

Ahavas Torah Boys Academy

Levi House, Bury Old Road, Manchester M7 4QX

Inspection dates

5–7 June 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment in chol (secular learning) is less effective than that in kodesh (faith learning). This leads to slower progress, particularly in subjects other than mathematics, including English.
- Schemes of work in chol are not used as well as possible.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour in some chol lessons are not high enough. Some teachers do not build from pupils' errors to help pupils to learn from their mistakes.
- While teachers' skills have been enhanced through training, further development is needed.
- The role of those who provide governance and their relationship to the proprietorial body is not clear enough.
- The planned move of the school to new premises has been slow, meaning that pupils remain in the present, tired accommodation.
- While leaders ensure that pupils develop their understanding of wider British society, this is not as wide as possible.
- The chol curriculum is relatively narrow. The time allocated to chol teaching is restricted.
- Not all the independent school standards were met at the start of the inspection.

The school has the following strengths

- The school has a clear faith ethos which underpins its work. There is warmth in the relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils trust their teachers.
- Teaching of kodesh is effective and pupils make rapid progress in this aspect.
- Pupils are respectful of others and generally behave well. Bullying is very infrequent.
- Staff know pupils very well.
- Parents and carers are very happy with the education provided.
- Pupils are safe in school. They are well looked after.
- Senior leaders are dedicated. The school has improved since the previous inspection.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure the greatest impact from leaders by ensuring that:
 - the roles and responsibilities of all those with governance responsibilities are clarified so that they are able to provide strong challenge to leaders
 - the schemes of work for all chol subjects are sufficiently detailed and allow for progressive build-up of skills and knowledge in other subjects as well as in English and mathematics
 - the independent school standards are used as a tool as part of leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness.
- Ensure that the move to the school's new premises happens smoothly and in a timely way with strong liaison between those responsible and senior leaders.
- Ensure that teaching and learning are of the same high quality in all subjects in kodesh and chol by:
 - extending the training of teachers to increase their confidence and effectiveness whatever subject is being taught
 - raising teachers' expectations further, so that pupils are taught to present work with full pride in its quality and to behave with full consideration for others when learning
 - ensuring that the learning needs of different groups of pupils are met in chol subjects and, in particular, English.
- Raise pupils' attainment in chol subjects by:
 - ensuring that more effective learning increases the rates of progress in English
 - providing better opportunities for pupils to read in English throughout chol learning
 - ensuring that assessment is securely in place for all subjects and that teachers use information from this to understand how well pupils are doing and to plan future learning.
- Further develop opportunities for pupils to extend their awareness of wider British society so they are even better prepared for the range of different people and experiences they will encounter.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher provides confident and well-informed leadership of all aspects of the school. The change of the headteacher's role to a full-time post since the previous inspection means that there is continuity in the leadership of the school throughout the school day. The headteacher works closely with, and is strongly supported by, the head of kodesh, who was the previous headteacher. This arrangement allows leaders to continue to build their long-term view of pupils and their development.
- The school has a strong positive ethos. This reflects the faith principles which lie beneath all aspects of its work. People are valued and respected. Relationships between staff and pupils are highly supportive. For example, the school takes care to provide individual guidance to pupils with their kodesh work and also with any personal concerns or worries they may have.
- Leaders are aware of the local Jewish community's aspirations and expectations for the education that the school provides. Parents are very positive about the school's work. Staff have high levels of confidence in leaders' work.
- While improvement since the previous inspection was initially slow, in part as a result of changes to teaching staff, the school is now improving. Leaders are taking effective steps to improve teaching, for example through the work of a specialist consultant who has provided guidance on chol schemes of work and training for staff. Some aspects of this improvement are at an early stage, including leaders' involvement in checking the effectiveness of teaching. To date, leaders have not done enough to ensure that some aspects of chol, including teaching and learning in English, are as good as possible.
- The training programmes for staff have covered effective teaching and learning and special educational needs. These have helped to improve teachers' skills and confidence. However, teaching in chol remains less effective than in kodesh.
- The school met the independent school standards by the end of the inspection. However, significant work was completed during the inspection to make sure that the school's medical room was fully suitable. In addition, changes to some documents were made to ensure that these contained all the required information. Over time, leaders have not used the independent school standards as well as possible to support their continuing review of the school and its work.
- The school premises are shabby and cramped. Larger premises have been purchased in a neighbouring area of Salford. However, the redevelopment of the recently acquired building to make it suitable as a school has been slow to start. This means that pupils have not yet been able to benefit from the improved facilities which are planned.
- The school is registered for up to 47 pupils. There are currently 56 pupils on the overall roll. Leaders allowed this increase in anticipation of the school's move to its new premises. However, they have not notified the Department for Education of the increase.
- The curriculum is focused on kodesh, which is taught predominately during the morning. Most chol is taught in the afternoon. The time available for chol is limited. The topics covered in subjects such as science and technology are restricted, so that it is harder for pupils to build up their knowledge and skills systematically. Kodesh learning enhances the

