

Talmud Torah Bobov

87 Egerton Road

London N16 6UF

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Information about the school

Name of the school:	Talmud Torah Bobov
Type of school:	Primary
Status:	Independent
Association membership:	None
Age range of pupils:	2.5 to 13
Gender of pupils:	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	230
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	0
Number of boarders:	0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	2
Number of pupils with English as an additional language:	230
Termly fees (day pupils):	No fees
School address:	87 Egerton Road London N16 6UF
Telephone number:	0208 809 1025
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Headteacher:	Rabbi A Just

Proprietor:	The Bobov Foundation
Chair of the governing body:	Rabbi B Blum
DfES number:	204/6385
Reporting Inspector:	Roy Long HMI
Dates of inspection:	5-7 November 2001

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

Scope and purpose of the inspection

This inspection was carried out at the request of the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, who has asked for reporting inspections to be undertaken in all schools that have a number of publicly funded pupils. The purpose of the inspection was to advise the Secretary of State about the school's suitability for registration under the Education Act 1996. The report concentrates on those aspects of the school relevant to that purpose.

The inspection was carried out over three days by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). Following the tradition of strictly observant Jewish boys' schools, the curriculum is divided into two strands, Limmudei Kodesh, which deals with the study of Hebrew, sacred texts and religious observance, and Limmudei Chol, which is often referred to as secular studies. All aspects of the school were inspected, including Limmudei Kodesh, but the only subjects reported on in detail are English and mathematics. In all, HMI visited 20 lessons or parts of lessons, had discussions with most members of staff, the adviser for under-fives provision, the head of the Bobov Yeshiva (Talmudical College), and pupils of the school.

Information about the school

Talmud Torah Bobov is an independent day school for boys aged two to 13 serving the strictly observant Jewish community. Most boys come from the immediate vicinity in the Stamford Hill and Stoke Newington areas of the London Borough of Hackney, but a small number come from the Golders Green area of Barnet. Most of the boys are housed in a building on the south side of Egerton Road, but the early years provision is accommodated in a building on the other side of the road; this building also houses the Bobov Yeshiva. There are 230 pupils on roll, of whom 200 are of compulsory school age. Two pupils have statements of special educational need funded by the local education authority. Forty-two pupils in the nursery are publicly funded. No fees are charged and apart from this limited funding for pupils in the nursery, the school is dependent on voluntary contributions.

The school is owned and maintained by the Bobov Chassidisch (Hasidic) community. A little under half of the pupils come from the Bobov community; the rest are from other Hasidic communities. The school is open to applications from Yiddish-speaking households who wish their children to learn in an orthodox environment that is run according to the dictates of Jewish religious law and the prevailing customs of the Bobov community. The menahel (principal) estimates that about 80 per cent of the pupils come from homes where Yiddish is the main language. Homes do not have access to television, and only limited access to radio or newspapers.

The school has a brief written constitution which defines three main aims for the school:

to provide a programme of secular learning that equips pupils with the necessary skills to work and move around in the contemporary world;

to provide a solid grounding in Jewish studies enabling the pupil to grow into a responsible member of his community and of society at large, sufficiently equipped to maintain the traditions of his forefathers;

to ensure children's spiritual and moral growth.

How good the school is

Talmud Torah Bobov provides a sound Kodesh education for its pupils and is successful in laying the foundations for their future religious studies. It shows great concern for the boys as individuals and is very successful in promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has strong ties with the community and clearly has the confidence of the parents. The school has worked hard in response to the requirements for receiving a grant for nursery education and is developing its teaching in the early years in positive ways. However, as the school is well aware, there are significant weaknesses in the secular curriculum and standards are unsatisfactory in English and mathematics. In this respect, the school is failing to meet the requirement that instruction should be efficient and suitable, bearing in mind the age and sex of the pupils.

What the school does well

- The school is very successful in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral and social development within the context of a strictly observant Jewish educational philosophy.
- The school is very concerned about the boys as individuals and values them highly; it takes great pains to help them when they experience academic or personal difficulties.
- The rebbes (rabbis) provide good pastoral care and are highly visible in the school: they are conscientious, hard working, and concerned for the welfare of the pupils.
- The school has strong links with the community it serves and clearly has the confidence of the parents;
- The school has worked hard in response to the requirements for receiving the grant

for its nursery provision to develop its teaching approaches in the early years.

What could be improved

- Teaching time could be used more effectively and efficiently to enable pupils to become reflective learners.
- There need to be clearer expectations of what pupils need to achieve at each key stage and in both strands of the curriculum.
- Strategies need to be developed to improve the performance of abler pupils in Limmudei Kodesh.
- Expectations and standards in English and maths need to be raised.
- The school needs to improve standards by drawing on professional advice to improve teaching and learning by making time available for the provision of physical education by introducing a programme of secular studies into the reception year and Year 1, and improving the quantity and quality of the learning resources.
- The school must ensure that it conforms to current regulations in respect of the following:
 - checks on the suitability of staff
 - the completion of attendance registers
- The school should produce a policy for child protection.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the school's action plan.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

This is the first time that Talmud Torah Bobov has had a Reporting Inspection, but during the past 10 years it has had a number of visits by HMI in relation to requirements for registration as an independent school. The last of these was in November 2000; it was carried out over one day by two HMI. Since then the school has made only slow progress in implementing the recommendations, but it has now taken the important step of appointing a head of secular studies.

