

Ahavas Torah Boys Academy

Levi House, Bury Old Road, Manchester, M7 4QX

Inspection dates	4–6 November 2014	
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management	Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils	Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The proprietor and senior managers are not sufficiently familiar with current legislation and the independent school standards to accurately carry out self-evaluation.
- The school does not have fully developed systems to track teaching and progress in all subjects.
- Teachers do not always mark pupils' work in a way that enables them to see what they have to do to improve.
- Teachers do not always set work that enables the most-able and the least-able pupils to make progress to the best of their ability.
- Teachers do not consistently apply behaviour management strategies for minor misbehaviour.
- The school does not use any form of standardised tests, so it does not know accurately how pupils are progressing compared to their peers.

The school has the following strengths

- Governors are fully committed to the success of the school and are keen to implement the lessons learned from this inspection.
- The school offers good training opportunities to all staff, resulting in improved teaching in both religious studies (kodesh) and secular studies (chol).
- Teachers and pupils show mutual respect for each other and a positive atmosphere prevails throughout the school.
- The school has implemented effective lesson planning and tracking systems in English and mathematics which enable clear identification of subjects covered and where further work is necessary.
- The school offers good support for weaker pupils in kodesh. As a result, they are able to keep up with the class.
- Parents are unanimously positive about the school and full of praise for both the teaching and the care provided.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets 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.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed nine lessons taught by nine teachers. A further three lessons were briefly observed during a learning walk.
- The inspector examined samples of pupils' work in both kodesh and chol, scrutinised school policies, subject documents and registers and spoke to governors, senior managers, teachers and pupils.
- There were no responses on the online Parent View website, as the parent body does not use the internet for religious reasons. However, the inspector analysed 20 written surveys returned by parents and five returned by staff.

Inspection team

Michael Glickman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ahavas Torah Boys Academy is a Jewish faith school for boys aged 11 to 16 years located in Salford. It occupies the upper two floors of a large Victorian house, the lower part of which is occupied by Tashbar Crèche, which is separately registered.
- The school was opened in response to the increasing demand for school places in the Orthodox Jewish communities of North Manchester, Salford and Prestwich and is registered for 45 pupils. There are currently 30 pupils on the roll, none of whom has a statement of special educational needs.
- The school aims to, 'provide an excellent secular education which is guided by and also gives over the principles of orthodox Judaism' and 'to build an atmosphere of happiness and achievement whilst instilling within pupils a deep and passionate love for, and understanding of, their own religion, coupled with an uncompromising respect for other religions and lifestyles different to their own'.
- The majority of the school day is devoted to kodesh with chol at the end of the afternoon. The school is open six days per week.
- The school opened in August 2013 and this is its first inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement by:
 - marking pupils' work in ways that show them what they need to do to improve
 - setting written work which enables both more-able and less-able pupils to progress at the best rate possible
 - developing consistent lesson planning and tracking documentation to ensure that teaching in all subjects is covered fully and improves basic skills
 - evaluating pupils' progress against national and local norms to ensure that pupils are making good progress in relation to their peers.
- Ensure that all staff consistently employ behaviour management strategies to foster outstanding behaviour.
- Ensure that governors and senior managers are familiar with the current legislation and independent school standards to enable their self-evaluation and planning to be accurate.

An external review of governance is highly recommended to be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- The school is in its second year of operation and has a small roll and staff team, which enables close liaison between management, teachers and parents. Kodesh and chol staff work well together and are happy to share ideas. Staff morale is high; teachers say that they feel well supported and are proud to work in the school.
- The school offers all staff a range of training opportunities, including courses run by outside agencies. Both staff and management feel that these have successfully improved the quality of teaching. Leaders regularly observe teaching and make suggestions for improvement. However, there is limited monitoring of pupils' written work which impedes understanding of how it can be improved.
- Although all independent school regulations were met after some minor omissions were corrected during the inspection, leaders and managers do not currently have a detailed understanding of the independent school standards. This means that they are not fully aware of where improvements could be made regarding compliance and the quality of the school's work.
- The school is housed in a Victorian building. Although the premises and accommodation comply with regulations and are maintained in a safe and clean condition, the school's leaders recognise that these premises are not suitable for the long-term development of the school.
- The school's leaders have ensured that all requirements related to the safeguarding of pupils are met.
- Detailed subject plans and schemes of work are in place for English and mathematics. These include a year planner which enables leaders to check on what is taught on a weekly basis as well as evaluation of pupils' progress. Planning for other subjects is not as detailed which prevents leaders from having a clear overview of progress. This also makes it difficult to check coverage of learning opportunities in different subjects such as those which promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Through both the kodesh and chol subjects, the school ensures that pupils learn about, and are tolerant of, other groups and cultures. Every class begins the day with a kodesh lesson devoted to proper behaviour towards others and pupils are aware that Jewish Law mandates respect for all people. They learn about other faiths; for example, an English lesson included the history of the church as background to the Gunpowder Plot. They also learn about the British system of democracy and to respect the civil and criminal law. Leaders have taken steps to ensure that no extremist ideas are taught within the school or expressed by visitors.
- Parents are unanimously positive about the school. One commented, 'The warmth and care shown to students is second to none', while others described it as 'amazing' and 'truly wonderful'.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Chair of Governors founded the school and is closely involved in its day-to-day running, as the acting headteacher is employed part-time.
 - Governors have high ambitions for the school and are actively seeking new premises which will allow for expansion and offer enhanced educational opportunities for pupils.
 - Governors were unaware of recent changes to legislation and standards, and therefore their self-evaluation and planning was not entirely accurate.
 - Governors work closely with senior managers to monitor staff performance and support training by providing cover and funding to enable teachers to attend external courses. They have invited national and international experts to deliver training sessions to staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite and welcoming to visitors, holding open doors and standing when an adult enters the classroom. They spontaneously help parents bringing children into the crèche housed in the same building.
- Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities within the school and in the wider community. They asked to take turns leading prayers to develop their skills so that they can volunteer in places where there is no-one else to do so. On their own initiative, they recently organised a sponsored bicycle ride in order to raise funds for the school.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are unanimous that there is no bullying and are confident that they can approach the acting headteacher if they have any problems. Because of the small size of the school, there is a warm family feeling, and the mutual respect between pupils and staff is

