

Ateres Girls' High School

Willow Grove, Felling, Gateshead, NE10 9PQ

Inspection dates

5–7 March 2013

Overall effectiveness

Good **2**

Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching. They say that they work hard and enjoy school.
- The headteacher and the governors provide outstanding leadership. They have introduced training for staff which has improved the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They have a detailed plan for the development of the school and are committed to its success.
- Pupils' behaviour and personal development are outstanding and they show consideration for one another.
- The school has made outstanding provision for ensuring the pupils are safe. Pupils are certain that no bullying occurs.
- The school is developing a curriculum that enables pupils to make good progress in all subjects.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Teachers do not always plan lessons which match the needs of all pupils to ensure that all pupils can give their best performance.
- Marking of pupils' books does not always give them guidance on how to improve.
- The curriculum plans and schemes of work for all subjects are not yet integrated into a unified framework.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school requires improvement and must take action to meet schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with half a day's notice.
- The inspectors observed 16 lessons taught by 14 teachers, looked at pupils' work and held meetings with the headteacher, governors and pupils.
- The inspectors looked at the school's documentation, including policies, schemes of work, teachers' planning and records of pupils' progress. They checked the school's compliance with the regulations for independent schools.
- The inspectors considered the views expressed in questionnaires returned by 10 members of staff and 27 parents and carers.

Inspection team

Michael Glickman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sarah Drake

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ateres Girls' High School is an independent, secondary day school for orthodox Jewish girls aged from 11 to 16 years of age. It opened in September 2011 and is located in a former voluntary aided primary school building in the Felling area of Gateshead.
- The school currently has 74 pupils on the roll in Years 7 and 8 only. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- The school aims to 'instil in its pupils good character traits and fear of heaven coupled with a practical knowledge and understanding of Torah (Jewish law) so as to equip them to become true Jewish women' and also to 'offer a broad education within a Torah framework to develop pupils both academically and socially.'
- This is the school's first inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Integrate the curriculum plans and schemes of work for all subjects into a unified framework.
- Ensure that teachers' planning and lessons give pupils of differing levels of ability the opportunity to learn and achieve as well as they can.
- In marking their work, give pupils clear indications to pupils of how they can improve.
- Provide continuous training for staff to improve the quality of their teaching in all subjects so that more is outstanding.
- The school must meet the following independent school regulation.
 - Provide suitable changing accommodation and showers for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education (paragraph 23A(1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Pupils' achievement is good. This is the result not only of good teaching but also of the detailed pupil tracking system implemented by the new headteacher which enables teachers to identify the strengths and weaknesses in each pupil's learning. Pupils enter the school with literacy and numeracy skills at or above the national average, and examination results, samples of work and pupil tracking demonstrate that they make good progress overall and in English and mathematics. In a newly introduced scheme, pupils are informed of their average marks in both *kodesh* (religious studies) and *chol* (secular studies) and are set targets for improvement in a personal interview with the headteacher.

Pupils say that they 'work hard but enjoy it at the same time.' They participate enthusiastically in lessons and are keen to succeed. They say that their teachers make clear what they have to do to improve, although this is usually verbal rather than through written comments in their exercise books. They develop a range of skills in both academic and technical subjects which will help them in the next stage of their education.

The school has recently introduced learning mentors to support disabled pupils or those with special educational needs, with their learning or social difficulties. The mentors work together with teachers, parents and carers to produce a specific action plan for each pupil which may involve support during or after school. As a result, pupils progress well and some are now able to work by themselves.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Pupils' behaviour and personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. Pupils are friendly and extremely respectful to adults and remain very focused and attentive in all lessons. They wait quietly until staff arrive to admit them to the classroom or to supervise them outside during breaks. An incentive scheme for good behaviour and work allows pupils to accumulate merit points leading to prizes and outings. There is a school council attended by the headteacher at which pupils are encouraged to contribute ideas for the development of the school. Pupils feel that they are listened to closely and that their ideas are implemented. Attendance and punctuality are exemplary.

The school has adopted an international programme for encouraging positive personal relationships. For example, posters, stickers and poems reminded pupils during the examination period not to ask their classmates about their marks to avoid embarrassing them. Social activities are planned to encourage pupils from different classes and groups to mix together. These include, during school hours, a special assembly or party to mark the beginning of each Jewish month, and after school, a series of events to mark pupils' *Bat Mitzvah* (religious coming of age). Pupils comment very favourably on the sense of unity that these activities generate.

Pupils learn to respect other cultures and faiths and about public services throughout the curriculum. For example, the mediaeval church is a topic in history and they discuss the dietary laws of other faiths during cookery. There are wall displays on life in Kenya and on slavery; and they carried out a project to mark the Queen's Jubilee. The school supports the wider community by making its extensive playing fields available outside school hours and has agreed with a local college to accommodate students for their teaching practice.

