

# Beis Trana Girls' School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	204/6400
Unique Reference Number	131342
Inspection number	316910
Inspection dates	12-13 December 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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

Beis Trana Girls' School is an independent day school for 205 girls aged 3-14 years. It caters solely for girls of the strictly orthodox Jewish community from Hackney and Haringey. The families are from a variety of social and economic backgrounds and most are affiliated to the *Square* Chassidic movement, the headquarters of which are in New York. The main language spoken at home is Yiddish but most pupils are bilingual. There is no access to radio, television or the internet but Jewish newspapers are read. *Kodesh* (religious studies) is mainly taught in the morning in Yiddish and *Chol* (secular studies) is taught in the afternoon in English from Year 1. The school was last inspected in 2004. There has been no recent Early Years inspection.

## Evaluation of the school

Parents and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school and are right to be so. There are a number of good features and the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. The overall quality of education is satisfactory rather than good because of the limited *Chol* curriculum. The pupils are very happy at the school. Care and welfare are good. Pupils feel safe and comfortable as they know each other and the staff well. They are well prepared for life in their community. In *Kodesh*, the curriculum and quality of teaching is good, work is of a high standard and pupils make good progress. In *Chol* their progress is satisfactory because the curriculum is still in the developmental stage in Key Stage 3 and the quality of teaching and assessment is only satisfactory.

## Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. The *Kodesh* curriculum is good. It is varied and exciting and ensures that pupils gain the necessary skills upon which to build as they progress in their Jewish religious education and future lives as observant young ladies within the *charedi* community. The focus of the *Kodesh* curriculum is on the study of the *Chumash and Nach* (Bible studies). Pupils quickly gain the skills to read, translate and comprehend the sacred texts, studying in Yiddish and Hebrew. There is a clearly written curriculum policy and this is supported by appropriate schemes of work. This enables the majority of pupils to achieve high standards in all areas of their *Kodesh* studies. More able pupils are set challenging

work appropriate to their needs and good one-to-one support is provided to pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. In keeping with the usual practice in orthodox Jewish schools, personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) pervades the *Kodesh* curriculum through the teaching of *Musar* and *Midos* (morals and ethics). A particular strength is the way in which the curriculum contributes to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Projects on kindness, modesty and behaviour have a strong impact on personal development and permeate the work of the school.

The curriculum in the Nursery and Reception classes is satisfactory. Staff plan a range of learning experiences in all the six areas of learning for children of this age. The children develop skills in Yiddish, a sense of belonging within the school community and develop their social skills effectively as they enjoy learning through play. However, children do not get sufficient opportunities to develop independent learning habits as teaching is often over-directed and resources are limited. Planning does not fully consider how to use the outside area as an outdoor classroom to enhance the learning.

The *Chol* curriculum is satisfactory. Good use is made of the national literacy and numeracy strategies, but because the time spent on the *Chol* curriculum is short and higher attaining pupils are not always stretched, pupils' progress is satisfactory rather than good and they do not achieve as well other pupils of similar ages and ability. Schemes of work are not fully in place for physical education (PE) and music. Older pupils in Key Stage 3 do not have access to designated teaching areas for science and technology. PSHCE is taught through circle time, *Kodesh* and science. The dangers of drug misuse are taught through science but because of the religious nature of the school both sex and relationship education and information and communication technology are not taught. The curriculum for pupils with statements of special needs is relevant and appropriate; good support is provided from outside agencies. Partnership with parents and visits to places of educational interest play important parts in extending the curriculum.

Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory and pupils make satisfactory progress. The best teaching is in the *Kodesh* lessons where it is good overall. The relationship between staff and pupils is excellent. Pupils' response to the teachers' high expectations is outstanding, particularly with regard to *middos* (good character traits including behaviour and respect). They display remarkable respect towards their teachers and visitors and they stand up immediately when an adult enters their classroom. Most teachers are extremely secure in their subject knowledge and are very successful in imbuing pupils with a love of *Torah* and *mitzvos* (commandments). In the best lessons, the planning clearly identifies what pupils are to learn and this is communicated to them. Good questioning techniques are employed which encourage pupils to think for themselves and they make good progress. A good example of the integration between *Kodesh* and *Chol* was seen in a lesson about Moses and the snake. The teacher not only introduced adjectives, like slippery and sly, but also related the snake's characteristics to *lashon hora* (engaging in idle gossip).

Traditional methods of Jewish learning encourage pupils to study independently or with a *chavrusa* (in pairs), where they share ideas about the meaning of the text.

In *Chol*, planning is mostly for the whole class and often all pupils do the same work. This results in the higher attaining pupils not reaching more difficult levels of work. There is a heavy reliance on worksheets which minimises pupils' own creative ideas. Because the numbers are small and there are plenty of adults, those pupils who do not learn so quickly receive individual support. Teachers have high expectations for pupils to concentrate and work hard and respond positively. Relationships are excellent. Resources are inadequate and classrooms are small. This inhibits practical activities.

