

Inspection of Beis Medrash Elyon

233 West Hendon Broadway, West Hendon, London NW9 7DH

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils study a secular curriculum that is too limited. Teaching is driven by preparation for examinations. In some subjects, lessons are taught by staff who do not have the required knowledge and expertise. Subjects such as music and physical education are extremely new to pupils. In some subjects, staff do not have sufficient resources to help pupils learn.

Pupils speak with pride about their school. They especially like the close-knit nature of the small community, which they describe as a family. There are high expectations of pupils. They behave and attend well. Pupils enjoy their learning, and like to use their own laptops in class.

Pupils spoke positively about the educational visits on offer, such as the annual residential trip to Snowdonia. They feel safe in school and said that staff are quick to deal with any incidents of bullying. One parent described the school as a 'cut above the rest'. This sums up parents' extremely positive views about the care and education provided.

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

The secular curriculum is too narrow. The quality of leaders' and teachers' planning is variable. In subjects such as English and mathematics, pupils' learning is too focused on passing examinations from as early as Year 7. In some cases, pupils study A levels independently in different subjects in Years 9 and 10, having 'finished' their studies in GCSE English or mathematics. Pupils achieve generally high grades at GCSE. However, leaders are too focused on these examination outcomes. They do not plan a curriculum that is enjoyable, well sequenced and effective.

Leaders have recently invested in a computerised learning platform for English, mathematics and science. Pupils enjoy the mixture of independent and teacher-led learning using the 'nuggets' on this system. However, sometimes pupils have already completed lessons in their own time, which means they repeat their learning. Leaders are in the process of improving the system to prevent this.

Leaders' emphasis on GCSE results means that pupils do not develop deep knowledge and understanding in their subjects. Instead, pupils complete some qualifications as quickly as possible and at unusually young ages. In very new subjects, such as physical education, history and music, teachers follow incomplete curriculum plans. These do not include much detail of what should be taught and when. Arrangements for the assessment of pupils varies subject to subject. Some teachers also have to manage with very few resources. Often, they do not have the training they need to become subject specialists. Beyond Year 8, there is no formal learning in creative or technological education, and biology is not taught at all. This limits pupils' learning opportunities.

Leaders and governors have taken some effective action since the previous inspection. For example, they have put in place a suitable accessibility plan. However, leaders do not understand and implement the independent school standards fully. They do not have a secure knowledge of government guidance including 'Keeping children safe in education'. Arrangements for writing meaningful policies, recruiting staff safely and managing fire safety are weak. Leading the secular curriculum and recruiting teachers are significant challenges for the school. Governors and the proprietor have not given enough thought to leaders' roles and responsibilities. They do not have realistic expectations of what individual staff can manage. Many independent school standards are not met, including all those that were not met at the school's previous progress monitoring inspections.

Pupils become confident, respectful and well mannered. This is partly due to the effective work in Kodesh education. They have very positive attitudes about their learning and futures. Staff teach pupils about British values and to respect everybody, regardless of differences. Pupils are taught, for example, to respect other religions, cultures and faiths. They receive suitable, impartial careers information, advice and guidance from an external company. However, the school does not encourage respect for all people with protected characteristics. Relationships education does not cover all of the required content. This limits pupils' preparation for life in modern Britain.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

There are serious concerns about the school's systems for recruiting staff. The process does not pay regard to government guidance, including in relation to interviews, references, right to work checks and additional checks on those who have lived and/or worked overseas. Gaps in the school's recruitment record found staff and others to be working in the school without all the required checks. Employee files typically contain as little as a health questionnaire and a reference or two from the applicant's friends.

Other than the recruitment failings, leaders and staff prioritise pupils' safety. They are suitably trained, vigilant and take effective action to keep pupils as safe as possible. The school's safeguarding policy reflects the required national guidance and is available in hard copy from the school office.

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

- Safeguarding is not effective because the safer recruitment process is weak. Leaders and the proprietor should take action to improve safeguarding

arrangements, ensuring the recruitment process and single central record of vetting checks pay regard to the latest statutory guidance.

