

Inspection of Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadass School

1 Belz Terrace, Clapton Common, London E5 9SN

Inspection dates: 28–30 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

The standard of secular education is weak, and the curriculum is not ambitious enough. Leaders have begun to tackle the most important priorities, especially teaching pupils to read and write fluently in English. There is more emphasis on the teaching of phonics. However, it is early days, and standards of literacy remain poor. In mathematics, pupils deepen their knowledge in a logical way. In other subjects, planning is haphazard. Pupils do not learn enough about science, history or geography.

Pupils behave well, enjoy school and are keen to learn. The school deals well with bullying. Pupils say that bullying rarely happens. They know that if it occurs, staff will sort things out quickly. Pupils feel safe in school. The school promotes the fundamental British values effectively. It teaches pupils to respect others, regardless of their background, and the importance of upholding the laws of the land. Pupils are polite, courteous and respectful of others. However, not all the protected characteristics are covered. Pupils are not given information about same-sex relationships or gender reassignment.

Parents and carers say that their children are well cared for. They are especially supportive of the school's staff and how they help their children to gain confidence. Parents told us that their children are happy and safe at school. Parents value the school's Jewish teaching and ethos.

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

Leaders know what to do to improve the quality of secular education. They have rightly introduced a phonics programme to improve pupils' reading and writing. However, this does not start early enough. Children in the early years get off to a slow start with their reading. The curriculum in the early years reflects the areas of learning, but it is not preparing children adequately for Year 1. Children do not meet the early learning goals when they should.

Pupils' weak reading and writing skills have a knock-on effect on their learning in other subjects. They do not read for pleasure often enough. Pupils have few opportunities to use their mathematical skills to solve problems. In science, teachers use Yiddish, and pupils write little in English. Pupils do not practise their English language skills often enough. This holds back their learning.

The secular curriculum is weak. Planning is ad hoc. In some subjects, pupils experience a jumble of information in no particular order. Subject plans do not match the ambitions of the national curriculum. In mathematics, pupils learn about decimals and fractions, but the work is meant for younger pupils. Leaders are tackling these weaknesses in the curriculum. For example, elements of science, history and geography are now on the timetable. Leaders are evaluating the early developments. However, plans lack detail and there is too little link between one lesson and the next. Pupils do not remember what they have learned.

The plans for personal, social and health education (PSHE) in Years 2 to 7 are better organised. PSHE is taught through the Kodesh curriculum. It is organised so that it builds pupils' learning in a planned way. Pupils consider opposing views, for example by holding a 'mock' general election and drawing up a manifesto. They take part in activities to help them understand different religions and how democracy works. This includes visits to the Houses of Parliament and visits from religious leaders. They learn about different jobs and listened considerately to a senior hospital consultant. These activities help pupils gain a broad knowledge of British society.

The curriculum in the Yeshiva is related to the school's Jewish ethos. There are no separate secular lessons for pupils in Years 8 to 11. References to secular knowledge are linked to Jewish teaching. For example, pupils learn about healthy eating through the Kodesh curriculum. However, these links are haphazard. The curriculum does not match the ambition of the national curriculum.

Leaders are ambitious for the curriculum. However, these ambitions are limited by teachers' lack of teaching expertise. There is not enough subject-specific training for staff. For example, not all staff have completed the training for phonics teaching. They do not have the skills needed to build pupils' learning logically over time.

The school makes a strong contribution to pupils' moral and spiritual values. Pupils behave well in classrooms and around the school. They have an appetite for learning. They listen attentively in lessons and respond to questions readily. They debate and discuss in a mature way. Staff encourage pupils to imagine themselves in the shoes of others. Pupils respect the differences of others. Relationships are strong.

Procedures for maintaining the premises, and providing good-quality accommodation, are strong. Health and safety are high on leaders' priorities. As a result, the school buildings are clean, safe and in tip-top condition.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is strong. There is a clear focus on language and behaviour. Specialist teachers and counsellors help pupils to bridge the gaps in their learning. However, literacy skills remain weak.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The updated safeguarding policy takes account of the most recent requirements. It is comprehensive and available to parents upon request. Leaders and the proprietor understand their responsibilities.

Leaders maintain a detailed record of the vetting checks they make on staff. The records reflect the most recent guidance and add additional information such as safeguarding training and employment references.

Pupils are taught about keeping safe, for example in the street and on public transport. Pupils know about personal safety. Pupils do not use the internet in school, but they know the potential risks of social media.

Staff have received copies of the latest version of 'Keeping children safe in education, 2019'. Regular training keeps them up to date. Leaders check how well staff understand the most recent statutory requirements by setting a quiz. Leaders take appropriate action to deal with safeguarding issues. The good links with the local authority ensure that any issues are resolved swiftly.

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

- Pupils do not read English fluently. Although leaders have introduced phonics teaching, this does not happen early enough. As a result, pupils fall behind in their reading and writing. Leaders should ensure that pupils develop their knowledge of phonics in the Reception and Year 1 classes, so that they improve their reading and writing skills. Pupils in key stages 2 and 3 should read more widely for pleasure.
- The curriculum is not planned well enough to ensure that pupils build their knowledge in a structured and coherent way. Science, history and geography are taught through the Kodesh curriculum, but the order in which pupils study topics is ad hoc. The aims for the secular curriculum, including English, are not ambitious enough and pupils' achievements are weak. Leaders should ensure that the planned curriculum meets the ambitions of the national curriculum. They need to be clear about what they expect pupils to learn in each year group in all subjects.
- Pupils develop their mathematical calculation skills appropriately. Leaders have introduced a planned programme based on a commercial scheme. However, pupils are given work that is ill-matched to their age. This limits pupils' achievements. Leaders should ensure that the work teachers give pupils is suitably demanding.
- Leaders have begun to ensure that staff receive some external training, for example in teaching phonics. However, this is limited. Staff do not have the knowledge to teach their subjects to sufficient depth. Leaders should ensure that staff have opportunities to improve their knowledge of teaching subjects so that they can deepen pupils' learning.

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	100294
DfE registration number	204/6331
Local authority	Hackney
Inspection number	10115221
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	612
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Moreshet Hatorah Ltd
Chair	Rabbi Baumgarten and Rabbi Klein
Headteacher	Rabbi C Silbiger
Annual fees (day pupils)	Not applicable
Telephone number	0208 800 6599
Website	No website
Email address	klein@belzlondon.com
Date of previous inspection	6–8 February 2018

Information about this school

- Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadass School is an independent Charedi (strictly Orthodox) Jewish boys' school, founded in 1973 and situated in Hackney, North London.
- There are very few pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- The school does not have a website, but all the required policies are available to parents on request.
- The school's last full standard inspection took place in February 2018, when its overall effectiveness was judged as inadequate.

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 does not meet all the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We looked in particular at the quality of the curriculum in reading, English, history, mathematics and PSHE. We also considered other subjects as part of looking at the quality of education.
- We spoke with leaders, including the headteachers of the Chol and Kodesh curriculums, the compliance officer and teachers.
- We met with governors and the chair of the proprietorial body. An inspector had a telephone call with an external adviser.
- We also spoke to groups of pupils to explore their experiences of attending the school and their learning. We spoke to some pupils informally during lessons.
- We considered written policies, including documents related to safeguarding, behaviour, complaints and the plans for assemblies, careers education and lessons. We toured both buildings and considered how the proprietorial body met the independent school standards.
- We used an interpreter to understand lessons taught in Yiddish and speak to pupils.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Maureen Okoye

Ofsted Inspector

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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) 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.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(c) involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught.

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(b) 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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