

Torah Vodaas

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	302/6115
Unique Reference Number	133553
Inspection number	320404
Inspection dates	11-12 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Godfrey Bancroft

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).

Inspection of funded nursery education was carried out under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Inspection of day care was carried out under the Children Act 1989: Part XA (as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000) and, where funded nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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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

Opened in October 2001, the Torah Vodaas School provides Jewish studies and secular education for boys from the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community in Golders Green and the surrounding area of North West London. The school aims to give pupils an education that will develop their knowledge of and allegiance to Judaism. There are currently 212 boys in the two to eleven years age group on roll, including 51 below statutory school age in the Kindergarten and pre-nursery class. The last inspection of the school was in April 2003.

Evaluation of the school

This is an outstanding school that addresses its stated aim of providing Jewish studies and secular education very effectively. The quality of care is outstanding. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection. The success of the school is evident in that it has a waiting list of pupils wishing to attend. The community is rightly proud of the school's achievements. The comments of one parent reflected those of many in saying, 'A wonderful school with a warm atmosphere where the children work and play to the best of their abilities.' The school complies fully with all the regulations for independent schools.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding and contributes very successfully to meeting the aims of the school. The *Kodesh* (religious studies), founded on the full Hebrew curriculum, is usually taught during the morning sessions and ensures that pupils have an outstanding knowledge and understanding of their faith and their responsibility to the community at large. The *Chol* (secular) curriculum is based on an abridged version of the National Curriculum and places significant emphasis on the acquisition of the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and science. It does this very successfully. A major strength is the successful blending of the *Chol* curriculum with the underpinning Jewish values of the school. Other subjects are also taught, for example, art, drama, geography and physical education (PE), ensuring that pupils receive a balanced and relevant education. The secular curriculum is firmly based on national guidance and supplemented by a range of suitable commercial schemes that are thoughtfully modified to meet the needs of pupils and the ethos of the school. Learning for younger pupils, those in the Reception classes, is based on the national

Early Learning Goals and all six areas of learning are covered effectively. The school also provides a very effective curriculum for those pupils who sometimes find learning difficult.

The *Kodesh* curriculum is outstanding. It is broad and balanced and covers all the areas of study commensurate with the Jewish religious ethos of the school. This includes the study of *Chumash* and *Nach* (Bible), *Mishnayos* and *Gemoro* (Talmud), *Halochoh* (practical law) and *Yedioh Kelolis* (general Jewish knowledge). There is a clearly written curriculum policy and this is supported by appropriate schemes of work and resource material. Aspects of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) are taught within the *Kodesh* curriculum and the focus is on the development of pupils' *middos tovos* (desirable personal character traits). This aim is admirably achieved, as evidenced by the outstanding behaviour and courtesy of pupils towards each other, their teachers and visitors to the school.

Teaching and assessment are outstanding. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge and are excellent role models for pupils to emulate. Teachers display enormous enthusiasm and as a result, pupils are motivated to learn and greatly enjoy their lessons. Lessons are invariably exciting and interesting and move along at a cracking pace. Teachers have high expectations, to which pupils respond very well. They are able to stimulate pupils and keep them focused even when difficult subject matters are being taught, for example the laws of the sacrifices recorded in the Book of Leviticus. Questions are often posed very skilfully to extend pupils' understanding and pupils often reveal very good levels of knowledge by setting questions of their own. These exchanges are all part of the very effective promotion of pupils' speaking and listening skills. A strong feature throughout the school is the encouragement given to pupils to become independent learners, for example by working *b'chevruso* (working in pairs, with one pupil assuming the role of the teacher). Even so, in some *Chol* lessons, there are times when teachers do not give pupils sufficient time to plan their answers to questions or to further develop their answers through discussion. Pupils who sometimes find learning difficult and those who show signs of falling behind are supported well during lessons. The needs of these pupils are identified at an early stage and suitable interventions to promote improved progress are put in place.

