

Inspection of Bnois Jerusalem Girls School

71, 75–81 Amhurst Park, London N16 5DL

Inspection dates: 10–12 December 2019

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and teachers want pupils to do well. They are improving the curriculum slowly. Subject content remains limited. Pupils are not entered for any external qualifications at the end of Year 11.

We saw pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils are self-aware, manage their own behaviour and enjoy each other's company. Leaders' records of behaviour and bullying indicate that this is usual behaviour and that bullying is rare. However, it was not possible to get pupils' own views of this or ask them about how safe they feel.

Leaders develop pupils' character, through the kodesh and secular subjects. Respect and kindness to others are key aspects of leaders' vision for the pupils. They report that this helps to build a strong sense of community, where staff and pupils care for each other. In the junior department, pupils took part in a project to identify and display each other's positive character traits. This meant that pupils could see themselves as others saw them.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have made some improvements in the quality of education since the last standard inspection, for example in mathematics and careers education. In mathematics, subject plans are in place across the departments. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. The order of activities helps pupils practise mathematical methods and build up their knowledge. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Teachers have strong subject knowledge across the range of subjects. Leaders check teaching regularly and teachers say they feel well supported.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils' conduct. In classes, pupils concentrate, listen attentively and work well together. Children in early years behave well and respond positively to adults. However, teachers' questions usually only require one-word answers, and pupils often speak so quietly that they cannot be heard. Pupils lack confidence in speaking. Teachers do not check what pupils know by asking more probing questions.

Leaders are focused on developing the curriculum and have appointed subject experts to do this. At present, curriculum planning is uneven across the departments. Pupils learn only Jewish history in Years 7 and 8. Across the range of subjects, however, planning is stronger in the senior school. In the junior and infant departments, the focus is on literacy and mathematics. Leaders in these departments are just starting to work on the foundation subjects. The range of physical education activities is limited across the school. Leaders ensure that curriculum plans enable pupils with SEND to learn new knowledge. In the Nursery,

children are well looked after, but the provision for two-year-olds is meagre and not well resourced.

Leaders have introduced phonics, but this is not taught in Reception. So, children in early years are not prepared for Year 1. From Year 1, teachers combine phonics with the 'look and say' method where pupils remember whole words. Older pupils rely on look and say. Leaders say this is the method that parents and carers know and use to help their child at home.

Pupils' spelling is weak because of their lack of phonics knowledge. Leaders have taken steps to compensate for this in the junior department. However, leaders have not addressed the underlying issue, which is weakness in the planned phonics programme.

For older pupils, wider reading is limited. Pupils' class reading books are selected from a narrow genre of fiction, such as 'Carrie's War' by Nina Bawden. Even within that narrow genre, pupils' fiction books are censored and redacted. There are no English language books in the school library.

Leaders have limited the scope of the curriculum to make it fit with Orthodox Jewish teaching. Text, photographs and illustrations in geography text books are redacted. Pupils learn about creationism, according to religious teachings, in the kodesh curriculum. However, this is also taught in geography and science, which is not appropriate. Pupils do not learn anything about the scientific theories about the origins of life.

Pupils do not take any external GCSE or other qualifications, because leaders would have to break examination regulations in order to censor the papers. Pupils take internal school examinations using past-paper questions. Subjects are graded and the school issues certificates. However, these have no value outside of the community. Pupils do not have access to meaningful qualifications and so they are not prepared for life in modern Britain.

Opportunities for pupils' personal development provided by the kodesh curriculum are well planned across the school. Curriculum leaders have started to work with their counterparts in the secular curriculum on personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Respect and kindness are key themes. They are linked to religious stories from the Torah and to practical activities in pupils' day-to-day lives.

Pupils learn about the public institutions of Britain and democracy in citizenship. Pupils' work in folders indicates that they learn in detail about parliamentary process. During the inspection, we visited mock election events. Pupils were interested and motivated by these activities. Pupil speakers at the hustings demonstrated detailed knowledge of political parties, the manifestos and the democratic process.

The careers programme has developed well since the last inspection. All pupils in the senior school, from Year 7 to 11, have careers education as part of their

citizenship course. Leaders have planned this well using the Department for Education guidance. A careers adviser has been appointed and pupils in Year 11 have an individual careers interview. Leaders undermine this development, because pupils cannot gain qualifications that would enable them to access a range of careers once they leave the school.

Other aspects of pupils' personal development are much weaker or non-existent. Pupils have very few opportunities to learn about other cultures other than in geography. These are limited by the censorship of resources. Pupils do not have opportunities to learn about other faiths. Pupils' social development is also weak. Pupils lack confidence when speaking in class. They are not well prepared for life in modern Britain. Not only do they not obtain any qualifications, they have limited or no knowledge of other cultures and faiths.

Where leaders can improve the school without, as they perceive it, contravening their faith, they have shown that they have the motivation and skills to do this. School leaders are making some progress in developing aspects of the curriculum, and the different departments are working together more closely to ensure continuity for pupils.

Leaders have kept up standards on the health and safety of the premises effectively. These standards were met at the progress monitoring inspection in March 2019 and have been maintained.

However, overall, governors are not showing the leadership skills required to move the school forward. On the issues of equality and diversity, the protected characteristics, and censorship of the curriculum and resources, leaders have not made any changes since the last full standard inspection in June 2018. The relevant independent school standards remain unmet.

