

Yeshivah Ohr Torah 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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Yeshivah Ohr Torah School was opened in 1995 and is situated in Salford, near Manchester. It offers a secondary education for religious Jewish boys, with provision for both religious (*Kodesh*) and secular studies (*Chol*). *Kodesh* is taught in Yiddish, which is the home language of many of the students. The school is affiliated to the Belz Chassidic community, but it is not exclusive to members of that community. The school is registered for students between the ages of 11 and 16 and there are currently 39 students on the roll. No student has a statement of special educational needs.

The school states its aim as '*to enable our pupils to reach their maximum potential as productive members of society within the guidelines of traditional Jewish observance and family values*'. The school's aims emphasise personal development, improvement of character, promoting self-esteem and respect for others. The more able students are expected to help the less able and stimulate an atmosphere of co-operation and unity. On leaving school, all the students continue their education in yeshivahs (Talmudical Colleges) in the United Kingdom and abroad. The school was last inspected in October 2007.

Evaluation of the school

Yeshivah Ohr Torah School provides a good quality of education and meets its aims. The staff ensure that all students make good progress and the quality of the curriculum and of teaching in both *Kodesh* and *Chol* is good. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and behaviour of students is outstanding, largely because of the emphasis on *Mussar* (self-improvement) throughout the school. However, the provision for students' welfare, health and safety is only satisfactory because, whilst staff are aware of what is expected of them in following the school's child protection policy, not all staff have received formal child protection training. The school has improved since its last inspection and now complies with all of the regulations except one.

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

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. The school sees itself as a *Yeshivah Ketanah* (junior Talmudical college) and the teaching style is modelled on the traditional yeshivah format; students work in pairs to prepare a section of the Talmud before hearing a lecture on it and then revising it, again in pairs. Lectures are interactive, with the teacher asking questions, and the students in response discussing and challenging the points at issue. The school is divided into three *shiurim* (classes), covering the equivalent of Years 7 to 10, and the teaching style in the first *shiur* still retains elements of a class lesson.

Students are extremely positive about the school – one said, 'When you wake up in the morning, you want to come' – and parents, too, are unanimously appreciative of the education that the school provides. The loyalty that the school evokes can be seen by the fact that one of its first graduates, now a local businessman, voluntarily assists with the administration.

As a *yeshivah ketanah*, the emphasis of the curriculum is very much on *Kodesh* (religious studies), with each *shiur* only having two *Chol* (secular studies) lessons per week. These are focussed on basic literacy and numeracy, but other areas of the curriculum are covered through *Kodesh*. For example, *Kodesh* lessons observed included elements of English and Jewish history, a science experiment and knowledge of British institutions. In *Chol*, worksheets on science topics are used for English teaching.

Additional curricular activities are organised by the school to cover further curriculum areas. For example, students have regular swimming sessions at the local pool and opportunities to learn practical skills such as woodwork and book-binding or to develop their creative talents through art and music. One student proudly demonstrated a powered go-kart that he was building from scrap materials.

All students progress to *yeshivah gedolah* (senior college) on leaving the school, so careers advice is concerned with ensuring that they are directed towards and gain admission to the most appropriate institution for their particular abilities and interests. Students are confident that the staff will guide and support them with their applications.

Teaching and assessment are good and, as a result, students make good progress. In *Kodesh*, teachers have good subject knowledge and are able to vary their delivery to maintain students' interest even in the more formal lecture setting. Their good knowledge of their students' levels enables them to direct their questions appropriately. They use anecdotes and humour to enliven their lessons and are skilled at giving practical examples to clarify the sometimes rather abstruse Talmudical cases. Other areas of both the *Kodesh* and *Chol* curriculum are seamlessly introduced into their lectures. Staff, students and parents alike are focussed on success in religious studies and, as a result, students are eager to learn, and prepare and revise the lectures with their study partners with tremendous

energy and concentration.

Assessment in *Kodesh* is by way of regular tests and clear records are maintained which are used to track student progress. Staff are quick to arrange extra provision for students who require it and this was favourably commented on by both students and parents. Home-school liaison is a particular strength and in the close-knit community, staff are in frequent contact with parents.

