

# Gateshead Jewish Boarding School

Independent school inspection report

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DCSF registration number	390/6002
Unique reference number	108414
Inspection number	342463
Inspection dates	1 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Chanan Tomlin

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 as amended.

For use on light touch inspections from September 2009

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Age group: 11-15

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Published: 23 December 2009

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Reference no: 090071

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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 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.<sup>1</sup>

This was a light touch inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

## Information about the school

Gateshead Jewish Boarding School was established in 1944 and in 1974 it became a day school. It is the only secondary boys' school of its kind in Gateshead catering for the needs of the orthodox Jewish community. There are currently 137 students on roll, aged 11 to 15 years. The school accepts students of vastly differing abilities. Three pupils have statements of special educational needs. Its mission is to ensure that 'students learn those skills necessary to become productive, caring, thinking individuals suitably equipped so as to successfully embark on the next stage of their education. This is to be achieved by inculcating the students with core *Torah* values as transmitted by rabbinic authorities as well as providing a secular education up to GCSE standard'. In 2005 the school moved to new purpose-built air-conditioned premises with access for those with disabilities. The school was last inspected in March 2007.

## Evaluation of the school

The overall quality of the education provided by the school is good and the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The religious and secular curricula and the quality of teaching are good. The school has made a steady improvement since the last inspection. Arrangements for safeguarding the pupils are good and provision for their welfare, health and safety is good. The school meets its aims and all of the regulations.

### Quality of education

The quality of the education provided by the school is good. This is because it is supported by good curricula for both *kodesh* (religious studies) and *chol* (secular studies). The *kodesh* curriculum provides the pupils with firm grounding in the aspects of *Torah* study (religious law) that they need when they enter *yeshivas*

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

(*talmudic* academies) upon completion of their tenure at the school. All of the pupils join *yeshivas* in Gateshead and elsewhere, and the school has a reputation for equipping its pupils with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed. *Talmud*, which is at the core of the *kodesh* curriculum is taught at graduating levels throughout the four year groups and one tractate is studied throughout the school each year in order to ensure consistency and group work. In addition to *talmud*, *chumash/rashi* (Bible/commentaries) and *halacha* (Jewish law) are taught at levels that match the aptitudes and capabilities of the pupils. *Nach* (Prophets) are taught to the first 2 classes. Jewish history, in Forms 1 to 3, covers the period between the destruction of the First Temple until the Holocaust. *Mussar* (Jewish ethics) is integral to the *kodesh* education provided and supports and strengthens the pupils' understanding and appreciation of morality and spirituality. Some aspects of personal, social and health education are covered through *mussar* lessons as are studies of different races and religions in Jewish history. Some aspects of history and geography are effectively integrated into the *kodesh* curriculum as well. *Kodesh* teachers use different methods of differentiation to ensure that all pupils succeed, although these do not always feature consistently in planning. Generally this takes the form of separate group work and individually tailored quotas of *talmud* to be learned by pupils of varying abilities.

The *chol* curriculum follows the National Curriculum GCSE syllabi for mathematics, English, science and information and communication technology (ICT) and all pupils take GCSE examinations in these subjects. Physical education lessons are provided once a week. These lessons are especially well organised and teach pupils the importance of exercise and team work. Pupils take part in a good range of extra-curricular activities, most of which are extensions of the learning that takes place at the school. Examples of this are: the well-attended school *minyan* (prayer services), *Chevras Mishnayos*, *Yeshivas Hamasmidim*, an optional *Pirkei Avos* (Chapters of Our Fathers) lesson in the principal's house and a *Minchas Chinuch* (Jewish law) class on Saturday mornings. Weekly swimming sessions are offered locally as part of the community's infrastructure and the 'Lchu Vonim' Boys' Club provides lessons in woodwork and ICT. These optional activities have an exceptionally large uptake of pupils from the school.

