

Talmud Torah Bobov Primary School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	204/6385
Unique Reference Number	100298
Inspection number	320387
Inspection dates	13-14 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Chanan Tomlin

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

Talmud Torah Bnei Zion D'Bobov was opened in the Stamford Hill area of London at the behest of the late Grand Rabbi of Bobov, Rabbi Shlomo Halberstam in 1979. The school has an enrolment of 289 boys, is attached to the Bobov Community Centre and has headteachers for both the *Kodesh* (Jewish Studies) and secular departments. It was last inspected in 2001. The school aims *'to provide a solid grounding in Jewish studies, enabling the children to grow into responsible members of their community and society at large'*. To this end, the school's programme of secular learning is designed to *'equip the pupils with the necessary skills'* to be productive members of society. Chassidic culture and philosophy are at the core of life at the school.

Evaluation of the school

Parents and pupils are overwhelmingly positive about the school. The school provides a good quality of education and care with a strong emphasis on *Kodesh*, behaviour and ethics. The importance given to education, both *Kodesh* and secular, and the stress on self-improvement are evident in the ways that the school is run, the atmosphere in the school and the attitudes of the pupils. The school meets all the requirements for registration.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. In *Kodesh*, there is a carefully outlined curriculum that covers all subjects throughout all of the year groups. This curriculum is adhered to and is monitored by the headteacher. It takes into account the fact that at different times during the year, i.e. the periods preceding major festivals, regular studies will give way to more in-depth coverage of the upcoming festival. Parallel classes, in Year 3, work together so that by the end the year pupils are equally equipped to start the next year, even though some of the project work and teaching styles differ.

In secular studies, the curriculum is comprehensive and ensures that the optimum progress is made in the time allotted to these studies. This is with the exception of information and communication technology (ICT), a subject that is not covered in the

school syllabus for cultural reasons. However, there is evidence that many of the pupils, especially in the higher grades, complete their assignments and project work with the use of computers at home. Much of this work is of a high quality and this confirms that academic expectations in school often extend to the home. The number of educational visits and opportunities for physical education (PE) are fewer than found in many schools.

Much of the secular curriculum, especially in the older years, is geared to preparing the pupils for adult life. This includes a significant cross-curricular stress on morals and responsibility, and practical guidance on becoming dependable members of English society. The secular curriculum is embedded in the consciousness of the school and the headteacher takes all efforts to ensure that it is followed by his staff.

Teaching and assessment are good. The teachers make good use of the resources that are available to them and use effective teaching methods to enthuse their pupils. The pupils genuinely enjoy learning and do not see the comparatively run-down state of the premises as a disadvantage. The pupils respect their teachers and appreciate the efforts made by both heads to ensure that they are taught effectively.

There are regular tests in the core *Kodesh* subjects, both written and oral. These forms of assessment are bolstered by tests, at 4-5 week intervals, in *Chumash/Rashi* (Bible with Rashi's commentary), for the older classes. Periodic oral tests are supervised by visiting dignitaries. There is regular testing in secular studies and the teachers ensure that the pupils progress in their learning. Pupils' progress is followed up carefully by the headteacher who circulates around the classes on a regular basis and supports the teachers in ways that ensure the advancement of each pupil.

The pupils' progress is good with some outstanding features, especially in *Kodesh*. There is a strong work ethic in the school. There are numerous incentives that encourage the pupils to make real progress in their studies. These include certificates, privileges and a tuck shop where pupils can 'buy' rewards for the tokens that they have collected.

Academic progress is the major focus for the school and more capable pupils are encouraged to progress in their studies as much and as quickly as possible. Less capable pupils and pupils needing extra support are cared for through an effective system that provides them with regular one-to-one teaching.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Ethics and moral conduct are the core ethos of the school and rather than this just being a policy statement, it is a real and tangible feature of daily life in the school. The pupils are ingrained with the virtues of respect and humility and they are taught to

appreciate that these are the very virtues that will hold them in good stead as they get older.

