

Mechinoh School

13 Upper Park Road, Salford, Lancashire M7 4HY

Inspection dates

28–30 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met. The unmet standards include those about equalities.
- The school’s attendance registers have some gaps. Teachers do not follow government guidance when completing registers.
- While pupils learn well in their chol (secular) subjects, rates of progress are slower than in kodesh (religious) studies.
- Leaders do not use the information they have about individual pupils as well as possible to help them identify any patterns which might help groups of pupils to learn even better.

The school has the following strengths

- The principal and vice-principal provide determined leadership based on the school’s clear orthodox Jewish ethos.
- Senior leaders’ checks on many aspects of the school’s work are thorough.
- The deficiencies in health and safety identified at the previous inspection have been securely addressed. The school continues to improve.
- Pupils behave well. They are polite, respectful and get on well with each other.
- The small size of the school means that pupils are known as individuals.
- Leaders maintain close contact with pupils’ parents. Parents are satisfied with the education provided.
- Teachers are positive about the school. They relate well to pupils.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to provide suitable challenges for pupils.
- Teaching and learning in kodesh work is highly effective.
- Pupils are successful in moving to yeshivas (Jewish religious colleges) when they leave the school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - the school paying particular regard to people with the full range of protected characteristics as set out in the national equality legislation
 - leaders and teachers ensuring that registers are always completed fully using the codes set out in national guidance
 - leaders better using the data and information they have to identify patterns in the work and outcomes of group of pupils to ensure that the education offered continues to improve.
- Further increase the rates of progress in chol learning by teachers:
 - matching the standards of work more closely to those typical in other schools
 - consistently providing work to better challenge different groups of learners, including the most able
 - sharing their effective practice.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that the curriculum policy, plans and schemes of work provide for and effectively implement personal, social, health and economic education which encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 and which provides for effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society (paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(2), 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(i)).
- The proprietor must ensure that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and ensures that principles are actively promoted which encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 (paragraph 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b) (vi)).
- The proprietor must ensure that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 15).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently and actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The proprietor and senior leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met. The school does not meet the standards which require it to pay particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the national legislation about equality. Opportunities to help pupils understand the wide range of people and cultures which contribute to modern Britain are limited. These weaknesses in the school's provision stem from leaders' determination to conform to orthodox Jewish expectations about what is appropriate for young people to learn and experience.
- The school's registers are not complete. These have occasional gaps from earlier in this school year. Leaders have identified this problem and are now demanding that teachers are more systematic in taking registers. In addition, the school does not use the codes for detailed recording of absences set out in the most recent national guidance.
- The small size of the school means that senior leaders know pupils as individuals. Senior leaders are directly involved in reviewing how well pupils are doing. While senior leaders collect and consider the results from the regular testing of pupils' learning, much of the follow-up is solely through discussion. There is little recording of such discussion, so it is harder for leaders to identify any patterns which may develop concerning groups of pupils' learning.
- The principal and vice-principal have worked together to lead successful improvement in the school. They have a clear vision of what the school is aiming to achieve. They have introduced systems and routines to allow them to check that teachers are effective, pupils are learning well and behaving properly, and that the school buildings are safe. While they do not use a formal self-evaluation document, they know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and have prepared an appropriate school improvement plan. They are aware that this could be further strengthened by including tighter timescales for planned actions.
- The vice-principal has introduced a programme of lesson observation for chol subjects. The feedback given to teachers includes recommendations for improvement, which can then be reviewed the next time the teacher is observed. In addition, senior leaders' systematic checking of test results means that they can quickly identify any changes in individual pupils' progress or teachers' effectiveness.
- The curriculum provides both kodesh and chol learning. Pupils see both of these as important. The range of timetabled secular subjects is currently limited to English, mathematics, science and sports. However, subjects such as geography are sometimes included. In addition, leaders expect teachers to develop pupils' broader knowledge and understanding as opportunities arise; for example, by pupils developing their technological skills in building 'fighting tanks' in science. Similarly, the inspector saw pupils discussing current issues in the news in an English lesson. Leaders have carefully mapped out where pupils' understanding of British values can be developed across other learning.
- From time to time, leaders organise additional activities for pupils outside the normal school day. These include trips to sports venues to reward pupils for good behaviour and

residential visits to outdoor locations. Pupils enjoy such visits.

