

Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadass School

98 Clapton Common, Clapton Common, London, E5 9AL

Inspection dates 4–6 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This is a good school because

- Good teaching ensures that pupils acquire knowledge and skills quickly and provides a variety and breadth of suitable learning experiences. Pupils make good progress in their literacy and numeracy skills and achieve well.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make outstanding progress which serves them well as they move through the school.
- Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This helps them to blossom into caring, considerate young citizens who behave extremely well and display exemplary British values.
- The good leadership, management and governance have ensured that teaching and achievement have improved since the previous inspection, and that procedures to ensure the safety of pupils remain outstanding.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes the pace of lessons can be a little slow and not all pupils make good progress in every lesson. In addition, marking does not consistently give pupils specific feedback on how they can improve their work or give them opportunities to respond to marking and feedback.
- The procedures for the monitoring of teaching and learning are not rigorous enough in giving feedback to teachers, and are not linked well enough to follow up observations and professional development. In addition, performance management procedures are not fully embedded for all staff.

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

- The inspection was conducted with one day’s notice.
- The inspectors observed 25 lessons in all key stages and scrutinised samples of pupils’ work in many subjects.
- Discussions were held with governors, the *menahel* (head of Jewish studies), the headteacher, middle leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and a representative group of pupils and parents.
- School policies, documents and records were perused and discussed.
- The inspectors took account of the results of surveys from 55 staff and 177 parents.

Inspection team

Jonathan Yodaiken, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Nathaniel Lieberman	Additional Inspector
Usman Mapara	Additional Inspector
David Smith	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadass School is an independent *Charedi* (strictly orthodox) Jewish boys' school, founded in 1973 and situated in the heart of the Jewish community in Hackney, North London.
- Most of the boys belong to the Belz Chasidic community and the majority of boys speak Yiddish as their first language with *Kodesh* (Jewish studies) taught in Yiddish. *Chol* (secular studies) are taught in both English and Yiddish.
- The school is open six days a week, from Sunday to Friday, and the majority of time is spent on the teaching of *Kodesh* studies. Most *Kodesh* lessons provide a cross-curricular input, whereby many *Chol* curriculum targets are met.
- The school is guided by the principles of Torah (Jewish law) and rooted in the ethos of Torah values, which aim to educate the boys to become self-motivated, productive members of British society, who embody British values and blossom into outstanding citizens.
- The school was last inspected in October 2010, and a material change inspection took place in May 2014, when the school was granted registration for 520 pupils between the ages of three and 16 years of age. This was subject to the designated person named in the child protection policy updating his advanced training. This top-up training has now taken place. Currently, there are 533 pupils on roll. Eight pupils have statements of special educational needs. There are 76 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The school's main premises are at 98, Clapton Common. Pupils in the top three classes within Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are being taught at the Lampard Grove premises which offer a superb purpose built setting. The school is now in the middle of a major building project which, when completed, will provide 27 purpose built classrooms. In the interim, pupils on the Clapton Common site are being taught in high quality 'portacabins' which can comfortably house the current number of pupils on roll.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the quality of teaching so that all pupils make accelerated progress by:
 - ensuring that teachers provide appropriate challenge and pace for all pupils in all lessons
 - ensuring that marking of pupils' work identifies more specifically what pupils need to do to improve their work and that they have regular opportunities to respond to marking and feedback.
- Further improve leadership and management by:
 - embedding a more formal and systematic approach to lesson observations which provides guidance on how the quality of teaching can be improved and which is linked to follow-up observations and appropriate professional development
 - adopting a systematic approach to performance management for all staff linked to time-related targets.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The quality of leadership and management is good because senior leaders, middle leaders and teaching staff have high expectations for pupils' achievement and personal development. The school's senior leaders are aware of the developments required to move the school forward at an accelerated pace. The development plan identifies challenging areas for improvement, together with areas for implementation which can be quickly acted upon. While teaching is good overall it is not sufficiently consistent to ensure outstanding achievement.
- The *menahel* and headteacher work harmoniously together to ensure that pupils are provided with a suitable range of learning experiences and activities. The morale of staff is high due to the support provided by the *menahel* and headteacher, and the opportunities for staff training provided at the school.
- The excellent relationships established between staff and pupils enable pupils to develop their self-confidence and to recognise that success is achievable. This makes a strong, positive contribution to pupils' outstanding behaviour and personal development.
- British values are continuously being reinforced within *Kodesh* and *Chol* lessons and pupils are very involved in charity work. Pupils are encouraged to develop an understanding and respect for differences of belief and culture through discussions, as part of the *Kodesh* curriculum and in citizenship lessons.
- The school's policies include a clear statement about the requirement for a non-partisan approach to any controversial political, religious or lifestyle issues in the curricula, as proscribed by the Torah.
- The school's leaders work effectively with external agencies, both in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, appropriately skilled staff are provided to enable pupils to overcome their barriers to effective learning.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. As a result, pupils are reflective, caring and display a very positive attitude towards learning, with a real thirst for knowledge. One parent reported, 'My child cried when he heard he was on holiday from school.'
- The *menahel* and headteacher are visible in and around the school and take an active role in classroom activities and particularly in the ongoing assessments which take place throughout the school. These assessment strategies provide the school with a clear insight as to which pupils are struggling and may need additional support. However, the assessment work would be further enhanced by the use of a computer generated assessment tool which could help to present these data in a visual way, plotting the progress of each pupil and class over time.
- The school's actions since the last inspection have brought about improvements in many areas, including enhancing the premises and early years provision.
- The school works well with parents and carers who fully support the work of the school, as demonstrated by the very positive comments of the 11 parents interviewed and the overwhelmingly positive response to all aspects of the school inspection questionnaire completed by 177 parents.
- Monitoring the quality of teaching takes place on a regular basis. However, the school does not have a systematic and formal approach to lesson observations, where targets for teachers and areas for development are followed up in a rigorous way and linked to appropriate professional development.

