

# TTMH Belz Day School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number 204/6331 Unique Reference Number 100294 Inspection number 316960

Inspection dates 17-18 October 2007 Reporting inspector Sandra Teacher 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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

#### Information about the school

Belz day school is an independent, *Charedi* (strictly orthodox) Jewish boys' school situated in the heart of the Jewish community in North London. Most of the boys belong to the Belz *Chasidic* community. The majority of boys speak Yiddish as their first language and *Kodesh* (Jewish Studies) is taught in Yiddish. In addition, literacy and numeracy (*Chol*) is taught in both English and Yiddish. The school is open 6 days a week from Sunday to Friday and the majority of time is spent on the teaching of Yiddish and *Kodesh* studies. The school is guided by the principles of *Torah* (Jewish law) and rooted in an ethos of *Torah* values which aims to train the boys into becoming self-motivated, mature people.

#### Evaluation of the school

The overall quality of education provided by the school is inadequate because of the poor *Chol* curriculum. In *Kodesh*, the curriculum and quality of teaching are good, work is of a high standard and pupils make good progress. However, in *Chol* (secular studies) their progress is unsatisfactory because the curriculum is unstructured and the quality of teaching and assessment is inadequate. The provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Care and welfare are satisfactory; checks on the suitability of staff are not always completed in advance of their appointment. Parents and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Pupils are well prepared for life in their community.

# Quality of education

The overall quality of the curriculum is inadequate. 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 Jews within the Belz's community. The focus of the *Kodesh* curriculum is on the study of the *Chumash* (Bible), *Gemara* (Talmud) and Mishnayos (Codes of Law). Pupils quickly gain the skills to read, translate and comprehend the sacred texts, studying in Yiddish, Hebrew and Aramaic. 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).

The curriculum in the Nursery and Reception classes (Foundation Stage) is satisfactory. Staff plan a range of play experiences in all the six areas of learning for children of this age. The children develop their social skills effectively, and learn in three languages. The limitations to the outdoor environment and large play equipment restrict the range of outdoor learning. This is being addressed as part of the future building plans.

The secular curriculum (*Chol*) is inadequate. Limited time is allocated to the teaching of literacy and numeracy in English and without a clear curriculum map and schemes of work to guide teachers, pupils make inadequate progress. Other subjects such as science, physical education (PE), design technology, art and music are not taught, thus the curriculum does not provide appropriate experiences for pupils in the scientific, technological, physical, and aesthetic and creative areas of learning. There are insufficient resources to aid the teaching and learning for these subjects. There are some good examples of integration between the *Kodesh* and *Chol* curricula, particularly in PSHCE. A lesson on healthy eating was linked to the concept of *mezuman* (laws concerning grace after meals). Due to the school's religious ethos, information and communication technology (ICT) is not included. Extra-curricular activities in sport, music and an after school club enrich the curriculum.

The best teaching was seen 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). All teachers, including the non-Jewish staff, demonstrate their full understanding of, and respect for, the orthodox ethos of the school and they are excellent role models to the pupils.

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. 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.

Teaching is inadequate in *Chol.* Teachers lack good subject knowledge, there is inadequate planning and pupils are all expected to do the same work. Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop creative or physical effort in lessons, and they have insufficient opportunities to learn independently. There are limited resources for art, music, history, geography, PE or science and these are not used



effectively enough. Assessment in Chol is inadequate because teachers do not apply their good knowledge of pupils in planning for different needs. As a result, higher attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged and are not sufficiently stimulated and engaged. Although written work is marked, there is no framework in place to assess pupils' progress within the secular subjects. There is no framework in place to evaluate pupils' performance against the school's own aims or national norms.

Assessment is good in *Kodesh* but it is inadequate in all other respects. The headteacher tests each pupil and parents are involved in their children's learning. In *Chol* subjects, there are limited assessment procedures. The quality of marking of pupils' written work varies and, in the best practice, helpful and evaluative comments are given to inform pupils what they must do to improve in the future. There are no systems in place to track how well pupils are doing in relation to similar pupils in other schools.

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

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. 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.

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.

There are many aspects of school life which give pupils the opportunity to make a contribution to the community, for example, they help the infirm and elderly, sort out the money collected for charity and organise the food for the *siyyum* (graduation).

Pupils do not have sufficient knowledge of British institutions and services. There is no citizenship curriculum through which these required areas of learning may be developed. The school is also part of the local community. Teachers make use of the wider community to develop pupils' appreciation of their own and other cultures. However, there is insufficient planned teaching about other faiths and cultures apart from through the study of religious literature.

