

INSPECTION REPORT

Iranian Khadije Kobra School

Report published in April 2014

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Iranian Khadije Kobra School

Location	Al Karama
Type of school	Private
Website	www.kha-irs.com
Telephone	04-3961072
Address	P O Box17, Dubai
Principal	Mitra Akbar Shahnazi
Curriculum	Iranian
Gender of students	Girls
Age / Grades	5-18/ Grades 1 -12
Attendance	Good
Number of students on roll	475
Largest nationality group of students	Iranian
Number of Emirati students	0
Date of the inspection	21st to 23rd October 2013

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The context of the school

Khadija Al Kobra Iranian School for Girls is located in Al Karama. It was established approximately 50 years ago. At the time of the inspection, there were 475 girls on roll, aged five to 18 years. The number of students had grown by approximately nine percent since the previous year.

Students were grouped into 25 classes: there were eleven in Grades 1 to 5, the primary phase, four in Grades 6 to 8 the middle phase and ten in Grades 9 to 12, the high school phase. The school followed a modified Iranian Ministry of Education curriculum. Twice a year, students were entered into the Iranian national examinations, which were internally marked and externally moderated. The language of instruction was Farsi. All students studied Arabic as an additional language as well as English.

The 39 full-time teachers had a range of appropriate teaching and academic qualifications, and were supported by five classroom assistants. The senior leadership team included the Principal, Vice-Principal and heads of phases and subjects. Almost all students were Iranian, with about six per cent from other countries. Approximately 25 per cent of students had been identified by the school as having a special educational need. The Principal had been in the school for 16 years and was in her fourth year in her present position. Most teachers had been in the school for five years or less.

Overall school performance 2013-2014

Acceptable

Key strengths

- The school's caring ethos which resulted from the Principal's strong, nurturing values;
- The good attitudes and behavior of all groups of students;
- The good understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness;
- The excellent relationships between staff and students.

Recommendations

- Senior managers should develop their role in leading school improvement
- Improve lesson planning to ensure that learning outcomes are clear and make sure students know what they are trying to achieve;
- Make lessons across the school more challenging;
- Develop assessment processes to meet the learning needs of students of different abilities.
- Improve provision in all lessons for students who have a special educational need;
- Use the best classroom practice in the school as a model for other teachers to follow.

Progress since the last inspection

- There had been more opportunities for students to work collaboratively and engage in a wider range of classroom activities.
- There had been little progress in the school's development overall.

Trend of overall performance



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

	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

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	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	Good	Good	Good
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	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

[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
Parents and the community	Acceptable
Governance	Acceptable
Management, including staffing, facilities and resources	Acceptable

[Read paragraph](#)

How good are the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment was acceptable in all phases. In Arabic as an additional language, most students understood grammatical rules and could apply them in writing. However, a significant number of students could not use Arabic in their daily lives. In English, students were quite confident in all four skills in English, but did not have enough opportunity to extend them, especially the more able students. Students entered the school with very limited mathematical understanding. By the end of the primary phase, their skills in calculation, measurement and knowledge of shape and space were of an acceptable standard. High school students had theoretical knowledge and reasoning skills but these were not being applied to real-life problems. The scientific knowledge of students in the primary and middle phases was secure in life, physical and earth sciences. Students in the high school had age-appropriate levels of knowledge, skill and understanding.

Progress was acceptable in all phases, except in primary mathematics where it was good. In Arabic, a lack of appropriate challenge in lessons limited progress for many students. Progress in grammar was stronger than in other skills. In English, missed opportunities for assessment and modest expectations reduced most students' progress, especially that of the more able. In mathematics, most primary students began Grade 1 with a low level of mathematical experience but made good progress. Throughout the middle phase and high school, most students made acceptable progress against international expectations. In science, progress in problem solving and thinking critically was acceptable in primary; students lacked confidence when applying their knowledge. In high school, students gained more confidence in practical investigation, problem solving and applying their learning to the real world.

[View judgements](#)

Quality of students' learning skills

Students' learning skills were acceptable across the school. Nearly all students took responsibility for and were active in their own learning whenever they were given the opportunity. They had only a general awareness of their progress and strengths as learners and were often unclear about what they needed to do to improve. Students enjoyed learning, wanted to achieve well and had high career aspirations. Almost all students enjoyed working collaboratively with others; they listened and interacted well when allowed to work in groups and share ideas. Too few opportunities were offered for students to more fully develop their skills of independent learning and research. Most students had good knowledge of subjects but were limited by restricted opportunities to apply their learning to real-life situations. Some students confidently took responsibility for organising tasks such as science presentations, though opportunities to do so were rare.

