

# Bnois Jerusalem School

Independent school standard inspection report

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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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## Information about the school

Bnois Jerusalem School is an orthodox Jewish (Charedi) Hassidic school, founded in 1965, in Stamford Hill, London. Pupils come from Yiddish-speaking homes and speak English as an additional language. Their families do not access secular media such as national newspapers, radio, television or the internet. The girls are from mixed socio-economic backgrounds and large families. The age range is from three to 16 years. There are currently 658 pupils on roll which includes 175 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, all of whom receive public funding. One pupil is currently being assessed for a statement of special educational needs relating to communication difficulties and a few other girls have similar difficulties.

The school aims to give its pupils a broad and balanced education in Yiddish, *Kodesh* (religious studies) and *Chol* (secular subjects). Its all-female environment aims to develop girls' *middos tovos* (positive character traits) to encourage them to live true Torah lives and to emerge as mature, contributing members of society. The school had its last full inspection in 2008 and its last monitoring inspection in 2010.

## Evaluation of the school

Bnois Jerusalem School fully meets its aims to develop in the girls their *Charedi* identity and prepares them well for adult life. Outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is the foundation for the girls' excellent behaviour and manners. The school has made good progress in improving the quality of education since the last inspection and it is now good. The quality of the curriculum, teaching and assessment and the Early Years Foundation Stage is good as are the school's safeguarding arrangements. An exceptionally large number of parents and carers returned questionnaires of which the overwhelming majority are thrilled with the quality of education their children receive; in the words of one parent, 'Amazing! No words to explain how happy I am with the school.' All the regulations are now met, which is an improvement on the last inspection.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

## Quality of education

The quality of the curricula for both *Chol* and *Kodesh* is good. *Kodesh* is taught in the mornings in Yiddish, and *Chol* in the afternoons in English. The latter is broad and balanced and includes: mathematics; English literature as well as grammar and language speaking skills; science, including biology, chemistry and physics; geography; history; business studies, including typing; citizenship; physical education; art; and design and technology. There is no information and communication technology but all pupils learn computer skills when they move on to the seminary. There is some outstanding work in sewing which is taught from Year 7 with pupils designing and making a range of items including clothes for younger family members. In one pupil's words, 'The school achieves its aim to prepare us for life.' Although pupils do not take accredited examinations, the school ensures that end-of-Year 11 assessments are of equivalent standard because they are externally marked.

Both *Chol* and *Kodesh* are underpinned by detailed schemes of work which set out clear long, medium and short-term outcomes and progression across the entire school. Teachers produce detailed lesson plans and lesson evaluations are used to inform future planning. The heads of both the *Kodesh* and *Chol* departments monitor lesson planning and teaching on a regular basis to achieve consistency across the school. Termly teacher training sessions are held to further develop staff competence.

Whenever possible, the school encourages pupils to make links between the *Kodesh* and *Chol* curricula. For example, pupils' projects on the Blitz include references to the spiritual difficulties faced by religious Jews in London at the time. *Kodesh* projects include some impressive examples of drama and design and technology work. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is outstanding because pupils' additional needs are identified as early as possible and excellent provision is put in place to support them, including the use of a range of external professionals. The school has recently introduced the study of Yiddish as a modern language across all year groups, including the teaching of spelling, grammar and creative writing. Pupils write at length and produce projects and a school yearbook in Yiddish. The quality of projects in history and English is good because pupils take a great pride in their work. For example Year 7 produce leaflets for Year 6 to introduce them to the senior school. These are filled with 'wise thoughts', for example, 'It's not the talent, it's the effort you put in.' They are colourful, good humoured and carefully crafted to ensure younger pupils will look forward to their senior years.

The school has developed an effective policy for good learning and teaching. As a result, the quality of teaching in the junior and senior school in both *Chol* and *Kodesh* lessons is good and pupils make good progress in all subjects. Learning objectives are clearly stated at the start of each lesson and re-emphasised and evaluated during the course of the lesson. Teachers are creative in making lessons memorable and interesting. For example, in a lesson on the Laws of the Sabbath, pupils acted out medical scenarios before discussing which laws applied in each case. A range of

techniques are used to appeal to pupils with different learning styles and this generally works well. However, on occasion, not all pupils take an active part in answering teachers' questions. There are regular tests to encourage revision which result in pupils being highly motivated and displaying an impressive level of knowledge of complex topics such as the dietary laws or the nature of compounds in chemistry. Although there is useful verbal feedback to pupils in lessons about their progress, teachers' written comments in pupils' books are less helpful. Record keeping is good; teachers track the progress of every pupil and any difficulties are discussed with senior staff, either informally or at regular weekly meetings, resulting in early intervention or improved outcomes for pupils who require additional support or who find learning difficult.

