

North West London Jewish Day School

180 Willesden Lane, London NW6 7PP

Kodesh Studies Inspection

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| Inspection dates | 15-16 November 2017 |
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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
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| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
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| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
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| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Outstanding |
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| Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Outstanding |
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| Outcomes for pupils | Outstanding |
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Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The leadership and management of the school and its Kodesh department is strong and well-managed. There is now an effective middle management and the Kodesh department works closely and collaboratively with the Chol (general studies) department.
- The vast majority of the teaching is at least good, and often outstanding.
- The outstanding SMSC provision is based on a combination of Torah (Bible) teachings and fundamental British values.
- The pupils' behaviour and attitude to learning is outstanding. A positive and cheerful attitude pervades the school.
- The highly effective cross-curricular teaching in the Nursery provides the pupils with a solid foundation to their Jewish studies.
- A comprehensive assessment and tracking system ensures that pupils are fluent and confident Hebrew readers.
- The tailor-made curriculum, which is skills-based, enables the pupils to reach outstanding standards in Chumash by the end of Year Six. They are thus well-prepared for high school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Quality of teaching in some classes does not fully engage the pupils. Teachers would benefit from a peer mentoring system to share good practice garnered from the knowledge and skills of their more experienced colleagues.
- Not all Ivrit lessons are delivered at a level that suits the class. The assessment of Ivrit lessons requires further development, with the outcomes used to stream classes according to their abilities and needs.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The leadership and management of Kodesh studies is very effective. The Headteacher, School Rabbi/Deputy Head and the Head of Kodesh have an accurate understanding of the school's current position and a forward-thinking vision for the future, as evidenced in the detailed self-evaluation document and the school improvement plan.
- As the School Rabbi is also the Deputy Head of the school, there is close co-operation between the Kodesh and Chol departments. For example, the school's set of values and its code of conduct are based on the Magnificent Middot (character traits) programme. Project work on the Middot programme takes place during Chol time in a cross-curricular fashion, involving Literacy, Art and PSHE.
- There is an active programme of professional development for teachers which has created an effective middle management structure. Since the last inspection senior teachers have been promoted to become the Head of Kodesh, Assessment Lead for Chumash and KS2 Lead.
- Junior teachers are encouraged to attend training courses to develop their teaching and pastoral skills. However, considering the range of talent within the senior members of the teaching staff, it would seem appropriate to arrange a mentoring system within the school to support junior members of staff.
- The prescriptive curriculum covers a range of Jewish subjects, including Chumash (Bible), Mishna, Tefilah (Prayer), Parasha (weekly Bible reading), JGK (Jewish General Knowledge) – which includes the history of the Land of Israel and its modern day relevance – and Ivrit.
- Each key learning area of the curriculum contains a comprehensive scheme of work which includes a wealth of guidance for teachers and clear attainment targets for pupils at all stages of their development.
- Due to timetable restrictions there are only seven Kodesh lessons timetabled for every class every week. There is however also a programme of well-attended extra-curricular classes, which range from the study of Gemara (Talmud) to Israeli dancing.
- The text-based lessons focus on embedding vocabulary and grammar skills that will enable pupils to study unseen Kodesh texts by themselves. When a selection of Year 6 pupils were tested on their Chumash skills, they were indeed able to translate and comprehend unseen texts with 80%-90% accuracy.
- The school's leadership has created a positive, warm and friendly atmosphere amongst staff and pupils. This positivity extends to an outstanding attitude to learning and to superb inter-personal relationships.
- Initiatives to promote and enhance the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. There is a wide-ranging Magnificent Middot programme to encourage the highest levels of spiritual, moral and social conduct, and there are a range of interfaith

activities to broaden the pupils' exposure to other religions and cultures.

- Year 6 pupils vie for positions on the school's Chesed (kindness) Committee, which organises and encourages acts of charity and kindness as part of the school's advancement of the Torah and British values of understanding the differences between right and wrong, respect for others and allegiance to the laws of the country.
- Pupils are screened on a tri-annual basis for their fluency in Hebrew reading and the results are carefully tracked. This dictates the grouping of pupils for their weekly reading lessons. A comprehensive assessment system has also been set up for Chumash, but the assessment for Ivrit requires further development.
- The school has strong support from parents and carers. Typical comments from parents include: 'Our children thoroughly enjoy their Kodesh lessons and are very enthusiastic about their teachers', 'Thank you for the precious Jewish education you provide', and, 'I am really impressed and grateful with the level of Jewish General Knowledge at NWLJDS'.
- The Kodesh SEN department is well-organised by the capable and systematic SENCo, and caters for the most able pupils alongside the least able ones. The SENCo also has responsibility for Hebrew reading throughout the school, and has created original worksheets for classwork, homework and assessment.

