

## **Bnois Jerusalem School**

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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



Bnois Jerusalem School is an independent Jewish day school for girls aged 3 to 16. It is situated in the London Borough of Hackney and was established around 40 years ago and is one of the oldest in Stamford Hill. It is related to the Satmar Hasidic movement to educate the girls of the strictly observant Jewish community in Stamford Hill. It extended its provision to include secondary education in 1998. There were 423 pupils on roll, of whom 324 are of compulsory school age. Ninety nine are under fives, the majority of whom are funded under the nursery grant. There are 11 pupils post -16. One pupil has a statement of special educational need (SEN), and the school has identified four pupils as being in need of learning support. The majority of families speak Yiddish as

their home language and the Jewish Studies curriculum is conducted in Yiddish.

## **Summary of main findings**



Bnois Jerusalem School is successful in meeting its stated aims `of providing girls with a sound Jewish and secular education and in preparing them for the next stage of their education.' It has made significant progress in curricular provision in the primary and secondary departments. The two strands of the curriculum, the Limmodei Kodesh (religious strand) and the Limmodei Chol (secular strand) together offer a broad and balanced curriculum. A strong feature of the school is the good achievement in Kodesh studies and the way in which pupils learn in three languages. Teaching is satisfactory in the primary and secondary departments with a higher proportion of good teaching in the secular strand of the secondary department. The curricular provision and the quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage are unsatisfactory. Physical education (PE) is poor throughout the school. Although the school has begun some essential refurbishment of the main building there remain issues to be addressed in relation to health and safely and the suitability of the premises. The behaviour of the pupils and their spiritual and moral development are important strengths. Parents strongly support the school and are very satisfied with the education and care of their children.

#### What the school does well



- o it is very good at teaching *Torah* values;
- o it promotes pupils' personal qualities and behaviour very well;
- o it enables pupils to achieve well in three languages; and
- it achieves high standards in Kodesh, in sewing and in art.

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



- improve the quality of provision and teaching in the Foundation Stage and in PE throughout the school;
- o improve the quantity and range of resources to support the curriculum;
- help pupils to acquire an appreciation of, and respect for, cultures other than their own.
- o ensure that all the relevant health and safety policies are written and implemented;
- ensure that all staff are checked through the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) at an appropriate level;
- ensure that prior to appointment all staff are checked against the relevant criteria and such information is taken into account in confirming the appointment;
- check that all load-bearing structures comply with (School Premises) Regulations 1999; and
- o replace broken or worn floor tiles throughout the main building.

## What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002

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In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA, the school should:

o produce a written three-year accessibility plan within affordable resources.

#### Compliance with the regulations for registration



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



## The quality of the curriculum



The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is divided into distinctive strands: the Limmodei Kodesh (Religious) and the Limmodei Chol (secular). Kodesh, which is taught in the mornings, includes a range of Jewish studies covering the study of the Bible, Hebrew and Yiddish. This curriculum inculcates in the pupils an understanding of their Jewish identity and heritage, their culture and their religion. The teaching is carried out through the medium of Yiddish which is the first language of the great majority of pupils. The secular curriculum is taught through the medium of English and pupils' progress and achievement are successfully promoted in the secondary and primary departments and in all subjects except PE.

The scheme of work in Kodesh reflects that this is a part of the curriculum that is well known in strictly observant Jewish circles, and is dependent on a high level of knowledge among the teachers. As a result, pupils achieve well in their Kodesh studies and reach high standards of work, writing factual explanations, stories and poems in Yiddish. Particular strengths are the links with work in arts and craft which has a high profile within the displays, illustrated work and religious artefacts which are designed and made.

Although the youngest pupils develop their Yiddish speaking skills and Kodesh knowledge, there has not been the same rate of progress in the development of the Foundation Stage curriculum which is unsatisfactory. It is loosely based on the national guidance but lacks a well constructed, educational programme to ensure children systematically acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding in all the areas of learning. The programme of activities is insufficiently broad and does not take account of pupils' different stages of development. There are too few opportunities for pupils to experiment, investigate and explore. There is an imbalance between activities chosen by the pupils and those led by the staff. The latter dominate the curriculum, particularly in the creative area.

