

# INDEPENDENT JEWISH DAY SCHOOL INSPECTION REPORT

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Local Authority: Barnet

Inspected under the auspices of Pikuach

Inspection dates: 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> April 2024

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

Type of school: Primary

School category: Voluntary Aided Academy

Age range of children: 3 - 11

Mixed /Single sex: Mixed

Number on roll: 236

Chair of Governors: Mrs Rachel Stafler

Headteacher: Mr Yosh Radomsky

Address: 46 Green Lane, Hendon, London NW4 2AH

Telephone number: 0208 203 2299

Email address: [office@ijds.co.uk](mailto:office@ijds.co.uk)

School website: <https://www.ijds.co.uk>

## Inspection team

**Lead Inspector:** Richard Felsenstein

**Team Inspector:** Esther Colman

## 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, Head of *Kodesh* (Jewish Studies) and an Assistant Headteacher, inspectors visited 10-part lessons, *Tefillah* (Prayers), including *Rosh Chodesh* (New Month) *Tefillah*, and *Bircat Hamazon* (Grace After Meals). Inspectors held meetings with Year 2 and 6 pupils and heard them read in Hebrew. They met with the Student Council, and also spoke informally with pupils during lessons. Inspectors held meetings with the Headteacher, Head of *Kodesh*, Assistant Head, the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator (SENDCO), and with Governors. Inspectors examined the *Kodesh* School Development Plan, which included Self-Evaluation, reporting assessment and tracking documentation, pupils' work, displays, and the curricula for formal and informal Jewish learning. Inspectors also went on a learning walk with the Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher (with responsibility for the Student Council).

## Information about the school

- The Independent Jewish Day School Academy is a one-form entry Jewish Voluntary Aided Primary School with a nursery. The school predominantly serves the Hendon Jewish community in the London Borough of Barnet. The school has a full-time nursery on site.
- Approximately 40% of the school's week is devoted to *Kodesh*.
- *Kodesh* lessons are taught in *Ivrit* (Modern Hebrew), which is a distinctive characteristic of the school's *Kodesh* programme.
- The school is fully committed to a Zionist, Modern-Orthodox education.
- The Headteacher commenced his role in September 2023.
- The school's mission statement aims to provide all pupils 'with an outstanding education in an environment which nurtures the potential of each child, encourages a love of *Torah* and *Mitzvot* (Commandments), promotes British values, develops a sense of responsibility towards others, and creates a strong connection with the people and the Land of Israel.'
- The proportion of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) is 14% (national average is 12.6%) and the proportion of pupils with an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) is 3% (below the national average).

## 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?

- Pupils reported that they enjoy coming to school. They feel it is a safe and secure setting. One pupil stated that, "If I had a problem, I would go and tell a teacher, and if I cannot find a teacher, I would tell someone in the school office." Leaders ensure that appropriate measures are taken to promote a positive and protected atmosphere. In the parents' survey, nearly 100% of respondents said their child feels safe at school, and 95% said their child felt happy in school, one parent commented that, "My child loves IJDS," another said, "Extremely engaged, learns a lot, and happy." In addition, 88% of parents said they would recommend the school to others.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. This was very clear from the lessons observed by inspectors, from speaking to pupils in focus groups and when meeting them around the school. One Year 2 pupil told an inspector that, "The Independent Jewish Day School (IJDS) is fun, because in *Kodesh* we learn about *Chagim* (Festivals), and we have a parade thing; such cool things happen at school." A Year 6 pupil commented that, "It's great, because you get familiar with *Ivrit*, your brain gets used to it, and I have friends in other schools who cannot speak Hebrew fluently."
- Pupils respect each other and teachers and want to succeed. This was clear from the lessons observed by inspectors, and from talking to the pupils. One Year 6 pupil said that "The teachers make *Kodesh* learning fun and give us some great interactive activities during the lessons, which help our understanding of what we are learning."
- Pupils appreciate opportunities for a wide range of *Kodesh* activities, including the Etgar quiz, where one pupil said, "I love learning for Etgar, and you can pick what you learn." Another pupil talked about Purim and said, "It was an amazing day, we were all dressed up as characters from Hogwarts, it was such fun." A final comment from a pupil in *Hachana* (Reception) in relation to activities they were involved in preparing for *Pesach* (Passover) was, "We are making *Matzah* (unleavened bread), and I'm going to cook it in the oven." There was a toy *Matzah* oven being used enthusiastically by the children in the outdoor area next to the classroom.
- The whole atmosphere of the school reflects the close collaboration between *Chol* (secular), and *Kodesh* promoted by the Headteacher and Head of *Kodesh* who ensure an integrated education provision for all pupils. This is evidenced by the timeline corridor display of both Jewish and secular milestones, which pupils are shown before commencing a topic.