In March 2000 the school's early years provision was inspected for OFSTED by a Registered Nursery Inspector. Although the report was generally positive, it did contain two key issues. The school has taken very little action on these. The more substantial is concerned with the development of assessment systems and working towards clear targets. It is important to consider this issue anew, not just in the context of the kindergarten, but in the school as a whole, as part of the school's action plan in response to this inspection.

Standards

The school uses no external examinations and no objective data are available to determine standards. HMI are satisfied that pupils reach satisfactory standards in Limmudei Kodesh, although more opportunities could be made available for the boys

to become more independent in their learning. Standards in secular subjects are below what is expected nationally.

Teaching and learning

Within the Limmudei Kodesh strand of the curriculum the quality of teaching is sound, but much of the teaching concentrates on imparting information which pupils have to memorise, with too few resources to aid understanding. More emphasis needs to be placed on enabling pupils to become more independent in their learning. However, pupils respond well and make satisfactory progress. The present teachers of secular subjects have limited experience, none has a recognised qualification, and there are no opportunities for professional development. Their subject knowledge is often not very deep, but they are, without exception, conscientious, hardworking and willing to learn. Pupils show them great respect and they respond enthusiastically to what they are asked to do.

Pupils' attitudes and learning

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils display very good attitudes towards the school and have a very positive approach to their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is excellent. Even in lessons which are unchallenging, the pupils show great respect for their teachers and concentrate well on what they are asked to do.
Personal development and relationships	One of the school's great strengths is in paying attention to the development of the pupils' character and fostering a sense of belonging to the observant community: it is very successful in this and the boys' personal relationships with each other and with their teachers are very good.
Attendance	This is satisfactory, but punctuality at the start of morning school needs to be improved.

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The Limmudei Kodesh curriculum is sound overall, but lacks objectives from year to year; it is rather narrowly focused on a few aspects which are assessed by the principal each week. The secular curriculum is not taught to pupils in Years R and 1, is limited in scope, narrow in content, and lacks the structure to provide continuity and progression. There is no physical education.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs	This is a cause of concern. Some pupils with special educational needs follow a very narrow curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is good, although by the nature of the school it is limited to development within the confines of the strictly observant Jewish community.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Although this is something that the school does very well, paying considerable attention to pupils as individuals, it does not have a written child protection policy.

How well the school is led and managed

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is an orderly community which is managed adequately on a day-to-day basis. However, the management of the school has not dealt with a number of issues raised in the last registration visit by HMI, for example, formal checking of the suitability of staff by List 99 procedures, adequate maintenance of attendance registers, and the development of a Child Protection policy. The secular curriculum is not well managed, but the school is aware of deficiencies in this area and has taken steps to remedy it, particularly by the appointment of a teacher to be in charge of secular studies.
The school's evaluation of its performance	As yet, there are no mechanisms in place for evaluating the school's performance in secular studies.
The strategic use of resources	The school is poorly resourced and resources are barely adequate in both strands of the curriculum, although some new texts have been purchased for use in secular studies. The school needs to develop its library resources.

Parents' and carers' views of the school

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school • Pupils make good progress • Behaviour is good • Teaching is good • Parents feel comfortable approaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a more interesting range of activities outside lessons

<p>the school with questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils are expected to work hard• The school is well led and managed• The school is helping to develop pupils' maturity	
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PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

The school has few objective measures by which it assesses levels of pupils' attainment in Limmudei Kodesh, but the work in class, and pupils' responses to oral questioning, indicate a gradual growth from Key Stage 1 to 3 in the fluency with which most pupils read, understand and can explain texts. In Key Stage 1 and early Key Stage 2, abler pupils showed an understanding of the main issues confronting Abraham, as a stranger in the land, when he sought a burial ground for his deceased wife, Sarah. Weaker pupils, however, were struggling to remember the literal translation of individual verses. Although usually rewarded with success later in the week, not all pupils could explain the Yiddish translations which they had memorised.

Pupils' recognition of letters and words, including Rashi script, were good in almost all classes seen. With a few exceptions, pupils were quick to find the points in the text which their rabbi was expounding. They were also able to memorise the teacher's reading of sources, such as Chumash or Mishna, or an explanation by Rashi. In the middle years of Key Stage 2, pupils began to read, copy and explain notes in Yiddish about the weekly portion written for them by their teacher. In all but one or two classes, however, the opportunities for writing connected Yiddish or Hebrew prose were very few. Opportunities for pupils to originate such notes or other prose were usually limited to what pupils needed to write down in a test. In this context, however, pupils' vocabulary and style were understandably focused on the topic being tested, and reflected closely that context and its language.