The governance of the school:

- The school's trustees and governors are actively involved with the school, and are conscientious in the performance of their duties. They have a detailed knowledge of both the areas of excellence and those that require further input.
- The governors work harmoniously with the school's leadership team and demonstrate respect for their educational expertise. In the words of one governor: 'We are there to support the leadership team without stifling them.' They are kept fully informed of all noteworthy developments within the school via frequent visits and excellent communication channels with school managers.
- The well-resourced Kodesh department is due to the governors' dedication and strong desire for the school to provide a high-quality Jewish education.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching is often outstanding, especially in those classes taught by the more experienced staff. However, in a minority of lessons, the less-experienced teachers fail to ensure that all pupils remain focussed on the subject matter.
- In the outstanding lessons, all pupils were fully engaged as the teaching proceeded at a brisk pace and the experienced staff explained new and challenging concepts in an age-appropriate and engaging fashion.
- The skilful teaching ensures that the subject matter becomes engrained in the minds of the pupils. For example, in a Year 4 Chumash class, pupils participated enthusiastically in a revision of the translation of key words up to ten times as the teacher employed a wide range of motivational techniques.
- Most teachers use good questioning techniques to draw pupils into lively class discussions. They also encourage pupils to contribute to lessons via the dojo award scheme, whereby they award varying amounts of points for a range of positive contributions from pupils.
- The teachers act as excellent role-models for the pupils. In interviews with the pupils it was noteworthy that each year felt that their Kodesh teacher was 'the thing they enjoyed most at school'.
- Good use is made of the plentiful resources within the classrooms, with teachers preparing appropriate Powerpoint presentations for use with the interactive whiteboards. Pupils also benefit from the high-quality booklets created specifically for individual topics.
- The text-based lessons, such as Chumash and Mishna, focus on translation and grammar skills for at least one lesson a week, with the aim that pupils should be able to study texts by themselves by the time they leave school. Ivrit is also taught with that goal in mind, as the Ivrit vocabulary and grammar has many similarities to Biblical Hebrew.
- The comprehensive assessment system for Hebrew reading enables pupils to be split accurately into standard-based reading groups. They are then tracked three times a year to ensure that they are making adequate progress and that they are in the correct grouping. The colour-coded tracking system also demonstrates clear progression from year to year.
- All KS2 pupils are assessed bi-annually in four areas of Chumash – translation, grammar, referencing and narrative. They are assessed against pre-determined level descriptors and are recorded as beginning to access a level, working within a level or secure in that level. They are assessed via both written tests and oral interviews, so that a clear picture emerges of each pupil's ability and level of progress.
- The Nursery features outstanding cross-curricular lessons, where all areas of the EYFS are covered by the Jewish topics delivered by enthusiastic and experienced teachers. Most topics are tackled hands-on, with the children crushing grapes for wine, stirring mixtures for

latkes (potato pancakes for Chanukah), and baking themed biscuits according to the weekly Sedra (portion of the Bible).