Pupils' attainment is assessed accurately and their progress over time is tracked closely in both Jewish studies and the secular curriculum. Good use is made of a range of tests and nationally recognised assessment tools. External marking to ensure accuracy and comparability validates national tests. In addition, pupils' Hebrew reading skills are assessed regularly to ensure that their fluency and accuracy are well-developed. Written records are maintained and updated by the head of *Kodesh*. Teachers also involve pupils well in assessment processes. All pupils have academic targets and many show their understanding of these by explaining them clearly. Teachers, through their marking of pupils' work and through discussion, ensure that pupils are aware of the next steps in their learning and know what they need to do to make their work even better.

Pupils, including those who sometimes find learning difficult, make exceptional progress. The school's own very accurate assessment information affirms that at all stages many pupils far exceed the levels expected for their ages. They acquire an exceptional understanding of the Jewish faith. In secular studies, many pupils attain standards that are well above those expected for their age in English, mathematics and science. Progress in other subjects is also frequently exceptional. Even so, it is in Years 4, 5 and 6 that the rate of pupils' progress really takes off. In some lessons the progress made by younger pupils is not as rapid as it might be. This is because when teachers introduce new work, they do not always give sufficient consideration to the stage that pupils have already reached.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Part of the school's aim is to provide pupils with the necessary tools to become law-abiding, moral and well-rounded citizens. It does this very successfully. Behaviour, enjoyment and attendance are outstanding. Pupils are very well motivated, have exceptionally positive attitudes and take pride in their work. This is achieved by capturing pupils' interest during lessons, supporting them in their learning and rewarding good work and behaviour with prizes and trips. To quote one pupil, 'We all get along with each other.' Another was full of praise for the head of *Kodesh*, commenting, 'He helps us in a nice way.' The school's strong emphasis on the moral and ethical teachings as taught through the *Kodesh* curriculum permeates every aspect of their lives. This instils in the pupils the importance of distinguishing between right and wrong. Pupils learn to understand the importance Judaism attaches to respecting the law of the land and being law-abiding citizens. They respond exceptionally well to the trust that staff place in them and are eager to take responsibility and consequently gain confidence.

Pupils contribute to the local and wider Jewish community in a variety of ways. They raise funds for charitable organisations that benefit Jewish and non-Jewish causes, such as the Chai Cancer Charity. The school choir entertains the residents at a local nursing home and performs at some important communal events. Pupils are given opportunities to learn about public institutions and services in England. For example, they have been to Buckingham Palace and have visited HMS Belfast as part of their Second World War studies. Pupils, from an early age, possess an outstanding insight into their own culture. They also display immense respect and tolerance of other cultural traditions, which prepares them very well for their future lives. This is very evident in their dealings with adults who visit and work in the school.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. It is based on a well-established, robust set of policies that are clearly understood and applied by all staff. Thorough checks are undertaken on every aspect of the school's activities which

might pose any form of risk. The school is particularly effective in raising pupils' awareness of the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise. It also ensures that pupils are fully aware of how to keep themselves safe. In meeting all the regulations, the school complies fully with the Disability Discrimination Act of 2002 and provides a safe and secure site.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school complies fully with all the regulations. Arrangements to check the suitability of all staff and volunteer helpers to work with children are robust, up-to-date and recorded accurately.

School's premises and accommodation

Classrooms are adequate for their purpose, being well suited to the age of pupils attending the school. There is specialist accommodation for art and design and PE and an assembly hall. Whilst pupils have access to computers in classrooms and the school has a trolley of laptop computers there is no dedicated computer suite. The outdoor play area is adequate.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Parents are provided with clear, accurate, up-to-date and helpful information about the activities of the school and about their children's progress. The school successfully encourages an open dialogue with parents and carers, viewing them as key partners in the pupils' learning. Large numbers of parents attend open evenings and other school events. Regular questionnaires are used to gauge parents' and carers' views about the effectiveness of the education provided by the school. Parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire reveal that they are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of education their children receive.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's arrangements for receiving and responding to complaints made by parents and by staff comply fully with the regulations. Any concerns are investigated immediately and, where necessary, prompt action is taken. However, there have been no complaints in recent times.

