

Pardes House Grammar School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	3026084
Unique Reference Number	101385
Inspection number	320373
Inspection dates	13-14 February
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).

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

Pardes House Grammar School was opened in 1972 and is situated in North West London. It offers secondary education for Orthodox Jewish boys, with provision for both religious and secular studies. There are 233 students on roll between the ages of 11 and 16 years. In 2001, the school moved to its present site, which is a grade 1 listed building. The school has no students with statements of special educational needs, but a significant proportion are receiving additional provision to help them with their learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The school states its aim as *'besides stressing academic achievements in both general and religious studies' to put 'great emphasis on the social, moral and spiritual well-being of the students, whilst affording them the skills to interact with the wider community and show respect for, and value the outlook of others'*. On leaving school, all the students continue their education in *Yeshivot* (Talmudical Colleges) in the United Kingdom.

Evaluation of the school

Pardes House is a good school, with some outstanding features, which provides a good education for its students. The main focus is on the development of students' knowledge and understanding of their own rich cultural and academic inheritance, whilst developing students' *middos* (desirable personal traits of responsibility and consideration). The school's rigorous secular academic provision also enables its students to prepare well for their future economic well-being. The school very successfully meets its aims. This is because of its strengths. These include the good teaching by dedicated staff and the devoted commitment by the Principal. Pastoral care is also a strong feature of the school, although premises risk assessments have not been completed satisfactorily. Elements of students' spiritual and moral development are outstanding. The school complies with most but not all the regulations.

Quality of education

The quality of education is good. The good curriculum forms an effective basis on which good and effective teaching and learning lead to students making good progress. The curriculum is made up of religious studies (*Limmudei Kodesh*) and secular studies (*Limmudei Chol*). A strength is the combination of secular elements (*Chol*) with Jewish studies. This is achieved by effective use of an extended school day, which enables *Kodesh* and *Chol* to have some parity of esteem.

Limmudei Kodesh is taught predominantly in English, but with some input in Yiddish. *Limmudei Chol* is taught in English. A forte of the secular curriculum is the breadth of subjects offered at GCSE, which boys take in either Year 9 or Year 10, and the growing number of subjects offered at A-level, which boys take in Years 10 and 11. These include English, mathematics, physics, biblical Hebrew, economics, business studies, law and government and politics. The school covers personal, social and health education and citizenship within both *Kodesh* and *Chol* curricula. The opportunity for development of students' technological skills is enhanced by a dedicated technology workshop. The literature provision covers a wide range of English classical literature. However, the coverage of art, music and literature of other cultures, is slim. Care and respect for others permeate the curriculum, which includes many additional activities which take place both in the school and in the wider community. These range from students' leading the daily synagogue services to taking part in outdoor visits and pursuits. Physical education is limited to activities in the school yard. A number of parents and students commented on the lack of facilities and opportunities for a wider range of sporting activities

Most of the teaching and learning is good, but it ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers' subject knowledge is secure, and their planning is precise and well matched to students' capabilities. Teachers create an exciting and stimulating learning environment, in which there is good interaction with students, based on relationships of mutual respect. Activities give a sharp focus to learning. Consequently, students make good progress and achieve good standards in their work.

In a small proportion of lessons, assessment is not used well to check on what students have learnt. Furthermore, in this minority of lessons, teaching tends to be overly teacher-directed and students are passive recipients rather than active participants in their own learning. As a result, such teaching does not engage students as well as it does in most lessons and their progress is slowed. Nevertheless, progress is good overall and students achieve well, because of the generally good teaching they receive, the strong work ethic within the school and the high value given to education by the community the school serves.

Marking is mostly regular and undertaken conscientiously. In some assessment there are constructive comments which make clear to students why their work is good, or how they can improve some aspects. However, this good practice is not yet

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

All the students go on to *Yeshivot* (Talmudical Colleges) to continue their education. The high standards achieved in *Kodesh* subjects give them a good preparation for this next stage of their education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

Some aspects of students' spiritual and moral development are outstanding, but overall it is good. Behaviour is good. This is because the very high levels of both spirituality and behaviour attained, for example, in *mussar* (ethics) lessons, are not fully replicated across the school. Students' attendance is very good and they enjoy school. The school meets its aims of promoting students' personal development successfully, a major focus of which is the development of students' *middos*.

