

# JEWISH PRIMARY SCHOOL INSPECTION REPORT

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Local Authority: Liverpool City Council

Inspected under the auspices of Pikuach

Inspection dates: 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> July 2023

**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 children: 4 - 11

Mixed /Single sex: Mixed

Number on roll: 432

Chair of Governors: Lauren Lesin-Davis

Headteacher: Mathew Shaw

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## Inspection team

**Lead Inspector:** Ruth Wilkinson  
**Team Inspector:** Rabbi Cobi Ebrahimoff

## 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.

## Information about the school

- The school opened on 21st June 1841 with 10 boys, rising to 28 by April 1842. The girls' department was established in February 1844, and an Infants' Department from 1875. It moved to its current location in September 2011. King David Primary School is now a mixed voluntary-aided Jewish day school under the religious authority of the Office of the Chief Rabbi. The school is operated in conjunction with the King David Harold House Foundation.
- 23.4% of the pupils are Jewish. Other religions represented in the pupil population include Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Roman Catholic and Sikh.
- 18.9% of pupils have English as an additional language. 14.35% of pupils have special educational needs, 10 of which have EHCPs.

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

## What is it like to attend this Jewish school?

- The Primary school shares a well-kept, purpose-built campus with the Kindergarten and King David High School. Shared facilities include a swimming pool, sports field, and the Atrium for large school events. The wall displays are meaningful and echo the school's high regard for inclusivity, respect and the importance of every pupil. Many of the displays are celebrations of pupil achievements and recognition that everyone has an important role to play in the school.  
The three core values of the school; *Chesed* (Kindness), *Kavod* (Respect) and *Achrayut* (responsibility) are central to the ethos of the school. These values are shared by both members of staff and the pupils and lead to a strong sense of community in the school and a high level of respect between the pupils, and between the pupils and members of staff. A comment from a pupil encapsulates this level of shared respect: "Because I am Christian, we

both worship god in different ways but if I go to school in a Jewish community, I respect that.” This was conveyed in the Staff Survey and Parent Survey; “It is an honour to work at this school. As a staff we work hard, and the children are safe and happy.” “The Jewish ethos and values are instilled and demonstrated by each pupil and member of staff.” A sense of trust and belonging was expressed in comments in the Pupil Survey; “I feel safe around all of the adults and children in the school”. This was echoed by parents and members of staff. 97% of parents responding to the survey felt that their children were very safe at school, and a member of staff, who responded to the survey, expressed that: “There is a whole school awareness of anti-bullying that is embedded in the Jewish ethos of caring for each other. The teachers explain how to treat people with kindness (Chesed) respect (Kavod) and responsibility (Achrayut). A pupil commented, “This school has made me become more confident in my learning. It is overall an AMAZING school!!”, “King David makes me feel included.” The behaviour in lessons and around the school building is very good and echoes the schools the school’s core values. Three local rabbis play a key role in the informal Jewish education at the school, enhancing the curriculum through creativity, stories and assemblies.

- Supervised kosher meals are served at lunchtime. Packed lunches are allowed if preferred. Pupils also have the option of attending a daily breakfast club and a wide variety of after school clubs and activities.

