

PARDES HOUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Inspection report

LEA Barnet

Inspection dates 12-13 December 2006

Inspected under the auspices of Pikuach

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

Type of School Primary School address Hendon Lane Voluntary Aided School category **Finchley** Age range of pupils London N3 1SA 4-11 Gender of pupils **Boys** Telephone number 0208 343 3568 Number on roll 190 Fax number 0208 343 4804 Appropriate authority Chair of Governors Barnet Mr A Sprung Date of previous inspection 12-13 March 2003 Menahel Rabbi N Lieberman

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Introduction

Description of the school

Pardes House Primary School is an orthodox Jewish School for boys, founded in 1952. The great majority of pupils are from Golders Green and surrounding areas, although some come for further away. The religious affiliation of the school is strictly orthodox. Most of the pupils leaving the school go on to the adjoining grammar school.

There are several distinctive features of the school, which contribute to its special nature and reflect the values of Orthodox Judaism. A sizeable proportion of the timetable is devoted to Limmudei Kodesh, which is integrated into an elongated school day. The school day for years 4 to 6 finishes at 5.20 p.m. On Sundays there are additional sessions in Limmudei Kodesh for all classes.

Very recently, the school has appointed a Menahel to join the leadership of the school and to direct the school forward in achieving its stated aims of providing an excellent *chinuch* for its pupils, both in Limmudei Kodesh and in the National Curriculum provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of its provision for Jewish education

The Limmudei Kodesh department of the Pardes House Primary School is good overall, with some very good and outstanding features.

The strength of the Limmudei Kodesh department lies in the quality of teaching, which ensures that good progress is being made by nearly all pupils. Staff have excellent subject knowledge and present as ideal role models for their pupils. They display great care and consideration for their pupils. Staff morale is high and pupils are happy and confident within the school environment.

The school's most effective features are: dynamic leadership of the new Menahel; consistently high quality of the teaching; high standards in Hebrew reading and *Gemoro*; the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, and the pastoral care given by teachers.

Areas for development include: implementing an already written formal curriculum in all areas of Limmudei Kodesh; continuing to raise the standards of Jewish General Knowledge by building on the progress since the last inspection; enhancing the teaching of *Chumash* by incorporating the teaching of *Dikduk* consistently and progressively throughout the school, and co-ordinating the extensive SEN (Special Educational Needs) support in an effective way, which will maximise this good provision.

There has been clear progress made since the last inspection, with nearly all the key issues for action, delineated in the last report, achieved and acted upon. The school now has a very good capacity for further progress. The school's new Senior Management Team for Limmudei Kodesh, headed by the dynamic and well liked Menahel, and supported by a dedicated team of senior Rebbes and governors, is well placed to meet the needs of the school. There can be confidence that the Limmudei Kodesh provision can be further enhanced in the future. This is evidenced by the impressive evaluation of the school's strengths, weaknesses and areas for development, prepared by the new Menahel in only a very short time since assuming office.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement an already written in-depth Limmudei Kodesh curriculum in all areas, which will ensure progression and appropriate coverage.
- Continue to raise the standards of Jewish General Knowledge throughout the school by high-profiling this subject for careful planning and assessment, and linking it with a progression of appropriate tests, which will ensure that pupils retain knowledge as they move up the school.
- Further enhance the teaching of *Chumash* by ensuring that this subject is taught in a way, which builds pupils' skills and understanding, in addition to being able to translate taught *pesukim*.

 Co-ordinate effectively the already good provision for SEN support, which would ensure that all pupils' progress is appropriately tracked and supported.

Achievement and standards

Standards in Limmudei Kodesh, overall, are impressive. The standards achieved by most pupils in lessons that were observed were, overall, good and, in many cases, very good. This was confirmed by the testing of pupils from four classes.

Standards in Hebrew reading throughout the school are very impressive, with pupils generally reading with accuracy and fluency. This skill has been focused upon recently by an innovation of the new Menahel, whereby parents reinforce reading at home through a system of rewards linked to school. Standards in *Chumash* are good; particularly impressive is the way that pupils retain accuracy in translating *pesukim* recently learnt. Pupils' knowledge of grammatical aspects of *Chumash* is much less developed and some pupils are unsure of aspects such as basic prefixes and suffixes. Standards in *Gemoro* are good; however, standards in Jewish General Knowledge, although improving, are still only sound. In all other areas, good levels of achievement are reached.

The school provides very good support for children of lower attainment, thus ensuring that the progress of nearly all pupils, throughout the school, is at least good, thus meeting the school's expectations. However, this support of pupils with SEN could be really maximised if a system of co-ordination could be implemented effectively.

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being

The school's provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school fully complies with the statutory requirements of a daily act of collective worship by providing *Shacharis* (with breakfast for the two top classes) and *Minchah* daily for its pupils. The manner in which *Tefillah* is conducted in most of the classes reflects the school's ethos and Jewish values.

Attendance is good and the evidence gained from lesson observation and discussions with pupils confirms that they fully enjoy their Jewish education. Pupils understand and appreciate the importance of leading healthy lifestyles and the school provides opportunities for them to do so, for example pupils are advised which foods are healthy for them.

Behaviour is good and pupils display an impressive degree of *derech eretz* to visitors, teachers and peers. During the inspection it was noted that pupils continually held doors open for visitors and warmly greeted the members of the inspection team. The displays in the classrooms and corridors, in the main, are effective and reinforce good *middos*.

