

Bnos Beis Yaakov Primary School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Paul Armitage

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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

Bnos Beis Yaakov is a primary school for Orthodox Jewish girls located in the Kingsbury Synagogue in north-west London. It opened in September 2010. It aims to provide 'a holistic approach to learning, wherein the spiritual, moral, social and cultural values espoused by the school are embedded in every aspect of school life'. Although registered for 50 children aged three to six years, it currently has 17 girls aged four and five years. Nine of the children are in Reception and eight are in the Nursery. None of them has a statement of special educational needs. All children receive government funding to support their education. The school intends to expand next year to include a Year 1 class. In doing so, the school will not exceed its current registration limit. This is the school's first inspection.

Evaluation of the school

Bnos Beis Yaakov Primary School meets its aims; it provides a good quality of education supported by a good curriculum. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good because the quality of teaching is good and children make good progress. Supported by effective and accurate assessment methods, teachers adjust very well what and how they teach so as to meet children's needs. Children's personal development is outstanding and their welfare, health and safety, including robust safeguarding arrangements, are good. The school's leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage are effective. The school meets all regulatory requirements for independent schools and all but one of the statutory requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good, providing a rich variety of experiences for its children. Provision is based on *Kodesh* (religious studies) and *Chol* (secular studies) and covers, appropriately, all the Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning. The school's approach is integrative in that some secular curriculum topics are covered through *Kodesh*. In *Kodesh*, both Hebrew and English are used. There are clear, relevant policies detailing the aims, objectives and outline content for each

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

area of learning. These are then used as a basis for more detailed statements of curriculum content in medium-term and shorter-term planning.

Literacy in both Hebrew and English is given strong emphasis, as is numeracy. There are good opportunities for art and what the school calls 'craft', namely designing and making things. There is a lot of singing and recitation. Children have many opportunities to study topics with elements of history and geography. Science is approached well through practical work such as the study of caterpillars and a visit to a local farm. Children have planted flowers and watched them grow and die, and they have also melted chocolate. Classrooms have computers which are well used by children for creating pictures and simple investigation.

Personal, social and health education runs through virtually everything the school does, but especially at the start of school in the morning when children sit around their teacher and talk about themselves, their families and other bits of news. This 'circle time' also provides an excellent opportunity for talking about what is going on in the world. The school is good at inviting people to come and talk. These have recently included a fireman, a dentist, a blind person with a guide dog, a policeman and an optician. Such opportunities give children an understanding of the world of work. There are good opportunities for physical education in the playground as well as indoors.

Teaching and assessment are good. Inspectors saw examples of good and outstanding teaching both in *Kodesh* and *Chol*. The small number of children means that teachers have a very good understanding of each child's needs and they meet these needs very well. They have excellent professional relationships with children and make it very clear to them that they care and want them to be happy and do well in school. The content of lessons and other activities is well planned; resources are used well and there is sufficient challenge. There is a very good balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities.

As a result of this effective teaching, children make good progress and sometimes better in all the areas of learning. In communication, language and literacy, children look at and increasingly read books. They draw and older children are beginning to write simply but convincingly. They listen well and there is a high standard of talk and discussion. The use of phonics (including the sounds that Hebrew letters make) is well developed in both Hebrew and English and even the less-able children are beginning to distinguish well, Hebrew letters and syllables and the sounds that go with them. Progress in numeracy is good. In a Reception class, inspectors saw children confidently handling numbers and this was replicated in the Nursery, for example, they were counting and working out how many children were present given that one or two were away.

Children make good progress in 'creative development', including participating in some interesting work with clay, string and other materials, and producing some excellent paintings based on the work of Paul Klee. Religion and art are successfully

linked as shown when flowers made by the children were attached to a representation on the wall of *Har Sinai* (Mount Sinai) as they count the *Omer* - the time between *Pesach* (Passover) and *Shavuot* (Feast of Weeks).

Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is very well developed through specific activities such as the invitations to visitors and 'circle times'. Children have studied countries such as Nigeria and France, eaten rice and yam, and made baguettes. This area of learning is also very successfully developed in *Kodesh* through the study of the many ramifications of what is written in the Torah.

Children work confidently at the computer and make good progress in their technological/computer skills development. The inspector who watched a 'music and movement' lesson was very impressed not only by the developing physical and musical skills but also by children's excitement at achieving.

Assessment is thorough and data are well used to inform teaching. Teachers keep detailed informal notes, photographs and other evidence and use the information gained from observations to match work effectively to children's capabilities and to form an accurate picture of the progress of each child.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Children's progress in the personal, social and emotional development area of learning is outstanding. The exploration of the *Torah* and the expansion of faith, the meaning of Jewish festivals, and the study of secular issues in *Chol* all contribute significantly to this. Children's self-confidence is boosted effectively. An example from *Chol* was the high- quality support given to a Reception child in an English phonics lesson as she struggled with, but eventually achieved, the correct sound. It greatly strengthened her confidence that she had achieved. Similar encouragement was given in a Nursery lesson as children learnt to count. They grew in confidence as they realised they could do the required task.

