was B; this suggests that the value added by the school is good. However, the variation between subjects within a given year and the variation within individual subjects over time, especially with regard to A*-A grades, has been identified by the school as a cause for concern and has led to a commitment to improving the recording and use of data so that pupil assessment can be more accurate, and intervention appropriately directed.

The lack of adequate baseline assessment data was identified by the current headmaster as a significant weakness when he took over. During the last two years the school has begun to introduce CATs and the formal recording of progress data. This allows the school to undertake the more forensic analysis of pupils' progress. The challenge now is for it to develop ways of using this information to inform target-setting and lesson planning the better to meet the needs of individual pupils. The school is aware that this will require a focused programme of staff development if the data at its disposal is to be used effectively.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school meets the regulations for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and its overall provision is good. The pupils are generally self-confident young Muslims and their respect for the school, the teaching and support staff and each other is evident in their behaviour and demeanour. They take an active role in daily acts of worship and seasonal faith-based and cultural activities.

The curriculum covers the major faiths and lessons are delivered with a confessional perspective, with Islamic views noted separately where these differ from those of the faith in question. Pupils are well prepared for life as British citizens in a multi-faith society and the school is building links with local schools and institutions to introduce pupils to people of other faiths. In January 2014, pupils took a leading part in a Holocaust Memorial Day service at a local Jewish school. Sports teams also participate in competitive matches against other schools from across Manchester. Speakers invited into the school include local imams, charity workers and an ambassador.

Pupils are taught to respect people of all faiths and none. It is pertinent that the headmaster is a non-Muslim and there is a number of other non-Muslim staff at the school. It was clear from discussions with the pupils and their responses to the questionnaire that they do not discriminate in their respect for their teachers on the grounds of either faith or gender. This is a clear reflection of the Islamic ethos of the school and the values embodied by the pupils. Similarly, the pupils show an excellent commitment to supporting those less fortunate than themselves. A pupils' charity committee was established in 2012 and this has been active in raising money on behalf of a range of causes including famine relief, research into breast cancer and aid for the Palestinians in Gaza.

The PSHCE syllabus is at the heart of teaching pupils about important aspects of British society, including democracy. This commitment is reinforced by the study of the Qur'an, Islam and other religions. The importance of participating in democratic processes is given a practical expression within the school in the election of the school prefects, who must nominate themselves and canvas for votes. Likewise, candidates for membership of the school council are chosen by self-nomination, followed by canvassing and a secret ballot. The ten-member council, with two pupils per year group, meets monthly and the meetings are minuted. This fulfils one of the areas for development identified at the previous inspection. Contacts with the local police force help to build trust between the school community and the authorities; this develops pupils' awareness of the need to respect law and order. During the inspection, a detective sergeant from the Greater Manchester Police Force spoke to pupils in a citizenship lesson, the latest in a number of officers to have visited the school.

The school accepts that an Islamic world-view is all-embracing and the many examples of good practice observed can be regarded as being under the umbrella of Islam as a complete way of life. The trustees' stated intention to have such a broad approach to the practice of the faith across the school is not always expressed explicitly in school policies. Nor is it always obvious in practices and procedures. The intention is that the 'spirit of Islam should be at the heart of all aspects of school life' and that 'the Islamic elements...should pervade all aspects of the curriculum to some degree'. However, the delivery of such a curriculum is patchy, with missed opportunities to introduce Islamic links in many of the lessons observed. The headmaster and trustees have demonstrated that they are sensitive to the Islamic ethos of the school and the need to develop this aspect of classroom practice.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Arrangements for the pupils' welfare, health and safety are good and all regulations are met.

Most school policies for pupils' welfare, health and safety are comprehensive in terms of aims and intent but some are less detailed in terms of actual implementation, and this has an impact on their effectiveness. For example, the school's behaviour policy sets out expectations and emphasises the need for the thorough investigation of major incidents, as well as the importance of fairness in the application of sanctions. However, it does not prescribe particular procedures; nor does it make explicit how sanctions are used, by whom and for what levels of offence. This has led to some variability in classroom practice. The appointment of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 co-ordinators has helped to bring consistency to this area. The interpretation of the way in which the policy should be applied is delegated to them and to the heads of department and relies on their professional judgement. Due largely to their efforts, pupils' behaviour is good but more explicit procedures would help to ensure greater consistency across the staff. The anti-bullying policy is an integral part of the school's approach to behaviour. Its effective implementation is shown by the pupils' view that bullying is very rare and that, when it occurs, they are confident that that it will be rapidly and effectively dealt with.

The school has in place an effective safeguarding policy which takes full account of the guidance issued by the Secretary of State. It gives clear guidance to staff on awareness of child protection issues and sets out procedures for dealing with incidents, keeping records and liaising with other agencies. All staff training including that of the designated person is up-to-date. E-Safety is covered by at least two policies and the school might consider reviewing these to consolidate and simplify.

The school's health and safety policy complies with the relevant regulations and effective risk assessments are carried out; this is an improvement since the last inspection. Since then, the school has put in place measures to ensure that the policy is effectively implemented. In particular, there are now detailed procedures covering all off-site activities and school visits, which set out clearly how these are to be approved and organised. The visits co-ordinator trains new staff in the procedures, monitors planning carefully and keeps thorough records.

