

# Beis Aharon School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Michael Glickman

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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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## Information about the school

Beis Aharon School is an independent *Charedi* (strictly religious) Jewish boys' school situated in North London. Most of the pupils belong to the local *Chasidic* community and speak Yiddish as their first language. The school is open six days a week, from Sunday to Friday, and the majority of the school day is taken up by *Kodesh* (religious studies), taught in Yiddish, with a short period devoted to *Chol* (secular studies), taught in English. The school is guided by the principles of *Torah* (Jewish law) and aims 'to educate our children in the very same way our parents were taught, carrying forward Jewish tradition and Jewish values to the next generation'.

The school is registered for pupils aged three to 12 years of age and there are currently 320 pupils on the roll, including 49 in the Early Years Foundation Stage. One pupil has a statement of special education needs. All the pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage are entitled to free education.

The school was founded in 1981 and moved into its current premises in 2009. It was last inspected in November 2007.

## Evaluation of the school

Beis Aharon School provides a satisfactory quality of education and meets its aims. Teaching and learning in both *Kodesh* and *Chol* are satisfactory and pupils make good progress. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, because the school successfully embeds the teaching of Jewish ethical values into its curriculum. The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is inadequate as there is an omission in the checks on adults working in school. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and its leadership and management are outstanding. The school has greatly improved since its last inspection and now meets all but one of the regulations.

## Quality of education

The overall quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, however, the provision is good. The *Kodesh* curriculum is taught in Yiddish and is based on the classical Jewish texts. Pupils progress through the school

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

following a clearly laid down syllabus from the beginnings of Hebrew reading to in-depth study of the Talmud and Biblical commentaries. This prepares them for the next stage of their education in *yeshivah ketanah* (junior Talmudical college).

*Chol* is studied for one hour per day. The *Chol* curriculum is based upon a range of commercial schemes which have been well adapted to the particular needs of the school. *Chol* is taught in English and covers all the required areas of learning. Pupils receive a thorough grounding in literacy and numeracy. There are time constraints on the teaching of other *Chol* subjects, but this time is used very effectively. An appropriate range of resources is in place to support teaching.

Pupils have regular exercise and sports sessions in the school yard and the school organises extra-curricular cycling outings. Music is a popular activity, with the school choir performing at local events. Parents and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school. 'The best school ever!' wrote one boy in block capitals in the pre-inspection questionnaire.

Teaching and assessment in both *Kodesh* and *Chol* are satisfactory overall. Teaching is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in some lessons in the main school. In *Kodesh* in the main school, teaching is satisfactory and largely teacher-led. Some of these lessons, however, are basically lectures with little opportunity for pupil participation. In the better *Kodesh* lessons, teachers use a variety of methods, including drama and humour, to enliven their lessons and retain the interest of the class. *Chol* lessons are well paced and the methods used encourage greater pupil participation. Here again, however, opportunities for further development of pupil-led activities are sometimes missed.

Pupils from the youngest age are focused on the importance of Jewish study, not only as a key to future success but also as a religious duty, and take their studies seriously. Boys learning to read Hebrew begin their morning by reciting their prayers together with great sincerity then sing a prayer for success in learning before chanting their reading words with evident enthusiasm and enjoyment. Parents and teachers are good role models and make clear their high expectations. The result of this commitment and eagerness to learn, strongly promoted by the school, is that pupils are highly motivated and make the most of every learning opportunity in school. They study and revise in their own time with their classmates and parents. As a result, they make good progress in both *Kodesh* and *Chol*, as do the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Notably, pupils beginning English progress in five weeks of daily half-hour lessons from no knowledge to the point where they are able to read and write simple sentences fluently. At the higher levels of attainment in *Chol*, a wide range of appropriate extension work is provided for the more-able pupils to ensure that they continue to make good progress.

Pupils have weekly and monthly assessments in both *Kodesh* and *Chol*, which make their rates of progress clear and are used to identify pupils who would benefit from additional provision. Teachers keep good records and results are regularly shared with the parents. An appropriate educational programme is provided for all pupils

with a statement of special educational needs. The school has identified a number of pupils who require additional intervention and has produced and implemented suitable support plans for them.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. *Mussar* (self-improvement) texts are studied in every class and pupils are shown how these lessons can be embedded in their daily lives. As a result, behaviour is good. Pupils are taught to be respectful to others, whatever their religion or culture, and to take care of the environment. In one *Kodesh* lesson, linked to the weekly Bible portion, the principal explained to a younger class the importance of greeting passers-by in a friendly fashion and why dropping litter is not only unsightly but can be dangerous.

Pupils have the opportunity to contribute to the school by leading prayer services and becoming involved in organising, speaking or entertaining at whole-school celebrations to mark festivals or academic success. They contribute to the wider community by collecting for charity and the school choir regularly entertains at the local old people's home.