Relations at all levels are good, and the school is a secure and well-ordered community that is characterised by friendliness and mutual concern. Students have a deep appreciation of, and respect for, their own culture. Students' knowledge and understanding of some aspects of world culture, such as art, literature and music, are very restricted. They are, however, given opportunities to discuss other religious cultures in various lessons, both *Kodesh* and *Chol*, and are encouraged to appreciate the virtues of tolerance and harmony.

Generally, students have very good attitudes to learning. The ethos of their families and community is very much learning oriented. For the most part, students strive to meet the community's high expectations. However, a number of students commented about the lack of forums, both formal and informal, where they could express their views about aspects of the school which affect them, such as arrangements for eating at lunch times.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

The overall welfare, health and safety of the students is satisfactory and the school fulfils all but one of the regulations. A Fire Risk Assessment was completed in January 2003, with a review scheduled for January 2004. This review did not take place and there has not been one since. The Fire Department and Local authority have been requested by the school to address this. Students are cognizant of the importance of good health. Fruit and vegetables are offered for sale at the 'tuck-shop'. Students are keen to take part in outdoor activities in school and after school hours, however many parents and students feel that the time allocated for PE in the school is insufficient. Staff members ensure that the students play safely and responsibly during break-times. The pastoral care in the school is very good. The

school has strong links with renowned experts in this country and abroad who advise on appropriate pastoral guidance and care. Students enjoy good, open relationships with their teachers, especially teachers in the *Kodesh* Department and the school '*mashgiach*' (counsellor), and often discuss their problems with them. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The suitability of the proprietor and staff are checked and evaluated rigorously and appropriate records are kept. The school meets all of the requirements.

School's premises and accommodation

The school fulfils all of the regulations relating to premises and accommodation except for one. There is a folding bed available in the main office for students who are taken ill, but this room does not have the required washbasin. The school is housed in a Grade 1 listed building. There are therefore tight restrictions on all renovations and redecorating in the interior and exterior of the building. The classrooms are generally of a good size and adequately furnished, washrooms are adequate and there is sufficient access for all students and emergency vehicles.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides parents and prospective parents with comprehensive and useful information through its prospectus, and parents' handbook, which contain full details of school policies. Parents are regularly updated by informative meetings. A detailed half-yearly report is written for each pupil. This is augmented by a further report at the end of the academic year, which gives parents a clear picture of the progress which their sons are making in each subject.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has detailed and comprehensive complaints procedures that are clearly outlined in an informative policy document. All parents are informed of the procedures when students are admitted and the school makes further copies available on request.

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 students' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- ensure the school has appropriate documents to show a satisfactory level of fire safety, identified by its risk assessment under the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and by any report from the Fire Authority (paragraph 3(5))

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

- provide appropriate facilities for students who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l))

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:

- ensure all teaching is at least as good as best practice through a rigorous process of lesson observations.
- strengthen cultural aspects of the curriculum, particularly the art of both Jewish and non-Jewish cultures.
- offer more formal and informal opportunities for students to express their views.

School details

Name of school	Pardes House Grammar School
DCSF number	3026084
Unique reference number	101385
Type of school	Secondary Jewish
Status	Independent
Date school opened	September
Age range of students	10-16
Gender of students	Boys
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 233
Number of students with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0
Number of students who are looked after	Boys: 0
Annual fees (day students)	£ 5750
Address of school	Hendon Lane Finchley London N3 1SA
Telephone number	0208349 4222
Fax number	0208349 4777
Email address	admin@phgrammar.co.uk
Headteacher	Rabbi Dunner
Proprietor	Mr Lisser
Reporting inspector	Ronald Cohen AI
Dates of inspection	13-14 February 2008