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

### Quality of Jewish Education

- The curriculum is well structured and sequenced to provide pupils with Jewish knowledge and skills for future learning as well as involvement in the community. The school’s implementation of the Jewish Studies curriculum is consistently strong as is the teaching throughout the school. The Jewish Studies and Hebrew language curriculum enhances the Jewish ethos of the school, focusing on Chesed, Kavod and Achrayut. This curriculum enables and empowers pupils with different interests and educational needs to connect with Judaism and participate in Jewish life. Pupils from various backgrounds are provided opportunities to develop their Jewish learning and Hebrew language knowledge and skills. A parent in the school shared her view: “Thanks to the school my children have a strong Jewish identity, this is the reason we joined the school, and it really works”. Another parent commented, “We are not Jewish. However, my child enjoys celebrating the festivals and sharing their Jewish knowledge at home.” Pupils have a positive attitude towards Jewish Studies and Hebrew Language learning. Lessons are made relevant to pupils, which makes learning exciting and engaging. These comments were expressed in the Pupil Survey, “Understanding different religions makes me feel closer to god”. “All though I’m not Jewish it helps me think of how to be better as a person etc” All staff members use key words in Hebrew throughout the school to enhance the pupils’ Hebrew vocabulary. Pupils from a range of religious and cultural backgrounds are proud to present and share their Hebrew language skills. As one pupil commented, “I liked the time when we made the bedrooms and had to write the objects in our rooms in Ivrit...I really liked it!”
- Hebrew reading is taught effectively by experienced Hebrew speaking teachers. Pupils are encouraged to read for meaning and translate key vocabulary words from the text. A pupil commented, “All our teachers in the school use some Hebrew words”. Year 6 pupils, taking on the role of “Ivrit Ambassadors”, encourage younger pupils to read Hebrew and visit each class to teach them the Ivrit word of the week. The recent arrival of *Shlichim* (teachers from Israel) to the school is significantly raising the level of Hebrew reading, comprehension, and speaking and listening. The Shlichim are well supported by the school’s longstanding, experienced Hebrew teacher. This ensures consistent, high standards of Hebrew Language throughout the school.

- There is a clear link between the Jewish Studies curriculum and the Hebrew Language curriculum. The programmes complement and enhance pupils' overall learning experience. Additionally, the school Leadership Team maximises opportunities to promote cross-curricular links between Jewish and National Curriculum subjects. Standards of Hebrew literacy are good and support other areas of Jewish learning.
- The school's assessment of pupils' Jewish and Hebrew skills is effective and informative. This online tracking system measures progress across the school for Jewish Studies and National Curriculum subjects. Class teachers and Jewish studies teachers work closely together to promote pupil progress. There is provision for pupils who have special needs in small bespoke groups, as well as in the classroom. The experienced SENDCo works with families to get a clear understanding of the child's academic and emotional wellbeing needs. A SEN support teacher works with small groups of pupils throughout the school. Additionally, a music therapist works with some pupils. Any additional special education needs provision that is provided in National Curriculum lessons is also provided in Jewish Studies lessons. The school has recently adapted the premises to create small group rooms which provide pupils with a suitable space for learning. The King David Primary and Secondary Schools have a transition programme in place and there is a thorough handover procedure between the two schools. Taking account of their starting points, the majority of pupils in the school make sustained progress in Jewish and Hebrew language studies.
- Creatively addressing the difficulty in recruiting local Jewish Studies teachers, some Jewish studies lessons take place online. This is facilitated by an experienced teacher who was previously Head of Jewish Studies in the school. In conversation with parents and in the survey results, several parents raised concerns regarding the effectiveness of online provision. This was discussed in our feedback meetings with relevant members of the school Leadership Team. The leadership team already had plans to address these concerns as part of a new initiative in Parent Engagement and assure parents that effective online provision is supported by teachers in class. Online teaching and the online *Havdalah* Assembly was observed as part of the inspection. During these sessions, pupils were visibly engaged, and teaching was effective with pupils participating with the online teacher and answering questions.

## Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development

- Many pupils struggled to find the verbal vocabulary needed to relate their feelings about spirituality and talk about what belief in G-d meant to them. However, some pupils did manage to express their thoughts and feelings in answers to the survey questions: "At first, I did not believe in G-d but now I do believe in Hashem", "I feel like I know more about the Jewish community and it makes me strongly feel closer to G-d".
- Continuous provision in the Reception Class provides opportunities for personal and spiritual development through play in the 'Home Corner' where they have a meaty/milky kitchen and selection of artifacts to create a shabbat table. There is also play dough available for making *challah* (Shabbat bread).
- Many of the wall displays in the communal areas and classrooms reiterate the school's ethos and three core values. The displays are meaningful and many celebrate the successes in the school. A sense of pride in the school and in the pupils themselves is created by displays showing photographs of pupils and their achievements. This may be winning a prize in recognition of good work and kind deeds, or having a leaf on the mitzvah tree that spans a large area of the staircase wall. The House Captains, Maths Leaders, Reading Ambassador, Friendship Group and other pupils with roles of responsibility have their photographs displayed in a prominent position in the school. Interspersed with other curriculum displays a wide variety of Jewish interest displays can be seen. These displays are a constant reminder of the school ethos, of the Jewish year and festivals, and of each pupil's importance to the whole school community.

