

Shiras Devorah

Woodside Park Synagogue, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8RZ

Inspection dates

12–14 February 2019

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders and the proprietor have not ensured that the independent school standards are met. They do not permit reference to all of the protected characteristics, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, which means that children do not learn to be respectful of difference and diversity.
- Pupils do not make enough progress in secular subjects, including mathematics and English. Standards are often below those expected for pupils of that age.
- The assessment system is not linked strongly enough to pupils' learning and the progress they make over time.
- Leaders do not take sufficient account of pupils' work when monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching.
- Teachers in secular subjects do not make enough use of past learning to plan appropriately challenging activities for pupils.
- Questioning is not used consistently well to challenge pupils' thinking and probe their understanding.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to practise their writing skills in secular subjects or their reasoning skills in mathematics.
- Governors do not offer sharp challenge to leaders about the quality of education provided. They have an over-generous view of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders are beginning to take corrective action to raise pupils' achievement. In this regard, the school has the capacity to improve.
- Pupils' behaviour is consistently good; they are safe and thoroughly enjoy attending school.
- Pupils achieve well in Kodesh subjects.
- Pupils have good opportunities for purposeful reflection about a range of spiritual and ethical issues.
- Parents and staff work well together; they are all very supportive of their school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school does not meet 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?

- Improve leadership and management, by ensuring that:
 - provision is made to promote respect for all of the protected characteristics included in the Equality Act 2010
 - leaders make accurate judgements about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by taking account of pupils' work
 - the assessment system is used to plan work that meets pupils' needs and helps them make strong, sustained progress
 - governors challenge leaders more sharply and consequently gain a more realistic view of the quality of education provided.
- Improve pupils' achievement, by ensuring that:
 - teachers make better use of information about pupils' previous learning when setting activities
 - teachers use questioning more effectively to challenge pupils' thinking and probe their understanding
 - pupils have more opportunities to consolidate their writing skills in secular subjects, and their reasoning skills in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met. Leaders specifically do not permit reference to gender reassignment or sexual orientation. This does not give regard or promote respect for people in these groups and restricts pupils' preparedness for life in modern Britain.
- The school's assessment system relies on a narrow range of information, particularly pupils' attainment in tests. Leaders do not have an accurate view of the progress being made by pupils in different subjects. The system does not help teachers understand where pupils are in their learning or to plan effectively for the next steps in learning.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching and provide some useful feedback for improvement, for instance, the need to check pupils' understanding. However, their view of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress is over generous. This is partly because they do not take account of a wider range of evidence when making their judgement, particularly the quality of pupils' work.
- The Kodesh (religious) curriculum is taught in English and is well thought through. It provides pupils with a good grounding in Jewish history and religious studies. Leaders have expanded the secular subjects to include art, textiles and citizenship. Their improvement plan includes further development of the secular curriculum. For example, leaders are working to improve provision in science and physical education by hiring specialist venues in local schools. Leaders are beginning to identify opportunities where links can be made between Kodesh and secular subjects. When this happens, for example in history and geography, the school's evidence suggests that pupils remember important information for longer.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual and some aspects of their moral development effectively. Opportunities to think about difficult moral and ethical problems are provided in Kodesh and secular subjects.
- Pupils' social and cultural development requires improvement. Leaders have suitable plans in place to teach pupils about other faiths and cultures represented in Britain. However, the impact of these plans cannot yet be seen.
- The school has applied to the registration authority to extend its age range to 11 to 18, and to increase the number of pupils on roll. The school's curriculum plans for a wide range of academic subjects were scrutinised and judged to be suitable. The current building has the capacity to educate in excess of 100 pupils, after some refurbishment. However, in view of the unmet independent school standards, an extension of the age range and increase in pupil numbers are not recommended.

Governance

- The proprietor and governors have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met. They are in breach of their duty to promote respect for all the protected characteristics.
- Governors actively seek additional funds to improve the quality of resources. They have

negotiated the use of additional spaces with the synagogue, such as the provision of a suitable hall for dance and gymnastics.

