

CLORE SHALOM SCHOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

Local Authority: Hertfordshire

Inspected under the auspices of Pikuach

Inspection dates: 14th, 15th November 2022

This inspection of the school was conducted under section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of school: Voluntary-aided

School category: Primary

Age range of pupils: 4-11

Mixed /Single sex: Mixed

Number on roll: 202

Chair of Governors: Sara Levan

Headteacher: Karen Cohen

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Inspection team

Lead Inspector: Sandra Teacher

Team Inspector: Ruth Wilkinson

Introduction

The inspection was carried out over two days by two inspectors. They visited each year group's Jewish Studies (JS) and *Ivrit* lessons. (*Ivrit* is designated a Modern Foreign Language by the school but was included in the inspection visit at the school's request.) Teaching was observed from Reception to Year Six. The inspectors attended the *Havdalah* (after Sabbath service), assemblies, *Tefillah* (prayer) and Grace after Meals at lunchtime. Lessons were observed jointly with senior school leaders or other members of staff. Meetings were held with the Headteacher, the Head of Jewish Life and Learning, Senior Management Team, the *Shinshin* (Israeli scouts), security and other key members of staff and governors, as well as meeting with many of the pupils and parents.

Inspectors make judgements on the following three Key Areas:

- **The Quality of Jewish Education**
- **Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development**
- **Leadership and Management**

These key judgements will then contribute to the overall judgement on the school's efficiency and effectiveness in its provision of Jewish education, enabling inspectors to reach their final judgement.

Information about the school

- The Clore Shalom School is a voluntary-aided Jewish faith school where families represent a broad range of religious and non-religious backgrounds. The school was opened in 1999 with support from the Reform, Liberal and Masorti Jewish Movements but it is open to families from a wider Jewish background and non-Jewish pupils. Leaders describe the school as 'progressive.' Families celebrate Judaism in many different ways. All ways are valued and respected.
- Pupils range from Reception Class to Year Six. 7.9% of pupils have additional needs and 5% of pupils receive additional funding.
- The current Headteacher has been in position since January 2017. The current Deputy Head, who also has the post of Head of Jewish Life and Learning, has been in position since September 2022 but has been part of the senior leadership team for many years.
- The school's last *Pikuach* inspection was in 2015 and its overall effectiveness was judged as 'good'. All areas were judged as 'good', except for 'Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development' and the 'Jewish Curriculum Meeting Children's Needs' which was judged as 'outstanding'.
- At the end of Key Stage Two, the vast majority of pupils transfer to Jewish secondary schools. Mostly to Yavneh and JFS, with some transferring to JCROSS. A few children attend non-Jewish secondary schools

Inspection judgements

Grade

Overall effectiveness	2
The Quality of Jewish Education	2
Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development	1
Leadership and Management	1

What is it like to attend this school?

- Clore shalom is a family school where all pupils thrive and are well prepared for the next stage of their education, the majority transitioning on to other Jewish secondary schools.
- The value of *Chesed* (kindness) is evident in all areas of school life and the school motto is taken from the *Shema* (Hebrew prayer) “and you shall teach your children” which epitomises leaders’ vision.
- This vision was derived with contributions from all stakeholders. The original statement was analysed and evaluated to produce both the school values and school rules. Both were observed in so many ways to be part of the essence of the school’s life: for example, the *Chesed* wall; the way the pupils talk about their love of Jewish learning; how their learning is enjoyable and experiential. Pupils say that they love their learning and are engaged because it is fun. This is because leaders prioritise enjoyment and engagement of Jewish learning. Parents say: “This school is perfect for me because I want my children to understand the traditions and festivals and know they are Jewish without it being too much, it fits in with our homelife and family”. “I feel that having JS lessons once a week is perfect, with all the Jewish holidays and half term, I would be concerned they would be missing out on the curriculum”, and “Good balance between Jewish studies and rest of the curriculum”.
- The Quality of Jewish Education is good overall with some outstanding features. The school’s Jewish curriculum, which including the teaching of *Ivrit*, provides memorable experiences for all pupils including SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) pupils who are fully supported in their JS lessons through the collaboration between the SENDCO (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator) and the JS team.
- The teaching of *Ivrit* makes a strong contribution to JS learning and enables the pupils to begin to learn to read and write in Hebrew, so that they can begin to understand the meaning of prayers and Hebrew songs. They all know what ‘*Kol Hakavod*’ (Well done) means, and have stickers with these words on their jumpers.
- The pupils love their lessons, and this love continues to inspire them beyond the school gates. Parents tell us: “Our children sing the Jewish songs and teach us how to do Jewish things”.
- Pupils at Clore Shalom benefit from a warm, caring, and nurturing environment where they receive a holistic Jewish Education. This is provided by a team of dedicated teachers under the leadership of outstanding leaders and managers. As a parent said: “This is a small school with excellent teachers, they clearly care, and this comes out in all aspects of their teaching.”
- Pupils enjoy their JS lessons and are enthusiastic about their Jewish experiences such as *Kabbalat Shabbat* and *Havdalah*. (Sabbath services). The school provides memorable, meaningful, and stimulating spiritual experiences, which will hopefully spill over into their home