■ The governance of the school:

Governors are knowledgeable about the school and the quality of teaching and are committed to driving improvement forward. While they are fully supportive of the school, they are equally determined to hold it to account and do so effectively.

The governors have ensured that all the independent school regulations are met, including those pertaining to the premises and accommodation, pupils' welfare, health and safety, information for parents and carers, and the complaints procedure. Indeed, the Lampard Grove site, which houses the top three classes, provides state of the art accommodation. The ongoing building project, to provide a purpose built 27 classroom block, is very impressive and has come about through the dedication and resourcefulness of the governors.

The governors are at the cutting edge of *chareidi* education and are leaders in developing cross-curricular work from *Kodesh* subjects. This expertise has been shared with other schools.

Governors have supported the headteacher in introducing teachers' performance management.

However, these procedures need now to be embedded for all staff and linked to time-related targets.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**Behaviour**

- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils are well behaved at all times and say that behaviour in the school has always been so. This has a very positive impact on their learning and their academic achievement.
- Pupils display exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and a real joy in coming to school. As a result, attendance is excellent with little unauthorised absence. Good manners and courtesy characterise pupils' everyday approach and pupils are always willing to help.
- In class, pupils demonstrate an unrelenting determination to succeed and are often paired, which encourages them to work closely together. They demonstrate very high standards of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and provision in this regard is very effective. The school behaviour policy identifies rewards and sanctions that could be used, but these are hardly ever required because pupils are so well behaved and self-motivated.
- During the inspection, pupils were extremely polite and respectful to the visitors, demonstrating curiosity about the inspection process and volunteering positive information about the school and their experiences therein. Pupils say that they appreciate the care of the teachers and camaraderie of their classmates. It is quite the norm for teachers to telephone or visit when a pupil is unwell.
- Parents and carers report that behaviour at the school is outstanding and that the highly effective nurturing environment of the school is instrumental in preparing pupils for moving on. Many said that they could not wish for a better school because of the opportunities it provides for their children.
- Personal development is outstanding. The themes of *Kodesh* lessons constantly remind pupils of their moral responsibilities. Pupils learn to respect the views of other and gain tolerance and understanding of people from other backgrounds. This ensures that pupils know the difference between right and wrong and develop self-confidence. They learn about their own religion and heritage and gain information about others from different backgrounds, in this country and abroad. They take part in many charity events and raise money for different causes. Around school, pupils develop much awareness of taking responsibility by leading prayers, organising events such as Purim spiels (performing short sketches) and acting as 'big buddies' by looking after younger boys.
- Through the subjects of personal, social, health education and citizenship, pupils learn about the public institutions and services in England. Regular visits to the school by local police community support officers and fire service personnel help pupils develop an appreciation of their work.
- Partisan political views are not tolerated, whether in attendance at the school or when pupils are taking part in extra-curricular activities organised by the school. When political views are presented to pupils, the school ensures that they are presented with a range of opposing views within a Torah perspective.
- All staff are keenly aware of the need to imbue pupils with British values. There is a very effective British Values policy, and display throughout the school demonstrates the high priority which the school puts into this important area. Display includes a focus upon character traits such as humility, honesty, kindness, empathy, fairness and gratitude, all within the context of how the Torah defines them. In several classes during the inspection, teachers discussed with pupils the importance and majesty of the Queen and the great respect which we must display towards her. The study of the democratic process of government was evidenced during discussions with pupils and in pupils' books.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Arrangements for the recruitment of staff, training of staff in safeguarding, fire safety and first aid are excellent and are implemented and reviewed thoroughly. Supervision levels are good and the site is secure with entry to the school buildings being closely monitored. Pupils confirm that they feel very safe at school. They have good relationships with staff and pupils are confident that they can approach teachers if they have any concerns. Good communication between the *Kodesh* and *Chol* staff means that any matters relating to pupils' welfare, health and safety are addressed effectively.
