

KING SOLOMON HIGH SCHOOL INSPECTION REPORT

Local Authority: Redbridge

Inspected under the auspices of Pikuach

Inspection dates: 7th and 8th November 2023

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

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary - Aided

Age range of children: 11 - 18

Mixed /Single sex: Mixed

Number on roll: 992

Chair of Governors: Mr Brian Westbury

Headteacher: Ms Michele Phillips

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Inspection team

Lead Inspector: Richard Felsenstein

Team Inspector: Dr Alan Shaw

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 by two inspectors over two days. Together with the Headteacher and an Assistant Headteacher, inspectors visited 16-part lessons, *Shacharit* (Morning service), Year 7 *Tefillah* (Prayers), and a Year 10 and 11 Remembrance Day assembly. Inspectors held meetings with Year 7, 9, 11 and 13 students, and also spoke informally with students during lessons. Inspectors held numerous meetings with Senior Leaders, governors, Head of Jewish Studies, *Kehila* (Community) informal Jewish educators, and the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO). Inspectors examined the Jewish Studies Self Evaluation Form (SEF), School Improvement Plan (SIP), reporting and tracking documentation, students' work, displays and the curricula for formal and informal Jewish learning.

Information about the school

- King Solomon High School is an Orthodox Jewish voluntary-aided school, which welcomes students of all faiths and of no faith.
- At its heart the school is a *Kehila* who look out for and support each other. This idea is centred on three core pillars: *Torah* (Learning), *Avodah* (Service) and *Gemilut Chassadim* (Acts of kindness).
- There are currently 992 students on the roll, including 135 in the Sixth Form.
- The school admits six forms of entry into Year 7 each year (180 students).
- The proportion of students eligible for free school meals (21%) is below the national average. The proportion of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN), and Educational Health Care Plans (EHCP) is below the national average.
- Jewish students make up approximately 21% of the cohort. Approximately 20% of students are Muslim, and 34% are Christian. The other 25% consists of Hindu, Sikh and students of other religions and no religion.

Inspection judgement

Grade

Quality of Jewish Education	3
Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development	2
Leadership and management	3
Overall effectiveness	3

What is it like to attend this Jewish school?

- Students feel happy and safe at school. 85% of parents said their children are happy coming to school, and 91% of students said they feel safe at school. Students said they enjoy attending a school with different faiths and cultures, and that “it is inclusive, safe, and fun, with a family feel.” Pupils know who to go to in the school if they have a problem, or something they wish to discuss.
- Students respect teachers and each other and want to succeed. This was clear from the lessons observed by inspectors, from speaking to students, and from being present at the moving Year 10 and 11 Remembrance Day Assembly. Behaviour is generally good around the school. There is a calm atmosphere, and students arrive at lessons promptly.
- Students are proud to be part of the King Solomon community, and the students know what the school’s three pillars of *Torah, Avodah and Gemilut Chassadim* mean for them and the school.
- Opportunities are provided for pupils to involve themselves in extra-curricular activities outside the formal curriculum. There is a ‘buddy system’ whereby Year 12 students are trained, including receiving safeguarding training, to act as buddies to Year 7 students, who they meet on a weekly basis.
- Students regularly told inspectors that the atmosphere when celebrating *Chagim* (Festivals) is special, and that “it’s great seeing staff and pupils enjoying the occasion, and celebrating together, there is a real community feel.”

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

Quality of Jewish Education

- The Quality of Jewish education requires improvement. Several targets identified in the previous *Pikuach* (Inspection Service) inspection report (2018), have not yet been met. These include the evaluation of the impact of the Jewish Studies programme in the Sixth form, development of middle leaders and training for governors to strengthen their role. The new Headteacher, a Religious Education specialist, has a clear vision of what needs to be done to improve Jewish Education. This includes the appointment of a senior leader to oversee both the formal and informal provision of Jewish education, further management training for middle leaders, and subject knowledge development for those Jewish Studies teachers who are not Jewish.
- Informal Jewish education is provided through the school’s *Kehila* department. Practical and enjoyable activities are organised for festivals, so for example, on *Sukkot* (Festival of Booths) students are able to experience the shaking of the *Lulav* (Palm branch) in the *Sukkah* (Booth), and local rabbis come in regularly to provide activities such as ‘Lunch and Learn’. Students are encouraged to participate in charitable events such as *Mitzvah* Day (A day when people give time to help others). Students informed inspectors that “every faith and belief is welcomed; they respect your religion.” An area for improvement is for more students to be given opportunities to participate in both Jewish and secular enrichment activities, including the option of volunteering. The school needs to create systems and structures for this to be achieved.
- It is planned to improve the links between different areas of formal and informal Jewish

education, by each year group being given a designated Jewish project which could be related to Jewish values such as *Chesed* (Kindness) or *Tzedakah* (Charity); this will ensure that all students are actively participating. The plan is for this to begin in the near future.