Older pupils found it easy to memorise material and did so effectively and quickly in lessons. Some of those who found it harder to follow and remember aural drill and discourse were helped when they were withdrawn for individual work. One-to-one working with another teacher enabled some pupils at Key Stage 2 to gain confidence and fluency in explaining talmudic discussions. In all key stages, however, few of the pupils who had memorised text and its explanation, were then challenged to study independently and continue preparing further material on their own. They had to wait until most of the rest of the class was ready to move on. Older pupils' ability to study and present texts independently and critically was, therefore, underdeveloped. While most pupils in Key Stage 3 listened attentively to texts presented by the teacher, such as *Shmirath Halashon*, and the *Mishna Brurah*, a significant minority found it hard to become involved. Pupils' skills of looking up references, even where their locations were clearly cited, were also underdeveloped. Key Stage 3 pupils were not confident

in relating biblical stories or identifying features of the geography of the Land of Israel, such as important ancient sites in it and their relative positions.

Variation in attainment sometimes appeared to be related to the level of encouragement provided to pupils from home. The system of regular weekly notes from teachers allows parents to be informed about the work done in class. Indications are that, in some classes, up to about half the parents responded to such notes and attempted to check and reinforce their sons' work.

Pupils make good progress when they are first taught to read and write English in Year 2. They are soon able to read simple texts with accuracy and understanding, and to write short sentences in their own words. It is understandable, bearing in mind their late start in English and the fact that most come from Yiddish-speaking homes, that in their literacy skills in English they are somewhat behind their peers in English medium schools. At this stage many pupils are well placed to make rapid progress, but unfortunately they do not do so; throughout their time at the school they operate at a level in English that is too far below their potential. The texts that they are given to read are not challenging or interesting enough, their oral skills are not systematically developed, and their writing tasks are often repetitive and mundane. As a result, the standards that they reach in their ability to communicate in spoken and written English by the time they leave school are not as good as they should be.

Attainment in mathematics in each of the three key stages is unsatisfactory at present, although it shows signs of improving. Pupils have some introduction to concepts of number and shape in their early years in the school, but the formal teaching of mathematics does not begin until Year 2. However, such things as talking about number and number relationships, for instance, in the context of the clock, the calendar and shopping, are part of pupils' everyday experience in their community and in Limmudei Kodesh. Such experience supports the development of awareness of number and arithmetical operations, and motivates pupils to work with numbers. Unfortunately, there is virtually no link between the Kodesh curriculum, which abounds in relevant applications of number, measure and shape, and pupils' discrete mathematics lessons, and little transfer of vocabulary between these two important contexts.

During the inspection, there was insufficient opportunity to observe lessons in other subjects and it is not possible to evaluate levels of attainment in these.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

This is a school which is very successful in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within the clearly defined context of a strictly observant Jewish educational philosophy.

A significant feature of the school day is that the menahel waits outside the school each morning to welcome the boys and, as far as possible, greet each one personally. This sets a very positive tone and as a result the boys' behaviour is generally good and they show very positive attitudes towards each other, their teachers, and their learning. They are very tolerant and supportive of each other, as, for example, in cases where boys find it difficult to understand what they are learning and may need to be

withdrawn from ordinary lessons for additional help: this is not seen as weakness and no stigma is attached to it. Conversations with pupils during the inspection indicated that they are keen and eager to come to school and enjoy what it has to offer: this is supported by the positive response expressed in the parental questionnaire.

Although the school is maintained by the Bobov community, over 50 per cent of the pupils are from families that owe allegiance to other Hasidic groups. Boys from these different groups mix well and show mutual respect for differences in tradition. However, the nature of the school means that there are no opportunities to learn about other expressions of the Jewish faith or about other religious systems.

There are few opportunities for boys to undertake more formal responsibilities in the school and this is an area which the school needs to look at further. On the rare opportunities when they have such opportunities, such as when boys from the two oldest classes help in serving each other at breakfast, or when they lead prayers in the morning or afternoon, or give out prayer sheets, they do these very well.

In both Limmudei Kodesh and secular lessons, pupils show respect towards their teachers and positive attitudes to the subjects they study. They usually participate very well and, during morning sessions in Kodesh, behaved impeccably. When a pupil's query or test result led an experienced rabbi to repeat an explanation that was already familiar to many in the class they displayed little hostility or impatience. Consideration for one another and towards visitors was very evident. In Limmudei Kodesh lessons, pupils co-operated well with their neighbours in revising texts.

Except in studying mussar, when pupils sometimes needed to reflect on aspects of a person's moral and social traits, reflection on issues raised in class was limited. In Limmudei Kodesh, reflection on social, moral and cultural issues was explicit in the teaching, and was usually expressed by the rabbi, rather than articulated by pupils in response to independent observation. While pupils, working in pairs, mostly used available time well to revise the gemarah section studied that day, they did not usually prepare the next section in anticipation of the rabbi's presentation of it. At all stages, pupils tend to rely on the interpretation of their rabbi, and the manner in which he delivers it.

Attendance

At the time of the last registration visit the school was failing to maintain its statutory admissions register accurately. It has since rectified this defect and is now maintaining it according to current regulations.