Leaders did not agree to inspectors talking to pupils during the inspection, saying this was at the parents' request. Governors say they have met with parents to try to address this issue. Governors and leaders also told us that pupils lead very sheltered lives, would feel intimidated by talking to strangers, and parents do not want it to happen. Similarly, they say that parents do not want their children to take external qualifications and that parents want younger pupils to learn to read using 'look and say' methods. Leaders give undue weight to the views of parents in their decision making. The proprietor and governors do not always take responsibility for meeting all of the independent school standards and the requirements of the early years foundation stage.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

We have made this finding because we were unable to speak with pupils to find out whether they feel safe in the school. We could not find out whether they know what

to do if they are worried about something, or how adults respond to them. Consequently, we cannot be certain that safeguarding is effective.

Leaders ensure that staff have regular training and know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil. Leaders seek advice from the local authority and take effective action to support pupils in need of help. Leaders carry out the required pre-employment checks on staff. Governors check regularly that this is done.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Pupils do not take any qualifications at the end of key stage 4. This is because leaders would have to contravene the examination regulations in order to censor the examination papers. As a result, pupils do not gain the qualifications they need to prepare them for further study and employment. Their options for post-16 study are limited to institutions that will admit pupils without these qualifications. Leaders should ensure that pupils study and take examinations and gain qualifications in GCSE subjects.
- The curriculum is too narrow. Pupils learn only Jewish history in Years 7 and 8. In the junior department, there is insufficient focus on the foundation subjects. In physical education, the range of sports is limited. Pupils do not gain the knowledge and understanding they need for academic success in all subjects. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced across all the departments.
- Children in Reception do not learn phonics. In older year groups, there is a mixture of phonics and sight reading. Pupils read only a limited genre of fiction. The school library has only books in Yiddish. This means that pupils cannot apply their phonics knowledge. They do not develop a love of reading literature. This restricts pupils' opportunities to gain knowledge across the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that all pupils read a broad range of literature, fiction and non-fiction.
- The learning environment for two-year-olds is not well resourced and the provision is meagre. This has a negative impact on children's learning and development. Leaders should improve the provision.
- Pupils' knowledge of other cultures is limited, and they do not know about other faiths. Leaders do not actively promote respect for all groups of people, paying particular regard to the full range of protected characteristics. This means that pupils are not prepared for life in modern Britain. Leaders should ensure that these aspects of the curriculum and the independent school standards are addressed.
- Pupils' speaking skills are weak. Often, pupils only give one-word answers in class and speak quietly so as not to be heard. This reflects pupils' lack of confidence with English language. Leaders should develop teachers' questioning so that they probe pupils' understanding and ensure that pupils give more extended answers.

- Inspectors were not able to talk to pupils. Therefore, they were not able to get all the information required for the inspection. In particular, they were not able to find out pupils' views about behaviour, whether they feel safe, whether there is bullying and how leaders deal with it. Governors must demonstrate leadership and ensure that the school meets these standards.

How can I feed back my views?

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The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	100291
DfE registration number	204/6242
Local authority	Hackney
Inspection number	10115217
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	840
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Bnois Jerusalem School
Chair	Judah Wider
Headteacher	M Landau
Annual fees (day pupils)	Paid on a voluntary basis
Telephone number	020 8800 5781
Website	The school does not have a website
Email address	admin@bnoisschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–14 June 2018

Information about this school

- Bnois Jerusalem Girls School is an independent Orthodox Jewish day school in the London Borough of Hackney. The school caters for girls aged two to 16. The school consists of early years, infant, junior and senior departments.
- The school's last standard inspection took place in June 2018, when the school was judged inadequate. Independent school standards in parts 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8 were unmet. The school had a progress monitoring inspection in March 2019, when some of the unmet standards were met.
- Since the last inspection, curriculum advisers have been appointed to work alongside the headteachers in the separate school departments.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- I met with the headteacher and heads of the school's separate infant, junior and senior departments regarding the quality of education. We held additional discussions with other senior and subject leaders.
- We focused deeply on reading, mathematics, PSHE education and geography. We visited classes, looked at pupils' work and held discussions with teachers and subject leaders.
- We met with safeguarding leaders and scrutinised case files and the school's record of pre-employment checks on staff.
- We met with the local authority early years adviser.
- We met with four members of the governing body.
- We reviewed a range of documentation including curriculum plans, teaching resources and records of safeguarding, health and safety, and behaviour.
- We did not speak to pupils in lessons, around the school or in separate groups as part of the subject focus. This was at the insistence of the headteacher and governors.

Inspection team

Janet Hallett, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Rick Barnes

Ofsted Inspector

Tim McLoughlin

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively;
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(b) that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills;
 - 2(2)(d) personal, social, health and economic education which–
 - 2(2)(d)(ii) encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act;
 - 2(2)(f) where the school has pupils below compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their educational needs in relation to personal, social, emotional and physical development and communication and language skills;
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range.

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–
 - 5(a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which–
 - 5(b)(v) further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;

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

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.
- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that–
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively.
- 10 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that bullying at the school is prevented in so far as reasonably practicable, by the drawing up and implementation of an effective anti-bullying strategy.

Part 6. Provision of information

- 32(1) The standard about the provision of information by the school is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 32(1)(g) any information reasonably requested in connection with an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act which is required for the purposes of the inspection is provided to the body conducting the inspection and that body is given access to the school's admission and attendance registers;

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; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

Early Years Foundation Stage

- Children read and understand simple sentences. They use phonic knowledge to decode regular words and read them aloud accurately. They also read some

common irregular words. They demonstrate understanding when talking with others about what they have read (1.12).

- Providers must have regard to the government's statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015' and to the 'Prevent duty guidance for England and Wales 2015'. All schools are required to have regard to the government's 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' statutory guidance, and other childcare providers may also find it helpful to refer to this guidance. If providers have concerns about children's safety or welfare, they must notify agencies with statutory responsibilities without delay. This means the local children's social care services and, in emergencies, the police (3.7).

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