

Kisharon Day School

Independent special school inspection report

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Reporting inspector Sandra Teacher

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is 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

Kisharon Day School is a small independent special school which provides education for pupils with a wide spectrum of special educational needs and/or disabilities. This provision has expanded since the last inspection in January 2007 to include pupils with moderate through to severe and complex learning disabilities, including autistic spectrum conditions. Some pupils also have physical, sensory and communication impairments and lifelong medical conditions. The school was established in 1976 and admits up to 28 pupils aged between four and 19 years. Currently, 26 pupils are on roll, of whom approximately two thirds are boys and one third girls. There are no children receiving nursery funding. The school occupies two floors of a building in the heart of the Jewish community of North West London. A new senior leadership team took up post at the start of the current school year.

The school aims 'to provide an excellent standard of secular and Jewish education within a framework of Jewish life, experience and practice, together with excellent standards of care, therapies, support and personal development'.

Evaluation of the school

Kisharon provides a satisfactory quality of education and meets its primary aims. Since the last inspection, the school has improved its safeguarding arrangements which are now robust and contribute to making good provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety. It has made a positive start with the new Early Years Foundation Stage framework and the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Attention to understanding pupils' individual needs through a multi-disciplinary and holistic approach in both kodesh (Religious Studies) and chol (secular work) enables pupils to make satisfactory progress. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good as they benefit from the great emphasis placed on Torah (Jewish law and teaching) values and middos (moral education and good behaviour). The school has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection and now meets all of the regulations for independent schools.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Quality of education

Overall, the school provides a satisfactory quality of education. The quality of the curriculum provided by the school is satisfactory. The curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage provides activities to develop children's physical, mobility and self-help skills and there is also a strong emphasis on the development of different communication skills. The curricula in the school for both kodesh and chol are developing on the model of the National Curriculum programmes of study. Hebrew is included as a modern foreign language and music and singing play an important role. The two curricula are supported by appropriate planning and schemes of work that are personalised for each pupil. The school is working towards integrating kodesh and chol, with an increasing range of cross-curricular topics. For example, when presenting the letter 'kicking k', the teacher referred to King Pharaoh who featured in that week's sedra (weekly Biblical portion). The curriculum lays stress on life skills, communication, language and literacy. Pupils are taught to keep fit through a regular programme of walks, swimming and horse-riding sessions, and the school uses the small outside area, gym and exercise rooms effectively.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory. Lessons in the Early Years Foundation Stage are often enjoyable and exciting, as well as calm and supportive. This, along with the very good relationships between staff and children, enables children to make satisfactory progress overall but better progress in developing physical and communication skills. In the school, the teachers have appropriate subject knowledge, know their pupils well and work in close conjunction with them and with each other. This enables them to utilise suitable resources, practical activities and teaching methods to support pupils' learning. The school has considerably expanded the resources available for learning, in particular in information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils are beginning to appreciate the value of learning through the use of ICT, and they demonstrated much excitement when they recognised their faces on the interactive whiteboard as a means of registration. Where necessary, teachers make their own resources based on pupils' personal experiences. For example, parents send in photographs of the pupils' own homes to be used as resources for the topic of houses and homes; and the Hebrew alphabet is represented through pictures and sounds that are meaningful to individual pupils. When these teaching methods are used, progress is often good. Teachers are very patient and understanding and promote responsible behaviour successfully. The school makes good use of additional support from a wide range of therapists who work on site, which enhances each pupil's individual learning and development. Pupils enjoy their learning and generally persevere well with challenging tasks. Assessment is satisfactory and relates clearly to individual education plans. Although targets are set, they are not always sufficiently precise to ensure gradual improvement in learning, and assessment data are not always used to monitor pupils' progress and identify their next steps in learning. Satisfactory assessments are undertaken in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

There is a warm, caring atmosphere that complements a real learning environment, and this is noted by staff, parents and pupils. Pupils are stretched according to their abilities in a genuine effort to enable them to reach their potential and make positive contributions to Jewish communal life. Pupils of all ages generally make satisfactory progress in their studies because they are encouraged extensively to appreciate their own unique potential.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good as a result of the school's strong emphasis on personal development. Music and singing play a large part in the learning process, and it is a delight to see the joy on the pupils' faces when they are involved in davening (daily prayers) or carrying out other rituals of the Jewish faith, for example, putting on tephillin (small leather boxes strapped to the head and upper arm).

The religious ethos of the school contributes to creating an environment where trust and mutual respect are steadily fostered. Pupils are helped to settle and feel part of their community, which is facilitated by well-planned transition arrangements to help pupils move up to the next class and, if appropriate, to mainstream schools. Torah values underpin the work of the school, so that pupils' behaviour and attendance are good. Effective behaviour management supports pupils, helping them towards a growing awareness that their conduct affects others and has direct personal consequences. Physically able pupils look after their friends by, for example, holding the doors open for wheelchair users. An additional social and life skills programme enables pupils to integrate and live a full life within their community. Older pupils have meaningful work experiences, for example, helping in a local primary school tuck shop or local care home and this prepares them well for their future lives. However, pupils have limited opportunities to contribute to the school's self-evaluation and strategic planning.

