

WOHL ILFORD JEWISH PRIMARY SCHOOL INSPECTION REPORT

Local Authority: Redbridge

Inspected under the auspices of Pikuach

Inspection dates: 8th – 9th July 2024

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: 3 - 11

Mixed /Single sex: Mixed

Number on roll: 234 (including 36 in nursery)

Chair of Governors: Mr Ben Saltman

Headteacher: Mrs Lisa West

Address: Forest Road, Ilford, IG6 3HB

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Inspection team

Lead Inspector: Richard Felsenstein
Team Inspector: Rabbi Yehuda Pearlman

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. Together with the Headteacher, inspectors visited 11 part-lessons, *Tefillah* (Prayers) and *Bircat Hamazon* (Grace after Meals). Inspectors held meetings with Year 2 and 6 pupils, listened to them read Hebrew and spoke informally to pupils during lessons. Inspectors held meetings with the Headteacher, Jewish Studies Lead, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators, with the Chair and Vice-Chair of governors, and with other members of the teaching staff. Inspectors examined the Jewish Studies Development Plan, Self-Evaluation Document, reporting, assessment and tracking documentation, pupils' work, displays, and the Jewish Studies curriculum.

Information about the school

- Wohl Ilford Jewish Primary School (WIJPS) is a designated one form entry primary school with a nursery, for boys and girls, situated in the London Borough of Redbridge.
- Approximately 53 % of the pupils on the role are Jewish, 35% are Christian, 10% Muslim, and then other. Around 20% of curriculum time is devoted to Jewish Studies, and both Jewish and non-Jewish pupils are taught Jewish Studies together.
- WIJPS moved into its current, purpose-built school in September 2013.
- The Headteacher was appointed as acting Headteacher in September 2020 and appointed substantively in July 2022.
- The school promotes a positive commitment to Modern Orthodox Judaism, and a proud sense of identity with Israel. The school provides an inclusive Jewish education that is full of challenge, interest and fun for all pupils, regardless of their own faith or beliefs.
- The proportion of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) is 9.8% (national average is 18.4%), 9.4% of pupils are on pupil premium, and 34.2% are EAL (English as an additional language, with 22 languages spoken across the school).

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?

- 100% of pupils reported that they enjoy coming to school. Pupils feel it is a safe and secure setting, and 100% of pupils also said they know who to go to if they have a problem. One Year 6 pupil said that, "It is very safe here; security and teachers and non-teaching staff will always help." Another commented that, "I really like the school, it's a great environment, if I have a problem, I know it will be sorted out."
- Pupils feel that WIJPS has a warm, happy, caring environment. One parent commented, "I would not hesitate to recommend this school, it is outstanding on so many levels, such as quality of teaching quality of facilities, engagement with parents, feel of the school, in addition to the excellent JS department. One Year 6 pupil said, "I've been here since I was very little, and I would definitely send my child here." 100% of parents said that their child is happy at school; one commented, "My daughter really enjoys going to school, a combination of great teachers, and excellent learning environment, and a nice class."
- Pupils respect each other and the teachers and want to succeed. This was clear from lessons observed and from talking to the pupils. One Year 6 pupil said that, "WIJPS is an excellent school, because in *Tefillah* the older pupils help the younger ones, we are a community, and we all respect each other."
- Pupils explained what makes the school so special. One pupil said that, "Jewish Studies is important to me because all we learn from that can help you make the right choices. We learn the history of Israel and understand Hebrew that can help you pray for good things."
- A number of teachers came to see inspectors to tell them that they were former pupils of the school, and that the Jewish ethos has made and continues to make, a tremendous impact on their lives. One teacher commented that, "I came to the school and my children came to the school. As a teacher, I am reconnecting with my roots, giving the next generation what I received as a child. My children received their grounding at WIJPS in terms of their love for *Yiddishkeit* (Judaism). All the teachers here are responsible for ensuring the continuation of our ethos, and they are respected and loved by all. Another teacher said, "I am a new teacher and an ex-WIJPS pupil. I always knew I would come back here to teach; I had the best time in primary school, it's like a second home."