There are two separate attendance registers for each class, one for Kodesh lessons and one for secular. They are marked during each session, but this may mean that the registers for secular lessons, which take place at different times in the afternoon depending on the class concerned, may be marked at some point other than the start of afternoon school. All boys stay at school throughout the whole day and boys are punctilious in seeking permission if they need to leave the school. However, in order to conform with current regulations, the school should ensure that registers are marked at the start of each session. Registers do not distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absence. The school reported an attendance figure of 94.4 per cent

for the last full year. This is satisfactory. Parents usually inform the school as to why their child has been absent, and in cases where this does not happen, the school contacts the home to ask for a reason.

Punctuality is not good at the start of the day, but in some cases this is because some pupils come long distances to get to school and heavy traffic may delay parents who drive their children. Otherwise, during the day, punctuality is satisfactory.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

Boys start in the kindergarten shortly before their third birthday. Initially they are in a small group with one member of staff who is occasionally assisted by another who divides his time between the two kindergarten classes. Later, the boys move on to the larger class where there are two or three adults. In both classes there is a pleasant and friendly atmosphere with good relationships between the adults and their pupils that set the tone and encourage the boys to co-operate among themselves.

In the early years there is a suitable balance between adult-directed activities and those that are chosen by the boys themselves. However, some care needs to be taken to ensure that adult-led activities are not over-directed and contain opportunities for the boys to make choices and add in their own ideas. On the other hand, the boys' free play would often benefit from more adult involvement, with greater care taken to set up productive opportunities for learning, and with adults joining in to talk and ask questions in order to develop the boys' vocabulary and ideas.

The teaching in English, mathematics and other subjects of the secular curriculum, is generally satisfactory and sometimes good. However, in around 20 per cent of the lessons observed, the teaching was unsatisfactory because the teachers' expectations were too low and pupils were given tasks that lacked sufficient challenge and interest.

All lessons are orderly and disciplined. The pupils listen to their teachers, show respect for them and do as they are told. The classroom organisation is satisfactory and lessons proceed at a suitable pace, with sufficient variety to retain the boys' attention. Without exception the teachers are conscientious and hard-working.

In the best lessons the teaching is lively and imaginative. Wherever possible the subject matter is related to the boys' own experiences. The teachers' questions help to draw out connections, promote understanding and stimulate imagination.

In general, however, the teachers' knowledge of the subjects they are teaching is often not very deep. As a result, they tend to concentrate on imparting factual knowledge and practising basic skills, rather than encouraging pupils to think things out for themselves and to develop the higher order-skills of reasoning, problem-solving and communicating ideas. No clear guidance is given to teachers about what they should expect pupils of different ages to do, to know and to understand. The teachers now need to be given more advice, support and training so that they can develop higher and more appropriate expectations.

Support, often on a one-to-one basis, is given by members of staff, volunteers and by outside agencies such as BINO, the Jewish special educational needs service. Some

pupils, however, who receive support in Kodesh are withdrawn during secular lessons and this results in them receiving too narrow a curriculum, which can consist of only one particular strand of Kodesh.

The school is very concerned to identify and help any pupils who are falling behind in their studies. Within lessons, teachers show an awareness of the needs of pupils who are finding the work difficult, and go to some lengths to make sure that everyone in class is able to follow. In Kodesh in particular there are good systems for identifying difficulties, informing parents and giving extra support. However, there needs to be more careful diagnosis of pupils' individual learning styles, so that the support they are given can be more effective. For example, if a pupil is falling behind because they have specific learning difficulties related to poor auditory memory, then they may need support that makes use of visual approaches. Similarly, communication between teachers is needed about which pupils have difficulty in reading from the blackboard.

The very positive attitudes pupils show towards school emanate largely from the good relationships they have with their menahel. These start from the moment they enter the school in the morning, and with their rabbis during most lessons. The work in the classroom is mostly well managed in that rabbis control behaviour and may change an activity or its pace in response to the pupils' reactions and alertness. The pressure is not so great as to overload the average pupil, and there are opportunities for pupils who need individual help to be withdrawn from lessons.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

An independent school is not required to deliver the National Curriculum, but it must provide instruction that is efficient and suitable, bearing in mind the age and sex of the pupils.

Talmud Torah Bobov offers a highly specialised, non-standard education that is traditional for boys within the community that it serves. It is concerned, first and foremost, with passing on the strictly observant Jewish religious, moral and cultural traditions, and encouraging a love for the sacred texts of the faith and the skills to study them in their original languages. The school also recognises that its pupils will need to be equipped with the necessary skills to work and move around in the contemporary world, and it attempts to provide for this by offering an elementary secular education. The twofold nature of the instruction offered in the school is reflected in the traditional division of the curriculum into the two strands of Limmudei Kodesh (religious) and Limmudei Chol (secular).

