

Torah Vodaas

Julian Headon House, West Hendon Broadway, London NW9 7AL

Inspection dates

1–3 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that there are effective systems in place to monitor the progress of pupils.
- The proprietors and governors do not fully understand the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on the pupils' progress.
- The roles of the governing body to bring about continuous improvements are not sufficiently developed.
- Subject leaders are yet to be appointed to check pupils' progress more regularly across the curriculum.
- Pupils' attainment in writing is not as strong as in mathematics and reading.
- The quality of teaching and learning does not ensure that pupils make good progress from their various starting points.
- The most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged on occasions so that they make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not consistently make good use of resources to support pupils' learning.
- Leaders do not ensure that teachers apply the school's marking policy consistently.
- The school's work on promoting diversity is not yet effective in preparing pupils well for life in modern Britain.

The school has the following strengths

- The quality of teaching is good in the Reception classes and children make good progress.
- Pupils make good progress in the Kodesh curriculum because teaching is good.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance is high.
- Staff are very supportive of leadership and the morale in the school is high.
- Parents are very supportive of the school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - assessment information is used more effectively to plan for the learning needs of pupils at different starting points
 - the most able pupils are appropriately challenged and are moved on quickly to harder tasks once they have understood what they are learning
 - a wide range of resources, including modern technology, are used to support and reinforce learning.
- Raise pupils' attainment in writing in key stages 1 and 2 by ensuring that they routinely write at length and across different subjects to improve their writing skills further.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - there are effective systems in place to monitor the progress of pupils in reading, writing, mathematics and other subjects
 - governors and proprietors know how well pupils are taught and the progress they make to enable them to hold leaders more accountable for the work they do on raising pupils' achievement
 - governors work with leaders more effectively to bring about continuous improvements
 - the checking of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in different subjects is widened to include subject leaders
 - teachers consistently apply the school's marking policy to help pupils improve their work further
 - the school's work on preparing pupils for life in modern Britain is further developed.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that the teaching at the school:
 - enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught
 - involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time
 - shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons
 - utilises effectively classroom resources of good quality, quantity and range
 - demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and uses information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress

(paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(d), 3(f), 3(g)).

- The proprietor must ensure that a framework for pupil performance to be evaluated, by reference to the school's own aims as provided to parents or national norms, or to both, is in place (paragraph 4).
- The proprietor must ensure that principles are actively promoted which further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures (paragraph 5, 5(b), 5(b)(v)).
- The proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school:
 - demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a))
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(b)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that teaching, learning and assessment are good in the Chol (secular) curriculum.
- The principal and the acting headteacher monitor the quality of teaching across the school and provide Kodesh (religious education) staff and Chol teachers with effective feedback to improve the quality of teaching. However, the checks on the quality of teaching in Chol subjects are not regular enough. Currently, there are no Chol subject leaders in place to ensure that the checks on the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make in different subjects are more regular.
- Leaders are introducing a new system of assessment to track pupils' progress in the Chol subjects. Leaders have, therefore, not been able to monitor pupils' progress closely or accurately enough from their different starting points. Consequently, they are not always able to identify those pupils who fall behind quickly enough for timely support.
- The school has a marking policy to provide pupils with guidance on how to improve their work. However, the marking policy is not consistently applied by teachers.
- The school's work on preparing pupils for life in modern Britain is not yet sufficiently developed. Although pupils learn about respect, they do not have sufficient opportunities to learn about the different cultures and religions represented in Britain. They have limited opportunities to visit different places of worship to widen their understanding of religious diversity.
- The principal, acting headteacher, governors and proprietors are very ambitious for pupils and want the very best for them. Their ambition is shared by all staff.
- Leaders have ensured that the teaching in the Kodesh curriculum is good.
- Leaders, governors and proprietors ensure that teachers' performance management is effective, and that any pay awards for teachers are linked to the quality of their teaching.
- There is an effective programme of staff development for Chol teachers and Kodesh staff to improve their quality of teaching. Teachers have visited another school to observe effective teaching and to reflect on their own practice. The Kodesh staff are also attending a long course on improving their quality of teaching.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, with written policies and schemes of work supporting curriculum plans. Pupils study a range of subjects, including history, geography, design and technology, science and personal, social and health education. The curriculum is further enhanced through educational visits, for example to the British Museum, Woburn Safari Park and the Roman village. There is a range of after-school sports clubs for pupils to enjoy and develop their physical fitness. During the school inspection, pupils thoroughly enjoyed seeing animals brought to the school by a mobile farm. They were able to handle different animals and discuss their experiences, feelings and emotions about the animals with each other. The mobile farm visit was linked to the Kodesh curriculum where pupils have been learning about all the different animals that went into Noah's ark.

