

LUBAVITCH SENIOR GIRLS' SCHOOL INSPECTION REPORT

Local Authority: Hackney

Inspected under the auspices of Pikuach

Inspection dates: 14th & 15th March 2023

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

Type of school: Secondary Comprehensive

School category: Academy converter

Age range of children: 11 to 18

Mixed /Single sex: Girls

Number on roll: 124

Chair of Governors: Hadasa Korner

Headteacher: Helen Freeman

Address: Lubavitch House, 107-115 Stamford Hill, N16 5RP

Telephone number: 020 8049 1899

Email address: admin.seniorgirls@lubavitchmat.uk

School website: <https://www.lubavitchseniorgirls.com>

Inspection team

Lead Inspector: Esther Colman
Team Inspector: Sandra Teacher

Introduction

Inspectors make judgements on the following three Key Areas:

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

The inspection was conducted over two days by two inspectors, who watched *Kodesh* (Jewish Studies) lessons, *Davening* (prayers), had detailed discussions with all interested parties including students, teachers and teaching assistants, and scrutinised the Pikuach questionnaires. Joint observations were carried out with members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to ascertain their knowledge and expertise in the monitoring process. Inspectors also met with the executive director and the chair of the trust and scrutinized relevant documentation, including policy documents, strategic plans, curriculum documents, students' work as well as displays of students' work and ideas displayed on the walls.

Information about the school

- Lubavitch Senior Girls' School is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school and this gives it a warm, family atmosphere.
- The school is part of the *Lubavitch* Multi-Academy Trust which was formed in 2018 and includes two primary schools – one for boys and one for girls.
- The school promotes and teaches *Torah* (Bible) values and embraces the *Lubavitch* ethos. The school prides itself on being inclusive and welcomes students from every type of Jewish home. This is a great act of *Chesed* (kindness) as it can impact on standards throughout the school.

Inspection judgement	Grade
Quality of Jewish Education	2
Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development	1
Leadership and management	2
Overall effectiveness	2

What is it like to attend this Jewish school?

- Students describe life at this school as being part of a big family, where everyone cares for each other. Leaders have established a culture of care that is modelled by adults and practised by students.

- Students enjoy their lessons and are encouraged to ask questions and express themselves with clarity and confidence. The *Kodesh* curriculum is very ambitious and has been carefully devised and crafted based on the teaching of the *Lubavitcher Rebbe* (first Rabbi of *Lubavitch*). The atmosphere in the classrooms and around the school is calm and allows everyone to learn.
- Older students support those in younger classes, especially during morning prayers, and act as role models. Students in Year 12 take responsibility for planning and organising special events such as the annual show, which brings the whole school together in unity. As one Year 12 student pointed out: “If you want to get an idea of our school – come to our production.”
- The students have a strong love of, and commitment to, *Yiddishkeit* (authentic Judaism) and display a love and passion for learning, which translates into a clear sense of identity. This enables them to use their skills and knowledge for future learning and communal involvement.

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

Quality of Jewish Education

- The curriculum is well thought out, provides a wide breadth of knowledge to the students and the intent aims are clearly met. This was particularly evident in Years 12 and 13, where students talk confidently about the range of stimulating opportunities, such as Jewish ethics and philosophy, and are already putting their knowledge to best use by, for example, supporting younger students, or teaching and tutoring within the wider Jewish community.
- Students have the opportunity to learn the *Tanya* (*Chabad* philosophy, authored by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of the *Chabad-Lubavitch* Movement) with an outstanding educator, and this promotes and develops higher order thinking skills, connecting the students to their heritage. Most of the students will transition into the most reputable seminaries, and the school fully prepares them for this next stage.
- In Year 10, students are tackling relevant, modern-day issues such as *Yichud* (seclusion) and exploring how this relates to the modern world, considering aspects such as safeguarding, for example, being able to ask for a chaperone at the doctor’s surgery. Students are further empowered by learning about different women in Jewish history and the challenges they faced and overcame. These students can use the same traits to chart the courses of their own life, supporting them to know who they are and who they want to become.
- Students in Year 7 are already preparing for their Biblical Hebrew GCSE through their Hebrew grammar lessons. In a lesson observed, the students were learning about the definite article, which supports their English language skills as well. Cross-curricular links with English were also evident in a Year 9 lesson on the laws of the *Korban Pesach* (Pascal lamb offering) where students were reading about this event through an eyewitness report. This brought the lesson to life and made it much more relevant to the students.
- Students are given a wealth of exciting and varied learning opportunities through a curriculum that is built around daily learning. The current theme is *Hakhel* (community),

