

Talmud Torah Chaim Meirim Wiznitz School

Independent school light-touch 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}

This was a light touch 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

Talmud Torah Chaim Meirim Wiznitz School is situated in the heart of a strongly religious Jewish community in North London and was established in 1979 in response to the wishes of the Viznitzer Rebbe during a visit to London. The school aims to educate pupils who 'will continue to higher Jewish education filled to overflowing with Torah, fear of Heaven and Chassidus'. It is owned by a charitable trust and serves the local Chassidic Jewish community. It currently has a roll of 204 pupils aged between six and 13 years, of whom two have statements of special educational needs. Many pupils come from homes where Yiddish is the main language used and speak English as an additional language. In common with most Jewish schools, the curriculum is divided into two distinctive strands, Kodesh (Jewish studies), under the leadership of the principal, and Chol (secular studies) which is overseen by the headteacher. Kodesh lessons, which are conducted in Yiddish, take up the majority of the school day. The school was last inspected in January 2008.

Evaluation of the school

Although it meets its main aim, Talmud Torah Chaim Meirim Wiznitz School provides an inadequate quality of education overall. The quality of provision in Kodesh is good and pupils make good progress in that aspect. The principal visits all classes regularly to monitor the quality of teaching and has made his expectations clear. However, the quality of education in Chol is inadequate because there are elements lacking in the curriculum and the pupils make inadequate progress as a result of inappropriate teaching methods and materials. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, because the school embeds the teaching of Jewish ethical values into its curriculum. The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is inadequate as most staff have not received child protection training and the school does not effectively ensure pupils' health and safety. On its previous inspection, the school did not provide all the required information to parents and carers and did not have an appropriate three-year accessibility plan under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended. These

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

regulations have now been met, but the school has failed to improve its curriculum as required by the previous inspection.

Quality of education

The overall quality of the curriculum is inadequate. The quality of the Kodesh (Jewish studies) curriculum is good. The emphasis of the school and the community from which its pupils come is firmly on Kodesh and the vast majority of the school day is devoted to it. The recently appointed principal has developed a detailed curriculum which clearly sets out what is to be taught at each level throughout the school. Kodesh is taught in Yiddish and pupils study the classical Jewish religious texts, beginning with Hebrew reading and moving on to Bible translation and eventually Talmud and commentaries. They also study Jewish history and law as well as traditional texts of moral and ethical teachings. In the process, they acquire advanced reading, translation and comprehension skills in both Hebrew and Aramaic as well as developing logical thinking and reasoning skills.

The quality of the Chol (secular studies) curriculum is inadequate. Chol is largely taught in English, although difficult words and concepts are sometimes translated into Yiddish. There is a clear and detailed curriculum for literacy and numeracy. Pupils begin Chol in Year 3 and progress through a series of internally produced textbooks and worksheets. Although the school has recently adopted a specially written science curriculum used in a number of Jewish schools, this is only at a pilot stage and most pupils currently receive no teaching in science or technology. Some, but not all, classes study geography. The school has no formal provision for physical education and although pupils have some opportunities to develop their creative and aesthetic skills in Kodesh through work related to the various festivals, this is not formally planned or documented. On this account, the school does not provide all the required areas of experience for its pupils. The school does not meet the requirements of all of its pupils' statements of special educational needs.

Pupils are very positive about the school. Several wrote: 'I am proud of my school' in their pre-inspection questionnaires. Parents, too, are generally positive and feel that the school provides a good education for their children. Because staff are members of the local Chassidic community, they are in daily contact with parents and any issues are quickly dealt with on an informal basis.

Teaching and assessment are inadequate overall. In Kodesh, teaching and assessment are good. Teachers are experienced and have good knowledge of their subjects and they convey to pupils both enthusiasm and reverence for the texts. For example, they frequently employ the word 'holy' when referring to the Talmud or one of the commentators. Although lessons are largely teacher-led, as is traditional in Kodesh, pupils are keen to participate, for example by enthusiastically chanting translations together in the younger classes or by eagerly offering answers in the older classes.

Pupils, including those with statements of special educational needs, make good

progress in Kodesh. Those with special educational needs are given good support and the school is proud that they keep up with their peers as a result. Teachers, parents and pupils all see study as a religious duty and as a result, pupils are focused on success. They have weekly written tests in all subjects, which monitor their progress. These are supplemented by weekly oral assessments by the principal or his deputy. Detailed records are kept and pupils who require additional support are quickly identified and remedial lessons are arranged either during or after school. The school operates a voluntary revision programme outside school hours through which pupils in the upper classes can earn rewards by thoroughly revising the Talmud they have learned over their school career.

