

## Hertsmere Jewish Primary School Radlett, Herts WD7 7LQ

#### Inspection report

LA Hertfordshire

Inspection dates 15 & 19 January 2009 Lead inspector Mr John Gordon Team inspector Rev Michael Binstock

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

Type of School Primary School address Watling Street, Radlett, Herts

WD7 7LQ

School category Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils 3 - 11

Gender and Number Mixed Telephone number 01923 855857 of pupils on roll 477 Fax number 01923 853399
Appropriate authority The governing body Chair of governors Mrs R Hilsenrath

Date of previous inspection 22 & 23 February Headteacher Mrs M Bazak

2006

#### © Pikuach copyright 2006

#### Website: www.bod.org.uk

This document has been modified from the *Every child matters: framework for the inspection of schools in England from September 2005* with their permission.

It may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

### Introduction

### **Description of the school**

Hertsmere Jewish Primary School is a two-form entry modern orthodox Jewish school for boys and girls drawing the majority of its pupils from families living in Borehamwood, Elstree and Radlett in South Hertfordshire. Having opened in 1999 under the auspices of the United Synagogue, it has now reached full size with 480 pupils currently on roll.

The school has a standing policy of close curricular integration between Jewish Studies and the secular national curriculum wherever this is possible. Timetabled Jewish Studies lessons, religious assemblies and associated activities occupy approximately 30% of the school day in the main school.

Jewish education and a commitment to and love of Israel is central to the ethos of the school and plays a major part in promoting personal development.

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

# Overall effectiveness of provision for Jewish education

The school's own assessment of the overall effectiveness of its provision for Jewish education is outstanding. In the inspectors' judgement it is of outstanding quality.

### The school's main strengths lie in:

- its full commitment to maintaining and strengthening the Jewish values of the children and families it serves
- its clear vision of what the Jewish Studies curriculum should be offering to its pupils in order to achieve this
- the evidence for effective cross-curricular integration between many areas of the school's Jewish Studies and secular curricula
- the total commitment of all the school staff working together as a very effective team
- the firm proactive leadership given by the Headteacher, the Head of Jewish Studies and the Key Stage Leaders in developing and implementing the Jewish Studies curriculum
- the teachers' high expectations of their pupils and the high standards of learning and teaching that the school strives to achieve
- the overall competence and strong personal commitment of the Jewish Studies teaching and support staff and the commitment of the school to furthering their continuing professional development
- the positive attitudes and application of the pupils with regard to their Jewish studies
- its highly supportive governing and parent body.

### The school's capacity to improve is reflected in:

 a strong school ethos focused on achieving and maintaining high standards, backed up by the provision of effective additional support arrangements for helping underachievers improve their performance in areas such as Hebrew reading

- the excellent working relationship with external agencies in developing curriculum resources
- the improvement since the last inspection in providing for differentiation in learning activities for the more gifted evident in teachers' planning of their lessons
- its policy of setting and reviewing learning targets for the pupils and its ongoing efforts to refine and improve its systems for assessing their performance and attainment.

#### Grade: 1

### Quality and standards in the Foundation Stage

The inspectors agree with the school's view that standards have been steadily rising since the last inspection and that, in relation to their ability, its children in the 3-5 year age band are attaining high standards in their Jewish education when compared to those in other similar schools. Provision is efficient and effective both in direction and monitoring by all Early Years Practitioners and Foundation Stage Leaders.

The Jewish curriculum of the school contributes significantly to realising national Early Learning goals, particularly with regard to Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Communication, Language and Literacy, and Knowledge and Understanding of the World.

This was observed in lessons in both Nursery and Reception classes dealing with the story (taken from the weekly *Parashah*) of the infant Moses being hidden in the bulrushes. There was sustained attentive listening by the whole class group and skilful prompting by the teachers helped children to identify the resemblances between their own immediate family and that of baby Moses, and recognise, conceptualise and empathise with natural human instincts such as kindness, family love and compassion.

### Grade: 1

### What the school should do to improve further

There are no major areas of weakness but, in the inspectors' view, the school may wish to consider a range of strategies for teaching grammar.

### **Achievement and standards**

The level and depth of children's Jewish knowledge and religious practice on entry to the school is variable but, once embarked on their programme of Jewish Studies, the progress of most pupils is at least good and in many cases outstanding, in line with the school's expectations.

Significant underachievement is confined to:

- (a) a small number of children within the normal ability range but with specific identified learning difficulties (for example, in mastering Hebrew reading and writing) and
- (b) children with special educational needs for whom Jewish Studies targets are included in their Individual Education Plans.

In both cases additional learning support is provided and the progress of children towards their learning targets is carefully monitored and regularly assessed. Parents are kept informed of their children's Jewish Studies learning problems, needs and progress by means of an individual message book/homework diary which also provides a channel for two-way written communication between teachers and parents over matters of concern. The different ways in which parents are involved with their children's learning contributes to their success.

Grade: 1

### Personal development and well-being

The attention given to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's Personal, Social, Citizenship and Health Education curriculum is largely delivered through the medium of Jewish Studies and is led by the two Jewish Studies Key Stage Leaders.