[View judgements](#)

How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' personal responsibility was good across all phases. Students across the school showed very positive attitudes and behaviour in lessons. They were extremely polite, friendly and well-mannered to their teachers and respectful to each other. Attendance was good and students were generally punctual. They mostly followed the school's advice about keeping fit and healthy. The school's poor outdoor environment and canteen food often restricted opportunities to develop a more positive approach to healthy living. Understanding of Islamic values and local, cultural and global awareness were good across all phases. Almost all students demonstrated a strong understanding of Islamic values and, where appropriate, they showed understanding of how to put into practice what they had learned from their awareness of these values. They appreciated the relevance and impact of these values on everyday life in Dubai and reflected upon key messages in relation to their own lives and experiences. Emirati traditions and cultural heritage were well known and understood by students who recognised the importance, relevance and value to people in the UAE. Students fully appreciated and celebrated their own culture. Students' awareness of their community and environmental responsibility was acceptable across all phases. Their involvement in the school community was often limited to high school students. Across the phases, students displayed a good work ethic, although independent strategies and initiative were less developed. Most students understood the importance of taking care of their surroundings but projects to support conservation, especially environmental issues, were limited to water conservation and some recycling of school waste.

[View judgements](#)

How good are teaching and assessment?

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable across all phases. Teachers had good subject knowledge. They created a positive learning environment where students felt respected and valued. Teachers understanding of how students learn was inconsistent. Most teachers prepared well for their lessons but, across all subjects, teaching was not consistently challenging enough. Often, too much time was spent listening to teachers talking or completing exercises in workbooks. Students learned best and made most progress when they were engaged in active dialogue and worked in groups to solve problems. In a minority of classes, questioning encouraged independent and higher order thinking. The most effective teaching allowed students to reflect, take time with their responses, and discuss and debate at length. Although teachers knew their students well, lesson planning did not take account of the learning needs of specific groups of students, such as those who required more support or more challenge.

Assessment was acceptable across all phases. All students were comprehensively assessed on entry to the school. Across the school, students' attainment data was gathered on a regular basis from tests, quizzes and

exams. Formal test results were not yet compared with international benchmarks. Teachers did not use the available data to devise learning objectives that would meet the needs of all students, although it was used to identify a few students who received additional support. Teachers gave positive oral feedback to students, but this was not specific enough to help students improve their learning. Marking, although regular, was inconsistent across 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. However, neither students nor parents were involved in processes of setting targets to help clarify learning outcomes for each student, and thereby raise standards of progress and attainment.

[View judgements](#)

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

The curriculum was acceptable across all phases. It was based on the Iranian Ministry of Education curriculum and was soundly planned with appropriate breadth and balance. Progression of learning was ensured by using the textbook based on the curriculum's structure. However, the over-reliance on a single textbook restricted the development of additional skills of students. There were few opportunities for the development of independent learning skills, research and critical thinking across all phases, although there was more scope in the high school philosophy (humanities) strand. Opportunities for students to work collaboratively were provided in a minority of classes. Movement between the various phases in the school was adequate. The curriculum was occasionally reviewed by individual teachers but was yet to be a school-wide feature. A few cross-curricular approaches to learning were evident but were not sufficiently coordinated or actively planned. The provision of extra-curricular activities was limited to participation in a few school competitions. The school had not complied with the UAE Ministry of Education curriculum requirement for Islamic Education or Arabic as an additional language. The school did not comply with the time requirement for Arabic in the primary and middle phases. In middle phase and high school, there was a lack of balance between language skills. These impacted negatively on progress and attainment in Arabic.

The curriculum design to meet the individual needs of students was unsatisfactory across all phases. The school had done little to modify its curriculum to meet the different needs of the students with special educational needs, including the gifted and talented. It failed to cater adequately for their educational needs and personal development. Subject choice was too narrow for older students, who were restricted to choices of subjects from either the humanities or the science strand.

[View judgements](#)

How well does the school protect and support students?

Health and safety were acceptable across all phases. The school made frequent medical checks, kept regular and appropriate individual records and medications were securely stored. There was little systematic promotion of a healthier eating approach across the school because the canteen offered insufficient healthy choices. The beginning and end of the day arrangements for bus students were effective and efficiently arranged, although the school was yet to meet the requirements for adult supervision on all buses. Safety procedures for the daily drop off and collection of students by their parents had been reviewed and improved. Classrooms in the primary phase were often too small and overcrowded. Child protection guidelines were effective and training was provided for all new teaching staff.