Effective reward systems encourage the pupils to take responsibility for themselves, and opportunities to speak in public and to take part in school activities bolster self-esteem and confidence. Pupils are keenly aware of their place in British society and have good knowledge of public institutions. Although exposure to other cultures is not a major feature of the written curriculum, it features in class discussions and school assemblies. As a result, pupils have an appreciation for and are respectful of all races and creeds. This is evident in the ways that the pupils speak, in their interactions with their neighbours and workers in the school and in the fact that *'dina d'malchusa'* i.e. 'the law of the land is law', is an accepted and taught tenet of Jewish religious law.

The behaviour of the pupils is outstanding. This is evident in the ways that they act in classes, the corridors and the playground. Pupils are very respectful to guests and to auxiliary workers in the school. The behaviour of the pupils during afternoon prayers is particularly outstanding and is indicative of their respect for their own culture and authority.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision made for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. The care of pupils is afforded a high priority and lies at the core of the ethos of the school. Staff know both the academic and personal needs of all of the pupils very well and go out of their way to ensure that these needs are met. As a result, pupils feel very safe, valued and respected, although older pupils would welcome a greater say in making decisions about the school. Pupils are adamant that bullying is not an issue at this school and if it did occur they are equally confident that it would be dealt with swiftly but sensitively. Effective procedures are in place to promote good behaviour and this is reflected in the very calm and disciplined learning environment in the school.

The safety and well being of pupils is another key area of the school's mission. Risk assessments and health and safety checks are carried out on a regular basis and good attention is given to ensuring pupils' safety on off-site visits. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place, staff are suitably trained and procedures relating to the safeguarding of pupils are robust and assiduously followed. Pupils have a good understanding of what is needed to lead fit and healthy lives. They are encouraged to eat a balanced diet, take regular exercise and walk or cycle to school. Pupils are taught how to manage risks in their own lives and learn some basic strategies in dealing with fire, illness and road safety.

The school takes good account of the regulations and recommendations made by external agencies relating to fire and electrical equipment. It has drawn up a three

year accessibility plan for disabled pupils and complies with its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act (2002).

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school fully complies with the regulations relating to the checks it makes on prospective employees and volunteers, regarding their identity, qualifications, medical fitness and suitability to work with children.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation are adequate. Classrooms just meet regulations in terms of size, however many are in need of re-decoration and much of the furniture is dated and worn. Where classrooms have attractive and informative displays, this adds to the quality of the learning environment. The outdoor accommodation is satisfactory. A recently built play area with climbing frame and other equipment is seen by pupils as a welcome addition and is regularly utilised.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides suitable opportunities to consult with parents twice a year for both the *Kodesh* and the secular curricula. *Kodesh* reports are written twice a year and secular reports once a year. These reports provide detailed information relating to both the academic progress and behaviour of pupils. Parents are very happy with the communication between home and school. This is further enhanced by the 'open door' policy that the school operates which means that parents feel comfortable with approaching the school if ever they have any worries or concerns.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a clearly written and fair complaints procedure which meets requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

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:

- introduce ICT as a taught subject if this can be developed in a way that is culturally appropriate
- provide the pupils with more frequent educational outings
- adjust the classrooms to be more appropriate in size for the number of pupils using them
- expand the current PE curriculum in order to further promote the importance of exercise and healthy living.

School details

Name of school	Talmud Torah Bobov Primary School
DCSF number	204/6385
Unique reference number	100298
Type of school	Primary school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1979
Age range of pupils	3-13 years
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	289
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils who are looked after	0
Annual fees	No fees
Address of school	87 Egerton Road London N16 6UE
Telephone number	0208 809 1025
Headteacher	Mr Pomerantz
Proprietor	The Bobov Foundation
Reporting inspector	Chanan Tomlin
Dates of inspection	13-14 March 2008