- There is a conscious school-wide effort to involve special-needs pupils in as wide a range of activities as possible. Teachers integrate them into lessons at every opportunity and display empathy towards their individual needs.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding, as they display care and concern for their peers and act in a calm and sensible manner both in class and around the school.
- The outstanding behaviour is supported by a heavily-promoted Magnificent Middot programme, which sets clear guidance on the standards of behaviour expected at the school. Based on Torah (and British) values, the Middot programme is divided into a set of values which serves as the code of conduct for the school.
- The values are displayed prominently around the school and each class concentrates on creating displays reflecting elements of the programme. These displays are created on a cross-curricular basis and impact many areas of school life.
- This is a friendly school where visitors are made to feel genuinely welcome by both staff and pupils. The pupils were keen to engage in friendly conversation with the inspector in the playground during their break, and one pupil asked if she could bring the inspector a drink.
- In private and small-group conversation the pupils are reflective, mature and well-spoken. They respect each other's views and debate issues in a respectful manner.
- Pupils of all ages are given opportunities to assume responsibility in a variety of ways. There is an active school council, where participants feel they are making a worthwhile contribution to school life, on Grandparent and Relative morning pupils are invited to give visitors a tour around the school and Year Six pupils are encouraged to adopt one of the children in Early Years by acting as a 'buddy'.
- Year Six pupils are offered the opportunity to become a member of the Chesed (kindness) committee, and the following are extracts from their applications: 'I want to be on the committee as ... it is a Mitzvah and a constructive way to use my time', 'It makes me feel good to help other people', and 'I feel that as a growing child I should do my best to help people who aren't as fortunate as me'.
- At the weekly Kabbalat Shabbat (welcoming the Sabbath) assemblies: two pupils contribute a Dvar Torah (a Torah thought or message); other pupils role-play scenes from the weekly portion of the Bible; the Tzedakah (charity) monitors announce the weekly totals raised for charity and other charity news; amongst other pupil-led activities.
- The large amount and wide range of extra-curricular activities make an important contribution to the development of the pupils, as they have

opportunities to broaden their horizons and engage in targeted programmes which are either academic or promote a variety of skills in a pleasant environment.

- Pupils feel that the school takes their personal welfare seriously. Pupils aver that the school's leadership –led by the Headteacher- are eminently approachable.
- A large group of parents gathered together at school last month to pray for the health of the mother of two pupils. When she very sadly passed away, the parents rallied round to support the bereaved family in a meaningful manner, whilst the pupils received professional counselling. But as a parent declared, 'It doesn't take a tragedy to bring the parent body together. We are constantly sharing in each other's high and lows.'
- The pupils strongly appreciate the special effort the school has recently made to improve the choices of hot food served at lunch, and that the school takes into account the vagaries of individual diets by providing several choices for all main dishes.
- Pupils expressed a sound knowledge of food allergies and were fully aware of their responsibilities towards their peers by eschewing certain foods at school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding

- Northwest is a spiritual school, and ones senses this as soon as one enters the school. There is a sense of excitement in performing religious rituals such as prayer, the wall displays feature Torah teachings, the pupils visibly enjoy their Jewish studies, there is a palpable desire to help the less fortunate and pupils proudly display their Tzitzit (fringes worn on an under-shirt).
- The school's values are underpinned(in the Magnificent Middot programme) by Torah concepts, which tie in seamlessly with British values of law and order, knowing right from wrong, democracy and displaying respect for those of different cultures and lifestyles.
- There is an extensive moral, social and cultural programme of activities, which is led by a designated member of staff. The focus is on the areas of Chesed (kindness) and inter-faith work.
- Year Four are linked to a school in Ghana, with staff and pupils exchanging letters with their counterparts. The pupils also arrange collections of money, toys and other useful items, which they send to Ghana.
- There are weekly music sessions for all pupils that feature Jewish songs, and pupils are able to join the school choir. The choir performs at the nearby Young Court (an assisted-living complex) and at the SAGE home for the elderly at Golders Green.
- Pupils from Year 3 and Year 5 meet pupils from the nearby Al Saddiq and Al-Zahra Muslim school at both formal and informal settings. They also have a partnership with the Interfaith Centre. These links to other

schools and other religions are within the framework of the Three Faiths Forum.

- Pupils put forward their names for membership of the Chesed committee. This committee chooses different charities to sponsor, and they are tasked with promoting their charities and raising as much funding as possible. There is a list on display of twenty seven charities that the school supported during the past academic year. These include local, national and international charities - mainly non-Jewish ones.
- The pupils recite their morning prayers in their classrooms every morning, and they Bentch (say grace after meals) in unison after lunch. All religious rituals are taken seriously by pupils, and a group of Year Six girls voluntarily joined the staff gathering for Mincha (afternoon prayers) during their lunch hour.
- Jewish festivals are marked with an array of hands-on activities throughout the school. For example, the Early Years classes trample grapes to make wine for the Rosh Hashanah (New Year) festival, they fry latkes (potato pancakes) for Chanukah (festival of lights) and cut up various fruits to mark Tu b'Shvat (New Year for Trees), amongst other activities.
- Pupils interact admirably with their disabled peers. To increase understanding of the issues facing those with disabilities, pupils from the Geshet School for disabled children were invited to an assembly, which was followed by a play session between the two schools.

