



Office for Standards  
in Education

# Side By Side School

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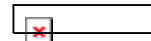
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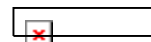
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## Introduction and summary

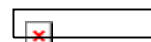


## Purpose and scope of the inspection



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

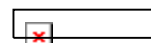


Side by Side School is a mixed independent special school and also a nursery for pupils with and without special educational needs. It caters for pupils aged from two to eleven years who are from the Orthodox Jewish community. In the nursery, there are 37 children between the ages of two and five who are taught in three classes, mostly according to their age. Twelve of these children are on the special educational needs register and nine have statements of special educational needs as a result of their physical or sensory disabilities or moderate or severe learning difficulties. Pupils with and without special educational needs are educated alongside one another. There are currently nine pupils, aged between five and eleven, all of whom have statements of special educational need and most of whom are boys. Their special needs include moderate and severe learning difficulties, physical disabilities and sensory impairment. They are taught in two separate groups, an infant class and a junior class. English, Hebrew and Yiddish are spoken throughout the school day.

The school has been registered with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) since October 2002. In September 2003 the school relocated to its current site in the heart of Hackney, adjoining the River Lee and the surrounding parkland. The accommodation includes five classrooms, a gymnasium, a sensory and soft play area, a well-equipped outdoor playground and rooms for visiting therapists.

Side by Side School aims to encourage all pupils to: achieve their full potential, physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually; to encourage pupils to have respect for each other and to play a useful and meaningful role in the community. The school aims to provide access to a broad and balanced Kodesh and secular curriculum within the framework of Jewish Law; to encourage pupils to be independent; to understand the range of options open to them and to take responsibility for the consequences of their choice; and to develop self-confidence, self-discipline and self-motivation.

## Summary of main findings

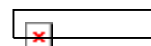


Side by Side School is effective in meeting the diverse needs of its pupils well. There is a happy and caring ethos and the school is well organised and managed. Pupils receive very good support

The secular curriculum and Jewish studies programme are combined well. The good quality of teaching, and the intensive support provided by the team of therapists, ensures that pupils make good progress in all areas of their learning and development.

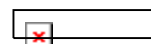
The school is a stimulating learning environment. Both pupils and staff clearly enjoy learning and working at Side by Side. Staff apply policies and procedures most consistently and challenge themselves to constantly improve their practice. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. The staff work in close partnership with parents, almost all of whom are very pleased with all aspects of the education provided.

### What the school does well



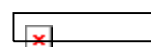
- the school has a positive ethos; relationships between all members of the community are excellent and the dedicated staff form a strong team committed to ensuring that all pupils achieve their full potential;
- the quality of teaching is very good; teachers and learning support assistants work closely with the therapists, and pupils make good progress in their academic, social and physical development;
- there is a strong focus on pupils as individual learners; staff know pupils well and plan appropriate and interesting programmes for them;
- the secular and Kodesh programmes of study are combined well so that pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum;
- pupils enjoy school, their behaviour is excellent and they are interested learners;
- the school successfully fosters and develops all pupils' Jewish identity; teachers ensure that pupils cope and progress in English, Hebrew and Yiddish;
- the provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is excellent; and
- the development of pupils' personal and social skills is a priority in all activities throughout the school day. Older pupils' regular integration into mainstream Jewish schools further develops these skills.

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



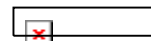
- comply with all regulations regarding attendance and admissions registers;
- complete the required checks on all staff prior to their appointment;
- provide additional wash-hand basins in the toilets for nursery pupils and girls of school age; and
- provide information for parents on the school's policy for discipline and exclusions.

### Compliance with the regulations for registration

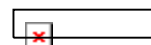


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## 1. The quality of education provided by the school



## The quality of the curriculum



Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum which incorporates both secular and Kodesh programmes of study. These two areas are combined effectively; the Kodesh curriculum has been designed well to reinforce cross-curricular links, in particular, in art, music and design and technology. The curriculum for children under compulsory school age includes a good range of interesting activities and experiences that help children to make good progress in all areas of their learning. In every class there is a strong and appropriate emphasis on learning through practical experiences. The curriculum is enhanced by regular visits into the local community; for example, there is weekly swimming at the local leisure centre, and the local open space and the urban area is used for geography and science topic work.

There are policies and schemes of work for each area of the curriculum. The nursery curriculum follows the six main areas of learning and takes into account the early learning goals. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy frameworks guide infant and junior teachers in their planning.

There is a strong focus on each child as an individual. Teachers, support staff and therapists work together to design programmes which are appropriate for each pupil's individual needs. These programmes fulfil all the requirements on pupils' statements of special educational need. Pupils receive regular, intensive and high quality support from the speech and language and occupational therapists, and the physiotherapist. The therapists have trained teaching staff well so that teachers and learning support assistants confidently continue their work throughout the week. Pupils with visual impairment and physical difficulties benefit from their daily sessions in the sensory room and soft play area.

The school is quick to identify the needs of even the youngest children. Staff draw up appropriate individual education plans and constantly monitor progress towards targets. The special educational needs co-ordinator and the teaching staff work hard to ensure that all pupils have the equipment and resources they require to access all areas of the curriculum.

