

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Iranian Towheed Girls School

Report published in April 2014

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Iranian Towheed Girls School

Location	Al Karama
Type of school	Private
Website	www.Gi-st.com
Telephone	04-3961234
Address	Dubai Al Karama-P.O.BOX:17
Principal	Narges Hassani Shabestari
Curriculum	Iranian
Gender of students	Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	6-18 / Grade 1-Grade 12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	296
Largest nationality group of Students	Iranian
Number of Emirati students	0 (0%)
Date of the inspection	21st to 23rd October 2013

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## The context of the school

Towheed Iranian Girls School is situated in Al Karama. At the time of the inspection there were 296 students on roll, aged six to 18 years and the principal was in her second year in post.

The school followed an Iranian curriculum. Almost all students were of Iranian nationality with a few from Pakistan. Students took Iranian national examinations at the end of Grades 11 and 12.

There were 27 teachers, including the new principal and a senior leadership team. Most teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications. Students were grouped in 17 classes. There were five classes in primary from Grades 1 to 5, five in middle school from Grades 6 to 8 and seven in high school from Grades 9 to 12.

At the time of the inspection, nine teachers were newly appointed. Extensive new building works were taking place to provide updated facilities. This was restricting open outdoor spaces and created potential risks to health and safety.

## Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

### Key strengths

- Sustained good attainment and progress in science in all phases of the school;
- Outstanding attitudes and behaviour of almost all students in all phases of the school;
- Students' good understanding of how Islamic values influence their lives;

### Recommendations

- Develop the self-evaluation skills of leaders at all levels to give a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school as a basis for planning improvement that leads to raised levels of attainment and progress;
- Ensure the governing body monitors, supports and guides senior leaders of the school and checks that the school's response to inspection recommendations is thorough and properly evaluated;
- All senior and middle leaders should conduct regular lesson evaluation visits by to ensure that there is a range and variety of teaching approaches which lead to good progress in English and mathematics in all phases, and improved progress in Arabic;
- Improve the progress of students with special educational needs by developing written support plans that are shared with teachers so they can adapt lesson plans to meet the needs of all;
- Ensure that all teachers provide clear feedback on students' work so that students know how to improve.
- Comply with MoE requirements for the teaching of Islamic Education and Arabic.

## Progress since the last inspection

- There had been some improvement in:
  - the provision for students with special educational needs
  - speaking and listening skills in English
- For the second year, the school leaders had failed to ensure acceptable progress in addressing most of the recommendations in previous inspection reports:
  - the four language skills in Arabic had not been sufficiently developed and, as a result, attainment and progress in the primary phase for Arabic as an additional language remained unsatisfactory;
  - the range of teaching approaches and resources had not been expanded to enable active and meaningful learning to take place. This had a negative impact on progress especially in secondary mathematics where it was no longer good and the quality of teaching had declined in most subjects in the secondary phase;
  - assessment strategies to inform next steps in learning for all students had not been put in place;
  - the number of hours in Arabic in primary and middle school (and now secondary) and the curriculum for Islamic Education still did not meet MoE requirements;
  - systematic self-evaluation processes at all levels to secure improvement across the school had not been introduced;

## Trend of overall performance



## How good are the students' attainment progress and learning skills?

	Primary	Middle	High
<b>Islamic Education</b>			
Attainment	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
<b>Arabic as a first language</b>			
Attainment	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Progress	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
<b>Arabic as an additional language</b>			
Attainment	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Unsatisfactory	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>English</b>			
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Mathematics</b>			
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Progress	Good	Acceptable	Acceptable
<b>Science</b>			
Attainment	Good	Good	Good
Progress	Good	Good	Good

[Read paragraph](#)

	Primary	Middle	High
Quality of students' learning skills	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

	Primary	Middle	High
Personal responsibility	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness	Good	Good	Good
Community and environmental responsibility	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

	Primary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

## How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?

	Primary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

## How well does the school protect and support students?

	Primary	Middle	High
Health and Safety	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of Support	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