In Chol, teaching and assessment are inadequate. The time devoted to Chol is not used to best advantage; the pace of lessons is generally slow. For example, in several lessons, most pupils sat idle for too long while one read aloud. Pupils are not encouraged to work collaboratively and the more able pupils are not given sufficiently challenging material. The materials used and the teaching methods employed do not encourage pupils to use their imagination or develop their creative talents. Because pupils do not begin to study Chol until Year 3, they are sometimes given work better suited to a younger age group. Teachers do not always adequately prepare lessons and some do not use the whiteboard when it would be helpful.

Pupils are given homework regularly. They have weekly assessments in Chol, the results of which are monitored by the headteacher. These ensure that pupils do make progress, but the teaching materials and methods do not enable pupils to make the progress that of which they are capable, so that their progress is inadequate overall. Pupils with special educational needs are given additional support in the Chol curriculum by a nearby specialist centre. However, this does not provide all the elements specified in the statements, so that their progress is inadequate.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good. Pupils study Mussar (ethical improvement) texts and the staff make clear that they expect pupils to conduct themselves in accordance with these standards. The principal gives regular assemblies in which he highlights any issues which he feels need to be addressed in terms of behaviour or conduct in or out of school. The school organises morning prayers in school or in the nearby synagogue and afternoon prayers are said in school, when pupils pray with sincerity and concentration.

Behaviour is good, and does not deteriorate even in lessons where pupils are clearly less engaged due to inappropriate teaching methods or materials. Pupils are respectful and stand when an adult enters the classroom. They play well together and encourage and support one another in class. Because Kodesh studies are taken seriously and pupils enjoy school, attendance is good.

Pupils learn responsibility and contribute to the school by organising class events and

by running the school library. They coordinate a rota for contacting and visiting any classmates who are ill and they collect for charity. There is a school choir which performs at school celebrations and pupils visit and entertain at a local special school. They learn about public institutions through outings to places of interest and visits from members of the police and fire services. Both the principal in assemblies and teachers in Mussar lessons put great stress on the religious duties of respecting all people, whatever their culture or religion, and of providing role models of understanding and good behaviour.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The provision for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety is inadequate. The school has a child protection policy which meets the requirements. However, most staff have not received child protection training and some are not familiar with the policy. The members of staff named as child protection officers have not received appropriate training for their role. The school has a safe recruitment policy and maintains a single central register which meets the requirements.

The school has a healthy eating policy and pupils are aware of what constitutes healthy eating. They feel that the school's dinners offer some healthy eating options. Pupils learn about road safety and the school carries out regular fire drills. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that there is no bullying or fighting. They are confident that they can speak to a member of staff or the principal if they have a problem. Younger pupils are driven to and from school by minibus and the school arranges for older pupils to walk home in groups for their safety.

The school provides continuous loop fabric roller towels in the pupil washrooms. Although these are changed regularly, they may contribute to the spread of infection. A number of parents and pupils commented on this in their pre-inspection questionnaires and requested more hygienic hand-drying facilities. During the inspection, a cupboard containing electrical switchgear and cleaning chemicals was left unlocked and was accessed by pupils.

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 the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- set out in writing a curriculum policy for Chol (secular studies) which is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, and implement it effectively (paragraph 2(1))

³

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



- give pupils of compulsory school age sufficient experience in the following areas of learning: scientific, technological, physical, and aesthetic and creative (paragraph 2(2)(a))
- provide subject matter appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of pupils, including those pupils with a statement of special educational needs (paragraph 2(2)(b))
- for pupils who have a statement of special educational needs, provide education which fulfils its requirements (paragraph 2(2)(e))
- ensure that teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught (paragraph 3(a))
- ensure that teaching involves well-planned lessons, effective teaching methods, suitable activities and appropriate management of class time (paragraph 3(c))
- ensure that teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensure these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 3(d))
- provide classroom resources of an adequate quality, quantity and range and ensure that they are used effectively (paragraph 3(f)).

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 (paragraph 7)
- take effective measures to ensure pupils' health and safety which have regard to the DfES guidance Health and safety: responsibilities and powers (DfES 0803/2001) (paragraph 11).

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	1979		
Age range of pupils	6–13 years		
Gender of pupils	Boys		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 204	Girls: 0	Total: 204
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 2	Girls: 0	Total: 2
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	None		
Address of school	26 Lampard Grove London N16 6XB		
Telephone number	020 8806 0898		
Email address	None		
Headteacher	Rabbi S Hoffman		
Proprietor	CMA Trust		