



Office for Standards
in Education

Beis Rochel D'Satmar Girls School

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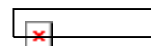
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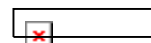
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INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

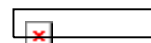


Purpose and scope of the inspection



This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

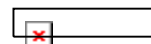


Beis Rochel d'Satmar Girls' School is an independent day school for girls aged two to 16 in the London Borough of Hackney. It is owned and maintained by the Bais Rochel d'Satmar Charitable Trust on behalf of the Satmar Chassidic community, and serves girls from the strictly observant Jewish community in the Stamford Hill and Stoke Newington areas of the borough. The majority of pupils in the school are from the Satmar community, but there are also girls from other Chassidic communities. The majority of girls come from bilingual homes where both Yiddish and English are spoken. There are also a few girls who came originally from Yemen. None of the girls has access to radio or television in their homes. At the time of the inspection there were 788 pupils on roll, of whom one was part-time.

The school is accommodated on two sites. Older pupils occupy purpose-built premises near Stamford Hill station; younger pupils are housed in refurbished accommodation about one mile away in Stoke Newington.

The school is run almost entirely from voluntary contributions. There are no fees, although parents are expected to contribute to whatever extent they can. Many teachers are paid only nominally for their services, and some work on an entirely voluntary basis.

Summary of main findings



Beis Rochel D'Satmar is a thoughtful school. It has many strengths, chief of which is the ethos of dedication and commitment to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The main focus is on the development of pupils' *middos* - desirable personal traits of responsibility, modesty, consideration. This produces young women who are well informed, able to exercise self-control and who retain a lively interest in their environment and wider issues. There is good teaching at all key stages in both strands of the curriculum. However, this good practice needs to be spread to all members of staff. The school has made significant progress in recent years and has made considerable efforts to meet the requirements of the new legislation. It is well placed to continue its

development. Pastoral care is a very strong feature of the school. Staff provide good role models to the pupils and show care for pupils' welfare and well-being. The five heads of department, ably supported by the administrator and curriculum advisers, provide increasing leadership and direction in the development of teaching, learning and pupils' welfare.

What the school does well:

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- its provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional; in consequence behaviour is very good;
 - it prepares pupils extremely well for their future role within their Jewish community;
 - there is good teaching at all key stages in both strands of the curriculum and this contributes significantly to pupils' progress and achievement;
 - in both strands of the curriculum, heads of department and curriculum advisers give positive direction and leadership to curriculum development;
 - the Jewish Studies curriculum is well co-ordinated, documented and resourced;
 - in secular studies, the school gives pupils the confidence to express themselves well, to ask questions and to seek clarification about their work; and
 - it provides effectively for pupils' welfare and well-being.

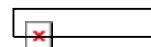
What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations:

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- identify a senior member of staff with designated responsibility for child protection and provide training for all staff responsible for child welfare;
 - carry out a fire risk assessment;
 - prepare a draft accessibility plan with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act;
 - ensure that attendance registers are properly kept;
 - check all staff through the Criminal Records Bureau and verify essential information prior to appointment;
 - increase the number of wash-rooms for pupils; and
 - ensure that parents of pupils and prospective parents are provided with information as required and are made aware of what is available to them on request.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum



The school has a clearly articulated statement of its aims and objectives:

"Beis Rochel d'Satmar Girls' School was established as an educational institution of excellence by developing and delivering a broad and balanced curriculum in Yiddish, Kodesh and secular subjects within the framework of Jewish Law and Satmar Chassidic customs as well as meeting the requirements of the various Acts of Parliament and educational standards."

The school is broadly successful in fulfilling these aims.

All pupils receive a full time education except one pupil who attends part-time. The length of the academic week varies according to the age of the pupils, but averages around 25 hours a week, which includes approximately 3.5 hours for prayers. The overall curriculum is divided into two distinctive strands, *Limmudei Kodesh* and *Limmudei Chol*. *Limmudei Kodesh*, which is taught in the mornings, covers a wide range of distinctively Jewish studies, including the study of Hebrew and Yiddish, and educates girls to an understanding of Jewish history, culture and religious practice. The teaching of *Limmudei Kodesh* is carried out entirely through the medium of Yiddish. *Limmudei Chol*, which is taught in English, includes English, mathematics, science, history, geography, art, needlework and physical education. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are offered some choice of the subjects that they study, and all pupils are entered for public examinations in English, mathematics, history, geography and art. Taken as a whole, the curriculum provides access to all areas of learning required by the current regulations. Although the technological component is limited, there is a strong emphasis on the design and preparation of clothes, and on some essential elements of food technology.

