

HASMONEAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

INSPECTION REPORT

Local Authority Barnet

Inspected under the auspices of Pikuach

Inspection dates 6th and 7th December 2022

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

Type of school Primary

School category Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils 3 - 11

Mixed /Single sex Mixed

Number on roll 221

Chair of Governors Dan Sacker

Headteacher Hayley Gross

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Inspection team

Lead Inspector: Rabbi Yaakov Heimann

Team Inspector: Richard Felsenstein

Introduction

Inspectors make judgements on the following three Key Areas:

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

The inspection was carried out over two days by two inspectors. The inspectors observed sixteen lessons from Nursery to Year 6 and participated in learning walks. The inspectors also observed *Tefillah* (collective worship) and *Birkas Hamazon* (grace after meals). All lessons were observed jointly with senior school leaders. Meetings were held with the school's Principal, Governors, Trustees, SENDCO (Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Coordinator), the senior leadership team (SLT), including the head of *Kodesh* (Jewish studies) and many of the pupils and their parents.

Information about the school

- Hasmonean Primary School is an Orthodox Jewish school that serves the local and wider Jewish community.
- The school is a one-form entry primary school, whose numbers have slightly declined since the last inspection, as is evident by the number of pupils in the current Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Year 1. Governors are working to address this. Approximately 40% of the day is devoted to *Kodesh* lessons.
- *Ivrit* (Modern Hebrew) lessons are taught as a modern foreign language by a specialist teacher working with the secular Department. The school was judged to be 'Good' at its last Ofsted inspection, January 2019.
- SEND: The percentage of pupils receiving Pupil Premium is 15% (34 pupils). There are 37 pupils on the register (17%). Nine pupils have an Education Health Care Plan. The school has 7 pupils (3%) with English as an Additional Language (EAL).
- Since the previous *Pikuach* (Jewish Inspection Team) Inspection, July 2015, a new head of *Kodesh* was appointed in 2019. A new Headteacher was appointed in January 2022.

Inspection judgements

Grade

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

What is it like to attend this school?

- Pupils at Hasmonean Primary School benefit from a warm and caring environment, where they receive a holistic Jewish Education. This is provided by a team of enthusiastic *Kodesh* teachers under the leadership of an outstanding Head of *Kodesh*. As a parent said: "I couldn't be any happier. There is lots of positive reinforcement and the school is so approachable. The Head of *Kodesh* knows each child."
- Pupils are proud to belong to Hasmonean Primary School and have positive attitudes towards school and their *Kodesh* learning. This is because the curriculum enables them to actively engage in Jewish texts and to experience and participate in Jewish practice. Many of the lessons are made relevant to them, which in turn makes their Jewish learning exciting and engaging, as a Year 2 pupil commented, "Reading is fun."
- Pupils benefit from seeing that all senior leaders and teachers are passionate about the school's Jewish ethos and their Jewish education.
- Pupils in the EYFS benefit from a spacious unit and outdoor area. A range of indoor and outdoor activities is set up and pupils rotate between them and learn through play. Inspectors observed the nursery children putting candles in a wooden *Menorah* (candelabra for *Chanukah*, festival of lights) and sticking latkes onto paper and were able to explain to the inspectors what they had learnt.
- Safeguarding at Hasmonean Primary School is effective. Pupils feel safe when at school, know who to speak to if they have a concern and are confident that their issue will be addressed. Indeed, nearly 90% of pupils who responded to the pupil online survey said they knew who to go to if they had a problem. As one Year 6 pupil said: "The teachers are so nice. We know who to go to if we have a problem."
- The school has in the main addressed the areas for development highlighted in the previous *Pikuach* report. There is now a robust system to monitor teaching and assessments, and the curriculum has been developed and expanded with new relevant curricula added, for example the *Divrei Chazal* (words of the Rabbis) curriculum. Marking and feedback is still in progress and needs to be properly implemented and embedded.

