

INSPECTION REPORT

Khadija Al Kobra Iranian School for Girls

Report published in April 2013

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Khadija Al Kobra Iranian School for Girls

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Location | Al Karama |
| Type of school | Private |
| Website | www.kha-irs.com |
| Telephone | 04-3961072 |
| Address | PO Box 17, Al Karama, Dubai |
| Principal | Mitra Akbar Shahnazi |
| Curriculum | Iranian |
| Gender of students | Girls |
| Age / Grades or Year Groups | 5-18 / Grade 1 to Grade 12 |
| Attendance | Good |
| Number of students on roll | 430 |
| Largest nationality group of Students | Iranian |
| Number of Emirati students | 0 (0%) |
| Date of the inspection | 5th November to 7th November 2012 |

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The context of the school

Khadija Al Kobra Iranian School for Girls is located in Al Karama, Dubai. The school opened approximately fifty years ago, and currently has 430 students, aged five to 18 years.

Students were grouped into 25 classes: there were eleven classes in the primary phase, four in the middle school and ten in the high school. The Iranian Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum was followed and some modifications had been introduced. Twice a year, students were entered for Iranian national examinations and these were marked internally and moderated externally. The language of instruction was Farsi. Arabic was the second language for almost all students and English their third language.

The 38 full-time teachers had a range of teaching and academic qualifications, and were supported by six classroom assistants. The senior leadership team included the Principal, Vice-Principal and heads of phases and subjects. Almost all students were Iranian, with a few Afghan students completing the student population. There were no Emirati students. Approximately 25 per cent had been identified as having some form of special educational need (SEN). The principal had been at the school for 15 years and was in her third year in her present post. Most teachers had been at the school for five years or less.

Overall school performance 2012-2013

Acceptable

Key strengths

- Students have a very strong sense of personal responsibility and cooperate and support each other;
- The highly committed members of staff have excellent relationships with all students;
- Parents feel very welcome at the school and are confident that any concerns are addressed.

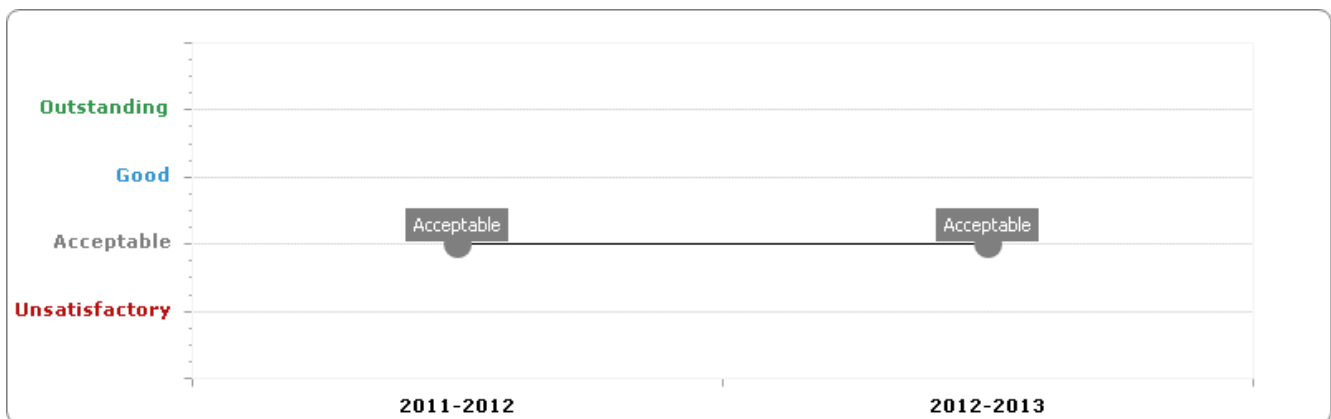
Recommendations

- Ensure that the curriculum for Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language meets the UAE Ministry of Education (MoE) requirements;
- Engage students more actively in purposeful learning by creating tasks and activities which provide appropriate challenges for all students, enabling them to maximise their potential;
- Create opportunities for students to work collaboratively and engage in a wider range of activities using resources beyond the textbook;
- Enhance evaluation methods by sharing the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau report with the staff and preparing an improvement plan that directly addresses the recommendations.

Progress since the last inspection

- Students' progress in mathematics has improved in the primary phase;
- Students' progress in science has improved in the secondary phase;
- The school continued to be non-compliant with Ministry of Education requirements in Islamic Education and Arabic.

