

# RIMON JEWISH PRIMARY SCHOOL INSPECTION REPORT

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Local Authority: Barnet

Inspected under the auspices of Pikuach

Inspection dates: 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024

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

Type of school: Primary

School category: Academy free school

Age range of children: 4 – 11 years

Mixed /Single sex: Mixed

Number on roll: 208

Chair of Governors: Suzanne Tager

Headteacher: Sarah Simmons

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## Inspection team

**Lead Inspector:** Richard Felsenstein  
**Team Inspector:** Rebbetzin Esther Cohen

## 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 8 part-lessons, *Tefillah* (Prayer), *Bircat Hamazon* (Grace after Meals) and a Year 4 *Chagigat Chumash* (celebrating receiving one's first Bible) celebration. 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, *Kodesh* (Jewish Studies) Co-leads, with the Chair of governors, the *Kodesh* governor, and with the Special Education and Disabilities Co-ordinator (SENDCO). Inspectors examined the *Kodesh* Self-Evaluation, and development documents, reporting, assessment and tracking documentation, the school improvement plan, pupils' work, displays, and the *Kodesh* curriculum.

## Information about the school

- Rimon Jewish Primary School (Rimon) is a single form entry, co-educational Modern Orthodox Jewish Primary School, under the auspices of the Chief Rabbi of the UK and associated with Golders Green Synagogue.
- Rimon opened as a Free School in September 2012, and is warm, caring and inclusive. Rimon is part of the Jewish Academy Trust (JCAT).
- Rimon is committed to ensuring that children are equipped with the tools required to feel comfortable and interested in the world of Judaism.
- The Headteacher was appointed in 2020.
- Approximately 30% of the curriculum time is devoted to Jewish learning, spiritual growth and connection to the wider community and Israel.
- The proportion of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) is 8.4% (national average is 13.6%). 9.6% of pupils are on pupil premium, and 20% are EAL (English as a second language). 4.8% of pupils have Educational Health Care Plans.

## Inspection judgement

## Grade

<b>Quality of Jewish Education</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

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

- Pupils are overwhelmingly positive about Rimon Jewish Primary School. They enjoy coming to school and say that their Jewish Studies teachers leave them feeling positive. Pupils feel appreciated by their Jewish Studies teachers, and the large majority of pupils say they understand the Jewish values of Rimon.
- Pupils feel that Rimon has a warm, happy and caring environment. A Year 6 pupil commented that, "I have really enjoyed my time at Rimon, it is so welcoming and inclusive." One parent said that, "Both boys are very happy and walk in cheerfully each day," another said, "My child respects the Jewish values the school teaches, the teachers and Headteacher consistently provide a wonderful atmosphere in this regard." Parents are extremely positive about the school.
- Pupil wellbeing is at the heart of the school. School values of *Chesed* (loving-kindness), *Tikkun Olam* (repairing the world to make it better), and the 'Five Bs': 'Be respectful, Be resilient, Be safe, Be responsible and Be kind', establish Rimon's school values. The 'Five Bs', are understood and articulated by the pupils, and can be seen around the school.
- Pupils know who to go to if they have a problem, and they feel safe in school. One pupil said, "We have great security, so I feel safe." A second pupil commented that, "When I feel scared or nervous, there is a teacher to comfort me or help me." Another told inspectors that, "You don't find any bullying in this school, it is a safe place, and everyone is so kind."

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

### Quality of Jewish Education

- The school's curriculum for Jewish education is good. It is coherently planned and sequenced to provide Jewish knowledge and skills for future learning and communal involvement. It enables pupils to apply what they know and what they do, with increasing confidence. The current ongoing development of the Jewish topic curriculum is being implemented this academic year, and includes *Chagim* (Festivals), *Middot* (good character traits), *Tzelem Elokim* (awareness of the spiritual in all humankind), and a greater focus on Jewish History and identity. There have been good opportunities for wider curriculum integration. For example, in Reception, pupils learn about the solar system and connect to this when learning the *Kodesh* topic about the creation of the world. Ethics was introduced into Key Stage 2 at the start of this academic year and is continuing to be developed. An inspector observed a good Y6 ethics lesson in which the focus question was: "Can you go to a shop, get lots of information about a camera, and buy the camera somewhere else?" There had been a general discussion followed by the *Halachic* (Jewish law) perspective, which was: "You cannot use their advice about the camera if you have no intention of buying it, but it is fine if you are buying or if you are uncertain."
- Teachers have a secure knowledge of the *Kodesh* lessons they teach. They often use high quality resources that inspire and contribute to pupils' good progress in Jewish education. Teaching in *Kodesh* is consistently good. Teachers ensure that most pupils, including those with SEND and additional needs, are making good progress and achieving well over time. In lessons observed, teachers constantly checked pupils' understanding of what had been taught in the first few minutes of each lesson, and this

was used for review and recap. In a Reception lesson observed, pupils were learning a new letter *Lamed* (Hebrew letter), with a focus activity table where pupils were drawing lines within the *Lamed* work sheet. The impact of this activity, which was linked to the task, could be seen when one pupil was able to tell the inspector, "I'm colouring in a *Lamed* by filling it in with lines, that's because it is a *LeLe* sound, and there is a line for each *Le*." At another table, a pupil said, "We are learning one letter *Lamed* (Hebrew letter), we learnt *Gimmel* (Hebrew letter) before."