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

The Quality of Jewish Education:

- Pupils are proud to be Jewish and have a close connection to *Yiddishkeit* (Judaism) because of a well-constructed and sequenced curriculum that provides Jewish knowledge

and skills for future learning and communal involvement. The *Kodesh* curriculum enhances the Jewish ethos of the school, particularly in the *Chumash* (Bible studies) lessons, where pupils participate in discussions about moral values that they can learn from *Torah* (Bible) events and personalities.

- Pupils have the opportunity to explore and experience *Yiddishkeit* and learn about aspects of the Jewish Way of Life such as *Shabbos* (Sabbath), *kashrus* (Kosher dietary laws), *Brochos* (blessings) etc. When Year 6 pupils were asked why they think that *Shabbos* is called *Shabbos Kodesh* they said that it is, "Because *Hashem* finished creating the world, and *Shabbos* needs calmness. We have a break, go to *Shul* (synagogue) with our parents and *Daven* (pray)." Real-life experiences such as a *Melave Malka* (post Sabbath meal) for pupils and their parents, a Friday night *Davening* (prayers) and meal for upper Key Stage 2, and making the learning relevant, are essential parts of the curriculum.
- Pupils celebrate and learn about the history, *Dinim* (laws) and customs of the *Chagim* (Jewish Festivals) as they occur throughout the year. In EYFS, the Jewish Year curriculum is integrated within the 7 areas of learning through art, music, technology etc. as well as through specific *Kodesh* lessons. There are now detailed Reception Learning Journals for *Parsha* (weekly Torah portion) and *Yomim Tovim* (Jewish festivals) with clear notes about pupils' understanding of each topic. This leads to seamless education across all lessons in the EYFS.
- Pupils make good progress in their Jewish education because teachers have a secure subject knowledge and use a range of resources that inspire and motivate their pupils. Inspectors saw effective use of ICT (information and Communication Technology) in most lessons, which included a new lesson starter in *Chumash* with questions on a topic they had previously covered.
- Teaching in Jewish education is overall good across the school. In order for lessons to be outstanding, teaching should be less teacher-led and more focused on pupils' active learning in all parts of the lesson. In particular, active learning at the start of the lesson would engage all pupils and therefore improve behaviour. Teachers ensure that most pupils, including those with SEND and additional needs, are making good progress and achieving well over time. Assessment data shows that 79% of pupils in Key Stage 2 at working at or exceeding expected levels in *Kodesh*. This was evident in pupils' written work and wall displays in the classrooms and corridors and from the assessment results.
- Lesson observations and book scrutiny are used effectively to monitor progress and feedback is given to teachers and discussed at the *Kodesh* Inset (In-Service training). The Head of *Kodesh* 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 education their children receive. A parent who had moved their child to Hasmonean Primary school last year said, "My child can now read," and another parent said, "My daughter loves the songs in Year 1 and the *Chumash* is very good."
- A new marking policy has been introduced. Whilst most pupil's work is marked, it generally does not include coaching comments and target setting, to allow pupils to progress to the next level. The marking policy now needs to be fully embedded.
- The school's assessment of pupils' Jewish knowledge, understanding and skills is used effectively to identify gaps and to address these through interventions. By the end of this current term, almost 50% of pupils were working above the expected level and a further 30% of pupils were working at the expected level. This shows an improvement to the levels in the previous assessment in Summer term 2022.

- 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.
- Pupils develop fluency, accuracy and confidence in their Hebrew reading according to their own levels of ability. This was evidenced through hearing pupils of varying abilities read in a variety of classes, in particular Year 2 and Year 6 and observing a Reception *Krioh* (Hebrew reading) lesson. They enjoy using the school's reading scheme, as a Reception pupil said: "it is important to learn these letters, so we know them."
- Pupils develop detailed Jewish General knowledge and skills across the Jewish curriculum and, as a result, achieve well as can be evidenced from the assessment data. Most pupils are generally confident and display good Jewish knowledge, skills and understanding appropriate to their age, ability and background.

Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development

- Pupils feel supported by their Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development curriculum, and they told the inspectors that it really helps in building their Jewish character and values. As pupils progress through the school, they are offered appropriate levels of challenge, insight and understanding of *Tefillah* (prayer), *Tzedakah* (charity) and religious activities. When asked about their favourite *Mitzvah* (commandment) pupils replied, "To help people", "Being kind and helpful." When asked about *Tefillah* and *Tzedakah*, they responded, "Being kind and looking after people if they fall over." The curriculum builds on pupil's prior learning, progressive taking into account pupils' intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth.
- Pupils responded enthusiastically and very positively when asked if they are happy at school. In discussions with inspectors both inside and outside the classroom, pupils consistently relate to their Jewish learning experiences. For example, a Year 2 pupil told an inspector about the time he visited the *Kosel* (Western Wall) in Jerusalem. He said, "The most important place is the *Kosel* because I can talk to *Hashem* (God) and it is near the *Beis Hamikdash* (Holy Temple). I feel so close to *Hashem*." He was then able to relate these thoughts to feeling close to *Hashem* when he was *Davening* in school. Another pupil in Year 2 commented that "Israel is so important because of *Hashem*; I feel so close to Him."
- Pupils also benefit from the fact that well over 80% of the *Kodesh* staff feel they are sufficiently trained to deal with the various aspects of Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development. Staff continue to be trained, and it has been noted by the school as an area for development.
- Over 80% of pupils said that the school encourages them to become involved in the wider community. The pupils demonstrated their awareness of both their own feelings, and the feelings of others. They treat others considerately, and display respect towards their teachers. A new initiative is Year 6 participation in a six-part course on "learning how to give" run by GIFT (Give It Forward Today). Part of the programme is an opportunity to shop at a local supermarket with a set budget and a challenge to purchase the most cost-efficient products for a family in need. The pupils are encouraged to become involved in GIFT and other charitable organisations.
- All pupils participate fully, and feel included, in the prayer life of the school. This contributes enormously to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. *Tefillah* is woven seamlessly into the fabric of daily life, through *Brochos*, and *Birkas Hamazon*. Many pupils

were seen to *Daven* with *Kavonoh* (sincere feeling, devotion of the heart), pronounce the Hebrew words correctly, and have an understanding of parts of the *Tefillah*.