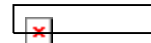
Speaking, listening and numeracy are reinforced in all areas of the curriculum. English, Hebrew and Yiddish are spoken during the school day and even pupils with the most severe needs make steady progress in developing their speaking and understanding in all three languages. Pupils' Jewish identity is fostered and developed well through the Jewish studies programme.

Personal, social and health education is promoted well throughout the school day. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to work independently and to work as part of a small group. The junior class help staff to prepare a weekly lunch for the infants. They share tasks well, take delight in explaining what they have made and they eat their lunch in a happy, friendly manner. In the nursery children follow routines well, take turns and help their friends when they have any difficulties.

Weekly integration into mainstream Jewish schools is organised with parental consent for some school-aged pupils. These regular opportunities give pupils good opportunities to further develop their social skills and help to prepare them for the next stage in their education.

All the parents who responded to the questionnaire are pleased with the range of activities offered to their children and they feel that the school helps their children to become more mature and to take responsibility.

## The quality of the teaching and assessment



The quality of teaching is at least good in all classes. Over three quarters of the lessons observed were good or better and almost all other lessons had more strengths than weaknesses. This high quality teaching, which incorporates strategies from the therapists, ensures that pupils in every class make good progress in all areas of their academic, social and physical development.

Teachers ensure that classrooms provide bright and stimulating learning environments. The team of staff in each class work together closely and effectively. Lessons are well planned and sensitive support is given to pupils. There is a good balance between individual help and encouraging pupils to have independent attitudes to learning. Expectations are high. Staff have a consistent approach, and routines and expectations are established and consistently reinforced from the youngest class onwards. Rewards and praise are meaningful, even the most difficult behaviour is managed well and, as a result, pupils behave very well and sustain concentration. They are interested learners.

Staff know pupils well and have a good understanding of the strategies suitable for particular pupils. They are keen to undertake additional training and the school provides good opportunities for them to do so. All staff have an encouraging, enthusiastic approach; they make learning fun and take every opportunity to reinforce good behaviour and appropriate social skills. As a result pupils are polite, friendly and eager to please.

The structure of most lessons is good as there is a balance between group activity and individual work. In most, interesting and challenging tasks are given to pupils. However, in a few lessons the most able children are not always fully challenged by either the questioning or some of the activities, and in some art and creative activities there is too much adult direction and insufficient opportunity for imaginative work.

Teachers and learning support staff promote speaking and listening skills, and numeracy, in particular counting, in all lessons. As a result even the youngest children listen well and answer questions confidently. Staff questioning is good and both questions and instructions are reinforced using signing, visual cues and objects. This ensures that pupils with the most severe needs are able to take a full part. Very good attention is given to speaking and listening in English, Hebrew and Yiddish and, as a result, pupils make good progress in all three languages.

Interesting and appropriate resources are always readily prepared for lessons and are used well. Pupils take good care of them and take responsibility for packing them away tidily. Computer programmes help to reinforce pupils' understanding; for example, in literacy, numeracy and Hebrew studies.

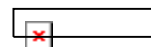
There is very good ongoing assessment of pupils' learning through questioning and observation. All members of each class team take responsibility for assessing pupils' understanding and moving their learning on at an appropriate time. Subsequent activities which reinforce understanding are planned well. Progress towards individual targets is recorded on a daily basis. Individual education plans are reviewed regularly with parents. Each parent attends these meetings on their child's progress.

The parents' questionnaires show that all parents who responded feel that teaching is good and that staff treat pupils with respect. They are pleased that the school keeps them well informed about their children's progress.

### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

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



The provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is excellent. The school promotes effectively a respect and appreciation of their own culture and helps all pupils to develop a strong Jewish identity. Every opportunity is taken in both the Kodesh and secular programmes of studies to enable pupils to achieve success and develop self-esteem and self-confidence. The high quality displays around the school celebrate the pupils' achievements, and the way in which they are presented demonstrates a high level of respect for pupils' work.

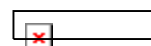
Staff maximise opportunities to assist pupils in distinguishing between right and wrong by making clear the consequences for the choices they make. Pupils demonstrate an increasing ability to take responsibility for their own behaviour because from the youngest age onwards they are encouraged and supported to make appropriate choices about how they behave.

The school promotes respect for other cultures within the parameters of an orthodox Jewish community. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to use services from the multi-ethnic local community; for example, the local swimming pool, adventure playground, horse riding stables and local shops. The Kodesh schemes of work and the topic plans include learning experiences which encourage pupils to understand, appreciate and respect different cultures; for example, the topic on homes includes a study of homes in other countries.

### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

**Yes.**

## 3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school is a caring community in which the health and welfare of pupils is of the utmost importance. There are written policies which comply with regulations for all the required areas. Staff are familiar with these policies and apply them consistently.

The comprehensive behaviour policy identifies positive strategies to help pupils to behave appropriately. The emphasis on making choices is highly effective in assisting pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour and to be aware of the consequences of choices they make. The policy details the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving. Any incidents of behaviour requiring sanctions are recorded in satisfactory detail.

