

Torah Vodaas

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

Torah Vodaas is an Orthodox Jewish primary school for boys that opened in September 2001. It provides Jewish studies and secular education from the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities of Golders Green and the surrounding areas of north-west London. The school is located in premises attached to the Dunstan Road Synagogue. There are currently 263 boys in the two to eleven-year-old age group on roll, including 26 below statutory school age in the kindergarten and 20 two to three-year-olds in the pre-nursery class. All three- and four-year-olds are entitled to free education. One pupil at the school has a statement of special educational needs. The school aims to give pupils an education that will help them to develop their knowledge of and allegiance to Judaism. The last inspection of the school was in March 2008. Since the last inspection the school has registered provision for up to 20 children aged two and three years of age; this provision opened in 2009.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of the education is good and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils are outstanding. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Safeguarding procedures are robust and meet regulatory requirements. The school has improved its curricular documentation and schemes of work since the last inspection and clearly meets its aims. The school meets all of the independent school regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and all pupils make good progress. The curriculum is divided into two strands: *Kodesh* (religious

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

education) and *Chol* (secular studies). The *Chol* curriculum is based on the National Curriculum and all areas of learning are taught. *Kodesh* lessons are taught throughout the morning and *Chol* in the afternoon. The curriculum is supported by effective schemes of work that are suitably implemented to meet the needs of the pupils and reflects the strictly orthodox Jewish ethos of the school.

The *Chol* and *Kodesh* curricula are effectively integrated. For example, the history of the Greeks is taught in connection with the Festival of Chanukah; healthy eating with the laws of *kashrus* (Kosher food); and woodwork sessions where boys produce items such as lecterns, charity boxes and *Menoros* (candelabras for the Festival of Chanukah). There is adequate physical education each week and, in addition, the school provides an after-school sports club for Years 3 to 6 as an extra-curricular activity.

The curriculum is enhanced by some excellent extra-curricular activities, including a gardening club, chess club, choir and a *laining* club where pupils are taught to chant from a Torah scroll. Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is good. The school takes every opportunity through the *Kodesh* and *Chol* curricula to inform and guide pupils in these areas of their learning. This is a significant factor in the pupils' good personal development.

Teaching and assessment are good and pupils make good progress. The school has a clear framework by which pupil performance is evaluated across the curriculum. This includes weekly written tests and weekly oral exams by the headteacher for all *Kodesh* subjects. In *Chol*, pupils take end-of-term examinations and National Curriculum standard assessment tests. In addition to this, teachers conduct informal assessments daily to gauge pupils' understanding and progress.

Most teachers employ a variety of teaching methods to provide their pupils with valuable learning experiences. Teachers of both *Kodesh* and *Chol* manage time well and lessons are well paced. Pupils with special educational needs in *Kodesh* are supported well by one-to-one teaching and groups are withdrawn for extra support in *Chol*. While *Kodesh* and *Chol* lesson planning is satisfactory, it is not always made sufficiently explicit how the needs of pupils with differing capabilities will be met. The school makes provision for staff development. These include regular in-service training sessions, professional dialogue and performance management for *Chol*. However, the school has not devised a system of regular lesson observations for *Kodesh* in order to ensure consistent improvements in teaching practice.

Teachers manage behaviour well and behaviour during the lessons observed was good. Pupils receive regular instruction in physical education and are encouraged to use break times to exercise. However, the playground, although adequate, is small and is not equipped with play apparatus. As a result, pupils lack stimulation during break times.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. Discussions with pupils reveal that they have extremely positive views about their school and greatly enjoy their lessons. To quote one Year 6 pupil: 'Teachers make lessons fun.' The enjoyable learning environment provided by the school contributes to very good attendance. Pupils are successfully encouraged to develop their self-confidence through performances during assemblies and acting as school librarians and prefects. The school choir performs at functions and takes part in an inter-school choir festival.

The school's religious ethos imbues the pupils with a keen understanding of what is right and wrong and delivery of the curriculum includes moral and ethical content at every turn. Pupils are taught to respect the law during *Kodesh* lessons and through citizenship. They enjoy visits from Transport for London, local police and the Community Security Trust which broaden pupils' horizons and their understanding of the world of work. The school organises themed weeks throughout the year such as 'Anti-Bullying Week', 'Police Week' and 'Book Week'. Pupils gain an appreciation and respect for their own and other cultures through citizenship and history, as well as through their involvement in an 'International Week' towards the end of the year. This provision promotes tolerance and harmony well.