life as expressed by some of the parents: “Even though I am not Jewish, my child is teaching me all about the faith.”

- When carrying out tasks, pupils are given the option to choose the strength of challenge so that those pupils who learn more quickly are given higher-order learning.
- Parents are supportive of their children’s learning and Jewish experience, as was evident through discussions with them. For example: “My children come home singing all the songs and were so keen to be involved in the *Succah* (Tabernacle) competition. ”
- The school provided JS on Zoom during the Covid pandemic focussing on the Jewish festivals and The Jewish Way of Life. During *Purim*, (Jewish Festival) staff delivered ‘*Mishloach Manot* ‘ (*Purim* gifts) to each family. This demonstrates the care and commitment of the school staff in keeping the flame of Judaism alive, even under challenging circumstances.
- Self-evaluation and monitoring by leaders and managers is both rigorous and accurate. The school recognises that because of its previous history and the impact of Covid, assessments showed gaps in standards of Hebrew Reading and Jewish knowledge. Vital and positive steps have since been taken to address these issues and raise standards through a wide range of initiatives and interventions.
- Pupils engage in daily *Tefillah* and Grace after Meals with enthusiasm and behaviour is excellent. Pupils join in *Tefillah* with gusto as it is meaningful to them, and they insert their own prayers on the *Chesed* wall.
- All pupils, including those with SEND, or those who speak other languages at home, benefit from a values-driven curriculum, where the focus is on *middot* (character traits/values) which align with the school’s ethos of excellence, achievement, pride and respect.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards JS because the curriculum, which includes *Ivrit*, enables them to actively engage in real life Judaism and to experience and participate in Jewish practice and language. They are beginning to make best use of Twenty - first Century learning and digital materials which makes their Jewish learning exciting and engaging. High-quality video programmes capture their imagination-
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils feel safe at school, know who to speak to if they have a concern and are confident that their issues will be addressed. Safety procedures are rigorously followed, as when, for example, a visiting Rabbi or speakers come to the school. Analysis of surveys carried out by the school indicate a 100 percent agreement that the school keeps the children safe, happy and well.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The Quality of Jewish education:

- Children in the Early Years benefit from a purpose-built unit and outdoor area. A range of indoor and outdoor activities are set up and children rotate between them and learn through play. Their Judaism is integrated into all the Seven Areas of Learning- for example: Children develop their skills in Expressive Arts and Design through role play about *Shabbat* and the *Chagim* (festivals). They love the *Challah* Bake every week and the smell of freshly baked *challot* will remain in their memories. In their JS lessons, they experiment with shadows and light and dark to emulate the first day of creation. This connects with their *Ivrit* lessons, where they are learning the days of the week.
- Pupils are proud of their identity and have a close connection to Judaism because of a well-constructed and sequenced curriculum that provides Jewish knowledge and skills for future learning and communal involvement. The Jewish curriculum enhances the Jewish ethos of the school, particularly when discussing ‘Big Questions’ such as marriage and relationships, where pupils participate in discussion and activities about the ethical and moral values that they can learn from the *Torah* (Bible) and its personalities.

