

Inspection of Pardes House Grammar School

Hendon Lane, Finchley, London N3 1SA

Inspection dates: 2 to 4 July 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

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?

Pupils are happy and kept safe in this school. They enjoy their time here and they are keen to learn, in both their religious and secular studies. Pupils trust that adults in the school will help them if they ever have any worries. During breaktimes, pupils enjoy playing football with their friends in the playground. At lunchtime, many pupils take advantage of the library and enjoy reading quietly to themselves.

The school is ambitious for its pupils. It offers a broad secular curriculum which enables pupils to study for a range of subjects at GCSE, including English and mathematics. However, the school's ambition is not consistently realised. The curriculum does not enable pupils to learn subject content securely and in depth across all areas of learning that independent schools are required to offer. This limits the progression of pupils' knowledge and reduces how well they are prepared for further study in the future.

Pupils behave well. They are polite to one another and respectful to staff and visitors. Inappropriate language is not tolerated, and it is seldom heard.

Pupils are keen to take up positions of responsibility in school, for example as the 'Purim rebbe'. In carrying out their roles, pupils enjoy setting a good example to younger pupils.

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

The school has designed a curriculum that is broad, as defined by the independent school standards. Subjects are designed to cover ambitious content, and the school's curriculum thinking is based on the main aims of the national curriculum.

Subject leaders have thought carefully about how to sequence the content so that pupils build on previous learning step by step and can attempt more complex tasks based on these building blocks. For example, in mathematics pupils learn how to calculate percentages before progressing to percentage changes. This allows pupils to progress to compound interest calculations at a later stage. Nevertheless, because pupils are required to take their GCSE options at the end of Year 7, opportunities for them to develop their understanding in some areas of learning are reduced. For example, from Year 8 onwards, pupils continue to have a scientific education through studying for a GCSE in physics. However, there are few opportunities for them to build their knowledge in other aspects of science.

Teachers are specialists in their subject areas and, mostly, they select appropriate learning activities during lessons. As a result, pupils are supported to commit new knowledge to their long-term memories. For example, Year 7 pupils develop a secure understanding of the British political system. They are supported appropriately to apply their knowledge to discuss current events and topics, such as the 2024 General Election, in a balanced manner. However, the school does not have a clear and rigorous approach to checking what pupils know and remember across

all subject areas. Pupils are not supported consistently well to reflect on mistakes that they have made and correct them. As a result, they develop misconceptions and have gaps in their understanding. In addition, staff do not have access to relevant up-to-date training in their subject areas. As a result, there are times when teaching is not as focused as it could be on the key knowledge and skills that pupils need to know and remember.

The school has systems in place to assess pupils' prior learning when they join the school in Year 7. This includes systems to identify pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). When the school identifies that pupils need additional support to access the curriculum, they make sure to share this with staff. However, the school has not thought about how to break down the curriculum into smaller chunks so that pupils with SEND can access it appropriately in class. The school's approach to supporting pupils with SEND places an over-reliance on removing pupils from class to practise exam-style questions. These extra sessions do not identify the key knowledge that pupils with SEND need to go over again and do not support them well in progressing through the curriculum.

The school assesses pupils' reading ability when they join the school. Leaders put appropriate support in place for those pupils who are not yet accurate and fluent readers. Leaders have invested in developing the range of books available in the school library. This includes responding to requests made by pupils about the books that they like to read. As a result, pupils are keen to read for pleasure during their lunchtimes.

Leaders are rigorous in checking pupil attendance. There are secure systems in place to check on those pupils not in school. This includes first-day calling to parents and carers if a pupil is absent. Leaders have recently introduced a new behaviour policy. Pupils and staff agree that this is clear. As a result, pupil behaviour in lessons and around the school is improving. Pupils behave well overall. Low-level disruption is not common, but teachers now have appropriate systems to deal with this if it does occur.

