

BETH JACOB GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

STRATFORD ROAD

LONDON NW4 2AT

Reporting Inspector: Roy Long HMI

Date of Inspection: 29 January - 1 February 2001

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Information about the school

Name of the school:	Beth Jacob Grammar School for Girls
Type of school:	Secondary
Status:	Independent
Association membership:	None
Age range of pupils:	11-17
Gender of pupils:	Female
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	303
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	0
Number of boarders:	None
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	3
Number of pupils with English as an additional language:	2

Termly fees (day pupils):	£1350
Termly fees (boarders):	Not applicable
School address:	Stratford Road, London NW4 2AT
Telephone number:	020 8203 4322
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Headteacher:	Mrs Ann Devorah Steinberg
Proprietor:	Beth Jacob Grammar School for Girls Limited
Chair of the governing body:	Mr Benzion Freshwater
DfEE number:	302/6092

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

Information about the school

This inspection was carried out at the request of the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, who has asked for reporting inspections to be undertaken in all schools that have a number of publicly funded pupils. The purpose of the report was to advise the Secretary of State about the school's suitability for registration under the Education Act 1996. To this end, the report concentrates on those aspects of the school relevant to that purpose.

Beth Jacob Grammar School for Girls is an independent day school serving a section of the strictly observant Jewish community of north London. It was established in 1980 and occupied split-site premises in Golders Green; in 1998 it moved to purpose-built premises in Hendon. It has 303 pupils on roll. Of these three have statements of special educational needs and for whom the school who receives funding from the London Borough of Barnet.

There are no published criteria covering eligibility for entrance to the school. While there is a formal entrance examination, it appears from discussion with the school that it is non-selective as far as ability is concerned and that criteria relating to the level of religious observance play a significant part in determining admission. The school does not make use of the data that are available from Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results and does not have a clear picture of the range of attainment of pupils on entry. The majority of pupils come from one maintained Jewish primary school, with smaller numbers from two other maintained primary schools.

In the absence of a current school prospectus there is no stated set of aims and objectives for the school, but the headteacher was able to provide the original aims of the school. These are:

- to provide a comprehensive Limmudei Kodesh (religious studies) programme so that graduates from the school will be able to enter the seminary of their choice, having already achieved a high standard;
- to provide a sound secular education up to General Certificate of Education (GCE) levels under the tuition of qualified staff, so as to more than satisfy the recruiting requirements of discerning employers;
- to concentrate on character training by instilling into its girls a love and genuine appreciation of good character traits.

Beth Jacob Grammar School for Girls is an effective school which provides a good education for its pupils and achieves very good results in public examinations. It is a school which shows considerable care for its pupils and is concerned that they should have good religious and moral understanding; in this it is very successful. It helps to lay a good academic and religious foundation from which girls can proceed to further study, should they so wish. The school has had one headteacher since it was established in 1980; she has led the school very well and, with the backing of the school's governing body and the able support of the senior management team and of heads of subject, she has led the school to its present position.

What the school does well

- The school is highly successful in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral and social development within the context of a strictly observant Jewish educational philosophy.
- Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and they attain standards above the national average for similar schools at GCSE, A-level, and in the City and Guilds vocational examinations.
- The quality of teaching is generally good throughout the school and across all subjects.
- In spite of time constraints, the school offers its pupils a rich curriculum which balances its religious and secular strands.
- The school cares very well for its pupils and promotes very good relationships among pupils and between pupils and adults.
- Pupils' behaviour is good, they have very positive attitudes towards the school, and the school is successful in promoting their welfare, but it needs to provide a clearly documented child protection policy.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- The school is very well led and there is good management at all levels.
- The accommodation is well used to provide a stimulating environment for teaching and learning.

What could be improved

- In a number of subject areas the school needs to look at whether sufficient time is available for the requirements of the subject.
- The school needs to ensure that staff involved in supporting children with special educational needs have clear criteria and targets to work to.
- It should look for ways to improve the use of information and communication (ICT) across the school.

- It needs to review its library provision and improve the range of reference books and other material relevant to the secular strand of the curriculum.
- There are no formal job descriptions to make clear what staff responsibilities are.
- The school does not have a current prospectus and there are no clear statements of aim for either Kodesh or secular subjects, or written policies which would help subject departments deliver any whole school policies.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the school's action plan.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

This is the first reporting inspection carried out at Beth Jacob Grammar School for Girls, but registration inspection visits have routinely been carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). The last of these was in February 1999, shortly after the school had moved to its new premises. Since then, the school has made good use of its new facilities to provide an environment in which good quality teaching and learning can take place.

Standards

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils based on GCSE examination results.

Performance in	compared with all schools in England			Key	
	1998	1999	2000		
				well above average above average	A B
				average below average	C D
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	well below average	E

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 17-year-olds based on average point scores in Key Stage 3 tests and GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in	compared with all schools in England			Key	
	1998	1999	2000		
				well above average above average	A B
GCSE	A	A	A	Average	C

examinations					below average	D
A-levels/AS-levels	B	B	B		well below average	E

Pupils' attitudes and learning

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to the school and to their learning are very good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is almost always good, although there are a few minor lapses in lessons when pupils interrupt each other.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good and the school is successful in promoting personal development.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is rich and effectively combines religious and secular strands.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is good, although the reviews of the progress of pupils with statements of special educational needs now needs to take place annually.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is very good. It is set within the context of the strictly observant Jewish tradition.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is a caring community in which individuals and their needs are well known.

How well the school is led and managed

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Since it was established, the school has been very well led by the headteacher and management is sound at all levels. However, there needs to be a clear definition of job descriptions and fuller schemes of work need to be developed.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are well used, but the school needs more computers and a wider range of secular books in the library.