- The school works closely and communicates well with parents. The parents that the inspectors met and those responding to the online survey, Parent View, were very supportive of the school's leadership.
- The school promotes British values through learning about elections, parliament and democracy.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The Kodesh curriculum contributes well to pupils' understanding of moral and ethical issues, including recognising the difference between right and wrong and applying this to their own lives. Pupils are reflective about their own beliefs and show respect for other people's beliefs. There is a real sense of enjoyment and togetherness when they sing their prayers in Hebrew.
- Leaders have been successful in creating a culture of respect in the school and ensuring that staff morale is high.
- Leaders have been effective in meeting most of the unmet standards identified in the school's previous inspection on 12 May 2016. The unmet standards were 7, 7(a) and 7(b); 32 (1) and 32(1)(c); 33, 33(b), 33(f), 33(g), 33(j)(i) and 33(j) (ii); 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)). All of these standards are now met except for 34(1), 34(1)(a) and 34(1)(b).
- The school has updated its policy on safeguarding in relation to the most recent guidance. As the school has no website, a hard copy of the safeguarding policy and other policies are made available to parents.

Governance

- The governors and the proprietors are ambitious and want the very best for all pupils. They ensure that there are good links with parents to help pupils succeed at school.
- Governors and the proprietors are not sufficiently secure with their understanding of the progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics and other subjects to hold senior leaders to account for the work they do.
- They do not work closely enough with school leaders to identify the school priorities and so bring about improvements. They do not routinely check and evaluate the school's performance.
- Governors are highly skilled and very knowledgeable and attend appropriate training, for example on safeguarding.
- Decisions made by the governing body on pay awards are closely linked to the quality of teaching for all staff.
- Much work has been done by governors to improve the school building, its security and the playground.

Safeguarding

- Overseen by governors, the arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff have had recent training on safeguarding, based on current guidance. They know the correct procedures to follow if they have concerns in relation to safeguarding. They have a secure understanding of the 'Prevent' duty.
- Leaders ensure that safeguarding documents, records, processes and procedures are successfully implemented to create a safe culture in the school.

- Almost all parents responding to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, stated that their child feels safe at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching over time does not ensure that all pupils make good progress from their different starting points. Owing to the lack of a suitable assessment framework to track the progress of pupils across a range of subjects, teachers do not have accurate information on pupils’ starting points to plan effectively and to ensure that pupils make good progress.
- Occasionally, the most able pupils are not challenged enough through tasks that make them think hard and extend their learning. Sometimes, they have to wait for teachers to give them more challenging tasks. This slows their progress.
- Teachers, including Kodesh staff, do not often make use of a wide range of practical and visual resources, including modern technology, to reinforce learning and to spark pupils’ excitement.
- Pupils’ writing is improving. However, their writing over time has been weaker compared to reading and mathematics. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length and across the different subjects to improve their writing skills. There is sometimes a lack of feedback on how they can improve their writing because the school’s marking policy is not consistently applied.
- Teachers, support staff and Kodesh staff make good use of questioning overall to engage pupils, test their understanding and extend their understanding. However, teachers’ questioning is sometimes not probing enough to extend the thinking of the most able pupils.
- One of the strong features of teaching is the effective working relationships between staff and pupils. This promotes pupils’ engagement in an atmosphere of trust, care and respect.
- Teachers check pupils’ work well in lessons and pick up any misconceptions about the tasks they do. For example, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson, a few pupils used an addition method rather than a subtraction to calculate their answer; this was picked up by the teacher who then gave a timely intervention to move learning on.
- Pupils enjoy reading and their teachers encourage them to read widely and often. The teaching of phonics is improving, and younger readers in key stage 1 use their phonics skills well to read unfamiliar or difficult words. Readers in key stage 2 are generally confident readers and many read for pleasure. Pupils across the year groups, including in Year 1, are particularly confident, enthusiastic and skilful in reading the verses from the Torah in Kodesh lessons.
- In Kodesh lessons, pupils reflected on their experience of interacting with farm animals on the mobile farm visit day through the story of Noah’s ark. This promoted pupils’ spiritual, moral and social development well.
- Mathematics is taught well. Teachers have a secure subject knowledge. Pupils’ work shows that they use a wide range of calculations and operations to solve mathematical problems.
- Pupils particularly enjoy design and technology. There are a range of models they have made from wood, including models of vehicles with moving wheels and various models with moving parts. There were also examples of wooden models made by children in the Reception classes.

