

King David High School

Inspection report

LEA	Liverpool
Inspected under the auspices of	Pikuach
Inspection dates	16-17 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Jeffrey Leader

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of students	11 - 18
Gender of students	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	662
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair	Mr Max Steinberg
Headteacher	Mrs Brigid Smith
Date of previous school inspection	20 – 21 September 2006
School address	Childwall Road Liverpool, Merseyside, L15 6UZ
Telephone number	0151 7227496
Fax number	0151 7380259
Email address	king-david@kingdavidhigh.liverpool.sch.uk

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two Pikuach inspectors. The inspectors spent most of their time looking at learning. They observed 5 lessons and 1 *davening* session covering all Jewish Studies teachers, and talked to staff, students and governors. They also scrutinised the school's documentation and a sample of students' written work. In addition, 13 parent and carer, and 3 Jewish Studies staff written responses to questionnaires were received and analysed as were responses to questionnaires from 56 students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the quality of teaching and learning
- the progress made by all groups of students
- the extent to which the curriculum, schemes of work and lesson planning meet the needs of all students.

Information about the school

King David High School is a small, mixed, Jewish faith-based comprehensive with 662 students on roll. The sixth form with 180 students is large for the size of the school. Fourteen places are reserved for students with an aptitude for music. Most other students come from a faith background. King David is a multi-faith school with a strong Jewish ethos even though Jewish students account for only 16% of the school population. The remainder are mainly Christian (72.8%) with 4% of students from Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh religions.

The percentage of students who apply for free school meals is 3%. The number of students with English as an additional language is low. The number of students having special educational needs including those with statements is below the national average. The majority of students are white British.

The school holds a modern Jewish orthodox position. It accepts as Jewish, students who are not halachically Jewish. The school has altered its admissions policy in line with the House of Lords' ruling in the JFS case. Most students come from King David Primary School.

The Liverpool Jewish Community has declined markedly in both religious commitment and numbers in recent years whilst the school has maintained and indeed increased its general numbers. However, the number of Jewish students attending since the last Pikuach inspection four years ago has decreased by 6%.

The school's self-evaluation for Jewish Studies maintains that the decrease in numbers, together with the weakening of Jewish traditions within the community, means that students are less knowledgeable in Judaism and Hebrew than previously.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The quality of Jewish education at King David High School is satisfactory. Students are happy and work hard. Parents are divided equally in their view of what the school achieves in Jewish Studies. Half appreciate what the school is trying to do while the remaining half feels that there needs to be a significant improvement in Jewish Studies provision.

There are effective partnerships with other organisations which promote Jewish learning and well-being and enhance the students' personal development.

Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good examples but it lacks consistency. The present curriculum for Jewish Studies lacks the structure necessary to ensure that students are exposed to learning which is informative, engaging and challenging.

The school provides an excellent level of care, guidance and support.

Students' behaviour, both in class and around the school is good overall. Students enjoy school and speak positively about their Jewish Studies. However, at the pre-GCSE stage they feel that their Jewish learning, especially in the areas of Bible and Festival study, is often repetitive and not challenging enough. The extra provision provided in the school by Jewish outreach organisations has had a very positive effect on the students' Jewish identity and their attitude to Jewish learning.

The effectiveness of leadership and management is satisfactory. The Head of Jewish Studies is a long-serving, highly valued member of staff who teaches Judaism with warmth and devotion which is very much appreciated by students, colleagues and parents. The senior leadership team recognises that provision in Jewish Studies needs to be better and to achieve this, suitable plans aimed at improving areas of weakness need to be drawn up and senior staff have to be more proactive in taking effective steps to secure the delivery of high-quality, Jewish education. This has still to happen but the talent available among senior staff and governors suggests that, at this stage, the capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory rather than inadequate.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Improve the quality of provision by:

- Developing the Jewish Studies curriculum within a structure providing real balance, depth, continuity and challenge which aims to extend students' Jewish learning as they move up the school.
- Developing a range of effective teaching strategies to include the use of information technology, effective assessment procedures and lesson planning that not only takes account of but also specifies provision for students of different abilities.
- Ensuring that a daily act of collective worship is provided for all students that is both meaningful and relevant.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of students

3

Students' achievement in their Jewish Studies overall is satisfactory. While students continue to achieve well at GCSE and A level this is less evident in the younger years where progress in Jewish Studies and *Ivrit* (Modern Hebrew) is slower.

