

INSPECTION REPORT

Khadija Al Kobra Iranian School for Girls

Report published in May 2012

Knowledge and Human Development Authority

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GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT Khadija Al Kobra Iranian School for Girls

Location	Karama
Type of school	Private
Website	www.kha_irs.com
Telephone	04-3961072/3961676
Address	PO Box 17, 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	475
Number of Emirati students	0
Date of the inspection	Monday 14th to Wednesday 16th November 2011

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The context of the school

Khadija Al Kobra Iranian School for Girls is situated in Karama, Dubai. It is a private, non-profit making school overseen by the Iranian Embassy. There are currently 475 students on roll, aged between five and 18 years.

The school followed the Iranian Ministry of Education curriculum with some modifications. Students were entered for Iranian national examinations twice a year, marked internally and moderated externally.

There were 38 full-time teachers including the Principal and the leadership team and 6 other staff. Most of the teachers were Iranian qualified nationals selected to teach in the school. Students were arranged in 28 classes: nine in the primary school, four in the middle school and ten in the high school. 447 of the students, ninety four per cent, were Iranian and the remaining 27 were from different nationalities. There were no Emirati students in the school. No students were identified as needing special educational provision but three students received special medical care.

Teachers stayed in the school for varying short periods before returning to Iran. Most teachers had served in the school for five years or fewer though the Principal had been in post for 14 years. The language of instruction was Farsi with Arabic as the second and English as the third language.

Overall school performance 2011-2012

Acceptable

How has the school progressed since the last inspection?

The overall performance of the school was acceptable. The school provided a caring environment where students' welfare and educational success was of the highest priority. Students enjoyed school and were well-behaved, respectful and friendly. They showed the ability to work co-operatively, with a good attitude to their learning and appreciation of life in the UAE. Attainment and progress in all subjects were acceptable but Arabic and Islamic Education were not compliant with UAE MOE requirements. The teaching styles in the school needed to be more varied to engage the students in active, independent learning. Students needed a clearer understanding of how they were progressing and what they should do to improve. The curriculum offered was broad and balanced and enabled students to go on to higher education. There were some visits and competitions but students were eager for more clubs and extra-

curricular activities. The school showed concern for students' health and students were kept secure in school. The premises, however, were in need of repair and a few areas required improvement. The staff provided good support and guidance and the school was managed efficiently. Parents were kept well-informed about their daughters' progress by reports and consultations with staff. The governance of the school was effective though lacked community involvement. The school as a whole lacked sufficient resources for learning.

Key strengths

- The students' good attitudes and behaviour;
- The students' good understanding and appreciation of the multi-cultural nature of Dubai;
- The care and concern for students' welfare.

Recommendations

- Ensure that the curriculum for Islamic Education meets UAE Ministry of Education requirements;
- Ensure that the time given to Arabic meets UAE Ministry of Education requirements;
- Develop a wider range of teaching strategies to engage students more actively in purposeful learning;
- Review and develop assessment procedures so that students and teachers are aware of how students are progressing and what they need to do to make further progress;
- Improve leadership and management by developing effective strategies for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning, identifying strengths and providing appropriate training to tackle weaknesses.

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	Good	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
English			
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Mathematics			
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Science			
Attainment	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
Progress	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

Attainment was acceptable in all key subjects across all phases of the school. In Arabic as an additional language, the majority of students had good reading and comprehension skills. The majority had acceptable pronunciation, could engage in conversation but most found writing challenging. Students in all grades attained at expected levels for English as additional language learners. Their attainment overall was strong in listening and speaking and in the middle and high school, was it was strong in reading. Writing

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showed least attainment across all grades. In science, students' knowledge and skills in Grades 1 to 10 were at expected standards and in Grades 11 and 12 were higher. Students solved problems collaboratively and could apply formulae. Their experimental and investigative skills were limited. In mathematics, Grade 1 students were unfamiliar with basic number concepts but, by Grade 5, had good mental arithmetic and calculation skills. Students overall had limited problem-solving skills and did not apply mathematics well to everyday situations.