- Hebrew reading is good. It is taught sequentially, which helps to develop pupils' fluency, and the reading curriculum has been recently developed, with additional resources used. There has been a focused emphasis on raising the quality of teaching and attainment goals in Reception and Key Stage 1 (KS1) in Hebrew reading skills. The school is now seeing much stronger reading outcomes in Years 1 and 2 and are working on maintaining this progress as the pupils go through Key Stage 2 (KS2). In a Reception *Kriyah* (Hebrew Reading) lesson that was observed, an inspector saw the implementation of Hebrew reading through an activity of pupils rolling dice and reading the line of letters and sounds on their worksheet of the number the dice landed on. Pupils spent time as a whole class reviewing previous words that were taught through question and answer, and then with a partner twirled a *dreidel* (spinning top used during the festival of *Chanukah*) to use the Hebrew letter the *dreidel* landed on to recite the words next to that letter on the sheet provided. This helped them to link the Hebrew letter to the next task of reading a text. The impact on learning could be seen when pupils talked to the inspector about the activity they were doing. One pupil explained that, "My *dreidel* landed on a *Shin* (Hebrew letter); I'm going to read the line with the *Shin* on it." Another pupil commented, "My *dreidel* landed on *Hey* (Hebrew letter), the first word on the line is *Chanukah* (Festival of Lights). When inspectors interviewed pupils in Years 2 and 6, they also heard them read Hebrew, in addition to listening to pupils read Hebrew in lessons. Inspectors noted more fluent and accurate reading outcomes in Years 1 and 2 where reading was good. The school is focussing now on building and embedding this knowledge and skills when the pupils get to KS2.
- In the last couple of years, the *Kodesh* team has been developing a strong relationship with the SENDCO. This has enabled *Kodesh* teachers to become more skilled in adapting work in lessons, for example, offering multiple choice questions to reduce writing when assessing comprehension. Additional support is now being offered in Hebrew Reading, and in KS2 *Chumash* (Five Books of Moses) lessons. Inspectors observed this support being given in lessons, where for example in a Year 1 *Kriyah* lesson, groups of pupils were being supported by LSAs (Learning Support Assistants) both inside and outside the classroom. The SENDCO has worked with all teachers (*Kodesh* and secular) to develop their understanding and use of support plans to enhance the learning of pupils with SEN (Special Educational Needs). *Kodesh* staff were recently provided with guidance by a *Kodesh* Co-Lead as to how to set more specific targets appropriate to the learning needs of each pupil. Good progress has been made with the work that is being done by the SENDCO and *Kodesh* Leads, and the aim this year is to ensure that one-to-one *Kodesh* interventions outside lesson time are taking place consistently, to enable pupil targets set in their support plans to be met, in order to ensure even greater progression.
- *Kodesh* assessment and tracking are good. Marking and feedback continue to be areas of development in the *Kodesh* Development Plan, and in the findings of inspectors. This features in the 2024/25 School Improvement Plan. There has been real progress in assessment and tracking, and good systems are in place and being developed, which ensure that pupil progress is constantly monitored. Pupils' Hebrew reading is tracked (accuracy and fluency) from Reception with Hebrew letters and vowels, which are developed in Year 1, and from Year 2, there is more emphasis on fluency. The tracking system is colour coded to identify the different levels of progress. Reading starts with the assumption of no prior knowledge in Reception, and then is monitored until the pupils leave Rimon. Assessment is termly, each teacher completing an assessment grid, and

this impacts on the planning and organisation of teaching in lessons. *Kodesh* teachers work with the SENDCO to ensure that effective support is put in place where appropriate. More recently in *Kriyah* (Hebrew reading) lessons, lower ability pupils are taken out of lessons as a group with a teacher/LSA, who teaches and reinforces the letters and sounds. This enables adaptive teaching to take place, and the learning needs of the pupils to be met. In KS2 Hebrew reading, pupils are tested at the end of each term on *Aleinu* (prayer in the *Siddur* / prayer book), mistakes are recorded, corrections made, and progress assessed again next term in relation to the previous assessment.

## What does the school need to do to improve the Quality of Jewish Education.

- Continue to develop meaningful feedback for all pupils and ensure there is consistent and good quality marking in all areas of *Kodesh*.
- Continue to develop Hebrew reading fluency, specifically in Key Stage 2, to ensure all pupils make progress at their level.

## Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development

- Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development at Rimon is outstanding. Pupils benefit from the notable way the school approaches the development of their Jewish character and supports their wellbeing and personal growth. Stakeholders pride themselves in the great care the school takes to ensure that the teaching of Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development is done in a meaningful and impactful way. The inspectors observed compelling examples of how the school fosters the Jewish personal and spiritual development of its pupils, thereby strengthening *Emunah* (Acknowledging the Divine) and developing an awareness of *Tzelem Elokim* (Awareness of the Spiritual in all Humankind). From the Nurture provision (a wellbeing programme) and the emotional coaching approach to the meaningful events and experiences which allow children to experience spirituality, reflective thinking and personal development, the school is an exemplary model of a healthy caring school. This came across particularly strongly through the whole school *Tefillah* and *Kumzitz* ('Come, sit down', a campfire-style gathering, often including inspirational stories and singing) assembly marking a year since the atrocities of 7th of October in Israel. The assembly offered an opportunity for the pupils to experience *Morah* (Spiritual Awe and Wonder at the World Around them). One Year 6 pupil remarked in experiencing *Morah* that, "During the *Kumzitz*, it felt like we were connected with *Hashem* (God)." Another pupil said, "We stood up and we were all connected together." Pupils were able to define spirituality. One pupil explained spirituality as, "When you talk to *Hashem* and when you do a *Mitzvah* (Commandment) that helps other people, when you are being holy. Angels are spiritual."
- The school consistently provides rich Jewish experiences in a coherently planned way, through both the formal and informal curriculum, extra-curricular activities, and links with the community and other organisations. Examples of those are raising *Tzedakah* (Charity) for the Ukrainian families or victims of the earthquake in Turkey. The school also supported different projects in Israel such as sending *Mishloach Manot* (Gifts of food given during the festival of *Purim*) to displaced families.
- Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their *Kodesh* learning and the experiences provided by the school. They are able to draw out meaningful lessons and can apply those to their lives and context. This has been evident through formal and informal conversations with pupils, and through much of their work, showing their appreciation of *Kedushah* (Experiencing Holiness in Everyday Life). During an informal conversation with a Year 3 group, one pupil explained that "When we do *Tefillah*, teachers stop us and ask what

each of the prayers mean and the deeper meaning behind them.” Some of the girls illustrated how discussions on *Tefillot* (prayers) promote their reflective thinking by sharing the prayers they would write if given the opportunity. A pupil said, “I would thank *Hashem* for being me.” Another shared that they would say, “Thank you for everything we have.” *Tefillah* could be further improved by proactively encouraging pupils to read the prayers from the *Siddur* even if they know those by heart. The school has produced effective PowerPoint resources to support *Tefillah*. Next steps are to increase monitoring of how these are used and evaluate its impact on learning.

- The behaviour of most pupils in each age group towards adults, peers and other pupils, is exemplary. Inspectors observed pupils patiently and respectfully encouraging their *Tzelem Elokim* keen awareness of the spiritual and display high levels of personal conduct.
- Pupils gain from a curriculum that extends beyond the academic and incorporates themes on 'Connecting with *Hashem*' and 'Jewish Identity'. It provides for their broader development including their Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development. Many samples of this were noted, including, for instance, enabling pupils to understand and uphold their responsibility towards the Jewish community, the environment, and society in general. This is supported by the school's '5 B's' values, which pupils are able to give examples of, promoting a deeper understanding of *Kedushah*. One learner explained, “I like doing *Tzedakah* and giving food to other people because it shows we care for other people.” The school's intent and its implementation, as well as the work observed in the *Kodesh* department and wider school, support and encourage pupils to develop resilience, confidence, and pride in their Jewish identity. Many samples of this were seen in the work learners produced in their books and for wall displays.
- Pupils benefit from a positive Jewish learning environment throughout the school, enhanced by meaningful and beautifully presented displays, showcasing their contemplative work that reflects the school's Jewish ethos and values. One of the displays shows a flag of Israel made up of the thumbprint of every pupil learning at the school. Another display has letters that Year 2 wrote to *Hashem*.

## What does the school need to do to improve the Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development.

- In *Tefillah* increase monitoring and reminders to ensure that the PowerPoints produced by the *Kodesh* Co-Leads, are used regularly across all Year Groups. In addition, ensure children are following the prayers in the *Siddur*.

