

Vishnitz Girls' School

49 Amhurst Park, London N16 5DL

Inspection dates

7–9 November 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
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders and proprietors have not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders and proprietors have continued to increase the numbers and extend the age range of pupils. This is in breach of the school's registration with the Department for Education.
- Leaders and the proprietor do not systematically evaluate provision across the school.
- The curriculum for older pupils has not been planned for, long-term; rather, it is developed as pupils progress through the school.
- Curriculum plans in physical education and art are basic and lack detail.
- Safeguarding is effective. However, pupils' understanding about to stay safe online is limited.
- Pupils are not well enough prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils have too few opportunities to experience life beyond the school and their community.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils have sufficient awareness and understanding of other faiths and people with different characteristics.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils make good progress in Jewish studies and almost all of the secular subjects because they are taught well.
- Pupils are keen to learn, work hard in lessons and show pride in their work.
- Pupils are well behaved, polite and courteous. They show respect for each other and adults.
- Working relationships between staff, parents and pupils are strong.

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 curriculum, by:
 - broadening the range of techniques and styles covered in the art and physical education schemes of work
 - developing detailed schemes of work for teaching pupils of secondary age
 - ensuring that secondary-age pupils have access to detailed and impartial careers information, advice and guidance
 - ensuring that the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum promotes respect for all the protected characteristic groups defined in the 2010 Equality Act in an age appropriate way, through raising pupils' awareness and understanding of these groups.
- Improve the early years foundation stage provision, by:
 - using accurate assessment information to identify and plan for pupils' next steps in learning
 - ensuring that leaders effectively identify the strengths and weaknesses of provision, including teaching, and take the actions needed to secure improvement.
- Improve leadership and management so that:
 - all the independent school standards are met
 - pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well, and pupils are aware of, understand, and have an educated respect for other faiths, beliefs and personal characteristics
 - pupils have opportunities to learn about and mix with others beyond the school and their community to prepare them fully for life in modern Britain and to enable them to contribute to local, national and global communities
 - all provision is monitored rigorously against the independent school standards and the early years statutory requirements.
- Develop the quality of teaching and learning, by
 - giving pupils more frequent opportunities to apply their mathematical learning in a greater range of situations
 - planning activities that encourage pupils to be more inquisitive by fostering their investigational and thinking skills
 - increasing and broadening the range of books available to pupils to give them more choice, variety and opportunities to read both fiction and non-fiction.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- Ensure that the written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, is drawn up and implemented effectively and take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan (paragraph 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b) and 2(1)(b)(i)).