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

### Quality of Jewish Education

- The school's outstanding new Jewish curriculum intent is clear and ensures progression from year to year in all *Kodesh* subjects. The *Tefillah* curriculum outlines the prayers pupils recite in each Year group, but it would also be beneficial to document what concepts should be covered by the teachers. The school provides memorable experiences such as *Horim VeYeladim* (parents and children learning together) three times a year linked to a particular Festival, Israeli theatre festival, and other rich opportunities for high-quality learning for all pupils, with additional *Kodesh* enrichment available on Thursdays and Sundays. Inspectors observed an inspiring Question and Answer session with the school Principal for pupils in Year 5, a regular opportunity for pupils to ask their own challenging questions such as, "What will happen to non-Jewish people when *Mashiach* (the Messiah) comes?" Another pupil asked the Principal, "Why does *Hashem* (G-d) want us to do certain *Mitzvot* we don't understand? An excellent answer to the pupil gave the analogy of going to see a doctor, where we would not always understand the information given, but we would still follow the instructions.
- The impact of the excellent Jewish curriculum is strong. The pupils are very enthusiastic learners, and a number of pupils told inspectors that, "We will take what we have learnt at IJDS with us to secondary school." Pupils are rewarded for their efforts in various ways, for example through the *Kodesh* stars of the week which are mentioned in the weekly newsletter, and in assembly. The large number of books that pupils have clearly demonstrate the amount of work they get through in their *Kodesh* lessons, and teachers use the marking policy extremely effectively. For example, inspectors saw many examples of "live" marking in lessons, as well as comments designed to help pupils progress further in their learning. One Year 6 pupil commented that, "You are always told what progress you have made, and what you need to do to progress even more."
- Inspectors found very high levels of teaching and learning across the school. Clearly a lot of progress has been made since the last inspection, as a result of the regular monitoring that has taken place, for example, through learning walks. Teachers continue to benefit from impressive peer observations to share good practice, especially in adaptive teaching (designed to challenge all the pupils while providing for their individual needs), and active learning. In *Kodesh* lessons, pupils benefit from high quality additional adult support to ensure all the pupils successfully carry out the *Kodesh* tasks set in *Ivrit*.
- Responses from pupils demonstrate a deep understanding of material they have been taught. The extremely high-quality resources such as *iTaLAM* (fully digital Jewish Studies Curriculum in *Ivrit*) and *Sulamot* (*Mishnah* – Oral Law curriculum for Years 5 and 6) benefit all pupils including those with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and show the school's commitment to the high value placed on *Kodesh*. 80% of pupils say their Jewish learning has helped them reflect on what is important to them – for example, a Year 6 child said, "When our *Kodesh* teachers give us stories about people they know, that don't have money for food or toys, it makes me realise that I am lucky to have those things."
- The inspectors were shown outstanding examples of pupil progression through termly assessments, followed up by pupil progress meetings. Inspectors were impressed with the standard of Hebrew Reading across year groups, and the ability range. iPads are used by pupils to record their Hebrew Reading, and this and the other *Kodesh* data, including homework, is now recorded on the school's assessment platform which

enables all teachers to review pupil progress and attainment and address next steps. In this regard, a Year 2 pupil said, “We are always told what to do to improve our work,” and a Year 6 pupil also commented that, “When we have termly tests, we are always told about our progress.”

## Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development

- Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development (JPSD) at IJDS 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. Year 6 pupils spoke enthusiastically about their experiences at IJDS. One pupil told inspectors that, “The school is special because we have learnt so much *Kodesh*, the teachers are excellent, and I am going to miss them when I leave.” The Jewish ethos pervades every aspect of life at the school, and one pupil said, “You can see how special it is, the moment you walk in the door, you can really feel it.” In corridors and classrooms, well-planned displays, enhance the Jewish values celebrated by the school. For example, when you enter the school, you see the school key values, “Ready, Respectful, Safe and Kind,” written in Hebrew and English, and this is clearly visible throughout the school, and adhered to by the pupils, who showed exemplary behaviour throughout the inspection. An attractive collage on the “Year at IJDS” can be seen along one of the corridors. This display is a month-by-month summary of the IJDS year, with information in Hebrew and English, together with photographs which bring the explanations to life.
- IJDS consistently provides rich Jewish experiences in a coherently planned way through both the formal and informal *Kodesh* curriculum. For example, on *Purim* (Festival commemorating Esther, Queen of Persia, who saved the Jewish people from execution by Haman), the *Kodesh* team together with the *Bnot Sherut* (religious female youth in National Service who are working at IJDS) turned IJDS into Hogwarts, and parents were welcomed into school for the fancy dress parade. Also on *Purim*, *Kitah Gimmel* (Year 3) acted out the *Purim* story in *Ivrit* to an audience of parents, therefore involving the whole school community. In preparation for *Purim*, in one of the wide range of extra-curricular activities, including *Mitzvah* (Commandment) Club, run by *Bnot Sherut*, the girls of *Kitah Daled* learnt about the importance of being more considerate to others, and they made masks in honour of *Purim*. Other informal *Kodesh* activities include “Sunday School,” which is a voluntary additional *Kodesh* learning for pupils in classes *Daled* (Year 4) to *Vav* (Year 6), and *Horim v’Yeladim*, which takes place three times a year.
- Outstanding *Tzelem Elokim* (awareness of the spiritual in all humankind; connections between human beings) is shown through *Tzedakah* (charity work) and *Chesed* (loving-kindness) which also links well to the school values. GIFT (a Jewish charity that inspires giving) ran a six-week *Tzedakah* programme with *Kittah Vav* culminating in a supermarket challenge, and the pupils also learnt about the eight levels of *Tzedakah* and how to be a “giver.” In addition, when inspectors met with the Student Council, one pupil explained that “Every Monday and Friday we stand by the gate, and when pupils arrive with their parents, they can put money in the *Tzedakah* boxes.” Another member of the council told an inspector that the money currently goes to different charities over the course of the year. One charity supports people that are injured with rehabilitation to improve their lives. Several children voiced that we want those in need within the community to know we are connecting with them and want to help.
- Inspectors were very impressed by the pupils’ concentration and enthusiasm whilst singing the *Tefillot* (prayers), and the extent to which they experience real *Kedushah* (Holiness in everyday life). Key Stage 2 *Rosh Chodesh Davening* (praying) had a fantastic *Ruach* (togetherness and feeling of joy and happiness) from start to finish. As it was pre-*Pesach*, the song “*Dayenu*” (it would have been enough) was playing as pupils

entered the hall. Each pupil had a Koren *Siddur* (Prayer Book) which they used throughout *Tefillah*, and the *Tefillot* were also put on the screen at the front of the hall. The atmosphere and spiritual feeling were amazing, as the pupils sang many parts of the *Davening*, including a very special rendering of *Hallel* (Prayer of Thanksgiving), with everyone in the hall (pupils and teachers) singing and dancing. This feeling of *Morah* (Spiritual Awe and Wonder) could be seen during the *Amidah* (standing Prayer), where almost all the paragraphs were led by different Year 6 pupils, who *Davened* with real *Kavanah* (sincere feeling, devotion of the heart). After *Shacharit* (morning service) one Year 6 pupil said, "I really enjoy it when we *daven* together, especially when we sing and dance during *Hallel*, there is a real feeling of spirituality and togetherness." The special connection with Israel could be seen during *Shacharit* when a *Tefillah* was said for *Tzahal* (Israeli Defence Force), and *Tehillim* (Psalms) were also recited. In addition, on Thursday mornings there is a *Kittah Heh* and *Vav* (Years 5 and 6) *Minyan* (Prayer Service) where one of the boys will *Lein* (read from the *Torah*) from the school's own *Sefer Torah* (A *Torah* scroll, and a girl will give a *Dvar Torah* (*Torah* thoughts), with their parents being invited to attend and listen.

- The JPSD journey at IJDS enables its pupils to develop their personal and spiritual journey, including their love for Israel, by learning *Kodesh* in *Ivrit*, and enjoying celebrations on special days such as *Yom Ha'atzmaut* (Israel Independence Day). The school also shows its closeness to, and empathy with, Israel and *Am Yisrael* (the People of Israel) in relation to the current situation in Israel, and regularly prays for the return of the hostages. The *Acheinu Perek* (a request to *Hashem* for the release of the captives) can be seen beneath yellow flowers for the hostages strategically placed on a staircase in school, and every IJDS family received a *Perek* (section) of *Tehillim* to say at home, showing how the IJDS community comes together. At the end of their IJDS Jewish personal and spiritual journey, one Year 6 pupil said, "I have learnt how I can have a conversation with *Hashem* and that we should always thank Him for all that we have." Another mentioned that, "I will miss the school when I leave, I'm so grateful we have learnt so much *Kodesh* at IJDS."

