

Hertsmere Jewish Primary School

Inspection report

LEA	Hertfordshire
Inspection dates	22 & 23 February 2006
Lead inspector	Mrs Fayge Levenberg
Team inspector	Rev Michael Binstock

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

Type of School	Primary	Watling Street, Radlett, Herts	
School category	Voluntary Aided	WD7 7LQ	
Age range of pupils	3 - 11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01923 855857
Number on roll	480	Fax number	01923 853399
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs R Hilsenrath
Date of previous inspection	January 2001	Headteacher	Mrs M Bazak

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Introduction

Description of the school

The Hertsmere Jewish Primary School opened in 1999 with two reception and one Year 1 class. It has since grown to its full capacity as a two-form entry for boys and girls and the roll is now 480. It is a modern orthodox Jewish school run under the auspices of the United Synagogue. 30% of the school day is devoted to Jewish Studies. The school includes a nursery of 60 children. They are accommodated in two sessions, with 30 attending in the morning and 30 in the afternoon.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness its provision for Jewish education

The Jewish Studies department of the Hertsmere Jewish Primary School is very good overall with some outstanding features. Considerable progress has been made in all areas since the previous inspection. The needs of the overwhelming majority of the pupils are met resulting in well-adjusted, happy and healthy pupils working in a safe and secure environment.

Among the school's strengths are its leadership and management. The Head of Jewish Studies who is also the deputy head has a very clear vision of the school and understands what is needed to move the school forward. An outstanding feature is the contribution the whole school community makes to the religious ethos and the way all staff work together to promote its aims. Another significant strength is the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and the excellent manner in which they conduct themselves during *Tefillah*, in the classrooms, and around the school admirably reflects its Jewish values and ethos. This permeates every aspect of the school day.

Teachers and pupils relate very well to each other. The teachers are well-supported by the Head of Jewish Studies and they in turn, are highly dedicated and motivated. The school places great emphasis on pupils gaining the skills to read and write Hebrew and these are well developed and built upon as pupils advance through the school.

Pupils in the Foundation Stage make very good progress. During the week of the inspection they were learning about the weekly *Sidra*, the forthcoming festival of *Purim* and Hebrew letters and vowels to introduce reading. Excellent resources were used to support these lessons including the active involvement of parents.

Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further

The inspectors found no weakness and they agree with the school's view regarding those areas identified for further development. They are:

- to further develop the procedures for assessment and target setting
- to further develop the provision for higher achievers by providing more challenging tasks

Achievement and standards

Whilst pupils' prior attainment varies considerably, most, including those with learning difficulties achieve well and make very good progress as they advance through the school. The standard of Hebrew reading is good overall and in some cases, pupils read with outstanding accuracy and fluency. Script writing is introduced in Year 2 and most pupils gain competence in this skill so that by Key Stage 2, most are able to write with confidence.

Most pupils meet challenging targets. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, they successfully learned some Hebrew prefixes to prepare them for the study of *Chumash* and in a Year 6 *Mishnah* lesson, pupils enjoyed learning the names and contents of the *Shishah Sedarim* (Six Orders).

Jewish general knowledge is taught consistently throughout the school. Pupils in Year 2 were able to recite the names of the Jewish months fluently and knew the names and content of recent *Sidrot*. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have good Jewish general knowledge and can discuss many subjects intelligently and articulately. These very good standards are due to the constant reinforcement in all classes across the school.

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being

The school's overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. In the previous Pikuach inspection report, cultural development was judged as being satisfactory, and this has now greatly improved. For example, pupils are now taught about other faith traditions. The school fully complies with the statutory requirements by providing daily acts of collective worship (*Tefillah*) for all pupils in a variety of settings. The manner in which *Tefillah* is conducted is a strength of the school and admirably reflects its ethos and Jewish values.

Attendance is good and the evidence gained from lesson observations and discussions with pupils confirms that they very much enjoy their Jewish education. To quote one pupil in Year 2, 'Jewish Studies is amazing'. The views of pupils are taken seriously and issues are raised by means of the effective school council. For example, the condition of the toilets in the playground was improved as a direct result of the council. Pupils understand and appreciate the importance of leading healthy lifestyles and the school provides many opportunities for them to do so. For example, a variety of healthy foods are available at lunchtime and pupils are encouraged to make appropriate choices. Behaviour is outstanding and pupils display an impressive degree of *derech erez* (politeness and courtesy) to visitors, teachers and peers. This is

reinforced by the very good displays around the school and particularly, the display in the school entrance to highlight the rules for a happy school. The school has a very calm environment and pupils move around the building in an exemplary manner. Pupils contribute to the Jewish and wider communities in a variety of ways, for example by collecting money for *tzedakah* (charity).