In relation to its early years provision, the school has benefited greatly from the advice it has received from an experienced nursery teacher who is a member of the Bobov community. She visits about once a fortnight to help with the planning, and has spent time observing sessions, discussing teaching approaches, advising on the purchasing of resources, and developing a curriculum that takes account of the six areas of learning in the Foundation Stage. She has been very effective in helping the school to meet the criteria for the Nursery Grant. An inspection of the school's nursery provision in March 2000 concluded that the school is a very good setting that provides

a wide range of interesting and challenging activities for both three- and four-year-old boys.

The planning uses Jewish festivals and the weekly portion of the Torah as starting point for work in all six areas of learning, mapped out over a full year to give balance, variety and appropriate progression. The method of planning results in a strong link between Kodesh and all other aspects of the curriculum, and ensures a broad programme, in line with the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage.

Boys are taught in the school for an average of five and a half days per week, with variations depending on the age of the pupils and the season of the year. For the oldest pupils the amount of time that they are taught is around 44 hours, but this includes time for the saying of morning and afternoon prayers, which are an integral part of the boys' school experience. For younger pupils the equivalent time is a little over 27 hours.

The Kodesh curriculum is traditional and is known and understood by all the teachers and there are no schemes of work. The result of this, however, is that there is little actual awareness between teachers of what their colleagues are teaching and what pupils are learning, although the menahel himself has a clear overview because of his practice of going into classes to test boys on a regular basis in Chumash, Rashi and Gemoro. All Kodesh subjects are taught through the medium of Yiddish.

At the time of the inspection, the school had no formally stated curriculum in Limmudei Kodesh which defined what pupils should be able to do and understand at the end of each year and key stage. There was also no guidance about the balance rabbis should keep between oral and written work and the skills of independent study that pupils should develop.

In the absence of a curriculum plan, which defines clear learning objectives and shows progression from year to year, teachers' main concern was to improve the number of verses of Chumash or Rashi that pupils encounter each week, and the number of pages of Talmud they cover in a term. The rabbi in each year decides, in consultation with the menahel, which texts and sources to include in the programme of work and the depth to which pupils will study, for instance, the weekly portion of Chumash and Talmud. The efficacy of this programme is then assessed by a weekly oral test held by the menahel himself in each class at the end of each week. The menahel's monitoring is sensitive to variations in the ability and background of every pupil. The process is not intended to yield summative measures of achievement so much as to encourage progress and to identify problems in comprehension so that they can be remedied.

In the kindergarten half-an-hour a day is devoted to some elementary studies in English, and in the main school these occupy seven hours a week. However, there is no secular curriculum for the pupils in the reception class or Year 1. Thereafter, in Years 2 to 8, an average of four and a half hours a week is devoted to English, one and a half hours to mathematics, and one hour to other subjects, mainly rudimentary science, geography or general knowledge. There is no planned physical education. The secular curriculum is not planned centrally: there are no schemes of work to ensure continuity and progression and individual teachers devise what they intend to

teach with little reference to other colleagues. The result of this is that the secular curriculum is unsystematic and that in both English and mathematics there is needless repetition and lack of challenge. The head of secular subjects, who was appointed to this post in the spring of 2001, has now begun to visit classes to see what is happening and this may provide a way for the school to move forward.

The length of the school day means that there is very little time for extra-curricular activities, although some swimming is organised. It was clear from the responses by parents to the inspection questionnaire that some of them feel that the school should offer more extra-curricular activities. Very occasionally the school organises curriculum enrichment experiences, for example, in the autumn of 2000 the boys from the two top classes had a residential experience at a former Jewish boarding school in Oxfordshire. Discussion with the boys indicated how much they enjoyed this experience and hoped that it would be repeated.

The school is aware of the need to develop schemes of work, and the head of secular studies, appointed last April, has made a start in compiling a syllabus for the first couple of year groups. This scheme needs to be extended to indicate annual objectives and to offer guidance on provision for pupils with special educational needs. He is also aware of the value of enlivening the curriculum with links to the topics and concepts addressed in Limmudei Kodesh.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

The school cares deeply for its pupils. The teachers know their individual pupils well and take an interest in their progress and well being. They take their lead from the menahel who shows his concern for all the pupils in the school, and is particularly solicitous towards those who are going through a difficult time, whether because of their schoolwork or because of home circumstances.

There are good procedures to deal with accidents. There are members of staff on each of the two sites who have up to date qualifications in first-aid. The school can also call on a Jewish paramedical service run by the community in the event of a serious accident.

The school's administrator inspects both sites regularly to make sure that maintenance matters are dealt with promptly and that any hazards to the health and safety of the pupils are kept to a minimum. However, the road that runs between the two sites presents a hazard. Despite frequent representations to the local authority, there are no signs or road markings to indicate the presence of a school, nor are there any traffic calming measures or designated crossings. While every effort is made to supervise the pupils properly when they arrive or depart by minibus, and to discourage them from going near the road at other times, the speed of the traffic as it comes round the curve in the road gives cause for concern.

The school has recently developed a useful set of written policies on health and safety, and on caring, discipline and guidance. As yet, there is, however, no child protection policy, although the matter has been brought to the school's attention on previous HMI inspections. The school should seek the advice of the local Social

Services Department and proceed without delay to draw up a policy, making sure that all staff know about it and understand it, and arranging for training for key staff.

