

Etz Chaim School at the Belmont

89 Middleton Road, Crumpsall, Manchester M8 4JY

Inspection dates

12–14 September 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Etz Chaim is a good and improving school.
- After years of having not met the independent school standards, leaders have ensured that the standards are the fundamental basics of the school. All the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders have ensured the balance of kodesh (religious) and chol (secular) studies. This is leading to the successful development of well-balanced pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that all of the protected characteristics stated in the Equality Act 2010 are respected in policies and practice.
- Teaching and learning is given priority. The kodesh and chol teachers support each other and share ideas to improve practice.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and respect their teachers. This allows for a positive learning environment where pupils can achieve.
- Pupils are keen readers and are stimulated by the opportunities to read literary classics.
- Pupils value the opportunities to respond to feedback on their learning.
- Pupils achieve very well given how early they sit their examinations. Standards are particularly impressive in science and mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points in all year groups across the curriculum. Where interventions are necessary, they are effectively made to teaching and planning.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported. They make good progress and are known and understood by all staff.
- Pupils feel safe at the school and are happy. This happiness is shared by parents and staff.
- The curriculum is broad but the design of the curriculum has limited the opportunities for depth. This prevents pupils from reaching the highest standards.
- Pupils' weaker writing skills across the curriculum are preventing them from achieving better than they already do.
- Pupils' contribution to the wider community has been too limited and this prevents the school from becoming the 'beacon' it aspires to be.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Review the design of the curriculum to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to subjects so that the necessary depth can be covered.
- Further develop the opportunities for pupils to contribute to the wider community.
- Strengthen the quality of pupils' writing skills across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, and those responsible for governance, have presided over rapid improvements since the last inspection. The importance of the independent school standards has been acknowledged. Strides have been taken to provide a good standard of education while not losing anything of the distinctive Jewish tradition.
- Leaders have ensured that all independent school standards that were not met at the time of the last inspection have been addressed. The school meets all of the independent school standards.
- Leaders' accurate evaluation and development plans indicate that there is still room for improvement. There is still some way to go until the school is where it wants to be.
- Systems and structures have been put in place to ensure that all staff are held to account. This has been welcomed by teachers. Teaching and learning is a rightful priority. This has allowed for leaders to develop a system to manage the performance and effectiveness of teachers and promote opportunities for professional development.
- Leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. The pupils and their needs are well known to all adults and there are appropriate plans for every pupil. The parents of these pupils are particularly effusive in their praise for the support and provision that is given to their children. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do well at Etz Chaim.
- Leaders have ensured that all policies and practices pay due regard to the Equality Act 2010. All of the protected characteristics are identified and great emphasis is made on the necessity to respect all people, regardless of belief, race, gender or sexual orientation, for example.
- Pupils benefit from a range of extra-curricular activities. This includes opportunities for the pupils to enjoy themselves at the bowling alley and paintballing. Leaders pride themselves on developing balanced pupils and are actively seeking ways to broaden the horizons of pupils while losing nothing of their traditions. British values are promoted throughout the curriculum and no opportunity for wider discussion regarding these values is thwarted. Pupils spoke with ease to inspectors about British values.
- Leaders had established smooth transition arrangements for those new to the school and as pupils leave the school. This allows for a seamless education for pupils.
- The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ofsted to consider, as part of this standard inspection, the school's application to increase the number of pupils on roll from 150 pupils to 250 pupils. The DfE also commissioned Ofsted to visit the new premises scheduled to open in October 2017 to ensure that they met the independent school standards. The new premises still require significant refurbishment. Moving into these premises in their current state would mean that certain independent school standards would not likely be met.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils receive a broad chol curriculum and it covers the range of linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education. Because of the commitment to the kodesh curriculum,

the time dedicated to the chol subjects is limited. Given the changes in the curriculum nationally and its focus on depth, this is hindering pupils from attaining the highest standards. It is also leading to teaching and learning being rushed. Despite this, the pupils still achieve well and this is testament to their hard work and dedication.