The school has in place a fire safety policy including a fire risk assessment regularly undertaken by the Tameside Fire and Rescue Service. Following the last inspection, fire marshals have been appointed and trained. Fire exits are clearly marked and emergency signage and lighting are adequate. Fire drills are held regularly and are organised to test and reinforce particular aspects of the procedures; the outcome is carefully recorded and reviewed. Electrical equipment is regularly and systematically tested. The school might consider reviewing safety signs in relation to access stairs to some rooms, low ceilings and out-of-bounds areas.

The school now has an effective first aid policy in place which addresses the matters raised by the previous inspection. There are sufficient trained first-aiders and all training is currently up-to-date. There is a dedicated medical room with washbasin and first aid kits are located in strategically appropriate places, including one for off-site activities.

There is an equal opportunities policy and disabled access plan which meet the regulations. The plan is currently being reviewed in the light of proposed building development. There is appropriate supervision of the outside play spaces at break and lunchtime and senior staff are present in corridors at lesson changeover times.

The admission and attendance registers comply with the regulations, and attendance is recorded electronically. There were no unauthorised absences during the last academic year. Lateness has been an issue for some pupils but this is usually related to the distances a number of them have to travel to school. The school is making efforts to address this.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

All the appropriate checks on staff and trustees have been made including those on staff with overseas backgrounds and qualifications. The school does not use volunteers or agency supply staff; when necessary cover is carried out by its own staff who are on part-time contracts and therefore already have the relevant checks. During the inspection, the school reacted promptly in response to some minor errors

in the single central record so that by the end of the inspection all the regulatory requirements were met.

Premises of and accommodation at schools

The school is accommodated in an historic, listed building which creates its own difficulties. There are plenty of teaching rooms but these vary significantly in size and shape although high ceilings generate a feeling of space. Nonetheless, the available space is creatively and effectively used and clearly cared for. Floor levels vary with short flights of stairs in some places in addition to the main staircases; the school recognises the potential difficulties for any disabled pupils or staff and is seeking to address this in its revised access plan. Some areas of the building are still in need of renovation: these areas are out of bounds to pupils. Acoustic conditions, sound insulation and interior and exterior lighting are suitable.

The school now complies with all the regulations. There are three toilets and washrooms with four cubicles and wash basins in each. There are additional facilities for ablutions. All toilet facilities have hot and cold running water at suitable temperatures. There is a drinking fountain located in the dining hall. It is easily accessible and clearly labelled. Bottled water is also available from the school office and the school kitchen.

There is adequate specialist accommodation. The school has a generous library space equipped for both web-based and book-based research, two well-equipped science laboratories (a third is planned), a large, light art room and an ICT room equipped with more than 20 desktop computers. There is a beautiful prayer hall and an additional assembly space, which is in need of some modernisation. Most teaching rooms are used for only one subject; nearly all are equipped with interactive whiteboards.

Since the last inspection, five individual shower stalls have been installed in the PE changing rooms. For off-site PE and games lessons, showers are available either at the off-site location or on return to the school. Some timetabling adjustments have been made so that pupils can go straight home at the end of the day to shower. For on-site PE and games and outside play, space is limited but there is an all-weather, AstroTurf pitch for hockey and football, a separate hard-surface area for basketball and two outdoor, all-weather cricket nets. Use is also made of other public facilities within easy reach of the school. In poor weather the dining hall can also be used.

Provision of information

The school meets the regulatory requirements by providing all the necessary information to parents and others through an up-to-date prospectus, a detailed parents' handbook and a comprehensive website. This is easy to navigate and a helpful first port-of-call for parents considering the school for their sons.

There is an effective system of reporting which is appreciated by parents. The annual report format is clear and informative: for each subject the report includes a statement of the curriculum followed, comments on key aspects of character development (manners, behaviour, attitude and organisation) and progress and

attainment. The report does not include a specific section on the pupil's spiritual development but this is occasionally mentioned by tutors. The annual report is supplemented by three further progress checks which are undertaken in the course of the academic year; these generate data reports which are sent home to parents and which inform discussion at parents' evenings.

The school has made a considerable effort to improve its communication with parents and the wider community. There are regular newsletters and the school has recently developed a high quality newspaper which is produced by the pupils. This is directed not only at parents but also at local businesses and professional services.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's complaints policy and procedures meet the regulations. There have been no formal complaints within the past twelve months.

Compliance with the regulations

The school meets all of the regulations for registration.

The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Meeting the expectations AMSUK

The school's religious ethos broadly meets the expectations of AMSUK but in order to strengthen its religious ethos the school should consider:

- integrating the Islamic perspective consistently across all school policies and areas of the curriculum and reviewing job descriptions to emphasise the importance of appointing candidates who are practising Muslims or are supportive of the school's religious ethos
- ensuring that Islamic links and references are included in lesson planning and delivery, and providing opportunities for the Islamic ethos to be more visible throughout the school day.
- appointing an Islamic co-ordinator
- introducing staff training to implement the policies in such a way that they understand that the frame of reference is first and foremost the Sacred Texts.

What the school could do to improve further

As part of future development the school might wish to consider:

- developing ways of using assessment data to inform lesson planning and target-setting to meet pupils' differing learning needs
- continuing to raise standards of literacy across the curriculum
- strengthening links between policy and practice to achieve greater consistency in, for example, marking for improvement, classroom management and the application of sanctions.