The curriculum in the primary department promotes the intellectual and personal development of its pupils. They build up their knowledge of Kodesh, but the youngest experience initial difficulties in coping with three languages. The Chol curriculum is broadly based in English, mathematics,

science, history, geography and PE. However, the curriculum in Year 1 remains narrow. It consists of only three subjects: English, mathematics and physical education.

There is a clear focus on helping pupils develop skills in literacy, numeracy, speaking and listening and there is an emphasis on teaching phonics. However, pupils have limited opportunities to develop their skills in communicating in English with a variety of listeners or extending their ideas and understanding through talk. The range of writing opportunities for writing is narrow and pupils are insufficiently encouraged to write for different audiences and purposes. Pupils in primary and secondary classes do very well working in their two main languages Yiddish and English but nevertheless, the language of home is Yiddish and there are areas in pupils' work in English which reflect some weaknesses. Speaking does not yet receive sufficient emphasis in lessons and the habit of pupils whispering responses exacerbates the weakness. Although, writing in Yiddish is fluent, there is limited evidence of pupils writing at length in English and in other subjects of the curriculum, such as history and geography.

Schemes of work based on the National Curriculum programmes of study are used as a framework for planning. This encourages a high degree of consistency in the teaching of the curriculum across classes. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been introduced in recent months. Although the strategies are not fully embedded in classroom practice they are beginning to be effective in promoting new skills. Teachers' medium-term plans are detailed with clear learning objectives and activities identified.

In the secondary department, the Kodesh curriculum is challenging. Pupils learn processes and skills, through, for example, detailed analysis of text, or the study of Jewish history and geography. The secular curriculum is taught in English and includes English, mathematics, science, history in Years 9, 10 and 11, geography (not in Year 11) art and PE up to Year 11. In addition, all pupils learn sewing, and in Year 11, typing, First Aid and Life Skills. Achievement in sewing and art are particular strengths.

The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education has been developed and implemented successfully. The Life Skills programme in the secondary department provides pupils with a valuable insight into the world of work, the economic and financial aspects of life and the employment opportunities available for the young people.

The school makes effective use of the SEN Code of Practice and has clear and effective strategies to identify and support such pupils. The SEN co-ordinator undertakes the assessment carefully. The individual education plans are of satisfactory quality. Appropriate decisions are made about the nature of the support required and whether it is best delivered by withdrawal or in the classroom.

A range of educational and visits make a good contribution to extending pupils' knowledge and experience. Good use is made of specialists who talk to the pupils on a variety of topics. For example, a bee keeper visited the school before Rosh Hashana to explain how honey is made; girls visit both the local baker and butcher shops to further their knowledge of Kashrus. Pupils present plays and productions to parents. As well as enriching the curriculum, they make a significant contribution to pupils' self-confidence and social development.

The school has made considerable progress in the development of the secular curriculum in the primary and secondary departments since the last inspection visit. This has been achieved through the hard work and effective leadership of the heads of these departments. However, there is no whole school curriculum overview covering both strands. This makes it difficult to monitor the quality of the provision throughout the school and to identify areas for improvement.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Forty-eight lessons were observed during the inspection across the Kodesh and secular curriculum and of these, about one third was good or better, and in the great majority of the remainder, the strengths outweighed the weaknesses. A small number of lessons was unsatisfactory and these were in the Foundation Stage and in PE.

Much needed emphasis has been placed to good effect on planning in the primary and secondary departments. All teachers complete satisfactory long-term planning with an overview of the year and medium-and short-term planning which translates into programmes of work in each subject. However, planning is not effective in the Foundation Stage. In religious studies teachers' planning is secure but in secular subjects learning objectives lack clarity and precision. Teachers' record books chronicle what has been covered each week but do not yet include evaluations to inform future planning.

There is good quality teaching in both the primary and secondary departments, with teaching being strongest in the secular secondary department. Good teaching was seen in some Kodesh lessons and in a significant number of lessons in the secular curriculum, including sewing, mathematics, history and art in the secondary department, and in science and geography in the junior department. At its best, teaching is characterised by secure subject knowledge, precise planning, and a lively and enthusiastic manner allied to a variety of practical approaches to keep pupils engaged, interested and keen to learn. For example, a lesson in science gave pupils an opportunity to make models of animal and plant cells. This involved collaborative planning in small groups, culminating in a presentation to the class. Where teaching is best, the teachers expect pupils to be attentive, to reflect and to contribute to their own learning by actively participating in the lessons. In consequence, pupils make good progress and achieve well.