Progress in Arabic as an additional language was acceptable. Reading was better than listening and speaking owing to teaching in Farsi. Insufficient progress was made in writing. From a low start, young children made acceptable progress in English. Overall, writing showed the least development. Progress in science was acceptable though better for the eldest students. Students made acceptable progress in understanding theory but less in interpreting data. In mathematics, few young children understood number but by middle primary most progress was acceptable. Overall, students made better progress in number work but limited progress in problem-solving. Students with special educational needs made acceptable progress in all key subjects.

How good is the students' personal and social development?

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

Students' personal and social development was good. They were well-behaved and courteous to each other and to adults. They could work co-operatively and students of all ages mixed amicably in the playground. They could take initiative, as shown when organizing festivities, but their eating choices did not show commitment to a healthy lifestyle. The attendance rate for the last semester was high and almost all students attended school punctually. All students spoke respectfully about Islam and the need for tolerance in relationships between all people. Students appreciated UAE customs and knew about local traditions and historical places. They showed strong appreciation and pleasure in the multi-cultural nature of Dubai. Students showed civic understanding in their desire to work and contribute to the society as a whole. They had some understanding of how the country earns its living. Older students understood conservation and sustainability and younger students demonstrated age-appropriate knowledge about pollution and the need to save water.

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	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Teaching for effective learning was acceptable. All teachers had a sound knowledge of their subject. Most teachers did not set out clear objectives for the lesson and the purpose of lessons was not explained at the beginning or end of lessons. Resources were limited so most practical aspects of lessons consisted of demonstrations by the teacher and selected students. There was little use of information and communication technology (ICT), except in Grade 10 and 11 computer streams. Most lessons relied heavily on textbooks to provide content and structure for learning. Longer secondary periods were generally not sufficiently broken up to provide for a variety of activities within each lesson. Most teachers created a positive atmosphere, interacted well with students and sustained their attention in lessons well, although teachers sometimes talked for too long. Teaching was often unvaried, consisting of discussion, short exercises and textbook work. A few teachers devised worksheets to cater for different levels of ability but most lessons did not cater sufficiently for students' varying needs. Dictation was used too often as a teaching method in high school and teaching, focused on learning by heart and practicing skills, which did not encourage the development of critical thinking. Teachers regularly set homework that consolidated class work.

The quality of students' learning was acceptable. All students were highly engaged with learning and enjoyed most lessons. They could work independently when asked to do so but this was often for only short periods. Students were confident in explaining their work in front of their classes and to visitors, but a majority could not describe the next steps in their learning. Students worked effectively in groups but the opportunity to do so was offered too infrequently. Students predominantly learned topics without investigating their application to practical contexts and they made only a few connections to learning in other subjects. There were too few opportunities in class for students to reason for themselves to undertake independent research or reflect upon their learning.

Assessment was unsatisfactory. Students were assessed mainly through summative tests, which included Iranian national end of year examinations as well as the school's mid-year tests and tests on units of work. Marks were communicated to students and parents, but students were rarely involved in evaluating their own learning. Assessment results were not used effectively to inform teaching. In consequence, most teaching did not take into account the range of students needs in each class, although a majority of teachers did know the broad strengths and weaknesses of their students. Students did not receive focused feedback about the next steps in their learning and how to improve further in each subject.

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

	Primary	Middle	High
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable

The curriculum had a clear rationale based on the Iranian Ministry of Education system with the addition of the UAE curriculum to give further breadth and balance. Progression and transition were through twice-yearly examinations. The curriculum was reviewed at regular teacher meetings which included discussion of how the curriculum met students' needs and personal development. The text book driven curriculum allowed limited opportunities for independent learning, research and the development of critical thinking skills. In-school, extra-curricular activities included a school newspaper, school plays, a science fair, an arts club, a music club and whole-school celebrations. Students could enter inter-school competitions. There were occasional visits outside the school. The curriculum did not fully meet all learners' needs and restricted their access to more challenging work. The lack of both cross-curricular links and real-world application constrained students' engagement with the curriculum. Curriculum time provision for Arabic as an additional language in Grades 1 to 5 did not meet the UAE Ministry of Education 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 health, safety of students in the school were acceptable. The premises were secure and students kept safe. The supervision of the arrival and departure of buses was carried out with due attention to safety. Procedures for the emergency evacuation of the premises were effective. Although buildings were old and in a poor state of repair, particularly the playground, classrooms and corridors were kept clean and litter free. The walls of almost all corridors and classrooms were bare, with few displays of stimulus materials or students' work. Classrooms were small leading to overcrowding and, in a few instances, were barely adequate in size for the numbers of students. Records of students' needs regarding health and well-being were detailed and appropriately maintained. Students' health and safety were assured by adherence to appropriate policies which were understood by all staff. Girls' health was effectively promoted both through advice and guidance from the nurse and through the discussion of the importance of a healthy lifestyle in, for example, science. The procedures for child protection, including contact with the Ministry of Social Affairs, were appropriate and known to all staff. Parents expressed confidence in the care the staff provided and communication between the school, parents and relevant specialists was good.

