

# MATHILDA MARKS-KENNEDY JEWISH PRIMARY SCHOOL INSPECTION REPORT

---

Local Authority: Barnet

Inspected under the auspices of Pikuach

Inspection dates: 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024

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

Type of school: Primary School

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of children: 3-11

Mixed /Single sex: Mixed

Number on roll: 219

Chair of Governors: David Stone

Headteacher: Miriam Kaye

Address: 68 Hale Lane, Edgware, HA8 3RD

Telephone number: 0208 959 6089

Email address: [office@mmks.barnet.sch.uk](mailto:office@mmks.barnet.sch.uk)

School website: [www.mathildamarks.org.uk](http://www.mathildamarks.org.uk)

## Inspection team

**Lead Inspector:** Rabbi Yaakov Heimann

**Team Inspector:** Daniel Marcus

## 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 observed Jewish Studies (JS) lessons, *Tefilla* (collective worship), *Bentching* (Grace after meals) Years 3-5 *Yom Yerusholayim* (Jerusalem Day) and *Tefilla* (prayer) assembly. They also reviewed the Pikuach (Jewish Inspection Team) questionnaires and had detailed discussions with pupils from Years 2 and 6 and JS teachers. Joint observations were carried out with the Headteacher, Head of Jewish Studies and deputy Headteacher to ascertain their knowledge and expertise in the monitoring process. Inspectors also met with the SENDCO (Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Coordinator), chair of governors, JS governor and senior leadership team (SLT). They scrutinised relevant documentation, including policy documents, curriculum documents, pupils' work and displays of pupils' work, and spoke to the many parents who were keen to share their views about the school.

## Information about the school

- Mathilda Marks-Kennedy Jewish Primary School is a Jewish Primary school that was established in 1959 and moved into its present location in 1989.
- The school is a one-form entry voluntary-aided primary school, which includes Nursery and Reception classes. The school is persistent in its aim to be inclusive of all pupils, including those with SEND (Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities) and to ensure that they are able to access the full curriculum of learning. Lessons are planned taking into account their individual needs.
- The majority of classes, especially the younger years, have the full quota of 30 pupils per class. Approximately 12% of the day is devoted to formal Jewish Studies lessons.
- *Ivrit* (Modern Hebrew) lessons are taught as a modern foreign language by teachers in the secular department of the school.
- Most of the pupils come from the local community and the school has a community feel.
- The school was judged to be 'Good' at its last Ofsted inspection, January 2022.

## Inspection judgement

## Grade

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

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

- Mathilda-Marks Kennedy Primary School is an outstanding school where pupils receive an inspiring, holistic, and engaging JS education that creates a thirst for further Jewish learning and engagement. As a pupil said, “I like my Jewish Studies lessons because they make me think of really good questions to ask my parents and grandparents.”
- Pupils benefit from learning in a positive, warm and all-inclusive 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 gain through being taught by extremely dedicated and inspiring JS teachers under the leadership of an outstanding Head of JS. As a parent commented, “The Jewish Studies teachers go above and beyond to provide a superb level of Jewish learning in fun ways.”
- Pupils benefit from being educated in a school where there is a clear vision and ethos, which is disseminated by the school leadership to all staff, both JS and secular studies teachers. A parent noted, “We very much feel that the Jewish ethos is at the centre of the school’s vision.”
- Pupils are extremely proud to belong to Mathilda Marks-Kennedy Primary School and have positive attitudes towards school, and in particular to their JS learning, both formal and informal. This is because the bespoke curriculum combined with the lesson style and structure, as well as the pupils’ positive relationships with their JS teachers, encourages pupils to actively engage in Jewish texts and learning and to experience and participate in Jewish practice. A pupil said, “The teachers always try to make me do my best and keep pushing me until I have accomplished my goal, and they are always very supportive.”
- Although there are just three formal JS lessons per week, every part of the lesson is utilised to its fullest, and the lessons are made relevant to the pupils. In turn, pupils look forward to their JS lessons, and most pupils voluntarily attend an optional early morning weekly lesson, in the classes in which these are offered.
- Pupils gain from being in an environment where appropriate behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, and *Derech Eretz* (respect) to all adults in the school, is actively encouraged. They are motivated through rewards, such as a special *Rosh Chodesh* (new month) breakfast. During the inspection, pupils went out of their way to ensure that

the inspectors could find their way around the school. Pupils were seen speaking respectfully to their teachers and to one another, and stood up every time an adult entered the classroom. *Derech Eretz* and a care for others is part of the fabric of the school. Pupils exhibit a keen awareness of the spiritual aspects of Judaism and display high levels of personal conduct.