Extra-curricular events, which nurture personal development, take place regularly throughout the school year. A shining example of this is the annual *Shabbos Hisachdus* event, which is held by the school for pupils from years 4 to 6. The weekend involves *davening*, eating *Shabbos* meals together, singing *zemiros*, and boys saying *Divrei Torah*. The *Melava Malka* part of the weekend is attended by many fathers and grandfathers. The ensuing atmosphere is enjoyed by all the pupils and has a clear impact on the personal development of pupils.

Grade: 1

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. During the inspection 12 lessons were observed, all but one of which was at least good, with several very good and two KS1 lessons judged as outstanding. Rebbes are very committed to their pupils' progress, often giving up their spare time to help talmidim. They act as excellent role models and it is particularly impressive to see how teachers offer a caring and supportive approach to their pupils. In nearly all lessons, classes are well managed, discipline is good, and Rebbes offer praise and encouragement appropriately on a regular basis. respond with enthusiasm and are involved and interested. strategies are used appropriately within lessons. However, the most effective approaches in the school, to help pupils of lower attainment, occur through the extensive support system available in nearly all classes, when Rebbes take out from the class individual pupils, who need help. Recently, regular staff meetings have been introduced, many of which focus on professional development. This is to be encouraged, along with the organising of other opportunities for professional development.

In some classes, there are quality summative and formative assessments, which inform lesson planning. However, this needs to be systematically introduced in all classes so that the assessment and planning stages are closely linked to pupils' learning. The school is correct in prioritising the implementation of the curriculum as this will help teachers to plan and assess in an organised way.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

The school provides a sound, broad and balanced Limmudei Kodesh curriculum. It displays breadth across a wide range of Limmudei Kodesh subjects, ranging from basic Hebrew reading, *Chumash*, *Rashi*, *Sedra*, *Dinim* and Jewish General Knowledge and *Mishnah*, to the learning of *Gemoro* by the pupils in Years 5 and 6.

Chumash translation is introduced in Year 1 and then taught throughout the school. Each class learns the weekly Sedra, but it appears that all classes start again from the beginning of the Sedra, year on year. There is a lack of curriculum direction in Chumash, particularly the skills associated with Dikduk, appropriate for each year group. Pupils in Year 2 begin to learn Rashi, and the study of Mishnayos commences towards the end of Year 2, and is taught until the end of Year 4.

There is no formal written curriculum implemented at the present time. A previous Menahel prepared a comprehensive written syllabus for all classes; the new Menahel will work through it and intends to implement it in the near future. Work has recently been started on a Jewish General Knowledge curriculum and, with assistance from a number of members of staff, the first parts of it have been put into practice, with a new topic being developed month by month. This work is of a high quality and should be continued until there is a whole-school Jewish General Knowledge curriculum in place. During the month of *Cheshvan*, the topic learnt was the 39 *melochos* that are forbidden on *Shabbos*. This month, *Krias Hatorah* has been the chosen topic.

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support

The provision for support, guidance and welfare of pupils is a strength of the school. The school provides a safe and secure environment for its pupils. Security in the school is very effective. There is a full-time security officer and a new CCTV camera system in place, which ensures that visitors are carefully vetted before being admitted onto the school premises.

The new Menahel operates an 'open door' policy and children discuss issues with him and other members of staff on a regular basis. This is a most effective approach. The school has explicit anti-bullying, Health and Safety and Child Protection policies and effective arrangements for safeguarding pupils at all points in the school day. Teachers show care and sensitivity to children of lower attainment or those who have other learning difficulties. Supervision, at breaktime and lunchtime, is appropriate.

There are two full-time SEN teachers employed by the school and another specialist SEN teacher spends two half days in the school. In addition, several Rebbes are timetabled to work with some of the pupils, who need extra help.

The provision of supporting children of lower attainment is good and should be maximised by effective co-ordination.

There is strong support by parents for the school. A fair number of completed questionnaires was received by the inspection team and the overwhelming majority of them were supportive of the school in all aspects. The school is effective in the way that it deals with parents' concerns about what their children learn or how the pupils interact with friends and teachers. Appropriate information is available to parents regarding future educational choices for their children.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management

The management of Limmudei Kodesh is very good overall and is led with courage and conviction. There is a clear vision for success in Limmudei Kodesh and in the further enhancement of the school's ethos. The recent appointment of a dynamic and dedicated Menahel is a major development forward and the positive impact on the school, even in the short time since his appointment, is very clear. This is evidenced by his very good self evaluation of the school's strengths and areas of development and his part in the new excellent morale of staff. Pupils respond very well to his warm, but clear approach to discipline and he is well liked by pupils. He is well supported in the Senior Management Team by a dedicated and effective deputy Menahel and by the professional approach of the very committed governors, who act as a 'critical friend' to the Menahel.

Strengths of the Management Team include: creating high staff morale; good communication with parents, as illustrated by the very positive responses to the school questionnaire; enhancing the enjoyment and 'feel good' factor of pupils, and a very promising capacity for development within the new Senior Management Team.

Areas for development include: implementing a written curriculum; organising the co-ordination of Special Needs, and developing assessment strategies in an organised way throughout the school.

Grade: 2