Some weaknesses are common to many lessons. Some of these lessons take too little account of pupils' differing strengths and needs, giving the same task to the whole class. More able pupils complete the task but are not sufficiently challenged to achieve higher standards by thinking for themselves, through investigations or focused research. Less able pupils struggle or fail to complete the work. Some teachers talk for too long, or ask closed questions requiring only single word or short phrase answers. This results in too few opportunities for pupils to speak at length to clarify their thoughts, to argue or to defend a point of view and in so doing, make clear to teachers what they know and understand. Teaching in PE is poor. As a result, pupils make less effort and show only limited interest.

The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is unsatisfactory. Staff lack sufficient knowledge and understanding of the national Guidance for the Foundation Stage to promote a balanced and effective educational programme. Consequently, activities are not well matched to pupils' needs. Although staff supervise pupils closely they infrequently extend their experience and learning through effective questioning to develop their vocabulary and encourage thoughtful responses. The expectations of staff are too low.

The teaching of SEN pupils is sound and the pupils are well supported. The school ensures that pupils with a statement of SEN have additional weekly specialist teaching and appropriate liaison with other teachers. Parents also work with teachers to support pupils with learning difficulties, and some teachers give time on Sundays to help small groups who benefit from this additional support.

The quality and range of resources are unsatisfactory. They do not sufficiently support the subjects of the curriculum. In particular, in PE the lack of appropriate resources severely restricts the range of activities in which pupils can participate.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and conscientiously across the school. They record pupils' progress and attainment regularly. Teachers praise pupils for good work but advice about how to improve work is rarely added. Mark books are kept by all teachers to record academic grades and marks, as well as pupils' behaviour. The Foundation Stage Profile is completed at the end of reception year. Observations on individual children take place regularly to assess their performance. There are regular tests throughout the primary and secondary classes to track pupils' progress and

achievement. In English, this information is used effectively to shape future planning. The criteria used by teachers for assessment do not consistently relate to national comparators, such as the National Curriculum level descriptors.

In both strands of the curriculum, the school employs a large number of staff, all of whom are parttime. This creates challenges for the heads of departments in relation to planning continuity and progress in pupils' learning and ensuring consistency in teachers' assessment. All teachers have seminary training and there is a need for further professional development, particularly given the unavoidable turnover of staff. There are good models in the effective training given to newly appointed teachers, the use of the training of the SENCO and the education consultants' in-service work. All of these provide a basis for an in-service development plan in order to support teachers' continuing professional development.

#### 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 the curriculum policy and schemes of work for the Foundation Stage are implemented effectively (paragraph 1(2));
- o ensure that the curriculum gives pupils of compulsory school age appropriate experiences in the physical area of learning (paragraph 1(2)(a)(ii));
- o ensure that the curriculum enables pupils to acquire skills in speaking and listening and literacy (paragraph 1(2)(c));
- ensure that pupils below compulsory school age are provided with a programme of activities appropriate to their needs (paragraph 1(2)(h)(ii));
- o ensure that the Foundation Stage curriculum provides opportunities for all pupils to learn and make progress (paragraph 1(2)(i)):
- improve planning and teaching in PE and the Foundation Stage (paragraphs 1(3)(a)and 1(3)(c));
- ensure that teaching encourages pupils to work harder and to show an interest in PE (paragraph1(3)(b)); and
- build up sufficient resources to support the curriculum in all subjects (paragraph1(3)(f)).

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



The school's provision for the pupils' spiritual and moral development is excellent and is strength of the school. From an early age, great emphasis is placed on the teaching of Jewish values and how they are applied to everyday life. Pupils are imbued with a love of and respect for the Torah and its teachings. Opportunities are given to reinforce Torah values not only within the Kodesh curriculum, but during prayers, grace before and after meals and through the religious ethos that permeates the school.

Through extensive discussion of Jewish law and ethics, pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong. Teachers create many opportunities during lessons to promote Torah values. For example, in a Kodesh lesson, the teacher's use of optical illusions helped pupils to understand the idea that one sees what one wishes to see. They study the good deeds of great Jewish men and women and learn from their righteous behaviour.

