

Inspection of Vishnitz Girls School

49 Amhurst Park, London N16 5DL

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' attendance and behaviour. Pupils are well cared for. They behave well, attend regularly and are punctual. Pupils said they feel safe in school. Staff are quick to deal with any concerns, such as incidents of bullying.

Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy their learning. They especially like the shows and festivals they help to prepare and are a part of. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about their favourite subjects. The secular curriculum in Years 1 to 11 is well planned and resourced. As a result, most pupils receive a high-quality education.

However, provision for children in the early years is weak. This is mainly because children are not taught to read in English in Reception. This significantly limits their development, and means they are not ready for Year 1.

Pupils' personal development is significantly limited. Pupils are not taught, for example, about other religions in order to develop and deepen their understanding of mutual respect and tolerance. References to some of the protected characteristics are avoided entirely. Pupils do not receive impartial careers information, education, advice and guidance (CIEAG). As a result, pupils are unprepared for life in modern Britain.

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

Children do not get off to a strong enough start because early years provision is poor. Some of the requirements of the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage are not met. Unlike the other areas of the school, the early years curriculum is not well planned, organised or sequenced. Plans do not cover all the required areas of learning, particularly communication and language, and literacy. Children are taught entirely in Yiddish in the early years. They learn to read and write in basic Hebrew too, but are not taught to read in English, or receive any teaching in English, until Year 1. Phonics is not taught in the Reception Year. Staff do not have a clear understanding of the requirements to assess children's learning accurately. Classrooms do not encourage learning in all the required areas. Resources and equipment, including toys, stationery and books, are kept in cupboards for children to ask for and are not readily available to enable children to learn and develop well.

In contrast, leaders have worked hard to ensure the quality of education is good for pupils in Years 1 to 11. The curriculum is well constructed and led. Subject specialists have worked hard to reflect on curriculum design and the order in which subject content is taught. In every subject, leaders work together to ensure that the curriculum is coherent and ambitious. Leaders also make sure that assessment information is used to inform next steps in pupils' learning. All this helps pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to know and

remember more over time. Subjects, including creative and aesthetic, and physical education, are well resourced. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. Staff report that leaders are supportive of their well-being and mindful of any potential workload issues.

Pupils are taught to be kind and courteous. Staff promote pupils' understanding of some aspects of British values including democracy and the rule of law. Pupils have visited the Houses of Parliament and Windsor Castle. They are encouraged to respect others generally. However, this is without reference to the cultures, faiths and beliefs of others. Leaders have not ensured that pupils in the secondary phase develop, over time, an understanding of and respect for all the protected characteristics. The school's relationships and sex education programme does not make pupils aware of how some people are protected by discrimination law and are to be respected. This is not sufficient to meet some of the requirements of the independent school standards and the relationships and sex education (RSE) statutory guidance. Reproduction and scientific theories behind the origins of life are not taught. These restrictions limit pupils' knowledge about, and preparation for, life in modern Britain.

Pupils learn about and celebrate Jewish festivals. They enjoy taking part in wider-curricular activities. These include writing competitions, recycling projects and clubs in dance, art and cooking. The lack of impartial CIEAG prevents pupils from making informed choices about a wide range of career options available to them and discourages them from fulfilling their potential.

The proprietor body has not ensured that all the independent school standards are met. They have worked outside of their registration agreement. They have extended the number of pupils on roll and admitted pupils outside of the age range for which the school is registered without seeking the permission of the Department for Education, as they are required to do.

The school is compliant with Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a strong safeguarding culture. Staff are trained well, and leaders take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Pupils said they have trusted adults they can go to with any worries, concerns and questions. Leaders follow up concerns promptly and effectively.

The school's safeguarding policy reflects the latest national guidance and is readily available from the school's office. Recruitment checks on the adults who work with pupils are completed in line with requirements and recorded accurately.