Trend of overall performance



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

| | Primary | Middle | High |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Islamic Education | | | |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |
| Progress | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |
| Arabic as a first language | | | |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |
| Progress | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |
| Arabic as an additional language | | | |
| Attainment | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Progress | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Farsi | | | |
| Attainment | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |
| Progress | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |
| English | | | |
| Attainment | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Progress | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Mathematics | | | |
| Attainment | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Progress | Good | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Science | | | |
| Attainment | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |
| Progress | Acceptable | Acceptable | Good |

[Read paragraph](#)

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How good is the students' personal and social development?

| | Primary | Middle | High |
|--|------------|------------|------------|
| Attitudes and behaviour | Good | Good | Good |
| Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness | Good | Good | Good |
| Community and environmental responsibility | Acceptable | Acceptable | Acceptable |

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

| | Primary | Middle | High |
|--------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Curriculum quality | 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 | Good | Good | Good |

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

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

[Read paragraph](#)

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

Attainment was acceptable in the key subjects. In Arabic as an additional language, most students achieved levels of reading and comprehension in line with curriculum objectives. Their handwriting and calligraphy were strong, but their skills were limited in free writing and conversation. Across all phases of the school, attainment in English was acceptable. Students from the primary phase onwards listened carefully and they talked with increasing confidence as they progressed through the year groups. Older students were able to talk at length to meet a range of audiences. By Grade 12 most students read fluently, with expression and good understanding. Writing was well structured. Students entered the school with very limited mathematical understanding. However, by the last primary year their skills in calculation, measurement and knowledge of shape and space were at the acceptable standards. Secondary students had good theoretical knowledge and reasoning skills but did not gain experience in applying their knowledge to solve real-life mathematical problems. Attainment in science was matched to the Iranian Ministry of Education course material in all phases.

Progress was acceptable in all key subjects in the school, with students making better than expected progress over time and against their starting points in primary mathematics and secondary science. In all key subjects reported on, the inadequate differentiation and lack of appropriate challenge in many lessons had a negative impact on students' progress. In science, faster progress in the high school was linked to better teaching, effective student groupings and stronger subject knowledge. Students with special educational needs made acceptable progress in all subjects, but no better due to the lack of early intervention procedures and limited support.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Student's attitudes and behaviour were good in all three phases. They were considerate and demonstrated kindness and friendship towards their classmates. Relationships with other students, staff and visitors were respectful and cordial. Healthy eating was also encouraged around the school and students could talk knowledgeably about what they needed to do to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. Attendance over the last full term was good.

Most students demonstrated good understanding of Islamic values in the society of Dubai. They appreciated and could discuss the relevance and impact of those values on everyday life in Dubai. They reflected upon key messages in relation to their own lives and experiences. Local traditions and cultural heritage were well known and understood by students who recognised their value to people of the U.A.E.

students of all ages had good knowledge and pride about their own culture and celebrated it in assemblies.

Students' sense of community and environmental awareness was acceptable. They participated actively in practical projects and activities. Students actively engaged in environmental activities and projects both in and outside school when given the opportunity to do so. At all stages students displayed an excellent work ethic. In the middle and secondary phases, students were aware of the personal work requirements needed to achieve their academic and career goals. Students showed an appropriate understanding of environmental sustainability.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the teaching, learning and assessment?

The quality of teaching was acceptable across the school. Teachers had good subject knowledge and excellent relationships with their students, but their understanding of how students learn was inconsistent. Across a broad range of subjects most teachers achieved the curriculum objectives with their students as planned. Teaching across both the key subjects and other curricular subjects did not consistently provide enough challenge to match the students' needs. The pace of learning was acceptable, with too much time spent listening to the teacher talking or completing exercises in workbooks. Students learned best and made the most progress when they engaged in dialogue, used resources provided by their teachers or worked in groups to solve problems. In a minority of classes, questioning was effective in encouraging independent and higher order thinking. In the best lessons teachers allowed the students to take time with their responses and discuss topics at length. Although teachers knew their students well, lesson planning did not take into account the learning needs of specific groups of students, such as those who required more support or more challenge. Resources to support learning were limited, particularly information and communication technology (ICT).

Learning was acceptable overall. Most students enjoyed learning, were curious and ambitious to achieve well. They helped each other regularly and worked well with their teachers across all phases of the school. Most secondary students had good subject knowledge, but the majority were given few opportunities to apply their learning to real life situations or investigate topics more deeply. They did not develop sufficient skills in independent learning and research. This restricted their ability to solve problems and achieve higher levels of attainment. Most students confidently took responsibility to organise tasks or share their own opinions; however the opportunities to do this were too infrequent.

Assessment of learning was also acceptable. All students were comprehensively assessed upon entry to the school. Across the school students' attainment data was gathered on a regular basis from bi-weekly tests and other examinations. Most teachers did not use available data to design learning objectives that met the needs of groups of students, although the information was used to identify a few students who received additional support. Teachers mostly gave oral feedback to students. Marking of students' work was inconsistently done across different grades and subjects. The school tracked the attainment and progress of individual students over time and across different subjects. This information was shared with parents at regular intervals.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was based on the Iranian Ministry of Education requirements. It had a clear rationale and was closely followed and occasionally adapted by teachers to ensure that it was accessible to all. Other subjects, including English, enhanced the largely textbook-based curriculum but the ICT curriculum was not well developed. In the primary phase ICT was based entirely on textbooks. Opportunities for independent learning, research and critical thinking were limited as the use of the internet was restricted. There were few opportunities for students to apply scientific and mathematic skills in practical, real life situations. Since the last inspection the Iranian Ministry had reviewed the curriculum and the school has introduced 'Heavenly Gifts' and 'Think and Research' as discrete lessons. The curriculum was extended with a small range of extra-curricular activities including visits to the zoo in the primary phase. Outings to the museum and the mosque in Abu Dhabi were used to support learning about UAE culture. A few community links were in place with students visiting the local Iranian hospital. Transition between grades within the school from one phase to the next was seamless. The school did not comply with the UAE's MoE curriculum requirements for Islamic Education or Arabic as an additional language.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