The administrator has endeavoured to ensure that all statutorily required checks on staff have been carried out. However, there are still some members of staff who have regular contact with pupils who have not been checked against the official register. This matter must be rectified immediately.

The school regularly monitors aspects of the pupils' academic performance and of their personal development. However, this monitoring is not full effective in raising pupils' achievements because it concentrates a little too narrowly on factual recall at the expense of deeper understanding. It would be helpful to develop new approaches to assessment and monitoring to widen the focus and to make a stronger link between the results of assessment of understanding and the planning of the future programme of work.

There are two pupils with statements of special educational need. Background documents relating to these pupils were read during the inspection but it was not possible to see their current statements or to discover the precise funding arrangements. As a result no judgement can be made as to whether the school is doing what is required of it in relation to these statements.

As part of the conditions for the grant for its nursery provision which the school receives, the kindergarten and reception classes undertake to have regard to the national Code of Practice for the identification and assessment in special needs. The school should consider applying the principles of the Code throughout the school, particularly in secular subjects where the identification of needs is not currently very systematic.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

The school is part of a close-knit community, the life of which centres on the synagogue in which many of the staff and parents worship and study; as a result, relationships are very good and there is a good deal of contact, although this is largely informal. Parents' evenings were held in the past but these have been discontinued because of the difficulties that fathers experienced in coming to the school at night. As yet, the school has found no acceptable way in which it can liaise on a personal basis with mothers, other than by telephone. The school sends home regular reports on what pupils are achieving in their Kodesh studies, but by no means all parents respond and there is no regular reporting on secular subjects.

Prior to the inspection a total of 230 questionnaires were sent to parents asking for their views of the school. Of these 48 per cent were returned and it is clear that the school enjoys overwhelming support. Parents value the school and are confident that it is providing their children with the sort of education that they want.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

The school is a charity registered under the name of Friends of Bobov. It is owned and maintained by the Bobov community and is under the ultimate spiritual authority of the Bobover Rebbe (spiritual leader), whose headquarters are in New York. There is a local management committee which consists of six persons appointed by the leaders of the community. According to the school constitution, this board has the responsibility of overseeing the running of the school and appointing heads of department. Its role is, however, purely advisory, and day-to-day running of the school is in the hands of the menahel (principal), who is assisted by a school administrator. The menahel is responsible for overseeing the whole curriculum, but he has, in effect, delegated the responsibility for the secular strand to a teacher.

The menahel is highly visible and knows all the pupils and teachers well. He is ably assisted by the school administrator, who deals effectively with the day to day practicalities of running the school. Together with the teacher in charge of secular studies, they have sound educational instincts and have created a very positive atmosphere in which teaching and learning can take place. However, the management of the curriculum is ineffective and stronger central direction is needed to ensure that expectations are higher. In both strands of the curriculum the responsibility for planning and carrying out the teaching is devolved to class teachers and there is no joint planning to ensure continuity and progression. The school's management is aware of these weaknesses and of the need to develop strategies for more effective curriculum planning. As part of its application for funding for its early years' provision, the school secured the services of a well qualified and experienced adviser, with the result that there have been significant improvements in planning, management and delivery in the kindergarten. The school is actively considering securing the advice of a similar person to help in the main school.

The number of teachers is sufficient for delivering both strands of the curriculum. Kodesh teachers are all graduates of yeshivas (higher Talmudical colleges), are appropriately qualified and experienced, and teach within a pedagogical tradition that they know and understand. The school does, however, have difficulties in recruiting staff to teach the secular curriculum. The school considers it desirable that teachers should be orthodox Jewish men, but there is a severe shortage of such teachers throughout the community. Although it has sufficient teachers at present, they have limited experience, none has a recognised qualification, and there are no opportunities for training and professional development.

There are shortcomings in the accommodation. The main school is housed in a building that was originally used for social and educational purposes by the adjacent synagogue. It has an adequate number of classrooms and places where pupils can gather for worship or other communal activities, but some classrooms are overcrowded. The buildings are adequately maintained, but they need to be refurbished. The school has the use of a neighbouring field for recreation, but this can be very muddy and in wet weather the boys play on a hard-surfaced area which faces on to the main road and which is inadequately protected. The nursery and kindergarten are adequately accommodated in rooms across the road in the buildings occupied by the Bobov Yeshiva.