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

Quality of Jewish Education

- The school's Quality of Jewish Education is outstanding. The curriculum intent is strong and provides memorable experiences and rich opportunities for high-quality Jewish learning for all pupils, including those with additional needs and those from different backgrounds. The outstanding *Tefillah* curriculum outlines the *Tefillot* (Several Prayers) the pupils recite in each Year group. The curriculum highlights those *Tefillot* that are to be added each year, so that pupils build on previous knowledge, and are confident reciting them by the end of the year. PowerPoints are available with music, and also include all *Tefillot* written in transliteration. Pupils are given many opportunities to learn about and understand the *Tefillot* in Jewish Studies lessons and Key Stage *Tefillah*. Inspectors attended a whole-school *Tefillah* on the first day of the inspection, which commenced with the *Havdalah* (End of Sabbath prayer) Service led beautifully by three Year 6 pupils. One pupil in Year 4 commented that, "I love *Havdalah*, it helps me to start the week in school." When it came to *Davening* (praying), the pupils were asked to think of something to thank *Hashem* (God) for. One Year 3 pupil told an inspector at the end of *Tefillah*, that, "I thanked *Hashem* for my lovely food." A Year 6 pupil said that, "When we *Daven*, and we sing together, I feel a real connection with *Hashem*."
- The impact of the outstanding Jewish curriculum (formal and informal) is strong, and is the result of a thoughtful, curriculum intent, which clearly sets out the detailed content, and gives pupils a wide range of Jewish experiences. Pupils learn about the *Chagim* (Festivals), Jewish Way of Life, and develop their Hebrew reading; they enjoy eating in the *Succah* (a temporary hut used during the festival of *Sukkot* – Tabernacles), love *Purim* (Festival commemorating Esther, Queen of Persia, saved the Jewish people from execution by Haman, the advisor to the Persian king the Jewish people being saved) and participate in Jewish Studies Mastermind. Pupils are enthusiastic learners as they move through the school. A pupil in Year 5 commented that, "Our Jewish learning really makes us think." Teachers consistently check pupils' understanding in lessons, and appropriate feedback is provided, which enables them to make progress and gain in confidence. For example, in an excellent Year 3 lesson, understanding of what had been taught previously about *Shabbat* (Sabbath) was checked by the teacher using an interactive Kahoot (this is an online learning platform) quiz with questions about *Shabbat*. There were five mixed ability teams sitting around five tables, and responses were recorded on iPads. One Year 3 pupil told the inspector, "I like getting the answers right, and getting lots of points."
- Inspectors were shown outstanding examples of pupil progression through regular formative assessment in the classroom. For example, in a Year 1 lesson looking at artefacts such as a *Sefer Torah* (five Books of Moses Scroll), *Mezuzah* (parchment with special Hebrew verses) and *Tefillin* (black leather boxes containing scrolls of parchment), pupils needed to use their prior knowledge to say what the items were. One pupil told the inspector that, "We are opening a *Sefer Torah* and feeling it, I can see Hebrew letters and words." Another looking at a *Mezuzah* said, "I can see *Hashem's* name, and the *Shema* (Prayer expressing belief in God)." These Year 1 pupils were also asked to write their ideas down on paper to challenge them and test knowledge and understanding. Marking was of a very high quality. Work is marked in green, and pupils have the opportunity to respond to feedback or further challenges from the teacher: an excellent way of maintaining a regular dialogue in the books and enabling further progress to be made.