culminating in a trip to New York for some Year 9 students, *Shabbatonim* (programs held over the Sabbath) and whole school shows and productions, which link the formal and informal sides of the school.

- The quality of teaching and learning is mostly good, and some outstanding lessons were also observed. This best practice occurred when students explored the text of *Novi* (Prophets) through exciting and stimulating activities such as song, dance, drama and art which brought the stories to life. Students have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the life of David and were able to give accurate examples of characters and places mentioned in the text. However, the teaching does not always meet the needs of the wide range of differing abilities of the students and particularly those with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities).
- Examples of best practice are not always fully emulated and used consistently by all staff and lessons were observed where tasks did not match the differing abilities, resources mainly consisting of worksheets with limited use of visual aids or technological equipment to enhance the learning. This limits the quality of the teaching and the learning. Feedback in students' books is rarely evaluative and students are not told how to improve their work or the next steps to extend their learning.
- The recently introduced Zekelman standards for *Chumash* (Bible) are a good tool to assess students' levels and should be used as a model to develop standards for all areas of the *Kodesh* curriculum to ensure consistency across the board. It is too early to see evidence of tracking students' progress over time. This was an area for improvement in the school's previous Pikuach inspection and needs to be addressed. The results from GCSEs and A levels show that students make good progress as they move up the school.

Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development

- JPSD is outstanding in this school and is a core strength of Lubavitch Senior Girls' School. Inspectors saw many impressive and superb examples of this amongst the students – in their interactions with inspectors, with each other and in their *Kodesh* lessons strengthening the idea of *Tzelem Elokim* (connection between human beings). For example, in a Year 10 lesson in Biblical Hebrew, the teacher was building students' confidence and self-esteem through *Torah* learning, helping them to reach their potential by pointing out lessons to be learnt about everyday life.
- The ethos of the school is visible and highly valued by students, teachers and parents as seen in the survey results. Spiritual development permeates and is at the heart of this family and community setting. Every lesson and interaction reflects the school's values and reinforces the messages it is conveying. For example, *davening* fully meets the legal requirement for collective worship but goes far and beyond this because the experience allows each student to make her own personal connection on her own level with *Hashem* (God) through using the new GROW curriculum, deepening her connection to the world (*Morah*). The older students embrace the opportunity to support the younger ones during *Davening* while modelling good practice.
- Students are inspired through their teachers' and leaders' excellent role modelling and passion for authentic Judaism. Students are privileged to have their world expanded by top educators, for example when learning the lesson of the *Tanya*. To quote a Year 11 student: "*Tanya* teaches you how to have a deeper connection to *Hashem* even for ordinary people. It validates normal behaviour and how to overcome challenges."

- *Tzedaka* (charity) is a big focus for the students throughout the school and they have the opportunity to choose various projects which they want to support. One of the charities sponsored by the students is “Noa Girls” as this is an organisation that helps young women to overcome their challenges which is close to their heart.
- When talking to Year 12/13 students, they mentioned that the school is “not only preparing us for our future life but giving us a direction.” These students are already involved in roles that are impacting others, such as leading youth groups, running summer camps and various programs as well as teaching in supplementary Jewish Studies classes across London. They are looking forward to training to become teachers so that they can give back to the school in due course. These are all examples of *Kedushah* – experiencing holiness in their everyday lives.
- The students have access to the use of technology for *Kodesh* research and benefit from studying the laws of the Sabbath, how to run a Jewish home as well as the value of life, current affairs and ethical issues around the world. They are encouraged to ask difficult questions which are answered in a safe and nurturing environment by experts in Jewish law.