- Ensure that the personal, social, health and economic education encourages respect for other people, paying regard to those who may have protected characteristics as set out in the 2010 Equality Act (paragraph 2(2), 2(2)(d) and 2(2)(d)(ii)).
- The proprietor must ensure that for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that is presented in an impartial manner; enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential (paragraph 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii)).
- Ensure the effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society (paragraph 2(2) and 2(2)(i)).
- Ensure that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school:
 - actively promotes mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
 - encourages pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely
 - encourages respect for other people, paying regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Equality Act (paragraph 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(iii) and 5(b)(vi)).
- Ensure that suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for the sole use of pupils (paragraph 23(1) and 23(1)(a)).
- Ensure that suitable changing accommodation and showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education (paragraph 23(1) and 23(1)(c)).
- Ensure that suitable drinking water facilities are provided; cold water supplies that are suitable for drinking are clearly marked as such (paragraph 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(c) and 28(2) and 28(2)(b)).
- Ensure that information is made available to parents of pupils and parents of prospective pupils about the school and covers the information specified in sub-paragraph (3) (paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(b), 32(3), 32(3)(e) and 32(3)(f)).
- 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 that they fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The proprietors and school leaders have not ensured that all the independent school standards are met. The school has more than doubled in size, admitting pupils in Years 5, 6 and 7 without the permission of the Department for Education. This is in breach of the school's registration agreement.
- Early years and primary/secondary provision are run as two separate establishments within the same registration. Leaders and the proprietors have an inconsistent approach to school policy and practice. For example, the monitoring of teaching is effective in the primary/secondary phases but this approach is not followed in the early years.
- In the main school, all the required areas of learning are covered. Adequate time is given to learning in the secular subjects, including for English and mathematics. Detailed schemes of work are in place for the Kodesh (Jewish studies) curriculum and most of the secular subjects. The schemes for physical education (PE) and art lack detail and depth, particularly in the ranges of techniques and styles covered.
- There is no overarching policy for the whole curriculum. This makes it very difficult for teachers to see any duplication, gaps or opportunities to deepen pupils' learning. Trips and visiting speakers are provided to broaden pupils' experiences. However, these are not planned in a systematic or cohesive way.
- Leaders have developed the PSHE curriculum to increase pupils' awareness of some groups of people who are protected by law, as defined in the 2010 Equality Act. However, leaders restrict which groups of which pupils can discuss. Consequently, while pupils understand the importance of tolerance and respect for others in principle, they do not have any real understanding of other faiths or the full range of differences found in modern Britain. This, together with pupils' limited contributions to the wider community and understanding of how to safe online, means that they not prepared well enough for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Pupils learn about other faiths within the historical context of their own faith. However, this does not give them sufficient awareness or understanding to promote respect for and tolerance of the different faiths found in modern Britain. Pupils do learn about other countries but this is at a very basic level.
- Leaders have acted on areas for improvement identified in the July 2013 inspection. However, areas identified as weaknesses in the 2016 and 2017 inspections have not been rectified.

Governance

- The trustees have disregarded letters from the Department for Education telling them they could not extend the age range or increase the numbers on roll. Three classes of pupils are now taught in the school above the school's permitted upper age registration age limit of eight years. Furthermore, more than double the permitted number of pupils have been enrolled by the trustees. They have not ensured that

suitable changing accommodation and showers are provided for secondary-aged pupils. Children in the early years do not have access to adequate toilets, and drinking water that is labelled and separate from the toilet facilities.