- Pupil progression in Jewish Studies is also monitored and tracked through an excellent reporting system to parents in the Spring and Summer terms. Parents receive one grade for “Attitude and Effort,” one for “Progress” and one for “Attainment”. There are four Attainment grades; “emerging,” “developing,” “secure,” and “mastery.” This grading system is used in books and in the reports; a JS written comment is also made in the end of year reports. Progress in Jewish Studies and Hebrew reading is recorded so that both can be tracked and monitored, and appropriate interventions made when required. The vast majority of Year 6 pupils will leave with their reading and Jewish Studies graded as “secure” (with some “mastery” and “developing” in JS), huge progress since the beginning of Key Stage 2, and the return to school post Covid. In addition, Hebrew reading Champions are mentioned and celebrated each month in the school newsletter, so that parents can see all the progress that has been made. Pupils are heard reading Hebrew every day. Inspectors heard pupils in Years 2 and 6 read: some were very fluent and accurate, others were a little slower but generally accurate, with a range of abilities. Reading has made a very positive impact on the JS curriculum, and one parent wrote to the teachers to say that, “My son was extremely excited this weekend when doing his Hebrew reading, he was over the moon he could sing his favourite song *Hashem Melech* (God is King) to the line he was reading in his book.” In addition, in the middle of a Year 3 Jewish Studies lesson observed, when a pupil came back from her Hebrew reading session with a badge to show she had reached the next level, each pupil and the teacher clapped this achievement. This is something that is done in each JS class in relation to Hebrew reading, when a pupil reaches the next level.
- Pupils are able to focus on their Jewish learning in an atmosphere of respect and inclusion as a result of their teachers, who create a very positive environment. Pupils with Special Educational Needs are provided with excellent support both inside and outside the classroom. There are “calm corners” outside every two sets of classrooms, where pupils can be given additional help, time and support. In the classrooms, “adaptive” teaching takes place which caters for the needs of all pupils. The JS Lead meets with learning support assistants to discuss strategies in order to meet individual needs. For example, one pupil had drawn a picture of Noah and the animals, instead of writing about them; a Year 2 pupil had made a shul instead of writing about one, and a Year 5 pupil’s teaching is adapted so that Hebrew letters are made rather than drawn. Another Year 5 pupil with SEN said in relation to *Tefillah* that, “The singing makes me so happy, because it’s good to say thank you in this way to *Hashem*. Another pupil with communication challenges, said that she loves *Tefillah*. She said that, “*Tefillah* is important to me because I feel free, and *Hashem* is with me, it’s like He is right next to me, even though He is everywhere.” Other comments from Year 6 pupils showing the massive positive impact their Jewish education has had on them were: “I love JS here; I don’t want to leave.” Another commented that, “I will really miss my Jewish Studies teacher.”

Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development

- Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development (JPSD) at WIJPS is outstanding. The way the school goes about developing pupils’ Jewish character and values is exemplary, and worthy of being disseminated widely as an example to other schools. A teacher commented that, “At university my son represents Judaism with pride and has taken a key role in combatting anti-Semitism on campus post October 7th.” Without a doubt, she credits her son’s love and pride in Judaism from his experiences at WIJPS. The impact

of the school's approach to JPSD can be encapsulated by a pupil's winning entry in the Yad Vashem Kites Messages of Hope: "Look at those who hushed your voice, don't listen and voice your choice. Stand tall and build a wall against hate, we stand mighty not small."

