

# Pardes House Grammar School

Hendon Lane, Finchley, London N3 1SA

**Inspection dates** 12–14 November 2014

**Overall effectiveness** **Good** **2**

Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good school.

- The newly appointed senior leadership team have a clear vision for the school. They, together with the proprietor and governors, are ensuring that the school continues to improve.
- Students achieve well and make good progress as a result of good teaching. They often reach standards that are at least one or two years ahead of their contemporaries.
- Staff thoroughly enjoy working at the school. All parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire said they would recommend the school to other parents and carers.
- Students are polite and tolerant towards each other and members of staff. They behave well both in and out of classrooms.
- The stimulating blend of Jewish and secular subjects ensures students are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Governors monitor the work of the school well. They offer both challenge and support to leaders and have a good grasp of the school's strengths.
- The proprietor, governors and senior leaders have ensured that all the Independent School Standards are met.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Not all teachers give students work that challenges them enough, particularly the most able.
- Teachers' questioning does not always deepen students' understanding, particularly in secular subjects.
- Marking does not always provide students with detailed enough advice on how to improve their work.
- Information on students' progress is not always presented clearly enough, so that any variation in performance can be quickly ironed out.
- The coaching programme to improve teachers' skills is underdeveloped.
- Middle leaders are not directly involved in improving the quality of teaching in their subjects.

### 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 took place with one day’s notice.
- The inspectors observed 21 lessons or parts of lessons. They held informal discussions with two groups of students.
- There were 23 responses to the online survey, Parent View. The inspector considered 14 responses to the staff questionnaire, and met with the Chair of the Governing Body and co-chair, the headteacher and senior staff.
- The inspectors reviewed key documents and policies and scrutinised the school’s information about students’ attainment and progress.

## Inspection team

David Scott, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Chanan Tomlin

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Pardes House Grammar School is an independent day school situated in Finchley, North West London. It provides secondary education, both religious and secular, for Jewish Orthodox boys, aged 11 to 16 years.
- The school is registered to admit 220 students. At the time of the inspection, there were 153 students on roll.
- There are no students with a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is below average.
- The school was founded in 1972 and is currently located in a Grade 1 listed building, which presents a number of challenges in terms of maintenance and repair.
- The school was last inspected in January 2011, when it received a 'light-touch' inspection, and was judged to be good.
- The school aims to promote strong 'academic achievements in both secular and religious studies' to put 'great emphasis on the social, moral and spiritual well-being of the students, whilst affording them the skills to interact with the wider community and show respect for, and value the outlook of others'.
- Both Jewish religious studies (*Kodesh*) and secular subjects (*Chol*) are taught in English. There is a headteacher and deputy headteacher for both Jewish studies and secular studies. The school is open six days a week from Sunday to Friday.
- Since September 2014, the school uses one off-site training provider, Fusion, based in Golders Green. This provides Years 9, 10 and 11 students the opportunity to study work-related courses, such as web-design and film-making.
- Some Year 8 and Year 9 students are entered early for GCSE examinations in mathematics. The large majority of students sit their GCSEs in Year 10 and enter AS and A2 examinations in Year 11.
- The vast majority of students continue their education in Yeshivot (Talmudical Colleges) in the United Kingdom.
- The four members of the senior leadership team have been in post since September 2014, all of whom were internal appointments.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and achievement further by:
  - increasing the consistency in marking so that all students receive detailed feedback on how to improve their work
  - using questioning more effectively to deepen students' knowledge and understanding, particularly in their secular subjects
  - ensuring teachers regularly provide activities that are challenging, particularly for the most able.
- Strengthen leadership and management still further by:
  - ensuring that information on students' progress is presented clearly so that any variation in performance can be ironed out quickly
  - formalising and intensifying the coaching programme for teachers to improve their teaching skills
  - developing the middle leaders so that they are more directly involved in improving the quality of teaching in their subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The newly formed senior leadership team have set out a clear vision for the future of the school. In a very short space of time, they have strengthened existing systems and introduced new ones. For example, a new system for tracking students' progress has been introduced since September and is already proving effective. The system can now pinpoint when a student is falling behind, so that appropriate support can be given to ensure he is soon back on track. However, it is too soon to judge the full impact of some of the new initiatives.
- The leadership of the school is shared at all levels, both formally and informally. As a result, staff have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve. Staff care deeply about all the students in the school, and as a result of good teaching and pastoral care, students behave and achieve well.
- Procedures for setting targets for teachers have been strengthened and are designed to identify strengths and eliminate weaknesses. Targets are now set based on students' performance, which subsequently inform any decisions regarding increases in teachers' pay.
- Staff, parents, carers and students are wholeheartedly supportive of the new leadership of the school. As one student reported, 'I am so grateful for all the help and support I have received from the headteacher and deputy headteachers.'
- The broad and balanced curriculum provides a strong platform for learning. The impressive range of secular subjects (*Chol*) complements the Jewish religious studies (*Kodesh*) well. Since the last inspection provision for the arts and work-related courses has been strengthened. Students are now able to take courses in music, Safrus (Jewish Calligraphy), web-design and film-making. These, together with trips and residential visits, ensure that students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is successfully promoted through visits from expert speakers and regular opportunities for prayer and reflection. Tolerance of others, including their religious beliefs and social mores, is a hallmark of the school's ethos, which ensures there is no form of extremism permitted.
- Staff, students and governors are well aware of the challenges the school buildings present. Leaders take appropriate action to ensure students are safe and that all learning areas are suitable. Plans to make further improvements are already at an advanced stage.
- Staff are given many opportunities to undertake well-considered training, both during the school day and off site. Senior leaders regularly monitor the quality of both *chol* and *kodesh* teaching. However, middle leaders are not directly involved in the monitoring of their subject areas, and the coaching programme to improve teachers' skills is underdeveloped.
- Relationships with parents, carers and the local community are a strength of the school. All parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, said they would recommend the school to other parents and carers. Students also commented on how swiftly the school communicates with their parents and carers.
- The school's complaints policy is implemented effectively and is available on request. It ensures that the views of all members of the school community are listened to.
- Arrangements for safeguarding meet current requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**

The proprietor and governors have ensured that the school meets all Independent Schools Standards so that it provides an appropriate and safe place to educate students.