- The school's anti bullying policy is effective and pupils state that bullying is not a problem at the school. Pupils demonstrate a good awareness of different forms of bullying. They learn how to deal with potential bullying and harassment during lessons on developing good *middos* (character traits). An example of this *middos* development is a Year 6 lesson where the key focus is upon altruistic Torah acts of kindness, such as returning lost property and developing empathy for those less fortunate.
- Parents and carers report that their children feel very safe at school and that the leadership and management of the school correctly treat the safeguarding of pupils as a high priority and act effectively to keep pupils safe.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good in both *Kodesh* and *Chol* lessons and enables pupils to make good progress from their varying starting points. Teachers know their pupils well and the school provides effective care and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, often outside the classroom. This support includes specialist input in speech therapy, play therapy and occupational therapy. The curriculum is divided into two parts; *Kodesh* is taught predominantly in the morning and *Chol* in the afternoon.
- In the primary and secondary schools, in the majority of lessons, the pace is good and lessons are presented in a way which encourages pupils to reflect and analyse. This is exemplified within a Year 11 *Gemoroh* lesson when pupils were gripped by the thrust and parry of analytical discourse and debate, and in a Year 6 science lesson where pupils carried out a scientific investigation into how liquids with different densities have different properties and uses.
- Pupils say that 'teachers make sure we learn everything we need to know in different subjects. The work is just right and isn't too easy or too hard'.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and teachers are generous with praise. Teachers display good subject knowledge and enthuse their pupils.
- Basic skills in English are taught well. For example, there are many opportunities in different lessons and activities for pupils to develop their reading skills. Basic skills in mathematics are taught very solidly. For example, mathematical concepts are frequently explained to pupils and they are set many problems from text books until they firmly understand the principles involved. This work is then reinforced within *Kodesh* lessons and ensures that pupils are well prepared for their future.
- However, in the few lessons which are less successful, the pace is too slow and pupils are not all challenged sufficiently, according to their levels of attainment, because questioning does not ensure that all pupils are extended.
- The *Kodesh* curriculum covers a wide variety of subjects, for example *chumash* (bible), *davening* (prayers), *Gemoroh* (Talmud), *halochah* (Jewish law), *kriah* (reading), *hashkofo* (Jewish philosophy), *Sedra* (weekly portion of the Torah) and *yediah klolis* (Jewish general knowledge). Some aspects of the *Kodesh* curriculum are taught outstandingly well, for example within *Gemoroh* lessons which ensure that pupils' knowledge and skills are built upon very impressively year on year. An example of this outstanding teaching was seen in a Year 11 *Gemoroh* lesson when pupils were gripped by the thrust and parry of analytical discourse and debate. Not all lessons are outstanding because they do not always challenge all pupils to the full.
- In addition, the *Kodesh* curriculum incorporates many elements of the required areas of learning, such as mathematics, science, phonics, history and geography. A good example of this cross-curricular work was in a Year 5 Talmudical studies lesson, in which the mathematical skill of simplifying fractions was reinforced. Pupils hone their linguistic skills by debating Talmudical study concepts in front of their peers. Pupils in lower classes also have opportunities to be interactive through arts and craft activities connected to the *Sedra*.
- The *Chol* curriculum is good with English, mathematics, science and physical education being taught as discrete subjects. All other subjects are taught in a cross-curricular way. With the help of an external consultant, the school has drawn up detailed curriculum guidance in all subjects that identifies how the required areas of learning specified by the independent school regulations are covered. These documents make specific reference to how skills outlined in National Curriculum programmes of study are promoted and developed within pupils' *Kodesh* learning and in discrete *Chol* lessons.
- Although the quality of marking pupils' work has improved since the last inspection, it is still not consistently good enough across all year groups and subjects in giving specific advice on the next steps pupils need to take for improvement. In addition, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to respond to marking and feedback when next steps are identified.
- Accurate assessment is recorded in individual files and is used to help plan lessons. Particularly impressive is the use of agreed criteria in the assessment of *Kodesh*. However, these assessment data need to be presented visually year on year for each pupil and class using computer generated graphs and tables in order to facilitate analysis.