Outcomes for pupils are outstanding

- Overall, pupils make outstanding progress in their Kodesh studies. By the time they are in Year Six pupils are able to decipher 80%-90% of unseen Chumash texts using their vocabulary and grammar skills.
- Pupils enjoy their Torah learning. This was evident during observations of lessons, in discussion with pupils and by the fact that extra-curricular lessons in a variety of Jewish topics, including Gemara, are very popular.
- Prayers are approached with seriousness and –in many cases- obvious sincerity. This was evident during the whole-school prayer assembly, during prayers in individual classes and by the fact that pupils chose to attend voluntary prayer sessions.
- The standard of fluency in Hebrew reading is very high at all levels within the school, due to the relentless practice, assessment, tracking and interventions.
- The standard of conversational Ivrit has improved considerably since the last inspection, and Ivrit is now more prevalent around the school.
- Hebrew handwriting is generally neat, and the letters are well-formed. This is particularly evident in the Ivrit exercise books throughout the school.

- Pupils were unanimous in their opinion that they are making very good progress at school. They set themselves ambitious targets for self-improvement, as one Year 5 pupil told the inspector, 'I am going to be a Talmid Chacham (Torah sage) when I am older.'
- Pupils combine their serious attitude to academic studies with a relaxed and friendly inter-personal approach. They thrive on the happy atmosphere that pervades the school, and are proud of their school and of their religion.
- Pupils with special educational needs benefit from professional support which enables them to take a full part in lessons and to make above-average progress.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the Jewish Studies at the school, and amid the tens of 'thank you' letters, typical comments include: 'It's a blessing to have you. We are so grateful.' And, 'Thank you so much – it is very special to be part of such an excellent Kodesh provision.'

Information about this school

- North West London Jewish Day School was founded in 1945 and converted into an academy in September 2015. The current Principal is the school's overall authority on all spiritual matters, whilst the School Rabbi is responsible for day to day matters.
- NWLJDS is an over-subscribed single-form entry voluntary-aided school for Jewish boys and girls aged 3-11. There are currently 275 pupils on roll, including a two-form Year Six. Approximately 45% of the pupils belong to French families who have moved into the school's catchment area.
- The school aims to meet the needs of modern Orthodox Jewish families by providing a wholesome secular and Orthodox Jewish education which imbues pupils with a love of Judaism.
- The current Head of Kodesh was promoted to his position in September 2016, when the previous incumbent was appointed to the position of School Rabbi and Deputy Head.
- Jewish studies take up approximately 30% of the curriculum, and this is supplemented with a choice of extra-curricular clubs at the school.
- The proportion of pupils with an EHCP (educational health and care plan) and those on the SEND register is below the national average but average for an orthodox Jewish school.
- At the end of Year 6, the majority of pupils transfer to Jewish schools, including Hasmonian High School, Immanuel College and JFS.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited lessons in all classes from Nursery to Year Six, covering all subjects. He participated in the weekly Tefillah (prayer) assembly, and observed both morning prayers and Bentching (reciting of Grace After Meals) in several classes.
- Meetings were held with the Principal, Trustees, the Chair of Governors and members of his team, senior leaders, middle leaders, the Kodesh SENCo, the extra-curricular co-ordinator and with several members of staff. The inspector also perused files of feedback from parents.
- The inspector observed pupils at break, at lunch and around the school, met with groups of pupils of Years 4-6, and tested pupils of Years 3-6 on their knowledge of Chumash (Bible), Hebrew reading and Jewish General Knowledge.
- The inspector examined the Kodesh assessment and tracking systems, studied test papers, scrutinised all the pupils' Kodesh exercise books (Years 2-6), perused the school's files of Kodesh documentation and studied the school's Kodesh Improvement Plan.

Inspector

Rabbi Nathaniel Lieberman

School details

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| Unique reference number | 141154 |
| Local authority | London Borough of Brent |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 48 of the Education Act 2005

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 3-11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | 275 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Principal | Dayan Ivan Binstock |
| Chair of governors | Mr Ashley Donoff |
| Chair of trustees | Mr Graham Morris |
| Headteacher | Miss Judith Caplan |
| School Rabbi/Deputy Head | Rabbi Ronen Broder |
| Head of Kodesh | Rabbi David Wilk |
| Date of previous inspection | 23-24 April 2013 |
| Telephone number | 020 8459 3378 |
| Email address | admin@nwljds.org.uk |