

Inspection of Torah Vodaas

Brent Park Road, West Hendon Broadway, London NW9 7AJ

Inspection dates: 28 February to 2 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders' knowledge of statutory safeguarding guidance is not strong enough. They have not ensured that the school's safeguarding arrangements are effective. Staff care for pupils' well-being and are vigilant to concerns. However, weaknesses in record-keeping mean that leaders do not have a clear picture of pupils' needs and when further action is needed to protect their safety.

Pupils enjoy school very much. They are proud of it. This is reflected in their high attendance. Pupils are positive about learning. They enjoy talking about the things that they have been taught. They are keen to be the best they can be. The strong ethos of mutual respect and kindness is reflected in the positive relationships that exist throughout the school. Pupils achieve well in reading and mathematics. However, some weaknesses in the curriculum for other subjects affect how much pupils know and remember.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. They are keen to earn 'green cards' and other rewards, including the much-loved treats at the start of each month. While bullying is rare, staff sort it out well.

Pupils enjoy different visits out and about. They like it when trips link to what they learn in lessons. For example, pupils enjoyed seeing the postal system in action. Pupils are taught about keeping healthy. Leaders have planned a suitable programme of relationships education. However, the programme is new, and the way in which it is taught does not fully support pupils' understanding of important knowledge.

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

Leaders are ambitious for pupils' achievements. They want pupils to leave the school with the knowledge and skills needed for future success. Leaders have made changes to the secular curriculum over the past few years. They have introduced new subjects, such as computing, to broaden pupils' experiences. Pupils enjoy their lessons in the new computer room.

In reading and mathematics, leaders have worked out what pupils need to learn and when. Lessons build on pupils' prior knowledge. This helps pupils to develop a secure understanding of key concepts, such as calculations and problem-solving. However, in some subjects, leaders have not identified the most important subject content that pupils need to learn. This means that in some aspects of the curriculum, pupils' knowledge is not secure. For example, pupils in Year 2 learned about trains and engines in history. They remembered some of the activities that they had completed. However, their knowledge of the different inventors and time periods was weak.

Leaders have developed a well-planned and ambitious curriculum for children's learning in early years. It is delivered effectively, and children achieve well. Staff

promote children's all-round development in creative ways. For example, children enjoyed bringing in bright outfits from home to celebrate Purim. They learned about making coats from wool following a visit to a farm.

The curriculum for reading builds logically from early years into Year 1 and beyond. However, leaders have not worked out how the other subjects have their roots in early years. For example, children in Reception Year learn about the world around them. They look at plants, the weather and the different seasons. However, the science curriculum in Years 1 to 6 does not consider what children have previously learned as well as it could.

Leaders have developed a well-planned early reading programme. It begins in early years, when children quickly get to grips with using phonics for reading and writing. The programme is delivered consistently throughout early years and Years 1 and 2. It is successful at enabling pupils to read accurately and fluently. Pupils who need extra help to keep up with the reading programme are given the support that they need.

Leaders provide staff with a range of professional development opportunities, including training sessions. However, some staff lack the necessary subject knowledge to deliver the secular curriculum consistently well. There are inconsistencies in how well staff adapt activities to meet pupils' needs. Teachers' expectations of what pupils should learn are variable. These inconsistencies affect how well pupils learn in different subjects.

Staff are well supported by the school's special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) team. Together, they ensure that pupils' needs are identified carefully. Pupils with SEND receive a range of extra help to meet their individual needs.

Teachers of the religious curriculum meet regularly with teachers of the secular curriculum. They work together to discuss pupils' learning and well-being. Although leaders use a range of assessments to check pupils' knowledge in mathematics and English, they have not worked out how to check whether pupils know and remember other subject content.

Leaders have developed an assembly programme that aims to promote pupils' wider development. Pupils are taught about healthy lifestyles. They were particularly keen to achieve the rainbow pencils and certificates for healthy eating. Pupils understand the importance of democracy. They explained the process for being elected as a school councillor. Pupils were proud of the funds that they raised for the new table-tennis equipment.

The school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme, which includes the curriculum for relationships education, is new. It is not fully embedded. Staff are still being trained to deliver it. This affects how well pupils' understanding of some aspects of the PSHE education programme, particularly about relationships, is supported.

Pupils enjoy the art and sports clubs that take place after school. They like the time they get in the woodwork room. They have created all sorts of objects. For example, pupils in Year 6 were creating working bedside lamps, using wood and electrical circuits. They showed resilience and determination. Pupils behave well in school. Staff foster pupils' confidence from a young age. For example, in early years, children were delighted to be known as authors. They had proudly created and written their own books.

Staff enjoy working at Torah Vodaas. They value the strong and supportive ethos that governors and leaders have created. Staff said that leaders are mindful of their workload and show kindness and consideration in relation to their personal circumstances.

Leaders, including governors, make sure that the relationships education curriculum has due regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance. The policy is appropriate, and parents and carers have been consulted on what is being taught. The school's accessibility plan is in place to ensure compliance with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. However, leaders and governors were not able to show that the school's health and safety policy is implemented effectively. This was because some of the documentation related to the site checks was not made available during the inspection. The school does not meet the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the early years foundation stage as a result of the weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements.

