

# The School of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Independent School

Inspection report

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DfES Registration Number	304/6079
Unique Reference Number	133385
Inspection number	301650
Inspection dates	26-27 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi AI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

Opened in 2001, The School of the Islamic Republic of Iran is situated in a quiet part of Maida Vale, in the London Borough of Brent, where it occupies purpose-built premises. There are 69 pupils on roll, all of Iranian nationality, some with dual British-Iranian nationality. Most pupils attend this school for about three years and then move back to Iran. The school also attracts parents who wish to educate their children in Farsi language and Iranian culture. Pupils aged 6 to 11 years are taught in junior classes by class teachers and pupils aged 12 to 17 years are taught in senior classes by specialist teachers. The school teaches the Iranian curriculum through the medium of Farsi, and also places an emphasis on learning English as a second language. It aims to *'enable every pupil to reach his or her own potential through academic and personal achievement; to provide continuity in the education of the majority of pupils who are likely to further their studies in Iran.'*

The school was last inspected in November 2001.

## Evaluation of the school

Parents express a high level of satisfaction with the School of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and rightly so, as it provides good education for their children and is successful in achieving its aims. Consequently, pupils are highly motivated to learn and make at least good progress. The school makes satisfactory provision for its pupils' welfare, health and safety and staff show good levels of care for pupils. The school has improved markedly since the last inspection. It is led very effectively by an experienced and thoughtful headteacher and dedicated staff. It complies with nearly all of the regulations.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is good. It is broad and is designed to equip pupils with a good range of basic skills through learning a wide range of subjects. It is balanced so as to provide an academic education that prepares pupils well for their economic well-being, whilst ensuring that their personal development is carefully nurtured. In the junior classes, the core subjects include Farsi, mathematics, science and Islamic studies. Social sciences comprise history, geography and citizenship. In addition,

pupils have art, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education (PE) lessons. Secondary education is divided into two stages, the 'guidance school', which spans three years, and the 'high school', which enables pupils to specialise in mathematics whilst continuing to study a wide range of subjects. Mathematics, science and English as a second language are strengths of the curriculum. Since 2001, the school has been successful in developing the learning of English as a second language to a very good standard by instituting 'English days'. The English curriculum is planned carefully and reviewed annually to meet the specific needs of pupils as closely as possible, whether they are at an early or more advanced stage of learning English. Consequently, pupils who have recently arrived from Iran make rapid progress. The school is aware of the need to continue to build up its resources to support the teaching of the curriculum better. Whilst the science laboratory is very well equipped, resources are just adequate in most subjects. The ICT suite is used effectively to enable pupils to develop ICT skills in all subjects. Whilst the provision for PE is satisfactory overall, the school is looking into ways of improving the PE arrangements for girls of secondary school age. Both pupils and parents feel that the school does not plan sufficient opportunities for physical exercise. Personal, social and health education is taught mainly through Islamic studies and science and reflects the Islamic ethos of the school. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of educational trips. There are no extra-curricular activities as most pupils do not live locally. In addition to Iranian examinations, pupils can take their GCSE examinations in mathematics and Farsi.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teachers demonstrate a high level of care, which pupils appreciate. They have established excellent relationships in their classes and learning takes place in a relaxed atmosphere. The teaching is briskly paced, dynamic, interactive and stimulating, based on excellent subject knowledge and very high expectations. Lessons are well prepared. Teachers promote thinking effectively through probing questioning and they set challenging tasks. Although the small size of the groups does not always provide the dynamics required for very active learning, teachers do their best to promote a competitive spirit. However, when the questioning does not always sufficiently engage the quieter pupils, the more proactive pupils are allowed to dominate the lesson. Where the teaching is satisfactory rather than good, lessons are not planned in sufficient detail and the tasks set do not meet the needs of each pupil sufficiently closely. For example, in one lesson, the teacher did not explore what pupils already knew to engage them actively from the start. In another, although the tasks were well chosen and had the potential to challenge all pupils, the sequencing of the tasks had not been planned with enough thought, resulting in pupils being unable to maximise the time they had. There is a good range of strategies to test pupils' learning and assess their progress. Whereas teachers give good quality verbal feedback to each pupil, the marking rarely shows pupils how to improve. The school recognises that it needs to put in place a more rigorous system to monitor the progress of every pupil across the subjects studied.

As a result of the good curriculum and the good teaching, pupils make at least good progress. Pupils' performance in the national Iranian examinations, both at primary and secondary levels, indicates very high achievement.

### Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The school places a great emphasis on pupils' personal development and promotes good levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is reflected in pupils' good behaviour, in their good attendance, in the great courtesy they extend to visitors and in the consideration they show to each other. They speak with confidence and maturity. They enjoy and appreciate learning in a secure, friendly environment where teachers show high levels of care. *'We love this school because it's like a big family,'* said the older pupils. When asked what they like best about the school, they replied *'the teaching; teachers really care about us.'*

Their high achievement in core subjects and languages gives them a solid foundation for their future economic well-being. Although the older pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, not all pupils feel that they are sufficiently informed about further education. Pupils gain experience in leadership, management and enterprise skills by fulfilling a range of responsibilities in school and when organising annual events. However, the older pupils feel that there are few opportunities to involve them in making decisions about the school and suggesting ways of improving. Also, they have not had the experience of initiating and running their own projects to contribute to the wider community.

Pupils' spiritual development is also promoted successfully through Islamic studies, where teachers encourage reflection, and through pupils' involvement in daily religious practices and assemblies. They have a strong sense of identity enhanced by several annual cultural and social events. They have formed *nasheed* (Islamic songs) groups that perform at public functions. Although their cultural development is enriched by educational visits, there are missed opportunities in art to broaden their cultural experiences to include other cultures than those of Iran and other Muslim countries. The Islamic studies curriculum includes the study of comparative religion and prepares pupils effectively for life in a multicultural, multifaith society.

### Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school's provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. There are suitable procedures in place to minimise the risks incurred by all during the school day. Consequently, the school provides a safe and happy environment and generally good levels of care for its pupils. Instances of bullying are extremely rare and there has not been any need for serious sanctions. However, a thorough risk assessment is not always carried out before every school outing. Policies and procedures for safeguarding children have not all been updated to comply with the latest guidance. Furthermore, the nominated person for child protection and the staff have yet to receive the appropriate training.

Healthy living is promoted effectively. The school encourages pupils to eat and drink sensibly by discouraging fizzy drinks and junk foods, and providing wholesome meals much appreciated by pupils. However, some secondary pupils feel that the school does not help them to make sensible choices about what they eat and drink. A visiting dentist offers dental checks and the majority of pupils benefit from this service.

The school fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

### Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school is updating its recruitment policy to comply with the latest guidance on '*Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education.*' Nearly all teachers come from Iran and their suitability to work with children has been thoroughly checked by the Iranian Ministry of Education. Furthermore, the school carries out the necessary checks to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children prior to confirmation of their employment in the United Kingdom. However, it does not yet ensure that all staff are checked by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) at an enhanced level.

### School's premises and accommodation

The premises offer spacious and reasonably well maintained accommodation. The school has plans to make the environment more attractive, budget permitting. The specialist rooms have good facilities for science, ICT and personal study. There are two separate playgrounds that provide safe outdoor play for pupils of all ages. Pupils have expressed an interest in helping to improve the recreational facilities.

### Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The information available to parents and others is accurate and up-to-date. The present headteacher has strengthened the school-parent partnership through regular consultation. Consequently, parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions, or any problem. Informative reports on pupils' progress are handed to parents four times a year. Pupils' performance in every subject is expressed in graph form, which gives a vivid picture of their strengths and weaknesses. Although teachers' comments are not always subject specific and do not always indicate the pupil's next learning step, parents feel well informed of their children's progress as they have detailed discussions with their teachers.

### Procedures for handling complaints

The school has clear and fair procedures for dealing with complaints which meet the requirements of the regulations.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with Department for Education and Skills guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- maintain and implement a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school which has regard to DfES guidance *Health and safety of pupils on educational visits* (paragraph 3(2)(c)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of staff, ensure that they have all been subject to appropriate checks by the CRB to confirm their suitability to work with children (paragraph 4(b)).

## What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- continue to build up its resources and improve PE arrangements for girls of secondary school age
- disseminate the best teaching practice across the school
- implement a more rigorous system for monitoring the progress of individual pupils.

## School details

Name of school	The School of the Islamic Republic of Iran		
DfES number	304/6079		
Unique reference number	133385		
Type of school	Islamic Day School		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	2001		
Age range of pupils	6-17		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 39	Girls: 30	Total: 69
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£500 for the primary £550 for the guidance school £750 for the high school discounts for siblings		
Address of school	100 Carlton Vale London NW6 5HE		
Telephone number	0207 372 8051		
Fax number	0207 372 6367		
Email address	irischool@gmail.com		
Headteacher	Mr F Farzan		
Proprietor	The Iranian Embassy		
Reporting inspector	Michèle Messaoudi Al		
Dates of inspection	26-27 April 2007		