

# Yesodey Hatorah School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Dr Jonathan Yodaiken

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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, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

Yesodey Hatorah is a mainstream *Charedi* (Orthodox) Jewish religious school which has served the Stamford Hill area of North London since the school's inception in 1942. All the pupils come from strictly Orthodox Jewish homes. However, they represent a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and a relatively wide spectrum of Jewish cultural backgrounds, (Chassidic and non-Chassidic, Sephardi and Ashkenazi). The school, though registered as a single entity, has three discrete departments. These are junior girls and junior boys aged 4 to 11 and senior boys aged 11 to 15). No children are entitled to free educations for three- and four-year-olds. At the time of the inspection, there were 593 pupils on roll, of whom 436 were girls. Eleven pupils have statements of special educational needs. The departments work as separate institutions for all of the activities in which they are engaged. Nevertheless, they share a common aim which is to 'provide a sound education along national standards, together with a rich Jewish religious and cultural curriculum. This will enable the children to play a vital role in their community, according to their needs and aspirations.' The school was last inspected in November 2007.

## Evaluation of the school

Yesodey Hatorah School provides a good quality of education including in the Early Years Foundation Stage and is successful in meeting its aims. Pupils make good progress as they move up from the Early Years Foundation Stage through the school. The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, as is pupils' behaviour in the classroom and around the school. Pupils say they are happy to be at the school and enjoy lessons. They appreciate the support provided by their teachers. Safeguarding procedures meet all the regulations. The school has made steady progress since the last inspection and now complies with all but two of the regulations.

## Quality of education

The school provides a good curriculum for the pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage and those pupils with learning difficulties. The rich curriculum provision and effective teaching lead to pupils' good learning and good progress. The curriculum is divided into two distinctive strands; *limmudei kodesh* (religious studies) and *limmudei chol* (secular studies). The teaching of *limmudei kodesh* is carried out mainly through the medium of Yiddish and is taught in the

mornings. The *limmudei kodesh* curriculum has its own unique *mesoirah* (tradition). This spiritual ethos permeates the whole school and instils in the pupils a deep sense of integrity. *Limmudei chol*, which is taught in English, includes literacy, numeracy, science, history, geography and art. In the senior boys' department, pupils leave school at the end of Year 10 and all go directly to *yeshivos* (Talmudical colleges). The boys, therefore, take GCSE examinations at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 10.

Care and respect for others permeate the entire curriculum, which includes an expanding range of enrichment activities within the school. These include various charitable projects and presentations for parents. Personal, social and health education is taught effectively as part of the *limmudei kodesh* curriculum. The main focus is on the development of pupils' *middos* (desirable personal traits), for example of responsibility, modesty and respect.

Teaching and assessment are good and teachers plan their lessons well. In the best lessons, teachers' subject knowledge is secure and their planning is precise and well matched to pupils' prior attainment. Teachers create an exciting and stimulating learning environment in which there is good interaction with pupils, based on positive relationships. Learning is placed at the centre of all activities and lessons have appropriate pace and challenge. As a result, pupils make good progress in their learning. In the few less successful lessons, characteristically taught by less experienced staff, the needs of pupils of higher attainment are not consistently met and such lessons tend to be overly teacher-centred. The heads of each department are aware of the progress of each pupil, providing support to pupils experiencing difficulties. Assessment strategies used to inform planning are good overall and outstanding in some areas, for example, in *kriah* (Hebrew reading) and within the junior schools in some subjects. Marking is regular and undertaken conscientiously. It is particularly impressive in literacy. In most, but not all, of the marking there are constructive comments which make clear to pupils why their work is good or how they can improve in some aspects.

As a result of the good teaching, curriculum and work ethic, pupils make good progress in their learning as they move up the school. It is impressive to see the way in which pupils with special needs are supported so well. The life skills learned within the *limmudei kodesh* lessons, literacy and numeracy, including good language and communication skills, are well embedded through the range of learning opportunities provided. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life, as they grow up in a strictly Orthodox Jewish community and as good citizens within the wider community.

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

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and is a major strength of the school.

