

Bnois Jerusalem School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	204/6242
Unique Reference Number	100291
Inspection number	329737
Inspection dates	16-17 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Dr R Kapadia

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Bnois Jerusalem School is an orthodox Jewish (Charedi) Hassidic school, founded in 1965, whose girls are drawn almost exclusively from Stamford Hill in London, with a few girls travelling in from Golders Green. They come from Yiddish-speaking homes and speak English as an additional language. Their families do not access secular media such as national newspapers, radio, television or the internet. The girls are from mixed socio-economic backgrounds and large families. The age range is from 3 to 16 years. There are 122 girls in the Nursery, all of whom receive public funding. One girl has a statement of special educational needs and a few girls have specific learning difficulties relating to communication. The school aims to give its pupils a broad and balanced education in Yiddish, *Kodesh* (religious studies) and secular subjects within the framework of their home culture. Its all-female environment aims to develop girls' *middos tovos* (positive character traits) to encourage them to live true *Torah* lives and to emerge as mature, contributing members of society. The school was last inspected in 2004.

Evaluation of the school

Bnois Jerusalem School meets its aim to develop in girls their Charedi identity but does not fully prepare them for adult life in some respects, such as gaining external qualifications. Good spiritual and moral development underpins girls' courtesy and modesty and their good behaviour. The overall quality of education is satisfactory, as are the curriculum, teaching and assessment, and welfare, health and safety. The school has developed its policies well since the last inspection but a number of regulations are still not met.

Quality of education

The school's overall curriculum is satisfactory and is set out in its prospectus. *Limmudei Kodesh* (religious studies) is taught in the mornings and the secular curriculum, mainly consisting of English and mathematics, is taught on four afternoons a week. The primary and secondary departments teach science (except in Year 11), geography, history in most years, needlework, games and art, with a course in life skills in Year 11. Although there have been improvements since the last

inspection by the introduction of games, important aspects of physical education (PE) are still not taught across the school. There is no information and communication technology but sewing is taught.

Overall, the secular curriculum is broad but not well balanced, particularly with regard to the limited time allocated to the teaching of English and science. Schemes of work are available but are rather limited in quality. There is no careers education to prepare girls for their future life, partly because all girls are expected to go on to a Jewish seminary. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is covered in *Kodesh*.

Kodesh is taught in Yiddish. The scheme of work shows progression in the learning planned and is more developed in the junior department than the senior department. Teachers have lesson plans and maintain adequate records.

The Early Years Foundation Stage covers the six areas of learning and is satisfactory. It is taught entirely in Yiddish, with few opportunities for girls to speak in English.

The teaching and assessment are satisfactory overall. Most lessons are satisfactory and a few in *Kodesh* had strengths. Teachers, usually following a textbook closely, base much of the teaching on explanation. There are few opportunities for girls to make their own notes.

Teachers are enthusiastic and have very good relationships with the girls. They give help and support when required. Good support is also given to girls with learning difficulties, who are also well supported by their peers. Support for gifted girls is not as strong.

Girls are attentive and participate well in lessons when given the opportunity. However, there are too few opportunities for independent work. Only modest progress is made in PE since girls do not change, which restricts opportunities for vigorous exercise. Across the school resources are limited, especially in science and other practical subjects.

Assessment is undertaken at the end of units of work and there are regular internal school examinations. Records of results are kept. However, girls are not entered for external examinations, so that they are not enabled to acquire validated qualifications.

Projects are used to good effect in *Kodesh*; for example, having studied the laws of blessings, Year 10 girls staged a fair to present the information to the rest of the school, while Year 11 girls produced elaborate projects on the Jewish temple. Considerable emphasis is placed on competitions and tests in which the girls participate with great enthusiasm.

During their time in the school girls develop some skills in English, from a very low base, but this is made more difficult since they live in a closed community. They make better progress in mathematics and in *Kodesh*. Overall girls' progress is satisfactory in relation to the school's aims.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good, with particular strengths. For example, *Kodesh* reflects the strong biblical emphasis on proper behaviour and several lessons per week are devoted to the study of ethical and moral texts. Very good inter-personal relationships are fostered based on shared spiritual values.

Girls are given responsibilities for some daily routines such as leading in prayers, and are also involved in drama performances for the school and the wider community. Senior girls stage performances entirely by themselves, including painting the backdrops and making the props and costumes.

Morality is central to the school's ethos: every month, the school focuses on one character trait, such as kindness to the needy. Behaviour is good. Girls are extremely respectful to adults and each other. They attend well, enjoy coming to school and are rewarded for good behaviour through *derech erez* (respect) points and the *keser shem tov* (good behaviour award) each week.

Girls are taught to respect the law of the land and also learn about British institutions, including an annual visit to Parliament. They are involved in a number of local *chesed* (kindness) projects such as visits to elderly residents.

Various initiatives encourage knowledge of and respect for other cultures. In geography, girls dress up and role play the lives of people of the countries studied. Literature is sometimes chosen to reflect other cultures. However, there are few opportunities for girls to develop economic understanding.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision to ensure the welfare, health and safety of the girls is satisfactory and better than at the last inspection. Policies have now been developed relating to bullying and child protection training has been undertaken; risk assessments are made prior to external visits. Teachers supervise girls well around the school. Girls noted that there is virtually no bullying and report that they are very happy in the school. They feel secure, knowing that staff care personally for their welfare.