- The lower-attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are effectively supported by teachers and support staff. These pupils, including those who are potentially vulnerable, are provided with additional and effective support either in small groups or on a one-to-one basis. This ensures that they make similar progress to their classmates.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are very polite, courteous and friendly. They engage easily with adults, including visitors, and are keen to talk about their learning. They show much respect for adults and each other. Pupils are proud of their school and their achievements.
- Pupils who are potentially vulnerable are provided with effective, individual care and support. This promotes pupils' emotional well-being and helps them to engage better in their learning.
- Leaders have improved links with other agencies to ensure effective support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Overall, pupils are well cared for.
- Pupils that inspectors met said that they 'always feel safe' in school and would not hesitate to approach a member of staff if they had any concerns. They particularly welcome the presence of a 'safeguarding officer' who they can approach if they have any worries about their safety. They also said that the 'pupils' post box' is useful for posting any concerns that they may have; these are followed up by staff.
- Pupils say that the school is a safe place and that bullying is rare. However, they have limited knowledge about how to keep safe when using the internet and what cyber bullying means. They said that this is because they do not have access to computers or other modern technology at school.
- Pupils have very limited responsibilities around the school. They said that they would welcome a school council to represent the views of pupils.
- Nearly all parents responding to Parent View agreed that their child feels safe, is happy and is well looked after at the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils interact well with each other in classrooms and around the school.
- Pupils said that there were a few incidents of name-calling in the past, but behaviour has improved and it is now good. This is reflected in the school's behaviour records, which show very few incidents of poor behaviour. Good behaviour is rewarded by the principal's weekly awards; sanctions are in place and are used if and when necessary.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance is high. Persistent absence is very low and punctuality is good. There have been no recent exclusions.
- Most parents responding to Parent View agreed that the school makes sure that its pupils are well behaved.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress across a wide range of subjects is not consistently strong.
- Inspectors visited all the classes with leaders to observe learning in lessons and looked at pupils' books. Pupils' books and results from classroom assessments of learning show that sometimes they do not make sufficient progress.
- At the end of key stage 2 tests in 2016, pupils' attainment in mathematics, reading and English grammar, punctuation and spelling was above average; their attainment in writing was weaker and below average. Overall, pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education.
- At the end of key stage 1 in 2016, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly average.
- The school has not yet set out for teachers ways to deepen knowledge for the most able pupils in all subjects.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their classmates because they receive good support from teachers and support staff.
- In 2016, the proportion of Year 1 pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check was below average. However, the boys at the school did slightly better in the phonics screening check than boys nationally.
- It is not possible to comment on pupils' progress, including across the year groups, and attainment over time because the school does not have this information.
- The work in pupils' books and pupils' learning in lessons indicate that pupils make good progress in Kodesh.

Early years provision

Good

- A majority of children join the Reception Year with knowledge and basic skills that are typical for their age. Most of the children transfer from the school's Early Years Centre, which is located on the ground floor of the school building. This means that the staff know the children well when they enter the Reception Year. This helps children to settle quickly into routines, ready for learning. Parents are also familiar with the staff and know what to expect. This makes the whole transition process very smooth.
- Children's progress is accurately assessed overall on entry and tracked throughout the Reception Year by the early years leader and staff. The early years leader ensures that the quality of teaching is good and that children make good progress from their different starting points across all areas of learning.
- At the end of the Reception Year in 2016, children's good level of development was above average. Technology was the only area of learning where the good level of development was below average.
- Children's behaviour and attitudes are good and contribute well to the progress they make. Children show independence and make choices about their learning. Staff are extremely caring and are committed to children doing well. They record children's progress during activities and use the information to plan for their next stage of learning.

Staff use questioning effectively to engage children and test their understanding.

- There is a good emphasis on building and extending children's vocabulary. There are ample opportunities for pupils to use and improve their speaking and listening skills.
- Children show good levels of concentration. In one of the Reception classes, a small group of children were thoroughly absorbed in constructing a car using small tools, and they followed instructions carefully from a leaflet. The children were eager to explain what they had done and how they followed the instructions to construct their car.
- There are strong links with parents. Parents are kept informed about their children's progress regularly. There are workshops for parents on what children are taught, including on the teaching of mathematics and phonics, so that they are better able to support their children's learning.
- Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with effective one-to-one support to ensure that they make good progress. There are good links with external agencies to meet the needs of this group of children, including in promoting their well-being.
- Children are encouraged to use pencils and other writing equipment to make marks. There is a greater focus on writing because not enough pupils make more than expected progress in writing.
- The location of the Reception classes on the first floor of the school building makes it difficult for them to have easy access to the outdoor learning area.
- The early years provision is effectively led and managed. The leader and staff track the progress of children carefully to ensure that they make good progress. The leader knows the main strengths of the provision and has an action plan in place to address the areas for improvement.
- The early years staff ensure that children are prepared well for Year 1.
- Safeguarding is effective.