The quality of support provided for students was good. The personal well-being of students was given a high priority by all staff. Both the school counsellor and the nurse regularly monitored students to identify those potentially 'at risk' either academically or in terms of health and well-being. Students knew who they could go to for advice and guidance on any matter and that it would be dealt with sympathetically. Relationships between staff and student were good and there was no evidence of inappropriate behaviour. All members of the school community demonstrated care and concern for others. The school counsellor advised with regard to any emotional or behaviour issues, and provided advice to teachers, students and parents when necessary. Teachers also offered careers advice and guidance on university applications. Support for students with special educational needs was mostly through the special provision made for all Iranian schools in Dubai. Additional support for the few students with special educational needs in the school was acceptable. Arrangements to support attendance and punctuality were effective and, during the period of inspection, almost all students were present in all lessons.

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

The quality of leadership was acceptable and showed the capacity to improve. The Principal was dedicated to ensuring students' happiness, welfare and motivation and to equip them to be independent in the modern world. The six members of the leadership team had a clear understanding of their responsibilities and identified with the established vision and values of the school. Most teachers shared these values but frequent changes in staff led to difficulties in building a teaching force united in purpose and developing together. There were no subject co-ordinators to translate the vision into classroom improvement. Staff and students held the Principal in high regard and relationships throughout the school were professional and supportive.

Self-evaluation and improvement planning were acceptable. Areas for improvement were identified by analysing performance and gathering views from teachers, students and parents. The leadership had a realistic appreciation of the needs of the school. Some action plans had been drawn up but there was no coherent, jointly-agreed development plan analysing whole-school needs and formulating arrangements to effect school-wide improvement. The leadership regularly monitored teachers' work with contributions from students. Professional development was provided centrally but did not enable the identification and dissemination of best practice within school.

Partnership with parents and the community was acceptable. There was strong parental involvement in school through an elected Parents' Council which carried decision-making responsibility. Parents received frequent information about students' progress through reports and meetings which enabled regular two-way communication. The school had links with charities which supported the school but there were too few useful links with the wider community or with other schools which could broaden understanding of best educational practice.

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Governance of the school was acceptable. The Iranian Educational Office fulfilled a supportive, directive and monitoring function with frequent contact by visits, telephone and e-mail. The Principal provided the office with monthly reports on all aspects of school life. Her performance was monitored by observation and reference to staff, parental and students' responses. There was no community or parental involvement in the governance of the school which limited the opportunity for broader consultation, experience and advice.

Management of the school, including staffing, facilities and resources, was acceptable. The school was managed efficiently and was staffed by well-qualified, suitably deployed teachers. The premises were adequate with some facilities such as a computer room, library and laboratory. Provision for sport, recreation and practical subjects was extremely limited. Resources for learning were very scarce and the classroom furniture was not appropriate for a modern curriculum.

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	14	5%
	Last year	The school was not inspected in 2010-2011	
Teachers	8		21%
Students	17		14%

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

Only a few parents responded to the survey. Almost a third of the teachers and a tenth of Grade 10 to 12 students responded to their surveys. Most parents and students indicated broad satisfaction with the quality of education available at the school. About a third of parents believed that progress could be better in English. A few parents and students indicated that progress was also less than good in Arabic. Parents were broadly positive about the work of the school. They felt that the school provided a caring and supportive environment for learning. Most agreed that the school was well led and particularly appreciated the good teaching of Islam. Around half of the parents felt that their children would benefit from a wider range of extra-curricular activities. Almost all teachers who responded were positive about most aspects of the work of the school. They felt that the school was well led and that the students were responsive and well behaved.

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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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.

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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