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Rabbi Y Goldblatt
Headteacher
The Beis Yaakov Jewish High School
69 Broom Lane
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M7 4FF

Dear Rabbi Goldblatt

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 October 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff and pupils for their help, particularly those pupils who came to talk to me.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection in March 2006, the school was asked to:

- continue to improve teaching to interest and engage pupils as active participants
- implement a consistent common assessment system
- develop middle management roles and responsibilities, with clearly defined lines of accountability
- increase appropriate opportunities for pupils' participation in, and contribution to, school life.

In addition the report noted issues relating to compliance, teachers gaining qualified teacher status, and procedures for checking the suitability of those employed.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising pupils' achievement.

There have been significant changes since the inspection. The school is housed in a newly-built premise. Resources, including those for information and communication technology, have been improved. New appointments have extended the capacity of middle and senior management to analyse achievement and plan improvement. The duration of each lesson has been increased to 50 minutes to encourage more varied and active approaches. The curriculum has changed so that it meets national

curriculum requirements. Despite a large staff with many part-time teachers, the school has devised a scheme for all teachers to be involved in performance management this year. Procedures for checking the suitability of staff for employment are clear and thorough. More staff now have qualified teacher status, and the school is making good use of graduate teacher and other programmes to enable this to happen.

The 2007 examination results showed above average standards in the Key Stage 3 tests and high standards at GCSE. Despite relatively low pupil numbers and lack of data on some pupils when they join, teachers have an improving understanding of how to judge progress from statistics and comparisons. The school is better able to pinpoint issues that require attention, for instance some decline in the proportion of A*/A grades at GCSE and the need to increase the number of pupils gaining at least level 6 in English and science by the end of Year 9. Typical achievement is excellent, however, and in mathematics it is unusually and consistently strong.

Training both within the school and beyond is helping heads of department to understand their responsibility to evaluate results and progress, and plan how to tackle areas for improvement. As a result, the quality of analysis and development planning remains variable but is improved. The same is true of lesson observation which is becoming more regular and focused because of the experience gleaned from assessing graduate teachers. Most teachers reflect on what works in lessons and why, and are trying to use a wider range of teaching styles. New resources, including interactive whiteboards, have given a boost to learning. Pupils say that more lessons are interesting because teachers make the point of the lesson clear and encourage more discussion, group work and practical approaches. However, pupils tend to speak quietly in class discussion so that their good ideas cannot always be shared across the class. In some lessons there is still too much lengthy teacher talk with little thought about summary, emphasis, or varied pace or pitch to help learners. The matching of work to pupils' learning needs remains a weakness because much lesson planning and topic planning is in outline. This is because assessment is still seen by too many teachers as something relating to marking, examinations and reports, rather than as the vital ingredient to enable planned activities to best match pupils' needs. Nonetheless, marking is giving better guidance about what has been done well and what could be improved, and teachers are now passing on more detailed information about pupils' standards from year to year. Moderation, too, has improved. Much work has been done to make assessment more systematic and valuable but the school rightly sees that this remains a priority area.

Since the last inspection genuine attempts have been made to stimulate pupils' greater involvement in school life. They talk enthusiastically about these, making comments like: 'We are more involved in our own school life' and 'We are more in charge of organising and taking responsibility for what we plan.' Social and charity events, a newsletter, organising display areas, and taking on form captain, activity leader and 'buddy' roles are having a positive impact on pupils' confidence and organisational skills. The school council is run by pupils and they have been encouraged to take initiative and propose ideas to improve school. These are fully considered and correctly responded to.

The school has welcomed the quality of support and advice available to it through the local authority and its secondary school network. Mutual respect means that areas for development, such as school improvement planning, medium term topic planning, regular lesson observation and using assessment to modify teaching are being systematically tackled. However, the pace and rigour in bringing about changes in some of these important areas is variable.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Jon Lövgreen
Additional Inspector