Leadership and Management

- The school is well managed under the leadership of its governors, principal, executive headteacher and headteacher, who together with the newly formed *Kodesh* SLT structure, ensure that teachers are carrying out the shared vision of where the school wants to be. This distributed approach of team leadership supports the teaching and learning, whilst encouraging the enthusiasm of the whole staff and challenging their efforts to good effect.
- The newly formed Academy Trust has implemented an innovative distributed leadership structure. This was formed at the beginning of September 2022 and is still in its infancy. It comprises an Operations Manager, Curriculum and Staff Mentoring Lead, Staffing, *Kodesh* allocation and Teacher Development Lead as well as the Head of Years 12 & 13. Although green shoots are already appearing in the way teaching and learning is organised and supported, for example through targeted professional development for new members of staff, this is a work in progress and further self-evaluation would contribute to making this structure more effective. The headteacher has inspired and empowered all staff to be role models for the students and to show them how to take their place as confident Jewish women in today’s society. Inspectors carried out joint observations with members of the SLT who are developing their knowledge of what makes good quality teaching through the embedding of Quality First Teaching. In their feedback to teachers, they focused mainly on strengths but were more limited in their evaluation of weaknesses.
- The school acted with speed to support students during the challenging times of the pandemic by having online resources readily available. The leadership team have been mindful of the negative impact caused by the pandemic and have introduced a powerful PSHE and Relationship Education which is built on a *Torah* perspective and the school’s *Torah* values. As a result, students feel calm and well cared for and are able to focus on their studies.
- School leaders have a plan to focus on improving teachers’ subject, pedagogical and content knowledge and on their ability to deliver spiritually rich lessons and

experiences that enhance Jewish Education. There is a clear schedule set out in the school's overall strategic plan, which is firmly linked to teachers' performance management targets, but this is a work in progress.

- Leaders create a pleasant atmosphere for those involved in Jewish Education and take account of the pressures placed upon them. They manage staff in a constructive and realistic manner, establishing systems to recruit, train, reward, support and challenge staff members to ensure good quality Jewish education. Inspectors heard both from new staff members and experienced ones how well supported they feel in this school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

- Continue to provide professional and targeted development for staff, with a particular focus on how to support students with SEND, including approaches to differentiation (setting work to the needs and levels of all students) and working with support staff, as well as meetings with therapists to discuss specific students' needs. Increased liaison by the SENDCO (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator) with the *Kodesh* department, as well as allocating a member of the *Kodesh* SLT with responsibility for SEND, will ensure that students with SEND remain a priority whose needs are fully addressed.
- Designate a member of the *Kodesh* SLT to have oversight of the monitoring process together with the headteacher, to ensure consistency in teaching and learning across all classes.
- Track and assess students' progress from starting points by setting up a baseline and giving students more independence to self and peer assess, for example by creating learners' profiles based on the school's core values.

Statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship (tefillah)	Met
--	-----

Summary of Questionnaires

Pikuach invited parents and carers of pupils at Lubavitch Senior Girls' School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 24 people responded to the survey.

The comments below encapsulate their views:

- Always amazed at the high standard of teaching that they receive.
- Always shared inspirational thoughts and teachings when they come home.
- Knowledge is best taught but not skills in a consistent way.

Pikuach invited students at Lubavitch Senior Girls' School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 90 pupils responded to the survey.

The comments below encapsulate their views:

- There is always a practical lesson to improve my conduct in life.
- There is a strong sense of unity between the whole school, and I feel very lucky to call this school my own.
- School brings out the best in its students, which is why we want to give back to the community.

Pikuach invited members of staff at Lubavitch Senior Girls' School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 13 out of 17 members of staff responded to the survey.

The comments below encapsulate their views:

- LSGS is a great school. Kodesh is valued, taught well by the most and those who need support get it. Teachers receive support and training.
- Students come out well rounded and are accepted into the top Chabad sems in the world.
- Students are proud to be a Bas Chabad and past students always speak fondly of their time at LSGS.
- Support from Mrs Freeman has given me confidence and I am really happy in this school.

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.