chol curriculum. Many aspects, including history and personal, social and health education, are also covered within kodesh lessons.

- Leaders ensure that all pupils receive careers education. This includes lessons provided by an independent expert from the wider Jewish community. While the route for pupils when they leave the school is normally to a Yeshiva (Jewish further education college), leaders wish to give pupils a long-term view of their futures.
- Leaders ensure that the school develops pupils' wider understanding about themselves and their role within the Jewish community and British society. Pupils accept and demonstrate concepts such as tolerance, respect and the rule of law. The school's policies make it clear that discrimination against any group of people is wrong. The policies identify the need to be fair in treating people equally, whatever their background or particular characteristics. The well-established system of individual support for pupils means that pupils have confidence to discuss matters which could affect them, even when the school's orthodox Jewish approach means that open discussion with all pupils would be felt inappropriate.
- Pupils' spiritual and moral development is a strong feature of the school. Their social and cultural development is more restricted because it largely relates only to pupils' Jewish background and culture. Pupils are given opportunities to extend their knowledge and awareness of wider society, for example in their regular visits to a local cricket club and in more extensive sports and leisure activities. These are often used as rewards for hard work and good behaviour.

Governance

- The school's proprietor is a company which is also registered as a charity, currently with two directors. The directors have less routine contact with the school than two members of the local Jewish community who have volunteered to take on oversight of the school. The work of these volunteers includes many aspects of governance. However, as their roles are informal, it is not clear how far their responsibility and accountability extends. Records of their activity show that they take clear action over specific issues and hold senior leaders to account. However, their longer-term activity and monitoring is less well developed.
- School leaders have an established relationship with an independent rabbinical adviser. This allows them to discuss complex issues relating to the school, particularly when these concern kodesh or the school's faith aspects more widely.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff receive suitable training to give them confidence to know what to do should any concerns about a child's welfare arise. The detailed knowledge of staff about pupils and close liaison between staff means that possible concerns about pupils' welfare are quickly passed on. The designated senior member of staff responsible for the overall response to any safeguarding concerns is the headteacher. He has completed additional training to equip him for this role.
- The school does not have a website. However, the school's safeguarding policy is available for parents or others on request to the school office. This policy is detailed and up to date.