	Whole school
Quality of leadership	Acceptable
Self-evaluation and improvement planning	Unsatisfactory
Parents and the community	Good
Governance	Acceptable
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

## How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment in Arabic as an additional language was unsatisfactory in the primary phase but was acceptable in middle and secondary phases. In the primary phase, most students lacked the basic skills. In higher grades, listening and reading were in line with curriculum standards but speaking and independent writing skills were less well developed. Attainment in English was acceptable across all phases of the school. Listening and speaking became stronger as students developed increasing confidence with age. However, writing and reading skills continued to be underdeveloped in all phases. Attainment was acceptable in mathematics in primary and middle sections of the school. It was good in secondary because students showed a consistently diligent attitude to their studies and worked keenly in and out of school to improve their mathematical skills. Attainment in science was good in all phases. Primary students gained good knowledge and understanding of plants, for example, but their skills in using fair testing and writing about observations were less well developed. In middle and secondary phases, students were able to relate their knowledge to life outside school but their ability to design investigations and evaluate them were weaker.

Students in the primary phase made unsatisfactory progress in Arabic as an additional language but in middle and secondary phases, where progress in listening and reading was better, they made acceptable progress. Progress in English was acceptable overall with better progress in listening and speaking. Students made poor progress in reading and writing because there was insufficient time allocated to English lessons in the primary grades. Progress in mathematics was good in primary and acceptable in middle and secondary phases. Students in primary built upon their understanding of numbers and could carry out simple mathematical sums, multiply and divide numbers and used these skills to solve simple number problems. Progress slowed for older students, especially those in secondary phase because the style of teaching limited their learning. Progress in science was good in all phases. Students made good gains in their learning through the practical approach to science. Students also made good progress when they presented their work in class and were challenged about their ideas by their peers and teachers.

[View judgements](#)

## Quality of students' learning skills

Students' learning skills were acceptable. Students were enthusiastic learners. Their engagement was often better when working on practical activities. They were keen to answer the teachers' questions. They knew what they had learned, but were not given enough guidance on their strengths and weaknesses or how to improve their work. When given the chance they worked well together in groups. In some subjects, such as history, high school students were confident in presenting their research to the rest of the class. However, students had too few opportunities to share ideas through purposeful discussion. In some subjects, students were making links with real life in their learning. For example, students examined a bicycle brought into the classroom and identified the different types of energy involved in its use. However, such opportunities were not consistently offered across all subjects. Students' skills in critical thinking and independent learning were weak.

[View judgements](#)

## How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal responsibility was outstanding throughout the school. Students showed a consistently diligent approach to their learning in lessons, even when not engaged with interesting or stimulating work. Relationships between staff and students were supportive and courteous and contributed very well to the students' positive attitudes to their work. Students were aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles and the majority made healthy food choices with snacks. Attendance was good but a few students were not always punctual to classes after breaks.

Students' understanding of Islamic values and their local, cultural and global awareness were good across the school. Students had a clear understanding of how Islamic values influenced their lives and the community around them. Students had a strong awareness of their own Iranian identity and a basic understanding of the cultural traditions of the UAE but had a limited knowledge of other cultures.

Students in all phases showed acceptable responsibility towards community and environmental matters. Students demonstrated a commitment to their school through their work on the School Council and as play leaders in the primary phase. They had high standards of personal conduct, a strong work ethic and showed respect for those around them. Students responded to community initiatives each year supporting an Iranian festival to plant trees in the area but there was limited support for other environmental projects. Responsibility in the wider community was not well developed because of lack of contacts outside the school in Dubai.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable across the school. Most teachers' subject knowledge was good but only a few teachers used a wide range of teaching strategies to support the students' various learning styles. The best teaching was seen in science where most teachers used resources well, for example tasting different healthy snacks when studying food groups. However, there was too much reliance on textbooks in subjects such as mathematics and too few opportunities in most subjects for students to solve problems for themselves and reflect on their learning. Strong relationships between teachers and their students promoted a positive learning ethos so that students felt confident in participating in lessons. Teachers' skills in questioning were inconsistent. Although there was good practice within the school, teachers often accepted one word answers, which did not develop students' skills in explaining their ideas. Only a minority of teachers used assessment information to plan work for different ability groups, for example using a range of worksheets. Generally, teaching was better in middle and high schools when teachers acted as facilitators and used probing and demanding questioning to ensure that new learning was secure.