- Governors talk to leaders about the quality of provision on a weekly basis. However, they have an inflated view of the quality of education provided. This is because governors are over reliant on the analysis and evaluation of pupils' achievement provided by the school's leaders.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors have ensured a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Checks made on newly recruited staff are thorough. Records relating to safeguarding are organised and rigorous.
- Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training. They are clear about the referral system if they are worried about a pupil. All staff use the system well and are highly committed to keeping children safe.
- Staff are vigilant and aware of how to spot signs of abuse and neglect. New staff are swiftly trained and given good guidance with regard to safeguarding.
- Leaders ensure that appropriate advice and support are secured for pupils who may be at risk. The school has clear policies for involving parents.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not question pupils effectively enough to check their understanding or deepen their thinking. Typically, questions posed require only single-word answers. This limits pupils' use of language and their answers require little thought.
- Teachers occasionally give pupils opportunities to complete extended pieces of writing. However, pupils have too few opportunities to plan, draft, improve, edit and present writing for a range of audiences and purposes. Consequently, pupils' literacy skills are not as well developed as they could be.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work in mathematics shows a strong emphasis placed on number work and honing mental arithmetic skills. Problem-solving activities enable pupils to apply the skills they have learned. However, reasoning skills are underdeveloped. This is because pupils have insufficient opportunities to explain their thinking or show how they reached their answers. This limits their ability to work at greater depth.
- Teachers give pupils a lot of individual attention and help with their work. Teachers expect pupils to concentrate and finish tasks in good time.
- The content of lessons, and the way teachers present it, maintain pupils' interest in most subjects. Pupils show enthusiasm for the many historical stories shared with them in Kodesh lessons and they look forward to the next instalment.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Because of the school's stance, pupils are not able to show respect for all of the protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- Pupils show tolerance and understanding for people who have a physical or mental disability. This is because they put themselves into the shoes of such a person and reflect deeply on what the wider implications might be.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are strong. Pupils value their teachers and are proud to be part of their school. Leaders place an emphasis on nurturing pupils' emotional well-being, but this is undermined by restrictions on promoting respect for all the protected characteristics.
- Pupils are confident in discussing different interpretations of religious text. They show pride in the quality and presentation of their work.
- Pupils feel safe at school; there is no evidence of bullying. They know which staff to raise any concerns with. Pupils are supervised well throughout the day and are kept safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils regulate their own behaviour well. They follow well-established routines and rules without having to be reminded.
- Good attitudes to learning are a consistent feature of lessons. Pupils are eager to acquire knowledge and deepen their understanding.
- Pupils are polite; they are respectful to staff and to each other. They are friendly and welcoming to visitors.
- Pupils attend well and enjoy school. Punctuality at the beginning of the day is good; non-attendance is followed up swiftly with a telephone call home on the same day.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress is too variable. Information about pupils' starting points, progress and learning needs is not used well by teachers. This is the case across a range of subjects. As a result, pupils do not achieve well in the secular subjects.
- Pupils learn to write sentences accurately. Most pupils' spelling is accurate. However, pupils' ability to plan and compose a sustained, cohesive piece of writing is limited. This is because they have few opportunities to practise writing in a variety of forms, for example, story writing or letter writing.
- Pupils' mathematics books show that they are competent in multiplication and division. They are becoming fluent in numeracy and can calculate using a range of methods. However, pupils are less adept at using their reasoning skills to attempt more challenging problems in a range of contexts.

- Pupils' learning in the secular subjects is not sufficiently deep. Their understanding of important subject concepts requires improvement. Pupils are beginning to make connections between what they learn in different subjects. In geography, for instance, pupils consider ways of reducing the flooding of rivers by drawing on their knowledge of science. However, these important opportunities to strengthen learning are not embedded across the curriculum.
- Pupils' development in speaking and writing Hebrew is particularly strong. This is partly due to their detailed analysis of important episodes in Jewish history, supported by their careful interpretation of religious text.

School details

Unique reference number	145946
DfE registration number	302/6016
Inspection number	10083773

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	Jewish day school for girls
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 12
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Anthony Adler
Chair	Anthony Adler
Headteacher	Miriam Reich
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,000
Telephone number	020 8381 4513
Website	None
Email address	reich@ic24.net
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Shiras Devorah is an independent day school for girls of Jewish faith, aged from 11 to 12 years. It serves the Jewish Orthodox community of north-west London in the Borough of Barnet. The premises are situated within Woodside Park Synagogue.
- The school is registered to provide a full-time education for up to 40 pupils; currently there are 10 Year 7 pupils on roll.
- The majority of pupils who attend the school have transferred from the proprietor's feeder primary school for girls, Beis Soroh Schneier. The proprietor is also the chair of the governing body.
- There are no pupils with an education, health and care plan.

- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.
- The school does not have a website. Leaders ensure that all school policies are available to parents at the school office.
- This is the school's first full independent school inspection, following its registration in September 2018.
- The school has made an application to the Department for Education for an extension of its age range to 11 to 18, and, hence, an increase in pupil numbers. The feasibility of such a material change was considered as a part of the current inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning in a range of subjects, both Kodesh and secular. The inspector looked at pupils' work in books across a wide range of subjects.
- The inspector had informal conversations with pupils about their learning in lessons.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the head of Kodesh studies and the head of the secular curriculum. The inspector also held a meeting with the proprietor and a member of the governing body.
- The inspector met with a selection of staff to discuss the impact of their work with pupils.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, including school policies, health and safety and safeguarding records, and records of pupils' behaviour, attendance and progress.
- The inspector took account of the nine responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector considered the seven responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Nasim Butt, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - personal, social, health and economic education–

2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act [9];

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor–
 - ensures that principles are actively promoted which–

5(b)(vi) encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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