- Leaders and the proprietor have not ensured that the premises are compliant with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Act 2005. Evidence of the annual check on the emergency lighting was unavailable during the inspection. An updated fire risk assessment is required to take account of the opening of a new classroom. Leaders should take action to ensure the premises are fire safe, and review and improve the management of fire safety.
- The curriculum policy is a poorly edited template which fails to describe the school's curricular aims, including the subjects and qualifications offered. Some subjects are very new and have sparse curriculum plans in place. Leaders should ensure that ambitious, well-sequenced schemes of work are in place and followed in all subjects.
- The curriculum is too narrow and some teaching is too focused on pupils achieving qualifications as quickly as possible. Leaders and the proprietor should review the subjects offered to ensure that pupils in all year groups receive a broad curriculum that includes creative and technological learning. Leaders should also ensure that teaching focuses more on ensuring that pupils know, remember and are able to do more over time, rather than simply passing examinations.
- Some teachers lack expertise in the subjects they are responsible for. This is partly due to the lack of professional development opportunities available. Leaders should review and significantly increase the professional development offer for teachers to ensure that they have the required knowledge and skills to teach their subject well.
- There is a lack of resources in the school. This negatively affects the quality of education in some areas, such as practical subjects requiring sports equipment and musical instruments. Leaders should ensure that funding is provided so that all subjects are well resourced.
- Pupils are not taught about all the protected characteristics, including those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT). The school's relationships and sex education programme does not pay regard to guidance because it does not include teaching about LGBT relationships. Leaders should ensure that pupils are prepared for life in modern British society.
- All the independent school standards that were judged to be not met at the previous progress monitoring inspections in April 2021 and April 2019 remain not met. This inspection also judged additional standards to be not met. The proprietor, governors and leaders should ensure that they know the independent school standards and take action to ensure they are all met consistently.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

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	140492
DfE registration number	302/6007
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10202233
Type of school	Ultra-Orthodox Jewish secondary day school for boys
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Anthony Adler
Headteacher	Yaakov Lang
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,200
Telephone number	020 8203 8240
Website	None
Email address	admin@elyon.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 to 14 June 2018

Information about this school

- Beis Medrash Elyon is a secondary day school for boys of Orthodox Jewish faith.
- Pupils study GCSEs from as soon as Year 7. They study and complete them throughout their time at the school, and at the latest in Year 10, after which they leave to study at a Yeshiva.
- Leaders make no use of alternative provision.
- The school's sole proprietor is supported by a governing body. The substantive headteacher leads the secular curriculum, and the Menahal leads the religious curriculum.
- The school's most recent inspection was a progress monitoring inspection in April 2021, which followed an emergency inspection in September 2020. Prior to this, a progress monitoring inspection was conducted in April 2019, following the school's most recent full standard inspection in June 2018.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- This combined full standard and progress monitoring inspection was conducted without notice at the request of the Department for Education (DfE).
- Inspectors met with the substantive headteacher and the Menahal regularly throughout the inspection. Inspectors also met with the chair of governors and the proprietor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, science, personal, social, health and economic education, business studies and music. Inspectors visited lessons, spoke with pupils, teachers and those responsible for planning the curriculum, and reviewed pupils' work. Inspectors also visited lessons in mathematics, physical education and history.
- Inspectors met with several groups of pupils to discuss their learning, safety, personal development and behaviour. In line with the school's request, inspectors did not ask pupils questions about LGBT relationships.

- Inspectors met with the school’s safeguarding leaders and reviewed a range of related documentation, including vetting checks on staff and employee files.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including policies, curriculum plans and risk assessments. Inspectors also carried out checks on the premises, health and safety, and compliance with all the other independent school standards.
- Inspectors considered the 13 responses from parents on Ofsted Parent View. There were no responses to the online staff or pupil questionnaires.

The school’s progress in meeting previously failed standards

During the inspection, we checked whether the school now meets the independent school standards that it was judged to have failed at its previous progress monitoring inspections on 13 April 2021 and 2 April 2019.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school continues to not meet the previously failed standards.**

Inspection team

James Waite, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Gary Rawlings

Her Majesty’s 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; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work—
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
 - 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph 2(1)(a), the matters are—
 - 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)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
 - 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor—
 - 2A(1)(d) in making arrangements for the purposes of paragraphs (a), (b) or (c), has regard to any guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 that applies in relation to the provision of education by maintained schools.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school—
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

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 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; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if—
 - 18(2)(c)(iii) the person's right to work in the United Kingdom; and
 - 18(2)(e) in the case of any person for whom, by reason of that person living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining such a certificate is not sufficient to establish the person's suitability to work in a school, such further checks are made as the proprietor considers appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 18(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person's appointment.
- 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is—
 - 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether—
 - 21(3)(a)(vii) a check of S's right to work in the United Kingdom was made; and
 - 21(3)(a)(viii) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(e).

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.

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