Parents' and carers' views of the school

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children like the school • good progress is made • behaviour is good • teaching is good • the school is approachable • there are high expectations • the school is well led • personal development is sound 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more opportunities for extra-curricular activities • closer working with parents • more information about pupils' progress

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and they attain standards above the national average for similar schools in public examinations. In 2000, 87 per cent of pupils in Year 11 achieved grades A*-C in five or more subjects compared with the national average of 53 per cent. Approximately 68 per cent of the girls achieved grades A*-C in seven, eight or nine subjects. This represents an improvement on the corresponding figures for 1999.

In 2000 88 per cent of pupils gained GCSE grades A*-C and 65 per cent gained A*-B grades respectively. In both years, the national averages for girls in maintained secondary schools were 58 per cent and 34 per cent respectively and the proportion of the entries awarded grades A* or A were similar to the national norms for pupils in maintained selective schools.

Most girls achieved high grades in the GCSE examination in Biblical Hebrew: 68 per cent of the entries were awarded grades A*-B in 1999 and 77 per cent achieved this standard in 2000.

Most of the girls entered for A-level examinations in 1999 and 2000 were successful. The pass rates were 93 per cent in 1999 and 100 per cent in 2000. The corresponding national averages for girls in maintained secondary schools were 90 per cent and 91 per cent, respectively. The results achieved in 1999 were similar to the national averages at all grade levels: in 2000 the results were higher than the corresponding national averages at all grade levels.

In recent years, girls in Years 10, 11 and 12, have also been successful in vocational examinations organised by City and Guilds of the London Institute. Large numbers of girls have successfully completed courses in applications of information and communication technology (ICT) at elementary, intermediate or advanced levels, and small numbers have achieved passes in Design for Fashion and a very small number in cookery.

High standards of literacy are achieved. Girls express ideas well and read demanding texts with understanding; they are also very effective in discussion in the classrooms. Appropriate emphasis in mathematics is given to the development of the girls' skills in mental calculation. Skills taught in mathematics lessons are used effectively in subjects across the curriculum, particularly physics but also geography. Skills in graphical representation are particularly well used in science, although in this subject girls occasionally turn to calculators too quickly to carry out easy calculations.

Girls with special educational needs are given effective support in the classrooms or through one-to-one tuition. They make good progress and achieve standards of work commensurate with their capabilities.

Standards of work in English, mathematics and science are very good and are reflected in the most recent results in public examinations. More detailed reference to standards of work in English, mathematics and science are included in Part D of the report. Observation in lessons and scrutiny of written work indicate that standards are above average in art, French, history and geography, and in Kodesh subjects. Standards are average in physical education.

An entrance examination is set by the school in consultation with primary schools. This consists of written tests in English and mathematics, which are marked by the staff of the school. The results are sent to the primary schools who comment if the results are not in line with their data. Subsequently there are also meetings with the heads or deputy heads who provide the school with information on individual pupils; this is used to help determine class groupings. Girls are not entered for the National Curriculum tests in Year 9. The results achieved in GCSE and A-level examinations over the last two years represent high levels of achievement, and the inspection indicates that pupils' progress is good. The range of attainment in each year group is wide and it is evident that the girls benefit from the high quality of much of the teaching in small classes, together with their own very positive attitudes to learning.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

The girls at Beth Jacob Grammar School come from a religious community which places a strong emphasis on learning as a life-time experience and which has a long tradition of formal and informal education. The school itself stands within a tradition

which pioneered a sound education for girls which combined traditional study of religious subjects with a secular curriculum. It is clear that the girls understand this tradition and value their school, their education and their teachers very highly. They are keen and well motivated and have a very positive attitude to the school, and this is reflected in their behaviour and in their personal development.

The school gives its pupils very clear guidance about how it expects them to behave, and directions about this are to be found in the pupils' handbook and in the school rules. In the pupils' handbook, in particular, the encouragement to good behaviour is rooted firmly in the community's religious values and expectations.

Behaviour, both in class and around the school, is usually very good, and the girls are courteous and polite, respectful and conscientious. The school's clear expectations for hard work and good behaviour are understood by the girls, but this does not inhibit personal responses and initiative, and in lessons they contribute to their own learning in a positive way. They are allowed the freedom to develop their own understanding and ideas by intervening with comments and questions of their own. Very occasionally they can become too exuberant and there are times when girls are so eager to take part in discussion that they fail to listen to each other. This never becomes disruptive, but some teachers do not have the experience or the appropriate strategies to cope with such behaviour. The pupils usually work well together, and very positive examples were seen in science, where in practical sessions they showed concern for each other's safety, and in geography, where there is evidence that the field work encourages self-confidence, corporate learning and socialisation.

Relationships among the girls and between them and their teachers are very good and there is a caring atmosphere in the school. The impact of the school's programme for personal development is strong: the girls are concerned for each others' welfare and are aware of individuals' needs. There is no evidence of sustained bullying and on the rare occasions when such behaviour has come to the school's notice it has been dealt with speedily and effectively.

All the girls in the school come from strictly observant Jewish homes and most follow the same traditions and practices; indeed, most have studied together in the same primary school. However, there are a few girls from other primary schools and some who have different religious practices within the orthodox tradition; such differences are respected and valued. Girls are introduced to the idea of tolerance for others, for example in English, where some of the literature studied emphasises the dangers of racism.

In general, girls show great respect for their environment and the corridor walls are decorated with a wide range of pupils' work, but despite exhortations to care for the environment and rules to the effect, there is evidence of untidiness in lockers, and occasionally in cloakrooms and toilets.

