

# Etz Chaim Boys' School

Independent School

Inspection report

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DfES Registration Number	3526053
Unique Reference Number	131015
Inspection number	301522
Inspection dates	26-27 June 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

Etz Chaim Boys' School was established in 1993 in North Manchester as a strictly orthodox Jewish school, serving a particular strand of the local Jewish religious community. There are currently 94 pupils on roll, aged 11 to 15 years. The school accepts pupils of vastly differing abilities, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Its mission is "*To provide religious, personal and academic education, in order to prepare pupils for a full religious life in accordance with the religious outlook of their community, whilst forming upright citizens, who will be able to give to the community at large*". To achieve these aims "*Emphasis is mainly on cultivating enthusiasm and love for Jewish studies, practice and ethos, which prepare pupils adequately for their next institution, whilst concurrently providing a basic secular education to GCSE level, an understanding of the natural world and the world around them, and some skills which will be of economic use to them in their future*".

## Evaluation of the school

Etz Chaim school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The school effectively meets the aims and the aspirations of its pupils and their parents. The curriculum, which is good, offers a broad and balanced range of activities, suitable for pupils of all abilities, including those with statements of special learning need. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with the spiritual aspect being very good. Teaching is satisfactory and ensures that all pupils make satisfactory progress. These judgements accord with the school's self-evaluation. However, the school fails to comply with several regulations in the areas of welfare, health and safety; the procedures for ascertaining the suitability of staff, and the provision of information for parents. Premises and accommodation are of a poor standard and are not fit for purpose. In all these respects, provision by the school is inadequate. These judgements differ from the school's own self-evaluation.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is good. A strength of the curriculum is the fusion of the secular elements (*Chol*) with the underpinning Jewish values of the school (*Kodesh*). This is achieved by effective use of an extended school day. The overall curriculum provision

enables the school to meet the needs and interests of all its pupils, including those pupils who find engagement with learning difficult. This includes the small number of boys who have statements of special learning needs. At the same time, the provision of opportunities for pupils to take national end of key stage tests at the end of Year 8, and GCSE at the end of Year 10, enables pupils to pursue the next stages of their academic career, having gained a range of knowledge and qualifications in secular subjects.

The spiritual and moral aspects of the curriculum are good. Care and respect for others permeate the entire curriculum, which includes an expanding range of enrichment activities both within the school and in the wider community. These are diverse and range from leading the daily synagogue services to engaging in other extra-curricular activities, such as visits and communal charitable projects, such as the work done by the pupils with the local "T'mimei Lev" (*Purity of Heart*) special needs unit for young children. These activities provide for the further personal and social development of the pupils.

From an above average level of attainment at entry to the school, pupils make satisfactory progress and attain good standards relative to their abilities, particularly in the *Kodesh* (Jewish studies) elements. The good GCSE results of 2004 and 2005 were not maintained in 2006, but standards currently seen indicate that this year's cohort will once again produce the high standards of earlier years. The high standards in *Kodesh* subjects give them a particularly good preparation for the next stage of their education, and indeed for adult life, since all pupils leave school at the end of Year 10 and all go directly to Yeshivot (*Talmudical College*).

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some that is good. In the most effective lessons, learning is placed at the centre of all activities and pupils make good progress. Teachers create an exciting and stimulating learning environment, in which there is good interaction between teacher and pupils, based on relationships of mutual respect. Lessons have a good pace and appropriate challenge to which pupils respond well. Teaching is less successful where there is limited interaction between teacher and pupils, lack of pace, insufficient opportunities for independent working and a lack of adjustment of the teaching process to meet the learning needs of all pupils in the class. This sometimes leads to pupils going off task and the normally good behaviour not being maintained.

Assessment is satisfactory overall. Systems for target setting, monitoring and tracking of pupils' academic progress are increasingly effective, but differ between individual teachers. Consistency of good practice in using assessment to inform teaching and pupils' learning is not yet embedded in all areas of the curriculum, nor is it consistently applied by all staff.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good. The spiritual dimension is particularly strong. The school enables its pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence through religious instruction, incentive programmes and a general atmosphere of fairness and respect. The ethos of the school enables the pupils to distinguish between right and wrong and respect the law. Pupils are provided with a broad knowledge of public institutions and services in England through topics in the curriculum. Attendance is good. Pupils enjoy the education provided by the school. This is especially evident during *Kodesh* lessons where most pupils behave well and are actively engaged in their learning and have good relationships with their *rebbe*s (Jewish teachers, all of whom are rabbis). However, although many pupils have a positive attitude towards *Chol* studies and their behaviour is generally good, a significant minority display a marked difference in their attitude and as a result lessons are disturbed to the detriment, not only of their own learning and progress, but also of those of their fellow pupils.

Pupils are imbued with a deep appreciation of, and respect for their own culture. They are also given opportunities to discuss other cultures in various lessons, both *Kodesh* and *Chol*, and are encouraged to appreciate the virtues of tolerance and harmony. Pupils prepare for their economic well-being through the in-depth study of classical *Talmudic* and *Halachic* (legal) texts and by being encouraged to apply practical lessons to daily life. Pupils learn how to be responsible with money and show full understanding of their religious obligations through a practical application of charity, tithes and returning lost property. They make a positive contribution to the school community by running prayer services, organising the study hall daily, fund raising and helping to arrange major school events. They also make a positive contribution to the community at large through such activities as offering to do "Pre-Passover Spring Cleaning" for local residents, and engaging in fundraising for communal charities.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The welfare, health and safety of pupils are inadequate. Several essential arrangements to promote pupils' health and safety are not in place, leaving them potentially exposed to more risk than necessary. This is offset to a degree by the good care shown by staff that ensures, in school, in most eventualities, pupils stay safe. Pupils are managed well and consistently by staff, which results in their good behaviour. The school has a child protection policy but school leaders have not ensured that all staff are properly trained in order to implement it effectively. While the school gives priority to pupils making educational visits to a variety of outdoor venues, insufficient attention is paid to assessing any possible risks this might present and to taking the appropriate steps to minimise them. The school has recently written a policy governing the organisation of educational visits but it has not been implemented. Provision for first aid is inadequate for covering accidents in school or when pupils are on educational visits.

