

Beis Rochel Girls' School

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	352/6050
Unique Reference Number	130286
Inspection number	301499
Inspection dates	24-25 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Ronald Cohen AI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Beis Rochel Girls' School is an independent Jewish day school, located in North Manchester, for girls aged 3 to 16. The school was established in 1992 in response to the needs of the religious Satmar Chassidic families of Manchester and Salford, whose principles and customs underpin the educational provision of the school. The school offers a religious and secular curriculum. The majority of pupils in the school are from Satmar homes, but there are also girls from other Chassidic backgrounds. A small number of girls come from *Litvish* (non-Chassidic) and *Sefardi* (oriental) backgrounds. There are 250 full-time pupils on roll. The majority of girls come from bilingual homes where both Yiddish and English are spoken. 150 girls speak English as a second language. There are 30 pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but they do not have statements of special educational need. Thirty-seven pupils aged 3 and 4 are funded under the nursery scheme. The school has purchased a new building, which it hopes to occupy from September 2007, as its current rented accommodation is in need of much refurbishment and redecoration. The school's aim is to *'prepare the girls to be fully functioning members of their community; for their next step, (Jewish seminary) and for their long term roles'* In order to achieve this, *'high emphasis is placed on teaching spiritual and moral values and expectations of a high standard of behaviour and mutual respect'*.

Evaluation of the school

Beis Rochel Girls' School is a good school, with some outstanding features, which provides good education and care for its pupils. There is good teaching at all key stages in both the secular and religious strands of the curriculum. The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership and direction for the school and the dedicated staff, in the development of teaching, learning and pupils' welfare. The school has made significant progress since the last inspection and meets most but not all of the requirements of the regulations.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum and of teaching is good. This leads to pupils' good learning and progress.

The overall curriculum is divided into two distinctive strands: religious studies (*Limmudei Kodesh*) and secular studies (*Limmudei Chol*). *Limmudei Kodesh*, which is taught in the mornings, covers a wide range of distinctively Jewish studies, including the study of Classical Hebrew and Yiddish, and educates girls to an understanding of Jewish history, culture and religious practice. The teaching of *Limmudei Kodesh* is carried out entirely through the medium of Yiddish. *Limmudei Chol*, which is taught in English, includes English, mathematics, science, history, home economics, geography and art. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils are entered for public examinations in English, mathematics, history, and art. Although the technological component is limited, there is a strong emphasis on the design and preparation of clothes, and on some essential elements of food technology.

The clearly written curriculum policy is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which ensure that both the *Kodesh* and *Chol* strands of the curriculum are implemented effectively.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught as part of the *Kodesh* curriculum, and the girls are well prepared to take on the opportunities and challenges which will come to them as adult members of the strictly observant Jewish community. The main focus is on the development of pupils' *middos* (desirable personal traits of responsibility, modesty and consideration). All the pupils progress from this school to seminaries to continue their education. Careers guidance, taught within the context of the PSHE programme, prepares them well for their future experiences.

Teaching is good overall. Most lessons observed were good: some were outstanding, and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. In the best lessons, teachers' subject knowledge is secure, and their planning precise and well matched to pupils' prior attainment. Their approach is lively and enthusiastic and maintains the interest and involvement of pupils. Consequently, pupils make progress in their learning and achieve good standards. Homework is given to reinforce and extend the work undertaken in class. In less successful lessons, teachers talk for too long, or use dictation too much as a means of conveying information, and pupils' attention fades. In some subjects, closed questions limit pupils' opportunities to develop their thinking sufficiently.

Marking is regular and is undertaken conscientiously. In much of the marking, there are constructive comments which make clear to pupils why their work is good or how they can improve some aspects. Teachers use the information gained from assessment to inform their future planning and ensure that the needs of individuals are addressed appropriately. However, this good practice is not yet implemented consistently. The use of electronic software to track individual pupils' progress is in the early stages of development.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

This is an outstanding feature of the school, and its success is reflected in the girls' outstanding behaviour. The school meets its aims very successfully. Pastoral care is a strong feature of the school, with many strengths, chief of which is the ethos of dedication and commitment to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This produces young women who are well informed and modest, but who retain a lively interest in their environment and wider issues. Central to this is the provision of a knowledge and understanding of Jewish spiritual heritage. This is achieved not only through *Limmudei Kodesh* lessons, but also in the regular opportunities for prayer, and through the whole ethos of the school. Pupils have good attitudes to study and enjoy their learning, becoming aware of its contribution to their future well-being. Through extensive discussion of Jewish law and ethics, pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong. Throughout the school, there are extensive opportunities for pupils to learn how to respond to others with kindness and consideration. As a result, relations at all levels are excellent, and the school is a secure and well-ordered community that is characterised by friendliness and mutual concern. Pupils' attendance is good.