A wide range of educational outings, including a residential visit for all pupils, enriches their cultural and social experiences. Pupils fully appreciate their own culture and their respect and tolerance of other cultural traditions is evident in their dealings with adults who either work in or visit the school.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school makes good provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. Safeguarding procedures have improved since the last inspection and are now robust. The school ensures that the policies aimed at safeguarding pupils in all circumstances are implemented rigorously and, in so doing, it has dealt effectively with the weaknesses highlighted in the last report. All the procedures and policies which relate to the welfare and safety of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are fully in place and staff receive appropriate training in health and safety matters. There is also the additional reassurance of Hatzalah (Jewish paramedical

service) nearby. Clear policies to promote good behaviour are implemented consistently to ensure that pupils learn in a calm, positive atmosphere. Rules are simple and clearly understood by all. Admissions and attendance registers are kept in accordance with regulations. Healthy living is in keeping with Torah values, and this is an integral part of school life. Pupils enjoy cooking in the kitchen and engaging in a broad range of physical activities that suit their specific needs. Pupils are well supervised at all times.

The school takes seriously its duty with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002 and provides good access to the premises and the curriculum for the disabled and disadvantaged.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All staff have been subject to satisfactory clearance with the Criminal Records Bureau at an enhanced level. All the required pre-employment checks are recorded on a single central register.

School's premises and accommodation

Although the standard of the accommodation is satisfactory, the new refurbishment, including the installation of a lift, has made a tremendous difference to pupils' lives. Every effort has been made to meet pupils' individual needs and within a few months, pupils have benefited hugely in terms of both academic and personal development. There are attractive and thoughtful displays which create a stimulating learning environment and specialist rooms for therapy, soft play and sensory experiences. There is sufficient, albeit small, space for outside play, which is maximised through the provision of a good range of play equipment. Good use is made of local facilities for physical and educational activities.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides parents carers and others with all the required information. Parents are fully involved in all aspects of their children's school life; as one parent comments, 'When you walk through the front door, magic happens.' Pre-inspection questionnaires returned by parents were very positive. Individual records are readily available to parents who have easy access to teachers, receive an annual written report and have regular meetings to review how well their child is doing. Each pupil has a home-link school book in which both teachers and parents write comments. One parent said, 'This is my life line.' The school informs the local authorities that fund the placements of the progress made by pupils. However, while annual reviews have all been held, not all the reports have been submitted on time. The school is urgently addressing this.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's policy and procedures for handling complaints meet all of the requirements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Care of the children is paramount and all the procedures and policies which relate to the welfare and safety of the children are fully in place. There are good arrangements for bringing children into the unit, often from local nurseries, and also for transferring into the Key Stage 1 class. The curriculum is a good balance of opportunities and activities to develop children's physical, mobility and self-help skills. There is also a strong emphasis on the development of different communication skills. Lessons are taught in a variety of interesting and often exciting ways, but keeping the overall balance of calmness and support that is needed. Teaching and other classroom staff have very good relationships with children and all work together as a strong team. Children enjoy their activities and are well motivated to listen to staff, and do as they are asked and shown. They make satisfactory progress overall but do better in the areas that focus the most on their physical and communication skills. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory. Staff receive appropriate training in, for example, the Early Years Foundation Stage framework, conductive education and health and safety matters. Assessments of children's progress are carried out satisfactorily with good use made of photographic evidence. This area of work is being developed in tandem with the whole school's assessment programme.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- Further develop the whole-school curriculum to meet the needs and interests of pupils from the full range of learning disabilities and to maximise opportunities for the integration of kodesh and secular learning.
- Improve the use of assessment data to monitor pupils' progress and identify their next steps in learning.
- Develop outdoor learning opportunities for the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Introduce opportunities for pupils to contribute to the school's self-evaluation and strategic planning.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education			✓	
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils			✓	
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs			✓	
How well pupils make progress in their learning			✓	

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How good are the outcomes for children in the EYFS?			✓	
What is the quality of provision in the EYFS?			✓	
How effectively is the EYFS led and managed?			✓	
Overall effectiveness: how well does the school meet the needs of children in the EYFS?			✓	

School details

Name of school	Kisharon Day School		
DCSF number	302/6085		
Unique reference number	101386		
Type of school	Special day school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1976		
Age range of pupils	4–18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full time pupils)	Boys: 18	Girls: 8	Total: 26
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 18	Girls: 8	Total: 26
Annual fees (day pupils)	£21,897- £33,631		
Address of school	1011 Finchley Road London NW11 7HB		
Telephone number	020 8455 7483		
Fax number	020 8209 0994		
Email address	kisharondayschool@kisharon.org.uk		
Headteacher	Rabbi Yitzchak Freeman		
Proprietor	Kisharon Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Sandra Teacher		
Dates of inspection	13–14 January 2010		