

NORTH CHESHIRE JEWISH PRIMARY SCHOOL INSPECTION REPORT

Local Authority: Stockport

Inspected under the auspices of Pikuach

Inspection dates: 8th & 9th 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

Age range of children: 4 – 11 years old

Mixed /Single sex: Mixed

Number on roll: 199

Chair of Governors: Naomi Hornby

Headteacher: Mr Michael Woolf

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Inspection team

Lead Inspector: Rebbetzen Esther Cohen

Team Inspector: Rabbi Jacob 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 who observed Jewish Studies (JS) and *Ivrit* (Modern Hebrew) lessons, assemblies, *Bentching* (Grace after Meals) and the Jewish Studies Craft Club.

They had detailed discussions with the Headteacher, Head of JS, SENDCo (Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Coordinator), SLT (Senior Leadership Team), governors, including the Chair of governors, governor responsible for JS, the school Rabbi and other local community Rabbis, other teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and pupils from Reception to Year 6.

They also conducted focus group interviews and discussions with the Head Boy and Head Girl, pupil leadership team, the School Council, Year 2, Year 3, Year 4, Year 5, and Year 6 pupils and spoke informally with several other pupils and members of staff and stakeholders during assemblies, lessons and around school.

Inspectors listened to pupils' Hebrew reading, looked at pupils' work, their books, displays, photos and videos of past *Chagim* (Jewish Festivals) celebrations and events, curriculum, assessments, school documentations and policies. They also reviewed the Pikuach questionnaires sent to pupils, staff and parents.

Information about the school

- North Cheshire Jewish Primary School is a one-form voluntary-aided primary school with a strong Zionist ethos and teaches with a traditional centrist Orthodox approach to Judaism. It is the only Jewish school in the South Manchester area and caters for pupils aged 4-11 years old. Though a one-form entry school, its stakeholders invest heavily in creating smaller classes, so currently there are two classes in Year 3 and Year 4. Founded in 1973, the school is housed in a spacious complex with beautiful grounds where pupils can enjoy the calm green outdoors, located in a suburb of Heald Green, within the Stockport Local Authority. There is a private nursery located on the school's campus with whom North Cheshire Jewish Primary School works closely.
- The school is located at a fairly prosperous suburb of Manchester with some of its pupils coming from some of the city's most deprived areas. The school's catchment area includes Stockport, Manchester, and Trafford. It currently has 199 pupils on roll: 37 SEN Needs (19%), 9 EHCP (Education, Health and Care plan), with 4 pending (5%), 50 EAL (English as an Additional Language) (25%), 20 FSM (Free School Meals) (10%) and 20 (10%) Pupil Premium. There are no looked after children or children who are subject to

child protection plans. The school has 10 out of 17 possible ethnic groups and celebrates the different ethnicities of their pupils. Currently 23 of its pupils (12%) are not of the Jewish faith.

- Whole school attendance is very good and no pupil or group of pupils are disadvantaged due to this. There are very few persistent absentees, and this has been the case for more than 5 years.

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?

- North Cheshire Jewish Primary School prides itself on being a community school with a genuine family-like feeling, supported by its surrounding Jewish community and *Shuls* (Synagogues) of different affiliations. This was echoed by all stakeholders including community Rabbis and congregants. The school is a welcoming and vibrant place, radiating positivity which is reinforced through its RESPECT values: **R**esilience, **E**mpathy, **S**elf-Awareness, **P**ositivity, **E**xcellence, **C**ommunication and **T**eamwork. Pupils are taught the value of an “I can do” inclusive learning environment growth mindset, where every member of the learning community is valued, respected and is given equal opportunities with high expectations of themselves, academically, morally, emotionally, and socially. When asked what it is like to attend this school, one pupil in Key Stage 2 (KS2) explained, “I love this school because there is freedom of speech. Jewish Studies is always fun, and it is always helpful to me. Freedom of speech, you are allowed to say your opinion. You can say what you want as long as you don’t upset anyone.”
- There is a strong positive Jewish atmosphere around school. From its elegant front entrance with an artistic canopy and glass doors showing Stars of David, to its high-quality displays, the school emanates Jewishness and Zionism. Displays across the school show evidence of a strong connection with Israel, with Houses named after historical characters. *Ivrit* words (in *Ivrit* and transliterated) are evident across the school. *Kodesh* (Jewish Studies) displays in prominent places show pupils’ work and celebrates achievements. There is evidence of cross-curricular work on many *Chol* (Secular) displays, including English and Science and this helps pupils to appreciate how Jewish Studies can impact on their secular studies, and vice versa. Over 80% of pupils who answered the pupil survey said they understand the Jewish values of the school, which is reinforced through the school environment. The school describes itself as proud to be fully committed to *Halacha* (Jewish Law) and traditions and is steadfast in its Zionist outlook.
- The school is proactive in creating meaningful experiences for their pupils. The newly appointed Head of Jewish Studies is energetic and passionate about her role, and