Attendance

Pupils' attendance is satisfactory and the percentage of authorised absence for the year 2000 was 7.2 per cent. No examples of unauthorised absence were noted. Despite the

distances that some pupils have to travel to school there are few instances of lateness and punctuality during the school day is generally good.

The school maintains both its statutory admission register and its daily attendance registers in accordance with the current regulations. The attendance registers are marked daily at the start of both the morning and afternoon sessions and distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absence. There are good procedures in place for signing in at the school office for pupils who may arrive late.

During 2000 one pupil was excluded from school. This was as a result of repeated instances of behaviour that ran counter to the school's ethos.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Overall, teaching is good and often very good and has a very positive impact on pupils' learning. In the sixth form, and in the examination years, the teaching seen was particularly good, especially in Kodesh and in mathematics, French and science. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, and can teach with confidence, using methods that are effective for the girls. The teachers know the girls' strengths and weaknesses particularly well. In over a hundred lessons observed, only three lessons, not all taught by the same teacher, were less than satisfactory: here the objectives of the lesson were not made sufficiently clear to pupils, and pupils' natural exuberance needed channelling to a useful purpose. Girls who have difficulties with their work, are generally very well served by the system of extra tutorials, which are arranged flexibly, according to perceived need. In the teaching there is an appropriate balance between knowledge and skills.

Teachers all have appropriate qualifications. In English, lessons are well planned to make best use of the limited time available. In this subject, as in many history lessons, teachers are good at developing a running dialogue with their classes, particularly when they are reading or discussing stories or poems. In mathematics, the teaching in the first three years in the school is generally good and in all the succeeding years, the teaching is very good. In science, the teaching is mostly good, and at GCSE and at A level, it is very good. There is a clear focus in science lessons on literacy and numeracy, where appropriate. There are links with the mathematics department which ensure that common areas are taught at appropriate times so that, for example, conversions in graphs or diagrams are properly understood. In geography, there is good teaching throughout, with valuable practical fieldwork enabling some effective use of computers at times, and a suitably wide range of teaching and learning methods. French has a good blend of methodical teaching and very demanding tasks. The staff, four out of five of whom are native speakers of French, know how these girls learn and have high expectations of their pupils. Here as in many subjects, the shortage of curriculum time in the first three years requires a brisk pace, and this is generally effective. Pupils learn well and are enthusiastic volunteers to read or to speak. In history, discussions are well used. Lessons are sometimes structured so that pupils discuss problems or conflicting points of view in pairs before debating in plenary. This has the advantage of involving all pupils in the lesson; helping them to think for themselves.

Homework is almost always set and much time is spent on this; it is generally marked well. In most subjects, there is an end-of-topic test, which is very strictly marked, in line with the good practice in Kodesh. In some subjects, including history, the criteria for awarding marks in GCSE or A level are discussed. Although there is no written policy on marking, in many subjects there is good practice with marks awarded and praise given along with suggestions as to how the work can be improved still further.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

As an independent school Beth Jacob Grammar School is not required to follow the National Curriculum, but it is required that the instruction should be efficient and suitable, bearing in mind the age and sex of the pupils. The school meets this requirement.

The school stands within an orthodox Jewish educational tradition which dates from the middle of the 19th century CE and which combines sound religious education with an appropriate education in secular subjects. In this, the school is very successful. In traditional fashion, the curriculum is divided into two strands: Limmudei Kodesh (religious studies) and Limmudei Chol (secular studies): it provides a wide Kodesh curriculum together with most elements of the National Curriculum, and an appropriate range of external examination courses, both at GCSE and A level.

The Kodesh curriculum covers all the main elements of what is considered by the community which the school serves to be an appropriate education for Jewish girls. It includes study of Torah, ethics, and those things which a Jewish woman needs to know in order to sustain an orthodox home and family life. The secular curriculum includes the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science, together with history, geography, French, art, home economics, textiles, ICT, and physical education. There are also general knowledge lessons for Years 7, 8 and 10, and although music does not feature as a discrete subject, music does occur within some of the extra-curricular activities. The balance between the two strands of the curriculum is good and the overall result is that pupils have access to an educational experience that is particularly rich and rewarding.

At Key Stage 3, the secular curriculum is generally satisfactory and the arrangements for coverage are appropriate. In English, which has four periods a week, two lessons each are devoted to Language and Literature and the two elements are taught by different teachers. Although the school offers well thought out reasons for this, the arrangement does hinder flexibility. Otherwise, the range of stories, poems and drama used in English is good. Setting occurs in mathematics from Year 8 onwards and the organisation of the teaching groups is appropriate and helpful. The science curriculum is well structured and makes use of textbooks which link the content to the National Curriculum. There are some constraints because of religious and cultural beliefs, but even after taking these into account the science is broad and balanced. In French the allocation of time has recently been reduced to three periods a week; this is inadequate. Similarly, there is insufficient time for physical education, although additional sporting activities do take place at lunchtime.

In Key Stage 4 girls take a core of English, mathematics and physical education, and there is a system of guided options in other subjects. The coverage for subjects at GCSE level is generally appropriate. The school has given serious consideration to its provision in Key Stage 4; in particular, it has looked at the possibility that all groups should do science, but there are restrictions imposed by the limited space available and this suggestion has not been pursued.

A limited number of subjects are offered at A level, all of them taken in one year. Taken as a whole, the curriculum provides girls with a sound education and prepares them for entrance to a Jewish seminary. This is the preferred option for almost all of the girls and it gives them the opportunity to continue their religious education. There is no formal careers education, but pupils are given guidance about which seminary to choose.