- There are daily opportunities for prayer and communal worship. During the observed Zoom Havdalah assembly, pupils attentively listened to the story and participated fully in the Havdalah service. Behaviour was exemplary. After eating lunch, the first paragraph of Grace After Meals is sung in Hebrew. The words of this prayer have been made available to all parents and pupils on the school website in Hebrew, transliterated, and in English translation. An audio recording has also been included on the website making the prayer available to all families. All pupils were respectful and participated appropriately in the Grace After Meals prayer with older pupils leading the prayer together with staff. Pupils understood why they were saying this prayer and could articulate the meaning of some words. The older pupils took the responsibility of leading the prayer seriously and were confident in their task. In this way pupils are being prepared for Jewish life beyond the school.
- In an observed Year Six morning tefillah session the focus prayer was *Modeh Ani* (a prayer of thanks for restoring the soul when you wake in the morning). Initially, the pupils were asked if it was difficult for them to get up in the morning, many answered they wanted to stay in bed as they were tired or they wanted to carry on dreaming. The teacher then turned the focus to the meaning and purpose of the prayer which led to a more positive discussion, with pupils sharing that they wanted to get up to see their little brother, that they wanted to take advantage of the things they could learn on that day, and one pupil responded, “To push yourself to be the best version of what you can be.” This was then linked to the school’s key values in a way that was understandable to the pupils. If you can be honest about what you can do to be better today, then you can change. Take responsibility for your actions then you are making a positive contribution to the world. The class was able to articulate what they had learnt from the prayer session, speaking about thinking of something positive for the day and saying thank you for what you have – a new day to do good things. The value of prayer service and the discussions and activities associated with them was commented on in the Pupil Survey: “My Jewish teachers make me think about G-D and appreciating him”. “It is a bit confusing sometimes.” “It makes me think about my own faith.” “When the headteacher finishes the assemblies, he always ends with a blessing and it makes me feel more connected to god”,.
- As well as starting every day with class *tefillah* (prayer), an optional *Shacharit* (morning prayer) service is held once a week. This new early morning innovation is open to pupils and their parents giving them the opportunity of learning new prayers together and sharing a very special time. “Torah Wellbeing” is another new programme which highlights the Leadership Team’s aim to enhance the Jewish lived experience through the core values of the school. The programme, which runs throughout the school, connects the *Parasha* (weekly Torah reading) to the key values of the school. Depending on the age of the pupils, they hold discussions about the Parasha and what this can teach us nowadays. The programme started in January and feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with one pupil commenting, “Jewish Learning in the Torah Wellbeing class helps me to have a stronger connection to God.” The discussions are followed by further creative activities such as role play. The great strength of this programme is that it relates to all pupils, whatever their cultural or religious background. Pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on their characteristics, behaviour and their own core values. It builds confidence and resilience for future learning. The curriculum extends beyond the academic. It provides opportunities for pupils’ broader development, including Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development.

### Quality of Leadership and management:

- Although a few parents mentioned some initial anxiety, there is now a strong feeling of respect for the Head Teacher and the Leadership Team. This was expressed in the



Parent's Survey, "Having critical posts of senior management taken by non-Jews does mean that they have had to learn a lot about Judaism and take a lot of advice from others of the Jewish faith. I am pleased to say that they seem to put a lot of effort into learning about and promoting the Jewish ethos." Members of staff felt they had an important role to play in the school as part the staff team. The *ECTs* (Early Career Teachers) who are completing their *teacher* practice in the school, spoke of being very well supported and integrated into the staff team, and expressed a wish to stay at the school once their training years were completed. The respectful and appreciative relationship between members of staff is also reflected in the relationship between pupils and staff. 93% of the pupils responding to the survey felt appreciation for their Jewish Studies and Ivrit teachers commenting, "They always give us all of their respect and help us learn about really fun and important things and they are respectful when we are talking and always know if something is wrong so that you can talk to them.", "They always listen to my thoughts, ideas and answers. It makes me feel appreciated by my teachers.", The pupils also expressed appreciation for the initiatives that have been implemented through the Leadership's vision for a more creative and inclusive Jewish education in the school, "I appreciate when my teacher baked challah with us and let us plait it and have it at the end of the day to take home and share with our family, and when a teacher uses her time for us to have an assembly (on Zoom from her home) every Friday in the morning.

