



Menorah Grammar School

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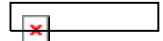
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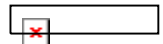
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Introduction and summary

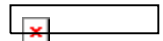


Purpose and scope of the inspection



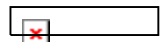
This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school



Menorah Grammar School is an independent day school for boys in the Burnt Oak area of the London Borough of Barnet. It was established in 1978 in order to provide education for boys from the strictly observant Jewish community of north London. It serves a wide catchment area and takes in boys from several different Jewish primary schools. It moved into its present premises in September 2000. At the time of the inspection it had 222 pupils on roll, of whom 187 were of compulsory school age. The school has within it a dedicated unit for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), known as the Darchei Noam Centre. Twelve pupils had statements of special educational needs and in addition there were 13 pupils at different stages of the SEN Code of Practice.

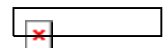
Summary of main findings



Menorah Grammar School was established with the aim of providing 'a high quality education within a caring and secure Torah environment'. The school has been very successful in meeting that principal aim and successfully wed together religious and secular education. It prepares its pupils very well for the next stages of their education, whether it be in a Yeshivah (higher Talmudical college), to which almost all pupils will go on for differing lengths of time after leaving school, or subsequently to university, or into a trade or profession. It is also very successful in meeting another of its stated aims, which is to provide 'a safe academic environment, dedicated to Torah values, good Middos, and respect for each other and the wider community'.

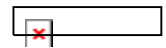
The school is served by well qualified and dedicated staff and the quality of teaching is generally very good in both strands of the curriculum. The ethos of the school encourages pupils of all levels of ability to set their sights high, and this reflects the tone set by the senior management. Pupils are well motivated, work hard, make good progress and achieve high standards. They are helped to develop a knowledge and understanding of their Jewish heritage and of their responsibilities as members of the wider British society. Through the Darchei Noam Centre and its staff, the school has been particularly successful in meeting the needs of pupils with a wide range of SEN.

What the school does well



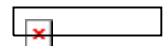
- it is particularly good in providing for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and in providing them with a deep and mature understanding of their Jewish heritage;
- it provides an effective curriculum in which pupils of differing abilities and make good progress and achieve high standards;
- the quality of teaching is very good overall;
- the Darchei Noam Centre provides very good support for pupils with special educational needs, and these pupils are enabled to achieve very well;
- pupils' behaviour is very good, and they treat each other, and the staff, with courtesy and respect; and
- staff show a high level commitment to their teaching and provide good role models.

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



The school fully meets the regulations.

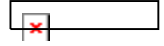
What the school must do to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002



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

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

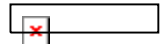
Next steps



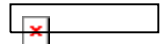
Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points in its drive for development:

- provide pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 with a wider range of opportunities for aesthetic and creative development;
- develop the processes for assessment of pupils' attainment in the Limmudei Chol strand of the curriculum so that they are more objective and consistent;
- continue to develop the provision for the appraisal and professional development of teachers in both strands of the curriculum, so that the high quality of teaching seen in the best lessons is extended across the curriculum; and
- continue to develop schemes of work in the Limmudei Chol strand of the curriculum.

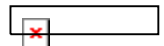
Compliance with the regulations for registration



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum



Following the normal practice of strictly observant Jewish boys' schools, the curriculum has two strands within it, known as Limmudei Kodesh and Limmudei Chol. Limmudei Kodesh is often referred to as the 'religious' or 'Hebrew' strand of the curriculum, although it also includes many references to areas of learning and experience which could be described as secular. Limmudei Chol is used to describe the more obviously secular subjects. These two strands of the curriculum are very successfully linked together, not least because of the excellent example that is set by the menahel (head of Limmudei Kodesh) and the headteacher in working together for the good of the whole school.

The Limmudei Kodesh strand provides a traditional curriculum that has developed over two thousand years and which is well known and understood by the members of the strictly observant Jewish community. It has several distinct, but inter-related components. It provides pupils with a very sound introduction to, and use of, Jewish sacred languages, including classical Hebrew, which pupils must learn to read in two scripts, and Aramaic, which occurs in the Talmud. Through familiarity with these, pupils are able to gain access to the Torah and Talmud in the original languages, and to deepen their knowledge of the faith, practice, law and traditions of orthodox Judaism. The Limmudei Kodesh strand of the curriculum is clearly documented by the school and the rabbonim (rabbis) who teach the component parts are able to benefit from these guidelines. This strand of the curriculum occupies pupils for just over half their taught time in the school.