Students answer questions well in both Jewish Studies and *Ivrit* lessons. There was evidence of students able to read fluently and accurately in Hebrew but some students suggested that this was because they receive extra support outside the school rather than targeted support within. This is supported by a parent who wrote: 'If we had not done it at home she would not have learned to read.'

Discussions with learners reveal an articulate Jewish student body, willing to learn and comfortable with their identity, and show that most students have positive feelings towards their Jewish Studies and enjoy them most when topical discussion is involved. Key Stage 3 students enjoy Jewish history but are critical of subjects that deal with biblical study or Jewish observance. These they feel are repetitive and not challenging enough. There was a general plea throughout the year groups for more Israel-related study and more occasions when the entire Jewish student body could engage together.

Students' written responses to inspection questionnaires are even more revealing. These show that students believe overwhelmingly that the school helps them to be proud of being Jewish. Most feel that they are doing well in Jewish Studies but significant numbers in Key Stage 4 do not think they are doing well enough. Many students throughout all year groups feel that homework does not help them to 'understand and improve' their work in Jewish Studies or *Ivrit*. Similar numbers feel that misbehaviour in some Jewish studies lessons is a barrier to effective learning.

Attendance at King David is excellent and students feel safe in school. They have a very clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and are polite and courteous. They are thoughtful, caring and responsive to each other's feelings and needs. They grow in confidence and enjoy taking on responsibility.

The school has instituted a 'thought for the day' to meet the requirement for daily collective worship. However, students reveal in discussions that this does not always take place and when it does it is often not taken seriously by students or their teachers.

In addition, there are 'davening' sessions for Jewish students, male and female, held on a weekly basis but these are not always well attended. In an observed girls' davening session, the students behaved impeccably and followed the service in their *siddurim* (prayer books). However, it is questionable as to how much of the service the girls understood in the sense of understanding the meaning of Hebrew prayers they were reciting.

These are the grades for students' outcomes

Students' attainment¹	3
The quality of students' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	3
How well do students achieve and enjoy their learning?	3
To what extent do students feel safe?	1
How well do students behave?	2
To what extent do students adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do students contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Students' attendance ¹	1
How well do students develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory overall with some good examples but there has been no significant improvement since the previous inspection four years ago. The relationship between teachers and their students in Jewish Studies is mostly good but teachers' expectations are not high enough and some students complained about a lack of challenge in their Jewish learning. They found some topics repetitive and 'easy' and the occasional requirement to 'colour in worksheets' childish.

Although teachers' subject knowledge is strong the range of teaching styles they employ is fairly narrow and has a negative effect on the students' willingness to learn. The previous report made the same judgement and concluded that teaching

'should include the use of computers, if all students are to be fully challenged.' There is no evidence to suggest that four years later, this recommendation has been implemented.

There are some areas of relative weakness such as the teachers' lack of use of assessment to guide their teaching and planning. Teachers use oral questioning in lessons to gauge students' understanding but their responses to written work need to be vastly improved. Most students' work is marked and this does suggest that the teachers take an interest in what their students do. Other marked work did receive comments but often only with a tick and a grade. Marking in this way provides students with only a limited understanding of how they are doing in a specific topic area and the steps they need to take to improve. There are some examples of work being copied directly from the board into workbooks. The educational value of this practice is highly questionable.

With limited teaching time available for Jewish Studies, the school feels it is necessary to concentrate on subjects that are deemed to have the most impact on students. These include aspects of Jewish history, ethical teaching, Judaism in practice e.g. *Shabbat* and festivals, *Kashrut*, personal and family life and *Tzedakah* (charity).

Lesson planning in Jewish Studies is satisfactory. However, although students of lower, average and higher ability are highlighted in some lesson plans, no provision is made for them during the lesson. Consequently, in one lesson a gifted student, given the same work as his classmates, constantly, finished tasks ahead of them and was left with nothing to do.

In some respects, the curriculum is adequately matched to students' needs but in a limited way. At GCSE and AS level, for example, Judaism is taught to a strict syllabus and in this respect fully meets students' needs and aspirations. However, for the younger years the Jewish Studies curriculum appears to be limited in design, range and depth.