together with the Headteacher, they have clear aims and visions for what they want for their pupils and where they want the school to be. This is ably supported by the school's SLT, who work in unison with governors and local Rabbis to create seamless opportunities of learning between the school and the *Shuls*, helping pupils develop a strong sense of community. The school stresses amongst its core aims the intention 'To give children confidence and pride about their Judaism and have a strong identity regarding their own community and the State of Israel'. An example of this is the Year 4 *Shabbaton* (an event or program of education held over the Sabbath) held at one of the local *Shuls*, where pupils learn songs for the *Kabbalat Shabbat* (bringing in the Sabbath) service from the *Shul's* Rabbi and then sing them during *Shabbat* (Sabbath) in the presence of their families and friends. One pupil stated that one of his most memorable events was the Y4 *Shabbaton*, "Where we did all the songs there." When asked why this was a memorable event, the pupil replied, "I could bring my cousins and my grandparents. They watched me singing the songs. It was a big achievement as it took time to learn... It helped with my stage fright but singing made me feel more connected to God." Over 96% of parents say that they either agree or strongly agree that their child is happy at North Cheshire Jewish Primary School.

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

Quality of Jewish Education

- Pupils' Jewish learning taking place in Key Stage 1 (KS1) and KS2 was good, with engaging, well-planned and effective teaching sessions that included Adaptive teaching (where teaching is planned to ensure that all learners can meet expectations). There were also some outstanding features in pupils' learning, where they could articulate what they were learning and what they need to do to improve.
- The school's Jewish Studies curriculum is coherently planned, and Jewish Studies teachers have a firm understanding of its intent. The curriculum provides a broad range of learning opportunities and experiences, including cross-curricular links between Jewish and secular subjects. The *Ivrit* curriculum enhances the school's Jewish ethos.
- Pupils are engaged and interested in their Jewish education as a result of positive engagement from their teachers. The work given to pupils across the school consistently matches the aims of the Jewish Studies curriculum. Teachers plan inspiring lessons while effectively building upon pupils' previous Jewish knowledge and understanding. Pupils found Kahoot quizzes used for retrieval learning motivating. This showed good and effective implementation of ICT as a way of stimulating pupils' retrieval memory.
- Hebrew Reading is taught sequentially, which helps develop pupils' fluency, accuracy, and confidence. A pupil shared: "I love challenging myself with reading as much Hebrew as possible." Inspectors found the quality of reading to be good, particularly in KS1. Generally, pupils showed confidence and pride in their reading however, some did not achieve accuracy and fluency as they do not get enough opportunity for practice and therefore falling short of the school's expectation that leavers would leave the school as fluent readers of Hebrew. Pupils would benefit from frequent reading practice, including reading at home.
- Regular assessments take place in Jewish Education, but at present there is no overall formal tracking system to identify the impact of the pupils' learning over time in all areas of JS. The school has identified this as a target for improvement.