The school has a ban on junk food and encourages healthy snacks. There is some attention given to safe and healthy living in Year 7 science but limited attention is

paid to this aspect in PE. Arrangements for health and safety and fire safety do not meet requirements. A number of hazards were identified to the school, as reported below. Fire drills are not undertaken in the junior school, where there is no fire certificate. The school now fulfils its obligation under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

There are robust procedures for the recruitment of appropriate staff, with a single central register maintained as required.

School's premises and accommodation

The main building for the senior and early years departments occupies four contiguous houses on a terrace; the junior department is in a fifth house further along the same terrace. Several demountable buildings in the yard provide additional accommodation and there is an adequate hard-play area. There are specialist rooms for sewing but not for science or art.

Some features of these converted domestic properties are not conducive to safe and effective learning. Although the last report noted deficiencies in the premises with regards to some building requirements, no structural survey has been undertaken. There are visible cracks in both internal and external walls and around door frames. The flooring of one of the demountables is cracked and missing in part over the length of the unit. The supply of hot water is inadequate and in some rooms there are holes in the ceiling.

Some classrooms are inadequately sized and many are cramped; moving around the school is not easy. A fluorescent fitting in one classroom is loose. A few upper floor classroom windows have neither bars nor safety catches. Loose concrete over a rear window crumbled and fell when touched. The school is in poor decorative order but there are limited funds to carry out repairs. In some parts of the building, displays of girls' work have been used to brighten the environment.

One of the houses does not meet fire regulations. There are insufficient washroom facilities in the junior department and in early years; facilities for girls who are ill are inadequate.

Although food is prepared on the premises for younger girls, the school was unable to produce an environmental health certificate. In addition, hot food is carried upstairs past girls queuing to wash.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school brochure includes the necessary information. About one hundred parents returned the questionnaire; they are very positive about the school. The school sends reports on girls' progress but these are relatively brief.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's complaints policy meets requirements; there have been no formal complaints since the last inspection.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The school has made progress since the last inspection and the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is now satisfactory. The new manager, whose leadership is satisfactory, has a good understanding of the new framework and its statutory requirements. A training session has been arranged to further teachers' knowledge and during the course of this year teachers will have the opportunity to work towards the qualifications now needed under the new requirements. The manager plans together with the teachers to ensure that all six areas of learning are covered. All teaching and learning take place through the medium of Yiddish. Girls are given opportunities to express themselves and develop language skills through Yiddish. They start to learn the English language letters in Reception, but there are few opportunities to develop speaking skills in English. They also learn to count.

Assessment of girls' progress is ongoing and this is being developed still further through regular observations, which are used to inform the planning for each individual. As a result girls are now making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals. The EYFS profile is completed at the end of the Reception year.

There are some opportunities for girls to experiment, investigate and explore through both indoor and outdoor play. Girls enjoy making their own biscuits and bread (round Challas) for the Jewish New Year, dressing up in case of cold weather and feeding the fish and birds. They develop fine motor control skills through a variety of activities including working with small objects such as cutting and sticking small shapes.

There is a key worker system in which there is an adult attached to every four girls to ensure that individual needs are met. Relationships are good, routines are clear and as a result girls are safe and secure. The action plan to further improve provision includes improving resources to enhance the opportunities offered to the children.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ("the Regulations"), with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- ensure that the curriculum gives pupils of compulsory school age experience in the following areas of learning: scientific and physical (paragraph 1(2)(a)(ii))
- provide careers education for secondary age pupils (paragraph 1(2)(g))
- ensure that classroom resources are of adequate quality (paragraph 1(3)(f)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- have regard to the DCSF guidance: *Health and Safety: responsibilities and powers* (paragraph 3(4))
- maintain a satisfactory level of fire safety (paragraph 3(5)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide a water supply which meets the requirements of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(a))
- check that all load bearing structures comply with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(c))
- ensure that all areas of the school do not compromise safety (paragraph 5(j))
- provide sufficient washrooms for staff and pupils, including facilities for pupils with special needs, which take account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k))
- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l))
- provide adequate facilities for the hygienic preparation and serving of food (paragraph 5(m))
- ensure a satisfactory standard and adequate maintenance of decoration (paragraph 5(q))
- ensure that flooring is in good condition (paragraph 5(s)).

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education			✓	
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils			✓	
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs			✓	
How well pupils make progress in their learning			✓	

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils			✓	
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?			✓	
How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?			✓	
How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?			✓	
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?			✓	
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?			✓	
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?			✓	

School details

Name of school	Bnois Jerusalem School		
DCSF number	2046242		
Unique reference number	100291		
Type of school	Jewish		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1965		
Age range of pupils	3-16		
Gender of pupils	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 535	Total: 535
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£0 (voluntary contributions)		
Address of school	79-81 Amhurst Park London N16 5DL		
Telephone number	0208 211 7136;0208 802 7470		
Fax number	n/a		
Email address	n/a		
Headteachers	Mrs Hager, Mrs Katz, Mrs Landau, Mrs Sonnenschein		
Proprietor	Mr Grunfeld		
Reporting inspector	Dr R Kapadia		
Dates of inspection	16-17 September 2008		