unmistakable. This is enhanced by whole-school outings and gatherings on festivals and special occasions.

- Pupils generally behave very well in both kodesh and chol lessons. They are attentive and keen to learn, and the vast majority remain well behaved even when they are not actively working. However, there are occasional instances when behaviour falls below this high standard and which teachers do not consistently address.
- Attendance and punctuality are mostly good. However, the school has been slow to deal with a small group of pupils who arrive in school on time but are regularly late into the classroom.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Fire safety and equipment checks are carried out regularly; there are two first aiders available and there is appropriate provision for pupils who are unwell.
- Although pupils do not have access to mobile phones or the internet for religious reasons, they are aware of the dangers. They have a good knowledge of road safety and the many pupils who cycle to school all wear helmets.
- All safeguarding requirements have been met and all staff have received or are booked on appropriate training. They are aware of what to do if they have concerns about a pupil. The designated lead for child protection is the headteacher of the adjacent primary school who is readily available; he visits the school daily in his role as chol coordinator.
- The premises are secure and the exterior is adequately lit at night. Risk assessments have been carried out for off-site activities such as physical education and school trips.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The majority of lessons in both kodesh and chol are well-paced and retain the interest of pupils. This enables them to make good progress in these lessons. In a few lessons, however, pupil involvement flags and there is some minor deterioration in behaviour, to which teachers do not respond consistently. This is particularly the case in a small number of lessons where the work is not pitched at a level that challenges pupils of different ability throughout the lesson.
- Teachers are, on the whole, skilled at directing oral questions to pupils on the basis of their ability. They are careful not to discourage pupils who give incorrect answers. However, some questions require only single word answers and sometimes pupils are not given the opportunity to complete their answers or elaborate on them.
- In English and mathematics, pupils are given written work appropriate to their level of ability, which enables more-able pupils to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the topic while less-able pupils are supported in developing basic skills. In other subjects, however, written work is at times based on worksheets or copying notes which does not provide sufficient challenge for the different abilities of pupil.
- In most subjects, marking consists of ticks and sometimes praise. There is little to show pupils how they can improve their work or what their next steps should be. In some subjects, work is only intermittently marked. Most pupils clearly take pride in their work. Their exercise books in both kodesh and chol indicate good understanding of the lessons and often show evidence of considerable effort. Written work is generally neat; where this is not the case, it is seldom commented on.
- Although there are schemes and plans for all chol subjects, these are not followed consistently other than in English and mathematics. Whilst teaching in other subjects at times deviates from agreed plans, pupils produce good quality work, for example, in art and design technology.
- Assessment of students' progress is insufficiently standardised and consistent in chol subjects other than English and mathematics. However, teachers are aware of how pupils are progressing and report it in general terms to the acting headteacher and to parents.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The achievement of pupils requires improvement because the quality of teaching does not always ensure that pupils of all abilities make the progress of which they are capable.
- The school has developed comprehensive assessment and record keeping systems for kodesh subjects. These records are reviewed weekly by the acting headteacher and are used to identify pupils in need of extra support. This support has been effective in allowing them to keep up with the rest of the class.
- Teachers in English and mathematics also maintain detailed records. They have accurately identified that pupils lack some underpinning knowledge on entry to the school and have effectively taken action to

develop basic skills. Although this means that pupils are sometimes working at levels below that expected for their age, they are making good progress and teachers anticipate that they will reach an appropriate standard to be entered for GCSE examinations in Year 10. They regularly assess pupils' knowledge and understanding to enable them to set appropriate work.

- The school does not use any standardised tests and therefore is unable to compare the achievement of pupils with either national or local norms. As this is a new school, pupils have not yet been entered for external examinations. Teachers, therefore, do not know accurately how effective their teaching is in ensuring that pupils progress at rates comparable to those in other schools.
- However, internal assessment records indicate that most pupils have made good progress in most aspects of both kodesh and chol since entry to the school. Members of staff who also teach in other schools have carried out informal comparisons which suggest that progress is comparable to similar schools in the area.
- The available inspection evidence indicates that the majority of pupils are making good progress from their various starting points in English and mathematics. However, overall achievement across the full range of subjects studied requires improvement based on accurate continuous assessment and review of pupils' progress.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

Unique reference number	140036
Inspection number	443025
DfE registration number	355/6000

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted 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 faith school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Ahavas Torah Boys Academy Ltd
Chair	Rabbi Yaakov Pines
Headteacher	Rabbi S Rabi
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,840
Telephone number	07591 160703
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	admin@ahavastorah.org.uk

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