- In some lessons, the students were more actively engaged than in others. In the lessons where students were more engaged, partner talk, and use of questioning were observed. In those lessons, students had a real positiveness about Jewish Studies, and a wish to learn more. However, in a number of lessons which required improvement, there was a lack of academic rigour. To improve further, leaders should review the Jewish Studies curriculum to ensure it is suitably rigorous and challenging for each key stage and has clear references to Jewish sources throughout. In these lessons, more retrieval of previous knowledge is needed together with a wider range of teaching methods and activities, including more time for students to work with each other. In addition, the SEF, notes that adaptive teaching (an approach that tailor's instruction to meet the needs of each learner) is an area of focus moving forward, to engage all the students in lessons.
- The school's statement of "Intent, Implementation and Impact", acknowledges the challenges King Solomon faces, with 80% non-Jewish students, and non-Jewish teachers of Jewish Studies. A curriculum map outlines planned progression in Jewish Studies throughout the school, but this is an area Heads of Department will be developing, with a focus on "expert and powerful knowledge (School Improvement Plan September 2023 -August 2024)." In addition, a more robust tracking system is planned to include assessment scores in order to identify individual progress (the school's improvement plan mentions "developing a strategic approach to analysing student attainment and progress in order to close gaps."). It also mentions providing appropriate intervention, when necessary, alongside a training programme for Jewish Studies teachers. All students take Religious Studies GCSE (the course includes Judaism and Islam options), and these results are slightly above the national average in 2023.
- The marking of books was inconsistent in all the observed year groups, often lacking developmental comments to help students progress further. In some books, there were just ticks and few (if any) comments. In others, where additional feedback was given, some WWW (What went well) comments, and EBI (Even better if) were noted down. The key areas here for development are more regular marking, consistency when marking and coaching comments.

Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development

- Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development (JPSD) at King Solomon is good. The curriculum extends beyond the academic, and provides for the students' broader personal, spiritual, moral and cultural development. The school's informal Jewish education provision is delivered by *Kehila*, which runs a number of programmes and trips that students participate in. A Year 9 and 10 nine-day trip to Israel takes place every other year, and is clearly a highlight of students' King Solomon experience. Year 11 students spoke very enthusiastically about the trip. One commented that we "had a memorable *Shabbat* (Sabbath), which was so spiritual and special because we were in Israel." A non-Jewish student said "I could see when we went to the Western Wall how we were all together, it was really spiritual."
- The Jewish education curriculum and wider work, support the students in developing their confidence and independence, in order to lead a purposeful lifestyle. Every year King Solomon hosts a Holocaust seminar. It welcomes groups from other schools, and

listens to survivors speak. Year 12 students take on leadership roles by leading the sessions they have prepared for. In terms of Holocaust education, the trip to Poland in Year 12, which included visits to concentration camps and the major Jewish towns and cities once populated by large Jewish communities, clearly had a huge impact on the Year 13 students interviewed. One student described it as an “unforgettable experience which has had a huge impact on my life.” Another said “I am not Jewish, but I could feel the emotions, it was tense, but beautiful in the way we connected to each other.” A third student commented that “it was very emotional, but we were there to look after one another, it was spiritual, the pure silence.” Then in April 2023 students who had been on the Poland trip visited the Jewish blind and disabled residents at Milne Court to recount their experiences.