The quality of the school's health and safety arrangements was acceptable. Security, supervision and health and safety arrangements on buses and in school were appropriate. Medical checks were carried out regularly and appropriately recorded in individual medical files. Medications were properly and securely stored and administered with parental consent. Students were well supervised throughout the day. Fire drills were conducted but accurate records were not maintained. School buildings and grounds were adequately maintained. Some classrooms in the primary phase were small and overcrowded and this presented a potential risk. The canteen stocked items that did not match with recommendations on healthy eating. Child protection guidelines were effective, with staff training provided during initial teacher training.

The quality of support for students was good. Management and procedures for monitoring and following up on attendance and punctuality of students were effective and rigorous. Staff-student relationships were very positive and respectful. Staff members managed behaviour effectively. Career guidance included one-to-one guidance for students and opportunities such as visits to careers fairs and to universities. The well-being and personal development of students were closely monitored and reported regularly to parents.

[View judgements](#)

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

Students with special educational needs were welcomed to the inclusive school environment. Procedures to assess individual learning needs and set specific targets for improvement across all the categories of special needs were at a very early stage of development. There were too few enrichment opportunities for gifted and talented students. In-class and withdrawal from lessons provided adequate support for students identified as having special educational needs. This enabled most to make acceptable progress.

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership and management was acceptable. The Principal supported the school community in promoting a clear vision for the school and had a good understanding of the school and its operation. Management and monitoring responsibilities were shared with specialists from the Iranian Education Board. Senior teachers carried out regular lesson observations and were taking a more active role in the evaluation process. These arrangements were at a relatively early stage of development.

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Effective professional relationships and communications resulted in a strong sense of commitment to improvement from the staff, who demonstrated the capacity to further improve the school.

Procedures for school self-evaluation were acceptable. Staff at all levels made contributions. The action plan, developed after the previous inspection, addressed areas in need of improvement but was not adequately focused on measurable actions which would impact upon learning. Curricular teams engaged in subject analysis, looking at strengths and areas for developments which were shared with the leaders. A few professional development activities had taken place on the campus and at other establishments in the Iranian group of schools, but had not been closely linked to improvement goals based on students' needs. The school had made some progress in addressing the recommendations of the previous report, for example, improving assessment.

Partnership with parents and the community was acceptable. Most parents had been involved in the formation of a seven member Parents' Council which through their elected representative had been effective in developing the two-way dialogue with the governors. Teachers met with parents regularly and provided written reports about students' progress. Almost all parents were highly appreciative of the interest staff took in their children's progress and welfare. Parents liked the school's caring and welcoming environment. Links with the local community were underdeveloped.

Governance of the school was acceptable. The Iranian Education Board had a full overview of the school's functioning and liaised with visiting Iranian Ministry representatives. The school was held accountable to the governing body for all aspects of its performance. Parents' views were welcomed through formal and informal channels. The closer liaison with the formally elected parent representative was a positive step. The governors were effective in terms of ensuring that the school met its commitments to the parents but did not fulfill all statutory requirements. The school continued to be non-compliant with regard to the UAE curriculum for Islamic Education.

Staffing levels were adequate to cover the requirements of all sections of the school and the administration and day-to-day organisation was efficient. Staff members were well qualified and adequately trained to deliver the curriculum, with an acceptable balance of experience across the teaching staff. There were enough teaching areas to accommodate the school population but space was restricted in the lower primary classrooms. The school premises were clean and well maintained, and access was monitored throughout the day. Educational resources, when available, were not always put to the best use. The library had a poor book stock for some key subject areas. The school had some specialist rooms including a computer suite and science laboratory.

[View judgements](#)

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 | 93 | 46% |
| | Last year | 14 | 7% |
| Teachers | 20 | | 67% |
| Students | 32 | | 97% |

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

Almost half of the parents replied to the survey. Most parents, agreed that students enjoyed life at school, that they were well looked after and safe, that there was good progress in the key subjects and that the behaviour of most students was good. A similar proportion of parents and students stated that teaching and learning were good at the school. All parents, students and teachers agreed that the students had a good understanding of Islamic values. Most parents and students, and almost all teachers, felt that students were actively involved in community projects in Dubai. Most students agreed that they could choose from a wide range of extra -curricular clubs and activities. All parents, students and teachers agreed that students were respected and valued. The leadership of the school and the quality of education were seen as strengths by all parents, students, and teachers. Almost all parents agreed that parent-teacher meetings were helpful.

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

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