There is a clearly written curriculum policy, which is set out in writing and is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, and teachers use these to plan their own lessons. Overall, both the *Kodesh* and *Chol* strands of the curriculum are implemented effectively, but the teaching and monitoring of them are not consistent. Careful monitoring is needed throughout the school in order to ensure that subjects are taught consistently and thoroughly. There is considerable variation in the pattern of recording what is taught, and while some teachers are very thorough in keeping records, others fail to do so. This affects both the progression and continuity of pupils' learning.

Management of the curriculum is in the hands of the five heads of department. They supervise the *Kodesh* and *Chol* strands of the curriculum in the primary and secondary departments respectively, and in the Foundation Stage. At the secondary stage there are curriculum advisers for each strand, and they have provided very positive support and guidance, so that curriculum innovation has become a strong feature of the school.

Personal, social and health education are taught as part of the *Kodesh* curriculum, and the girls are well prepared to take on the opportunities and challenges which will come to them as adult members of the strictly observant Jewish community. There is no formal careers guidance in the school, although some informal discussion may take place, particularly regarding further education. In practice, all girls go on to a Jewish girls' seminary of their choice, where they can continue their Jewish studies to a more advanced level.

The quality of teaching and assessment

During the inspection 59 lessons or parts of lessons were observed across the *Kodesh* and secular curriculum. Almost half the lessons were good, some were very good, and in the majority of the remainder, the strengths outweighed the weaknesses. Only a small number of lessons was unsatisfactory.

Good teaching was seen in all parts of the school, especially in the *Kodesh* lessons, but also in a significant number of lessons in the secular curriculum including some in English, science and history, as well as in the foundation stage. Pupils in primary and secondary classes show considerable skill and enthusiasm in working effectively in two main languages, Yiddish and English.

In the best lessons, teachers' subject knowledge is secure, their planning precise and well matched to pupils' competencies. Their approach is lively and enthusiastic and succeeds in maintaining the interest and involvement of pupils. As a result, pupils make progress in their learning and achieve good standards. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace with pupils expected to tackle challenging tasks and think for themselves. Older pupils showed mature insights and raised interesting questions in some of these lessons. Teachers listen to pupils carefully, assessing their understanding and shaping provision accordingly. Homework is given to reinforce and extend the work done in class. Such good practice provides models for dissemination across the school.

Some of the most effective teaching also gives pupils an opportunity to take some responsibility for their learning at an appropriate level. For example, in the Foundation Stage, young children find examples from their own experience to demonstrate good conduct and these are recorded in photographs. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, who respond well; this contributes to their progress and achievement.

In the less successful lessons there are some common weaknesses. Teachers' subject knowledge is insecure, planning is not clearly thought out and learning objectives are not identified. In some lessons the teacher talks for too long and pupils' attention fades, or the task is undemanding, as for example, when it consists almost entirely of colouring in. In some subjects, closed questions limit pupils' opportunities to develop their thinking sufficiently. Homework is not used consistently to help pupils consolidate learning or make progress.

Although teachers' planning varies in quality there is much that is clear and methodical. Some is particularly good in identifying what is to be learned and in specifying a variety of resources. Where planning is weak there is too little detail of what is to be learned and at what level by a particular class. In addition, the allocation of time for subjects is sometimes inconsistent across a year group. Where this occurs, pupils' experience of the subject is reduced and their learning opportunity is limited in consequence.

Marking is regular and undertaken conscientiously in *Kodesh* and secular subjects. In much of the marking seen in pupils' books, there are constructive comments which make clear to pupils why their work is good or how they can improve some aspects. In Jewish studies, for project work, teachers use assessment against specific criteria. This practice provides a good model for wider consideration, since it would help to ensure consistency in assessment across subjects. The school carries out regular internal tests and examinations to check pupils' progress. Some national tests are taken at the end of Key Stage 2 and 3 and these motivate pupils and provide useful feedback on areas of relative strength and weakness in pupils' attainment.

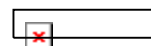
The school employs a large number of staff, all of whom are part time, and this poses challenges for the heads of departments in relation to curricular continuity and progression and consistency in assessment. In the secondary department there are curriculum advisers for both *Kodesh* and secular subjects who contribute valuable support and advice. The primary post is currently vacant but this is much needed to assist the head of that department in supporting and monitoring provision. Given the unavoidable turnover of staff, the school should continue to develop its

induction support for new teachers and where possible provide continuing professional development for teachers.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



According to the school's statement of aims and objectives, Beis Rochel was established to provide:

"an education service that is based on an holistic approach to children, parents, families and communities, and [which] fosters moral values, and promotes peace and respect."