- Trustees are not sufficiently rigorous or independent in checking the quality of provision. Trustees are not holding leaders sufficiently to account or taking on the role of 'critical friend' to secure improvement.
- Trustees ensured that the premises in Amhurst Park, where the primary- and secondary-aged pupils are taught, were refurbished to a very high standard. They are supportive of staff and have appointed additional leaders. However, they have not ensured that schemes of work and careers education are in place to match the needs of key stage 3 pupils.
- The trustees have sought the advice of a consultant to help them improve the quality of education and ensure pupils' safety. The impact of his work can be seen, for example, in the strong arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching in the main school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's policies and procedures reflect current guidance, and have regard for aspects such as radicalisation and children missing from education. There is, however, no detail about the how the school provides pupils with strategies for keeping safe online.
- Inspectors found that not all pupils on individual class lists were entered in the school's admissions register. This was corrected during the inspection.
- All staff have received appropriate and ongoing training in relation to safeguarding children. They are clear about how to keep children safe. They understand the signs and symptoms of concern to look out for, and the importance of passing any information on to leaders. As a result, there is a strong culture of monitoring pupils' welfare and providing help and support when needed. Parents support this view and have confidence in the school to keep their children safe. They say that their children are happy and well cared for. This view is shared by the primary-aged and older pupils.
- Leaders keep records of any concerns that are raised by either the pupils or staff, however minor, together with notes of any follow-up actions and their outcomes. Children's safety is secured through good relationships with parents and links to the local safeguarding leaders for advice and guidance.
- All of the required pre-employment checks are undertaken. The dates of a few further checks for any staff who have lived or worked overseas were added to the single central register during the inspection.
- The school does not have a website, but its safeguarding policy is readily available to parents on request.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- In key stages 1 and 2, leaders have sustained and improved the quality of teaching reported at the last inspection in July 2013. Teaching in both the secular and Kodesh curriculum areas ensures that pupils make good progress in most subjects.
- In lessons, teachers take account of the starting points and abilities of pupils, setting clear expectations for what the pupils should learn.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. They use this well to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in individual subject areas.
- Teachers provide pupils with good opportunities to reflect on what they are learning. Pupils avidly absorb what teachers tell them. Instructions are followed exceptionally well, so that excellent use is made of time.
- Within lessons, teachers routinely check pupils' understanding through effective questioning and monitoring of their work. They use these strategies well to adjust their teaching and subsequent planning. Teachers are skilful at knowing when to interject and when to stand back.
- Teachers make lessons interesting and engaging for pupils. Pupils' learning benefits from this, academically and personally. For example, in a PSHE lesson pupils worked in groups with enthusiasm to prepare plays. They were able to consider the moral implications of gender discrimination when designing their own endings to the short dramas.
- Assessment systems for tracking pupils' progress are secure in most subjects. Teachers' assessments and test results are collated to form a profile sheet for each pupil. Teachers make effective use of this information to plan whole-class and individual pupil learning. In most subjects, including literacy, handwriting, mathematics and science, pupils are given learning targets. This rigorous approach supports pupils' learning well.
- While pupils make good progress there are limited opportunities for them to practise their investigational skills, particularly in mathematics. Few links are made between subjects. As a result, pupils have limited opportunities to apply and develop their skills, knowledge and understanding across different contexts or subjects.
- Resources are basic, but adequate. Teachers encourage pupils to read. However, the breadth and number of books available in school are limited.
- Teachers are keen for their pupils to succeed. They impart this enthusiasm in their leadership of lessons and in the high expectations they set for pupils. Pupils are all highly positive about their teachers' approachability, the engaging lessons they have and the help they receive.

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 are confident and self-assured. They develop a strong moral code and an understanding of right and wrong. Working relationships with staff and between pupils are extremely positive; these support pupils' personal development and welfare well.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to learning, their love of school and their pride in their work.
- Pupils have an awareness of some British values, such as democracy. A visit to the Houses of Parliament enabled them to find out first-hand about the democratic process. However, they have had few opportunities in school to put this into practice.
- Pupils learn about British institutions and current affairs through weekly general knowledge lessons. A few visits, such as to the fire station or town hall, help extend pupils' experiences of life beyond school. However, there are very few opportunities to broaden pupils' minds through mixing or contributing to society beyond their school or faith communities. Pupils' knowledge and understanding about the world is very limited.
- Pupils feel safe in school. This view is shared by their parents. They have a good understanding about matters such as road safety, stranger danger and how to keep themselves and others safe at home. Pupils' access to computers is restricted, both at school and home. Pupils are not taught about the potential risks of using technology or how to keep themselves safe online. This does not prepare them well for the future.
- Pupils say that they all get on well together. During break and lunchtimes, younger pupils play well alongside older ones. Pupils are clear that they can always turn to a member of staff for help if they have any concerns or worries. Pupils say bullying is extremely rare. Leaders have appointed an independent anti-bullying officer to help ensure that bullying is prevented and, if it should occur, it is dealt with immediately and effectively.
- Pupils of secondary age in Year 7 have not yet received any careers information or guidance.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite, courteous, and show respect for each other and adults. They are welcoming to staff and visitors alike. In lessons, pupils are attentive to the teacher, and to the ideas and views of their peers.
- High expectations for behaviour are set by staff from when pupils join the school. Pupils, staff and parents alike are extremely positive about pupils' behaviour and how well they get on together. Records show there are very few instances of poor behaviour and that these are very minor.
- Pupils love their school. They attend well, are punctual to lessons and always ready to learn. Their pride in the school is reflected through their well-presented books and in their engagement in a competition between classes to see which classroom is kept the tidiest.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' progress is good in almost all of the secular subjects, including reading, writing, mathematics and science. They make good progress, including in all aspects of the Kodesh curriculum. Pupils' learning in Hebrew is a particular strength.
- Standards attained by pupils in key stage 1 mathematics, reading and writing remain below national expectations. The recently introduced scheme in Year 1, which is designed to improve pupils' writing across the school, is beginning to show signs of impact.
- By the end of key stage 2, most pupils reach age-related expectations in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Very few exceed national expectations and attain at greater depth. Overall, though, this represents good progress from pupils' starting points at the start of key stage 1.
- Progress is weaker in art and PE because the curriculum in these subjects lacks depth and is not broad enough.
- While pupils are suitably prepared for key stage 3, few exceed national expectations or attain at greater depth. This is because pupils have limited opportunities to undertake extending writing in a range of contexts or apply their mathematical investigation skills.
- Careful tracking contributes well to pupils' good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The effective support provided for those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities ensures that they, too, make good progress.
- Pupils are able to read with fluency although, at times, they have weak intonation. Nonetheless, pupils understand what they are reading.
- Work set in key stage 3 lessons is enabling pupils to make the progress expected of them. However, because schemes of work have not been planned beyond the current term, it is not possible to see if the school has appropriate expectations of what older pupils should learn and achieve.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Early years leaders do not evaluate the setting carefully enough. Consequently, they are not as effective as they could be in taking the necessary actions to improve provision for children's learning.
- Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour. Staff ensure that children understand what is expected of them. As a result, children feel safe, follow instructions quickly, play well together and share resources happily. This helps prepare them, socially, for Year 1.
- Typically, children join the school as Yiddish speakers and with knowledge, skills and understanding below those typical for their age. Staff use their awareness of children's starting points to plan for learning across the early years, in both in the secular and Kodesh curriculum elements. They encourage children to participate in learning and develop their speech and language skills.