School details

Unique reference number	133553
DfE registration number	302/6115
Inspection number	10021534

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	246
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Torah Vodaas Limited
Chair	Rabbi S Klor
Headteacher	Rabbi Y Feldman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,500
Telephone number	0203 670 4670
Website	No website
Email address	office@torahvodaas.org
Date of previous inspection	11–12 March 2008

Information about this school

- Torah Vodaas is an Orthodox Jewish primary school for boys that opened in September 2001. The school provides Jewish studies and secular education for the local Orthodox Jewish communities.
- The curriculum is divided into two parts: Kodesh (religious education) and Chol (secular studies). The Chol curriculum is based on the national curriculum and all areas of learning are taught. Kodesh lessons are taught throughout the morning and Chol in the afternoon.
- The school aims to give pupils an education that develops their knowledge of and allegiance to Judaism. It also aims to ensure that pupils have full access to the national curriculum subjects and prepares them for secondary school.

- The correct number of pupils in the school from the ages of 5 to 11 is 275, and not 335 as stated in the previous inspection report; this figure incorrectly includes children in the Early Years Centre, which is subject to a separate inspection by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Children's Act 2006. A published report can be found on the Ofsted website. The Early Years Centre is located on the ground floor of the school building.
- Early years consists of two full-time Reception classes.
- Currently there are no pupils known to be disadvantaged or who speak English as an additional language.
- No pupils attend off-site provision.
- The school has no website. However, all the appropriate information, including policies, is made available to parents.
- Currently, there is an acting headteacher of the school after the previous headteacher left the school in July 2016. There are also several new staff at the school, including the special educational needs coordinator and key stage 2 leader.
- The school relocated to the current premises in October 2013, when it received a material change inspection.
- The last standard inspection of the school was in March 2008, when it was judged as outstanding.
- The school received a 'light touch' inspection in June 2011. This inspection judged that the school provided a good quality of education; provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was outstanding; and the arrangements for safeguarding pupils were robust. At that time, all of the independent school standards were judged to be met.
- The Department for Education (DfE), following concerns raised by a number of complaints, commissioned an emergency inspection. This unannounced inspection took place on 12 May 2016. The inspection found that the school was not in compliance with regulatory requirements in relation to some of the independent school standards (ISS), namely under parts 3, 6, 7 and 8.
- Following the emergency inspection and its findings, the school was required by the registration authority to produce an action plan to address the areas for improvement. The action plan was evaluated on 10 August 2016, when it was concluded that the action plan required improvement due to lack of clarity of actions under ISS 8, the quality of leadership in and management of schools. The DfE accepted the action plan with modifications.
- In this inspection, ISS under parts 3, 6 and 7 were met; part 8 remains unmet.

Information about this inspection

- This standard inspection was commissioned by the DfE to take place ahead of the scheduled time. This was to enable the inspector to follow up the findings from the emergency inspection that took place in May 2016 following safeguarding complaints received about the school.
- The school was informed of this inspection on the day before the inspection started. Two inspectors carried out the inspection.
- The inspectors observed learning in lessons in all of the classes. Almost all were joint observations with the principal and the acting headteacher.
- A meeting was held with pupils to discuss their learning and views about the school. Inspectors listened to pupils read in Years 2 and 6 and discussed their reading with them.
- Inspectors scrutinised books, checked the single central register of employment checks on staff, looked at pupils' attendance and behaviour records and the school improvement plan, and examined documents and policies on the curriculum, safeguarding, welfare, and health and safety.
- The inspectors met with senior leaders, managers, staff, parents, governors and proprietors.
- It is not possible to evaluate pupils' progress in reading, writing, mathematics and other subjects over time because the school does not have this information. Although leaders and teachers know what pupils have attained by the end of the year, particularly at the end of key stages 1 and 2, they have not tracked the progress of pupils from their different starting points.
- The inspector considered the 61 responses from parents on Parent View, 19 written comments from parents and 41 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Avtar Sherri, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Dennis Canty	Ofsted Inspector

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