- The parents who contacted the inspector were very complimentary about the school and its leaders. The letters referred to the school's ability to cater for individuals, the 'amazing' support teachers provide and additional activities they offer. Teachers are similarly positive about the school.

Governance

- The day-to-day leadership of the school is entrusted to the principal and vice-principal. The school has an individual governor from the local orthodox Jewish community who has supportive, but infrequent, formal contact with the principal. He is available to be called upon if any complex issues arise. He provides challenge to leaders when needed; for example, about the health and safety issues identified during the previous inspection.
- The school has limited funding available. However, this is used carefully for the benefit of pupils; for example, in the previous health and safety improvements and in current work to provide a better library of books in English.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders have ensured that the necessary systems to keep pupils safe are robust. Training for staff with different levels of responsibility is in place and carefully recorded so that any gaps in the knowledge of members of staff can be quickly picked up and filled.
- The record of checks intended to reduce the risk of employing an unsuitable person to work with children is complete. In addition, part of senior leaders' safeguarding training is about safer recruitment of staff.
- The school does not have a website. However, an up-to-date and helpful safeguarding policy is available to parents on request.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching and learning of the kodesh and chol curriculums are effective.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Teachers are skilful in using different types of questions to challenge pupils to think. Debate and discussion are at the core of much of the learning in the school. This means that teachers and pupils are able to use any mistakes or misunderstandings in pupils' thinking to build up their knowledge. Collaborative learning is a particularly strong feature of kodesh studies.
- Teachers know pupils very well because classes are small. This means that teachers are well placed to meet pupils' learning needs. However, some teachers do not give enough attention to planning how to build from groups of pupils' different starting points in their work. In some classes, the needs of different groups, including the most able, are carefully considered, for example by using textbooks of different difficulties for different pupils within the same class.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are typically high. However, they do not insist on the highest possible standards of presentation in pupils' exercise books. For

example, they allow poorly set out work in mathematics and untidy diagrams in science.

