

Hasmonean High School

Inspection report

Local authority	Barnet
Inspected under the auspices of	Pikuach
Inspection dates	21-22 November 2012
Lead inspector	Jeffrey Leader

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary/Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided Academy
Age range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Boys and girls on separate sites
Number on roll	1012
Appropriate authority	Governing body
Chair	Mr Moshe Adler
Headteacher	Rabbi David Meyer
Date of previous school inspection	9-10 January 2008
School address	Boys' site: Holders Hill Road, N14 1NA
Telephone number	020 8203 1411(Boys) 0208 203 4294 (Girls)
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jeffrey Leader Lead Inspector

Richard Felsenstein Team Inspector

Enid Korn Team Inspector

Sharon Raphael Team Inspector

This inspection was carried out by four inspectors, two at the boys' school and two at the girls' school. They visited 37 lessons where, although the focus was on observing *Limmudei Kodesh*, inspectors also visited classes teaching Religious Studies, Biblical and Modern Hebrew. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including students' written work, teachers' lesson plans, the Jewish Studies Curriculum, the school's Self-Evaluation document and development plan.

The inspection team looked in detail at the following:

- The progress students make in *Limmudei Kodesh*.
- The quality of teaching in *Limmudei Kodesh*.
- Leadership and Management in *Limmudei Kodesh*.

Information about the school

The school was founded by the late Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld in 1944 as Hasmonian Grammar School. It is a voluntary aided academy school for students aged 11 to 18 from Orthodox Jewish families, situated in the London Borough of Barnet. The school comprises two sites, one for boys in the Hendon area of and one for girls in Mill Hill. The school has been awarded specialist Business and Enterprise College status. The school's motto is *Torah im Derech Eretz*.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness 1

Capacity for sustained improvement 2

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	1
The achievement of pupils in their Jewish education	1
The quality of teaching and assessment	1
The extent to which the Jewish Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development including the duty to fulfill the daily act of collective worship	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of Jewish Education, including through partnerships	1

Overall effectiveness: the quality of Jewish education provided in the school

Grade: 1

Hasmonean is an outstanding school in relation to its *Limmudei Kodesh* provision. It is strong in all areas of *Kodesh* with many exemplary features. The excellent leadership of the headteacher supported by a recently established leadership team and an engaged governing body have ensured that standards are high at all levels and all groups of students make exceptionally good progress. Care, guidance and support are exemplary and students feel safe and valued. A particularly outstanding feature is how well students are known by staff which enables them to make exceptional progress in their personal and social development in part because of the high levels of care, guidance and support provided by the school, but also because of the students themselves, who are motivated to engage fully in the life of the school.

The sixth form's effectiveness is outstanding. Students' results in GCSE and A Level Religious Studies examination far exceed national averages. All students achieve so well because teaching and learning is of a consistently high standard. Teaching is characterised by the very effective learning relationships established in the classroom. It provides a strong structure for learning, with careful questioning and varied teaching strategies promoting the rapid acquisition of knowledge and skills. Students have very mature attitudes to learning, behave very well and show a high level of responsibility for younger students by supporting them through the school's 'buddy system.'

The curriculum offered is broad and wide ranging, incorporating national examination subjects such as Modern Hebrew, Biblical Hebrew and Religious Studies (Judaism) together with traditional *Kodesh* subjects such as *Chumash*, *Gemara*, *Nach*, *Dinim* and Jewish History.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop schemes of work for all *Kodesh* subjects that provide the teacher with the detail of what to teach beyond a simple heading.
- Expand the good work on level descriptors in *Gemara* and *Chumash* to other subjects in the *Kodesh* curriculum but at a faster rate.
- Ensure that quality marking is more consistent.
- Ensure that planned activities for students of different ability include personalised tasks detailing how the learning needs of individual students will be met in their *Kodesh* lessons.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Grade: 1

Inspection evidence and an analysis of students' performance indicates that standards and achievement overall in *Limmudei Kodesh* are outstanding. Students start in Year 7 with standards that are generally above average. This high standard is maintained in external examinations at the end of Year 11. The proportion of students gaining higher grades (A*-A) in GCSE Religious Studies was far above the national average in 2012. The school rightly judges results in the sixth form to be outstanding. It provides students with two years of high calibre teaching combined with excellent academic and personal care, guidance and support

Jewish Studies teachers have access to the special educational needs register by signing into their Hasmonian computer accounts, and to each student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). The register contains helpful information which details each student's educational needs.

It would be helpful for Jewish Studies teachers to use the IEP "suggestions for lessons" section, to inform their lesson planning and teaching. If they were to keep a few key points about each special educational needs student in their mark book or planner it would enable differentiation to take place in a way that would cater better for students' special needs.

Currently, resources do not allow for Teaching Assistants to be attached to the Jewish Studies Department, but the use of Teaching Assistants in some lessons would enhance the *Kodesh* provision for those on the special needs register.

Students throughout the school make extremely good progress in response to often outstanding teaching and because so many are very highly motivated to achieve well.