The Limmudei Chol strand of the curriculum is also documented through an overall statement about

the curriculum, and by schemes of work. Although the schemes of work clearly state what is to be taught in each subject, the quality varies from subject to subject and the school would benefit from developing them further.

In Years 7 to 9, all pupils study English, mathematics, general science, French, history, geography, information and communication technology (ICT), and physical education (PE), to which music and Jewish Knowledge are added in Years 7 and 8. In Years 10 and 11 there is a common core of English, mathematics and general science, to which are added four options chosen from a pool of nine other subjects. Some pupils take public examinations the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) early, in which case they may begin an Advanced Level course. The range of subjects offered to the sixth form is good and the school has a policy that if pupils ask to take a particular subject and it can find teachers for the subject, it will provide a course where possible.

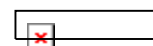
Personal, social and health education issues are dealt with, where appropriate, in both strands of the curriculum. The school is strongly of the opinion that matters relating to relationships between the sexes are not a matter for the school and should be dealt with in the context of the home and family. In this, it has the support of parents.

Taken overall, this is a good curriculum which combines a solid core of subjects with flexibility to provide pupils with as wide a range of choice as is possible in a small secondary school. Aspects of the aesthetic and creative areas of experience occur in Years 7, 8 and 9, however these need to be extended. Music is taught in Years 7 and 8. In Years 7, 8 and 9 there are strong aesthetic and practical elements in the ICT lessons, so that at the end of Year 9 all pupils are entered for a public examination which demonstrates their basic proficiency in computing. When pupils have asked to take art in Years 10 and 11, lessons have been provided. However, the school needs to investigate ways in which it can provide pupils, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9, with a wider scope for developing their aesthetic and creative potential through the use of different media.

The school is particularly successful in helping pupils who have SEN, and this is co-ordinated by the Darchei Noam Centre. Pupils have access to the full curriculum enjoyed by the other pupils in the school, but in addition they are provided with support particular to their needs. This curriculum is challenging and demanding and enables pupils to achieve very well. Some pupils follow a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) curriculum in either building studies or food hygiene and preparation.

In addition to the compulsory elements of the curriculum, the school provides a good range of curriculum enrichment and extra-curricular activities, some initiated by the pupils themselves. Each Thursday evening there is a voluntary mishmor, or study session, which is preceded by a communal meal at which pupils from the sixth form help to prepare and serve the meal, and which is regularly attended by up to half the pupils in the school. Many pupils take the opportunities that are provided to visit yeshivot during their half-term holidays. The school regularly organises outdoor pursuits trips to places such as the Lake District or the highlands of Scotland, and a small group of pupils from Year 10 recently stayed in the youth hostel in Fort William and climbed Ben Nevis.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



In almost all of the lessons observed during the inspection, both in the Limmudei Kodesh and Limmudei Chol strands of the curriculum, the quality of teaching was good and often very good. Only in a very small minority of lessons was the teaching unsatisfactory.

The school has benefited from having a core of well-qualified and experienced teachers who have served the school for many years and who have brought to it a strong sense of stability and scholarship. This helps new teachers to settle in well. The Limmudei Kodesh staff have all studied at a yeshivah and most have rabbinic ordination. Some are also graduates with secular qualifications and several have studied to obtain qualified teacher status. The secular teachers are

all well qualified to teach their subjects and most have wide experience. The school has recently initiated a programme of staff appraisal and professional development, and it encourages teachers to keep up-to-date in their subject areas. All of this contributes to the usually very good quality of teaching and learning.

In the best lessons, which are characterised by very good relationships, the teachers give pupils a very clear opening summary of the aims and objectives of the lesson. They present material in a challenging and demanding way that is often accompanied by good humour. These lessons are well paced and make very good use of resources. Teachers also present pupils with a good summing up at the end. Pupils respond by working enthusiastically and with obvious enjoyment. They learn well and are enabled to make good progress. Where the subject matter is appropriate, the pupils are given every opportunity to express themselves and the teachers create opportunities to draw them into discussion. Even shy and reticent pupils are drawn into debate and grow in the confidence that they need to express themselves. Within Limmudei Kodesh lessons, pupils are presented with many positive opportunities to develop their debating skills and powers of logical analysis.

In general, teachers show very good subject knowledge. Occasionally, and particularly in the oldest classes, time constraints mean that lessons sometimes include a great deal of talking by the teacher, who is anxious to use the limited time available to present as much information as possible, but in these lessons pupils stay on task and demonstrate their eagerness to learn.