- Pupils actively participate in JS sessions and display leadership qualities in Jewish religious, charitable and social activities. Pupils develop a secure Jewish identity as they participate in communal Jewish life with increasing confidence. A pupil shared: “Since we started *Bentching* (Grace after meals) together, I’ve been saying all the words correctly.” Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their Jewish education and keen to further develop their Jewish learning and practice.
- North Cheshire Jewish Primary School starts from Reception. It uses the JCP (Jewish Curriculum Partnership) *Parsha* (Torah portion of the week) curriculum and the Discovery Jewish Festivals Curriculum to teach about *Chagim*. Jewish learning in Early Years includes cross-curricular teaching where applicable, *Brachot* (blessings) for food, morning prayers, the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and experiential learning, for example, tasting bitter and sweet foods that go on the *Seder* plate (traditional plate containing key symbolic foods used at the Passover meal) and making *Matzot* (unleavened bread). During a lesson observed, pupils were interested, engaged and well supported by their teachers. They were able to recognise, name and in some cases explain how several items related to the festival of *Pesach* (Passover) are used.
- The school provides a variety of informal education opportunities and activities that enhance pupils’ learning. This includes the *Yehudi* programme run by the *Mizrahi* organization, Reading Club, Year 6 Friday night service and dinner with their parents, the school choir visiting the FED - a local organization supporting the vulnerable and the elderly - where they sang *Chanukah* (Festival of Lights) songs, and a JS Crafts Club. Inspectors observed pupils during the Craft Club, where they were making pillowcases for the *Seder* (Passover meal). This promoted much excitement among the pupils in their anticipation of the forthcoming festival of *Pesach*. The Club is attended by a range of Year Groups of different faiths who choose to attend. The activity reinforced what they learn in lessons.
- Pupils have an excellent and productive relationship with the JS staff. One pupil said, “They always listen to my opinions, and I always learn new things that always help me later on. I love to listen to stories about the Jewish People and they always feel free to let me share.”

Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development

- Pupils at North Cheshire Jewish Primary School showed clear understanding of the school motto ‘A School Built on Kindness’ and how to apply it in practice. The Jewish Studies curriculum extends beyond the academic, providing for pupils’ broader development, especially in helping them understand how to build strong relationships and show respect to one another. One pupil explained: “I learned that you must treat your neighbours as you treat yourself. We will go to a new school; we will make new friends so we should remember to treat your neighbours as you treat yourselves and we will know how to treat everyone.” There is a strong emphasis on social responsibility. Pupils spoke passionately about their ‘Grow your £1’ challenge and how much fun they had while learning about the importance of the *Mitzvah* (Commandment) of *Tzedakah* (Charity). Some pupils shared how meaningful it was to them that they were able to raise money for Israel.
- The provision aimed at Jewish spiritual development supports pupils, where appropriate, in building their Jewish character and values. The school complies with the statutory requirement for collective worship through morning assemblies, *Tefillot* (prayers), and

Bentching. Pupils enjoy assemblies that are made meaningful by the input of the Headteacher and Head of JS, ably supported by all members of staff. Most pupils join in, singing prayers with zest, creating a positive atmosphere. While the younger pupils sing from a PowerPoint presentation with *Tefillot* words in Hebrew and transliteration, Year 6 pupils follow the *Tefillot* in the *Siddur* (prayer book). This provided good role modelling for the younger pupils.

- The school's RESPECT values are reviewed in rotation. Each week there is a focus on a different value, which is initially introduced during the Monday morning assembly before being discussed in class. The weekly Celebration Assembly recognises pupils' achievements in their being able to demonstrate these values. Behaviour during *Tefillot* is excellent. Members of staff, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, are superior role models of respect for pupils to follow.
- During focus group discussion and informal conversations, many pupils in KS2 were able to talk about and give examples of how their Jewish learning helps them action *Mitzvot* that enable them to develop good relationships with one another and also to look after the environment. However, only some were able to articulate how *Tefillot* and singing help them develop a deeper connection with *Hashem* (God). During pupils' focus group discussion, pupils shared their memorable moments in Jewish learning. One pupil in Year 6 described learning about *Rosh Hashanah* (Jewish New Year), explaining that, "It is meaningful because it is the time when I can see all my family. We get together then and I can see all my family." Another pupil talked about *Tu bishvat* (New Year for the Trees) explaining that, "Trees are like humans. They breath like we do. This taught me to respect the environment as we respect people, like we respect ourselves".
- The school's intent and its implementation as well as the work observed in the Jewish Studies department and wider school, support and encourage pupils to develop resilience, confidence and pride in their Jewish identity. The school ensures that non-Jewish pupils (12% of total numbers of pupils) are engaged and feel part of the school. They follow the same curriculum as all pupils and feel an integral part of the school. A member of SLT shared: "Some of the non-Jewish children were the strongest in the "Brachot Bee" competition. They wanted to be part of it. They join in with everything. They came and sang at the Jewish home. Learning the song was in their free time over lunchtime and parents were supportive." Non-Jewish pupils are pleased to learn another language and are given opportunities to share about their own faith celebration, for example, talking about the Chinese New Year.
- Pupils in KS1 can articulate their connection with Hashem. They are able to link what they are learning at school with their relationship with Hashem and with their behaviour. There are good opportunities for learning about spiritual development in KS1 and pupils learn to articulate *Hashem's* presence. This was seen in lessons whilst interviewing pupils in Year 2 and during the *Bentching* prayer. One pupil in Year 2 shared: "I like how we get to sing songs in the festivals. We sing the frogs song and king Pharaoh. All the frogs were the 2nd plague. Because the Egyptians were using the Jewish people as slaves. *Hashem* sent the plague. *Hashem* wanted the Jewish people to be slaves in the first place. Yes, when they *Daven* to *Hashem*, *Hashem* wanted to help them."
- In KS2, however, pupils found it more difficult to reflect on and to articulate the impact that the enriching Jewish experiences and the Jewish curriculum had on themselves, especially in relation to acknowledging the Divine (Emunah). Whereas most pupils interviewed were able to reflect upon and articulate their relationship with each other, their families and the environment, including what Judaism expects of them, they were less able to articulate or reflect upon their deeper relationship with Hashem and how this