Grade: 1

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and this confirms the view of the school. Teachers conduct themselves in a most professional manner, they are deeply committed to the school and their pupils. The outcome of their dedication and hard work is a proactive, effective team. They have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and pupils respond with enthusiasm and enjoyment.

Most Jewish Studies teachers have qualified teacher status and most were observed during the inspection. Long, medium and short term planning is thorough and is constantly evaluated. The planning includes differentiated tasks and the school feels that this is an area that can be further developed so that pupils of higher ability can be set even more challenging tasks. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported effectively by support staff.

Teaching resources are very good and in Key Stage 2, they are enhanced by interactive boards which were used to great effect in all lessons observed.

Assessment of pupils' progress has improved since the previous inspection. All teachers maintain accurate records which are used to inform future planning. The Jewish Studies Department has started to set individual targets, and pupils are provided with guidelines so that they can be involved in the assessment process. This is now being developed across the whole department. Parents are strongly encouraged to be involved in their children's learning, for example by listening to their *D'var Torah* (study of the weekly Torah portion).

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

The quality and range of the curriculum is very good. It is suitably broad and balanced, providing a solid foundation of Jewish knowledge and textual skills, while implanting Jewish attitudes, beliefs and practice. The Head of Jewish Studies has direct responsibility for PSICHE which contributes to the pupils' capacity to stay healthy and safe. There is outstanding integration with secular

studies; the feeling that this is one school with one staff led by one team is felt very strongly. The school's conscious decision to combine the role of deputy with that of head of Jewish studies, the involvement and interest of the head in vision and decision making and the effort of all the teachers to promote and support each other and the combined curriculum, results in a school where Jewish studies is not a separate entity but part of a glorious educational experience for the children where Torah values are taught within a framework of a rich and full curriculum. The school admirably fulfils its mission statement to foster a love and knowledge of Judaism and, combined with the secular curriculum, to promote the intellectual, social and spiritual growth of the pupils. An example of integration within a lesson is in the excellent music provision through the teaching of songs in a variety of languages including Hebrew, Yiddish and Ladino. Drama also features prominently particularly in the presentations to celebrate the festivals.

The curriculum is enhanced by some excellent extra-curricular activities including an annual residential Shabbaton for Year 6, a school choir and Israeli dancing.

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support

The provision for pupils' care, guidance and support is outstanding. The school has clear policies on Anti-Bullying, Health and Safety and Child Protection. This provision promotes the pupils' health and safety and is greatly valued by parents. Discussions with pupils reveal that they feel very safe and secure and know to whom they should turn in the event they have a problem.

Year 6 pupils are given valuable advice and support in the choice of their secondary school transfer and the evidence indicates that pupils are well prepared for transition.

Grade: 1

Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding and underpins the school's many strengths. The Headteacher and governors are actively involved and play a very prominent role in all areas of Jewish Studies. It is their vision for pupils to achieve the highest possible standards. They therefore ensure that every support is given to the Head of Jewish Studies to turn this vision into a reality. The head of Jewish Studies on his part provides strong and effective leadership to all staff.

Induction for new teachers is very good and comments received indicate that the induction process is greatly valued as it gives the teachers confidence and encouragement. Specific In-service training (inset) is provided for Jewish Studies teachers and they also participate in whole school inset.

The Head of Jewish Studies has improved the Jewish Studies development plan and has addressed the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report. The current plan clearly prioritises tasks with appropriate criteria for measuring success. He monitors both teaching and learning and is well aware of teachers' strengths as well as those areas where further development is required. The curriculum document has been well developed under his leadership and direction and impacts most positively on pupils' learning. He ensures that assessment takes place to monitor progress and inform future planning and is aware of the need to develop the assessment procedures still further. Comments and feedback from parents indicate a high level of satisfaction for the Jewish Studies provision at the school.

The school is well aware of its strengths and the areas that need further development. It is therefore well placed to effect further improvement.

Grade: 1