- According to school records, around 80% of the children reach a good level of development by the time they leave the Reception classes. However, these records are inaccurate. Scrutiny of work in Reception and at the beginning of Year 1 shows children are working below national expectations at the end of Reception, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Partnership working with parents is evident. Parents contribute to assessments and are kept informed about their children's work. Parents are encouraged to support their children's learning at home. Parents are also welcomed into school to participate in craft activities.
- The premises are well suited for the age group. Classrooms vary in size, but ample hallway space and an extensive outdoor area means there is plenty of room for pupils to learn and play together. Children were seen highly engaged in different activities in the hallway space. In the farmyard activity, the teacher used questioning well to explore children's knowledge of farmyards and animals, as well as to develop their language skills. Children have good routines in helping the teacher set up and clear away. This helps them to develop team-working skills and responsibility.
- Classrooms are clean, tidy and reasonably well organised. The large outdoor area is adequately equipped, with access to a variety of play equipment and ride-on toys. A limited number of 'free choice' activities are made available for children, both in classrooms and in the outdoor area.
- Teachers are inconsistent in their assessment of children's achievements. The school does not have a full picture of children's skills, knowledge and understanding. Furthermore, individual targets for children are not set or shared with staff. Consequently, staff are unable to address any gaps in children's learning.
- Some information about children's attainment, learning and personal needs is passed on when they move to Year 1. However, the early years is run as a standalone provision, with its own policies and procedures. As a result, practice and procedure between the early years and the main school is inconsistent. This also includes monitoring of teaching, which is not as strong in the early years as it is the main school.
- Leaders ensure that arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Most health and safety matters are attended to appropriately. However, leaders have not ensured that the toilet facilities are adequate for the number of children who learn at the Lordship Road premises. Staff manage this well so that children's welfare is not affected. A working drinking water fountain, which is not labelled, is installed in one of the toilet facilities. However, this does not meet the requirement of the independent school standards.
- Leaders and staff are committed to ensuring that all children get their education off to a good start. Children are well cared for. Staff work well together and provide a nurturing environment. As a result, children are keen and happy learners.