Quality of teaching and learning in the school

Grade: 1

Much of the teaching and learning on both sites is outstanding, including in the sixth form where students are encouraged to learn independently and in *chavrutot*. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and very high expectations. They use a variety of strategies matched to the different ways in which students learn and make effective use of the available resources including Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In the best lessons, teachers use incisive questioning to encourage higher order thinking and discussion; they use a range of strategies to keep their students enthused and engaged. They listen to, observe and question groups of students and individuals during lessons in order to reshape tasks and explanations to improve learning. In those very few lessons where teacher ideas dominate all discussion, students sometimes become passive and lack motivation.

Formative (ongoing) and summative (at the end of a learning phase) assessments continue to be developed by the Jewish Studies Department. The introduction of an excellent new scheme of level descriptors for attainment in *Gemara* will provide clarity, consistency and progression statements for students in Years 7-10. Each student will have his own *Gemara* record card which will indicate his current achievement level. New attainment levels for *Chumash* are in the process of being developed on both sites which will enable also progress

to be tracked and monitored effectively in this important subject area.

The systems used to track the progress made by individual students are very effective especially in the boys' section and the school is actively looking into standardising the process across both sites. Teachers consult students regularly to further improve the quality of teaching and learning. They use their assessment and lesson evaluations effectively to inform future planning.

Although marking, which was an issue during the last *Pikuach* inspection, has improved significantly, it needs to be more consistent in its quality. Most of the students' work is marked and includes positive comments such as 'excellent' or 'wonderful.' However, such comments, although rewarding, need to be clarified so that pupils know how well they have done and can discuss what they need to do to improve and sustain good progress. There were good examples of informative marking such as: 'It was a really interesting and enjoyable read. Your sentence on why he is your hero is excellent.' (Year 8) 'Be more concise with your summary' (Year 9) and 'You need a more focused structure as discussed.' (Year 8). Comments such as these are instantly more meaningful than a tick, a single word or a numerical score e.g. 2/5. The best marking observed included new student learning targets which has a positive impact on marking.

Planning for lessons is mainly good but sometimes lesson objectives are too general for example, 'to read and translate a text of *perek*.' This objective does not explain specifically what a class or a group of students are expected to know, whereas the following example from a Biblical Hebrew lesson does: 'To recognise and be able to translate the locative and gentilic place suffixes.'

Limmudei Kodesh classes are set by ability and during the course of the year there is some movement, both up and down, between ability sets. Teacher's planning sheets contain a section labeled 'differentiation' where they are asked to show how, during the course of the lesson, they will meet the learning needs of students of different ability. Some differentiated planning is better than others. In a Biblical Hebrew lesson for example, the teacher had written: 'Columns of roots are in order of difficulty. Weaker groups will be allocated easier words,' while in a *gemara* lesson the teacher had written 'those pupils who want to challenge themselves further can attempt the extension work and the plenary task.' This particular *gemara* lesson was outstanding; however the differentiated task appears optional whereas in the first example the tasks were specific to both ability groups. The best examples of differentiation were in planning where teachers showed how they were going to meet the needs of individual students.

Quality of leadership in and management and governance of the school.

Grade: 1

The headteacher's excellent leadership has created a school that provides a high quality Jewish education for all its students. The headteacher and his newly created Jewish Studies Leadership team continually seek to improve all aspects of school life and have a strong sense of direction with clear priorities for improvement. In this, they are well supported by the Governing Body. The school's leadership has set, and continues to maintain, very high

aspirations for all students in their Jewish studies. Leaders and managers take great care to ensure that students are offered every opportunity to maximise their progress. Leadership and management in the sixth form are outstanding.

The leadership team has taken action to address the areas for improvement in the last report and consequently new skills based, level descriptors have been introduced for *Gemara* and a start has been made in developing skills based, level descriptors for *Chumash* for example: 'Put together letters and vowels to read basic familiar words.' (Level 1) to 'can independently research and prepare a topic of *Chumash* utilising a range of different *Mephorshim*, all of which are previously unseen.' (Level 10)

Although the quality of marking has improved also, the pace of development in both of these areas has been too slow.

In the girls' school a new leadership structure has also been, devolved and diversified, with subject leaders appointed for each strand of the curriculum. The new Head of Jewish Studies has identified correct priorities for action. The *Kodesh* leadership team at the girls' school receives the ongoing support and involvement of the headteacher.

The leadership team has a good awareness of the quality of teaching and learning in *Kodesh* through lesson observations and feedback to teachers. Although there is evidence that lessons are observed, many of the observation forms used for this purpose are dated by the day and month a lesson was seen but not by the year. This makes it difficult to assess how recently or how distantly the lesson was assessed. Roles and responsibilities are well-defined and professional development opportunities have further enhanced the effectiveness of managers at all levels.

