

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Towheed Iranian School for Girls

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Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Towheed Iranian School for Girls

Location	Karama
Type of school	Private
Website	www.gi-st.com
Telephone	04-3961234
Address	PO Box 17, Dubai
Principal	Soraya Norollah Komijani, Banafsheh Seyed Abdolraso
Curriculum	Iranian
Gender of students	Girls
Age / Grades or Year Groups	6-18 / Grade 1 to Grade 12
Attendance	Outstanding
Number of students on roll	416
Number of Emirati students	0
Date of the inspection	Monday 21st to Wednesday 23rd November 2011

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## The context of the school

Towheed Iranian Girls School is situated in Al Karama. The school in its original form opened in 1971. Currently, the school has a total roll of 416 students, aged six to 18 years.

The school followed an Iranian curriculum. Students took Iranian national examinations at the end of Grades 5, 8, and 12.

There were 42 teachers, including the principal and a senior leadership team. Most teachers in the school had appropriate teaching qualifications. Students were grouped in 22 classes: five in primary classes, Grades 1 to 5, six in middle school, Grades 6 to 8 and eight in high school classes, Grades 9 to 12. All students were of Iranian nationality.

At the time of inspection, the principal had been in the post for three years. Five teachers were newly appointed.

## Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

## How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

Towheed Iranian Girls' School provided an acceptable quality of education. An outstanding feature was the attitudes and behaviour of students throughout the school. The school had some good features, which included attainment in science in all levels and in mathematics in the high school levels. The quality of teaching for effective learning was acceptable in primary and middle schools and good in the high school. The students' civic and Islamic understanding was good across the school, as was their economic and environmental understanding. Arrangements to secure health, safety, and security were acceptable. The quality of support given to students was good. Self-evaluation and improvement planning processes were unsatisfactory. The school had good partnerships with parents and the community.

## Key strengths

- Motivated students, who were eager to learn, courteous and well-behaved;
- The productive links and communication between parents and the school;
- The good levels of attainment and progress in all grades in science and in mathematics in the high school.

## Recommendations

- Raise the standards of Arabic and English to ensure that all four language skills are equally developed;
- Further improve the overall quality of teaching by increasing the professional development of staff;
- Use assessment more effectively to improve learning and teaching, including the creation of individualised education plans for students with special education needs;
- Ensure that the curriculum for Islamic Education and the teaching hours for Arabic meet the UAE Ministry of Education requirements;
- Increase protection of students by conducting timely school evacuation drills for fire safety, ensuring that alternative exit routes are available and requiring students to wear seat belts on buses in accordance with government regulations;
- Improve the accuracy and rigour of self-evaluation and improvement planning.

## How good are the students' attainment and progress in key subjects?

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

Students' attainment in Arabic as an additional language was unsatisfactory in Primary and acceptable across the higher phases of the school. Students' vocabulary and skills of oral and written expression in Arabic were limited. Pronunciation was typically good. The majority of students in middle and upper grades could rephrase story paragraphs using age-appropriate vocabulary. Attainment in English was acceptable at all stages. Listening and speaking were relative strengths. Reading and writing were less

well developed. However, most students had age-appropriate skills in reading and writing for students with English as an additional language. Attainment in mathematics was acceptable in primary and middle levels and good in the high school. Students were able to solve algebraic problems and absolute functions and understood negative and positive powers. Attainment in science was good at all levels. Most students could discuss their hypotheses, test these and record their conclusions accurately. Students demonstrated a good understanding of physics, chemistry and biology and geology. Investigative skills were less well developed.

Students' progress in Arabic as an additional language in the primary phase was unsatisfactory and acceptable in the upper phases of the school. Progress in English was acceptable throughout the school. Writing skills developed less well compared to oral language skills and reading. Progress in mathematics was good in the primary grades, acceptable in the middle school and good in high school. Students demonstrated a strong understanding of patterns and sequences and were able to solve open-ended problems. In science, students' progress was good in all phases. Almost all were developing their scientific skills systematically and could apply these with confidence. High school students' ability to explain functions of parts of biological specimens in the laboratory showed rapidly developing understanding.