Links between the two strands of the curriculum are being developed, although they are not well documented. Some teachers teach both Kodesh and secular subjects. In history, links between Jewish history and world history are explored and during the academic year 1999-2000 the Kodesh and science staff co-operated in a project on the metals mentioned in the Bible.

The school provides enrichment both within the school day through regular religious observance, and through extra-curricular activities, including visits to old people in the community. There are visits to places of interest, for example to the Science Museum where the education officer helps planning and coverage to suit the school's needs. In science, teachers draw effectively on pupils' general knowledge and carefully link science to their religious and cultural background. The walks in the Lake District or in Wales help build girls' character and self-confidence in a different environment but still within the culture and ethos of the community.

Pupils at the school are able to take part in extra-curricular activities. Some of these, such as lunchtime sports events, occur on a daily or weekly basis, but others are seasonal. A large number of Year 9 pupils take part in an annual walking holiday which involves staying in a youth hotel, either in Wales or the Lake District, and after they have completed their GCSE examinations, Year 11 girls also have a residential weekend. These activities help to build up the girls' self-confidence in a different environment, yet still within the culture and ethos of the community. There is an annual show produced by the girls of Year 10, who not only produce and direct the show, but also make all the costumes, organise the brochure, paint scenery and organise the stage lighting and the sound effects. In December 2000 the show raised £3000 for ICT equipment.

Girls are encouraged to take part in voluntary extra-curricular activity through the Chessed programme, by which they can undertake social work within the community, either on a regular or emergency basis. For example, they help families with specific needs, visit old people's homes to entertain them, and occasionally organise projects for raising money for such things as a holiday scheme for children with terminal illness.

There is no programme of personal and social education as such, but many of the topics that would normally find a place in such a programme are covered in the

Kodesh strand of the curriculum. The school has also recently introduced a study programme called Derech (the way) which includes a study of different aspects of Jewish life and behaviour each week. All of these things, which are ultimately rooted in study of the Torah and other classical Jewish writings, enable pupils to understand what sort of behaviour and attitudes are expected of them.

The school has very good links with the strictly observant Jewish communities from which its pupils are drawn, and community rabbis come into the school to contribute to the religious curriculum. There are no formal links with other schools but there have been occasions when joint religious activities have been organised. By arrangement with the Gateshead Seminary, four pupils come to the school each year for supervised teaching practice.

A great strength of the school is its programme for the development, within the Jewish tradition, of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Much of this is done through the high quality Kodesh teaching, but all girls take part in daily afternoon prayers and other assemblies. The atmosphere of the school is permeated with a Jewish atmosphere which helps to form very positive attitudes. While there is little that is done to give systematic instruction about other faith or cultural communities an understanding of the wider world is given in a positive way in both strands of the curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

The school cares very well for its pupils and places a high priority on their health, safety and happiness, both in and out of school. The school has a very distinctive ethos, characterised by mutual respect and concern, and individuals, whether staff or pupils, accept responsibility for the care and support of each other. Teachers know pupils very well and this gives the girls the confidence that there is always someone to whom they can turn with their academic and pastoral concerns. The person to whom pupils frequently turn is the headteacher, who is held in high esteem by pupils and staff alike.

There are guidelines for the security, protection, health and safety of pupils. Risk assessments are routinely undertaken, and pupils work safely in the laboratory and domestic science areas. Several members of staff have first-aid qualifications and there are appropriate procedures for dealing with accidents or illness. All staff are checked against police and Department for Education and Employment records.

The school has an accepted policy for dealing with issues of child protection, but this is not formally documented. Where such issues have occurred, they have been handled personally by the headteacher and, when required, a Jewish agency has occasionally been involved. The school needs to address this issue in a positive way and provide training for staff so that they are able to recognise potential symptoms.

The school monitors pupils' academic performance closely by means of monthly tests, and keeps effective track of their progress. Work is set and marked regularly, but there is a noticeable difference between the quality of marking in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Few departments have clear policies for marking pupils' work, and in Key Stage 3 this results in marking which is inconsistent and often mechanical and

insufficiently developmental. At Key Stage 4 the marking is better: teachers use the GCSE criteria closely, and this gives pupils a clear idea of how to improve their work. This is also true of the marking of the monthly tests.

Progress reports, improvement sheets and a system of merits and demerits encourage hard work and good behaviour, and ensure that the school identifies difficulties or concerns effectively and acts on them rapidly. Teachers give generously of their time to support individuals who need help.

There are three pupils with statements of special educational need who receive funding through the London Borough of Barnet, and a further 50 pupils whom the school has identified and placed on its register of special needs. All staff are aware of the statemented pupils and cater effectively for their needs, but a recent review of provision for them highlighted the failure to review statements. The special educational needs co-ordinator, who has only been in post for one year, has subsequently contacted the local educational authority and dates for formal reviews have now been set.

There is no Special Needs Policy and the criteria for identifying special needs are wide and varied. The 50 pupils who are at present on the register of special needs receive a variety of support, either through setting arrangements, targeted support in classes, or through tutorials. Staff involved in support through the tutorials are usually nominated by the headteacher and are matched to the pupils' perceived needs. However, staff may be asked to support pupils with no criteria or targets to work to, and they are expected to write their own individual education programmes (IEPs). These IEPs are not time limited, the targets are general, and therefore they are not always an effective tool for monitoring pupils' progress. Notwithstanding this, the quality of teaching is almost always good, particularly in the tutorials and small group lessons, and individual needs, whether academic, personal, or emotional, are addressed well.