Although the school serves an inwardly focused community, and every effort is made to protect the pupils from outside influences which are considered to be harmful, nevertheless, pupils are taught, with empathy, about other cultures. Reference is made to those aspects of Jewish prayers which emphasise peace and harmony on earth. This promotes tolerance of, and respect for all people. In order to familiarise pupils with public institutions, visits are organised to places such as old peoples' homes and the local fire station.

Cultural provision is good. Art is a strength of the school and pupils' work, based on the style of world renowned artists, is displayed throughout the building.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. All required policies are in place and have regard to Department for Education and Skills guidance. The headteacher is presently undertaking training in the latest procedures for safeguarding children. Both the *Kodesh* and *Chol* curricula place emphasis on pupils' health and encourage pupils to take care of their bodies and keep safe. Healthy eating is included in the *Kodesh* curriculum and in science lessons, and the school informs parents of which foods may be brought in for break times. The school is conscientious in its responsibilities for its pupils and pupils are well supervised at all times. Three members of staff monitor the pupils at break times and pupils are encouraged to keep active. The pupils say that they feel safe secure and valued. These sentiments are supported by parents who see the caring attitudes of the school as a key factor in their daughters' learning and progress.

The school makes good provision for fire safety, and fire alarm tests and drills are regularly carried out and are well documented. Fire fighting equipment is inspected and maintained under external contract. Fire risk assessments have been completed. Senior staff have regular meetings to discuss health and safety matters.

Although the school has an appropriate policy and equipment for accidents, no member of staff has a current first aid qualification. Attendance registers are completed at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions but entries do not indicate the reasons for pupils' absences. As the school is to move to new premises next term, it has not yet drawn up a policy or three-year statement under its duties for the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Staff recruitment and vetting procedures are implemented effectively. Before staff are appointed, appropriate checks are made to confirm their identity, past employment history and qualifications. All staff have been subject to a check by the Criminal Records Bureau at an enhanced level to confirm their suitability to work with children. The records held at the school comply with requirements.

School's premises and accommodation

The school makes good use of its present premises, although these are far from ideal. There is a poor state of decoration throughout the building and the flooring is very worn. The flooring is not dangerous but broken tiles contribute to the general drabness of the building. There are no sick room facilities, as required by the regulations, for pupils who are ill. Although there is space for pupils to play outside safely, the facilities do not promote creative play, nor is there seating for pupils during hot weather. The building is maintained in sound order and standards of cleanliness are satisfactory. Staff try to improve the learning environment with displays of pupils' work and relevant posters. However, the overall effect of the condition of the building is not conducive to learning. The dedication of staff and the hard work of the pupils limit the impact of the building's shortcomings on pupils' progress. Nevertheless, the school is delighted to be able to move into new premises at the start of the next school year, which are planned to meet the shortcomings of the current premises, and to add considerably to the educational opportunities for the pupils.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides parents and parents of prospective pupils with comprehensive and useful information through its prospectus. This contains full details of key school

policies, including child protection, admissions, discipline and details of the curriculum provision. Clear and informative termly reports are produced for each pupil. These are augmented by further full and comprehensive reports at the end of the academic year.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a detailed and comprehensive complaints procedure that is clearly outlined in an informative policy document. The complaints procedures meet all requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- ensure that first aiders have current qualifications (paragraph 3(6))
- put appropriate codings in registers to clearly explain reasons for pupils' absence (paragraph 3(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill (paragraph 5(l))
- ensure satisfactory standards of maintenance and decoration (paragraph 5(q))
- improve and maintain the quality of flooring to ensure that it is in good condition (paragraph 5(s)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- ensure that all teaching is of the standard demonstrated by the best practice, particularly in encouraging independent thinking and learning
- implement and sustain uniform systems of marking and assessment.

School details

Name of school	Beis Rochel Girls' School		
DfES number	352/6050		
Unique reference number	130286		
Unique reference number (funded nursery education)	EY534439		
Type of school	Jewish Day school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1992		
Age range of pupils	3-16		
Gender of pupils	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 250	Total: 250
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	Boys: 0	Girls: 37	Total: 37
Annual fees (day pupils)	£936 - 2760		
Address of school	1-7 Seymour Road Manchester Lancashire M8 5BQ		
Telephone number	01617 951830		
Fax number	01617 402331		
Email address	beisruchelmancheste@tiscali.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs E Krausz		
Proprietor	Mr B Krausz		
Reporting inspector	Ronald Cohen AI		
Dates of inspection	24-25 April 2007		