

Beis Hatalmud School

Independent school light-touch inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Chanan Tomlin

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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, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

This was a light touch educational inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Beis Hatalmud is an orthodox Jewish independent day school for boys aged 11 to 16 in the west Salford area of Manchester. The school opened in August 2006 with Year 7 students only. There are now 64 students in Years 7 to 10, all of whom live close to the school and none of whom have a statement of special educational needs. The school aims to provide a unique and challenging educational programme for students aspiring to become Talmudic scholars, through a curriculum that is focused on developing a commitment to the pursuit of excellence in Torah learning and values. Through these studies, the school also aims to educate students to become caring, discerning, secure and well-balanced individuals who will be equipped to deal with all aspects of modern society. This school was last inspected in January 2008.

EVALUATION OF THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of the education provided by the school is good and the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Good teaching ensures students' progress well. The school has made steady improvement since the last inspection in all areas including assessment and lesson planning for *chol* and a broader *kodesh* curriculum. Arrangements for safeguarding and the welfare, health and safety of the students are good. The school meets its aims and all of the regulations for independent schools.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

THE SCHOOL'S CURRICULA FOR BOTH RELIGIOUS STUDIES (*KODESH*) AND SECULAR STUDIES (*CHOL*) ARE GOOD AND PROVIDE QUALITY EXPERIENCES IN ALL OF THE REQUIRED AREAS OF LEARNING. THESE ARE SUPPORTED BY SCHEMES OF WORK AND PLANNING WHICH ARE USUALLY SOUND. IN ORDER TO DELIVER THE CURRICULUM, THE SCHOOL DAY IS LONG AND STUDENTS HAVE A FULL DAY

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

OF SCHOOL ON SUNDAYS. HOWEVER, THE SCHOOL HAS INCORPORATED WELL-CONSIDERED BREAKS AND PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECREATION. THIS EFFECTIVELY BREAKS UP THE DAY AND STUDENTS ARE HAPPY WITH THEIR EXTENSIVE TIMETABLE. THIS WAS INDICATED IN THE STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRES IN WHICH ONE STUDENT WROTE 'I'D PREFER IF THERE WERE LONGER HOURS!'

THE *KODESH* CURRICULUM FOCUSES ON *TALMUDIC*, *HALACHIC* (JEWISH LAW) AND BIBLICAL STUDIES. WHENEVER POSSIBLE, STUDENTS STUDY AREAS OF THESE SUBJECTS THAT PERTAIN TO SPECIFIC HIGHLIGHTS OF THE JEWISH CALENDAR, FOR EXAMPLE, FESTIVALS AND MILESTONES IN THE STUDENTS' LIVES SUCH AS *BAR MITZVAH* CELEBRATIONS. IN YEARS 7 AND 8, BIBLE (*CHUMASH*) AND *TALMUD* ARE TAUGHT WITH THE COMMENTARIES OF *RASHI*. IN SUBSEQUENT YEARS, WHEN STUDENTS BECOME MORE PROFICIENT, THEY TACKLE MORE COMPLICATED COMMENTARIES SUCH AS *RISHONIM* AND *ACHARONIM* FOR *TALMUD* AND THE *MEFORSHEI HA-CHUMASH* FOR THE BIBLE. THE IN-DEPTH STUDY OF *TALMUD* AFFORDS STUDENTS A GOOD GRASP OF MANY AREAS OF LEARNING AND GIVES THEM ACCESS TO A WIDE RANGE OF GENERAL KNOWLEDGE. THESE INCLUDE THE ETHICAL AND PRACTICAL DIMENSIONS OF BUSINESS, CIVIC AND CRIMINAL COURT PROCEEDINGS, AGRICULTURAL AND FARMING TECHNIQUES, EMPLOYMENT ISSUES, PARTNERSHIPS, ARCHITECTURE, ANATOMY AND ASTRONOMY. ANOTHER FEATURE OF TALMUDIC DISCOURSE IS THAT STUDENTS ARE TRAINED TO THINK INDEPENDENTLY, CRITICALLY AND ANALYTICALLY; THEY TAKE PART IN VOCIFEROUS DEBATES AND DISCUSSIONS AND BECOME PROFICIENT IN ARAMAIC AND HEBREW. THIS HELPS PREPARE THEM FOR WHEN THEY GRADUATE TO RABBINIC SEMINARIES (*YESHIVAS*) AND ALSO EQUIPS THEM FOR ADULTHOOD AND THEIR FUTURE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING. ALL STUDENTS TAKE PART IN PAIRED LEARNING SESSIONS, SOME OF WHICH TAKE PLACE IN A LOCAL SYNAGOGUE AFTER SCHOOL HOURS. THIS ENCOURAGES STUDENTS TO LEARN INDEPENDENTLY, SHARE IDEAS AND GROW SOCIALLY.