The school is under-resourced. The school receives public funding for three- and four-year-old pupils and for pupils with statements of special educational need, but

receives no other public funding. It charges no fees and is dependent on parental contributions and a programme of fund-raising within the community. In Kodesh studies, pupils have access to sacred texts and there is a library of Jewish books for pupils to use. In secular studies, some year groups have recently been provided with new textbooks for mathematics, and these provide a basis for the teaching and learning. Resources for English are not satisfactory. The textbooks that are used for English are old and some of the texts used for reading are unchallenging and intellectually undemanding. The number of secular texts in the library is small, but many boys reported that with parental guidance they used the local public library. There are no ICT facilities that the boys can use in school, but many have access to computers at home and there is evidence that they use these extensively.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve its provision and its performance, the school should:

Improve its curriculum and teaching by:

- using time more efficiently and effectively to become reflective learners (paragraphs 10, 27-35);
- raising expectations and standards in English and mathematics (paragraphs 11-17);
- developing clearer expectations of what pupils need to achieve at each key stage and in both strands of the curriculum (paragraphs 52-54);
- developing strategies for improving the performance of older and abler pupils in Limmudei Kodesh (paragraphs 37-43);
- applying the principles of the SEN code of practice throughout the school (paragraph 53-54);
- drawing on professional advice to improve teaching and learning (paragraph 58);
- making time available for the provision of physical education (paragraph 44);
- introducing a programme of secular studies in Reception and Year 1 (paragraph 44);
- addressing the key issues raised in the recent inspection of provision for funded nursery pupils, and, in particular, the need to develop assessment systems and to work towards clear targets (paragraph 8).

Ensure that the school conforms to current regulations regarding:

- the checking of suitability of staff (paragraph 51);
- attendance registers (paragraph 25).

Develop and implement a child protection policy (paragraph 50).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

<i>Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection</i>	
Number of lessons observed	20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	0	3	12	5	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of full-time pupils	230	0	230
Number of part-time pupils	0	0	0
Total number of pupils	230		

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	Number of pupils with statements of SEN
230	2

<i>Attendance</i>			
Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	5.6	School data	0

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Strictly observant Jewish - 230 pupils.

This data refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes

Number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	n/a
Average class size	20

Average teaching group size	
Nursery	20
Key Stage 1	20
Key Stage 2	20
Key Stage 3	20

SURVEY OF PARENTS AND CARERS

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	230
Number of questionnaires returned	102

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	88	7	0	1	3
My child is making good progress in school.	90	9	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	77	18	0	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	73	17	4	0	5

The teaching is good.	89	9	1	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	70	21	7	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	89	11	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	86	14	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	77	18	4	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	91	8	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	86	12	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	27	12	8	18

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

English

Pupils generally come from bilingual homes in which both Yiddish and English are spoken. Yiddish is the main medium of instruction in the school, but in the nursery half an hour a day is set aside for oral work in English. In reception and Year 1 there is some use of English, but on an occasional and incidental basis. It would be helpful to extend the nursery practice to these two classes and to designate specific times each day when pupils listen to English and are encouraged to speak it. From Year 2 to Year 9, pupils receive seven hours of teaching a week in which the medium of instruction is English and they are taught the subjects of English and mathematics with some science and geography. In most classes the majority of this time is used to develop their literacy skills in English. They first learn to read and write using Hebrew letters and the formal teaching of reading and writing in English only begins in Year 2.

They make good progress initially and are soon able to read simple texts with accuracy and understanding, and to write short sentences in their own words. It is perfectly acceptable, and indeed hardly surprising in view of their relatively late start, that by Year 4 they are some way behind their peers in English medium schools in their literacy skills in English. At this stage many pupils are well placed to make rapid progress. Unfortunately they do not do so and remain throughout their time at the school operating at a level in English that is too far below their potential. The texts that they are given to read are not challenging or interesting enough, their oral skills are not systematically developed and their writing tasks are too often repetitive and mundane. As a result, the standards that they reach in their ability to communicate in

spoken and written English by the time that they leave the school are not as good as they should be.

In nearly all English lessons pupils are given some opportunities to develop their skills in speaking and listening. They listen carefully to their teachers, though not always to each other, and are eager to respond to questions. Oral activities are closely related to their work in literacy. Questions and discussions often arise from texts that they are reading. When pupils are given writing tasks, they are sensibly and appropriately given a chance to talk about them first. They are rarely, however, able to develop their ideas in speech at much length. It would now be helpful to give pupils tasks, such as making an oral presentation to the rest of the class, on a regular basis in order to develop more systematically their ability to communicate orally.

The reading that is done in class usually takes the form of boys taking turns to read aloud from a class reader while the rest of the pupils follow. In the younger classes this is effective in helping all pupils to make progress and to grow in confidence and competence. However, an over-reliance on this approach in the older classes holds many pupils back, particularly because many of the texts that are selected are lacking in challenge and interest. In order to capitalise on the good progress made in the initial stages older pupils need to be encouraged to read a wider range of worthwhile texts. The school library has a small number of books in English on Jewish themes, but it is not currently being well used. There are no class libraries or book lists available. Several boys read English books at home, and some make use of the local public library. However, more needs to be done to encourage all boys to read for pleasure and information, and to tell each other about the books that they have read.