- The school's single central record of employment checks on staff omitted the full details for two people at the start of the inspection. These details were available in the school and added to complete the register.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. School security is considered carefully; visitors have no access to the school site until they have been invited to enter. Clear health and safety documentation adds to pupils' safety. This includes the school's overall policy and other documents such as the first aid policy and risk assessments.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching and learning in kodesh is effective. Pupils make rapid gains in their knowledge and understanding. In chol, there is more variability. Mathematics teaching is more effective than teaching in English and other subjects.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and pupils behave well and concentrate hard. These features help them to learn effectively. Teachers expect pupils to work together well in pairs to discuss their developing understanding. In contrast, in some chol lessons, teachers' subject knowledge is not as strong. Teachers and pupils are less confident in the learning taking place. Pupils' enthusiasm to share their ideas in class discussion is not as well controlled. Teachers' expectations about pupils' behaviour are not high enough, with pupils allowed to shout out responses in class and to present untidy or incomplete work. Teachers do not respond to pupils' errors well enough to help pupils to learn as quickly as possible. For example, spelling errors persist in some pupils' books because teachers do not challenge these consistently.
- The schemes of work for English for all years and for mathematics in Years 8 to 10 are based on commercially available programmes. These provide teachers with a clear framework that is closely linked to the final GCSE examination requirements. This provides for the build-up of knowledge and skills needed for pupils to do well. However, teachers sometimes pass over opportunities for the extended writing which forms part of the English programme. This limits pupils' practice of writing at length.
- Systems for assessing pupils' work are firmly embedded in the school's kodesh work. Leaders and teachers are able to identify if pupils have any gaps in their learning. All pupils have regular, individual support sessions that give opportunities for such gaps to be filled. Those pupils who are most at risk of falling behind have more frequent one-to-one sessions. In addition, by providing these sessions for all pupils, the most able are provided with additional teaching to extend their thinking.
- Assessment in English and mathematics is in place and takes place regularly. However, it is not always straightforward to see how the marks awarded in subsequent assessments relate to each other. This, in turn, means that it is harder for teachers to identify when pupils' learning is slowing. There is some additional provision in mathematics to ensure that pupils who need extra support for their learning receive this, for example through the work of a teaching assistant. However, this is not the case in English. Assessment systems in other chol subjects are not as well developed as in English and mathematics.
- Roughly twice a year, teachers and leaders meet to formally review the learning and behaviour of each pupil. These meetings allow teachers to share their different perspectives and identify teaching strategies which work particularly well for different

pupils. In addition, this broad assessment gives all staff a shared overview of each pupil's learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are known very well as individuals. The warm approach of teachers towards pupils provides a very clear model of how to value and respect others. Pupils, in return, are polite and respectful. This does not limit their confidence to talk to staff about their learning and wider issues.
- The pupils who talked with the inspector said that pupils behave well and that bullying is very rare indeed, if it happens at all. They said that they would be happy to talk with any teacher if they had a concern. They are also aware of those members of staff who have a particular role in supporting them. While bullying is an insignificant aspect of the school, leaders are not complacent. They have arranged for an independent member of the Jewish community to be available to support pupils. This support is available should pupils ever have a concern that school staff have not resolved, or that pupils would prefer to follow up with someone from outside the school.
- The school's approach of providing each pupil with individual sessions of learning support also allows the teachers involved to provide emotional and welfare support to pupils whenever this is needed, without other pupils being aware of this.
- In line with orthodox Jewish views, pupils do not have access to mobile phones or to other technology connected to the internet. However, pupils said that the school still provides them with enough information to keep themselves safe should they ever come across problems if they encounter such devices.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school has a calm and pleasant atmosphere. Pupils conduct themselves well as they move about the school using its narrow staircase and small hallways.
- Pupils are courteous and considerate towards visitors and others who do not belong to their community. For example, pupils are polite and respectful to the security guards who work at the school.
- Pupils generally behave well in lessons. However, when teaching is less effective, they sometimes lack self-control in their enthusiasm to respond to questions. When pupils shout out answers, others have less opportunity to think and develop their understanding.
- While pupils are highly respectful towards other people, they show less respect to some of their chol work by untidily scribbling out work and doodling in their books.
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average. This, together with pupils' punctuality to morning and afternoon school, indicates their desire to be in school and their commitment to their studies. Leaders ensure that they have immediate contact with the family of any pupil who is unexpectedly absent from school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils make rapid progress in kodesh and mathematics. This reflects the effectiveness of the teaching in these subjects. Progress in other chol subjects is slower.
- The school's close monitoring indicates that pupils' progress in kodesh allows them to meet the high standards expected. Pupils' gains in kodesh mean that they are well prepared to move to Yeshivas when they leave the school.
- The school's use of schemes of work linked to national examinations in English and mathematics means that expectations of pupils' progress in those subjects broadly match those in other schools. However, where teachers do not make the most of the planned work, pupils learn more slowly. Pupils' progress in science and technology is disjointed because these subjects are taught by considering a narrow range of activities and topics. This makes it harder for pupils to build up a comprehensive understanding or to develop their skills to the highest level possible.
- The school's first pupils to complete their GCSE courses in English and mathematics did so in 2016. This means that the school only has two sets of GCSE results, which are also from relatively small groups of pupils. It is therefore hard to identify any definite patterns in pupils' results. However, in 2016, pupils did better in mathematics than English. In 2017, results in both subjects were similar. It is also difficult to match the school's GCSE performance with that in other schools, because pupils take their GCSEs at the end of Year 10, the oldest year group in the school. While leaders aspire for pupils' attainment to include the top scores for pupils, including the most able, no pupil has yet gained A or A* grades, or the equivalent in the new scoring system for GCSE.
- Pupils read widely in Hebrew as part of their kodesh work. Pupils' skills in reading in English are less well developed. The school has a very small library of books written in English. This does not contain many of the books often read by teenage pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	140036
DfE registration number	355/6000
Inspection number	10038935