Quality of teaching**Good**

The quality of teaching is good and enables pupils to make good progress. In-school training has enabled teachers to plan lessons well and they are encouraged to use techniques which engage pupils who have differing learning styles and abilities. In the best lessons, this is done very well and activities are available to challenge the more-able pupils while the teacher directly supports those of lower abilities. Pupils are encouraged to make their own discoveries and traditional text-based *kodesh* lessons are exciting and participatory. In a few lessons, however, pupils of higher or lower abilities are not sufficiently well catered for. In the more teacher-led lessons in both *kodesh* and *chol*, pupils still maintain high levels of concentration and are keen to offer answers and participate. Learning objectives are usually stated clearly at the beginning of a lesson and most teachers check pupils' understanding of a point before moving on. It is a measure of pupils' confidence in their teachers that they do not hesitate to admit when they have not understood.

In most subjects, pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work; for example, in an English lesson they were asked to use 'two stars and a wish' to identify two strengths and a point for improvement. Similarly, in sewing they were asked to grade their tacking with a view to identifying progress. On occasions, however, teachers' marking encourages pupils but does not make clear how they can improve. Pupils' progress is regularly assessed in termly examinations and the results are used well, for example, to identify any pupils who would benefit from additional support.

Quality of curriculum**Good**

The quality of the curriculum is good. The *kodesh* curriculum is based around the study of traditional texts and aspects of Jewish law, while a number of commercial schemes are used in *chol*, which are being adapted for the particular needs of the school. Curriculum plans and schemes of work cover all the required areas of learning. However, these are not currently integrated fully into a unified framework, which makes it more difficult to identify any possible links between subjects. The recently appointed headteacher has made curriculum development a priority. Restructuring of the curriculum for the current session is well advanced and she has already put a framework in place to support development for the next academic year. Clear schemes of work inform teachers' individual lesson planning. The headteacher has introduced a lesson planning form which requires teachers to identify how their lessons will meet the needs of pupils with differing levels of ability. However, the use of this form is not yet fully embedded across the school to ensure that all pupils' needs are met more consistently.

All the required areas of learning are covered through the *chol* curriculum, with practical subjects such as art, sewing and cookery represented alongside academic subjects such as English, mathematics and science. The *kodesh* curriculum includes the traditional texts but also overlaps with *chol* in such areas as history.

Extra-curricular activities, such as a highly successful play for the community and outings, enhance pupils' self-confidence and reinforce the sense of unity within the school. These are described by parents and carers as 'amazing.' Although the school currently has no pupils beyond Year 8, plans are already being developed to enable pupils to gain external qualifications and for appropriate career guidance.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety**Outstanding**

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding and all independent school regulations are met for this standard. The school has robust policies for ensuring the safety of pupils. It follows safer recruitment procedures and has made the required checks on the suitability of staff and governors which are suitably recorded in a single central record. Safeguarding training is part of staff induction and there are two designated child protection officers and four trained first aiders. There is a suitably equipped first aid room. A fire risk assessment has been carried out and

all required precautions are in place. Fire drills are held regularly. The school building is secure and governors have plans to further enhance security. One of the governors checks the premises on a daily basis for any potential hazards and needed repairs. Any identified issues are dealt with immediately. Admission and attendance registers comply with regulations.

Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and effectively supervised at all times, including breaks. They are taught to keep themselves safe, for example, when using the school bus. They say that they feel safe and well looked after in school. The school has a healthy eating policy and, until pupil numbers made it impractical, ran a fruit tuck shop to encourage healthy eating.

The school is very proactive with suitable procedures to prevent and deal with any bullying should it occur. It uses *kodesh* projects and extra-curricular activities to promote unity and friendship between all pupils and, as a result, pupils are certain that bullying does not exist; they say that 'nobody would drop friendships.' They feel very well supported by friends and staff when they have problems; one pupil commented, 'If you're down in the dumps, it's natural for someone to give you a compliment.' Parents and carers, too, comment on the 'upbeat atmosphere' in the school.

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The school knows itself very well. The governors are highly committed to the success of the school and are closely involved both strategically and in its day-to-day running. The recently appointed headteacher provides inspirational leadership. She has a clear understanding of the areas where the school needs to develop. Together with the governors, she has drawn up a detailed and ambitious but realistic school development plan with specific targets and timescales. She has initiated comprehensive curriculum development in both *kodesh* and *chol*, using best practice examples, and has introduced in-service training for her staff. She carries out regular lesson observations as part of performance management for teachers. As a result, staff now carry out more formal lesson planning and are far more confident in employing a variety of teaching techniques. This work has had an impact and led to improved teaching and enhanced pupil achievement. The school has developed links with the local authority and with other Jewish schools nationally which they use to good effect for advice and guidance. It enjoys the support of parents and carers who are, almost unanimously, extremely positive about the school.

The premises and accommodation comply with nearly all requirements and are suitable for safe and effective learning. However, changing facilities and showers are not provided for pupils receiving physical education on the premises. The governors had identified this issue earlier this year and have included the construction of such facilities in the school development plan.

The school provides all the required information to parents, carers and others through its prospectus and parent handbook. Reports on pupils' progress are sent to parents and carers twice yearly. The school's complaints policy complies with requirements.

The governors have ensured that all but one of the regulations for independent schools are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	138118
Inspection number	408690
DfE registration number	390/6000

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Jewish secondary
School status	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	74
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Ateres
Chair	Mr A C Morgan
Headteacher	Mrs J Nemeth
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,000
Telephone number	0191 469 2969
Fax number	0191 443 1435
Email address	info@ateres.org.uk

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