- A new initiative is the introduction of *Chavruta* (from the Aramaic to mean ‘Companionship’) There are partner rules: “Reading the text. Listening to each other. Noticing and wondering. Is there another way to understand that? Agree or disagree?” This approach stimulates excited discussion in pairs.
- Pupils have the opportunity to explore and experience Judaism and learn about aspects of the Jewish Way of Life such as *brachot* (blessings) for all types of occasions. Younger children learn the blessings for wine and food, whilst older pupils consider the blessing for peace. Peace in Israel was discussed with the *Shinshin* facilitator, who brought a whole new dimension to the learning. Israel is high on the learning agenda and in this session with Year 3, the pupils learned about the peace process in Israel. When asked to write a peace blessing on an image of a dove, one of the pupils immediately noticed that this was the logo on their school uniform.
- Pupils make good progress in their Jewish education and *Ivrit* because teachers and their assistants have a secure subject knowledge and use a range of resources that inspire and motivate their pupils. Pupils in Year 1 make *Besamim* (spice) bags to use for *Havdalah*, and their joy, wonder and excitement was clearly seen on their faces, when lighting the *Havdalah* candle in a darkened room. Technology is being used by the staff to support additional learning, such as *Aleph Bet* songs and games on the interactive whiteboard. However, the school may wish to consider further ways to bring Twenty-first Century learning into the JS curriculum.
- Teaching in Jewish education is consistently good across the school. Leaders have specifically identified talents within the staff and provide high quality CPD (Continuing Professional Development) and grow the team from within the school community. The staff is very stable, and the majority of the team have worked in the school for many years, bringing continuity, security and strong attachments to the pupils and their families. Teachers ensure that most pupils, including those with SEND and additional needs, are making good progress and are achieving well over time. They have identified the gaps in their pupils learning, particularly for the older learners, and are working on a catch-up programme.
- The Nurture Space in the school provides emotional strategies and support to those who need it, and this makes a huge impact on the pupils who attend. A quote on the wall describes the message that staff want to convey to their pupils “The bravest thing you can be is yourself.”
- Lesson observations and book scrutiny are used effectively by teachers to monitor progress and these feed into Inset (In-Service training) and CPD. The Head of Jewish Life and Learning runs weekly staff meetings with a clear agenda and goals. The teachers are constantly developing their skills to further enhance their teaching. Parents are full of praise for the teaching their children receive.
- Assessment was an area for improvement at the previous inspection in 2015, and still remains a priority. There are clear plans in a place to bring the assessment strategy in line with other subject areas, but staff know their pupils really well and can identify their differing needs in order to progress their Jewish learning.
- Pupils learn in a positive environment, allowing them to focus on their Jewish learning in an atmosphere of respect and inclusion irrespective of their background, gender, religiosity, and culture. When pupils come from different faiths, individual support is provided for them. This diversity among pupils also provides a wonderful opportunity to learn about different faiths such as Hinduism and Buddhism as well.
- Pupils are developing fluency, accuracy and confidence in their Hebrew reading according to their own levels of ability. They enjoy using the school’s Hebrew reading schemes, including *‘Ivrit B’click and Ivrit Mesaviv Leolam’*. One pupil said: “*Aleph Champ* is my favourite!” In an observed lesson, pupils were able to gain skills through a variety of well-planned and differentiated reading activities led effectively by the teacher and other adults in the class.
- Extra-curricular and informal Jewish learning opportunities are varied and much enjoyed. Pupils are most recently preparing for a Festival of Faith, involving *Chanukah* (The Festival of Lights) and Christmas, and older pupils are becoming excited about the future *Shabbaton* (Away Day),

as previously off-site visits were restricted. This is one of the ways in which the school builds relationships with parents and involves the whole family in their children's Jewish education. The school also encourages active participation of grandparents, for example on *Chanukah* when whole families, including grandparents, are invited to watch the lighting of the *Chanukiah* (candelabra).