In the light of its own aims, which are firmly based in the beliefs and ethics of orthodox Judaism, the school prepares its pupils well for their current and future lives.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

The school meets its stated aims of encouraging and maintaining close links with parents and of keeping them informed of pupils' progress through the school. The main cycle of annual reports (two in most year groups), adequately covers progress in subjects, general achievement and behaviour, and incorporates comments for effort as well as achievement. The staff handbook contains helpfully detailed guidelines for reporting by subject and form teachers.

The main cycle of reports is supplemented by interim progress reports for individual pupils when the need arises, and by direct contact with parents. The main points arising in telephone conversations are logged and all relevant correspondence kept on file.

According to the school some 80 per cent of parents attend parents' evenings, and those who are prevented from attending by family or business commitments generally communicate with the school or are seen at other times. The small minority of less forthcoming parents are contacted directly. From Year 9 upwards, girls are now able to join their parents at parents' evenings, and pupils welcome this possibility. Much effort goes into the discussion of subject options and decisions for the future prior to the end of Year 11.

Participation by parents in extra-curricular activities such as camps or educational visits is not expected or encouraged by the school, but parents attend ceremonies and performances in school.

Parents demonstrate overwhelming support for the school and show confidence that the education that their daughters receive enables them to proceed to further education, should they so wish, and produces worthy and responsible members of society. They show confidence in the dedication and hard work of the headteacher and staff, and although some identified areas for improvement, they felt that these were offset by the warm and caring atmosphere of the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

The headteacher provides excellent spiritual and pastoral leadership and has the strong support of the governing body. This comprises five men, including three rabbis, some of whom are leaders of other Jewish schools, and also the founder and proprietor of Beth Jacob School. They meet regularly and are closely involved in the governance of the school, which here includes framing the school rules and deciding admissions.

Many policies are commonly shared but few are formally recorded; an example is the school's child protection policy. In practice, there are well intentioned procedures and very good liaison between staff. However, because these policies and procedures are not recorded in writing, it is difficult to ensure consistency or continuity in the long term. All pastoral and academic concerns are known to the headteacher who has many contacts and demonstrates the ability to solve problems either personally or through others.

The headteacher provides staff with a clear picture of the way their contribution is valued but there is no formal system of staff appraisal. There are regular meetings of the senior management team and decisions are recorded in a book but not widely disseminated. Heads of departments' meetings are minuted and these are available to all staff; they provide a valuable record and source of information.

Few departments have formalised policies or schemes of work other than a summary of the topics covered or a précis of the textbook used, although geography has a particularly effective scheme of work. However, staff in subjects work well together. There are no departmental budgets; in this small school, the headteacher has a clear overview of the finances of the departments. There are generally adequate resources and textbooks and worksheets. However, the library has many gaps at present. There are no secular reference books, except for sets of atlases for geography. Weekly departmental meetings enable the swapping of ideas and resources and in many

departments this involves discussing teaching methodology. The relationships between the two strands of the curriculum are good and constructive; there are good links between the teaching of Jewish history in Kodesh and the teaching of secular history.

Staffing is appropriate. Most staff are well qualified in the subjects they teach and most have teaching qualifications that provide a very good match. Staffing is generally sufficient, well qualified with a good impact on standards and on the quality of teaching.

In-service training has been made available to most teachers but this has been limited to examination board updates rather than a wider range of subject teaching and classroom management topics. The range of in-service training provided for staff focuses mainly on public examinations and their changing rubrics, which is clearly beneficial. Very few teachers however have had access to training by subject associations, which would update their subject knowledge or focus on teaching methods, wider use of information and communication technology, on classroom management or curriculum management. Very few staff have anything approaching a clear job description.

The school building is purpose-built to provide suitable accommodation for the curriculum the school provides. The premises are appropriate and provide a secure and safe environment for the staff and pupils. The hall, the facilities and the classroom provision are carefully designed to be appropriate for the religious and secular roles the school serves. Many of the rooms are beautiful places in which to learn, and the hall, with its stage and roof terrace is a place with an unusual aesthetic. There are enough laboratories to provide the girls with the current curriculum and other rooms which could also be used for teaching science and adequate facilities for computing for their current use. Washing facilities are just adequate for the present numbers.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Beth Jacob Grammar School for Girls is a successful school which fulfils its aims. However, there are areas where it could improve its performance:

- although it sets an entrance examination in Kodesh, English and mathematics, it does not receive Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results from its contributory schools. This means that it lacks all the data that are available and that would contribute towards more comprehensive educational profiles for its new pupils and enable it to plan more effective programmes of study;
- in some subjects, such as French, physical education and science, the courses are constrained by lack of time. While acknowledging how much has to be fitted into the total curriculum time available, the school needs to re-examine time allocations and to consider providing science for all pupils in Key Stage 4;
- the school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs and is trying to plan the annual review for those pupils with statements. It must continue to liaise with the local education authority to ensure that these are carried out at the proper time and in an appropriate manner. Likewise, it

- should review the needs of the pupils on its register of special needs and prioritise those who need individual education programmes;
- at present, the use of ICT is limited and is not available in all subject areas; the school should find ways of increasing the use of this tool to support more areas of the curriculum;
 - the school library is potentially a very attractive room, although on occasion it has to be used for teaching. However, almost all the books in the library are for Kodesh studies and the school is failing to provide its pupils with resource materials to support the textbooks used in secular subjects. While recognising that there are constraints on the range of books that the school considers suitable, it should find ways of improving its provision;
 - more needs to be done to help staff fulfil their roles in the school, for example, by ensuring that all staff have written job descriptions to make clear to them what their responsibilities are;
 - the school does not have a current prospectus with clear statements about the school's aims or admissions policy. It would be helpful to have such a document and to provide written policy documents which would help subject departments deliver whole school policies. The school should also document other policies, especially that relating to child protection.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

