

Beis Soroh Schneirer

Independent School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	302/6104
Unique Reference Number	131026
Inspection number	301500
Inspection dates	9-10 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Sandra Teacher

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 Soroh Schneirer was established in 1996 as an independent Jewish school for girls aged from 3 to 11 years. It serves the growing, strictly orthodox Jewish community of north-west London in response to their specific religious and educational needs. In 2005, business premises were successfully converted to house the 217 pupils, 25 of whom are in the nursery. The school is guided by the principles of the Torah and is rooted in an ethos of Torah values. The school aims to instill in its pupils a love of their Jewish heritage and traditions and to ensure that they grow up to be confident, upright members of society. This is the school's first published inspection report.

Evaluation of the school

Beis Soroh Schneirer is right to be proud of its achievements. The quality of education is satisfactory, so that pupils make satisfactory progress overall. There are many strengths in the teaching of *Kodesh* (Jewish studies), and literacy and numeracy, where pupils make good progress. Technological, physical and creative aspects of the curriculum are not yet established securely. Pupils are very happy at the school and the quality of care is good. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding, but there is still more work to be done to promote their cultural development. Pupils feel safe and comfortable as they know each other and the staff so well. Parents and pupils are very positive about the school, which meets all the regulations.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory and it has some very positive strengths. The *Kodesh* curriculum is good and has its own unique *mesoirah* (tradition). This spiritual ethos permeates the whole school. Pupils achieve well in Torah *Nach* (Hebrew reading and writing). Older pupils come to grips with *Rashi* (Jewish commentary). *Middos* (Torah values) circle time is outstanding and enables the pupils to leave the school with high standards of integrity.

Foundation subjects, such as art and design and design and technology are integrated within the *Kodesh* curriculum but the schemes of work do not clearly show how skills will be built up and taught systematically year by year.

In the Foundation Stage, interesting play-based activities encourage the development of children's skills, knowledge and understanding well. However, the Kindergarten and Reception class do not fully integrate as an Early Years unit. These children's physical development is limited by the lack of a fully equipped outdoor play area.

In the main school the curriculum is broad but not sufficiently balanced. Mathematics is a strength, particularly the use of mental mathematics to generate confidence and help pupils achieve well. English is also a strength, particularly speaking and listening skills and the way in which the pupils recite poetry. These subjects, together with science, have good time allocations and are taught well. However, information and communication technology (ICT) is not offered and music, history and geography are underdeveloped. There are only limited opportunities for physical and creative activities; for example, there is only one physical education (PE) lesson per week for each class.

The curriculum is enriched through visits, shows and projects, and although there are few extra-curricular activities at present, there are firm plans for more in the future.

Teaching is satisfactory and pupils make sound progress overall. Pupils with specific learning difficulties make sound progress also because they are supported effectively in class and in some small groups. In the best lessons, positive relationships strengthen pupils' learning and their excellent behaviour and keenness to work hard and do well promote a good learning ethos. Teachers inject good pace and lots of interest into their lessons and carefully targeted questions help promote good learning. In a lesson on *Shemitah* (sabbatical laws) pupils were encouraged to share their own experiences, bringing the learning into their daily lives. In a mathematics lesson, pupils and teacher joined in a lively whole-class revision of fractions with rapid, well-targeted questions stimulating pupils and providing good practice for mental mathematics. When teaching is less effective it is over directed by the teacher, with limited input from pupils. In these lessons, tasks are routine and pupils are not stretched to do their best, particularly the higher attainers. Resources are adequate but teaching sometimes lacks an exciting dimension due, in part, to an absence of ICT.

All pupils' work is marked regularly but marking is not always sufficiently evaluative to give pupils clear guidance on how they can improve their work. Although assessment information is collected and recorded, there is no clear framework for the information to be used to plan teaching, set targets and provide greater challenge.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their personal development is excellent.

