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7 February 2018

Mrs Susy Stone
Headteacher
Akiva School
The Steinberg Centre for Judaism
80 East End Road
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Dear Mrs Stone

Short inspection of Akiva School

Following my visit to the school on 30 January 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in October 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection.

The school has a strong ethos characterised by tolerance and responsibility. Pupils' behaviour is thoughtful and kind. Pupils show courtesy and consideration to each other. During lessons, pupils concentrate well and listen carefully. They work hard and help each other. Around the school, they behave safely and are very polite and friendly. Children said that they feel safe at school and that 'it is like a family'. Inclusion for all is central to the school's work.

Pupils enjoy a rich curriculum and like the links made between subjects. The school has a continually evolving personal, social, health and economic education curriculum that seeks to equip children for the challenges of the modern world.

Parents and carers who completed the Parent View survey are extremely positive about the school and all that it offers. Many also wrote to express their appreciation for the difference that you make to their children's lives.

You know exactly what the school needs to do to improve further and you are forthright in your dialogue with those who hold you to account. Recently, you have made well-considered changes to the senior leadership structure. It was evident during the inspection that this has added strength and breadth to the team. Senior leaders are thoughtful, proactive and effective in their work. You have forged a strong partnership with governors. They are highly knowledgeable and provide a

strong level of challenge in their determination that the school should continue to improve. You also work effectively with the local authority, which supports you to review the school's strengths and areas for improvement.

You have been largely successful in addressing the recommendations made at the previous inspection, although some inconsistencies in teaching quality remain. You and your senior team are well aware of the development needs of your staff. Leaders are working to address these in a thoughtful and well-planned way to ensure continued improved outcomes for all pupils.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and that the school meets statutory requirements. The safeguarding policy is comprehensive and clear. Leaders ensure that staff are regularly and thoroughly trained in the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures.

Checks on visitors to the school are carried out with care. Risks are properly assessed, including for pupils' activity online, which has been a focus for the school this year. The school carries out pre-employment checks rigorously. The single central record and safeguarding records are well maintained. This is to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with pupils.

A recent local authority audit of the school's safeguarding procedures, and governors' own monitoring, have further strengthened the school's systems. Pupils said that they feel secure and very well looked after as a result of this.

Inspection Findings

- My first line of enquiry focused on how well teachers promote pupils' progress in writing. In 2017, middle-attaining pupils made less progress in writing than in reading and mathematics. A smaller proportion of this group of pupils made the expected progress from their starting points than found nationally.
- School leaders have sought to identify the reasons for the differences in the progress made by middle-attaining pupils and the others. You have found that there were some variations in the degree to which teachers used assessment information to match work to these pupils' needs. There were differences in the effectiveness of teachers' guidance to pupils on their work.
- You have already secured improvements. During visits to classes, we saw that middle-ability pupils in some classes respond well to teachers' guidance. They edit and redraft their writing, and this leads to strong outcomes. We saw some evidence of routinely careful matching of writing activities to pupils' prior attainment. In classes where this is the case, pupils achieve well. We also saw examples of good writing over time by middle-attaining pupils in their work across curriculum subjects. For example, in history, pupils have written at length about the Greeks and the Great Fire of London.
- You know that work remains to be done to share this good practice and

eliminate inconsistencies so that the progress of middle-attaining pupils in writing improves further and matches that seen in reading and mathematics.

- My second line of enquiry focused on the teaching and learning of phonics. This was because the proportion of Year 1 pupils meeting the expected standard in the national phonics screening check was average, a slight decline on previous years.
- Leaders have a clear plan and have taken action to raise the proportion of pupils attaining the required standard this year. They identified the need to provide pupils with earlier support with phonics than in the past. Leaders have carefully identified gaps in pupils' phonics knowledge. Teachers work to fill these gaps in partnership with parents, using high-quality resources. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Teaching assistants are also knowledgeable, well trained and work confidently with individual pupils or groups of pupils in phonics lessons. They ensure that all pupils are fully included. Selected pupils receive additional support to help them catch up.
- The school's strategies have improved pupils' progress in phonics. Pupils use the skills they have been taught and typically spell complex words accurately. I also found that pupils have a wide vocabulary that they use to good effect in phonics lessons.
- My final line of enquiry focused on provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and how well the school communicates with their parents. This was to evaluate how well leaders fulfil the commitment to parents as set out in the school's information plan for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- You identified the need for additional training for staff in supporting pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This academic year, you have organised training sessions for teachers and teaching assistants on strategies to support pupils' specific needs. Work in pupils' books shows that these strategies are used on a daily basis and ensure equality of opportunity for this group of pupils.
- You communicate effectively with parents. Leaders are in close contact with the parents of selected pupils so that they are well informed about their children's learning and progress.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- existing good practice in the teaching of writing is shared to promote consistently good progress for all groups of pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools

commissioner and the director of children's services for Barnet. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Karen Matthews
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I carried out a range of activities. I held meetings with you, senior leaders and other members of staff. I met with five governors, including the chair and both vice-chairs. I also met with a representative of the local authority. I met with pupils from key stage 2. I visited classrooms with senior leaders across the school to gather evidence about our key areas of enquiry and to look at pupils' work. I considered documents, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and the development plan, information about the use of pupil premium funding, information about the progress made by pupils, and documents relating to safeguarding. I also looked at information on the school's website. I analysed the confidential responses to the online surveys from 33 pupils and 27 members of staff. I also took account of the views of 133 parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including nine free-text responses.