- Pupils are developing their Jewish knowledge and skills across the Jewish curriculum, and as a result, achieve well in relation to their previous learning and experiences. Taking account of their starting points, most pupils are generally confident and display Jewish knowledge, skills and understanding appropriate to their age, ability and background.

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Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development

- Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development is outstanding. It permeates school life and is modelled by the staff. Pupils were able to express how they felt about the Jewish aspects of their education. Staff members expressed their positivity regarding the special Jewish spiritual environment in the school. There is a strong emphasis on experiential Jewish learning, and this has given the pupils an opportunity to internalise and appreciate being in a Jewish school.
- Pupils show great sensitivity and understanding of others, embracing the school's central value of *chesed*. Their understanding of *chesed* spans a wide spectrum of activities and they are able to articulate the importance of this *middah* (value). The practical implementation of the pupils' understanding of *chesed* and their personal thoughts and feelings about this *middah* was observed in many ways including how the learners in the school are also leaders in the school. For example, three Year 6 pupils hold the title of Jewish Life and Learning Leaders. This was a role that they had to apply for and show that they could take responsibility for creating activities that would promote the Jewish life in the school. The Jewish Life and Learning Leaders lead *Tefillah* in younger classes. They take this job very seriously, and on observation did a fantastic job engaging the younger pupils and stopping to explain prayers where they felt it was necessary. It was a pleasure to see everyone in the classroom involved saying their *Tefillot* in a meaningful way. The Jewish Life and Learning Leaders have also planned activities for *Chanukah* and have a weekly task of setting up and clearing away from the *Havdalah* and *Kabbalat Shabbat* assemblies. These Year 6 pupils see their role as an act of *chesed* in helping other children to appreciate and enjoy Jewish things in the school. They articulated how it had brought them closer and more interested in their own Jewish life and that it made them want to be part of a community. Each Year 6 pupil has 'buddy time' with a Year 1 pupil, enabling all Year 6 pupils to engage in acts of *chesed*, whether it be befriending them in the playground, helping them with reading or making *Chanukah* decorations together. The older pupils described it as a 'very special time'.
- *Tefillah* takes place in year groups in the classroom. The words are displayed on the board clearly for all pupils to see. Pupils showed engagement and attentiveness when joining in with singing the prayers. Members of staff are good role models during *Tefillah*, participating whilst operating the smartboard. The prayers are written in Hebrew and phonetics to enable all members of staff to participate. When meeting with a group of pupils in Year 3, they shared their own prayers which they had written in the previous lesson. The prayers were very meaningful, and our discussion showed deep thinking about the needs of others. Older pupils are beginning to explore their relationship with *Hashem* and could articulate their thoughts on why we pray.
- In discussion, many of the pupils spoke of personal experiences where they had been the receiver or giver of an act of *chesed* and explained how it made them feel. Parents have also commented on the positive effect of this aspect of the school programme. "My daughter says, 'You have to show *chesed*' and gives me examples, which is so sweet."