<i>Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection</i>							
Number of lessons observed							90
<i>Summary of teaching observed during the inspection</i>							
Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor	
2.5	25.5	52	16.5	3.5	0	0	
<i>The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.</i>							

Information about the school's pupils

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
7	-	44	44
8	-	63	63
9	-	52	52

10	-	42	42
11	-	70	70
12	-	32	32

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils eligible for free school meals
2	3	Not applicable

<i>Attendance</i>			
Authorised absence			Unauthorised absence
	%		%
School data	7.2	School data	0.0
<i>Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.</i>			

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15-year-olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	-	60 (60)	60 (60)
GCSE Results		5 or more grades A*-C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Number of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	52 (46)	58 (55)	61 (59)
	Total	52 (46)	58 (55)	61 (59)
Percentage of pupils	School	87 (77)	95 (92)	100 (98)

achieving the standard specified	National	53 (52)	92 (92)	97 (96)
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Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

<i>Ethnic background of pupils</i>		<i>Exclusions in the last school year</i>			
	No of pupils		Fixed period	Permanent	
Black - Caribbean heritage	-	Black - Caribbean heritage	-	-	
Black - African heritage	-	Black - African heritage	-	-	
Black - other	-	Black - other	-	-	
Indian	-	Indian	-	-	
Pakistani	-	Pakistani	-	-	
Bangladeshi	-	Bangladeshi	-	-	
Chinese	-	Chinese	-	-	
White	303	White	1	1	
Any other minority ethnic group	-	Other minority ethnic groups	-	-	

SURVEY OF PARENTS AND CARERS

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	303
Number of questionnaires returned	47

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57	40	2	-	-
My child is making good progress in school.	62	36	2	-	-
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	45	2	-	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	49	38	6	2	4
The teaching is good.	37	57	2	2	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	66	9	2	-
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	23	-	4	-
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	21	-	-	2
The school works closely with parents.	30	53	11	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	57	32	9	-	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	26	6	-	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	26	37	9	4

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

Standards of work are very good in relation to the age and ability of pupils and to national norms. They are reflected in recent public examination results. There is evidence in written and class work of sound development of abilities in reading, writing, speaking and listening by the time pupils approach GCSE in Years 10 and 11. In both the language and literature courses, GCSE criteria, with grade and mark descriptors are well used to enable pupils as well as teachers to assess progress and performance. Achievement in GCE A-level English Language is sound and also reflected in the public results.

In most of the lessons observed, the teaching was good or very good. Lessons are well planned to make the most of the time available and maintain continuity, including the setting and marking of homework. Good planning is essential since language and literature are taught by different teachers for two 35 minute periods each per week. Teachers combined good exposition, for example about the historical or social context of texts studied, or in debriefing about examinations, with skill and sensitivity in developing round the class discussion. The kind of running dialogue with pupils which frequently occurred was helped by the good relations between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves. High expectations for both work and behaviour went with encouragement to pupils to think for themselves.

In all but a few cases, pupils are keen and well motivated with better than average levels of concentration. Levels of participation in discussion or answering questions were high, with the emphasis on extended contributions rather than brief answers. Even when teachers were in the leading role, pupils were ready to intervene with questions or comments of their own. There was general eagerness to share the reading aloud of texts or of parts in plays, usually with good instant grasp of meaning but, as in discussion, with some over rapid delivery lacking in variation and expression. There were hints that pupils were helped in their response to literature by their reading of the scriptures, and consideration of moral issues in the Kodesh curriculum.

Although standards in Key Stage 3 are good, they could be improved further. Especially in Years 7 and 8 the invitation to pupils to write stories or poems needs to be carefully structured, with reference to good models. There is a need for deliberate emphasis on the improvement and redrafting of selected pieces of written work. Reading aloud from texts or the delivery of prepared talks would also benefit from sharper focus on the expressive and presentational skills involved. It would be helpful if the schemes of work that the department uses included more detailed requirements for the marking and assessment of written work, as well as objectives for the development of specific writing and oral skills.

There are two other matters with a bearing on achievement in English. Closer liaison with the main contributing primary school would be helpful to continuing development in English. Consideration should be given to establishing unified teaching of language and literature at all levels. The two main strands of English are closely related, and both flexibility in the overall time available and continuity from year to year would be easier to achieve, as would collaboration across a year in the teaching of a particular text or topic. GCSE language text books and examinations already use some literacy texts and extracts.

Resources for English are adequate, with well chosen and up-to-date text books and good use of duplicated extracts and of poetry and other audio tapes. A carefully selected range of stories, plays and poems meets the requirements of the school and its faith community, while also being appropriate by the age and interests of pupils. Some of the texts treat Jewish experience in a sensitive and imaginative way. Some pupils, especially older ones, make good individual use of computers for their written work in English. It would be helpful if there were more deliberate use of the school's information technology resources for English purposes.

MATHEMATICS

Very good results were achieved in GCSE examinations in 1999 and 2000. The small numbers of girls entered for A-level examinations in the last two years also achieved good results.

The quality of work in the lessons observed and girls' exercise books ranged from satisfactory to very good. Standards overall are a little above average in Years 7-9, above average in Years 10-11 and well above average in the sixth form. Throughout the school, the quality of work overall is higher than the standards expected of pupils of comparable age nationally. The standards achieved by high-attainers in Years 10 and 11 and girls in the sixth form compare favourably with those of pupils in maintained secondary selective schools: this is reflected in high levels of achievement in GCSE and A-level examinations.