The school's curriculum provides reasonably for pupils to develop healthy lifestyles, through physical education and the priority given to pupils adhering strictly to their religiously prescribed diet. The school has not prepared a three year plan to improve accessibility as required by the Disability Discrimination Act.

### Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The procedures for ascertaining the suitability of staff to work with children are inadequate. The school has started to put the necessary checks in place but the requirements, and the steps in meeting them, are not fully understood and are not nearly robust enough. As a result, checks to establish the identity, qualifications and medical fitness of all staff are not carried out systematically. There are significant gaps in the school's records on the suitability of staff, including records of checks with the Criminal Records Bureau.

### School's premises and accommodation

Premises and accommodation are of a poor standard and are not fit for purpose. The hard surface playground is large enough for the number of pupils but is underdeveloped as a sports and play space. The school building is in a poor state of repair and is in need of a very substantial programme of refurbishment. Improvements are piecemeal and keep up only with the more urgent repairs. Plans were drawn some years ago for the complete renovation of the school, although this is not yet underway. The roof is not watertight in several places, which has left damage to ceilings on the top floor. Floors and stairs throughout the building are worn and defective in places, creating some safety hazards for pupils and staff. Nevertheless, the appropriate fire safety measures are in place.

Classroom accommodation does not provide for a good learning environment. Their state of repair and decoration is poor. They all lack investment, although one is being developed as a science laboratory. While there are sufficient toilets for the number of pupils, they are in poor repair and none has a hot water supply. Pupils highlighted the state of the toilets as an area of concern to them. The school does not have appropriate facilities available for pupils who are ill. They eat their packed lunches in a large basement room with a low ceiling. This is damp, badly lit and not a suitable area for pupils to gather and eat lunch.

### Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The quality of information provided for parents and others is inadequate. The school's prospectus succeeds in communicating clearly the school's religious aims and character. It is much less effective in giving information on a number of other essential areas concerned with the organisation of the school and its educational arrangements. There is very little information available on the curriculum or pupils'

academic performance. Important facts on how the school promotes pupils' welfare, health and safety are either not provided or parents not made aware that they may request them from the school.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The complaints procedures meet requirements. Parents and others are made sufficiently aware that they may complain and how they can make a complaint, and what processes and procedures will then follow.

## 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:

- prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with DfES guidance (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- prepare and implement a written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school which has regard to DfES guidance *Health and safety of pupils on educational visits* (reference HSPV2) (paragraph 3(2)(c))
- prepare and implement a written policy on first aid (paragraph 3(6)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, ensure that staff at the school and any member of the body of persons named as the proprietor has been subject to a check with the Criminal Records Bureau to confirm their suitability to work with children and ensure that, where the duties of the staff member involve that person regularly caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of persons aged under 18, that the check with the Criminal Records Bureau is at an enhanced level (paragraph 4(b))
- Prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, ensure that appropriate checks have been carried out to confirm their identity, medical fitness, previous employment history, character references and, where appropriate, qualifications and professional references and ensure such information is taken into account in determining whether their appointment will be confirmed (paragraph 4(c)).

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

- ensure that the school buildings provide reasonable resistance to penetration by rain, snow, wind and moisture from the ground (paragraph 5(f))
- ensure that there are sufficient washrooms for staff and pupils, including facilities for pupils with special needs, which take account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k))
- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l))
- where food is served, provide adequate facilities for its hygienic preparation, serving and consumption (paragraph 5(m))
- ensure that classrooms and other parts of the school are maintained in a tidy, clean and hygienic state (paragraph 5(n))
- provide a satisfactory standard and adequate maintenance of decoration (paragraph 5(q))
- provide appropriate flooring and maintain it in good condition (paragraph 5(s)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide particulars of proprietor's full name, address for correspondence during both term time and holidays and a telephone number or numbers on which he may be contacted at all times (paragraph 6(2)(b))
- provide the name and address for correspondence of the Chair of the Board of Governors (paragraph 6(2)(c))
- provide particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for admissions, discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(2)(e))
- provide particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements of SEN and for pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 6(2)(f))
- ensure that parents are aware that they can request particulars of the curriculum offered by the school (paragraph 6(2)(g) )
- ensure that parents are aware that they can request particulars of policies relating to bullying, child protection, health and safety, the promotion of good behaviour, and sanctions adopted in the event of pupils misbehaving (paragraph 6(2)(h))
- ensure that parents are aware that they can request particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(2)(i))
- ensure that parents are aware that they can request details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j))



- ensure that parents are aware that they can request details of the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(2)(k)).

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

## School details

Name of school	Etz Chaim School at The Belmont
DfES number	3526053
Unique reference number	131015
Type of school	Secondary Boys School
Status	Independent
Date school opened	July 1993
Age range of pupils	11-15
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 94
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 2
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 5580
Address of school	The Belmont 89 Middleton Road Manchester Lancashire M8 4JY
Telephone number	01617406800
Fax number	01617209912
Email address	manager@ec-school.org.uk
Headteacher	Rabbi Eli Cohen
Proprietor	Mr N.M.Halpern
Reporting inspector	Ronald Cohen AI
Dates of inspection	26-27 June 2007