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

- Leaders have not ensured the requirements of the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage are met. The curriculum is not well planned, organised and sequenced. Plans do not cover all the required areas of learning, particularly communication and language, and literacy in English. Phonics is not taught in Reception. Children therefore do not learn to read in English and are not ready for Year 1. Staff do not have a clear understanding of the requirements to assess children's learning accurately. Classrooms are not enabling environments. The proprietor body and leaders should review their early years provision and curriculum. Children should be taught to read, using a synthetic phonics programme, from the start of Reception. Training should be provided to ensure all early years staff know how to facilitate learning and assess children. Leaders should ensure provision reflects all the requirements of the statutory framework.
- The RSE programme does not take account of current guidance. Secondary-aged pupils are not taught to respect all the protected characteristics in an integrated and age-appropriate way. The proprietor body and leaders should ensure that the RSE curriculum is delivered fully, sensitively and clearly, in line with current guidance.
- The proprietor body and leaders do not actively encourage pupils' respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths, beliefs and cultures. They should ensure that respect and tolerance of faiths, beliefs and cultures of others is actively fostered, and tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions is actively encouraged.
- The proprietor body and leaders do not provide pupils with impartial CIEAG. They should ensure that CIEAG is characterised by an ambitious approach of wide possibilities for pupils so that they are aware of education, training and career options available to them after they leave school.
- Reproduction and scientific theories behind the origins of life, are omitted entirely from the curriculum. As a result of these restrictions, creationism is presented as having a similar or superior evidence base to scientific theories. The proprietor body and leaders should ensure that creationism is not presented as having a similar or superior evidence base to scientific theories and that the curriculum content ensures pupils are prepared for their future adult lives.
- Some of the independent school standards are not met. The proprietor body and leaders should 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	138516
DfE registration number	204/6006
Local authority	Hackney
Inspection number	10216320
Type of school	Ultra-Orthodox Jewish day school for girls
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 13
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	311
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Vishnitz Girls School Ltd
Chair	Benzion Steiner
Headteacher	Leah Weiss
Annual fees (day pupils)	Variable and voluntary
Telephone number	020 8800 0490
Website	None
Email address	head@vishnitzgirlsschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 to 7 February 2019

Information about this school

- Vishnitz Girls School is an ultra-Orthodox Jewish independent day school located on two sites in Stamford Hill, north-east London.
- The main premises at 49 Amhurst Park accommodates pupils in Years 3 to 9.
- Additional premises at 85 Lordship Road, London N16 0QY, caters for children in the early years and pupils in Years 1 and 2. Since the previous inspection, an additional part of these premises has opened to accommodate pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11.
- The school is registered to admit up to 311 girls aged three to 13. However, there are currently 438 girls on roll, whose ages range from two to 16. This exceeds the maximum number of pupils on roll that they are registered to admit. The school has admitted pupils below and above the registered age range.
- The school's first cohort of Year 11 pupils will sit a range of GCSE examinations this year.
- The school has a proprietor body who take responsibility for both the management and governance of the school. There are no governors.
- The last inspection was a standard inspection in February 2019.
- The school makes no use of alternative provision.

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 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- This full standard inspection was conducted with two days' notice.
- Inspectors met regularly with the substantive headteacher and the school's compliance officer. Inspectors also met with two members of the proprietor body, including the chair of the proprietor body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science, physical education and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. For each deep dive, inspectors visited lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning, spoke to teachers and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors met

with the school's curriculum leaders. Inspectors listened to pupils read. Inspectors also met with the subject leaders for geography and mathematics.

- Inspectors met with the school's safeguarding leaders and reviewed a range of related documentation, including employee files and vetting checks on staff.
- Inspectors met with four groups of pupils to discuss their learning, safety, personal development and behaviour. In line with school leaders' request, inspectors did not ask pupils any questions about specified topics, including sex and relationships or religions other than their own.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents Parent View. There were no responses to the online staff or pupil surveys.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of evidence to check compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

James Waite, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Samantha Ingram

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards and requirements of the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 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)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that-
 - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential
 - 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.
- 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.

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 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.

Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage

Educational programmes

- **1.6. Communication and Language**

The development of children’s spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children’s back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children’s language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, story-telling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.

Early learning goals

- **1.10. Communication and Language**

ELG: Listening, Attention and Understanding
Children at the expected level of development will:

 - Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions;

- Make comments about what they have heard and ask questions to clarify their understanding;
- Hold conversation when engaged in back-and-forth exchanges with their teacher and peers.

- **ELG: Speaking**
- Children at the expected level of development will:
 - Participate in small group, class and one-to-one discussions, offering their own ideas, using recently introduced vocabulary;
 - Offer explanations for why things might happen, making use of recently introduced vocabulary from stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems when appropriate;
 - Express their ideas and feelings about their experiences using full sentences, including use of past, present and future tenses and making use of conjunctions, with modelling and support from their teacher.

- **ELG: Comprehension**
- Children at the expected level of development will:
 - Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary;
 - Anticipate – where appropriate – key events in stories;
 - Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role-play.

- **ELG: Word Reading**
- Children at the expected level of development will:
 - Say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs;
 - Read words consistent with their phonic knowledge by sound-blending;
 - Read aloud simple sentences and books that are consistent with their phonic knowledge, including some common exception words.

- **ELG: Writing**
- Children at the expected level of development will:
 - Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed;
 - Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with letter or letters;
 - Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

- **ELG: People, Culture and Communities**
- Children at the expected level of development will:
 - Know some similarities and differences between different religious and cultural communities in this country, drawing on their experiences and what has been read in class.

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