- A highlight of the week, also filled with music and song, is the school's *Kabbalat Shabbat service*. All sections of the school community have expressed the benefits and enjoyment that JS activities bring to their school. Jewish music and singing brings Jewish identity and spirituality to the forefront of the school community. This was expressed in responses to the *Pikuach* questionnaires sent to parents, staff and pupils. "Every Friday during *Kabbalat Shabbat* I feel such a sense of pride listening to all the children singing so beautifully and connecting to their Jewish heritage." (Staff member). "My daughter loves her JS learning. She comes home singing festival and *Kabbalat Shabbat* songs." (Parent). Enthusiastic groups of children were eager to speak about the school Rabbi, his guitar and the Hebrew songs that make the *Havdalah* assembly and *Chaggim* celebrations so special.
- The pupils benefit from a *Shinshin* providing weekly activities. Extra-curricular and in class creative programmes are organised to enhance the pupils' knowledge and love of Israel. The pupils were eagerly waiting for the *Shinshin* led Israel Club to restart this week and spoke about previous activities that had taken place for *Yom Haatzmaut* (Israel Independence Day) and other occasions. They were able to articulate how it deepened their feelings about Israel. It was very special for them to have a young Israeli teaching them about Israel and helping them to understand what it is like to live in Israel. The pupils were very excited to meet their new *Shinshin* who would be working with them, in the school, this year.
- Conversations with parents showed that they had no concerns about the safety of their children when in school. Pupils also feel safe in school, and this was verified by responses to the questionnaires. 98.88% of parental responses confirmed that their children felt safe at Clore Shalom. One parent commented, "I know when I drop my child at school, she is well looked after. She knows the staff care about her, and she feels safe in her environment." 100% of the responses from the pupil questionnaire expressed that they felt safe in school. Pupils also felt confident that they knew who to go to if they have a problem.
- The staff, including those who are not directly responsible for teaching JS feel that they are sufficiently trained in the areas of Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development, as well as Relationships and Sexual Education. An Inset was held where members of staff and governors shared the school's vision for all aspects of Jewish Studies and Personal and Spiritual Development. Additionally, regular Inset training is held with JS and *Ivrit* staff providing meaningful links to Jewish and Hebrew topics across the curriculum.
- The Headteacher is proactive in arranging activities which involve the wider community and other organisations to cater for all the pupils' religious and spiritual needs. Recent events have included a football match with refugee children. The pupils from Clore Shalom also joined the rest of the Shenley community - Shenley United synagogue, Shenley Parish council and Shenley Primary School, to participate in the Remembrance Day ceremony. The children performed a poem and laid a poppy wreath. The school will be participating in a Festival of Faith Concert at the end of the term where the pupils will perform songs and dances associated with Hinduism, Christianity and Judaism. Rabbis from a variety of synagogues have come to speak at the school. The school will also be participating in *Mitzvah* Day. The School Council makes choices about *Tzedaka* (charity) events and can give valid and perceptive reasons why a certain charity should be chosen, such as food banks and Camp *Simcha*. (Camp Simcha exists to improve the quality of life of children suffering from Cancer or other life-threatening illnesses.)
- The school made provision for the pupils during the Covid period by continuing to carry out whole school Jewish experiences remotely where possible e.g., *Kabbalat Shabbat*. Pupils spoke about this favourably.
- The growing sense of spiritual development throughout the entire school is seen not just through JS but in everyday school life.

Leadership and Management :

- All leaders and managers including the Governing Body work together in a collaborative and supportive manner. They jointly implement the vision and ethos of the school.

- The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) model to the teaching staff how the JS, *Ivrit* and secular departments can work in tandem in a mutual and beneficial manner, and this is duplicated in all areas of the school, including the classroom. The secular studies teachers are often at hand to support Jewish Studies lessons, and where cross-curricular topics are valid such as learning about climate change, the Jewish value of *Tikkun Olam* (Saving our world) makes the learning relevant and meaningful.
- Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and Relationships Education (RSE) are an integral part of the Jewish curriculum and pupils learn about the importance of healthy lifestyles linked to keeping *kashrut* (Kosher), or learning about keeping oneself safe, linked to Israeli culture helping pupils to understand the need for security in the school.
- All leaders and managers, including governors, articulate and communicate a strong commitment to high standards of work and to pupils' Jewish spiritual development. All staff are treated as equals and have access to the same training opportunities. Well-being and teacher workload are important priorities.
- All staff are involved in all aspects of Jewish Studies and pupils' spiritual development. They continuously evaluate the school's procedures and make changes for the best. A case in point is Grace after Meals. Staff produced an action plan which was implemented. to ensure that pupils recited Grace accurately. It has been re-taught one paragraph at a time and the text is now on screen, in front of the class so that everyone can follow together. The older pupils (Jewish life learning leaders) stand at the front to motivate the pupils, and this has proved successful. The results were evident when inspectors observed an enthusiastic, accurate and meaningful 'Grace' after lunch.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, enthuse the whole school team in an exceptional manner as evidenced through observing and meeting all the staff. In turn, all staff respect each other and model best practice. All staff are made to feel valued and are encouraged to share their own creative ideas which are often implemented. The staff are highly committed to the school and work together to provide the best Jewish education and *Ivrit* for their pupils.
- Leaders and managers model excellent practice in academic and spiritual matters, and work successfully to monitor, improve and support teaching, encouraging the enthusiasm of staff and challenging their efforts and skills. The governor responsible for JS as well as the whole Governing Body are actively involved with the JS and *Ivrit* Departments and act as a critical friend. They make themselves readily available to both guide and challenge the JS and *Ivrit* provision. The leadership of the school, including governors, have an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for development in all aspects of the school's Jewish education.
- Leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the provision for JS effectively. The systems employed are robust and make a real impact on the raising of standards of teaching and learning. The Chair of governors, the Head and senior leaders who are responsible for Jewish Studies, have an excellent grasp of the curriculum and the Jewish Studies Development Plan and support the JS team in all their endeavours.

