

Inspection report

T'Mimei Lev School

Independent special school

DfES ref no: 352/6062

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 21 - 23 February 2006

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 162A 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

T' Mimei Lev School is in Salford, Greater Manchester. The school was established in its present form in 2004 and uses rooms in a large Jewish community centre. It provides full-time special education for Jewish children who have learning difficulties. It is a very small school, currently with only three pupils, who are all boys aged between 9 and 14 years. The school is associated with an integrated nursery in the same building. It is the school's aim, where appropriate, to help its pupils return to mainstream Jewish schools. One pupil attends another local school each morning and two former pupils returned to full-time education at the end of the last school year. In this way the school is seeking to develop good links with other local Jewish schools and the wider community.

Summary of main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is very successful in creating an atmosphere of welcome and respect where pupils' personal development thrives. Its curriculum, ethos and routines clearly reflect the Jewish faith and in that respect the school achieves its aims. Pupils experience a broad range of subjects but the school lacks an overall curriculum policy and schemes of work in all subjects. Pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in their learning. Although they do not have a broad knowledge of current teaching methods and curriculum, teachers work hard to help pupils overcome their specific difficulties. Although pupils' achievements are regularly evaluated, the information gathered is not always effectively used to plan pupils' next steps with clear learning objectives. Consequently, although satisfactory overall, teaching sometimes lacks challenge and focus. The school is not rigorous enough with regard to the requirements relating to some matters of health and safety, pupils' welfare, the appointment of staff and the information it provides.

What the school does well:

- it creates a very friendly and welcoming ethos strongly influenced by the Jewish faith;
- it is effective in helping to secure pupils' good personal development, especially their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; and
- it helps pupils make good progress in their speaking, listening, perseverance and attitudes to their studies.

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

- draw up and implement a clear curriculum policy that sets out what the school is going to provide for pupils and :
 - use more age-appropriate learning resources for the older pupils;
 - improve lesson planning and increase the range of teaching methods;
 - improve the focus and rigour of on-going assessment in order to sharpen the focus on individual pupils' needs;

which are identified in section 1 of this report;

- attend to the matters of the welfare, health and safety of pupils itemised in section 3;
- ensure that staff appointment procedures include checks of their medical fitness prior to confirmation of their appointment, as noted in section 4;
- improve the condition and resourcing of the outside play area and make appropriate provision for accommodation for pupils who are ill, as indicated in section 5; and
- provide information to parents about admissions, discipline, exclusions and the provision and welfare of pupils with statements, as identified in section 6.

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

- liaise with the community centre to devise a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS FOR REGISTRATION

1. The quality of education provided by the school

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum strongly reflects the Jewish traditions of the school and in that respect meets its stated aims. There are prayers and Jewish studies each morning and a large part of the spiritual and social development of the pupils is successfully achieved through these lessons. However, there is no clear overall curriculum policy clearly outlining what the school provides.

The curriculum centres on language and literacy activities, as this is an area in which all the pupils have significant difficulties. English, mathematics and science have suitable long-term schemes of work. Pupils study a range of other National Curriculum subjects but technological, creative and aesthetic activities lack variety and are not planned in sufficient detail. Teachers use nationally produced materials to support medium- and long-term planning. Pupils and teachers underuse information and communication technology (ICT) and this means that opportunities are missed to enhance and widen pupils' learning experiences through the curriculum. It is the intention of the school to make links with a local secondary school to improve ICT opportunities. One pupil attends a local school each morning and works at age-appropriate activities, especially in mathematics and some aspects of English. Pupils have regular opportunities to swim.

There is not a school-specific programme for personal, health and social education but it is evident in other activities. In science, pupils learn about healthy eating and healthy bodies. Their social development is emphasised through conversation with teachers, social activities such as playing cooperative games and meeting pupils from other schools. Pupils' Jewish studies also play a large part in developing their social and personal skills. The school does not offer specific opportunities for pupils to learn about substance abuse and sex education. The school has made links with outside agencies in order to provide the older pupils with careers advice when appropriate.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. All the staff form positive relationships with their pupils and know them very well. The strength of the teaching lies in the family atmosphere created by staff so that pupils work in harmony and share and co-operate, for example while reading a story or playing a game together. Pupils receive significant amounts of individual support and this has a beneficial effect on learning and achievement. This has resulted in pupils making satisfactory progress overall but good progress in their ability to speak, listen and persevere with tasks. Pupils' writing skills, such as letter formation in both Hebrew and English, are satisfactory and they are beginning to develop their knowledge of letter sounds to support their reading. Teachers manage behaviour effectively showing a firm but sensitive manner in order to refocus pupils to their tasks as quickly as possible.