Pupils' social development is good. Their behaviour is very good during lessons, at break and at mealtimes. It is a major focus central to the ethos of the school and good behaviour is constantly praised and rewarded. Pupils are keen and eager to talk to visitors and treat them with great friendliness and courtesy. Sometimes they are careless of the environment and do not always pick up their rubbish at break times. Pupils work well together and display great initiative using research skills, presentation and collaboration. For example, Year 6 pupils were involved in a project on Anne Frank's diary and Year 11 pupils made a presentation of their Wax-Work Museum model. Senior pupils create exciting wall displays. They are given opportunities to show responsibility by being appointed as monitors and prefects. They have various duties including supervision and support for younger or less able pupils. Pupils contribute to their own community life by regular visits to the local Jewish home for the elderly and supporting families less fortunate than themselves.

A variety of events are organised in order to familiarise the pupils with public institutions. Year 11 pupils discussed the role of parliament prior to their visit to Westminster to see the State Opening of the Houses of Parliament procession. Younger pupils complete projects on the police and the Post Office.

One aspect of pupils' cultural development is unsatisfactory. They are extremely well- informed about Jewish cultural achievements and heritage. There is a high level of respect and appreciation for their own culture, particularly in regard to the lives of Jewish people throughout the world. However, there is no specific programme to develop understanding and harmony of other major world faiths and cultures. Pupils are not provided with opportunities to give them a greater awareness of the wide diversity of different cultural traditions within the United Kingdom.

## Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets all the requirement except 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:

 assist pupils to acquire an appreciation and respect of other cultures, in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions (paragraph 2(e)).

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



The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is unsatisfactory. The main weakness is that whilst the range of polices in place provide a simple outline of the school's procedures, the detail of the documentation does not comply with requirements.

The school is an orderly community. Pupils are very positive about the support and care they receive from adults who work in the school. They feel they are well supported and know who to see if they feel worried, hurt or unwell. Pupils have a loyal commitment to the school.

The school's behaviour policy reflects a determination to promote high standards of behaviour among the pupils and it succeeds in this aim. The need for sanctions is rare. Where necessary they are used with a view to improving behaviour. Pupils behave very well, are polite and show respect to adults and to each other. They have positive attitudes to their work and take a pride in all they do. They report that there are no incidents of bullying and all enjoy working and playing together.

All staff are responsible for the pastoral welfare of pupils. They are vigilant and closely supervise

pupils at all times during the school day.

The First Aid policy outlines clear procedures for the care of sick children and the reporting of accidents. Almost all the staff have appropriate qualifications in First Aid. The school does not have a medical room but pupils are well cared for until parents or carers are able to collect them. The school ensures that all members of staff are made aware of pupils' allergies and medical conditions. The heads of departments are the identified persons to co-ordinate the child protection work.

A fire risk assessment has been carried out recently by a specialist company, and action has been taken on the majority of the issues raised. Fire drills take place regularly and are adequately documented. There have been no alterations to the premises since the last fire officer's report, which was satisfactory; all fire appliances have recently been checked. The school has not yet devised procedures to identify and control health and safety risks both at school and on educational visits.

Admission and attendance registers are kept correctly.

The school recognises that the buildings would prove difficult for pupils with impaired mobility. However, the school has not yet given due regard to their obligation to complete an audit of the accessibility of the building and the curriculum for pupils with a range of disabilities.

### 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:

- o prepare and implement a written policy to prevent bullying which has regard to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance: `Bullying: don't suffer in silence' (paragraph 3(2)(a));
- write and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DfES guidance `Safeguarding Children in Education' (paragraph 3(2)(b));
- o write and implement a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school paying due regard to DfES guidance: `Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits' (paragraph 3(2)(c)); and
- o give due regard to the DfES guidance: Health and Safety: Responsibilities and Powers' (paragraph 3(4)).

## What does the school need to do to comply with the DDA?

In order to comply with the requirements of the DDA the school should:

 draw up a written plan covering a three-year period to improve the accessibility of the school premises and the curriculum to disabled pupils, within the resources that the school can afford.

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



The school is run by the Bnois Jerusalem Charitable Trust with five members serving as the board

of governors. The Av Beis Din (Head of the local Rabbinical authority) acts as its spiritual adviser. The school recruits appropriate staff to support its Kodesh and secular curricula. Most of the teachers who apply for posts have connections with the school and so are well known to existing staff. They have all graduated from seminary.