The quality of support provided was good overall across all phases. The staff demonstrated a respectful pastoral care approach to their students. There were excellent staff-student relationships. Staff had high expectations of students' behaviour. Consistent attendance and punctuality were considered important and the school had effective systems to promote these. There was a developing system for the early identification of students with special education needs upon school entry. Teachers were increasingly made aware of the nature of individual students' specific needs; however, there was limited advice and support available to teachers regarding appropriate strategies. As a result, there was little evidence of teachers using appropriate classroom approaches to meet individual learning needs of students with special educational needs. Individual education plans were not in place in the primary phase but some support for students with special educational needs was provided by the counsellor. In the high school, students with special educational needs were withdrawn for one-to-one support from some subject lessons. Senior students received appropriate advice and guidance on their post-school educational and employment opportunities.

[View judgements](#)

How good are the leadership and management of the school?

The quality of leadership was acceptable. The Principal and senior leaders promoted a clear vision of a caring, supportive environment. Senior leaders were attuned to the school's short- and long-term needs and worked diligently to ensure their vision was achieved. They shared responsibilities of management and monitoring with the Iranian Educational Board. Distributive leadership was evident within the school. Senior leaders regularly observed lessons and collegially determined strengths and areas for development. These arrangements were becoming embedded in the school's annual self-review. Relationships and communication were strengthening. There was evident commitment by senior leaders to improve the school further, but not enough tangible improvement had taken place since the previous inspection.

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The procedures for self-evaluation were acceptable. A collegial approach to self-evaluation had ensured that staff at all levels were able to contribute. Evaluation of students' learning performance was in its infancy and was yet to be a strong feature of self-evaluation. Improvement planning was similarly in place but did not sufficiently identify timelines, responsibilities and expected outcomes. A regular review of curricular areas by teams to develop better attainment and progress by students was at an early stage. The school had highlighted specific areas for the professional development of its staff. Some training had occurred both within the school and in the Iranian group of schools. The school had made some attempts to address the recommendations of the previous report but not with enough urgency.

Partnerships with parents and the community were acceptable. Parents were strongly supportive of the school and the quality of its educational provision. There was an active Parents' Council which provided a conduit between the parent body, the school and its board. Strengthening communication between school and parents was a feature. Written reports about students' progress were regular and reflected the caring yet professional nature of staff. Reports would be enhanced with additional comments from teachers that identified the next steps for students' learning. Links with the local community remained restricted.

Governance of the school was acceptable. The Iranian Education Board maintained an overarching view of the school and its progress. It held the school to account for its overall performance. Parental input through formal and informal channels was encouraged and was a developing feature. The governors effectively ensured that the school met its commitments to its parents but did not ensure that all statutory requirements were met. The school continued to be non-compliant in meeting UAE MoE requirements for Islamic Education and Arabic as an additional language.

Management, including staffing, facilities and resources, was acceptable. The day-to-day operations of the school were effective and efficient. There were adequate numbers of well-qualified staff who were able to deliver the curriculum. Sufficient clean, well-maintained teaching and specialist rooms including computer suites and a science laboratory were available. Space was restricted in primary classrooms. A range of teaching resources were available but not sufficiently well utilised to support learners. There was a limited range of library texts and computer technology available to support opportunities for research.

[View judgements](#)

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

Provision for students with special educational needs was unsatisfactory. Students were identified through the school's entry level testing. However, their classification using DSIB guidelines was inconsistent. Teachers were informed which students with a special need were in their class, but had not been trained in appropriate strategies to support their teaching. The counsellor offered advice and support to all students, but classroom provision remained a weakness. Too often while in class, these students remained passive and had few meaningful learning opportunities. Gifted and talented students often remained under-challenged. The inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream classes required a differentiated approach and modification of the curriculum. A small number of teachers were beginning to provide this successfully, but this was not consistent across the school. A few teachers had been incorporating extension activities into their lessons to challenge and engage gifted and talented students. The absence of ongoing assessment processes and procedures, individualised planning and target-setting for students was a significant weakness in the teaching and learning process. Individual education plans, created in partnership for each student, were yet to be developed.

What are the views of parents, teachers and students?

Before the inspection, the views of parents, teachers and high school 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	71	24%
	Last year	95	50%
Teachers	14		41%
Students	59		59%

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

The following statements were based on the survey response at the time of the inspection. The above response figures are the most up-to-date and accurate available prior to publication.

There was a much lower response from parents than in the previous year. In almost every question, parents responded unanimously. They agreed that students enjoyed life at the school, were safe and well cared for in school and on the school buses, and were exposed to a high quality of education. Their only concern was the perceived weakness in the understanding of Islam by students. Students were similarly overwhelmingly satisfied with the quality of education they received; fewer felt that they were making good progress in Arabic as an additional language. They were more positive about their progress in English than in science. Most agreed that they could choose from a broad range of extra-curricular activities. The leadership of the school was seen as a strength by all parents, students and teachers. All teachers stated that school leaders listened to their opinions about the school and they had been provided with the opportunity for professional development.

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.

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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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