Governance

- Governors provide effective governance and hold leaders firmly to account for the quality of education. They are able to do this because there is a breadth of skill and experience across their number.
- Governors have a very clear vision about the purpose of Etz Chaim. They are determined that pupils receive a high-quality kodesh education, which is balanced with qualifications that will allow them to pursue further studies and careers.
- Governors are not afraid to make tough decisions when standards are jeopardised. The well-being of pupils is their primary concern.
- Governors want to see Etz Chaim be a 'beacon school' and are aware that a greater involvement with the wider community is necessary for this to be realised.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet all statutory requirements.
- All adults understand how to keep children safe, what signs to look out for and the processes to follow if they should have any concerns. This is supported by regular training.
- Leaders liaise with parents and other external agencies where appropriate. The school's policies and procedures identify the correct channels of reporting, and effective records are kept.
- Safeguarding practices and policies have regard to aspects such as extremism, radicalisation, sexual exploitation and forced marriages.
- The school does not have a website but has a suitable safeguarding policy that is readily available to parents on request.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Effective teaching is enabling pupils to make good progress. Teachers use the information that they have to plan learning that meets the needs of pupils and their range of abilities.
- Pupils have constructive, harmonious and respectful relationships with their teachers. This allows for pupils to learn in an environment which is conducive to learning.
- The strong questioning skills that are a key feature in the kodesh curriculum are used well in the chol curriculum. This develops the pupils' thinking and oracy skills. Discussions are of high quality because they are underpinned by the secure subject knowledge of well-qualified teachers.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities learn well. This is because their needs are known and teachers have been provided with strategies to support the teaching and learning of these pupils.

- Assessments systems are used appropriately in order to make a difference to the learning of pupils. The information that is collected is used to adapt teaching so that any gaps in pupils' learning are addressed. This means that pupils are making the progress that is expected of them.
- Teachers of kodesh and chol benefit from working together and sharing ideas and initiatives that are proven to work. Pupils told inspectors that they can see improvements in teaching in both aspects of their learning because teachers are adopting strategies that help them.
- Pupils are very positive about the recent improvements to how they receive feedback. They say that they benefit from having time to respond to teachers' feedback and this allows them to improve their work and deepen their understanding.
- Parents take a keen interest in how well their children are learning in their kodesh and chol studies. Inspectors saw many examples of parents communicating with leaders to discuss their children's learning, especially in chol subjects. This is because parents are provided with clear and constructive reports on their children's progress throughout the year.
- Where teaching and learning are less effective, the pace of learning is too quick for some pupils to keep up and instructions can be rushed and unclear. This is often because there is a lot of subject content for teachers to deliver in a very limited amount of time because of how the curriculum has been organised.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' manners are impeccable and they show visitors the utmost respect and warmth. The pupils have brio and verve.
- Pupils demonstrate a strong sense of justice and understanding of right and wrong. This is borne out in their relationships with each other and their teachers.
- Pupils are proud to be British and speak with ease about the values espoused within a democratic and civilised society. Pupils are not naïve to the different characteristics that make up modern life in Britain and insist on respect as the foundation of all attitudes. For example, pupils understand that the make-up of families and relationships can be different to their own.
- Pupils have a range of opportunities to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Visits to parliament and European cities, discussions regarding current affairs, daily life and different religions, and commemorations of Black History Week are all examples of how leaders ensure that pupils' minds and experiences are broadened.
- Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. This includes how to keep safe when using technology. Pupils know whom to speak to if they are concerned or worried.
- Bullying is rare. The pupils consider each other as 'brothers' and any unkind word or action is not tolerated. The pupils have utter confidence that any occurrence of bullying would be dealt with immediately.