Teachers are well prepared for lessons and know what activities they are going to use. However, lesson planning is limited and lacks clear and specific learning objectives for individual pupils. There has been no significant in-service training for teachers to help them improve their skills and techniques for teaching pupils of this age with such complex learning difficulties. This restricts the pupils' breadth of study and the degree of challenge, especially where a pupil is more able.

When the teaching is more effective, staff make good use of time to bring pace and variety into their lessons and to plan age appropriate activities. A good example was seen when pupils learned about the Festival of Purim where both musical and visual aids were used. Visiting specialist teachers have considerable expertise, for example in speech therapy, and are able to establish the very specific needs of the pupils and this allows for good individual pupil support. However, this knowledge is not always translated into effective lessons, especially where pupils are being taught in a group.

The school has adequate resources and in the most effective lessons these are used well to support learning. In particular, some new reading books stimulate both literacy and religious education skills. However, resources in physical education, design and technology (DT), art and ICT are underused. This restricts opportunities to extend pupils' skills in independent learning.

Teachers are not using a sufficient variety of techniques. They depend too much on the use of unimaginative work sheets. Some resources are not age appropriate for the interests of the older pupils.

Assessment procedures to measure pupils' progress over a term or year are satisfactory. Teachers use national guidance to check progress and make daily observations on how pupils have completed tasks. There is a lack of clear learning objectives in the planning against which to measure progress. This limits the teachers' ability to make more rigorous short-term assessments in order to measure smaller steps in learning. Much of the content of the pupils' daily progress records provides a summary of tasks completed, rather than an evaluation of their learning. On-going oral feedback is used to praise and encourage pupils but they are not involved in their own assessment and so do not take responsibility for improving their work where they can.

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:

- *draw up a more detailed whole-school curriculum policy, supported by schemes of work, which should include the school's approach to personal, social and health education (paragraph 1(2));*
- *ensure that learning resources and materials are age-appropriate for the older pupils (paragraph 1(2)(b));*

- *ensure that all lessons are well planned with specific learning objectives and involve more imaginative teaching methods (paragraph 1(3)(c)); and*
- *improve the rigour of on-going assessment and evaluation of learning in order to better plan lessons with specific learning objectives for individual pupils (paragraph 1(3)(g)).*

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

The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and pupils make good progress. In line with the aims of the school, pupils effectively build up the self-knowledge, self-confidence and self-esteem that are at the heart of the school's ethos, or *hashkofa*.

Pupils' personal and social development is very well promoted through the opportunities provided for interaction with their teachers, with each other, with local schools and the Jewish community. An after-school club provides opportunities for similarly aged pupils to socialise and the school has started to develop further links with a local secondary school.

The school has a family atmosphere, with very good relationships. Pupils enjoy coming to school. There are many occasions for discussion, for pupils to consider the implications of their actions on others and to distinguish right from wrong through their Torah learning. Behaviour is good. Pupils are courteous and respectful.

Pupils are encouraged to be involved in their community. They take responsibility for tidying up and returning equipment. They learn to care for those less fortunate by supporting charities.

They learn about life in England and are being equipped with the vital life skills they need. They are developing cultural awareness by visiting places of educational interest such as the Jewish museum and work with other people from different religions and cultures.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Pupils are effectively supervised and they receive significant amounts of one-to-one support and guidance during lessons, breaks and lunchtimes. Their welfare is taken very seriously by the school. It is developing its written procedures to ensure that safe practices are followed but there are still a number of omissions in documentation which mean that not all the requirements are met. Policies regarding bullying and behaviour are satisfactory and child protection procedures are clear. Staff have not attended training about child protection although this is planned for in the near future. Some risk assessments for school activities have been

completed but they are not all rigorous enough and do not adequately cover some aspects of school life, for example visits off-site. The attendance register is satisfactory but the school has no formal admission register. Procedures in case of fire are satisfactory and fire drills are undertaken regularly and documented appropriately.