The school has designed a personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme through which pupils are taught to respect all people, regardless of their background. Topics in the PSHE programme follow weekly themes linked to the Torah. These are repeated each year and discussed in an age-appropriate way with pupils. Pupils also learn about other faiths. They enjoy taking on leadership roles during several religious festivals through the year. Educational visits are built into the curriculum. For example, pupils take part in an annual visit to the Houses of Parliament. Pupils are also encouraged to develop their independence skills on annual educational visits to Hungary and Poland. Visiting speakers add to a careers curriculum that introduces pupils to a range of careers.

The PSHE curriculum does not cover respect for all the different characteristics that people may have, or that people who have these characteristics are protected by law from discrimination. Furthermore, the school's policy and programme for relationships and sex education (RSE) does not follow statutory guidance. The

curriculum does not cover all aspects of relationships education. It does not take fully into account the required content about different forms of relationships that people may have.

The proprietor, chair of governors and headteacher are aware of their statutory responsibilities, including with regards to safeguarding. However, they have not taken effective steps to ensure that the school meets all of the independent school standards consistently. Leaders share an ambition for pupils to successfully progress to their next steps and gain qualifications in several subjects. However, the school has not made sure that the education on offer enables pupils to develop a rich understanding across a range of subjects.

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

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Pupils make GCSE option choices at the end of Year 7, and this reduces how well the curriculum enables them to obtain an understanding in some areas of learning. It also means that pupils are not as well prepared as they should be for their possible next steps in education. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum enables pupils to build secure and deep knowledge equally well across all aspects of learning.
- Staff do not rigorously assess what pupils know and remember during and after lessons. This means that gaps or misconceptions can develop in pupils' understanding that are not corrected. Leaders should introduce methods and strategies of assessment that enable teaching to identify and address errors and misconceptions as they arise.
- The school does not offer staff relevant training in their subject specialisms. As a result, the school does not help staff to be aware of the latest developments in their subject areas, or how they can ensure that teaching promotes effective learning of subject content. Leaders should ensure that staff receive the training that they need to strengthen their teaching practice in their specialist areas so that teaching is well focused on helping pupils to learn the knowledge identified in the curriculum.
- The curriculum is not consistently well adapted or designed to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Extra support that pupils receive is overly focused on preparing pupils for a test rather than breaking down the knowledge that they need to know and remember into manageable chunks. This stops pupils developing their knowledge and understanding effectively. The school needs to ensure that staff know how to adapt teaching to fully meet the needs of pupils with SEND.

- The curriculum for RSE does not take full account of what is required by the statutory guidance about different forms of relationships. The PSHE programme does not promote respect for those with protected characteristics. The school should ensure that all aspects of its approach to RSE and PSHE are planned and implemented in a manner that pays regard to the statutory guidance for RSE and the independent school standards.
- The proprietor and leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards have been met. The proprietor must ensure that all the independent school standards are consistently met.

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School details

Unique reference number	101385
DfE registration number	302/6084
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10322566
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	289
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Michael Lisser
Headteacher	Yitschok Lev
Annual fees (day pupils)	Voluntary contribution
Telephone number	020 8349 4222
Website	None
Email address	office@pardesgrammar.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 May to 28 June 2022

Information about this school

- Pardes House Grammar School is an independent secondary boys' school in Finchley, London. It provides religious and secular education for Jewish Orthodox boys. Pupils typically leave the school at the end of Year 10 and move on to study at a yeshiva.
- The school makes no use of alternative provision.
- The school's most recent inspection was a progress monitoring inspection in May 2023. This followed a standard inspection in May and June 2022.
- Since the last inspection, the school changed its registration from 10 to 16 years of age to 11 to 16 years of age, as the school has decided not to admit pupils of primary age.

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.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's provision.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher (Kodesh), the headteacher (Chol), the proprietor and the chair of the local governing body. Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation provided by the school to check compliance with the independent school standards. They also toured the school's premises.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, geography, mathematics and PSHE. Inspectors visited lessons, reviewed pupils' work, met with pupils to discuss their learning and met with subject leaders and teachers. Inspectors also looked at the curriculum in a range of other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes was observed.

- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff about safeguarding, pupils' behaviour and staff workload. Inspectors looked at parent, pupil and staff responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Mark Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Deborah Walters

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)(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].

- 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.

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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