A tiny minority of the lessons observed were unsatisfactory. A characteristic of such lessons was that teachers did not use time well and failed to engage the attention or imagination of the pupils. As a result, pupils became bored or distracted, their behaviour deteriorated, and the teachers did not have appropriate strategies to get the pupils back on track.

With the Limmudei Kodesh strand of the curriculum there are systems in place to assess the pupils' levels of attainment. There are weekly tests in their knowledge and understanding of the Talmud, and other subjects are tested fortnightly. Pupils' marks are systematically recorded. Within the subjects of the Limmudei Chol strand, pupils' work is regularly marked, and this marking is often very thorough, but is not entirely consistent.

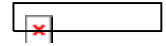
The quality of teaching in the Darchei Noam Centre is uniformly good, and the leadership provides a strong sense of vision and purpose. The teachers are very sensitive to the individual needs and requirements of the pupils in their care and the work which they are asked to do is carefully tailored to these. Programmes of study which match individual needs are put in place and are consistently monitored and evaluated. The head of centre ensures that pupils' targets, initially derived from the formal statement of SEN and subsequently from the individual education plans (IEPs) are focused and achievable. Recording of pupils' progress is very thorough and systematic. This meticulous planning ensures that pupils are included within all other aspects of the school's life and this results in a rise in their self-esteem and confidence. However, not all teachers within the main school follow the requirements of the IEPs sufficiently closely.

One group of pupils from Years 10 to 12 are studying for an NVQ in food hygiene and preparation, and this is followed to both Level 1 and Level 2. This provision is well managed and the pupils are wholly committed to it. In the Level 1 course, pupils have been so successful in their application that they now help in providing daily meals for the adjacent primary school. For pupils following the Level 2 course, the school has negotiated with a local business for access to their catering facilities. The impact of this is that these pupils are very well prepared to continue with catering if this is their chosen career.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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



The school is particularly good in providing for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It provides them with a deep and mature understanding of their Jewish heritage and enables them to take a full part in wider society.

The school has good systems in place to enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. Members of staff in both the Limmudei Kodesh and Limmudei Chol departments encourage the pupils to take initiative in their studies and to grow emotionally and in their social skills. This is especially evident in the Darchei Noam course, which puts great emphasis on personal development. A major feature of the Limmudei Kodesh programme is that through conventional Talmudic studies and an emphasis on the study of ethical texts, the pupils are taught to distinguish between right and wrong. Through this study, as well as during assemblies and through periodic courses run by the school, they are encouraged to respect the law. Pupils are provided with a knowledge of public services and institutions in England through lessons in the Limmudei Chol strand of the curriculum, as well as through mock elections, a student council, and an effective prefect system.

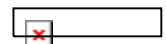
Menorah Grammar school is very much a community school, and the pupils are involved in projects that benefit the members of the larger Jewish community. For example, pupils are encouraged to be involved in 'chesed' projects, which mean that they participate in visits to hospitals and nursing homes, as well as to the neighbouring special needs school. This effectively encourages pupils to think about others and appreciate the contributions that they can make through being actively responsible and taking initiatives. Many pupils take an active interest in environmental issues and have taken part in local initiatives aimed at keeping both the school and the neighbourhood free of litter.

The staff act as good role models for the pupils and encourage a respect for their own culture as well as tolerance and respect for those of other cultural traditions. These issues are effectively taught within history, geography and PE. Within the school there are pupils from both the Ashkenazi and Sephardi traditions, and they are able to compare their differing cultures and customs and grow in their appreciation of the wide variety to be found within the Jewish community. Recently, a group of pupils, some of whom had ancestral roots in the area, visited southern Poland, where they had had the opportunity to visit sites connected with the Shoah (Holocaust).

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school takes its responsibilities for the welfare, health and safety of pupils very seriously. It has a full range of policies which set out the guidelines and principles which ensure the health and safety of pupils. Pupils' behaviour is influenced by the high expectations placed on them by staff. There is a very detailed anti-bullying policy and pupils report that they experience very little of this. The policy offers very clear guidelines for staff, but the advice offered to any pupil who may be bullied should be made more explicit, perhaps through a 'pupil-friendly' version of the policy.

The behaviour policy is clearly set out and the guidelines are followed rigorously. This results in very good behaviour throughout the school. These high standards only vary when, in a few lessons,

pupils become uninterested and bored. In general, pupils are courteous and considerate. They greet guests with great friendliness and engage happily in conversation.