Assessment was acceptable in all phases. The school frequently recorded students' test and examination data but had yet to develop a whole school system to track and analyse students' progress. A majority of teachers knew most of their students' strengths and weaknesses but not enough teachers supported students who were underachieving. Assessment information was used effectively by a minority of teachers to plan work for groups of students with different abilities. Whole class questioning with choral responses was not effective in assessing understanding. Students were not involved in assessing their own learning and did not receive enough oral or written feedback on how to improve.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?

The curriculum was acceptable in all phases. It was soundly planned based on a clear rationale and reviewed annually, ensuring continuity and progression of skills across the grades in all content areas. The curriculum had a broad and balanced range of subjects in the primary school and a specialised programme option for high school with a mathematics or science focus. The school was not compliant with MoE time requirements for Arabic and did not fulfil MoE requirements for Islamic Education. Students developed leadership skills by serving on the student council and as play leaders. Although there were some cross-curricular links, this was not a strong feature of the school. Links to the community of Dubai were restricted to field trips.

Only a few activities were offered to enrich the curriculum and develop an understanding and appreciation of Dubai.

The curriculum design to meet the individual needs was acceptable in all phases. Efforts to differentiate the curriculum were in the early stages of implementation. Students participated in competitions in art, science, photography and chess, which provided additional challenge for all students. The curriculum was modified with extension activities and extra challenge for some gifted students. The provision of additional English teachers allowed students to work in ability groupings but limited lesson time in the primary school resulted in underdeveloped skills in reading and writing. Effective transitions between phases enhanced students' chances of success, particularly in Grade 9 when students selected which section to attend based on their curriculum preferences. However, a lack of clubs and extra-curricular activities prevented most students from pursuing their interests and talents within the school setting.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school protect and support students?

Acceptable arrangements were made to ensure the health and safety of all students. The school buildings were clean and provided a suitable learning environment for all. The building works on the school site provided a range of issues for security and health and safety, which the school found challenging to manage. Students were appropriately supervised at all times in the school day including on school transport but there were occasions when teachers were late to lessons and left classes unsupervised. Arrangements for the arrival and departure of students on school buses were acceptable. Efficient records were maintained on all aspects of students' safety including the regular checks of equipment and fire precaution procedures. Child protection arrangements were secure. The school medical staff provided an efficient lead in the promotion of a healthy lifestyle and this message was reinforced throughout the school.

The quality of support was acceptable in all phases. The school maintained an inclusive enrolment and staff-student relationships were good. Effective systems were used to monitor and report issues related to behaviour and attendance. Most teachers knew their students well and were aware of their learning needs. Each new student was assessed to identify any special need but there was a lack of appropriate assessment tools to identify requirements of older students and those who were gifted and talented. In addition, there were no formal educational plans to help teachers to modify the curriculum for students with special educational needs. There were also no

routine procedures to monitor their progress. The school counsellor provided guidance to all students and regularly met with parents to address any concerns.

[View judgements](#)

## How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was acceptable. The principal had established priorities for improvement with a focus on developing the professional standards of newly recruited teachers from Iran. Relationships between staff were friendly and cordial. The small school enabled informal discussions to take place regularly. Frequent formal meetings with agenda and minutes provided senior staff with a focus for resolving management issues. Little progress had been made in responding to the recommendations from last two inspection reports. The school lacked sufficient skills and capacity to raise standards.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. Most of the pre-inspection self-evaluation had not been completed. The monitoring of the quality of teaching was inconsistent. Senior management were not fully involved. Those that were did not use the same methods. There was no school-wide system to bring about improvements. The school had lists of things to do but no details of who were responsible for actions, when they would be done and how the school would measure success.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. There was a well-established parent teacher association with elected representatives. Reports to parents and meetings with teachers were regular and informative. There was contact with other Iranian schools in Dubai but links with the wider community were not well developed. About half the parents met during inspection thought communication between home and school needed improvement and others thought they could be more involved with the life of the school.