Teaching in *Chol* is taken very seriously by the school and, as a result, is good. *Chol* lessons are well-paced and feature a good range of learning activities. Again, pupils are keen to succeed and work well. Assessment is through worksheets and revision tests and the newly-appointed *Chol* teacher is currently using these to gauge students' ability to ensure that lessons are at the appropriate level.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is outstanding. This is largely because the school has embedded the study of *Mussar* (moral improvement) in its daily routine. Every lesson begins with a short period of moral or ethical teaching and students are shown how to incorporate these ideals into their daily life. They learn to help one another and it is heart-warming to watch the more advanced students expending tremendous energy ensuring that their classmates understand the Talmudical passage under study. Students' very positive attitude towards learning is shown by the concentration with which they follow lectures and the enthusiasm with which they work together with their study partners. As a result of their enjoyment of school, attendance is good.

Students from a variety of religious Jewish backgrounds are represented in the school and there is an extremely strong sense of unity. This is fostered by extra-curricular activities such as special 'unity' Sabbaths and trips, including one to sites of Jewish historical interest in Eastern Europe. Students are clear that this is one of the greatest strengths of the school. Students are taught to show respect for others, whatever their religious or cultural background. They are quick to rise when an adult enters or leaves the room and speak respectfully at all times.

Behaviour is outstanding. Because the school is run as a *yeshivah ketanah*, students wear formal dress and are encouraged to think of themselves as college students rather than school pupils. They conduct themselves in a dignified and mature fashion and there is no evidence of any boisterous behaviour. Daily prayers are held in the school's study hall and students take turns leading the service. They were observed to pray with great sincerity and concentration.

Students have the opportunity to contribute to the local community. When the community celebrated the writing of a new Torah scroll, the entire ceremony, including the music, the parade and the decorations, was organised and carried out by the school. Students are also involved in raising funds for charity and in praying

for and visiting the sick. They are all given responsibilities when the Sabbath activities are organised and feel that they benefit greatly from this. Students learn about public institutions through *Kodesh* lessons, where information is introduced when appropriate. For example, a discussion of a Talmudical passage regarding marriage was broadened to include civil marriage laws in this country.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the students is satisfactory. Although the school has a clear child protection policy in place, has a suitably trained child protection officer who has ensured staff are aware of what is expected of them in keeping pupils safe, not all staff have attended a formal training course on child protection. The course is booked very shortly. Students say they feel safe within the school and are confident that they can turn to their teachers or the headteacher if they have any problems. They say that the staff genuinely care for them; as one student stated, 'they are with you, helping you.'

The school has a healthy eating policy which the students follow and, for example, school hikes encourage fresh air and exercise. Students walk or cycle to school. All policies meet requirements and the school maintains admission and attendance registers which comply with the regulations. It 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 the staff and proprietors and maintains a single central register which complies with the regulations.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The premises and accommodation are satisfactory for teaching and learning in safety. The school is housed in a purpose-built single storey building adjacent to the Belz synagogue. It contains a study hall, a number of appropriately sized classrooms and a student common room. The staffroom, medical room and office are in a separate block behind the main school building. Decoration is of satisfactory standard and furnishings are appropriate for the traditional yeshivah style of teaching.

The school playground is a paved courtyard behind the building. It is little used, as the students spend their break times talking together outside or in their common room, as one would expect to find in a yeshivah, rather than playing games. The provision is therefore adequate for their requirements.

Provision of information



The school provides parents, carers and others with all the required information through its prospectus. Parents receive detailed reports on their children's progress through termly reports as well as through regular informal contact from staff.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

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

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.³

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 which have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State by ensuring that all staff are suitably trained in child protection procedures (paragraph 7).

³

www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made

Inspection judgements

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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	1995		
Age range of pupils	11-16		
Gender of pupils	Boys		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 39	Girls: 0	Total: 39
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
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)	£3,000		
Address of school	28 Broom Lane Salford M7 4FX		
Telephone number	07970 722289		
Email address	N/A		
Headteacher	Rabbi Y Wind		
Proprietor	Mr D Neuwirth		