

Inspection of Beth Jacob Grammar School for Girls

Stratford Road, Hendon, London NW4 2AT

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form 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?

Pupils and staff are proud of their school. They said it feels like a family.

Pupils value the education that they receive. They are kept safe and feel well supported by leaders and staff. Pupils work hard and achieve highly across a range of subjects. They behave exceptionally well, showing consideration for others and responsibility. Bullying is very rare, but is dealt with effectively when it happens.

Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects. They plan and deliver engaging sequences of learning that typically ensure that pupils learn and remember more over time. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported.

Leaders ensure that the school provides a range of broader educational opportunities for pupils, including trips, educational outings, and support with post-16 applications for training and education.

Through personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, pupils are taught to be courteous and about being tolerant in general terms. However, the PSHE curriculum is not taught and planned in a way that promotes respect for all of the protected characteristics. Relationships and sex education (RSE) does not reflect the law as it applies to relationships. While pupils learn about others, the curriculum does not carefully build up their awareness of a broad range of people, cultures and identities. Pupils are taught limited information about other religions, for example. Leaders have also not ensured that pupils receive impartial careers advice. This means that pupils are not fully informed about the world outside their immediate community. They are not prepared well enough for life in modern Britain.

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

Pupils learn both a religious and a secular curriculum. The secular curriculum is broad and thoughtfully designed. For example, in computing, the curriculum is planned to ensure that pupils build up knowledge effectively from their starting points. Teachers plan and sequence learning so that pupils learn and remember more over time. They select subject content to ensure that pupils are supported to gain and remember a wide range of academic knowledge. For example, in English, pupils read demanding texts from different literary traditions.

As pupils move up through the school, the curriculum enables them to recall prior learning and to apply their knowledge to more complex tasks. For example, in art, pupils are taught about a number of different artistic schools and traditions. They learn to practise and apply a range of techniques. This results in pupils producing a high standard of expressive artwork.

Pupils are taught rigorously. They regularly revisit topics that they have learned previously. Working closely with pupils' previous schools, leaders give careful

thought to pupils' starting points and needs when they arrive at the school. Teachers make suitable adaptations to how the curriculum is delivered in order to meet the needs of individual pupils, including those with SEND. They understand what pupils can already know and do well, and their areas for development. If pupils arrive needing more help with reading, this is identified quickly and addressed effectively.

Leaders ensure that teachers are knowledgeable and well trained. They keep a sharp eye on how well the curriculum is being delivered. For example, leaders have identified that the design and delivery of the curriculum is working better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Sometimes, teachers do not consider carefully what building blocks of knowledge pupils need to learn in Years 7 to 9 in order to be ready for their future learning. This also means that checks on pupils' learning are, at times, not helpful in identifying what knowledge pupils need to revisit and embed.

Across the school, leaders foster a culture of high expectations. They expect pupils to be motivated and give their best. Pupils learn to work independently and take responsibility for their learning, in and out of taught lessons. For example, pupils made all the costumes for a recent school production, unaided and proficiently.

However, pupils are not taught to think ambitiously about their next steps after school, and are not given sufficiently clear or aspirational advice about options for future careers. For example, they are not encouraged to seriously consider a range of professions, such as medicine. When pupils choose their A levels, leaders do not help them to think about how their decisions could support future career choices. This is because pupils are not offered careers advice that extends beyond opportunities inside the local community.

The curriculum is planned to ensure that pupils learn about values like democracy and tolerance. For example, in history, pupils are taught to challenge accepted ideas and values while forming scholarly arguments. Teachers stress the importance of developing empathy for others and accepting difference. However, pupils do not learn enough about faiths and cultures that are different to their own.

The PSHE curriculum covers a broad range of topics. For example, pupils learn how to look after their physical health and mental well-being. However, the PSHE curriculum is not planned and delivered to ensure that pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of key topics. It does not teach pupils about respecting all the different characteristics that people may have, and that people who have these characteristics are protected by law from discrimination. The language that pupils are taught to describe people with SEND is, at times, old fashioned and lacks sensitivity.

Pupils take part in a range of activities beyond the academic curriculum, including music, drama and sport. They engage in works in the local community, for example by providing prepared vegetables to local families. This work aims to develop their sense of civic responsibility.

The proprietor and governors take a keen interest in the school and provide helpful challenge to leaders about many aspects of the school's work. They work closely and supportively with families. For example, they ensure that financial hardship is never a bar to opportunity or support. Leaders consider staff well-being and workload thoughtfully.

However, leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met. This is because they have not ensured that pupils receive impartial careers advice. They have also not implemented the statutory guidance on RSE. At the request of parents, all pupils have been withdrawn from sex education. However, leaders do not have a suitable curriculum for sex education, should a pupil who is eligible to request it do so. RSE does not reflect the law as it applies to relationships, including content about the different types of respectful relationships that people may have, with reference to the protected characteristics. This affects pupils' readiness for life outside of school.

Leaders ensure that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are knowledgeable and vigilant. They ensure that pupils learn how to stay safe, including online. Leaders provide staff with rigorous training. This means that concerns about pupils' welfare are quickly identified and reported.

Leaders follow up quickly and effectively if they identify that pupils' welfare and safety could be at risk. Where needed, leaders make external referrals to ensure that suitable help is given. They think carefully about individual needs and work sensitively with families. Leaders ensure that counselling is available on site. They keep scrupulous records and constantly consider how to help individuals.

Leaders ensure that they carry out the appropriate checks to recruit staff.

The safeguarding policy reflects the most recent guidance from the Secretary of State. It is made available to parents on request.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is not as well developed as it is in other year groups. Sometimes, teaching does not identify and focus on the key things that pupils need to learn and master in order to achieve the intended curriculum aims. Leaders need to continue their work to strengthen the curriculum in these year groups so that pupils' readiness for their future learning is well supported.

- Pupils at this school receive help with choosing post-14 and post-16 options. However, they do not receive impartial careers advice. This restricts their ability to make informed choices. Leaders need to ensure that all pupils receive broad and impartial careers guidance, including when they are in Year 12.
- Leaders have planned a broad PSHE curriculum. However, not enough thought has been given to building pupils' awareness of difference over time, including the protected characteristics. Pupils are not carefully supported to build their awareness of faiths and cultures that are different to their own. Leaders need to improve the planning and delivery of the PSHE curriculum. They should make sure that it enables pupils to be fully aware of and respectful towards difference, including different cultures, traditions and faiths. They should also make sure that teaching about differences pays regard to the protected characteristics and the legal protections that people with protected characteristics have.
- Leaders have not ensured that the statutory guidance for RSE is implemented. They have not made suitable arrangements to ensure that, at the point pupils are able to request sex education rather than be withdrawn, a suitable programme of study is in place should such a request be made. Teaching about relationships education does not reflect the law as it applies to relationships. Leaders need to ensure that arrangements for RSE pay regard to the statutory guidance and meet the requirements of the independent school 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.

School details

Unique reference number	101388
DfE registration number	302/6092
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10254635
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 17
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	321
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	19
Number of part-time pupils	Not applicable
Proprietor	Benzion Freshwater
Chair	Benzion Freshwater
Headteacher	Rabbi Mendel Chissick
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7200
Telephone number	0208 203 4322
Website	Not applicable
Email address	e.fletcher@bjgs.org
Date of previous inspection	9 to 11 October 2018

Information about this school

- The Beth Jacob Grammar School provides education for girls from 11 to 17 years of age from Jewish Orthodox families. It serves a Jewish community in north-west London.
- Pupils undergo a selection process for the school. This involves considering their religious observance and academic background.
- The school is registered for 330 pupils. Most pupils leave at the end of Year 11. However, a small number of pupils remain at the school until the end of Year 12 and complete their A-level courses within one year.
- Pupils learn a secular and a religious curriculum. Around 60% of time is devoted to the secular curriculum.
- Leaders do not make use of any off-site or alternative provision for pupils.
- The school does not have a website, but leaders make policies and information available to parents on request.
- Childcare provision operates on the school site for the children of staff. This provision is registered and inspected separately.

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 headteacher and other members of the leadership team, as well as with staff who have responsibility for safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, personal development and SEND.
- Inspectors undertook deep dives in the following subjects: mathematics, art, computing and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at the curriculum for other subjects, including English.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke to the designated safeguarding lead teachers. They reviewed the single central record. The safeguarding policy and examples of how leaders and staff supported pupils' welfare and safety were considered. Inspectors also spoke to teachers and pupils.

- Inspectors reviewed responses to the inspection survey received from parents and staff. There were no survey responses from pupils, but inspectors spoke to several groups of pupils, including those who attend the sixth form.
- At leaders' request, inspectors did not ask pupils about certain aspects of RSE, and some of the protected characteristics.

Inspection team

Alice Clay, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sahreen Siddiqui

Ofsted Inspector

Nick Turvey

His 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(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[9];
 - 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;

- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor-
 - 2A(1)(b) ensures that every registered pupil who is provided with secondary education at the school is provided with relationships and sex education, except in so far as the pupil is excused as mentioned in sub-paragraph (2),
 - 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(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; and

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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