Leaders have not made sure that all of the independent school standards are consistently met. Nevertheless, during the inspection, leaders took swift action to start to address the weaknesses identified in relation to safeguarding. Governors and leaders are taking the inspection findings seriously. During the inspection, they established an action plan and intend to put things right as soon as possible.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Pupils said that they feel safe in school. They are confident that staff listen to them and sort out any problems well. Parents feel that their children are well looked after in school on a day-to-day basis. However, leaders' understanding of the statutory safeguarding guidance is not strong enough. For example, leaders do not follow the right procedures for managing allegations against members of staff.

Leaders do not ensure that the local authority is informed about pupils who leave the school at times other than at the end of Year 6. There are gaps in the admissions record. For example, leaders do not always ensure that pupils' destinations are recorded when they leave the school. These issues also mean that the independent school standard related to the admissions record is not met.

Leaders' record-keeping is weak. Records related to child protection, including concern forms, are poorly completed. Concerns about pupils' welfare are not

recorded in a robust way. Records are messy and incomplete. For example, some forms are undated, and leaders' actions to follow up concerns are missing or illegible. This means that leaders are unable to ensure and assure that pupils who may be at risk are getting the right help at the right time.

These weaknesses put pupils' welfare and safety at risk.

The school's safeguarding policy meets requirements. Hard copies are available to parents on request as the school does not have a website.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders' knowledge of the statutory safeguarding guidance is weak. For example, leaders were not aware of their duties to inform the local authority designated officer about allegations against members of staff. This puts pupils at risk. Leaders, including governors, must ensure that all statutory procedures are followed, particularly in relation to allegations about members of staff.
- Until this inspection, leaders did not know that they must notify the local authority when pupils leave the school and when they are removed from the school's admissions record. The school's admissions record has gaps, and leavers' destinations are not completed in full. Leaders must ensure that the admissions record is kept up to date and completed fully. They must provide the required information to the local authority when a pupil leaves the school.
- Record-keeping procedures lack rigour. Leaders do not ensure that child protection information, including concerns about pupils' welfare, is recorded clearly or in sufficient detail. This lack of detail means that leaders do not have clear, concise and up-to-date records of pupils' circumstances. Leaders must improve all record-keeping procedures, so that all concerns about pupils' welfare are recorded and monitored rigorously.
- In some subjects, leaders have not worked out the most important content and subject knowledge that pupils need to learn in each topic. This lack of precision means that sometimes, teachers are unclear about what pupils must know and remember. This leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge. Leaders should ensure that in each subject, teachers are clear about precisely what pupils need to know and when.
- In some subjects, leaders have not considered how what children learn in early years is built on in Year 1 and beyond. This means that curriculum sequencing in some subjects does not securely build on pupils' prior learning. Where this is the case, leaders should ensure that the curriculum takes into account what children learn in early years. They should use this information to ensure that the curriculum plans in these subjects build pupils' knowledge sequentially over time.
- Some staff lack the subject knowledge needed to deliver the curriculum consistently well. This causes variability in teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Sometimes, activities are not adapted well to meet pupils' specific

needs. This affects how well some pupils learn and build their knowledge. Leaders should ensure that staff have the training and support that they need in order to deliver the curriculum consistently well.

- Leaders have not developed approaches to check pupils' learning in subjects other than English and mathematics. This means that they do not have an accurate understanding of what pupils have learned and remembered over time. Leaders should check that pupils know more and remember more in these subjects.
- The school's PSHE education programme, which includes the curriculum for relationships education, is new. It has not been fully embedded, and there are some inconsistencies in how it is implemented by staff. Pupils' knowledge of some aspects of the relationships education programme is not supported securely. Leaders should ensure that staff are well trained to deliver the school's PSHE education and personal development programmes, including relationships education. They should ensure that these programmes are taught effectively, so that pupils' understanding of the key concepts taught is promoted successfully.
- Leaders, including governors, have not ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards. The unmet standards relate to safeguarding arrangements, the management of the school's admissions record and effective implementation of the health and safety policy. Leaders should ensure that all the independent school standards are met.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	133553
DfE registration number	302/6115
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10254647
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	352
Proprietor	Torah Vodaas Ltd
Chair	Mr Arie Levison
Headteacher	Rabbi Y Feldman
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,500
Telephone number	020 3670 4670
Website	None
Email address	office@torahvodaas.org
Date of previous inspection	9 to 11 October 2018

Information about this school

- Torah Vodaas caters for Orthodox Jewish boys aged between three and 11 years.
- The school's previous standard inspection took place in October 2018, when it was judged to be good.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- An early years setting is located on the same site as the school. This is called Torah Vodaas Early Years Centre. It is registered and inspected separately.
- The school is registered to admit a maximum of 350 pupils. It has exceeded this number. The school has not notified the Department for Education that it is operating beyond its registration agreement.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders, including the early years leader.
- Inspectors held meetings with governors, including the chair of governors, and representatives of the proprietor body. The lead inspector spoke with the local authority designated officer.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, humanities and PSHE education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and pupils' work in science, English, and design and technology.
- The lead inspector held meetings with those responsible for safeguarding, including governors. He reviewed the single central record of staff suitability checks. The inspector held meetings with staff and pupils to discuss safeguarding arrangements. The lead inspector looked at safeguarding policies and child protection records.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils informally at breaktimes. They held meetings with groups of pupils. Inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted Parent View, and

an inspector met with some parents in person during the inspection. Inspectors considered the responses to the online staff survey.

- Inspectors toured the school premises and looked at policies and records to check compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Gary Rawlings, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Maureen Okoye

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

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.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006[13].

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

- 3.7 Providers must have regard to the government's statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' and to the 'Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales'. 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.

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