impact their lives. Inspectors found that there were missed opportunities where pupils could have explored and learned to articulate personal reflection, for example, during a lesson observation where pupils were learning about the three most important *Mitzvot* (commandments) of Pesach. Pupils would benefit from support to develop further personal reflective engagement with their Jewish learning.

- North Cheshire Jewish Primary School prepares pupils for life in the Jewish and wider community by developing their understanding of fundamental Jewish and British values. It encourages pupils to become active citizens and members of the Jewish community and wider community, showing respect and sensitivity to others, regardless of their religious and cultural backgrounds and lifestyles. A governor whose child attended North Cheshire Jewish Primary school and is now learning at a non-Jewish school said that her child is “Secure in who they are and their identity. She is confident and happy to talk to people about Israel and to stand up for herself. Pupils are very confident and proud of who they are. They are well equipped when they leave here.”
- Regular visits, teaching involvement and support given by the school and community Rabbis create strong links and opportunities for pupils to feel an inclusive part of the Jewish community, in and outside school. One Rabbi shared: “We take turns in doing assemblies. 90% of the pupils at school come from our *Shuls*.” The different Rabbis rotate leading Tuesday morning assemblies, the Friday morning *Kaballat Shabbat* assemblies and reading club. They said how they have seen the progression in the pupils’ ability to say *Tefillot*, explaining that KS2 knows most of the *Baruch Sh’amar* (‘Blessed is the One who said’) prayer.

Quality of Leadership and management:

- The Headteacher works in unison with The Head of Jewish studies, supported by a proactive and motivated SLT and group of knowledgeable and engaged governing body and community Rabbis. This enables them to drive values, oversee the curriculum and work tirelessly to realise the school’s aims. The leadership of the school, including governors, articulate and communicate the school’s essence. They show a strong commitment to high standards of work and to developing pupils’ Jewish personal and spiritual wellbeing. The Head of JS has a deep understanding and vision for the Jewish Studies development of the school. She, together with the Headteacher, staff and governors, has developed a shared clarity and trajectory where she wants the school to be.
- The SLT has identified the need for tracking pupils’ progress formally over time as a target for Jewish education in the school. This was identified in the previous Pikuach inspection. It is an improvement that should help ensure that targets are more effectively met. The SLT recognises that an overall tracking system should be implemented in order support pupils and track all pupils’ progress over time.
- The school’s leadership ensures that teachers receive focused and highly effective professional development. They invest in their staff’s professional development and team building. For example, the newly appointed Head of JS who started as an unqualified teacher at the school was put through the Teacher Training programme. This was found to be an asset which enabled her to take on the new role. Another example is that the governor responsible for JS has in the past taken the JS staff for an away day to plan together the teaching and events for the forthcoming year. Teachers’ pedagogy consistently builds and develops over time and this consistently translates into improvements in the teaching of the Jewish curriculum.