What does the school need to do to improve?

Continue to revise and adapt the Jewish Studies curriculum to enhance the teaching and learning so that all pupils reach their potential and expected levels.

Evaluate and develop the assessment strategies of pupils' Jewish knowledge, understanding and skills so that it is fully used to inform teaching and learning.

Statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship (<i>Tefillah</i>)	Met
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Summary of Questionnaires, Parents, Pupils Staff

Pikuach invited parents and carers of pupils at Clore Shalom School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 82 people responded to the survey. There are 143 families associated with the school.

The comments below encapsulate their views:

- I know when I drop my child at school, she is well looked after. She knows the staff care about her, and she feels safe in her environment.
- She knows who to talk to if she is upset about anything.
- My child loves the Jewish learning and looks forward to Kabbalah Shabbat every week. It's a highlight.
- My son loves the Jewish studies and the Ivrit lessons at Clore Shalom. They are fun and interactive.
- The school doesn't provide enough education about Jewish festivals to the extent that would have a long-lasting benefit.
- I think they encourage high standards in what they teach but they just don't teach some of the basics in Jewish studies.
- The Jewish ethos underpins the core values of Clore Shalom, for example prioritising Chesed.
- The motto and ethos of chesed is clearly instilled in the kids and staff.
- The ethos is very inclusive and I feel well supported and accepted within the school.
- We appreciate the egalitarian views, pluralistic values and kind and nurturing environment.

Pikuach invited members of staff at Clore Shalom School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 19 members of staff responded to the survey. There are 31 members of staff at the school.

The comments below encapsulate their views:

- Regular INSET and training. Liaising with JS and Ivrit staff to provide meaningful links to learning across the curriculum to JS and Ivrit.
- I feel incredibly proud to work at Clore Shalom, from the minute I walk through the door every member of staff and pupil radiates warmth and kindness.
- I feel such a sense of pride listening to all the children singing so beautifully and connecting to their Jewish heritage whilst hearing the Rabbi speak.
- I think the Jewish studies teachers and leaders deliver a curriculum that is interactive, full of life and relevant to the pupils of Clore Shalom
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Pikuach invited pupils at Clore Shalom School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

The information below encapsulate their data and comments.

Main findings included:

- 100% of pupils enjoyed coming to school all or most of the time.
- 100% of pupils found their lessons interesting all or most of the time.
- 89.09% of pupils understands the Jewish values taught at school.
- 72.73% of pupils agree that their Jewish Studies helps them think about what is important to them.
- 49.09% of pupil said they Understandable never take part in Jewish activities outside lessons, e.g., clubs, charities etc
- 100% of pupils agree or strongly agree that their school encourages them to respect people from other backgrounds and to treat them equally.
- Comments relating to the survey statement:
 - I feel appreciated by my JS teacher:
 - When I put my hand up there is an opportunity to get chosen.
 - When we get a class reward.
 - When he smiles.
 - He helps me when I'm stuck.

GLOSSARY

WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN:

GRADE	JUDGEMENT	DESCRIPTION
Grade1	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	Requires Improvement	A school requiring improvement is not 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.