School details

Unique reference number	138516
DfE registration number	204/6006
Inspection number	10020725

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	Jewish Orthodox girls school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 12 (Registered age range: 3 to 8)
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	261
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Vishnitz Girls' School
Chair	Mr Steiner
Headteacher (Chol and afternoons)	Leah Weiss
Headteacher (Kodesh and mornings)	Sarah Grohman
Headteacher (Early years foundation stage)	Rachel Fogel
Annual fees (day pupils)	Variable depending on the ability of parents and carers to pay
Telephone number	020 88000 490
Website	None
Email address	head@vishnitzgirlsschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 July 2013

Information about this school

- Vishnitz Girls' School is an Orthodox Jewish independent day school located on two sites in Stamford Hill, north east London. It was registered in 2009 as an early years setting, and registered as a primary school in 2012.
- The school is registered to take up to 127 girls, aged between three and eight years. However, there are currently 261 girls on roll, whose ages range from three to 12. This exceeds the school's agreed upper registration age of eight. Leaders have also exceeded

the school's registered capacity of 127 pupils.

- There are 81 children, all girls, in the early years provision. All children in the early years receive government funding and attend full time.
- Provision for early years children is at 85 Lordship Road, London N16 0QY, and for the primary- and secondary-aged pupils at 49 Amhurst Park, London N16 5DL.
- The school is open five days a week, from Monday to Friday. Kodesh (Jewish studies) takes place in the mornings and the secular curriculum takes place in the afternoons.
- Most girls speak Yiddish as their first language, but they are also fluent in English. In the main school, the Kodesh curriculum is taught in Yiddish. Secular subjects are taught in English. In the early years, girls are taught through a combination of English and Yiddish.
- A small percentage of pupils have SEN and/or disabilities. At the current time, one of the pupils has a statement of special educational needs or an EHC plan, and another is in the process of transferring to the school.
- The school's vision is 'to deliver a high-class education that is firmly based on the principles of the Torah and, combined with a strong Chol [secular] curriculum, to enable all pupils to become productive and upstanding citizens'.
- The school does not make use of any off-site provision.
- The school does not have a website, but all the required policies are available from the school office upon request.
- The leaders have the support of a local leader of education.
- Since the last standard inspection in July 2013, the school has moved premises and three inspections have taken place. The first, an emergency inspection, commissioned by the registration authority, took place in February 2016 following safeguarding concerns. The emergency inspection found that a number of independent school standards were unmet. In October 2016, the first monitoring inspection found that several independent school standards remained unmet. A second monitoring inspection took place in May 2017. This found that while many of the independent school standards were met, some remained unmet.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed pupils' learning across the school on both sites in both the secular and Kodesh strands of the curriculum. This included a tour of both sites, each accompanied by one of the headteachers. Play and breaktimes were also observed.
- Inspectors gauged pupils' progress over time across all subjects by examining pupils' books, considering their work during lessons and taking account of school assessment information.
- Inspectors held meetings with the three headteachers, the deputy headteacher, the administration manager, the chair of the board of directors and a group of staff. Pupils were also spoken with informally in classrooms and around both school sites. Inspectors held meetings with three groups of pupils from key stages 1, 2 and 3 to discuss their experiences at the school, and with a fourth group to hear them read.
- A range of documentation was considered in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards. This included the health and safety records, single central record of pre-employment checks, child protection and safeguarding information and the attendance and admissions registers. Inspectors reviewed curriculum policies and schemes of work. They also reviewed a wide range of other policies, including for behaviour, anti-bullying, admissions and complaints.
- The number of responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, was too low in number to be considered. However, parents' views were taken into account through discussions with parents at the start of the second day of the inspection and other times.
- Inspectors examined 14 responses to a staff questionnaire provided by Ofsted.

Inspection team

Angela Corbett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Paula Farrow

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