School governance was acceptable but had many weaknesses. A representative of the Directorate of Iranian Schools in Dubai had been involved with election of parent association representatives and had communicated with parents and listened to their concerns. A representative of the Directorate visited the school regularly, sometimes unannounced, and visited lessons and spoke to staff and students. There was no professional support for senior leaders and no monitoring or guidance on self-evaluation or action planning to ensure that recommendations from inspections were acted on.

Management of the school was acceptable. The school had coped with the school grounds becoming a building site but there was a lack of awareness about potential risks, such as supervision of the school entrance and the security of building works. Most staff were appropriately qualified. The timetable provision for English had been improved with the introduction of smaller classes. However, there were few

books written in English in the library, which limited extended reading. The late deployment of nine staff resulted in unsatisfactory educational provision at the start of term.

[View judgements](#)

## How well does the school provide for students with special educational needs?

The provision for students with special educational needs was acceptable. The school counsellor served as the special educational needs coordinator and was based in a dedicated office. The school maintained an inclusive enrolment policy and all new students were assessed for special educational needs but the school did not use recognised special education categories. Additional assessment strategies were not in place for assessing the needs of older students and gifted and talented students. Most teachers knew their students well and were aware of their learning needs but there were no formal educational plans to guide them in addressing classroom and curriculum modifications needed for their special education needs. In a minority of classes teachers modified their lessons by providing differentiated worksheets, targeted questioning and using varied textbooks and resources to instruct students at the appropriate levels. Efforts to differentiate the curriculum were in the early stages of implementation. Students participated in competitions in art, photography, science and chess providing additional challenge for gifted and talented students. Extension activities and project work was assigned in some lessons for gifted students. There was no school wide tracking system to monitor the progress of special education students making it difficult for parents, teachers and students to know how they were progressing and how they could improve their learning. The school counsellor met regularly with special education students and their parents to address concerns.

## What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents, teachers and senior secondary students were surveyed. Key messages from each group were considered during the inspection and these helped to form judgments. A summary of the survey statistics and comments from those who responded to the survey follows:

Responses to the surveys			
Responses received	Number		Percentage
Parents	This year	46	11%
	Last year	63	11%
Teachers	1		3%
Students	70		54%

\*The percentage of responses from parents is based on the number of families.

Only a few parents had responded to the survey at the time of the inspection. Most students responded but no teacher did so. Of the parents who responded, the majority were content with most aspects of the school but students were less supportive. Almost all parents but only under two thirds of students were satisfied with the quality of education at the school. Most parents and students thought that progress in English, mathematics and science was good. Most parents thought teaching quality was good but only a minority of students reported that their teachers were skilled and well qualified. Almost all parents and most students regarded school as a safe place. A majority of parents and most students thought school reports and meetings with teachers were helpful. Only a small minority of students thought they had the opportunity to take part in interesting, stimulating work involving problem solving, research and critical thinking. A larger minority did not think they had an opportunity to learn about Emirati heritage and traditions. Less than a third of students thought the curriculum was modified to meet their needs and that there were opportunities for student participation in school leadership.

## What happens next?

The school has been asked to prepare and submit an updated action plan to DSIB within two months of receiving the most recent report. This plan should address:

- Recommendations from DSIB;
- Areas identified by the school as requiring improvement;
- Other external reports or sources of information that comment on the work of the school;
- Priorities arising from the school's unique characteristics.

The next inspection will report on the progress made by the school.

**Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau**

**Knowledge and Human Development Authority**

## How to contact us

If you have a concern or wish to comment on any aspect of this report you should contact:

[inspection@khda.gov.ae](mailto:inspection@khda.gov.ae)

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