All girls in Years 7-11, cover all the attainment targets of the National Curriculum. The girls' work in exercise books is usually presented neatly. Most girls recall quickly work taught at an earlier stage. Sixth form students, in particular, have good recall of knowledge and techniques mastered during the GCSE course and, as a result, new concepts are quickly mastered and progress is made in lessons at a rapid rate. A significant factor contributing to the high standards is the confidence of the girls when using algebra: the girls have no fear of symbols. Low attainers in Year 9 are able to substitute numbers into formulae, simplify algebraic expressions and solve linear equations at an appropriate level. In a sixth form statistics lesson the girls quickly solved simultaneous equations which included very awkward numbers as coefficients. A test completed by all girls in Year 7 indicated that many carry out calculations accurately and also successfully solve problems presented in words. High-attainers in Year 11, in particular, cope well with very demanding work, for example, complex tasks involving geometrical transformations. The coursework completed as part of the GCSE examination, gives girls opportunities to work independently, investigating various facets of a problem over an extended period of time. Much of the coursework completed by girls in Year 11 was of high quality, some involving sophisticated algebra. None of the girls, however, had used their ICT skills to carry out part of the investigation or to present their work. Girls in Years 7 and 8 would respond well to opportunities to carry out similar investigations.

The techniques girls master in mathematics lessons are used effectively in subjects across the curriculum, particularly science and geography. Tables of data, formulae, flow diagrams, easy calculations and various forms of graphical representation are used effectively to promote learning in various subjects. The use of mathematics in subjects across the curriculum is stronger than in many schools.

The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was never less than satisfactory and occasionally was excellent. The overall standard of teaching in Years 7-9 is generally good: in Years 10-11 and the sixth form, it is very good. Teaching of high quality was seen in lessons involving both high and low attainers. The teaching is based on secure knowledge of the subject and the teachers have good knowledge of the requirements of the GCSE examination and examiners. The staff at all times aim to ensure pupils' learning is effective. Appropriate attention is given to the development of girls' skills in mental calculation in Years 7 and 8 and over-reliance on the use of calculators is discouraged in mathematics lessons. The high attaining girls, particularly in Year 11, are presented with challenging problems and the sixth form statistics course, in

particular, is well taught. Algebra is taught effectively to pupils of all levels of attainment. Tasks are also related well to real-life situations and to the experiences of the girls. This approach captures and holds their interest throughout lessons, and is used effectively with younger classes and groups of low attainers.

The best lessons are carefully planned, have clear objectives and are based on relaxed, mature relationships with the girls. The teachers have high expectations of the girls concerning standards of work and behaviour. Girls, whatever their levels of attainment, are provided with suitable challenge. In these lessons, the textbooks are not slavishly followed, but are used as a source of examples. Questions are used effectively to elicit information, ensure understanding and sustain interest. Answers are also handled sensitively. In a number of these lessons humour is used to good effect.

Other characteristics of the best teaching are that explanations are clear, the girls' questions are answered confidently, precise mathematical language is used and girls are helped to make notes to aid revision. The lessons are also conducted at a brisk but appropriate pace to ensure time is used well. A single method to solve a problem is not imposed on a whole class: on two occasions teachers solved a particular problem in two ways and then discussed the merits of the different solutions.

Teachers set homework regularly and some of the tasks make high demands of the girls. The marking of girls' work is sound. Teachers occasionally write supportive comments in exercise books but girls were often complimented about their work and given encouragement in lessons.

The teaching is supported by an appropriate range and quantity of book and paper resources. The textbook used with younger classes is very attractively presented. No use of computers was observed in lessons although the staff stated that occasionally they are used to study certain topics in the sixth form. More use of computers as a resource for teaching and learning would enable the girls to develop their ICT skills and further insights into mathematics. The provision of graphic calculators would enhance the teaching of some topics with older girls.

Very good provision is made for girls who need support in their learning. The small size of the teaching groups enables staff to support individual pupils and, although older girls are grouped in classes according to attainment, sensitive teaching of the low achievers in Years 10 and 11 helps build their confidence. Girls occasionally have the help of an adult in lessons or are withdrawn from lessons in other subjects for one-to-one support to re-inforce the work done in lessons, with tuition provided by special needs staff or mathematics teachers. Younger pupils are given further help through an expanded version of the class textbook and adult help during tests. The teachers are also willing to provide individual help at lunch times. Most of these approaches were seen to provide effective support to girls. A group of low attaining girls in Year 11 have responded well to a course with a focus on basic skills leading to a Certificate of Achievement, and this has motivated them to tackle the GCSE course. In order to provide further challenge to high attainers, the staff have recently encouraged girls to participate in the United Kingdom Mathematical Challenge at the senior, intermediate and junior levels.

Girls in all age groups and of all levels of attainment have very good attitudes towards learning. They are keen and ask questions when work is not understood. The girls respond well to teachers' questions in lessons: occasionally, however, this leads to a noisy classroom because all the girls want to be involved. The girls generally display high levels of interest and are very attentive during times of teaching.

The department is well staffed and the teachers are suitably qualified and experienced, with a core of long-serving members. The department is well managed and efficiently organised: the head of department provides firm leadership and the teachers work well together as a team. The staff have kept up to date with developments in public examinations and this shows in their teaching.

The organisation of teaching groups is satisfactory. The scheme of work is acceptable: the topics to be taught to classes in each year group are listed and the order reflects the needs of the teachers of science. The text books are suitable and provide structure for the course, ensuring continuity and progression in the work of girls as they move through the school.