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 faith school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	55
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Ahavas Torah Boys Academy Ltd
Chair	Mr Arthur Weller
Headteacher	Rabbi Aryeh Silkin
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3840
Telephone number	07591 160703
Website	None
Email address	admin@ahavastorah.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–6 November 2014

Information about this school

- Ahavas Torah Boys Academy is a Jewish faith school for boys aged 11 to 16 years located in Salford. It occupies the upper two floors of a large Victorian house, the lower part of which is occupied by Tashbar Crèche, which is separately registered and not linked to the school.
- The school was opened in response to the increasing demand for school places in the Orthodox Jewish communities of North Manchester, Salford and Prestwich and is registered for 47 pupils.
- There is a class in each of Years 7 to 10. Pupils take GCSEs in mathematics and English

language at the end of Year 10.

- No pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school aims to 'provide an excellent secular education which is guided by and also gives over the principles of orthodox Judaism' and to 'build an atmosphere of happiness and achievement whilst instilling within pupils a deep and passionate love for, and understanding of, their own religion, coupled with an uncompromising respect for other religions and lifestyles different to their own'.
- The school uses no alternative provision for pupils.
- The majority of the school day is devoted to kodesh, with chol taught mainly in the afternoon. The school is open six days per week.
- The school has appointed a full-time headteacher since the previous inspection. There is also a new chair of the board of directors of the company that forms the proprietorial body.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector toured the school site accompanied by the headteacher.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in the faith and secular curriculum across the school. He observed pupils' conduct in lessons, during movement between lessons and during their social time in school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and other leaders. He met with two volunteers who provide scrutiny of the school and a consultant who is providing support to the school. He also met an independent member of the wider Jewish community who the school has commissioned to provide careers advice and other support to pupils. The inspector met formally with a group of pupils and spoke to others during lessons and around the school.
- The inspector examined pupils' books during lessons and in a scrutiny of samples of pupils' written work in English and mathematics.
- The inspector reviewed documents to confirm compliance with the independent school standards and to provide other inspection evidence. These documents included policies, health and safety records and other safeguarding information, the school's own summary of examination results, minutes of meetings and the attendance and admissions registers.
- No response to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View was received over the inspection period. However, the inspector received 42 responses to a survey for parents provided by the school and completed during the inspection. He considered nine responses to Ofsted's inspection questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

David Selby, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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