Outline syllabuses and schemes of work exist for Jewish history and *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* but in each topic area there is no breakdown of the knowledge, skills and understanding that students are required to achieve. By omitting these elements the Jewish Studies curriculum lacks balance, progression and depth. A consequence of this omission is that some students spoke negatively about the repetitive nature of their learning, especially in the area of biblical studies where they learn about the same characters and events that they were taught about in primary school.

These somewhat inadequate features of the formal Jewish curriculum however are supplemented by a range of informal activities that are much appreciated by the student body. Festivals and special days such as *Purim*, *Yom Ha'atzmaut* and *Yom Ha'shoah* are regularly celebrated and commemorated. Links to outreach organisations such as *Aish* and *Lubavitch*, whose rabbis visit and teach in the school, enhance the work of the formal staff and provide the students with different perspectives of Judaism in an encouraging and engaging way. Visits to Poland arranged by the *Aish* rabbi and a two month stay and link-up with JFS students at *Kibbutz Lavi* have had a very positive Jewish impact on King David students. The

informal curriculum also includes students participating in real experiences in the Jewish community such as Harold House youth programmes and the annual *Shabbaton* where up to 50 students are directly involved in leading the full *Shabbat* service in a local synagogue.

Grade: 3

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets students' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The department is led by the long serving Head of Jewish Studies who is highly valued and respected by staff, students and parents. The headteacher has a clear vision of where the school needs to be going Jewishly and is dedicated to leading a school which retains its Jewish values and will provide a quality education for its Jewish students aimed at strengthening and consolidating their Jewish identity. The link governor for Jewish Studies who possesses a good level of insight and an ability to provide a high level of professional challenge is helping to make a significant contribution to the Jewish development of the school. She has, for example, introduced the idea of 'Jewish Captains' who take on a Jewish responsibility for their prospective year groups.

Although the senior leadership team recognise the need to improve provision in Jewish Studies they need to make suitable plans aimed at achieving it. They need to be more proactive in taking effective steps to secure high-quality teaching in Jewish Studies. Members of the school leadership team do monitor performance but due to a lack of Jewish knowledge are unable to offer professional advice in the area of curriculum development.

Staff questionnaire responses reveal support for the way the department is led. Teachers also feel strongly that their contribution to the school's Jewish Studies provision is 'valued'.

Only a small number of responses to parents (13) were returned to the inspectors. They reveal that parents are divided equally in their estimation of what the school achieves in Jewish Studies. While most agree that 'the life of the school gives my child a good understanding of Jewish values,' there are concerns about the standard of Jewish education provided and a perceived lack of Jewish extra-curricular activities.

Leaders work together well with parents and outside agencies to support students and to ensure that there are no forms of discrimination. Given its student make-up the school promotes community cohesion very successfully. It has good links with other Jewish schools and also with local state schools.

The community looks forward to the creation of a state of the art campus in September 2011 which should improve the accommodation and facilities for Jewish Studies considerably.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	Not inspected
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion through the Jewish Studies curriculum	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3
Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3

Formal provision for students in the sixth form is satisfactory. Students do very well when they sit for public examinations in Jewish subjects at AS and A level but the number entering is small. Some sixth form students would have liked to have taken Jewish Studies at Advanced level but claim that they are sometimes limited by the school's system of examination choice. There have been occasions, however, when Jewish Studies has been arranged outside option choices but not this year as the situation did not arise.

Less formally, students attend sessions given by the outreach rabbis and these are both enjoyed and valued.

Students clearly take responsibility for their own health, safety and well-being. The inspectors were very impressed by the '*Nishnoshim*' scheme set up by the previous Head Girl and carried on in her memory by sixth form students who contribute very well to the school and the wider community in a number of ways including acting as mentors to younger students and raising *tzedakah* (charity) that benefits worthy causes, both Jewish and non-Jewish. The *Nishnoshim* group has even organised in-service training for non-Jewish staff at school. These positive attitudes and initiatives make a sound contribution to students' development of skills for their future economic well-being.

Sixth form students participate in the JNF's Ambassador Programme which aims to prepare them for what could be a difficult time on university campuses dealing with possible challenges in relation to Judaism and Israel. The programme is run on a competitive basis between a number of Jewish secondary schools. King David High School is to be highly commended for achieving first place in last year's competition.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its students' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its students well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its students. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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 students. Pikuach inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment: the standard of the students' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.

Progress: the rate at which students are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the students' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

Achievement: the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.

Capacity to improve: the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.

Leadership and management: the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.

