Inspection of Shiras Devorah High School

1011 Finchley Road, London NW11 7HB

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 September 2024

Overall effectiveness	**Requires improvement**
The quality of education	**Requires improvement**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Outstanding**
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 describe the school as a very caring community and one in which they are happy. They really enjoy their learning and meeting up with friends. Pupils get along well with one another and bullying is rare. Staff know pupils well and they are there to support anyone that may have a concern or worry. Pupils know they can speak to their form tutors if they have any problems. This makes them feel safe in school.

Pupils study a range of secular subjects and complete a broad selection of GCSE and vocational qualifications in these curriculum areas. The school has high expectations for all pupils. It focuses on successfully preparing pupils for their progression to the next stage of their education. The school's work to ensure that pupils learn well across the curriculum has, to date, been effective in some subjects. For example, the school has carefully identified the key knowledge and skills that it wants pupils to know and remember in subjects like English and mathematics. However, this work on the curriculum is not complete in all subjects.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are enthusiastic about their learning and are very attentive in lessons. Teachers have clear routines in class and pupils settle quickly to complete their work. As a result, pupils can focus on their learning with no disruption.

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

The school provides a curriculum that meets the requirements of the independent school standards. In some subject areas, for example English, mathematics, science and geography, the content that pupils learn is broad in scope. In these subjects, the school has ordered the knowledge and skills in a way that builds on pupils' prior learning step by step. This enables pupils to use knowledge to complete more complex tasks as they progress through their learning. For example, in mathematics pupils learn how to order, add and subtract fractions in Year 7. In Year 8, they build on this by learning to multiply and divide fractions. Pupils use this knowledge in Year 9 to solve problems and start work on ratios. However, this level of curriculum thinking has not been applied to all subject areas. As a result, it is not clear what prior knowledge pupils need to know to access new learning. This in turn can lead to gaps in pupils' knowledge or misconceptions developing.

In subjects where the school has clearly sequenced the knowledge and skills that they want pupils to know and remember, teachers make regular checks to identify and correct gaps in knowledge. When teachers identify pupil errors in class, they correct them immediately. The school uses this information to consider whether any knowledge needs to be retaught before pupils move on to the next topic. This also informs the school's thinking for the delivery of topics in the future.

Teachers have good subject knowledge in their specialist subject areas. However, teachers also teach outside of their specialism. The school supports teachers with delivering the subjects as it intends, for instance through weekly meetings, lesson

observations and book checks. This allows the school to support teachers when they are teaching outside their specialism. However, this system is not developed across subject areas where there is a lack of clarity about the key knowledge that pupils need to know and remember. This means that the school does not provide teachers with the professional development needed to deliver lessons effectively across all the subjects that they teach.

The school has systems in place to identify pupils' prior learning when they join in Year 7. This includes checking all pupils' reading as well as systems to identify any special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school ensures that pupils with SEND receive the support that they need to access the full curriculum, including pre-teaching some topics to pupils and one-to-one support outside the classroom. Pupils with SEND access the full range of subjects. Most pupils join the school being able to read fluently and accurately. On the rare occasion that this is not the case, pupils receive support to catch up quickly.

Pupils are mature and take responsibility for their own behaviour. They are highly respectful to one another and to staff. Pupils are motivated by the school system of merits and they value the rewards that they receive. For example, pupils enjoyed their trip to the beach and, on another occasion, a boat trip on the Thames. Pupils attend school well and the school has robust systems in place to check on any absences.

The school has designed a personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme through which pupils learn about, in general terms, respecting all people, regardless of their background, beliefs or choices. Pupils also learn about fundamental British values in their citizenship lessons. They encounter different faiths and beliefs across the curriculum, including, for example, in texts they read in English and when learning about the Spanish Inquisition in history. Educational visits include trips to the Science Museum. These are being reintroduced following the pause during the pandemic. The personal development provision supports pupils to gain teamwork and leadership skills throughout their time in school.

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. For example, it does not fully take into account the required content about different forms of relationships that people may have.

The proprietor, supported by governors and headteachers, understands his statutory duties, including those related to safeguarding. Parents and carers have a very positive view of the work of the school. However, the proprietor has not taken effective action to make sure that the school consistently meets all the independent school standards. The proprietor supports leaders to recruit suitably qualified teachers to deliver the secular curriculum.

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)

- The school has not made sure that the curriculum in all subject areas is sequenced in a way that helps pupils to build their knowledge step by step and apply what they know to more complex ideas. Where this work has not been done on the curriculum, pupils find it harder to learn new concepts because they do not have the building blocks of knowledge needed to access this learning. The school should ensure that all subjects are sequenced so that pupils learn the knowledge that they require to successfully understand future learning.
- In some instances, staff do not get the training that they need to implement the curriculum effectively. Sometimes, staff expertise in key subject knowledge or the pedagogical knowledge of how best to teach a topic is underdeveloped. As a result, pupils struggle to learn key concepts. The school should ensure that it identifies and puts in place the support that staff need to implement the intended curriculum to all pupils effectively, including those with SEND.
- The curriculum for RSE does not take full account of what is required by the statutory guidance, for example 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.

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	145946
DfE registration number	302/6016
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10322596
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	74
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Anthony Adler
Headteacher	Sara Craimer
Annual fees (day pupils)	Voluntary and variable
Telephone number	020 7183 4858
Website	No website
Email address	admin@sdevorah.org
Dates of previous inspection	21 to 23 June 2022

Information about this school

- This is an independent secondary day school for girls of Orthodox Jewish faith. It is located at 1011 Finchley Road, London NW11 7HB.
- Though registered for pupils aged 11 to 18, the school does not provide sixth-form provision to students aged over 16. The school is registered to admit 98 pupils.
- The school's most recent inspection was its last progress monitoring inspection in March 2024.
- The school's previous full inspection took place in June 2022.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

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 education 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 co-headteachers (Chol), the proprietor and a member 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. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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
Katerina Christodoulou	Ofsted 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;

- 2A(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor-
  - 2(A)(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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