- The Head Teacher is very appreciative of the support and advice from his Chair of Governors, who has been working with the school for 25 years. Her knowledge and understanding of the school, its pupils and community, is a great asset when planning and making key decisions. The Governor's Jewish Education Committee straddles both King David Primary and Secondary schools. In discussions with parents, they clearly valued the option of their children having continuity through to the end of their school education. The committee consists of the Chair of Governors, both Head Teachers, the School Rabbi, parents and ex-parents. Their recent focus has been on securing suitable Jewish Studies teachers who have the knowledge, passion and experience to move forward with the Leadership's model of enhancing the Jewish ethos through the school's key values and increasing the Jewish lived experience whilst being respectful and inclusive for the whole school community. Feedback from the Pikuach Surveys was very positive about these developments. As expressed by parents, "The recruitment of the new teachers from Israel, and the presence of their family, strongly supports the school's desire to bring greater emphasis to the Jewish ethos and teaching." "I am pleased with the new Jewish studies appointment, the development of Jewish houses and ethos is great."
- The Head Teacher works closely with the governors and members of staff to ensure that Jewish Studies is not taught as an isolated topic. Jewish values, festivals, prayer and Jewish history are integral to school life, and where appropriate and meaningful they are integrated into the wider curriculum. As part of their history topic on WWII, Year Six invited special guests from the Jewish community to speak about their experiences of evacuation and the blitz in Liverpool. Additionally, a former Jewish Studies teacher at the school spoke about his father's role as a soldier in the British Army. Pupils also shared their families' own experiences and brought in photographs and artefacts. In conversation with pupils, it was apparent that these cross-curricular experiences were very impactful. In line with the Leadership Team's ambition to develop Ivrit as a useful language outside of the regular Ivrit lessons, pupils enjoyed combining their Art and Design topic with Ivrit. Year 5 were asked to make a model of their bedroom and label the contents of the room in Ivrit. The feedback in the Pupil

Survey included positive comments on these practical Ivrit projects: “Everybody brought in the bedroom on time, and I felt appreciated and she (the teacher) was very proud of us, also it made me feel very proud of my work and that it was a good use of time”.

- Parents have recognised improvements being instigated by the Head Teacher and the Leadership Team and some positive messages have been noted in the Parent Survey: “An increased range of extracurricular activities this year and good communication home from the Jewish Studies Lead who is very approachable. My child is enjoying the teaching more than in previous years.” “This (understanding of the school’s Jewish values) significantly improved when the new policy was written, displayed and embedded by referencing as part of the mitzvah awards, house activities etc.” There are still concerns by some parents that they lack clear information on their child’s progress and achievements in Jewish studies and have very few opportunities to meet the Jewish Studies teachers. This concern was noted during the inspection, as it meant that parents did not fully appreciate the many initiatives that make the school a special learning environment for their children. The Leadership Team, having identified this need, is in the process of creating a Parent Engagement Programme. This will include more opportunities for shared activities, visits to the school and engaging with the Jewish Studies teachers. Plans could also include curriculum evenings, newsletters, and opportunities for parents to visit the school in action.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

- There are many assets to this school which parents and carers have not been able to fully appreciate. The inspectors raised this issue and were pleased that the Leadership Team had already seen this as an area for improvement. The school needs to celebrate its successes with the families and share the innovations that it has implemented. The displays in the school tell the story of the pupils’ learning and school experiences as well as the school’s focus on good personal values. Sharing these with parents by enabling visits to the school, opportunities to speak with teachers, and family events, will be beneficial for both the families and the school.
- The school provides opportunities for Spiritual, Moral, Social, and Cultural education and now needs to make further progress in this area by facilitating more discussion and helping the pupils to acquire the language needed to express their thoughts and feelings.

Statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship (tefillah)	Met
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## Summary of Questionnaires

Pikuach invited parents and carers of pupils at King David School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 67 people responded to the survey.

Pikuach invited pupils at King David School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 112 pupils responded to the survey.

Pikuach invited members of staff at King David School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 23 out of 60 members of staff responded to the survey.

## 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.