Other excellent examples of promoting personal and moral development come from work done in *Kodesh*. In one lesson about *Shavuot*, the main objective was to teach the character trait of humility using the example by God's choice of *Har Sinai* for the giving of the *Torah*. At one point, children gave *Tzedakah* (charity money) for a local cause. From the children's comments and responses, it was clear that they understood that it is good not to boast and they understood that it is good to give to charity. In another lesson, children responded very positively to the story of the students of Rabbi Akiva who did not show proper respect for each other. Later, the meaning of this story became clearer when, in the playground, a child wanted to keep both a toy camera and a telephone. The teacher reminded her of the story and the child immediately handed over one of the toys to another child.

Children's attitudes to learning are outstanding, as are attendance and behaviour. A good example of their attentiveness was in a Nursery class when they responded

well to a range of child-initiated activities. They organised themselves well, cooperated with each other and showed respect.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The welfare, health and safety of children are good. All the required policies are in place including a child protection policy; the associated procedures are understood by staff and members of the governing body. The content of the policy documents is correct although, rightly, staff are about to rewrite some of them to make them more reflective of the school and its circumstances. The designated person has undertaken the required child protection training which has been provided by the local authority and all other staff have been appropriately trained to fulfil their child protection responsibilities. Risk assessments are correctly undertaken and recorded, including risk assessments for external visits. All staff have received training in paediatric first aid and there are appropriate arrangements for administering medicines. The school maintains the required admission and attendance registers. Children have a good but still developing understanding of how to stay safe and how to stay healthy. They enjoy physical education and are aware of foods that are healthy and those that are not. The school complies with the requirements of Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The required checks, including Criminal Records Bureau checks, on staff and members of the governing body have been undertaken correctly and the information recorded in a single central record as required.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The interior of school has recently been renovated and is therefore in very good condition. There are new toilets and a medical room with the appropriate facilities for those who are ill. The main teaching area is a large hall with parquet flooring. It is impressive that such a large and empty space has been creatively turned into three teaching areas which provide a suitable learning environment for young children. The rooms are bright and cheery with many examples of children's work and other material on the walls. Outside, there is sufficient space for play and physical education. Although in satisfactory condition, the surface is showing signs of wear. A wheelie bin could be better located to improve the quality of the play area.

Provision of information

Parents and carers have been provided with copies of the required information and have been made aware that they can obtain other information on request. The school will shortly be sending out the first annual reports to parents and carers using an appropriate format.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's complaints procedure complies with regulatory requirements.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. What the governing body and staff have done to establish a school of good quality in a short time is remarkable. Starting from nothing, in a short period of time, policies, procedures, the quality of teaching, learning and the quality of the accommodation are all now good. The children are achieving well and they are safe and happy. Parents, carers and others are highly supportive of the school. In response to Ofsted's questionnaire, one parent commented 'My daughter has blossomed exceptionally – really happy!' Another said 'I am really impressed with the school's running. It is run to a very high professional standard.'

Management had effective plans to establish the school and there are good, pragmatic ideas relating to increased staffing and good structural plans to amend the layout of the interior to accommodate another class next academic year. However, the school lacks an overall, coordinated development plan based on sound evaluation of its performance in all aspects to date. The school now has sufficient evidence of its performance to begin a valid self-evaluation and to produce a development plan. The quality of teaching at the school is good and sometimes better. This includes the work of the teaching assistants who are well deployed and give very helpful support. However, none of the assistants currently has a level 3 or above qualification as required. The school had already acknowledged this prior to the inspection and an appropriately qualified member of staff has already been appointed to work from September 2011.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

In order to comply with the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school must:

- appoint a teaching assistant with a relevant qualification of level 3 or above.

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:

- undertake a systematic self-evaluation of all aspects of the school's performance with a view to producing an effective, comprehensive, annual development plan
- update some welfare, health and safety policy documents to make them more reflective of the school and its circumstances
- improve the quality of the surface in the play area in the front of the school
- remove the wheelie bin in the play area to a more suitable location.

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

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Primary		
Date school opened	6 September 2010		
Age range of pupils	3–6		
Gender of pupils	Female		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 17	Total: 17
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)	£3,150		
Address of school	Kingsbury Synagogue, Kingsbury Green, London, NW9 8XR		
Telephone number	020 8204 4078		
Email address	admin@bnosbeisyaakov.co.uk		
Headteacher	Nechama Cohen		
Proprietor	Richard Harounoff		