- Pupils in the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) benefit from a spacious unit and outdoor area. There is a range of indoor and outdoor cross-curricular activities allowing the children to learn through play.
- Pupils gain from attending a school where the parents and the school work in partnership and have a mutual respect. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. This was highlighted through the numerous positive comments in the *Pikuach* survey and was echoed by the many parents who queued up to speak to the inspectors after school. Parents were keen to share the positive impact JS has had on their pupils and family.
- Safeguarding at Mathilda-Marks Kennedy Primary School is effective. Pupils feel safe when at school, know whom to speak to if they have a concern and are confident that their issue will be addressed. A pupil said that when practising fire and evacuation procedures, “My teachers are there, they look after me.”
- The school has addressed the key area for development highlighted in the previous *Pikuach* report (2018). Tracking data is effectively used to identify gaps and to address these through interventions, with input from the SENDCO when appropriate.
- The school has successfully inspired the pupils in their Jewish education to good effect, to the extent that, “I wish we could have a Jewish Studies lesson every day,” was a recurring comment echoed by many pupils in the school throughout the inspection. Pupils also enjoy the *Chumash* (Bible) lessons and said that they wish they could have additional *Chumash* lessons each week.

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

### Quality of Jewish Education

- The school’s Jewish curriculum intent is strong. It provides most memorable experiences and a range of rich opportunities for high-quality learning for all pupils, including those with additional needs and those from different religious backgrounds.
- It is evident that Jewish subject teachers have a firm and common understanding of the school’s Jewish curriculum intent.
- The Jewish curriculum, both formal and informal, enhances pupils’ spiritual development and love for learning, both in and out of school. As a pupil said, “I have learnt the Jewish laws so I can use them in my everyday life.”
- The school’s implantation of the Jewish curriculum is constantly strong. It contributes well to fostering pupils’ commitment to continued Jewish study and practice, as well as involvement in the community. As a pupil said, “They teach me well; it makes me feel much closer with my community,” whilst another pupil shared, “I go to *Shul*, give *Tzedakah* (charity) and I do *Tefillah* and *Bentching*.”
- The *Alef* Champ reading programme has been successfully embedded across the

school and has had a positive impact on the pupils' reading. A parent said, "My son's Hebrew reading has really progressed through the *Aleph* Champ scheme and I'm so impressed with how fluent he is now." This can be evidenced through the Hebrew reading data when the majority of pupils are working at the expected level and have made the expected progress.

- The pupils look forward to these lessons, and a pupil said, "Jewish Studies has helped me with *Alef* Champ, *Gematria* (numerical values of the *Alef-Bet*) and Hebrew reading. I look forward to it and it is one of my strong points." The high standard of Hebrew reading was evidenced through testing a range of Y2 and Y6 pupils.
- The work given to pupils across the school constantly matches the aims of the Jewish curriculum. Teachers effectively use their understanding of child pedagogy to ensure that all pupils are able to both relate and engage in the curriculum in an age-appropriate manner that is meaningful to them.
- The impact of this is that the Jewish curriculum is consistently strong, with the vast majority of pupils being enthusiastic learners, displaying an exceptional thirst for learning. As a parent added, "I love the fact that my daughter shares her *Parsha* (weekly portion of the Bible) with her grandparents every week. Such a lovely touch round our *Shabbat* (Sabbath) table." The school is aware that they still have work to do in completing and implementing the *Parsha* curriculum.
- Pupils are prepared for the next stage of their Jewish lives and are keen to seek opportunities to further develop their Jewish practice and learning.
- Pupils, including those with SEND, are active participants in both formal and informal Jewish learning both in school and in the community and consistently achieve highly. As a parent of a pupil with dyslexia said, "What I think is exceptional about this school is that they have developed my son's confidence in reading from *Torah*. He was encouraged to learn in small chunks, and read from the *Torah* with confidence."

## Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development

- The manner in which the school goes about developing pupils' Jewish character and values, of all pupils from all backgrounds, is exemplary and worthy of being disseminated widely as an example to other schools. Pupils exhibit a keen awareness of the spiritual aspects of Judaism and display high levels of personal conduct.
- The school consistently provides well-planned and rich Jewish experiences through both the formal and informal curriculum, links to other organisations and extra-curricular activities. Examples are, the *Rosh Chodesh* SEED event, Etgar and the impact of the *Shabbaton* (an event or program of education held over the Sabbath), which is felt by parents and pupils alike. A pupil said, "We had an amazing *Shabbaton*! We learnt many more things like actually keeping *Shabbat*. I had such a good time learning and playing and I didn't really want it to end."
- All pupils, irrespective of levels of religious practice, participate and feel included in the *Tefillah* life of the school. *Tefillah* is participative, engaging with clear development as pupils progress through the school, as seen through their ability to move to praying from *Siddurim* (prayer books) and reciting and understanding the *Tefillot*. The meaning and relevance of individual *Tefillot* are explained. Pupils were seen praying with *Kavannah* (sincere feeling, devotion of the heart). Through *Tefillah*, pupils show appreciation, gratitude, awe and wonder (*Morah*). These pupils demonstrated an acknowledgement of the Divine, and become aware of experiences in their lives.
- The school provides opportunities for pupils to question, reflect and consider a wider

spiritual picture in everything they learn and do. Inspectors observed pupils who were able to relate their specific learning to a wider spiritual and emotional context. For example, a Year 3 pupil in an *Aleph* Champ class stated that Hebrew reading is important as, "Through it I will be able to pass on the *Torah* to my children and the next generation."

- The pupils are encouraged to raise funds for a range of charities and in February 2024 pupils performed at the Arts Depot in aid of Boys Town, Jerusalem.
- All members of staff are good role models for pupils' behaviour, attitude and spiritual development. A parent said, "Teachers are fantastic role models for all the children and parents," and this was echoed by another parent who said that "The teaching staff demonstrate and teach Jewish learning and culture by their behaviour and attitudes as much as their active teaching."
- Most pupils exhibit a keen awareness of the spiritual and display high levels of personal conduct. A pupil noted that, "I now understand how important God is," and another pupil said that "We now have a stronger connection to Hashem." Pupils are aware of Hashem's (G-d) role in their lives (acknowledging the Divine - *Emuna*)
- The positive impact the school is having on the pupils beyond the school cannot be fully emphasised. Several parents told us about *Pesach*, "Our children are able to lead the Seder service and were so passionate and proud to show their guests how it's done." The impact it had on the parents was noted too: "My daughter's enthusiasm about *Pesach* made it the most engaging *Pesach* I can remember as an adult, where I finally actually enjoyed *Pesach* again."
- This comment from a parent sums it up: "Children leave the school confident in reading, prayer, knowledge and with a proud Jewish identity."

### Quality of Leadership and management:

- The leadership in the school, including governors, articulates and communicates a strong commitment to high standards of work and learning and to pupils' Jewish spiritual development. Working in tandem with the staff, they have developed a shared clarity of where they want the school to be beyond the short term.
- The school's leadership ensures that the Jewish studies staff receive effective professional development and that their pedagogy builds and consistently develops over time
- The Head of Jewish Studies is fully encouraged and supported by the Headteacher, as a parent said, "We feel very fortunate to have such a wonderful JS department and Headteacher who supports the vision."
- The Head of JS models excellent practice in both academic and spiritual matters and works successfully to monitor, improve and support teaching, encouraging the enthusiasm of staff whilst simultaneously challenging them to improve, ensuring that they receive relevant professional development.
- The Head of Jewish Studies and the Headteacher have an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for development in all aspects of the school's Jewish education.

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

- To continue to create and implement the *Parsha* curriculum
- As the school has inspired the pupils and given them a thirst for learning, explore further opportunities for pupils to learn, including more *Chumash*. This can be through adding clubs before and after school and cross-curricular.

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

### Summary of Questionnaires

Pikuach invited parents and carers of pupils at Mathilda Marks-Kennedy Jewish Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 113 people responded to the survey.

Pikuach invited pupils at Mathilda Marks-Kennedy Jewish Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 51 pupils responded to the survey.

Pikuach invited members of staff at Mathilda Marks-Kennedy Jewish Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 16 members of staff responded to the survey.

# GLOSSARY

## WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN:

<b>GRADE</b>	<b>JUDGEMENT</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
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.