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

	Primary	Middle	High
Attitudes and behaviour	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
Understanding of Islam and appreciation of local traditions and culture	Good	Good	Good
Civic, economic and environmental understanding	Good	Good	Good

Outstanding attitudes and behaviour were evident across the school. Relationships between students and teachers were positive and supportive. Student responsibility was encouraged and students took their civic duties seriously. Most students made healthy eating choices and displayed a well-developed awareness of healthy life-styles. Attendance and punctuality were outstanding. Most students had a good knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Islam. Almost all students appreciated the benefits of living in a multi-cultural society such as Dubai. Their civic and economic awareness was enhanced through the developing role of the student council and increased shared decision-making. This enabled them to raise money for people less fortunate than themselves in Somalia. Across the school most students had a growing awareness of Dubai's economic progress and its position in the world. Almost all students took good care of their environment. They were able to identify how they contributed to conservation by recycling and saving water and electricity.

## How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

	Primary	Middle	High
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable in the primary and middle levels and good in the high school. Most teachers were well qualified and knowledgeable about their subject. They planned their lessons carefully and effectively. Teaching was strongest in mathematics and science and more variable in Arabic and English. In Arabic as an additional language, the use of Farsi inhibited the oral skills of students. Teaching involved students regularly through good questioning. In English, students in the primary stages, for whom English was an additional language, needed more opportunities to become confident in writing. In a significant minority of lessons, teachers did not enable students to take a degree of responsibility for their own learning. In some instances, textbooks restricted flexibility and teachers did not always use other resources, including information and communications technology (ICT) to support their teaching. Students' individual needs were not always met. A few lessons lacked a suitably brisk pace to engage students continuously. There were examples of students engaging in first-hand investigations and real-life problem solving. These activities needed to become more consistent across lessons. The school offered lessons in other subjects, including computers, PE, Farsi, history and civic studies, art and geography. The quality of teaching and learning varied but was generally acceptable.

Learning was acceptable across the school. Almost all students were keen to learn and they enjoyed the opportunity to discuss topics with their teacher and with fellow students. In English, most students made acceptable progress in listening, talking and reading. In Arabic, students were occasionally passive learners and would have benefited from greater challenge. In mathematics students made steady progress in their acquisition of number and mathematical concepts. In the high school, students could solve complex mathematical equations and problems. At the primary stages, students were motivated through activity based learning in science and at the high school stages through laboratory and collaborative group work. Across the school, there were too few opportunities for students to engage in self-directed study.

Lessons did not always make effective allowances for students' different abilities. ICT was seldom used in classes by students to support and extend their learning.

Assessment was acceptable. Examination results obtained by Towheed School students were compared with the performances of other Iranian schools in Dubai. However, there were no international comparisons available. In lessons, assessment procedures for monitoring students' progress were regular and largely effective. Teachers checked students' knowledge and understanding consistently by asking questions, recapping previous lessons and assiduous checking of homework. Regular end-of-theme tests, projects and end-of-term formal examinations provided assessment feedback to students and their parents. Assessment information was not always used effectively to support future lesson planning and to identify students' next steps in learning. Students experiencing difficulties in their learning were supported through extra classes after school and at the weekend. Those identified as gifted were involved in challenging activities, including competitions and Olympiads.

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

	Primary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The curriculum was acceptable. However it did not meet the UAE Ministry requirements in Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language. There was little evidence of any differentiation in the curriculum. As a result, it was not always matched to students' different levels of ability. The curriculum was generally broad and balanced. However, the choices for senior students were too narrow with possibilities restricted to science or mathematical routes. Educational visits supported the curriculum and included visits to the zoo, universities, libraries and museums. Occasionally, the curriculum provided students with opportunities for independent research. Extra-curricular activities included chess, sports and the Olympiads. Cross-curricular links were limited. There were acceptable links with the community, including students visiting a range of professions. The curriculum was reviewed systematically using teachers' evaluations and students' progress reports. This resulted in developments to effectively use the extra hours taught above and beyond the Iranian curriculum requirements.