The achievement of pupils is good

- All the evidence indicates that achievement is good because teaching is good. Teachers provide pupils with clear support and guidance in different subjects, *Kodesh* and *Chol*. Pupils enjoy their learning experiences very much. Representative views from pupils included, 'We have lots of enjoyable things to

do every day in lots of activities.'

- The great majority of pupils start at a low level of development in *Chol*. This is particularly so for English which is taught as a second language for most pupils. As pupils go through primary school they develop their literacy and numeracy skills well because basic skills in these subjects are taught in an organised fashion, building on skills and knowledge year by year. When pupils leave school they attain standards which are commensurate with pupils of their age, as evidenced by internal assessment.
- Pupils' progress in *Kodesh* is good. Particularly impressive is the outstanding progress made in *Gemoroh*, where pupils display a high level of understanding and knowledge.
- Pupils read daily in *Kodesh* lessons, and within literacy, and develop a love for reading from a tender age. They are also provided with many good opportunities to develop their speaking, listening and writing skills in other subjects as well as English. An example of this is the Year 8 Jewish history project on the Jews of York throughout the ages and what pupils can learn from this.
- Pupils attain high standards in music, as demonstrated by the high quality of the choir; their singing in three or four part harmony is of a particularly high quality. Work seen in art illustrates that pupils attain a high standard in this subject.
- All groups of pupils make good gains, including the eight pupils with statements of special educational needs who benefit greatly from the specialist input provided at the school. Evidence in pupils' workbooks, school records and from discussions with staff and pupils confirm this. However, not all pupils make good progress in every lesson because the pace of lessons can be slow and not all pupils are being challenged.
- The school prepares pupils extremely well for proceeding to *yeshivos* (Talmudical colleges), as is evidenced from the fact that pupils are able to enter the *yeshiva* of their choice.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Children are happy and very well cared for. They develop outstanding attitudes to learning. For example, in a mathematics lesson they listened very carefully to the teacher, following his lead in repetitively counting up to 10. They could hardly wait to use the outdoor playground to consolidate their ability to count accurately by way of making big steps inside numbered circles.
- Records of children's starting points show that children start school with a low level of development. For most children, English is taught as a second language, with Yiddish being spoken at home. All the evidence indicates that they make outstanding progress within the Early Years Foundation Stage and develop the key skills needed to make a good start in Year 1. All groups of children make equally outstanding progress, whether more able or those with special educational needs.
- This is because teaching is outstanding and children are expected to make rapid progress in their basic skills in communication, reading and writing. Adults lead phonics sessions well by telling stories and providing activities linked to work on letters and sounds. Hebrew reading is also taught through a phonic approach, which reinforces children's phonic skills exceptionally well. Parents are rightly delighted with how quickly children learn to read.
- The learning environment is attractive and stimulating, and a recently designed outdoor play area is effectively used as an outdoor classroom. Generous staff to pupil ratios facilitate children's active participation in planned sessions. Frequent meetings and support from the Hackney Learning Trust ensure that all staff use recent training and new initiatives to benefit the children's development. Safeguarding policies are implemented rigorously.
- Parents and carers are well informed through regular newsletters and discussions with staff. The school conducts a parental survey regularly in which parents express how delighted with the Early Years Foundation Stage they are and that their children feel safe.
- Staff records of children's progress are comprehensive and relate to the early learning goals. This enables them to evaluate progress over time and helps them to plan activities accurately. However, parents are not as involved in this evidence gathering process as they could be.
- Discussions with the Head of Early Years and class teachers indicate that the school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development. This is underscored by the very comprehensive written self-evaluation of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Staff performance management procedures are well embedded and an appropriate level of qualifications has been achieved by staff.
- Good progress has been made since the last inspection and leadership and management of the early years are now outstanding.

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	100294
Inspection number	422689
DfE registration number	204/6331

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	Orthodox Jewish
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	533
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Moreshet Hatorah Limited
Chair	Rabbi J Baumgarten Mr A Klein
Headteacher	Rabbi C Silbiger
Date of previous school inspection	October 2010
Telephone number	0208 800 6599
Fax number	0208 802 9080
Email address	klein@belzlondon.com

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Store St
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