To achieve this, it places very strong emphasis on the overall development of pupils and their place within the religious community to which they belong. There is a positive concern for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is a strong feature of the school and it is conspicuously successful in meeting its aims and objectives.

Central to this is handing on to girls a knowledge and understanding of their Jewish spiritual heritage. This is done not only through *Limmudei Kodesh* lessons, but also in the regular opportunities for prayer, and through the whole ethos of the school. Through extensive discussion of Jewish law and ethics, pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong. Throughout the school, teachers ensure that the girls' moral sense can grow through well-planned activities, and there are extensive opportunities for them to learn how to respond to others with kindness and consideration. As a result, the school is a secure and well-ordered community that is characterised by friendliness and mutual concern. Relations at all levels are excellent. Pupils show great maturity in coping with large numbers of teachers.

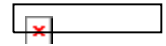
Although the school serves an inwardly focused community, and every effort is made to protect the pupils from outside influences which are considered to be harmful, they are taught about public institutions and services and they develop an understanding and respect for people of other cultures. In order to familiarise the girls with public institutions, visits are organised to places such as old peoples' homes, the local fire station, the Houses of Parliament, and centres for environmental development. All the girls live in a strongly multi-cultural area, and through both the *Kodesh* and *Chol* strands of the curriculum they learn how Jews have related historically to people of other faiths, and especially Christianity and Islam. There is a small community of Yemeni girls in the school, and they are encouraged to maintain and develop their distinctive culture and traditions. The school is aware of the challenges that they face and gives them sympathetic support. In several different curriculum areas, pupils consider the lives of people from other cultures and countries and learn the importance of understanding and tolerance. For instance, in geography some pupils discuss the barriers to removing economic deprivation in Third World countries.

Art is a strength of the school and pupils' work is displayed throughout the building. Shortly before the inspection, girls from Year 11 had prepared a dramatic performance which included work in art, design, dance and music. Their enjoyment of this event was evident, and they responded with commitment, energy, and creative endeavour to being given this considerable responsibility.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school takes its responsibility for the health and safety of pupils seriously and has a range of policies which clearly set out the principles and procedures guiding the health and safety of pupils. These fulfil most of the requirements. The anti-bullying policy makes plain the school's expectations of pupils' behaviour and how staff should deal with any issues of bullying. However, it needs to make explicit to pupils what they should do if they are bullied by others.

The behaviour policy sets out clear guidelines on how behaviour is managed throughout the school. Pupils in the school are well behaved and very courteous. They stand up and greet politely guests who visit their classrooms. They work diligently and listen attentively to staff in all lessons. The school keeps a written record of sanctions applied. Child protection procedures detail what actions should be taken in the event that a member of staff is under suspicion, but not where concerns arise from events which happen outside school. There is no named child protection officer in the main school and the named officer in the nursery school has yet to receive training for the role.

Though the school does not have a written First Aid Policy, there are at least two trained first aiders in each building at any time. A number of other staff have also been trained in basic first aid and refresher courses are made available to staff regularly. In addition, the school uses the services of the Hatzolo, which is a Jewish emergency response team whose reaction time is usually within two minutes. Accident books are maintained in each building.

The health and safety policy covers adequately almost all aspects of fire safety. Pupils are supervised at all times. The school maintains records on all fire drills and fire drill instructions are displayed prominently in classrooms. Fire drills occur twice a term. The fire alarm is maintained regularly, but the school has not carried out a recent fire risk assessment. Arrangements have now been made for a fire risk assessment to be carried out as soon as possible. Pupils' safety on school outings is given due consideration but risk assessments are not routinely completed prior to outings. This has now been written into the health and safety policy but needs to become embedded in practice.

The school maintains an admission register and an attendance register for each class. However, some attendance registers are not marked in ink and no clear distinction is made between authorised or unauthorised absences. The school's admission and special needs policy give due regard to the needs of pupils with disabilities. The school has not yet written a draft accessibility plan in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act regulations.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

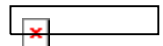
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *identify and make known to all staff and pupils a senior member of staff with designated responsibility for child protection and provide training for all staff responsible for child welfare; (paragraph 3(2)(b));*
- *ensure risk assessments are carried out under the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997 (paragraph 3.(5));*
- *ensure that all attendance registers are marked in ink and clear distinctions are made between authorised and unauthorised absences (paragraph 3.(9)); and*
- *produce a draft accessibility plan in relation to the DDA.*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