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:

- ensure that when teachers introduce new work, they always give sufficient consideration to the stage that pupils have already reached
- make sure that pupils have sufficient time to plan their answers to questions and to extend them through discussion.

Inspection of day care registered by Ofsted

Effectiveness of the registered day care

The quality of care is good. Children are well occupied throughout the day and show high levels of interest and concentration in what they do. They are able to choose from stimulating and challenging activities both indoors and outdoors.

Children are confident and secure because the staff know the children really well. There is a very positive atmosphere, where children can approach staff for help which helps the children to thrive.

The generally well-maintained setting provides a safe and secure environment, protecting children from harm appropriately.

Staff work closely with parents. They undertake home visits and regularly discuss each child's needs and ensure that all children are treated as individuals. The pre-school is well organised. Policies and procedures work well in practice; all required documentation is in place and effectively contributes to the children's enjoyment and well-being. There is an effective key worker system in place so parents know who to speak to about their child's progress. The setting meets the needs of the range of children who attend. Overall the outcomes for being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and for organisation are good.

Since registration there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

Recommendations or actions to improve the registered day care

To improve the quality and standards of the care the registered person should take account of the following recommendations:

- extend the selection of books and printed materials made available to children.

Inspection of funded nursery education

Effectiveness of the funded nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff promote all aspects of children's learning and development very successfully and they are well-informed about the children's individual starting points and interests. Children's profiles are completed at regular intervals, this means that their individual learning is well planned and children make good progress.

Staff are secure in their knowledge and implementation of the Foundation Stage. Teaching methods, such as open-ended questioning and mutually respectful relationships, help children to achieve. Staff have high expectations for children's learning and they follow their interests to ensure support and effective challenges. They are developing independence and become highly involved in activities.

Learning through play, topic work and practical activities means that children are well motivated to learn. Children with learning difficulties receive effective support from staff, who work closely with other professionals and parents to provide a fully inclusive curriculum.

The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff place strong emphasis on helping children consider and respect others; their good deeds are praised and celebrated. Consequently, children behave exceptionally well which has a significant impact on their learning.

Good coverage is given to all areas of learning; however, due to a lack of resources children have fewer opportunities to develop their understanding of modern technology. Children involve themselves in problem solving activities, for example, they consider their birthdays and calculate who is the oldest, and look at items to find out which one is the longest. Although there is a good range of books available children's access to good quality story books and books for information is sometimes limited.

The leadership and management of the nursery are good. The staff work effectively together and strive to achieve the best for the children in their care. The partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff show a strong commitment to working with parents, and actively encourage them to become involved in children's learning and

to spend time at the pre-school and kindergarten. The children's profiles are shared with parents either formally at the parents' events or informally on request.

Recommendations or actions to improve the funded nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of the nursery education the registered person should take account of the following recommendations:

- provide children with access to modern technology and programmable toys.

School details

Name of school	Torah Vodaas
DCSF number	3026115
Unique reference number	133553
Unique reference number (funded nursery education)	EY347746
Type of school	Ultra-Orthodox day Jewish school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	October 2001
Age range of pupils	3-11 years
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	212
Number of children receiving funded nursery education	51
Annual fees	£2,850
Address of school	41 Dunstan Road London NW11 8AE
Telephone number	0208 458 4003
Fax number	0208 458 4003
Email address	mrspisaacs@hotmail.com
Headteacher	Mr S Isaacs
Proprietor	Rabbi S Klor
Reporting inspector	Godfrey Bancroft
Childcare inspector	Pauline Nazerkardeh
Dates of inspection	11-12 March 2008