

Beth Jacob Grammar School for Girls

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Emma Ing HMI

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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

Beth Jacob Grammar School serves a strictly observant Jewish community in North West London. The principle aim of the school is to give students '*simhas hachayim*' – a love of life founded on Jewish law, but it is also important to the school to ensure that students achieve well in their secular (*chol*) studies. For these reasons around 60% of curriculum time is spent on *chol* subjects and around 40% on the *kodesh* (religious) curriculum. Although there is an entrance examination, the school takes students of all academic abilities. Two students currently have statements of special educational needs both of which relate to physical difficulties.

The school was founded in 1980 and moved to its current premises in 1998. At the time of the inspection 253 students were on roll aged 11 to 17. Nearly all students go on to seminary, either at the age of 16 or one year later aged 17. As a result, the sixth form is small, with just 24 students, and only extends to the end of Year 12.

The school was last inspected in June 2009 when it was judged to offer a good quality of education.

Evaluation of the school

The school has improved since its last inspection. It offers an outstanding quality of education for its students. It has addressed the regulations in respect of provision for students' welfare, health and safety and the provision of information to parents and carers so that it meets all of the regulations. The school provides very high levels of support and care, ensuring safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Students are highly motivated and work hard both at secular and religious studies. They make excellent progress in both, but their understanding is stronger in *kodesh* subjects, where teaching is stronger, than in *chol* subjects.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding in its effectiveness at meeting the aims of the school. Together with the attitudes of the girls and good teaching, it plays a major role in securing the excellent progress that the girls make, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs. One parent wrote, in response to the

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

Ofsted questionnaire, 'The school really goes out of their way to find out what their students can excel in ... be it in academic or arts areas.'

The *kodesh* curriculum is full and delivered in very engaging ways. Because the *chol* curriculum is delivered in 60% of the working week, and because the school aims for students to achieve as well in this as they possibly can, the pace of delivery is fast and there is less time than there might be for girls to develop their understanding and breadth of subject knowledge. However all the areas of learning are covered and the girls do very well in their GCSE examinations. Music, an area of weakness in the last inspection, is now offered as part of weekly singing. There are appropriate pathways so that individual girls can take courses that are closely allied to their aptitude and interests. While some gain up to ten A* to C in GCSE subjects, others combine GCSEs with achievements in City and Guilds courses in sewing and cookery, courses in childcare and computer studies and book keeping. Girls who need help to catch up are offered small group or one-to-one tutorials which effectively focus on supporting them to learn specific skills. In Year 12 many students make excellent progress. They achieve high level passes in at least two A levels, whilst others successfully complete a mixture of academic and vocational courses.

The teaching in the school is good. Generally, the pace is fast and the lessons are purposeful. The girls are enthusiastic learners and try hard to do well. They respond extremely well to the questions, many of which are probing, that they are often asked. Teachers are good at giving individuals advice and support during lessons. Most of the teaching at the school consists of the teacher addressing the whole class. This works best in the more traditional religious subjects. In the *chol* subjects it sometimes means that some girls are doing work that is too easy or too hard for them. The girls are given regular tests, examinations and homework over which they take care. However, some teachers are very good at helping the girls to understand what a model answer should look like and give excellent feedback to girls on how to improve their work, whilst in a few cases some work is unmarked or not particularly helpful. The mathematics department has recently introduced the practice of setting the girls targets to achieve, based on their progress to date, which has been warmly received. Middle and senior leaders track students' progress, but this is not systematic enough to allow them to quickly spot those girls who are not doing as well as they might, or who might be falling behind.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and, to a lesser extent, cultural development of the girls is the paramount aim of the school. The family atmosphere, the firm but caring leadership of the headteacher and her senior staff, the curriculum and the excellent welfare provision add up to outstanding provision. The girls generally enjoy their learning and are highly motivated. These attitudes contribute strongly to the excellent progress that they make. Their attendance is well above average and their behaviour is exceptionally good. They respect each other and themselves. During their school career they are taught about British institutions, democracy and about practical matters such as banking and acquiring a mortgage. Through art, in

particular, the girls are introduced to other British cultures and their attitudes are respectful. The girls' artwork on display around the school is of exceptionally high quality.