- North Cheshire Jewish Primary school is the only Jewish school serving the South Manchester community. Under the present leadership, together with the input of community Rabbis, it has become a beacon of light in bringing the community together. The school welcomes and encourages the participation and input of its communal Rabbis and the *Chabad* (Chassidic sect) Rabbi emissary, creating a seamless and cohesive experience for pupils in and outside school and enhancing their sense of belonging. One of the Rabbis explained that Rabbinical leaders in the community take part and contribute to Jewish festivals celebrations such as leading the mock *Pesach Sedarim* (Passover meal), *Purim* celebrations (Festival commemorating Esther, Queen of Persia, who saved the Jewish people from execution by Haman, the advisor to the Persian king), and *Havdalah* (ceremony at the completion of the Sabbath) ceremony. Another Rabbi said that the school welcomes initiatives. He explained that "The Rabbi comes in and teaches them at school and then they came to *Shul* and sang the songs at *Shul* from Friday night service from beginning to end."
- The newly appointed Head of Kodesh is an inspiration. She leads Jewish Studies at NCJPS with endless love and enthusiasm, modelling excellent practice in academic and spiritual matters. As a dedicated school leader, she sets the finest possible example for the entire school community, working hard to improve and support teaching, encouraging, and enthusing the staff while challenging their efforts and skills to good effect. Her total devotion to Jewish education is key to the school's success. One of the community Rabbis interviewed shared that, "There is one family (referring to the Head of JS's family) that does all the *Limudei Kodesh* (Jewish Studies). They are a vibrant Jewish family. They are not teaching it; they are living it. They want to educate them."
- The entire leadership team at NCJPS is committed to securing high standards of Jewish education for every pupil across the school. The leadership team works cohesively and effectively to provide pupils with the opportunities to experience Jewish life and to develop a high level of Jewish knowledge.
- Staff acknowledge the effective effort that the leadership has put in to improving behaviour. One member of staff explained that, "The behaviour has improved a lot since the last inspection; however, the attitude from the children towards teaching assistants and outside staff who come in to run clubs has yet to be improved. The children now have a clear code of conduct to follow of expectations of how they walk around school, how they should treat others with kindness and respect."
- During inspection, pupils showed excellent behaviour during lessons, when walking around school or in the playground. In the questionnaire, 89% of staff responded that behaviour in JS lessons is well managed, including that of SEND pupils. One staff member said, "JS staff have worked alongside secular staff to maintain discipline and follow the same routines with children who have care plans and additional SEND needs. They have listened to the advice from the class teachers and the SENDco and have followed a clear approach to create consistency and flow between the lessons the children receive."
- The leadership of the school works together with all staff, including the school's Business Manager and all stakeholders to ensure the best educational provision for all pupils. There is a rigorous procedure to deal with bullying or incidents and pupils and staff feel safe at school. The school leadership ensure that staff receive the appropriate training on safeguarding. 96% of pupils say they feel appreciated and listened to by their JS teachers and can turn to them for help. One child explained, "The teachers listen and help me with my problems."

What does the school need to do to improve?

- Provide more opportunities for KS2 pupils to engage regularly in Hebrew reading practice to attain accuracy and fluency so that all pupils, even those who are not supported at home, can achieve the school's aim that 'All children should leave NCJPS as fluent Hebrew readers.'
- The school's baseline assessment and tracking for Hebrew reading is effective. However, at the time of inspection there was no formal process or tracking system to identify the impact of pupils' learning over time for the whole Jewish Studies curriculum. Next stage for further development is to create an effectual baseline assessment and tracking progress for Jewish Studies and utilise *Kodesh* assessment data to inform targeted planning across the school.
- The school's intent offers many opportunities for spiritual development. However, during implementation, there are many missed opportunities for connection with the spiritual. Next steps are to create openings in KS2 during lessons and through informal education, to develop pupils' ability to understand and articulate how their Jewish Studies and Jewish life at school, as well as outside school, and the school values set of RESPECT, help them connect to the Divine. Pupils will benefit from provision for further opportunities to practise self-reflection and engage in discussions about their learning, sharing spiritual insights while learning from each other's perspective. This will enable pupils in the future to exhibit and articulate a keen awareness of the spiritual and help them connect the head (cognition and knowledge) to the heart (feeling and the intangible).

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 North Cheshire Jewish Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 65 people responded to the survey.

Pikuach invited pupils at North Cheshire 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 North Cheshire Jewish Primary School 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.