All students take GCSE examinations in English, mathematics and science in Year 9. The curriculum is designed to prepare students for their GCSEs alongside acquiring life-skills for the future. Students have weekly physical education lessons and regular experiences in design and technology. They also take part in educational and leisure outings that complement the curriculum. The school enjoys close partnerships with other schools in the community and is advised and guided by prominent Jewish educators. These links and the imaginative vision of the leadership of the school ensure that the curriculum is constantly evolving and provides an education that has great breadth and depth.

Teaching and assessment are good overall. There are some outstanding elements. In good lessons, teachers encourage independent learning and lively debate. On occasions lessons are only satisfactory when teaching is more formal and rigid. Students in the school progress well. By the time they are ready to graduate to *yeshiva*, they achieve high standards in *talmudic* and biblical studies. For Year 10 and above, regular programmes of learning are being developed to complement the

kodesh curriculum to provide the students with experiences in all of the required areas of learning. The school puts great emphasis on the thorough review of all of the subject matter taught in order to ensure that students are well equipped to progress. The school has a good system in place that provides individual tuition for students who are struggling in *kodesh*, however, students encountering difficulties in *chol* do not have the same level of support.

Assessment procedures are good. Marking is only satisfactory because it is often not sufficiently prescriptive and does not provide enough guidance to students. Students are tested on their *kodesh* studies weekly, both orally and in writing. In addition to this, they have end-of-term examinations in Years 8, 9 and 10, and external oral examinations undertaken by prominent rabbis. In *chol*, staff and senior leaders monitor students' progress regularly and students are tested at the end of each unit of work.

SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUPILS

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is outstanding. The school emphasizes spiritual growth extremely well through opportunities for regular prayer and a strong emphasis on the spiritual aspects of Torah learning. Students take part in daily discussions on ethical topics (*mussar*). Staff and regular guest speakers teach students about current affairs, contemporary issues, and public institutions and services. Students discuss and deliberate on Torah topics and concepts as they relate to society and modern life and through this, they gain a keen sense of morality.

Students really enjoy learning and school in general. As a result, attendance is very good and students behave well overall although behaviour observed in *chol* lessons was not as strong as elsewhere. Students appreciate teamwork and cooperate with each other by organizing, for example, the school library, prayer services and frequent school events such as activities during the festivals of *Rosh Chodesh*, *Purim* and *Chanukah*. They have plenty of opportunities to speak before their peers and in public, perform on *Purim* and publish their own work. They have good communication skills and are well prepared for the next stages in their education.

Students are well respected in their community and are good ambassadors for the school. There is a communal spirit in the school and former students participate in school functions whenever they can. Students gain an awareness of other cultures through group discussions, history and through elements of the *kodesh* curriculum. They appreciate the importance of harmony with members of other cultures and show this in the ways that they act outside of school.

SAFEGUARDING PUPILS' WELFARE, HEALTH AND SAFETY

The provision for students' welfare, health and safety and safeguarding are good. Staff have undergone all of the necessary recruitment checks and the school

maintains a single central register of all staff checks. Students are taught to be aware of how to keep healthy and safe through science and *kodesh*. They know about healthy eating and that they must keep fit.

The school has a suitable anti-bullying policy and ways of promoting good behaviour amongst students are clearly stated in its behaviour policy. Sanctions are clearly outlined and a sanctions book is in place. A suitable first aid policy has been produced and a member of staff is trained in first aid. Clear procedures and policies are in place for educational visits, health and safety and fire protection, and all meet the requirements. Fire safety procedures are satisfactory and fire drills and other checks are recorded. Routine monitoring of health and safety takes place. There is a child protection policy in place and staff are appropriately trained.

The school maintains a comprehensive register of admissions, and attendance is recorded appropriately. The school has a three-year plan to improve accessibility as required by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, amended by the Special Educational Needs & Disability Act 2001.

COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 (‘the Regulations’).

WHAT THE SCHOOL COULD DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

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

- Improve the quality of marking for both *kodesh* and *chol* elements of the curriculum.
- Develop extra support for students who are struggling with their work in the *chol* element of the curriculum.
- Further develop and improve the curriculum for Year 10 students to ensure all required areas of the learning are fully addressed.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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SCHOOL DETAILS

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Jewish day school		
Date school opened	August 2006		
Age range of pupils	11-16		
Gender of pupils	Boys		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 64	Girls: 0	Total: 64
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 6,900		
Address of school	62 Wellington Street West Broughton Salford Lancashire --- ---		
Telephone number	0161 7080400		
Email address	admin@beishatalmud.co.uk		
Headteacher	Rabbi Ganz		
Proprietor	Beis HaTalmud Manchester		