- Pupils are taught physical education by a specialist teacher. The skills that they are learning develop their physical well-being and teach them the importance of self-discipline, teamwork and perseverance.
- Pupils' contribution to the wider community has been limited. Leaders have begun to consider ways in which the school community can be more outward-facing and contribute to the needs of others in society at large.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Adults have high expectations for behaviour and the pupils respond accordingly.
- The pupils are enthusiastic and boisterous but they settle to work very quickly. On the few occasions where pupils do misbehave, teachers deal with it quickly and sensitively so that little learning time is lost. Behaviour logs are clear and well kept.
- Pupils appreciate the rewards system and are clear about the consequences of misbehaving. This develops within them an awareness of the correlation between actions and consequences, both positively and negatively.
- Attendance is good. The school responds quickly when pupils are absent and liaises closely with parents. The importance of punctuality is instilled into the pupils as soon as they join the school.
- The incidents of low-level disruption invariably arise from when pupils are unclear about what they are supposed to do in their lessons.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils are entered for public examinations at the end of Year 9 or Year 10. This prevents making comparisons with nationally accredited data. Nonetheless, the standards reached by pupils in both kodesh and chol subjects are very high and demonstrate strong progress from their starting points.
- The standards reached by pupils in mathematics and science are exceptional, given how early the pupils have been entered. This performance has been sustained year on year. The achievement of pupils in English, while still significant for their age, continues to lag behind mathematics and science. This is because of the limited curriculum time afforded to this subject and the weaker writing skills of pupils.
- Pupils join the school with varying starting points and make good progress across all year groups in their kodesh and chol subjects. The progress that pupils make is tracked with the same rigour in both aspects of the curriculum.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. This is because teaching meets their needs and there is good provision to support them to achieve.
- Pupils have a love of reading which stems from their Talmudic studies. Pupils spoke to the inspectors about how much they enjoyed reading the works of Shakespeare and grappling with the concepts and themes found in 'The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde'. The study of poetry and other literary classics exposes the pupils to a variety of themes and issues which they love to explore and debate.

- Pupils receive appropriate guidance for the next steps in their education. While most pupils move on to yeshiva (Jewish religious college) and make their future decisions there, a number of pupils already have a clear understanding of what courses or careers they wish to pursue. A small number of pupils move onto apprenticeships or employment.
- Pupils' writing skills are not as well developed so as to allow them to reach the highest standards in literacy-based subjects. This also affects all aspects of the chol curriculum and has not been given sufficient attention.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 131015 |
| DfE registration number | 352/6053 |
| Inspection number | 10034025 |

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.

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| Type of school | Other independent school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Boys |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 180 |
| Proprietor | Rabbi M Halpern |
| Headteacher | Rabbi E Cohen |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | Voluntary contributions |
| Telephone number | 0161 740 0300 |
| Email address | manager@ec-school.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 24–26 June 2014 |

Information about this school

- Etz Chaim School was established in 1993 in North Manchester as an orthodox Jewish secondary day school for boys, serving a particular strand of the local Jewish religious community. It is located in a large Victorian building on a main road in Crumpsall, Manchester. The school is intending to move to new premises later this term.
- There are currently 180 pupils on roll, aged 11 to 16 years, all of whom speak English and are of White British heritage. The school admits pupils of differing abilities, including those who have special educational and/or disabilities. A small number have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school's last full inspection was in June 2014. An unannounced emergency inspection took place in January 2016. This found that the school was failing to secure appropriate arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and that there was unsuitable accommodation to cater for the medical needs of the pupils. The Department for Education (DfE) requested a focus during this full inspection to check the

school's progress in implementing its action plan to address the issues identified in January 2016.

- The school has submitted a request to the DfE to increase the number of pupils that can be accommodated at the school from 150 to 250. This is in advance of the move to new premises.
- No pupils are educated at alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector toured the school site accompanied by senior leaders. A visit was also made to the new premises.
- Inspectors observed a range of lessons across subjects and across year groups. Pupils' work was reviewed during observed lessons.
- Inspectors spoke with more than 30 pupils from both key stages about their experience of school and their learning.
- Inspectors considered 37 responses to free text and 56 responses to Ofsted's parental questionnaire. There were 16 responses from staff to Ofsted's survey.
- Inspectors met two members of the governing body. Meetings were also held with leaders and members of staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of documentation to check compliance with the independent school standards and to provide other inspection evidence. This included the school's own self-evaluation and development plan; minutes of the governing body meetings; school policies and procedures; and the school's own assessment information. A range of documentation regarding safeguarding was scrutinised, including behaviour and attendance records and bullying logs.

Inspection team

Jonathan Jones, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mavis Smith

Ofsted Inspector

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