The school is run by the Bais Rochel d'Satmar Charitable Trust with four members serving as the board of governors. The school recruits appropriate staff to support its *Kodesh* and secular curricula. The majority of teachers who apply for posts are former pupils of the school and so are well known to existing staff. The school has been registered with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) for some time but has only recently begun to comply with the regulations by checking staff through CRB procedures. Similarly, the school has recently implemented procedures to check essential information relating to the suitability of all staff prior to appointment.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

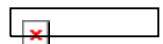
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003, the school should:

- *ensure that all staff are checked through the CRB (paragraph 4(b)); and*
- *prior to the appointment of any staff, carry out appropriate checks to confirm their identity, medical fitness, previous employment history, character references and, where appropriate, qualifications and professional references (paragraph 4 (c)).*

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The school occupies two sites. The nursery and reception classes are housed in a converted

building on Cazenove Road in Stoke Newington. This building contains a sufficient number of classrooms on three floors. It also has a dining room and kitchen. The main school on Amhurst Park is purpose built. In addition to several classrooms, there is an art room and sewing room. Classrooms on both sites are large enough for the numbers of pupils and in the nursery school are quite spacious. There is good flooring throughout both sites and the accommodation is maintained in satisfactory decorative order. Pupils' work is displayed attractively in classrooms, halls and corridors. Classrooms and other parts of the school are generally clean and tidy.

All classes in the nursery school have an intercom system which eases communication between staff. Lighting is good in most classrooms and satisfactory in others. Heating is satisfactory on both sites. The number of toilets and hand basins for children is more than adequate in the nursery school but under the number required in the main school.

Arrangements for looking after sick pupils are satisfactory. Both sites have an outdoor play area and kitchen facilities. The kitchen facilities and food hygiene are satisfactory.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

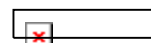
The school meets all of the requirements under section 5 of the regulations with one exception.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply in full with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- *ensure there is one s W.C. for every 20 pupils in the main school and ensure that the number of wash basins is adequately in line with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k)).*

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school operates within a close-knit community in which, traditionally, oral communication has been the norm. The school has drawn up a range of policies and documents in accordance with the regulations. However, these policies are yet to be collated into a format which could be made readily available to parents and some regulations are not fully met. The school is currently working on producing a school prospectus to address this. Parents of nursery aged children receive a document, which contains a number of essential policies, but this document does not fulfil all the requirements of the regulations. In addition, parents have not yet been made aware of documents which should be available to them on request.

Nursery staff keep a record of achievement for each child, which is updated every two months and shared with parents. On the transfer of their children from nursery to reception, parents receive a report which details their child's progress in personal and social development, language and literacy and mathematics. Parents of pupils in the other key stages also receive termly written reports on pupils' progress and achievement in the main subjects taught.

The school has made arrangements to ensure that, following this inspection, all parents will receive

a full report.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

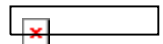
In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should ensure that all parents and prospective parents are provided with the following information:

- *the school's address and telephone number and the name of the headteacher (paragraph 6(2)(a));*
- *the full name, address and telephone number of the charity's registered or principal office (paragraph 6(2)(b));*
- *the name and address of the Chair of the board of governors (paragraph 6(2)(c));*
- *a statement of the school's ethos (including its religious ethos) and aims (paragraph 6(2)(d));*
- *particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e)); and*
- *particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f)).*

In addition, the school should ensure that all parents are aware that they may obtain on request:

- *particulars of the curriculum offered by the school (paragraph 6(2)(g));*
- *particulars of policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (paragraph 6(2)(h));*
- *particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i));*
- *details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j));*
- *the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k)).*

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints



The school has recently written and implemented new procedures for handling complaints which meet almost all of the new regulations. In order to comply fully, the school needs to make sure that parents and prospective parents are aware that they can obtain, on request, a copy of the complaints procedure.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

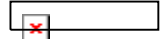
The school meets all the regulations, except for one.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply in full with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003, the school should:

- *make the complaints procedure available, on request, to parents and prospective parents of pupils (paragraph 7(b)).*

SCHOOL DETAILS



Name of school:	Beis Rochel D'Satmar Girls School		
DfES Number:	204/6296		
Type of school:	Jewish		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	2 - 16 years		
Gender of pupils:	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 0	Girls: 787	Total: 787
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils):	No fees are charged		
Address of school:	Beis Rochel d'Satmar Girls School 51-57 Amhurst Park London N16 5DL		
Telephone number:	0208 800 9060		
Administrator:	Mrs Gita Smus		
Proprietor:	Bais Rochel d'Satmar Charitable Trust		
Reporting Inspector:	Mrs Eileen McAndrew		
Date of inspection:	26 - 29 January 2004		