The school's current admission and attendance registers comply with the regulations. However, as a result of the school's recent relocation, attendance registers for previous years have been mislaid. The attendance registers maintained by the nursery classes do not distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absence for the small number of pupils of compulsory school age. Some corrections in admissions and attendance registers are made using correction fluid.

Regular maintenance checks are carried out on the premises and the fire alarm system. The most recent fire officer's report identified the need for some minor changes to the premises and the practices followed in the school; all have been put in place. The most recent visit raised no issues. Termly fire drills are held and details of these are recorded appropriately.

The school gives due regard to the Disability Discrimination Act and has adapted the premises to enable full access for disabled pupils.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

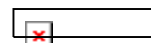
**The school meets almost all of the requirements**

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

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

- maintain an admission register and an attendance register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (paragraph 3(9)).

**4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff**



The staff are deployed well and form a hard-working and committed team. Relationships within the community are excellent and there is a shared ethos which promotes positive behaviour, mutual respect and the celebration of pupils' achievements. The ratio of adults to children is high. Each class has a staff team of teachers and learning support assistants and they have a thorough knowledge of the individual needs of each pupil. Teaching and support staff have had appropriate training for teaching nursery and primary-aged pupils with a range of special educational needs. The school is committed to staff development and many opportunities are available for them to extend their qualifications. Staff are eager to undertake additional training to help them improve their practice further and to meet the needs of every pupil.

The procedures for appointing teachers, therapists and teaching assistants are clearly defined. The required references and information are obtained prior to appointment. The majority of staff have received the necessary clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB); however, the school has not yet received CRB clearance for a small number of staff. The school reported that the clearances had been applied for but not yet confirmed.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

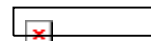
**No.**

***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:

- prior to confirmation of their appointment, members of staff at the school are subject to a check with the Criminal Records Bureau which confirms their suitability to work with children, that check to be at an enhanced level if the member of staff's duties involve regularly caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of persons aged under 18 (paragraph 4(b)).

**5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation**



The school has a pleasant location adjoining open space which is used well by the school for science and geography lessons. The school buildings are spacious, bright and in a good state of repair. All the classrooms have attractive and interesting displays of pupils' work and they form stimulating learning environments. On the corridor walls there are colourful, interesting displays of pupils' work and useful information for parents.

The classrooms are spacious and there is a good range of specialist accommodation including a gymnasium, soft play area and sensory room. There are a good number of small therapy and meeting rooms. These areas are used well to develop pupils' physical, sensory and communication skills. There is a children's kitchen and a good-sized dining area where the older pupils help to prepare lunch once a week. This time is thoroughly enjoyed by pupils and makes an important contribution to their social development.

There is a large, well-equipped outdoor playground which is split into areas for older and younger pupils. Disabled access to the whole site is good. There are an adequate number of toilets for nursery and school-aged pupils. However, a hand basin is required for the girls' toilet and there is an insufficient number of hand basins for nursery pupils. The ongoing installation of air conditioning is a thoughtful addition for the comfort of pupils and staff in summer.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

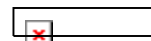
**The school meets almost all the requirements.**

***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:

- provide sufficient washrooms for staff and pupils including facilities for pupils with special educational needs, taking account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k)).

## **6. The quality of information for parents and other partners**



There are clear policies for working with parents; staff have developed a strong partnership with them. The school brochure gives detailed information about the education and welfare of pupils; however, there are no references to the school's policy for discipline and exclusion.

Detailed information about pupils' academic achievement and their progress in meeting targets on their individual education plans is provided at the termly and annual review meetings. Parents, staff, representatives from the local education authority and any other agencies involved with the pupil attend these meetings. End-of-year reports are compiled for parents. These give details of their children's progress in some, but not all subject areas. The questionnaire responses from parents show that almost every parent feels well informed about their children's progress.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

**The school meets all the requirements but one.**

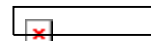
***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***



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

- o provide to parents of pupils and prospective pupils, and on request to the Chief Inspector, the Secretary of State, or a body approved under section 163 (1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e)).

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

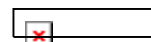


The recently revised complaints procedure includes all the necessary information and procedures. A useful diagram is included which guides complainants through the process. Complaints are rare; however, the school records and monitors details of any written complaints in the appropriate manner. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire said they were familiar with the school's procedure for dealing with complaints.

### ***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

## School details



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Name of school:	Side By Side School		
DfES ref number:	204/6409		
Type of school:	Special School		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	2-11 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 18,	Girls 18,	Total 36
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 6,	Girls 4,	Total 10
Number of boarders:	Boys 0,	Girls 0,	Total 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 15,	Girls 3,	Total 18
Annual fees (day pupils):	£13,500 - £18,425		
Annual fees (boarders):	N/A		
Address of school:	9 Big Hill London E5 9HH		
E-mail address:	N/A		
Telephone number:	020 8880 8300		
Fax number:	020 8880 8341		
Headteacher:	Ms R Atkins		
Proprietor:	Mrs R Rumpler		
Lead Inspector:	Helen Sharpe HMI		
Dates of inspection:	10-13 May 2004		

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