### Quality of Leadership and management:

- Leadership and Management at IJDS is outstanding. Leaders at all levels clearly communicate the school's commitment to high standards of work, and to the pupils' personal and spiritual development and well-being. Together with the staff, leaders and governors have developed a shared clarity as to how they want the school to progress. Inspectors held numerous meetings with the school Principal, Headteacher, Head of *Kodesh* other senior leaders, and governors, which clearly demonstrate the shared vision they have. Senior leaders and governors have led the staff to create an exceptional Jewish atmosphere that permeates all aspects of life at IJDS. They know what has to be done to progress even further and have the capacity to do so.
- The school's outstanding Headteacher who has only been in post since September 2023 has a clear vision as to how the school should develop over the next few years. His immediate aim is to bring in a new Head of *Kodesh* together with new *Shlichim* (teachers from Israel) for the start of the next academic year (the current Head of *Kodesh* is 'making *Aliya*' - going to live in Israel) with his family. Other key aims are to maintain the strong standard of *Kodesh* through *Kodesh b' Ivrit* (taught in Hebrew) and continue to develop the school's excellent commitment to Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development. An excellent new *Kodesh* Development Plan was introduced this year, which is being constantly evaluated by the Headteacher, Head of *Kodesh* other senior leaders and governors. The Headteacher has brought in the IJDS Award, which is designed to give pupils the opportunity to develop a range of skills. The Award has four

stages, from building skills in stage one, to helping at home for stage two, to helping within the community for stage three, and being involved in a social action project for the final stage. The Headteacher said that “*Kodesh* education at IJDS enables the pupils to learn, love and live their Judaism.”

- The school’s leadership ensures that IJDS teachers receive focused and highly effective professional development. This academic year, a new performance management system was introduced which provides an excellent structure to ensure the continued professional development of each member of staff. This new outstanding system requires objectives to be set, including success criteria, by line managers in October. These are then reviewed in March to see if the targets are on track, have been completed or need adjusting, and then in the summer term, at the third meeting evidence is produced to show whether targets have been met. In addition, senior leaders oversee a system that enables *Kodesh* professional development to take place on a weekly basis in school. Topics covered in this structured approach, include an INSET (In-Service Training) with Rabbi Reuven Spolter on “Digital tools for the classroom,” and a session on “How do we support weaker pupils in *Kodesh* using differentiation (giving work at different levels) and adaptive teaching (catering for the needs of all pupils in the class),” and “Planning for *Pesach Sedarim* (Passover meals) in school.”
- The Head of *Kodesh* models excellent practice in academic and spiritual matters and has an impressive understanding of the strengths and areas for development in all aspects of the school’s *Kodesh* education. Regular monitoring of the *Kodesh* provision is undertaken through SLT (Senior Leadership Team) learning walks, with the aim to drive progress further forward. Recently this monitoring undertook a review of exercise books and workbooks. Feedback is then given to teachers, with targets set for the next learning walk. A new *Kodesh* assessment and tracking system has been introduced which is the same system used for *Chol* in the school. The assessment system analyses data as to pupil progress in *Kodesh*, compares *Kodesh* to *Chol*, and enables the Head of *Kodesh* to decide if any intervention is needed. The *Kodesh* team also send parents a weekly newsletter for each Year group, which summarises what the pupils have been taught in *Kodesh* that week, an excellent way of keeping parents informed.
- Governance is very strong at IJDS, and all governors are committed to securing and sustaining improvements in teaching, learning and assessment in *Kodesh* education. Governors have high expectations grounded in strong Jewish values, and engage well with the Headteacher, Head of *Kodesh*, other senior leaders and parents. The governors challenge senior leaders to ensure a fair and effective deployment of staff and resources and to secure excellent outcomes for pupils. Governors receive termly reports from the Headteacher on all aspects of the school including *Kodesh*. The Chair of the *Kodesh* committee meets with the *Kodesh* committee once a term and reports back to governors. The link-governor programme includes regular learning walks when the *Kodesh* governor meets with the Head of *Kodesh*, looks at the pupils’ work, and visits lessons and assemblies. Feedback is then given to the school and the governing body. Leadership and Management is further strengthened with fortnightly meetings between the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher.

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

- Continue to embed and review adaptive teaching.
- Incorporate into the *Tefillah* curriculum document the explanations and ideas that are shared with the pupils about the meaning of the *Tefillot* learnt.

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 IJDS to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 89 people responded to the survey.

Pikuach invited pupils at IJDS to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 26 pupils responded to the survey.

Pikuach invited members of staff at IJDS to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 19 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.