Pupils are well motivated and have very positive attitudes towards school life; consequently their behaviour is outstanding. This is not reflected in the attendance, which is slightly below the national average. However, this is attributed to absences in order to attend family celebrations. Pupils take pride in their work and are anxious to please and to meet the standards set by their teachers. To quote one pupil 'I love school because my teachers really help me to succeed.' The school's strong emphasis on 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. For example, in one lesson pupils discussed the responsibility of someone who finds a lost article in terms of how best to look after it. Pupils develop a knowledge of public institutions through the curriculum in personal, social and health education and learn to understand the value Judaism attaches to respecting the law of the land and being law-abiding citizens. When they are taught about other cultures they demonstrate a deep respect for people who are different from themselves. They respond exceptionally well to the trust staff place in them and are eager to act responsibly.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety including in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. All required policies are in place and have regard for national guidance. The school ensures that the pupils stay safe. The school has prepared and implemented appropriate written policies for behaviour, health and safety and promoting the welfare of children. Procedures and staff training relating to safeguarding and child protection meet all of the regulations. The school encourages healthy eating and there is a good level of fire safety. The school fully implements its written policy on first aid. Staff members are deployed in ways that ensure the proper supervision of pupils. The school keeps records of sanctions imposed upon pupils, maintains appropriate admission and attendance registers and fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), as amended.

The pupils say that they feel safe, secure and valued. These sentiments are supported by parents who see the caring attitude of the school as a key factor in their children's learning and progress.

Pupils are well mannered, responsible and courteous. They enjoy and are enthusiastic about learning and there is a spirit of *achdus* (unity) in the school at all levels.

## **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The school carries out the required checks on all staff to ensure their suitability to work with children, including checks with the Criminal Records Bureau. Details are accurately recorded on the single central register of staff checks.

## **Premises of and accommodation at the school**

The school accommodation is fit for purpose. However, the school is housed in older premises, part of which has not been adequately maintained over the years. The proprietor has taken considerable steps to make improvements since the last inspection but in some areas, particularly within the boys' department, the standard of maintenance and decoration is still inadequate. Areas that have been refurbished are now bright and attractive and more conducive to good learning. Although there have been some improvements, the flooring in some areas is still not of an adequate standard and causes a trip hazard. There are sufficient classrooms and areas for small group work. The playground is safe and provides ample space for pupils to play at break times. There is an appropriate room for pupils when they are ill.

### **Provision of information**

A good range of information is available to parents, carers, prospective parents and the local authority. There is an informative prospectus which provides detailed information about the range of school policies available. Bi-annual reports give parents valuable information about each pupil's progress at the school. Regular newsletters and frequent opportunities for parents to share in their child's school experiences ensure the home-school partnership is strong.

### **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school's procedures for handling complaints meet requirements.

### **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children's starting points on entry to the Reception class are generally in line with those typical for their age. As a result of the good teaching, they make good progress in all areas of learning. An effective programme of learning letters and sounds supports the development of communication, reading and writing skills. Children develop their speaking and personal skills well and, as a result, outcomes are good.

The quality of provision of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children settle very happily into the Reception class owing to the warm welcome they receive and the good induction procedures. The promotion of children's welfare and safety is good. All routines are well established and this increases the children's feeling of security. Staff form good relationships with children and encourage them to enjoy learning. Plenty of practical play and stimulating activities are provided, for example, a visit to a local fishmonger where children learned about different fish. There is a sound balance of focused, adult-led sessions as well as purposeful, child-selected play activities. Learning opportunities are well planned for in all indoor activities, particularly for the girls. The outdoor learning environment has been greatly improved since the last inspection. However, opportunities are sometimes missed for it to be used as an outdoor classroom to extend and reinforce learning through well-planned activities. The children are well motivated to use their initiative and imagination through role play and practical work.

Leadership and management are good and ensure that all learning and welfare requirements are fully met. A good assessment system has been developed and staff work closely together to promote consistent practice. Parents are kept well informed and are very happy with the provision. There is a well-developed plan in place to upgrade the outdoor learning environment so that it can be used more effectively as an outdoor classroom.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- provide a satisfactory standard and adequate maintenance of decoration (paragraph 23(p))
- provide appropriate flooring in good condition (paragraph 23(r)).

## **What the school could do to improve further**

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

- Establish consistency of best practice in teaching and learning through experienced staff sharing their competencies with those who are relatively new to the school
- As planned, further develop the use of the Early Years Foundation Stage outside area so that it provides a more effective stimulus to learning and a richer environment whereby children can learn through their experiences.

## Inspection judgements

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

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		

## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Orthodox Jewish		
<b>Date school opened</b>	September 1942		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–15 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 157	Girls: 436	Total: 593
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 3	Girls: 8	Total: 11
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£2,500		
<b>Address of school</b>	Girls' Department, 153 Stamford Hill, London N16 5LG		
	Boys' Department, 2–4 Amhurst Park London N16 5AE		
<b>Telephone number</b>	0208 800 8612		
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:office@yhsl.org.uk">office@yhsl.org.uk</a>		
<b>Headteacher</b> – boys' department girls' department	Rabbi Pinchos Rosenberg Mrs Devora Luria		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Rabbi Pinter		