## Quality of Leadership and management:

- Leadership and Management is good. Leaders, including governors, have a clear and ambitious vision of Jewish education and pupils' spiritual development, and are always looking to improve. A new leadership structure was put in place in September 2024 and a new Co-Lead of *Kodesh* was appointed. As the new *Kodesh* and SLT (Senior Leadership Team) roles are being developed, the new structure needs time to be fully embedded. The Co-Leads work extremely well as a team, and together with the Headteacher, and governors, have the capacity to take Leadership and Management to the next level. The *Kodesh* leads have divided responsibilities, so that for example, one leads on development in KS2, and the other on KS1. A strength of Leadership and Management is that school leaders and governors have a shared vision, articulate the ethos of the school, and are actively involved to ensure that good progress is maintained. Leaders and governors all talked about the warm Jewish atmosphere, with a real love for Judaism, and respect for others, that has been created, and this was confirmed by pupils, parents and staff. Talking about leadership at Rimon, one member of staff

commented that, “Leaders constantly reflect, and are always working to further develop areas of Jewish Studies, and pupils’ Jewish experiences at the school.”

- Jewish Education leaders ensure that issues raised by self-evaluation of *Kodesh* provision and spiritual development are convincingly addressed by effective strategies for improvement. The *Kodesh* Self Evaluation Form (SEF) demonstrates that Rimon has a good understanding of its *Kodesh* provision. Inspectors agree with Rimon’s self-evaluation, and its strengths and key areas for development, showing how well leaders reflect on the school’s progress. This constant self-reflection by leaders and governors, and a strong wish to continue to develop its formal and informal *Kodesh* provision, is a real strength of leadership and management. The leadership provided by the Headteacher, together with the key areas for development mentioned in the *Kodesh* SEF articulated by leaders and governors, demonstrates that over the next few years, Rimon has the capacity to become outstanding in each judgement area.
- Governors systematically challenge senior leaders, including the *Kodesh* Co-Leads, in all aspects of the *Kodesh* provision, to ensure an effective and fair deployment of resources so as to secure good outcomes. This is achieved through governors’ meetings, performance management, and through reports from the Headteacher and *Kodesh* Co-Leads. The *Kodesh* governor told inspectors that he visits the school regularly, goes into lessons, looks at books, meets with *Kodesh* leaders and *Kodesh* staff, challenges, and questions them as to the impact of the curriculum, and other areas of development. These systems enable governors to have a good understanding of how the school is performing, and what its priorities should be moving forward. Performance management of the Headteacher by governors and of the *Kodesh* leads by the Headteacher, enables effective targets to be set, and further strengthens the school leadership. For example, one target set was to ‘demonstrate that marking and feedback have a good effect on progress’. At the end of year review, the appraiser commented, ‘marking and feedback was more consistent, but still needed to be developed further’. This performance management target will then be kept as a target to be reviewed at future meetings.
- Good leadership is shown by the *Kodesh* Leads who have introduced, and are developing and applying, effective systems and structures to assess and to track pupils’ progress, to ensure consistency of marking and feedback, and to develop Hebrew reading skills. *Kodesh* Leads are also developing the *Kodesh* curriculum with the aim of ensuring that when pupils leave Rimon, they will take with them key skills, knowledge and understanding upon which to build as they enter secondary school. In addition, pupils will leave with a love of Jewish learning, and an understanding of the *Tefillot* that will enable them to feel secure in their Judaism and their heritage. The continued development of the *Kodesh* curriculum, including the new topic curriculum, and Ethics programme and all other systems and structures, are constantly being reviewed and reflected upon by the Headteacher and *Kodesh* Leads. Termly monitoring of the *Kodesh* curriculum will enable leaders to judge its impact for both pupils and staff.
- Leaders ensure that teachers receive good professional development. School leaders organise In Service Training (INSET) every Wednesday after school and all teachers attend. INSET sessions that have taken place this academic year include adaptive teaching, leadership, pupil progress meetings, and towards the end of term, an opportunity to reflect and review the term. *Kodesh* training took place earlier this academic year on enhancing *Tefillah* and developing spirituality, making the pupils engage with it more, and focusing on giving time for reflection each day. To further develop leadership, the Headteacher provides training to the new *Kodesh* leadership team, on the development of leadership skills. This includes *Kodesh* Leads undertaking lesson observations, monitoring and working with teachers undergoing teacher training, and setting targets that are reviewed. Staff welfare, including mental health, is at the heart of leadership, including governance at Rimon. A recent staff INSET on bracelet making, gave staff the opportunity to meet and be involved in an activity aimed at helping to relieve daily pressures, and look after mental health and wellbeing. Staff appreciate,

and commented on, how well supported they feel. One member of staff said that “This is a school where medical and mental health conditions are accommodated for.”

## What does the school need to do to improve the Quality of Leadership and management?

- Build on the newly established *Kodesh* leadership model and review its impact on the continued development of *Kodesh* in the school.
- Continue monitoring across *Kodesh* subjects to judge impact for staff and pupils.

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 Rimon Jewish Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 42 people responded to the survey.

Pikuach invited pupils at Rimon Jewish Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 50 pupils responded to the survey.

Pikuach invited members of staff at Rimon Jewish Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 15 out of 30 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.