Teachers know their pupils very well and marking is good. Work is well presented, neat and legible. Regular tests and the use of national assessment tasks help the school and parents to know how well the pupils are achieving. Good use is made of photographs to show evidence of progress. However, analysis of these results is not used effectively to help pupils make even better progress.

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

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. The considerable emphasis placed on the moral and social aspects of their education, with the ethos of *Torah* values, leads to pupils' growing understanding of justice, right and wrong and respect for all. These aspects are taught very well and contribute to the very good attitudes and outstanding behaviour of pupils both inside and outside the classroom. Pupils are acquiring a sense of responsibility for themselves, others and their surroundings. The school provides an environment in which pupils feel safe, happy and respected which is greatly appreciated by parents. The pupils have very upbeat views about their education and inspectors were impressed by their enthusiasm when talking about the school. They said they loved the learning and the inspector believed them. However, they do not always feel that their opinions are taken into account and would like to be more involved in decision making.

Spiritual development is outstanding. The way pupils *daven* (pray) with *kavono* (sincerity) sets the tone for the day's learning and love of their religion shines through their faces. The emphasis on performance, for example the *Chanuka* show, builds up confidence and self esteem, particularly for those with learning difficulties.

There are many aspects of school life which give pupils the opportunity to make a contribution to the school community, for example, they help the infirm and elderly, sort out the money collected for charity and organise the food for the *siyyum* (graduation). Cultural development is satisfactory. Teachers make use of the local community to develop pupils' appreciation of their own and other cultures. Older girls learn about the legal system and visit the Houses of Parliament. It is to be celebrated that girls study in three different languages, English, Hebrew and Yiddish. The study

of *Torah, Rashi* and *Pirke Avos*, with their emphasis on discussion and analysis, gives the pupils a range of transferable skills not only for life but also for their future economic well-being within their own and the wider community.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for welfare, health and safety is good. Parents strongly agree that their children are safe in school. As some of them commented: *'The staff are warm and caring. There is an atmosphere of care and concern and each child is valued.'* Any incidents or accidents are reported appropriately. There is a good staffing ratio which ensures that pupils are closely supervised and receive good support in all activities. Risk assessments for when pupils go out for various trips are meticulously carried out and comprehensive records are kept. Pupils say that there is no bullying or name calling and if any incidents of disagreement happen they are quickly sorted out. Pupils like the school very much and feel safe, because they know if they have any problems in school or at home they have someone to talk to. Pupils are encouraged to follow a healthy life style through learning about healthy eating and the benefits of exercise, although both parents and pupils commented about the lack of regular teaching in PE. Inspectors agree. Issues about personal safety are also promoted through PSHCE. The school governors have decided not to teach sex and relationship education and to leave this to parents. The school complies with the Disability and Discrimination Act (2002) and has drawn up a three-year accessibility plan.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school carefully checks the suitability of all employees who work in the school and all records are kept on a central register.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation are adequate. However, some of the classrooms are unsatisfactory as they are small and cramped. The building is clean and in a reasonable state of repair. In addition to classrooms, there are some other rooms that are used for special needs or other group activities. The small hall is used effectively for assemblies. Since the last inspection, the school has made provision for sick pupils. Attractive displays brighten the learning environment. The playground area is small and impacts negatively on pupils' physical development.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The parents and families are at the heart of this school and are fully involved in their children's learning. A large amount of learning takes place at home. Much useful information, which includes an expression of the school's aims and ethos, is contained in the new prospectus for parents and prospective parents. More than 120 questionnaires were received from parents and they overwhelmingly support the

work of the school. This comment gives a flavour: *'the staff are warm and caring and give us regular updates'*. Parents receive a written report and there is regular verbal feedback on progress. However, this does not always give them a full picture of how well their children are achieving in all subjects areas and what needs to be improved.

## Procedures for handling complaints

All the requirements are met by the school's procedures.

## 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 the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- ensure that teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensure these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 1(3)(d))
- increase resources across the school (paragraph 1(3)(f)).

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

- improve the size of the classrooms to allow more effective teaching and to avoid compromising health and safety (paragraph 5(j)).

## 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:

- complete the schemes of work for KS3 in *Chol*
- ensure PE is taught regularly.

## School details

Name of school	Beis Trana Girls' School
DCSF number	204/6400
Unique reference number	131342
Type of school	Jewish Day
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1995
Age range of pupils	3-14 years
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	205
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils who are looked after	0
Annual fees (day pupils)	N/A
Address of school	186 Upper Clapton Road London E5 9DH
Telephone number	0208 8158003
Fax number	0208 8007933
Email address	beeny@sjsalesco.com
Headteacher	Mrs Smaya Mrs Hirsch
Proprietor	Mr Konig
Reporting inspector	Sandra Teacher
Dates of inspection	12-13 December 2007