In writing, pupils are required, at all stages, to write in their own words from time to time, but not often enough. Once again, the good start that they make in their ability to write in English is not built upon sufficiently as they get older because they are not expected to develop their ideas in writing at sufficient length. Too much time is spent on closed writing tasks, such as responding to very limited comprehension questions that only test factual recall, or undertaking exercises that have little relevance to their communication needs. Pupils are given spellings to learn at home each week and they are tested on them in school. Most boys manage this task well, but teachers do not have any effective strategies for helping the few that do not. More attention needs to be given to the teaching of spelling rules and patterns. Older pupils make use of dictionaries but when younger pupils are writing in their own words there are no word-lists on the walls to help them, nor do they have their own personal spelling dictionaries. The standard of handwriting is poor. Throughout the age range pupils write in print and they are not introduced to cursive script.

The teaching is satisfactory in many respects. Lessons are planned, orderly and sensibly organised and pupils respond well, even when the lessons take place towards the end of a very long school day. However, the weakness in the teaching lies in the selection of materials which, particularly in the older classes, often indicates that the teachers do not have high enough expectations of their pupils. For example, in a Year 7 class, pupils were given a dictation that consisted entirely of monosyllabic words, while in Year 8 pupils were working through a book of English exercises designed for children two years younger.

The teachers now need to be much more selective in their use of textbooks and readers, and they need to use other starting points for discussion and writing. They would benefit greatly from advice and support from qualified teachers with experience of teaching English in primary and secondary schools. With this help, the school should formulate more challenging and appropriate targets for speaking and listening, reading and writing in English for each year group, in order to raise standards.

Mathematics

Teaching of mathematics starts in Year 2, and the time allocated to mathematics from that year on is mainly about two 45-minute lessons a week. In addition, there are few opportunities for setting and marking homework. All this limits continuity and progression in the subject.

Attainment in mathematics across the three key stages is currently unsatisfactory but shows signs of improving. A year after starting work in mathematics in Year 2, most pupils can count to well beyond 30; are familiar with multiples of 10 and 11, though not secure with multiples of other integers, and can perform very simple concrete additions and subtractions, mainly by counting ahead and backwards. Most pupils are aware of the formal inter-relationships of different metric units of length but some have little experience of what this means in practice. Pupils' experience of concrete application of number to data handling or to measurement is very limited, although pupils gain some experience in their daily life and in Limmudei Kodesh lessons.

As pupils move up in Key Stage 2, they very gradually gain confidence in manipulating integers and gain sound techniques for addition, subtraction and multiplication of quite large numbers. Most are secure with place value and can follow routine processes to perform addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. By the end of the Key Stage, however, many pupils still have limited mental recall of some multiplication tables.

Pupils in Key Stage 3 begin to make up for some earlier omissions in number work, and become quite fluent in the mechanical manipulation of decimals and fractions. They apply many computation techniques routinely and fluently but are not always aware of the techniques that are appropriate in a given situation. Pupils' greater exposure to quantitative discussion in and out of school does help them to manage with number applications in some situations in daily life. However, pupils encounter very few interesting problems involving measure and data handling which develop the application of the techniques they practise. Their attainments continue, therefore, to be unsatisfactory in shape and measure, and in estimating length, area and volume, whether using standard units or traditional measures they encounter in studying Gemarah and Dinim.

Pupils' attitudes to learning mathematics were very good. Their interest was usually retained during afternoon mathematics sessions, and they continued to concentrate for long periods. They engaged well in oral and written exercises even when they were already familiar with the techniques being practised. Pupils enjoyed learning new techniques in mathematics, but were unused to looking for mathematical patterns and relationships and articulating what they noticed in order to develop understanding.

Teachers displayed much enthusiasm for number work in mathematics and possess the necessary skills of managing a classroom to ensure that pupils are on task and have secure structures in which to learn. None of the regular teachers is qualified by training to teach mathematics and it is evident that their expectations of pupils are modest at all levels.

Relationships between teachers and pupils were good, and several teachers engaged pupils well in lessons, using questioning to prompt mental calculation and clear oral responses. However, it was not always evident from the nature and pace of class discussion what exactly the intended outcome of a lesson was. Often lessons were not aimed at improving understanding of mathematics and its applications but only at marginally improving operational skills. Some mathematics lessons simply petered out without a conclusion when the time came to switch to another subject. Assessment of the pupils' attainment in mathematics was at a rudimentary stage, and no pupils were withdrawn for extra help in mathematics.

There was no curriculum documentation for mathematics that indicated clearly a set of objectives which all, most or some pupils should reach by the end of each year. Able pupils had few opportunities to exercise their considerable intellectual powers on significant problems and investigations. Their less able peers were offered little extra help to enable them to visualise their mathematics and experience its applications to real life situations. Even inexpensive practical resources for teaching pupils of various abilities were lacking.

The textbooks provided for each class were very suitable for revision and routine practice of skills, but they had not been designed to develop real insight and understanding. These books were used extensively for re-enforcement exercises, but they offered no substitute for teaching with a scheme of work that indicates both a progression of expectations, and practical resources and ideas for teaching various topics.

Although mathematics instruction is not yet efficient in preparing pupils for the demands of life after school, the leadership is aware of the need for more pedagogical guidance and appropriate expectations. The Head of Secular studies is developing a scheme of work that attempts to meet the needs of mainstream pupils. Consideration also needs to be given to the provision for those who have special needs at both ends of the ability spectrum.