- Teachers ensure that the high standards of respect for others are reinforced through their work. The inspector saw no instances of pupils using derogatory language in class or around the school.
- Teachers' formal reports to parents provide clear summaries of pupils' progress. The frequent internal reporting of test results means that leaders and teachers are able to provide informed advice about pupils' progress to parents whenever needed.
- Teachers set homework infrequently. However, pupils do not miss out on learning time because the school day is longer than in many other schools.
- The school no longer offers GCSE examinations. However, GCSE textbooks are used with older pupils and the internal examinations for such pupils in chol subjects are based on GCSE questions.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils have few opportunities to learn about the broad range of people and experiences within modern British society. This means that it is harder for them to develop skills that they may need in the future. Leaders reflect that providing this sheltered approach helps them to ensure that the education offered meets orthodox Jewish principles.
- There have been marked improvements in pupils' physical safety since the previous standard inspection.
- The school has a strongly positive ethos, which develops pupils' confidence and self-assurance. Leaders provide additional opportunities to develop these further, for example, by directly involving the oldest pupils in organising events for the school and the wider community.
- Pupils say that there is no bullying in the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good, which give pupils confidence that, should any difficulties occur between pupils, they would be quickly resolved.
- Pupils do not use computers in school unless for specific reasons and under direct adult supervision. However, leaders have provided teaching to raise pupils' awareness of issues such as cyber bullying. The school's computer system is filtered to reduce the possibility of anyone accessing unsuitable websites.
- Many aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are strong. The school's ethos reinforces ideas, such as the difference between right and wrong, general respect for others, contribution to the community and the Jewish cultural context.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is orderly. Pupils' conduct in class and around the school is good. They work together well to help everyone learn. Pupils are taught to respect others. This is evident in the way that they respond to visitors and their peers.
- The inspector saw no disruption to learning, although noise levels increased towards the end of the inspection days. The systems for encouraging good behaviour and responding to any poor behaviour have been refined since the previous inspection. The school's records show that any instances of poor behaviour are reducing.
- Pupils of different ages get on well together; for example, the inspector saw competitive but friendly football games involving pupils from all classes during breaktimes.
- Parents indicated that pupils are happy to come to school and enjoy the activities offered. Pupils also say they enjoy school. Their typical attendance is around the national average for secondary schools. Pupils are generally punctual.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The information about pupils' final outcomes is limited because pupils do not take GCSEs. However, inspection evidence indicates that pupils make good progress from their starting points, and particularly so in their kodesh learning. It remains harder for teachers to match the standards pupils achieve to those in other schools, because of the lack of externally accredited data.
- Leaders judge that pupils enter the school with standards typical for their age, although inspection evidence indicates that pupils' skills in English lag behind other aspects of learning.
- The school's own records show that pupils' test marks typically increase as time goes on within the year. In addition, pupils' books indicate that there is clear progress as pupils move up the school with, for example, more difficult topics being studied in mathematics, and pupils developing the ability to write longer and more accurate pieces of English.
- Where the most able are well supported, for example because of closely targeted individual work in kodesh learning and by the use of textbooks matched to pupils' ability in mathematics, they make rapid progress.
- Pupils develop strong reading skills in Hebrew through their detailed study of religious texts. Leaders' plans to increase the number of English books available are supporting further development of pupils' reading in English.
- Pupils are provided with information about a number of possible future careers. For most, if not all, pupils decisions about careers are not finally made until after they have spent the next stage of their education in a yeshiva. The school is successful in preparing pupils for this stage and in giving them a secure foundation for their further kodesh study.

School details

Unique reference number	105999
DfE registration number	355/6020
Inspection number	10021800

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	57
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Mechinoh School
Chair	Rabbi M Kupetz
Headteacher	Rabbi N Baddiel
Annual fees (day pupils)	None
Telephone number	0161 795 9275
Website	None
Email address	mechinoh@gmail.com
Date of previous inspection	25–27 November 2014

Information about this school

- Mechinoh School opened in 1982 and is situated in Salford, north Manchester. It offers secondary education for up to 73 Orthodox Jewish boys, aged between 11 and 16 years, with provision for both religious and secular studies.
- There are currently 57 pupils on roll. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. A very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school aims 'to provide a comprehensive religious education for its pupils and to prepare them for entry into yeshivas (Talmudic Colleges) to further their religious

education'. In addition, it aims 'to equip pupils with the basic skills required for adult life, such as literacy, numeracy and general knowledge whilst placing great emphasis on developing a high standard of ethical behaviour'.

- No pupils attend any alternative, off-site educational provision.
- The school received its previous standard inspection in November 2014. Two progress monitoring inspections followed in June and September 2015.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector toured the school site accompanied by the principal and vice-principal.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning across the school in kodesh and chol learning. He observed pupils' conduct in lessons, during movement between lessons and at breaks.
- The inspector held meetings with the principal and vice-principal. He met formally with a group of pupils, and spoke with others during lessons and at other times during the school day.
- The inspector met with the sole representative of the proprietorial body, who is also the sole governor.
- The inspector examined pupils' books during lessons and in a scrutiny of samples of written work.
- The inspector reviewed documents to confirm compliance with the independent school standards and to provide other inspection evidence. These documents included school policies, safeguarding information, the school's development planning, minutes of staff meetings, and the attendance and admissions registers.
- Too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were received for these to be considered. However, five letters from parents and a written comment provided through Parent View were reviewed. Inspectors examined three responses from members of staff to a questionnaire provided by Ofsted.
- The regulatory authority commissioned this inspection in order to check that the school had sustained the improvements made since the previous standard inspection.

Inspection team

David Selby, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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