- The school prepares students for life in the Jewish and wider community, by developing their understanding of fundamental Jewish and general British values. In the parent survey, 90% said their students had received a good understanding of Jewish values at King Solomon. Examples of these values can be seen in the social action and charitable extra-curricular activities the students are involved in when participating in the Alan Senitt Leadership Upstanders Programme for Year 10 pupils, which enables students of different faiths, cultural and social backgrounds, to create social action projects with students from other schools. One student said, “it was a real opportunity to work with students in different schools, and develop leadership skills, I really gained in confidence.” In relation to the range of extra-curricular activities available, the school is working on encouraging more students to participate.
- JPSD is also good because most students respond well and thoughtfully to experiences at King Solomon that develop their Jewish personal, spiritual, and social values. This could be seen when Jewish Studies scholars returned to their primary school, Clore Tikva, to attend the Year 5 *Seder* (Passover Meal) and said it “was amazing to share with the pupils and families work we had written in school on freedom, and how it links with the *Pesach* (Passover) experience.” In relation to *Purim* (Festival commemorating Esther, Queen of Persia, who saved the Jewish people) one student said “I am not Jewish, but *Purim* was so different, so much fun, so unique, I learnt so much, and it had a huge impact.” Students were able to talk about the quote from *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers), which can be seen displayed around the school, “If I am not for myself who will be for me?” Students said “we all know the saying; we sing it at the *Chanukah* (Festival of lights) concert.”
- Inspectors visited a weekly *Shacharit* (Morning) service for post *Barmitzvah* (Jewish Coming of age at 13) boys which is open to all year groups and taken by a local rabbi. It takes place in the library alongside a *Shacharit* service for Year 7 boys. The *Davening* (praying), had a focus on Israeli soldiers involved in the war against Hamas, and the rabbi explained to all the boys, that his nephew was in the Israeli Defence Forces. The Year 7 boys were writing personal letters to the soldiers in the nephew’s unit, and one Year 7 boy explained he “was writing to thank the soldier for protecting Israel.” In the post *Barmitzvah* service, one boy said “that they were putting on *Tefillin* (Jewish Phylacteries) today to remember the Israeli Defence Forces, and *Shacharit* is a time when “we can reflect on the situation in Israel.”
- Students spoken to were able to articulate Jewish knowledge and spiritual insights, the way these impact on their lives, and how the school provides opportunities for spiritual development and growth. One Year 11 student said that “I am not Jewish, but I really learnt a lot from celebrating *Tu Bishvat* (The Jewish New Year for Trees)) and how the festival connects with the environment and the discussions we have had about looking after the environment, it made more sense to me.” In terms of the impact that the school has had on their lives, Year 13 students said they would miss the family atmosphere of

a “unique school.” One explained that “I will always take the three pillars with me, everyone at the school knows what they are.” Another student said “I will miss the support of my teachers; university is a lot different.” A third student said the school “has taught me the importance of doing good deeds and *Tikkun Olam* (Repairing the world to make it a better place).

Quality of Leadership and management:

- Leadership and Management are in a state of transition and require improvement. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is in a period of change and development. The new Headteacher started at the beginning of term and has a very clear vision in terms of strengthening areas of responsibility in Jewish education, in both senior and middle leadership. With the support of all stakeholders, the Headteacher has the capacity to develop and enhance the provision, which once embedded, will really drive the school forward. There is also a new Chair of Governors who started in May this year and is keen to ensure that all governors are effectively trained. There are two training sessions for governors that will be taking place later this term, towards the end of November 2023.
- Although the school’s Jewish education requires improvement, the Headteacher has a clear vision for taking the school forward and is introducing a new school improvement plan which focuses on areas of development for the next twelve months. The vision is “to provide the students with a world class, educational experience and to be an example of best practice to other schools.” The improvement plan sets out priorities to fulfil the vision, these include leadership and management, quality of Jewish education and personal development. In addition, the Headteacher plans to appoint to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), a Director of Jewish Life and Learning who will have oversight of Jewish Education and bring together its two strands of formal and informal, in a more structured and codified way. This will ensure that all students benefit from the provision. Already under way are plans to introduce projects in each year of the school, which will bring together the formal and informal areas of the Jewish education curriculum and improve the provision on offer.
- In terms of improving Professional Development, the Headteacher is introducing a new training programme for middle leaders, whereby mentors will work with them to develop key leadership skills, and specific subject training for Jewish Studies teachers. This will help further develop the Jewish Studies provision at King Solomon. In addition, the last *Pikuach* report in 2018, mentioned “governors taking advantage of training opportunities,” and this is still an area to focus on in terms of leadership development. Inspectors noted that there are two training sessions planned for governors before the end of term.
- The further development of the role of ethos governor (discussed when inspectors met with governors) is considered a priority as part of the strengthening of the leadership and management structure. The governor would visit the school regularly and meet with the Heads of Jewish education, and receive reports from senior staff, that will help Jewish Education to be taken forward to the next level. The inclusion of regular written reports from Jewish education leaders to governors, both for sub-committees and main governors’ meeting will enable a constant dialogue to take place and should improve the overall quality of the provision.

What does the school need to do to improve?

- In terms of leadership and management, appoint a senior leader to oversee Jewish education, together with the development of middle leadership in Jewish education, and training for non-specialist Jewish Studies teachers. In addition, regular governor training and the appointment of a link governor for Jewish education, are areas to develop.
- Robust and evidence led self-evaluation needs to be embedded in the work of Jewish education leaders to ensure that the curriculum is developed effectively.
- The school's two strands of Jewish Education, formal and informal, need to be more structured and codified.
- Developing a more strategic approach to informal Jewish education and personal development opportunities, such as clubs, enrichment and opportunities.
- Teachers showing an awareness as to how they meet the needs of all learners in lessons, and leaders similarly meeting the needs of all learners in the curriculum.

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 Solomon High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 171 people responded to the survey.

Pikuach invited pupils at King Solomon High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 310 pupils responded to the survey.

Pikuach invited members of staff at King Solomon High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 40 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.