The school does not comply with the regulations as it has only recently registered with the CRB and is just beginning to check teachers. There are procedures to check essential information relating to the suitability of all staff prior to appointment. All the requirements are not yet in place, in particular, checks on the medical fitness of staff.

# 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:

- o ensure that all staff are checked through the CRB for their suitability to work with children (paragraph 4(b)); and
- o 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's premises and accommodation have significant shortcomings. It occupies two sites. The main building consists of three houses in one terrace with another house on the other side of the road. There is also a demountable building for the youngest pupils in the school playground and another building used for assemblies. The main building has sufficient classrooms for primary and secondary pupils on the ground and first and second floors, but has no specialist classrooms, for example, for art or science. The single house provides very good accommodation for sewing, which has a central place in the curriculum. The main building imposes limitations on the provision but the school has managed a workable, though far from ideal solution.

There is a sufficient number of classrooms but they are domestic sized rooms which result in limited space for practical teaching and learning approaches. Given the number of pupils, many rooms are cramped. The demountable unit provides more spacious and better quality accommodation but one room is underused. In one of the houses the flooring on the stairs and corridors has been replaced, greatly enhancing the appearance and improving safety. In other areas, the flooring is in a poor condition with worn and broken tiles which present a safety hazard. The recent redecoration of the main premises has greatly improved the aesthetic quality and appearance of the environment. Pupils' work in a variety of subjects is well-mounted and displayed in corridors and classrooms, celebrating and encouraging their achievement.

There is a sufficient number of washrooms. Pupils who are ill can rest in the staffroom until they are collected. The kitchen provides adequate accommodation for the preparation and serving of food.

The limited outside play space has a hard surface and is rather bleak but mobile toys for the youngest pupils and a climbing frame help to add a brighter aspect. There is no grassed area for PE lessons or recreation. The quality of the pupils' physical education provision is poor in consequence.

The exterior of the building is in need of routine maintenance to the guttering and stonework. In

particular, the connection between two houses in the terrace and a ground floor extension has large cracks, with movement in the brickwork and distortion in door and window frames. The school needs to assure itself that such structures meet the relevant building requirements.

The school has plans to develop the site, including the construction of a classroom block, but planning permission has so far been refused.

### 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:

- o check that all load-bearing structures comply with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(c)); and
- o replace broken or worn floor tiles in the main building (paragraph 5(s)).

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



The school provides an appropriate range of information to parents, prospective parents and other partners. The prospectus includes a clear statement of the school's ethos, admission policy, provision for pupils with statements and for pupils for whom English is an additional language. In addition to the information contained in the prospectus, clear details are given of further documents available on request from the school office.

Parents receive two reports each year on the progress and attainment of their daughters in each subject. These contain helpful information, but do not contain a sharper analysis of pupils' strengths. The school has an open-door policy, and parents can approach teachers at any convenient time in order to discuss their daughters' progress. There is good liaison with parents of SEN pupils.

Newsletters are sent including sedra sheets for the younger pupils, which reinforces their learning of the weekly Biblical reading. Seventy five per cent of parents who responded to the questionnaire considered that they were well informed about their children's progress.

## Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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



There is a newly revised and clearly written complaints procedure, which meets all of the requirements. Parents have been recently informed of this by letter. It is available to parents in a file of policies and general information. Procedures for both formal and informal complaints including the required stages and time scales are outlined clearly. They also provide for, if required, the establishment of a hearing before a panel, which includes a member who is independent of the

management and running of the school. This would usually be the Av Beis Din.

## Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

#### **School details**

Name of school: **Bnois Jerusalem School** 

DfES ref number: 204/6242 Type of school: Jewish Status: Independent Age range of pupils: 3 - 16

Gender of pupils: Girls

Number on roll (full-time pupils): Girls 423, Total 423 Number of pupils with a statement of special Girls 1, Total 1

educational need:

Annual fees (day pupils): **Voluntary Contributions** Address of school: 77 - 81 Amhurst Park

London N16 5DL

Telephone number: 020 8800 5781/020 8802 7470

Headteacher: Mrs S Sonnenschein Proprietor: Rabbi M A Rosenberg Chair of the governing body: Mr & Mrs Grunfeld

Lead Inspector: Mrs Sandra Teacher Dates of inspection: 22 - 25 November 2004

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