Standards of teaching and assessment in the school are good and pupils make good progress. Close collaboration between the headteacher and staff ensure that pupils of differing capabilities and aptitudes are catered for, and to support this, the principal examines and analyses lesson plans and completed tests regularly. Test results are all recorded and inform planning. In *chol*, pupils are given major examinations in every subject twice a year and minor examinations every term. Most teachers mark their pupils' work effectively. However, marking does not always make it clear to pupils how to improve and *kodesh* teachers do not peruse notes taken by pupils regularly enough. Parents receive reports and attend parent's evenings twice a year. In addition to this, the nature of the community affords close, informal, regular contact between parents and staff. Pupils with special educational needs and those with statements of special educational needs are effectively supported by the school.

'*Areivim*', the communal organisation that provides additional support is accessed by the school to provide extra help for many of these pupils.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. As a result of the debate and deliberation that takes place during *talmudic* study, pupils gain in confidence and self-knowledge. *Chavrusa*, or 'paired work' is especially effective in strengthening pupils' oratory skills and enables them to respect their peers' opinions whilst growing in self-esteem. Outstanding relationships exist between staff and pupils and pupils genuinely enjoy school. As one pupil put it, 'I like my school a lot! We take pride in our school!' Behaviour is good and attendance is high. There is an effusive learning environment in the school, especially in *kodesh*, and pupils take learning seriously. This is evident in monitored home revision daily and the excellent uptake of extra-curricular learning activities. The intense study of *talmud* provides the pupils with keen analytical skills that, aside from preparing them for *yeshiva*, equips them for their future economic well-being.

Pupils take an active part in many aspects of the running of the school, such as the school *minyan* (prayer services), holiday programmes and after-hours study in the school's study hall. Pupils arrange *melave malkas* (Saturday night get-togethers), a major *Chanuka* show and *Purim* celebrations, and the more capable singers are members of the school choir. Pupils take part in fundraising activities for the school and needy families in Israel. Some of these activities incorporate extra learning commitments such as the *Shavuos* sponsoring programme, where pupils secure sponsors for extra quotas of learning. They are active in voluntary work for the community, such as the 'Sheimos (holy writings) Disposal Facility' before Passover.

Pupils have a keen understanding of spiritual issues and strive for perfection in religious observance. An example of this is the '*Chevras Machzikei Tefilla*' club in the third year; an optional programme that strengthens commitment to prayer. Pupils are attuned to moral issues and respect the law as a core ethos of Jewish tradition. Cultural development is not quite as strong as spiritual, moral and social development although pupils acquire an understanding of other cultural traditions through Jewish history and know that they are duty-bound to exhibit tolerance and harmony toward people of other faiths and cultures. Pupils learn about public institutions and services through the English curriculum.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is good. The school has all the necessary policies and procedures in place and implements them effectively to ensure that the school is a safe environment. Pupils gain limited knowledge of nutrition, healthy lifestyles and eating through the science curriculum but enjoy very effective physical education lessons. The school takes child protection seriously and

makes good provision for the safeguarding of pupils. Staff are trained appropriately to ensure that pupils stay safe. The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

## 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:

- broaden the curriculum by:
  - incorporating topic work in all classes on nutrition and healthy eating
  - providing more experiences of other cultures
- ensuring that marking is consistent and helps pupils know how to improve and that *kodesh* teachers peruse notes taken by pupils regularly
- ensuring that methods of differentiation feature consistently in 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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## School details

Name of school	Gateshead Jewish Boarding School
DCSF number	390/6002
Unique reference number	108414
Type of school	Boys secondary school
Status	Independent
Date school opened	1944
Age range of pupils	11-15 years
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	137
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	3
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,000
Address of school	10 Rydal Street Gateshead Tyne & Wear NE8 1HG
Telephone number	0191 477 1431
Fax number	0191 477 1432
Email address	info@gjbs.gateshead.sch.uk
Headteacher	Rabbi M Kupetz
Proprietor	N/A
Reporting inspector	Chanan Tomlin
Dates of inspection	1 December 2009