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 attend the required training relating to child protection (paragraph 3(2)(b));*
- *ensure that arrangements for off-site visits including walks, visits to the park and the local cricket club satisfy the recommendations in Department for Education and Skills guidance (paragraph 3(2)(c));*
- *complete all health and safety risk assessments (paragraph 3(4)); and*
- *establish a formal admission register (paragraph 3(9)).*

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:

- *liaise with the community centre to ensure that there is a three-year plan to improve the accessibility of the premises.*

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

Procedures for the appointment of staff are satisfactory and all those who have supervisory responsibilities with pupils have been checked with the Criminal Records Bureau. However, the school does not yet have any procedures to establish a teacher's medical fitness to work with pupils.

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 appropriate checks on a teacher's medical fitness to teach are undertaken prior to appointment (paragraph 4(c)).*

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation

The school's premises are rooms in a community centre that also accommodates an associated nursery school and adult activities including acts of worship, fitness training and swimming. Suitable arrangements are made to ensure that pupils' lessons are not interrupted and that their welfare is safeguarded. Staff are alert to the issues of working in a community building. The main building is substantial and in satisfactory condition. The classroom is well maintained and pupils' work is celebrated in displays to make an attractive environment. The schoolroom is tidy and well organised but has no specialist facilities for subjects such as science and DT although there is one computer per pupil for the present numbers on roll. There is an outside play area within the community centre grounds but its condition is unsatisfactory for pupils to use. Boundary fences are in poor repair, there is significant litter and storage of unused items from the community centre and this makes it hazardous. The play equipment in this area is not age appropriate for the older pupils. However, the local park and cricket club facilities are also used for activities that are more energetic. Pupils have regular access to a gym and swimming pool in the centre, which are both well maintained and appropriately supervised. The whole ground floor of the building is suitably adapted to allow easy access to all pupils. Furniture and fittings are suitable for the present pupils. The school has attempted to make appropriate provision for a medical room but arrangements still do not meet all the requirements. The classroom layout is unimaginative and does not readily support a variety of learning experiences.

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 facilities with running water are made available to pupils who are ill (paragraph 5(l)); and*
- *improve the condition and safety of the outside play area by removing all unnecessary building debris, the cement mixer, broken benches, litter, broken boundary fences and old swimming pool covers and ensure that pupils use age-appropriate outside play equipment (paragraph 5(t)).*

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners

The school has produced a helpful booklet for parents that describes how the school is organised and operates. There are some omissions relating to information about admissions, discipline, exclusions and the arrangements for pupils who have statements of special educational needs.

Individual records are readily available to parents who have easy access to teachers, receive an annual written report and have meetings each year about how well their child is doing. Each pupil has a home-to-school book in which both teachers and

parents write comments. This is a successful means of communication. The school has good relationships with the local authority and provides information about the progress of the pupils with statements of special educational needs. Information for annual reviews is supplied as required. Details of the school's complaints procedure, its staff and their qualifications are readily available at the school. Teachers complete attendance registers satisfactorily. While information about admissions is available it is not written as required in a formal admission register.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

The school meets most but not 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:

- *ensure that information for parents includes more specific detail about admissions, discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e)); and*
- *provide as information for parents the arrangements for the provision and welfare of pupils with statements of educational needs (paragraph 6(2)(f)).*

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

The school's policy for handling complaints is clearly written, referred to in parents' information and readily available in school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	T'Mimei Lev School
DfES Number:	352/6062
Type of school:	Jewish Special School
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	5 - 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys: 3 Girls: 0 Total: 3
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys: 3 Girls: 0 Total: 3
Annual fees (day pupils):	£5,000
Address of school:	Manchester Jewish Community Centre Bury Old Road Manchester M7 4QY
Telephone number:	0161 795 2253
Fax number:	0161 795 2253
Email address:	tmimei.lev@btconnect.com
Headteacher:	Mrs M Gold
Proprietor:	Mr G Glickman
Reporting Inspector:	Mr Daniel Towl HMI
Date of inspection:	21 - 23 February 2006

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