- Pupils commented that they enjoy *Tefillah* and that it adds meaning to their lives. A Year 5 pupil said that a memorable moment in school was, “The *Siddur* (prayer book) presentation, because we got our *Siddur* to *daven* with.” Year 6 pupils said that when they leave Hasmonian Primary School they will continue to develop their knowledge and understanding of *Tefillah* and how to be grateful to *Hashem*: “We feel happy for thanking Hashem, for giving us trees and for waking us up.”
- Year 6 pupils related about their class education visit to Clifford’s Tower in York: “When in Clifford’s Tower, I felt connected to *Hashem* and could imagine how Jews felt at the time.” Another pupil said, “When we were in York, I liked it when we all got together to *Daven* in a non-Jewish hotel. The owners of the hotel and people were walking past and listening; I felt so proud to be a Jew.” These pupils demonstrated an acknowledgement of the Divine and become aware of experiences in their lives to something that cannot be perceived by their senses.
- Pupils said that *Tefillah* plays a large part in their daily lives. When they *Daven*, they begin to show appreciation, gratitude, awe and wonder (*Morah*), for example at waking up, being alive, eating food, and reciting *Brochos*.
- Pupils would benefit from learning more about the *Tefillos* they recite. As a Year 6 pupil noted, “I would like more explanations on *Ashrei* (Psalms 145) and *Yishtabach* (a blessing of praise to God) so that I understand what I am saying.” A new *Tefillah* initiative to give pupils the opportunity to explore and have a deeper meaning in the *Tefillah* would be most beneficial for them in furthering their Jewish Personal and Spiritual development.
- In some classes, pupils were encouraged to add their own person *Tefillah* in English at the conclusion of the *Amidah* (a main part of the daily prayers, recited whilst standing). This was observed at both *Shacharis* (morning prayers) and *Mincha* (afternoon prayers). This enhances pupils’ experience in *Kedusha* (holiness in everyday life) and helps them relate to the Divine.
- Prefects in Year 6 proudly showed the effective *Tzedakah* display in the entrance hall. Involvement in *Tzedakah* instils in the pupils a strong awareness of the spiritual in all humankind (*Tzelem Elokim*). *Tzedakah* has been relaunched this term (post Covid), and two British and one Jewish charities have been selected. They include helping people who suffer from dementia, sending clothes to Ukraine, food to GIFT and collecting funds to ensure all children have a bed. This is promoted through having *tzedakah* boxes in each class and the pupils are encouraged to bring in at least one Pence each day. Being involved in these charities is also encouraged through the weekly newsletter and at school assemblies.
- A strength of the school is that pupils now have a Wellbeing Room equipped with appropriate cosy furniture to create a warm ambience, a calm environment for pupils to come to when they feel they have the need. There are some fixed groups at lunchtimes with aims set out for the sessions, and individual targets in place, whilst at other times it is open for any pupil to attend. This initiative was set up by the Headteacher and is run by various members of the SLT, including the Head of *Kodesh*.
- The displays around the school are interactive and geared towards pupils. For example, “Think bright thoughts”, “*Chanukah*”, and a “*Middos* (good character traits) Board.” The whole school work on a different *Middoh* each month and a picture of a pupil who excels in the monthly *Middoh* is displayed on the board. Recent *Middoh* of the month was

friendship for *Cheshvan* and *Shalom* (peace) for this month of *Kislev*.

- Most pupils behave well, and this is being managed with a new behaviour approach and new Positive Behaviour policy. In a small number of lessons, inspectors observed low-level disruption, which included pupils calling out or talking amongst themselves. This is an area which is being addressed by the school.
- Pupils benefit spiritually from *L'Dor Vador*, a monthly session in school where pupils from Reception to Year 6 learn *Torah* with their parents and grandparents. The Head of *Kodesh* has created sheets of learning focus for each session. At the most recent *L'Dor Vador* learning session there were 80 participants and they learnt about the *Middoh* of *Chessed* (loving-kindness). In *Kislev*, they will learn the *Dinim* (laws) about kindling the *Menorah*.
- The school is actively engaged in British Values. In both *Kodesh* and *Chol* (secular) pupils learn the skills to be thoughtful, tolerant and caring citizens, within the school's ethos of *Torah Im Derech Eretz* (Torah with the way of the land) These values are incorporated into all aspects of school life for example collecting charity for a range of Jewish and other UK charities.

Leadership and Management

- Leadership and Management is outstanding because the SLT, including governors, have an accurate knowledge and understanding of both the school's strengths and areas requiring improvement. Together with the school Principal, they articulate and communicate a strong commitment to high standards of work and to pupils' Jewish spiritual development. They have developed a shared clarity of where they want the school to be beyond the short term. In turn, these have been communicated effectively to the staff. The SLT are aware that they are on a journey and are still in the process of implementing the necessary changes, for example, the positive behaviour system.
- The Head of *Kodesh* is on the SLT and works together with his senior colleagues in a collaborative and supportive manner. The leadership team includes the Headteacher, deputy Headteacher, SEND Coordinator and Head of *Kodesh*. They jointly implement the vision of the Head of *Kodesh* and promote the ethos of the school.
- The SLT are a highly effective team and support one another, working in tandem to drive change and raise standards of learning.
- Since the appointment of the Headteacher, she has ensured that the *Kodesh*, *Chol* and SEND departments work as a whole team, as opposed to operating as separate divisions. The SLT model to the teaching staff how the *Kodesh* and secular Departments can work collaboratively in a mutually beneficial manner, and this is duplicated in all areas of the school, including in the classrooms.
- The *Kodesh* teachers receive the same professional development opportunities and input as their secular studies counterparts. For example, they receive training and feedback from the SENDCO on how to address pupils' needs.
- The Head of *Kodesh* has an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for development in all aspects of the school's *Kodesh* education and is involved in all aspects of *Kodesh* and pupils' spiritual development. He continuously evaluates the school's procedures and makes necessary changes. For example, the lower ability *Chumash* group now covers the same *Pesukim* (verses) as the main class, albeit on a different level.
- The Head of *Kodesh* models excellent practice in academic and spiritual matters, and