The school makes good provision for meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The staff are kind and caring and are confident in the delivery of the curriculum. Early Years Foundation Stage requirements are integrated well through both the *Chol* and *Kodesh* curricula. The quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Staff have extremely enthusiastic attitudes towards the delivery of activities and create a really enjoyable learning environment. As a result of this the children are excited and eager to learn which is evident in the good progress they make. The learning environment is well equipped, a good improvement since the last monitoring inspection. Children have the opportunity to make choices about their own resources which are easily accessible to them. For example, during free play in the mornings, staff set up a range of activities for children to be involved in, including cutting and sticking which help refine fine motor skills. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities, enabling the children to engage confidently in all activities. Good records are kept about children's progress and development against the Early Years Foundation Stage goals. These are recorded and updated regularly. Children are set targets which are shared with parents to move learning forward.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. The school emphasises the development of good *middos* (character traits) through explicit teaching programmes, imaginative incentive schemes and frequent references elsewhere in the curriculum. The result is that behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are respectful towards staff, for example standing when an adult enters the room, and are friendly and helpful to one another. They support less able classmates and have organised a 'homework partner' system for pupils who are absent. Senior pupils take responsibility for organising and producing the annual show and pupils collect for charity and entertain residents at the local old age home. Pupils say that they have good opportunities to contribute to developments within the school. Pupils learn about the institutions of this country through regular class lessons and make an annual visit to Parliament. The school recently organised a mock election for which pupils enthusiastically produced election manifestos and campaign materials. Pupils also have the opportunity to vote for responsibilities within the class.

Pupils learn about other cultures through geography projects where they dress up and learn the language of other countries. They study novels which include issues of racism and tolerance and the annual school play is always set abroad. They are taught to respect all cultures in accordance with Jewish law and have produced a leaflet about the different groups in the Stamford Hill area. Every morning both school buildings resound with the joyful and expressive singing of all the pupils as they celebrate their faith in song.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have excellent relationships with their peers and adults alike. They know their morning routines and are able to take off their hats and coats independently. Staff are willing to offer help if needed and take an active role in keeping a lively and fun environment. Children feel happy and safe in their learning environment and are confident to talk to all adults who work with them and as a result behave exceptionally well and enjoy the carefully planned activities.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

There is good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. Pupils love coming to school and say they feel very safe and well cared for by all staff. One pupil said, 'No words can express how lovely this school is! Our teachers are exceptionally caring.' The school continues to have a ban on unhealthy snacks and only healthy food is permitted. The hot lunches provided for younger pupils are nourishing, tasty and reflect their dietary requirements. All policies required are in place and reflected in good practice. These include policies for child protection, behaviour, anti-bullying, fire and first aid. Health and safety policies pay due regard to national guidance. All staff have received child protection training and this is updated as required. An appropriate number of staff have been trained to administer first aid including paediatric care. Arrangements regarding the storage and administration of medicines are secure. There is good supervision of pupils at all times in class, on the playground and around the school. Risk assessments, including those for the building, fire and educational visits, are properly undertaken. There are regular fire drills and records show both school buildings are evacuated quickly and that the time for this has improved with practice. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

## **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

There are robust procedures for the recruitment of appropriate staff. A single central register is maintained and meets requirements.

## **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The premises provide a suitable environment for learning. Classrooms are adequate in size as are other areas of the accommodation. There are appropriate facilities for

pupils who are taken ill at school. The proprietor and governors have undertaken a large amount of work since the last inspection and both buildings have had considerable improvements made.

### **Provision of information**

The school brochure includes the necessary information, and safeguarding and child protection policies are available on request. Over 450 parents returned the questionnaire with the overwhelming majority being very positive about the school. A very few raised a point about insufficient school visits and homework. However, the inspection team found that there is a good range of visits to support the curriculum and that pupils are highly motivated and committed in completing homework projects. The school sends informative and adequate written reports to parents about their children's progress twice a year.

### **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school's complaints procedure meets requirements.

### **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.

- Provide opportunities for all pupils to be actively involved in answering teachers' questions.
- Ensure that written comments on pupils' work help them to understand what to do next to improve their work.

## 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

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Jewish		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1965		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–16 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 658	Total: 658
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£0 (voluntary contributions)		
<b>Address of school</b>	79–81 Amhurst Park London N16 5DL		
<b>Telephone number</b>	0208 802 7470		
<b>Email address</b>	katzbar@gmail.com		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs S Sonnenschein – Senior School Mrs A Katz – Junior School		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mrs Grunfeld		

**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.**



9 February 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Bnois Jerusalem, Amhurst Park N16 5DL**

Thank you all very much for the wonderful welcome you gave the team and me when we visited your school this week. We were very impressed with your excellent behaviour and the courtesy with which you treat your teachers and all visitors. We all enjoyed visiting your classes and think your teachers are good and that because of this you make good progress in your learning in both *Chol* and *Kodesh* lessons. It was good to see how keen many of you are to answer your teachers' questions and we have asked them to find ways of encouraging all of you to be more involved in making a response. We thought the quality of your written work was good and sometimes outstanding. When they talk to you, the teachers give you very positive comments to build up your confidence and we have asked them to help you even more by explaining in their marking of your written work what you have to do next to improve.

The quality of education you receive at the school is good and we agree with you that you are well prepared for your future lives. The quality of your sewing is wonderful and it is great to see you designing and making items for yourselves and your families. This is an example of your excellent spiritual, social, moral and cultural development because you have a deep and genuine care for each other and your community and take great pride in the quality of all your work. I was very moved by the beauty and vigour of your singing and thank you for sharing your prayer time with me.

I would also like to thank all those pupils who gave their time to talking with us about their work and their school. It was lovely to meet you all and the team would like to wish you every success in your future lives.

With every good wish and mazel tov,

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard  
Her Majesty's Inspector