The school is well staffed although sometimes hampered by the number of part-time teachers. However, the part-time nature of some of the *Kodesh* teaching does not detract from the excellence of its provision. Resources are effectively managed. The accommodation brings with it a number of constraints as the boys' site for example, cannot find the space to accommodate its excellent 6th Form *Beis* Programme and consequently, has classes running off-site. It would enhance the school's reputation as a quality provider of Jewish education, and make for a safer learning environment if the school was able, in the near future, to accommodate its off-site study programmes.

The school has maintained its very high standards over a number of years and possesses both a strong desire and a good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form is outstanding in all respects. Students have very mature attitudes to learning and are encouraged to do independent research and read widely. All are treated as individuals and their needs are recognised and met.

The sixth form provides students with two years of excellent teaching in *Limmudei Kodesh* combined with superb academic and personal care, guidance and support from their *rebbeim* and teachers. Standards are very high and students' achievement is outstanding.

They develop into thoughtful and mature young adults and relish the numerous opportunities, in which they can take responsibility, and help people in the community.

The *Beis* programme, incorporating Year 11 but focused mainly on Years 12 and 13 is a jewel in the crown of Hasmonean's Jewish educational provision. Here young men learn at a very high level in preparation for entry to *yeshiva* and are taught by excellent teachers secure in their subject knowledge and gifted in their delivery of it.

In the girls' school, as part of the *Chaburah* Programme, an impressive range of strategies were used to teach the topic of the *Korban Shelamim*, including excellent PowerPoint presentations by Year 11 students, thought showers (a group creativity technique designed to generate a large number of ideas for the solution of a problem) and paired discussion. In Years 12 and 13 girls attend the *Midrasha* which aims to develop within them 'a meaningful knowledge of the fundamental tenets of Judaism and an understanding of a wide range of Jewish texts, philosophy, laws, personalities and events.' The school achieves this aim by providing a range of learning sessions which include three weekly *Chumash* lessons focusing on in-depth learning, relevance and application.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are as effective as in the main school. The courses offered are predominantly in higher level Jewish learning reflecting students' aspirations and interests. Nearly 100% of them continue into higher education at seminaries, yeshiva and university.

Although, financially, the funding for the sixth form is subsidised from the main school budget, it offers outstanding value for money.

Quality of the Jewish curriculum

Grade 1

The curriculum is broad in both the boys and the girls' schools and most appropriate for the needs of the students. In addition to public examination syllabuses in Religious Studies (Judaism) Modern Hebrew and Biblical Hebrew, the school offers a range of *Kodesh* subjects including *Gemara*, *Chumash*, *Nach*, *Dinim*, *Halacha* and *Jewish History*. Although Modern Hebrew is part of the school's GCSE Modern Foreign Languages programme it clearly has an additional impact on textual learning by sharpening students' reading and translation skills. The formal curriculum is enhanced by enrichment programmes and extra-curricular activities including learning programmes during school holidays and a highly successful Sunday study morning where following a well attended *Avos Ubanim Shacharis*, boys from Year 7 – Year 10, have breakfast and then join two compulsory *shiurim* with the option of attending a third.

Most Jewish curriculum areas are supported by schemes of work which outline what is to be taught but they vary in quality. Very good examples were seen for Year 7 in *Gemara*. These are detailed and provide a highly useful guide for teaching. Elsewhere, schemes of work are restricted to short headings of learning objectives which inform teachers what they are expected to teach in the broadest sense but not in the detail.

The school has two informal educators, one for the boys' school and one for the girls' school who organise *Shabbatonim*, guest speakers, walking tours and trips including an exploration of Jewish heritage and the experiencing of different cultures across Europe for Years 8, 9

and 10 and a Poland trip for sixth form students. Formal study is of crucial importance in the Jewish learning process but experiential learning, which is provided at Hasmonian through its informal education programmes is also of great importance as it helps, to put into practice the Jewish values which students have learned for example, by organising *tzedaka* events and strengthens their Jewish identity.

Quality of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Grade 1

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is outstanding. In both schools students show courtesy and consideration for others. Among a range of social activities, students in the girls’ school help autistic children in their homes and also support Somali children to develop their English language skills; while in the boys’ school, Year 11 students organise and lead *Shabbat* prayer services at Clore Manor Home for the Aged. There is a *Kesher* Partner Programme in both schools where Year 12 students buddy their Year 7 counterparts.

The school facilitates extensive *tzedaka* activities which raise substantial amounts for the local community and other charitable projects both Jewish and non-Jewish.

The school completely fulfils its statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. Students, both boys and girls *daven* generally with *kavonah*. There is an impressive *Shacharis* service at the boys’ school, which is well attended and expertly led by students, followed by a breakfast provided by the school. There are strong links with external agencies which underpin the school’s commitment to provide outstanding levels of care, guidance and support for all students.

Views of parents and carers

Pikuach invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hasmonian High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children. The inspectors received 88 completed questionnaires.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and its Jewish education provision. The vast majority feel that the school encourages high standards in *Limmudei Kodesh* and that the life of the school gives their children a good understanding of Jewish values.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding

		school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.