The small size of each teaching group and continuity in teaching from year to year enable the teachers to know the girls well, their backgrounds, difficulties and levels of attainment. During a departmental meeting, when deciding which tier of the GCSE examination each Year 11 girl should enter, the teachers were genuinely concerned to make the decision that was in the best interest of the girl. The teachers' knowledge of the girls is complemented by the detailed records that are kept. The girls complete tests at roughly monthly intervals when sections in the textbook have been completed. In a file for each year group, the teachers record all test and examination marks, and other relevant information. There is, therefore, a cumulative record of each girl's attainment as she moves through the school, enabling the progress of each girl to be traced.

The accommodation is good. A group of rooms close together are mainly used for the teaching of mathematics. They are adequate in size and suitably furnished. Not all the staff have mastered the skill to produce neat work on white boards using felt pens. A small amount of girls' work and some posters are displayed in the classrooms but the visual environment could be made more interesting and stimulating.

SCIENCE

Knowledge and understanding of science at Key Stage 4 are particularly strong and standards are high. About half of the girls in Key Stage 4 choose to study science to GCSE; they are generally of above average ability and until recently they studied only for the single award examination. Achievements in public examinations in science over the last three years have been consistently above the national average; rarely is any girl who has studied science in Key Stage 4 not entered. In 2000, 97% of the girls entered obtained an A* to C grade for science and 45% achieved the highest two grades at GCSE. These results are outstanding in comparison with girls in all maintained schools for the single science award GCSE and well above the national average for girls in selective schools. A small number of Year 12 girls, who have not studied science since Year 9, take GCSE biology after one year and their examination success is frequently high.

The school does not enter any girls for the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests in the subject. Progress through the key stage is good and standards compare very well with those expected nationally for pupils at 14. Girls in Year 9 have a good understanding of the science they have been taught. They recall previous work accurately; for example, in exploring the structure of the periodic table and in classifying substances into elements, mixtures and compounds. All girls can carry out simple scientific investigations competently and confidently, make sensible predications and record observations with reasonable accuracy; for example, in the investigation of chemical changes in Year 8. In Key Stage 3 appropriate care is taken to build upon the science the girls have learnt in their previous schools. This contributes significantly to the good progress made in science within the limited time available. For example, pupils in Year 7 recall work from Key Stage 2 on electricity and magnetism and the high expectations of teachers ensure they are able to consolidate and extend understanding during the investigation of a range of simple electric circuits.

Girls in all classes work hard in science and are keen to learn. They see the relevance of the science taught to the world outside school and its value to modern life; for example, in the study of ecology and environmental issues in Year 11. They show very positive attitudes in class and are always keen to answer questions and take part in discussion. They respond with enthusiasm and interest to the predominantly good teaching. They are highly motivated and work at very good pace in nearly all lessons. They are, however, occasionally over exuberant and where this is not effectively channelled and when classroom management lacks sufficient authority, the normally rapid pace lessens as the minor disruptions need frequent checking by the teacher.

Teaching in science is authoritative, well planned and effectively delivered. All lessons seen were satisfactory or better, just over half were good and nearly one in four very good or better. Pupils' good progress in Key Stage 3 and very good progress in Key Stage 4 reflects this. Teachers generally provide high challenge in lessons and maintain good pace to ensure coverage of the planned course. Good use is made of textbooks, prepared booklets and worksheets. Homework is an integral part of the science teaching and most girls have a clear understanding of the preparation needed for the next lesson and independent study demanded. The best teaching uses a wide variety of techniques to develop interest and to illustrate points; the contributions from girls to lessons are valued and used effectively to develop understanding. Many of the good and very good lessons included demonstrations, use of models, and experimental work as well as the clearly focused independent study required prior to or following the lesson to reinforce the concepts being taught.

Teachers mark work regularly and most provide appropriate guidance on where improvement can be made. But there are some inconsistencies in the quality of marking and it is less thorough in Key Stage 3 than for older girls. Presentation and organisation of girls' work in Key Stage 4 is generally good; this needs to be extended to Key Stage 3 where presentation is occasionally unsatisfactory and some work is incomplete. Teachers regularly assess the progress being made through topic tests. They provide very good support in class and through tutorials and examination revision, to help girls who are finding a topic difficult to understand; a high priority is given to ensuring girls are confident and successful in the subject.

The high expectation and level of commitment of teachers to high standards overcomes the shortage of time available for science and contributes significantly to the success in GCSE examinations. But the time allocated to science in Key Stage 3 is half that recommended and this does lead to an excessive demand on both the teaching and pupils; written work is occasionally incomplete and although most topics required are covered, not all with sufficient depth. Just below average time is provided in Key Stage 4 for the teaching of single-award and the recently introduced double-award science for the most able girls. Consideration needs to be given to increasing the time available to teach science, particularly in Key Stage 3, and to introducing GCSE science for all girls in Key Stage 4.

The department is well led but the head of department has no identified role in monitoring or evaluating the work of the department. Although there is no detailed scheme of work for the science courses provided, the planning of teaching through a series of modules is well structured and makes good use of the National Curriculum guidance, examination requirements, textbooks and prepared booklets. There is a very good match between teacher expertise and the modules they teach. Day-to-day planning is generally good and the very good support provided by the technician ensures the department runs smoothly. The accommodation and resources available are sufficient to meet the needs of the department and its present teaching commitment. A brief development plan proposes planned changes in the curriculum and highlights the absence of information and communication technology in girls' science curriculum. The department has already sought guidance from a science education consultant on how they should address this shortcoming.