Attendance is good because both parents and pupils are committed to their learning. In addition, pupils are keen to come to school because they see it as the fulfilment of a religious duty. Pupils learn about public institutions in England through a specially-designed citizenship syllabus which is taught at appropriate levels throughout the school and which helps prepare pupils for their future lives as citizens of the country.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is inadequate. All of the required policies, for example to combat bullying, for first aid and for fire safety are in place. The school has a child protection policy which meets the requirements and all staff have received appropriate child protection training. However, at the time of the inspection, there was no evidence that the required checks had been carried out on a volunteer who visits the main school to work directly with older pupils. Although some lessons are given to pupils about personal safety, this is not a regular part of the curriculum and pupils rightly expressed a wish to learn more about how to keep themselves safe.

The school has a healthy eating policy and some pupils are aware of what constitutes healthy food, but this is also an area which is not covered in depth. School dinners, although greatly enjoyed by the pupils, do not encourage healthy eating. In addition, some class teachers use sweets and snacks as rewards. The school has prepared a suitable plan to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

## **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The school has carried out all the required checks on staff and proprietors and maintains a single central register of these checks. The school's policy is not to use supply staff.

## **Premises of and accommodation at the school**

The premises and accommodation in both the main school and the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory and conducive to safe and effective learning. The school has recently moved into newly built premises which are well lit, airy and spacious and which provide ample accommodation for teaching and learning. The premises also provide a particularly well-decorated multi-function hall which is used for prayers, assemblies, lunch and extra-curricular activities, as well being available for community events. When used in this way, the hall can be shut off from the rest of the building and accessed via rear doors, so that the school is not disturbed. The flooring and the lower part of the walls throughout the building are marble and therefore easy to clean. Classrooms are air-conditioned and are appropriately furnished and fitted with whiteboards. Sickroom facilities are satisfactory and there are ample washrooms. There is a large rear playground which is paved and which includes some planted areas; there is a smaller front yard with secure access. Pupils are extremely proud of their new building, particularly those who have spent a number of years in the school's former premises.

The Early Years Foundation Stage occupies a converted house across the road from the main school building. It has adequate space and facilities to permit effective learning and a large rear play area that is well equipped with outdoor toys and equipment. However, the steep stairs prevent children from having free access to the outdoor area. The school is currently converting an adjacent building to provide custom-built Early Years Foundation Stage accommodation which will have level access and hopes to move in shortly.

## **Provision of information**

The school provides parents and carers of pupils and prospective pupils with all the required information through its prospectus. Parents and carers receive detailed reports on their children's progress through weekly and termly reports.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school's complaints policy complies fully with the regulations.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory and children make good progress, especially in their personal and social development; this is reflected in their good attitudes to learning and behaviour. Provision in the

Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Teaching emphasises developing communication, language and literacy skills. Children have access to a wide variety of 'life experiences' such as wine-making and house building. Consequently, they develop a firm foundation for future skills development. Currently, classroom resources are only satisfactory and there is no free-flow outdoor play access. The new premises will have level access to the play area.

The curriculum, which revolves around the weekly *Torah* (Bible) portion, is planned well and provides experiences in all required areas of learning. It effectively integrates many topics, such as children being encouraged to count 'Jacob's stones' when learning the story of the weekly Bible portion. Pupil profiling ensures consistent assessment and a focus on areas for development. Much of the syllabus is taught through role-play. Children enjoy these activities immensely and they make learning come to life. Parents are kept well informed about their children's education. The children are well-cared for and healthy eating is encouraged.

The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding. This is because of the way that leaders have developed the provision in a relatively short period of time to ensure that children make good progress. They have laid firm foundations for its future progress. The leaders of the setting understand its strengths and areas for development and ensure that all staff participate in the department's programme of self-evaluation. They ensure that the setting has excellent links with parents and send home photographic evidence of pupils' activities and progress weekly. The setting has good links with the local Learning Trust which supports staff training. Staff meet regularly to share ideas and experiences and are currently being trained to a high standard.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.<sup>3</sup>

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

- make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school having regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State by ensuring that the required checks have been carried out on volunteers (paragraph 7).

## **What the school could do to improve further**

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

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made)

- adopt teaching strategies which encourage increased pupil participation in lessons
- encourage healthy eating through formal teaching and by providing school dinners which offer opportunities for healthy eating
- provide regular opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to learn about personal safety
- investigate options for improving classroom resources and access to the outdoor play area in the current Early Years Foundation Stage premises.



## 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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### The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage			✓	
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	✓			
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage			✓	

## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent
<b>Type of school</b>	Jewish day school
<b>Date school opened</b>	1981
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–12 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	320
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	0
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	1
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£3,120 to £4,420
<b>Address of school</b>	83-95 Bethune Road London N16 5ED
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8809 9444
<b>Email address</b>	dbk@ttbal.plus.com
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rabbi S Grunfeld and Mr L Pomerantz
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mr J Lipschitz