The curriculum is supplemented highly effectively by a wide ranging extra-curricular programme which supports girls to develop leadership and responsibility. Girls speak with enthusiasm about The Show, an annual show, written by the headteacher and performed, directed and managed largely by the girls with help from their teachers. They also have opportunities to develop practical skills in managing a Jewish household, for example by organising an upper school *Shabbaton* (Sabbath retreat) and taking part in *Melavot Malka* (the post-Sabbath meal) and *Bas Mitzvah* (Coming of age) luncheons. Perhaps the highlight of the year for those in Year 9 is the annual project. Last year it focused on *kashrut* (food laws). Different groups prepared presentations about different food groups, made and sold food, and made educational presentations about *kashrut* at a magnificent two-day fair to which pupils from other schools were invited.

Sixth form girls appreciate the increased levels of responsibility that they are given and feel that they are very well supported, both in their current work and in making their choices for the future.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school makes outstanding provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils with relevant safeguarding policies and risk assessments. Procedures for the recruitment and vetting of staff are secure. Child protection arrangements are implemented effectively. An appropriate number of staff are trained in first aid and arrangements for fire and other emergencies are sound.

Through both the *kodesh* and the *chol* curricula, girls are taught about healthy lifestyles and encouraged to eat healthily and exercise regularly. As one or two parents noted on their questionnaires, the amount of curriculum time allowed for physical education is, however, only just over an hour a week.

The headteacher and the deputies know the students extremely well. As a result, particularly of note is the level of personal and individualised support that is given to girls if and when they need it. The *mechaneches* (tutorial system) ensures that all girls are monitored and that they all have opportunities to discuss, both in groups and alone with an adult, matters of concern to them.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school maintains appropriate checks on staff, proprietors, and all others who come into contact with pupils. New staff are properly vetted.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school site is purpose built and provides well for the education of pupils. The school is secure and the premises are well cared for.

Provision of information

Parents and carers are appropriately informed of what is happening in the school and policies are available as required. The school issues two written reports annually to parents and carers which details the progress their children are making. All but three of 72 parents who responded to questionnaires agreed that they receive valuable information from the school.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

Procedures for dealing with complaints are available on request and are compliant with the regulations. There were no formal complaints in the previous year.

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 quality of teaching and assessment in the *chol* curriculum by ensuring that:
 - teachers use a range of techniques to allow every girl to work at her own level and pace in each lesson
 - all teachers identify for students what good and outstanding outcomes look like and give them feedback about what they each need to do to improve their work.
- Gather and use assessment data in respect of the *chol* curriculum to enable curriculum leaders to form a clear picture of the progress of each girl, set girls challenging targets, and intervene quickly if progress is not outstanding.

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	Secondary		
Date school opened	1980		
Age range of pupils	11–17		
Gender of pupils	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 253	Total: 253
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 2	Total: 2
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,520		
Address of school	Stratford Road Hendon London NW4 2AT		
Telephone number	020 8203 4322		
Email address	c.burke@bjgs.org		
Headteacher	Mrs D Steinberg		
Proprietor	Beth Jacob School Ltd.		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 October 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Beth Jacob Grammar School, Hendon, NW4 2 AT

Thank you all for the warm and courteous welcome that you extended to Rabbi Lieberman and me when we visited to inspect your school. We enjoyed talking to you, observing you at work and looking at all you have achieved.

We judged that your school provides you with an outstanding education, particularly in respect of your *kodesh* studies. You are well taught. You work hard and make excellent progress. Your headteacher, her senior leaders and her staff, care for and guide you exceptionally well. Those of you who need extra help with your work are very well supported by the special needs department and catch up well.

We were particularly impressed by your enthusiasm for school and by your extra-curricular work, such as the Year 9 project and the annual show. I very much appreciated your choral celebration of the anniversary of the death of Rachel.

We have suggested that the school might consider further improving by ensuring that all teachers give you clear feedback about how you might improve individual pieces of work and that, particularly in *chol* subjects, they use different techniques to ensure that each of you is doing work at a level challenging for you. We have further suggested that senior leaders might track your academic progress more closely in order to set targets as they do in mathematics and make sure that you all make outstanding progress.

It was a great pleasure to be in your school because your behaviour, your attitudes and your zest for learning are exemplary.

We wish you all the best in the future.

Yours sincerely

Emma Ing
Her Majesty's Inspector