Pupil's spiritual development is outstanding. Pupils develop markedly in confidence, sensitivity and understanding as they grow older. This is seen in the way they *daven* (pray) with *kavonoh* (reverence) and in conversations with the inspectors. All those spoken to had a good understanding of concepts such as friendship, happiness and sadness. All were able to express very clear views about the school. They take responsibility and handle this well; for example, pupils who are monitors fulfil their tasks maturely.

Pupils' moral development is outstanding. They have very clear views about right and wrong and their behaviour is outstanding. Attendance is very good and pupils very much enjoy school and learning. Through their academic work and personal development, they are developing knowledge and skills which should not only ensure their future economic well-being but also prepare them to lead successful lives within their *kehila* (community). They contribute positively to the wider community; for example, through charity fund raising and links with a home for the elderly.

Pupils' social development is excellent. The school is like a family and older girls support younger ones and act as good role models for them.

Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. It is an achievement that, from the youngest of ages, the girls learn in both Hebrew and English. Activities related to work in history and geography, such as a project on survival in differing environments, give pupils an understanding of differences in the world around them. However, pupils still have too little understanding of the richness of ethnic diversity within the local communities in which they live.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school ensures that the welfare, health and safety of its pupils are good. A detailed range of policies is in place to promote the safety and well-being of pupils in all circumstances, including those relating to first aid, good links with *hatzolah* (paramedics) and fire procedures. Pupils behave in a sensible, safe way around the school. Parents, staff and pupils report that they appreciate the warm, family atmosphere provided by the school. The school has a good record of support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and it liaises well with appropriate outside agencies.

Healthy living is in keeping with Torah values, and this is an integral part of school life. Clear policies to promote good behaviour ensure that pupils learn in a calm, positive atmosphere. Pupils know the importance of healthy eating and the taking of

exercise. They are also safety conscious and use equipment carefully. The school takes seriously its duty with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school undertakes the full range of checks to ensure the suitability of all staff to work with children and young people.

School's premises and accommodation

The accommodation makes a very positive contribution to pupils' education. It is in good condition and examples of pupils' work enhance the environment. The large warehouse area, hall and playground are not used to their full potential to support learning in PE, particularly for the children in the Foundation Stage, although there are plans to address this. The library is a stimulating environment but computers are not used often enough to supplement pupils' independent learning and research skills.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Provision for parents, prospective parents and carers is good. There is regular informal contact between staff and parents. In their responses to the questionnaires sent to parents before the inspection, almost all said they were happy with the information provided. A significant minority felt they were not well informed about their children's progress and they agreed with the inspectors about the limited amount of physical activity.

The school provides detailed informative newsletters to parents and often the pupils contribute with their own opinions. End of year reports are detailed and descriptive but not always sufficiently evaluative, for example lacking clear targets to show parents how to help their children do even better. The school has already introduced an improved style of report.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a complaints policy that meets all of the regulations. Parents and prospective parents are to be advised of this. There have been no formal complaints from parents.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

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:

- Develop schemes of work for the foundation subjects which strengthen the basic curriculum and show how they will be integrated into *Kodesh* in a systematic way.
- Ensure that teachers use assessment information, targets and the marking of pupils' work to challenge and guide pupils of all abilities.
- Develop the effective use of ICT to improve both teaching and learning.

School details

Name of school	Beis Soroh Schneirer		
DfES number	302/6104		
Unique reference number	131026		
Type of school	Jewish Day School		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1996		
Age range of pupils	3-11		
Gender of pupils	Female		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 217	Total: 217
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
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,850		
Address of school	Arbiter House Wilberforce Road West Hendon London NW9 6AX		
Telephone number	0208 201 7771		
Fax number	0208 201 7773		
Email address	bssschool@btconnect.com		
Headteachers	Mrs R Weiss / Mrs S Mossberg		
Proprietor	Rabbi A Adler		
Reporting inspector	Sandra Teacher		
Dates of inspection	9-10 May 2007		