It is to be celebrated that boys study in four different languages: English, Hebrew and Yiddish and Aramaic. The study of *Mishneh* and *Gemara* (Talmud), 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 pupils' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory as the school has only recently prepared all the necessary policies including child protection. Not all staff have had formal training in child protection procedures. The school has recently implemented procedures for the formal recording of risk assessments for external visits. Pupils are confident that they can tell staff about any concerns they have and that these will be addressed. Behaviour is impeccable both in class and around the school. Pupils were adamant that there is no bullying. The school is an inclusive community in which all feel safe and valued. 'My child is thriving under the caring guidance of these excellent teachers'; so wrote one parent. Pupils make strong friendships and they are clearly happy. No pupil is left out, and particular sensitivity is shown to friends who may have learning difficulties or disabilities. Pupils and parents feel that opportunities for physical exercise and learning about healthy living is limited and inspectors agree. Daily registers are not kept in accordance with regulations. The school fulfils its duty with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

#### Suitability of the proprietor and staff

Appropriate checks on staff, as regards their identity, medical fitness and references are not always completed in advance of the confirmation of employment. As a result, the central register of staff checks is incomplete.

## School's premises and accommodation

Premises and accommodation are satisfactory and the school is currently improving the decor. However, there is no large hall for assemblies or PE lessons, or specialist rooms, particularly for the older pupils. This hinders the learning in subjects such as science, art, PE and music. The size of the classrooms and play areas are adequate apart from the outside provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage; there are plans in place to develop an outside classroom for the Foundation Stage.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

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. A list of all staff and other policies are available on request. There is limited information of results of academic performance from the preceding school year. More than 120 questionnaires were received from parents and they overwhelmingly support the work of the school. This comment gives a flavour: 'The teachers are in constant contact with parents keeping us informed of our children's progress.'



Parents do not receive a written report although there is regular verbal feedback on progress in *Kodesh*. However, this does not always give them a full picture of how well their child is achieving in all subjects areas and what needs to be improved.

#### Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a new complaints policy which fully meets the 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 the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- establish a curriculum policy for *Chol* set out in writing and supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work and implement it effectively (paragraph (1(2))
- provide pupils of compulsory school age experience in the following areas of learning: scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative (paragraph 1(2)(a)(ii))
- ensure the subject matter in *Chol* is appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of pupils, including those pupils with a statement of special educational need (paragraph 1(2)(b))
- ensure the *Chol* curriculum provides the opportunity for all pupils to learn and make progress in their *Chol* studies (paragraph1(2)(i))
- ensure that the *Chol* teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge, and make progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught (paragraph 1(3)(a))
- ensure that the *Chol* teaching encourages pupils to apply intellectual, physical or creative efforts and to show interest in their work and to think and learn for themselves (paragraph 1(3)(b))
- ensure all lessons are well planned, with effective teaching methods and suitable activities (paragraph1(3)(c))
- increase resources across the school (paragraph 1(3)(f))
- put in place a framework by which pupil performance can be evaluated according to the school's own aims (paragraph 1(4)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (standard 2) and must:



• provide pupils with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England (paragraph 2(d)).

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

- ensure that all staff have received appropriate training in child protection procedures (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- maintain the attendance registers in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

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 appropriate checks been carried out to confirm their identity, medical fitness, right to work in the United Kingdom, previous employment history, character references and, where appropriate, qualifications and professional references and that such information been taken into account in determining whether their appointment will be confirmed, and ensure that these details are included in the single, central register (paragraphs 4(2)(a) and 4C(2 and 3)).

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

- provide parents with any particulars of academic performance during the preceding school year (paragraph 6 (2)(i))
- provide parents with an annual written report of the progress and attainment of their children in the main subject areas taught (paragraph 6(5)).



### School details

Name of school TTMH Belz Day School

DCSF number 204/6331 Unique reference number 100294

Type of school Orthodox Jewish Day School

Status Independent

Date school opened 1973
Age range of pupils 3-12
Gender of pupils Boys

Number on roll (full-time pupils)

Boys: 283 Girls: 0 Total: 283

Annual fees (day pupils) £ 0

 Telephone number
 0208 8006599

 Fax number
 0208 8029080

Email address N/A Headteacher Rabbi C Silbiger

Proprietor Rabbi J Baumgarten
Reporting inspector Sandra Teacher AI
Dates of inspection 17-18 October 2007