- WIJPS consistently provides rich Jewish experiences in a coherently planned way, through both the formal and informal Jewish Studies curriculum. One pupil said, "Jewish Studies teaches me a beautiful religion, I realise how lucky I am to learn Judaism." This was reinforced by another who said that "A small *Mitzvah* (Commandment) could change someone's life." In a Year 6 lesson with a Lesson Objective: "To understand we are all created in the image of Hashem, and that we all have the potential to make the right choices and improve our character," pupils were given a task to write a private letter and put it into an envelope to themselves, about how they wished to improve during the coming year. Examples from Year 6 pupils letters included, "I want to become a better person, being kinder to myself and my sisters." In another Year 6 lesson with a Learning Objective: "To know that on *Shemini Atzeret* (Day of Solemn Assembly), we begin to say *Mashiv Haruach* (Prayer for wind and rain), pupils made their own poems using acronyms. One pupil for the letter A of RAIN wrote "A gift from *Hashem* from *Shemini Atzeret* until *Pesach* (Passover). Another rich Jewish experience was undoubtedly the Year 5 residential *Shabbaton* (an event or programme of education held over the Sabbath) together with Tribe (organisation which provides programmes for Jewish youth), a pupil commented, "It was loving. People were crying over *Havdalah*, they didn't want this feeling to end, the songs were emotional, we were holding each other's shoulders, we could express our true feelings with our friends."
- Outstanding *Tzelem Elokim* (awareness of the spiritual in all humankind) is shown through *Tzedakah* (charity) and *Chesed* (loving-kindness) and the respectful relationships that exist between all stakeholders of the school community. Walking through the school, inspectors could feel the warmth and positivity that permeates the school culture. Displays convey the essence of the school's values and ethos. Pupils and staff are friendly, and overwhelmingly positive about their experiences at WIJPS. One pupil commented that, "It doesn't matter where I come from, or where anyone else is from, it has taught me to respect other people." A teacher commented, "The children look after each other, everyone is so proud to be a member of staff at WIJPS," while another stated that, "Everyone is valued here, and diversity is celebrated." Spreading kindness was enhanced when Year 6 participated in a six-week programme with GIFT (a charity that provides a culture of giving for those in need) which culminated in a visit to Tesco to purchase food to feed a family of five for a week. A similar activity was undertaken by Year 4 who joined with the United Synagogue *Chesed* Department to pack *Purim Mishloach Manot* (gifts to others on *Purim*) boxes for families in need across London. In addition, on an ongoing basis, *Chabad* (Orthodox Jewish *Chasidic* group) Aid is supported around the year through pupils being encouraged to bring groceries to school and put them in a large box outside the Jewish Studies classroom.
- The JPSD journey at WIJPS enables its pupils to develop their personal connection with *Hashem*. Inspectors were very impressed by the pupils' concentration and enthusiasm whilst singing the *Tefillot* and the extent to which they experience real *Kedushah* (holiness in everyday life). The inspector observing Key Stage 2 *Tefillah* assembly was genuinely moved by the experience, as he listened to the singing, and watched the real pleasure on the faces of the pupils and staff alike, as they prayed with devotion. One pupil commented that, "the *Aron Kodesh* (Holy Ark) in the hall, makes the school a special place to be." Another said, "I like *davening* to *Hashem* because I can say thank you for our World." One pupil in Year 6 explained that, "Nothing is stronger than the power of prayer. I pray for Him to grant peace across the world, and especially in Israel."

Tefillah as a strength of the school was conveyed by a pupil who reflected that, “In JS we learn lots of things, but for me, one thing stands above all learning, that *Hashem* is always by our side. To me, prayer is something I can turn to when I feel alone, without it I would be lost.” Reflecting generally on the power of a *Mitzvah*, after taking part in *Mitzvah* Day, one pupil commented that, “*Mitzvah* Day is amazing, you bring in a toy for children in hospital. My teacher said it is not just one day, it’s every day, as there are millions of *Mitzvot* you can do.”

Quality of Leadership and management:

- Leadership and Management at WIJPS is outstanding. The leadership of the school, including governors, articulates and communicates the school’s essence, a strong commitment to high standards of work and to pupils’ Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development and well-being. An outstanding strength of Leadership and management is the way in which school leaders and governors have a shared vision, articulate the ethos of the school, and are actively involved to ensure that their high standards are maintained. Leaders and governors all talked about the warm Jewish atmosphere, about the pupils leaving with a real love of Judaism, respect for others, and the ability to make informed choices. Each member of staff spoken to by inspectors, each pupil interviewed, and parents’ responses to the parental survey, clearly said what a special place WIJPS is for all of them. One member of staff commented that, “The Jewish ethos drives the school, everyone is valued here, diversity is celebrated, and we are all so proud to be a member of staff here.” The Chair and Vice Chair of governors told inspectors that, “Many governors attended WIJPS, and we get so much pleasure from the school and the staff.” They went on to say that, “The pupils leave with a clear identity in relation to their Judaism and Spirituality, we help them develop their curiosity so that they leave wanting to learn more.”
- The school’s leaders ensure that teachers receive focused and highly effective professional development. Leaders organise In Service Training (INSET) every Monday after school. INSET sessions that have taken place this year include Safeguarding, Marking and Feedback, Special Educational Needs, and preparation for *Yom Ha’atzmaut* (Israel Independence Day). In addition, there is an outstanding, well-structured Performance Management system in place. This is designed to ensure that each member of staff meets with his/her line manager during the year to look at professional development. This academic year each member of staff has had two appraisal meetings in relation to performance management with his/her line-manager. The first meeting was to set three individual targets, two based on the school targets, and one an individual target, and they are then reviewed at the end of the year. This process ensures that high standards of teaching and learning are maintained.
- The school’s Headteacher provides outstanding leadership, supported by the governors and Jewish Studies Lead. The Headteacher’s key priorities are to maintain the strong ethos (known and understood by all members of the school community), continue to make the school a central part of the community, and to make it accessible to all families in the area. The Headteacher believes strongly in the personal touch in developing relationships in the school and with the local community and is an excellent ambassador for the school. Applicants to the school are given individual tours by the Headteacher, are given opportunities to see the school in action and are able to feel how special and warm the school is. The Headteacher, JS Lead and governors, all said how proud they were that you know and can “feel it’s a Jewish school as soon as you walk into it.” The high-quality leadership and management can further be seen by the huge impact the

outstanding Jewish education has on all members of the school community. One parent commented that “I would not hesitate to recommend this school; it is outstanding on so many levels, leadership, quality of teaching, quality of facilities, engagement with parents, and the outstanding JS department.” A pupil said, “Jewish Studies is always fun, and my Jewish Studies teacher always encourages me to be a better person, and a better Jewish woman.”

- The Jewish Studies lead models excellent practice in academic and spiritual matters, works successfully to develop teaching and learning, and she conveys passion and devotion to the whole school community. The pupils have been overwhelmingly positive about the impact she has and has had on their lives. A parent described her as “one in a million, and her enthusiasm for Judaism inspires the pupils in the school.” Another parent commented that the Jewish Studies Lead is incredible, a real love of Torah has been nurtured. A third parent said that the Jewish Studies Lead and her team are so enthusiastic, that the children can’t help but love their Jewish Studies learning.” The Jewish Studies Lead has an excellent understanding of the strengths of JS and areas for development in all aspects of the school’s Jewish Studies provision. Regular monitoring of the school’s Jewish education is undertaken by Senior Leaders and by governors through a variety of ways: learning walks, lessons are visited, pupils and teachers are consulted, books are looked at and feedback is given. In addition, a monthly “*Kodesh (Jewish Studies) 4 Kids*” newsletter is sent to parents summarising what has taken place at school in the last month. This has a positive impact, ensuring parents are informed of developments in the Jewish Studies department.
- Governance is very strong at WIJPS, and governors are committed to sustaining developments in teaching, learning and assessment in Jewish Studies. Governors have high expectations grounded in strong Jewish values, and engage very well with the Headteacher, Jewish Studies Lead, and other senior leaders and parents. The governors challenge senior leaders to ensure excellent outcomes for pupils. Governors receive termly reports from the Headteacher on all aspects of the school, including Jewish Studies. Leaders are held to account through governors’ meetings, through the Ethos Committee and through regular meetings with the Headteacher. The school Rabbi, who is also a governor, provides outstanding support, advice and guidance in all aspects of Jewish life at the school. The Rabbi regularly comes to school, presents “Ask the Rabbi” sessions for all the pupils in Years 5 and 6, speaks to Senior Leaders, teachers and pupils and is involved in a range of programmes, including *Shabbatonim* for different year groups.

What does the school need to do to improve?

- To create and develop links with schools with a similar ethos to share good practice and develop capacity.

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 School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 103 people responded to the survey.

Pikuach invited pupils at School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 20 pupils responded to the survey.

Pikuach invited members of staff at WIJPS School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 27 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.