Behaviour is consistently good; pupils are welcoming, courteous and well mannered. They contribute to the community through visiting care homes, taking part in Memorial Day and raising funds for a wide range of charities, both Jewish and secular. During the inspection, two Year 6 pupils, chosen at random, showed inspectors around the school and they displayed enormous pride as they enthusiastically described wall displays, including photographs of activities that have taken place during the year.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all children in the Early Years Foundation stage is supported well. Young children pray with their teachers every morning and recite blessings before partaking of food through their own initiative. They learn about the weekly Torah portion with great interest and this imbues them with a keen understanding of moral concepts and social expectations.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Provision for safeguarding the pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. Very robust safeguarding processes and procedures are in place. The single central register is comprehensive and meets requirements. The school carries out all of the required checks on adults who work in the school. Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau certificates exist for all staff and all teachers are up to date with the required safety training. Regular fire drills take place and the school has an effective three-year plan which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. The school strongly encourages pupils to eat healthily and they are not allowed to bring in unhealthy food items. The school recently organised a 'Healthy Living and Eating Week' to successfully promote a healthy lifestyle. The school ensures that pupils who cycle to and from school must wear a safety helmet. Pupils feel very safe and know that they can approach their teachers if they have a matter of concern.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, as are provision and outcomes for children under three. All two- and three-year-olds are taught together in the pre-nursery class. All children enjoy learning and make good progress. The youngest children are broadly working within the age bands set out in national guidance. Relationships between teachers and children are good. Children work and play together harmoniously both indoors and outside. Provision enables the youngest children to use the space around them effectively, and there are plenty of stimulating activities to promote all children's physical and creative development. Children make good progress in their personal and social development and this is reflected in their good attitudes to learning and behaviour.

Teaching and the curriculum are good. Teachers and their assistants successfully promote children's independence by encouraging them to work independently, and to explore and experiment. For example, the very young children are successfully provided with opportunities to explore objects and materials using their senses effectively. Children plant flowers and in doing so learn about nature whilst improving their school environment. They strengthen their knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet by using pegs to form letters. There is a strong emphasis on developing basic communication, language and literacy skills. Consequently, all children gain secure basic skills. Adults provide positive role models and key workers spend time with each child, valuing them as individuals. The youngest children are gaining a sense of community and their self-esteem and confidence are developing well. The setting has adequate resources to support the curriculum. These include sand, water and role-play areas. The outdoor play area is small but equipped to a satisfactory standard.

The curriculum is planned well for the various ages and there is a good range of opportunities for children to gain experiences in all of the required areas of learning. There is a very good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. Parents and carers are closely involved in their children's education. They are kept abreast of what is happening in school and their children's personal development through regular letters and reports sent home. The children are well cared for; healthy eating is encouraged and children feel safe.

Leadership and management are good. The leader of this phase, which includes oversight of children in the pre-nursery class who are two and three years of age,

has an excellent understanding of current practice and ensures that regular observations of children inform planning and the development of the curriculum. The Early Years Profile is completed as required. The leadership ensures that provision for the under threes meets the requirements of the Early Years Register and that the setting is fully compliant with Early Years Foundation Stage requirements for three to five-year-olds.

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 professional development of *Kodesh* staff through regular lesson observations that result in consistent improvements in teaching practice
- ensure that *Kodesh* lesson planning makes explicit how the needs of pupils with differing capabilities will be met and that differentiation is always employed in *Chol* lessons
- improve the amount of play apparatus in the playground.

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	Orthodox Jewish Boys		
Date school opened	September 2001		
Age range of pupils	2–11 years		
Gender of pupils	Boys		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 263	Girls: 0	Total: 263
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of children aged 0–3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 20	Girls: 0	Total: 20
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,425		
Annual fees (childcare)	£2,550		
Address of school	41 Dunstan Rd. London NW11 8AE		
Telephone number	020 8458 4003		
Email address	office.tvps@googlemail.com		
Headteacher	Rabbi Y Feldman/Mr J Sager		
Proprietor	Rabbi S Klor		