Membership of the governing body is drawn from a range of different walks of life and as a result, brings a wealth of expertise and experience. They have a good understanding of the information about students' performance and how it compares with that for local schools. However, some information is not always presented clearly enough to make comparisons between different groups of students.

The Chair of the Governing Body and co-chair visit the school frequently, view lessons via CCTV and check homework diaries. They have a very good understanding of the strengths of teaching. They are also copied into email communications with staff so that they are able to offer both challenge and support to leaders, as appropriate.

Governors are very knowledgeable about the arrangements for setting targets for teachers. They are committed to ensuring that good performance, linked to students' progress, is rewarded. Equally, they have not shied away from holding difficult conversations when performance has required

improvement.

Governors have an excellent grasp of the school's financial position. They monitor expenditure very carefully and have been active and successful in raising funds for the school.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. They enjoy attending this warm and friendly school. As one student reported, 'This school is just like a family environment.'
- Students behave well both in and out of classrooms. They are polite and respectful towards adults and they have a very clear understanding of what is expected of them.
- In this caring school community respect and tolerance are promoted well and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Students are fully aware of the different types of bullying that can occur, including name calling and racist and homophobic comments. They were quite clear that these did not occur in their school, but said there is always a member of staff they could tell, if need be.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because not all students have the necessary skills to work on their own and are sometimes over-reliant on adults to prompt and support their learning.
- Fixed-term exclusions are extremely rare and there has only been one in the last year.
- Students attend well and their levels of attendance are above those in maintained secondary schools.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students report that they feel very safe, secure and well cared for. This is because of the high staff presence around the school site, a security guard on duty at the school gate and CCTV surveillance.
- Students have a good understanding of how to stay safe using the internet and smartphones, particularly while at home. The school has very strict filtering systems that only allow access to certain authorised sites.
- While some classrooms are in need of redecoration, they are litter and graffiti free.
- Students gain a mature appreciation of British institutions and the law as well as other cultures through personal, social and health education (PSHE), *Kodesh* studies, Sufrus and music. For example, in the Torah there is a specific commandment relating to how you should look after your health. This is discussed and explained often and is demonstrated in the school's improved provision of hot and nutritious food, available at lunchtimes.
- All parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, thought the school cared extremely well for their son.

## The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good. Relationships between staff and students are extremely positive and supportive, which enables them to achieve well.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to set work at the correct level and use questioning to deepen students' knowledge and understanding. This was very evident in a *Kodesh* studies lesson, where the teacher and students asked challenging questions of each other in order to clarify difficult concepts in Jewish law. However, this practice is not consistently applied across the school, particularly in *Chol (secular)* subjects.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs receive lots of encouragement and individual attention from teaching assistants and the special educational needs coordinator. As a result, this gives them the skills and confidence to join in classroom discussions.
- Teachers provide students with effective oral feedback on their work in class. However, marking in books is inconsistent across the school, both in *Kodesh* and *Chol* subjects. Students do not receive detailed enough feedback on how to improve their work.
- Students who attend the off-site work-related activities reported that they enjoy learning practical skills. They learn well, and school staff keep a careful eye to ensure students make the progress they are capable of. Similarly, in a Sufrus session, students paid great care and attention to detail not only in the writing of the text on parchment, but also the meaning of Jewish law.
- Teaching is not outstanding because teachers do not always provide activities that are engaging and challenging enough, particularly for the most able.

**The achievement of pupils****is good**

- Students enter the school with above average levels of attainment and as a result, are well prepared for learning. Boys are entered for examinations at least one and often two years earlier than their peers nationally. They make outstanding progress in their *Kodesh* studies and achieve well in their *Chol* subjects.
- In 2014, just under two thirds of students who sat their examinations in Years 8, 9 and 10, achieved five or more good quality GCSEs, including English and mathematics. However, this represented a dip in performance when compared to the previous two years. This was due to all students being entered for examinations, irrespective of whether they met the entry requirements. This decision has now been reversed and students are now only entered for examinations if they demonstrate they have the necessary skills to achieve at the higher levels.
- Of the 18 students who entered Year 11 in 2013, 16 successfully completed two or more A levels. Of this group, two thirds achieved a grade C or above, with half gaining A and B grades. Of the large entry subjects, students performed particularly well in mathematics, English language and Biblical Hebrew. Performance in business studies, AS mathematics, government and politics and physics was less impressive.
- Overall the most able students achieve well, with a number gaining an A-level qualification by the end of Year 10. However, at both GCSE and A level, across a range of subjects, they do not achieve as many of the high grades as they should. This is why achievement is not outstanding.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers in the school. This is because of the strong pastoral support and care they receive together with timely advice from teaching assistants and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Students who attend off-site training courses in web-design and film-making make good progress. Procedures for checking their attendance, punctuality and behaviour, including risk assessments, are in place.

## 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	101385
<b>Inspection number</b>	442984
<b>DfE registration number</b>	302/6084

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary school
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	153
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Moishe Lisser
<b>Chair</b>	N/A
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rabbi Lev
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 January 2011
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£6,750
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8349 4222
<b>Email address</b>	office@pardesgrammar.co.uk



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