works successfully to monitor, improve and support teaching, encouraging the enthusiasm of staff and challenging their efforts and skills.

- The school benefits from a Principal who makes himself available to guide and advise the Head of *Kodesh* and Headteacher. He has an excellent understanding of all aspects of the school, including the School Improvement Plan. He is also involved in curriculum development, most notably, the new *Divrei Chazal* in which the boys and girls learn the same topic, although approach and style of teaching slightly differs. The Principal also sits on the Board of the JSSM (Jewish secondary school movement), of which Hasmonian Primary is a member.
- The Chair of governors, who is also the Jewish Studies governor, is actively involved in the *Kodesh* department and acts as a critical friend to the Head of *Kodesh*. He makes himself readily available to both guide and challenge the Head of *Kodesh*. The governors, too, have an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas of development in all aspects of the school's Jewish education.
- Leaders and governors effectively monitor and evaluate the *Kodesh* provision through robust systems that make a real impact on raising of standards of teaching and learning, as can be evidenced through the school's assessment data. There are detailed level descriptors in both Key Stages, which are used as a benchmark to both assess the current level and progress of each Year group and individual pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

- Further develop Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development to include creating a *Tefillah* Explanation Programme so that *Tefillah* becomes more meaningful to the pupils.
- Continue to develop and implement the new positive behaviour policy. The SLT shared with the inspectors their vision and approach to positive behaviour and the steps already taken. This now needs to be firmly embedded which will ensure best learning outcomes for all pupils.
- Provide more professional development for the *Kodesh* teachers in child-centred pedagogy to enable all pupils, including those with SEND, to make expected progress.

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

Pikuach invited parents and carers of pupils Hasmonian Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 34 parents responded to the survey. The responses were overwhelmingly positive in all areas.

The comments below encapsulate their views:

- The Senior Leadership Team are very good
- My daughter knows the *Parsha* well
- It's a very warm school and staff are so caring
- Always a quick response from Head of *Kodesh* when I contact him
- My son learnt how to read so well

Pikuach invited Years 5/6 pupils at Hasmonean Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 16 pupils responded to the survey.

The comments below encapsulate their views:

- Teachers are very caring
- They push and stretch us so that we know how well we can do
- The school cares about our education and how well we are doing
- We learn a lot of new things
- There can be a lot of calling out during lessons
- In the middle of *Davening* the teacher explains the meaning of *Brochos*
- In *Davening* they correct reading mistakes
- I feel ready for High school
- There should be more reading homework

Pikuach invited members of staff at in Hasmonean Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 16 members of staff responded to the survey.

The comments below encapsulate their views:

- We get a lot of support from Head of *Kodesh* on how to teach *Chumash*
- The new Headteacher has made it more organised
- Behaviour can sometimes be challenging. The school have recently started to address behaviour
- Pupils are getting used to the changes in the behaviour system
- Head of *Kodesh* is open to suggestions and made a change to the curriculum
- We have learnt different methods of engaging pupils in *Krioh*

GLOSSARY

WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN:

GRADE	JUDGEMENT	DESCRIPTION
Grade 1	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.