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

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

Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety were acceptable. There were two important aspects requiring improvement. The last fire drill evacuation was held during the previous school year and a blockage existed in an exit path, leaving too few evacuation routes. Students were not in the habit of buckling seat belts as required in front seats and the rear middle seat. Otherwise, clear expectations and established routines throughout the school contributed to student and staff safety. The building was old but was clean and in an acceptable state of repair. Medicines and personal records were stored securely. Healthy living was encouraged through the curriculum and by information sent to parents. However, food in the canteen did not reflect this. Most members of staff were aware of child protection arrangements.

The quality of support for students was good overall. Relationships between students and staff were good. The management of students' behaviour was effective. Staff collaborated to support students' academic, social, and emotional growth. Guidance to students regarding high school section choices and career and university decisions was good. Students with special education needs were monitored and arrangements within lessons led to acceptable progress. However, formal individualised education plans were not developed, nor did the school do thorough analyses of students' disabilities. Systems to promote attendance led to outstanding results.

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

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

The leadership of the school was acceptable. The principal had good leadership skills and was committed to a vision of success and well-being for students. The senior leadership team shared her vision. Subject leaders were well-intentioned but did not have enough clarity regarding their roles in promoting improving teaching and learning. Relationships and communication among levels of leadership were professional but not sufficiently and productively focused on school improvement. Leaders were aware that improvements could be made, and with time, they had the capacity to do so.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were unsatisfactory. The school prepared an extensive self-evaluation report. However, the report lacked rigour and did not reflect a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Teacher evaluations seldom identified areas needed for improvement. A comprehensive plan for professional development had not been prepared. Improvement plans contained general goals but lacked specific, measurable objectives linked to identified needs and action steps.

Partnerships with parents and the community were good. Links with parents were productive and strengthened students' learning. Parents were supportive of the school. Two-way communication was frequent and effective and included parents' access to updates on their child's progress on the school's website. Student reports sent to parents included teachers' suggestions for improvement. Productive links to other schools and the community, including local businesses, supported student learning and the development of resources.

Governance was acceptable. The governors had a clear overview of, and strong commitment to, the school. Their monitoring of the school's development was adequate but did not focus enough on students' outcomes. They lacked details of overall teaching performance. Governors had supported significant improvements in child nutrition, health services and material resources. The board of governors was a

representative group of the entire school community. There were good avenues of communication between the board members, parents and the school.

The management of staffing, facilities and resources was acceptable. The school's procedures and routines were adequate and the school operated smoothly and efficiently on a daily basis. Most members of staff were suitably qualified and deployed. However, professional development was not prioritised sufficiently. Teachers' professional development was not typically identified as part of the teacher evaluation process. Consequently, professional development activities were few and not well focused. The premises were adequate, although barely so. The school lacked sufficient ICT resources to support the development of independent learning in the school.

## 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 judgements. 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	61	30%
	Last year	The school was not inspected in 2010-2011	
Teachers	14		33%
Students	15		10%

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

Almost a third of parents and teachers, but only ten percent of students, responded to the survey as part of the first inspection of this school. In all three groups most responses confirmed a high degree of satisfaction with the overall education provided by the school. In particular, almost all parents strongly agreed that attainment, teaching and assessment were effective. A majority were concerned about their child's progress in Arabic, a concern that was also expressed by the majority of students who responded. Likewise, a majority of teachers considered that there was a good range of subject options for students to study and that all teaching staff had the appropriate qualifications to teach them, supported by effective professional development within the school. Student behaviour was seen as a positive strength of the school by all teachers and students surveyed. However, fewer than half of the students felt that there was a good range of clubs or that most students in the school appreciated all the nationalities and cultures in Dubai.

## 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).

## Our work with schools

Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau (DSIB) inspects schools to inform parents, students and the wider community of the quality of education provided. Inspectors also give guidance to staff about how to improve the standard of education.

At the beginning of the inspection, we ask the principal and staff about the strengths of the school, what needs to improve and how they know. We use the information they give us to help us plan our time in school. During the inspection, we go into classes and join other activities in which students are involved. We also gather the views of students, parents and staff. We find their views very helpful and use them, together with the other information we have collected, to arrive at our view regarding the quality of education.

This report tells you what we found during the inspection and the quality of education in the school. We describe how well students are doing, how good the school is at helping them to learn and how well it cares for them. We comment on how well staff, parents and children work together and how they go about improving the school. Finally, we focus on how well the school is led and how staff help the school achieve its aims.

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