The health and safety policy satisfactorily covers most aspects of fire safety. A recent report from the local fire authority has indicated several minor areas which the school needs to address, and these have been put in hand. Pupils are supervised well at all times. A recent walking tour in Scotland was planned well and parents were advised of all the activities that the pupils would undertake. Risk assessments were duly carried out and the school used the services of a trained mountain leader for those aspects of the visit thought to be more hazardous.

The policy relating to child protection issues is applied meticulously. This policy provides good guidance to staff on how they might be made aware of matters relating to the emotional and physical welfare of pupils. The headteacher is the nominated child protection coordinator, and in this he is supported by the teacher in charge of the Darchei Noam Centre. Together they ensure effective implementation of the policy.

The school maintains an admission register and attendance registers. These are completed in accordance with the regulations. In addition, pupils are required to sign out if they need to leave the building. This helps to ensure pupils' safety in the event of any emergency.

The school has not yet written a draft accessibility plan in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act. However, it takes a very serious view of these responsibilities and has already installed a lift to enable wheelchair users to have access to the first floor. Other areas of the school, such as the science laboratories, have ramps that allow wheelchair access, and a toilet has been installed for use by disabled pupils and visitors.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

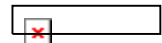
Yes.

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:

- devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff



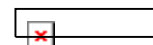
The school is a registered charitable trust. There is a board of Governors which consists of ten members. The day-to-day running of the school is in the hands of a senior management team which consists of the headmaster, deputy headmaster, menahel, and head of Limmudei Chol. Recently, the school has appointed a senior teacher to co-ordinate matters relating to Years 11, 12 and 13. As a point of principle, the chairman of the governing body comes into the school each week to teach Jewish Knowledge to all the pupils in Year 7, and in this way is able to get to know the pupils personally in their first year at the school.

The proprietor and staff have been subject to a check with the Criminal Records Bureau and they have been deemed suitable to work with children. Appropriate checks have been carried out to confirm the identity and credibility of those applying for positions at the school through character references supplied to the heads of department. However, the senior management team intends to supply a more comprehensive application pack in future in order to improve the hiring process within the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The school has very good premises and accommodation. It occupies purpose-built premises which formerly accommodated a maintained secondary school.

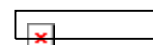
Before the buildings were taken over by the school in 2000, they were extensively refurbished and now provide a very good environment for teaching and learning. At the heart of the school is the Beis Hamedrash (house of study) which can accommodate the whole school, and which is used for study, prayer, and assemblies. It has an adequate number of classrooms for specialist subject teaching, three well-equipped laboratories for the teaching of physics, chemistry and biology respectively, a computer room, a small, but well-furnished base for pupils with SEN in the Darchei Noam Centre, and a purpose-built refectory in which meals are served. The school has a small gymnasium and makes good use of outdoor facilities for PE, including two playgrounds in the school grounds and an adjacent public park. Swimming has recently been introduced into the timetable and pupils attend a local public swimming pool for these sessions. Toilet and washroom facilities are suitable for pupils and staff, and there is a small room designated for use by pupils who are ill and which meets the requirements of the current regulations. The sixth form has a comfortable common room and a room for use during supervised private study periods has recently been furnished and brought into use.

The state of decoration is good and the pupils take very good care of it. Problems have arisen with the science block, where that some window frames have rotted and need to be replaced. The outside space around the affected area has been declared out-of-bounds and plans are in hand to replace the windows in the immediate future.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

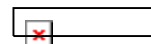


The school is a close-knit community which has very good relationships with the parents of its pupils. It provides them with all the required information through its prospectus, which is well produced and attractive. Where it does not routinely provide all policy details, and it is made clear that parents and carers can request these should they so wish.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

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

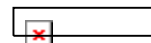


The school has an effective complaints policy which meets all of the regulations. This is a recently re-written document. The school has made it known to parents that they may have a copy of the document on request.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	Menorah Grammar School		
DfES ref number:	302/6089		
Type of school:	Strictly observant Jewish		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	11-18		
Gender of pupils:	Boys		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 222,	Girls 0,	Total 222
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 12,	Girls 0,	Total 12
Annual fees (day pupils):	£5,250		
Address of school:	Abbots Road Edgware London HA8 0QS		
E-mail address:	menorahgrammar@hotmail.com		
Telephone number:	020 8906 9756		
Fax number:	020 8959 1557		
Headteacher:	Rabbi A M Goldblatt		
Proprietor:	Menorah Grammar School Ltd		
Lead Inspector:	Dr Roy Long		
Dates of inspection:	22 - 25 November 2004		

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