In all lessons, assemblies and school activities every opportunity is taken to encourage and give recognition to the development of pupils' *middot tovot* (desirable personal qualities of character and social behaviour). The result is reflected in their excellent general behaviour about the school and in their attitudes towards their Jewish Studies which are for the most part refreshingly positive. Most enjoy the lessons and activities and work with interest and, in many cases, genuine enthusiasm.

The prayer assembly (*Tefillah*) for Years 2 to 6, led by the Head of Jewish Studies, provides pupils with a wonderful opportunity to experience living Judaism. The girls lead *Havdalah* and boys use the skills required for *Kriat haTorah*.

The school prepares children for recognising their responsibility to contribute to both the Jewish and wider communities by providing them with suitable opportunities for social action and raising money for charitable causes. Cultural diversity education is well promoted through a range of partnership programmes and curriculum development networks.

Grade: 1

### **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching takes place in mixed ability classes and teachers' planning of their lessons shows that they are aware of the need to provide challenging work for the more able – a need which was identified at the time of the last inspection – as well as for the less able and those of average ability.

The overall quality of all the teaching and learning was at least good, with much of near-outstanding or outstanding quality. Teachers' oral presentation of their material was very well matched to the needs, capabilities and perceptions of children. Pupils' attention and interest were held by suitable changes of activity at appropriate intervals. Very effective use was made of both interactive and ordinary whiteboards and other illustrative aids and materials for children to see, listen to and handle.

Teachers have very secure subject knowledge and are excellent role models for pupils to emulate. They display enormous enthusiasm and as a result, pupils are motivated to learn and greatly enjoy their lessons.

The best lessons seen were exciting and interesting and teachers used a variety of strategies to ensure that pupils were kept on task. However, in a small minority of lessons, teacher-led oral exposition went on for too long and the attention of some pupils was not always sustained.

Standards of Hebrew reading achieved by pupils in relation to their stage and ability levels are generally good. The school has developed an excellent resource called 'Additional Hebrew Support' (AHS), which has proved very successful.

Grade: 2

### **Curriculum and other activities**

The school has developed its own unique curriculum which achieves breadth and balance through four main areas of study which are coherent with the Jewish religious ethos of the school.

There is outstanding cross-curricular integration with the National Curriculum. This can be seen in the promotion of good standards of written literacy and creative writing through the composition of *Divrei Torah* (compositions on moral or religious issues arising from the sacred texts) by the pupils of Year 6. PSHCE is taught within and through the JS curriculum. Israel's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated through a three day event depicting aspects of its history and geography.

The formal Jewish Studies curriculum is enhanced by some excellent teacher-led extra-curricular enrichment activities including:

- the teaching of the vocal skills needed for *Kriat HaTorah* (chanting from the Torah scrolls) for Year 6 boys
- a highly popular *Rosh Chodesh* club for Year 6 girls which meets at the beginning of each new month of the Jewish calendar
- choir and Israeli dance groups
- an annual residential *Shabbaton* (prayer and study Sabbath) for Year 6 pupils.

#### Grade: 1

### Care, guidance and support

There are effective arrangements for monitoring and ensuring site security and for safeguarding pupils at all points of the school day. Inspectors saw ample evidence of the vigilance and prompt action of the Headteacher and staff in this respect during the course of the present inspection.

Arrangements for daily acts of collective worship fully comply with the requirements of the relevant Education Acts. The quality of the prayer assemblies (*Tefillah*) seen at the beginning of the school week was excellent and fully engaged the attention, interest and active participation of all the pupils. The constraints imposed by the use of the school's small assembly hall for midday lunch mean that Grace after Meals (*Birkat haMazon*) is normally recited by classes in their teaching bases at the beginning of the afternoon session.

### Grade: 1

### Leadership and management

A strong sense of purpose and high aspiration pervades this school to which its Governing Body gives unstinting support. The school's current self-evaluation documents show a realistic appreciation of what the Jewish Studies curriculum has achieved so far and what it should now be aiming to do for the future.

The school is to be commended for establishing close liaison with the local Jewish secondary school and for ensuring a smooth transition process.

The overall quality of leadership and management is outstanding. Key factors in ensuring high-quality Jewish Studies provision are the personal commitment and involvement of the Headteacher and the specialist competence of the Head of Jewish Studies who very effectively leads his team of well qualified staff.

Middle management have a perceptive understanding of the role of Jewish Studies in the whole curriculum to be delivered at each stage. The initiative that they display, the teaching models they provide and their methodological expertise are all of excellent quality and offer their departmental colleagues much valuable educational direction and guidance.

In promoting the improvement of teacher performance, there is a commitment to self-evaluation and performance appraisal to help guide decisions affecting the continuing professional development of all Jewish Studies staff. There is a carefully structured induction programme for all new members of staff.

The school works closely with SEED to develop opportunities for parent education. This has a powerful impact on parental commitment and on pupils' religious knowledge and understanding.

Grade: 1