

North West London Jewish Day School

180 Willesden Lane, London NW6 7PP

Kodesh Studies Inspection

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| Inspection dates | 14-15 December 2022 |
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| Overall effectiveness | Outstanding |
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| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Outstanding |
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| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Outstanding |
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| Personal development, behaviour and attitude | Outstanding |
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| Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Outstanding |
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| Overall effectiveness at the last inspection | Good |
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Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The leadership and management of the school has a passionate and clear vision for the Kodesh (religious) provision.
- The talented teaching team provide outstanding lessons and serve as excellent role-models for the pupils.
- The mutual respect and close cooperation between the Kodesh and Chol (secular) teaching teams is an important contributory factor to the success of the Kodesh provision.
- A comprehensive assessment and tracking system ensures that all pupils are taught to become fluent and accurate readers in Hebrew.
- The skills-based curriculum for textual subjects provides a solid foundation for pupils to become confident in studying Jewish texts. They are thus well-prepared for high school and beyond.
- The SMSC provision is underpinned by Torah (Bible) teachings which are connected to Fundamental British Values.
- The pupils' behaviour and attitude to learning is outstanding. Pupils work enthusiastically during their Kodesh lessons.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- Kodesh leaders are passionate and relentless in their drive for excellence in Kodesh studies. They have a clear vision of how to provide the pupils with an outstanding education, and this is delivered via the talented team of teachers.
- Kodesh and Chol class teachers meet to discuss issues relevant to the class, the curriculum, and individual pupils. Chol teachers tailor their lessons to incorporate topics that are being taught in Kodesh lessons, and vice-versa. This cross-curricular work enables the pupils to cover more ground in their Kodesh studies and to embed their Kodesh learning.
- 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.
- Since the last inspection, there have been a number of high-quality additions to the Kodesh teaching team. Other improvements include three teachers for Chumash (Bible) classes in KS2 and an enhanced Ivrit provision.
- The comprehensive curriculum covers the full range of Jewish subjects, including Chumash, 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. This curriculum is constantly updated to reflect the changing levels of the Jewish knowledge and practice of the pupil body.
- The curriculum includes schemes of work with extensive guidance for teachers. There are also attainment targets for pupils at crucial stages of their development.
- There are seven weekly Kodesh lessons for every class. This is augmented by bi-weekly assemblies and extra-curricular clubs that are led by the Kodesh teachers.
- Parents were overwhelmingly supportive when talking to this inspector about the school's Kodesh provision. One parent spoke about the positive difference she sees in her children's attitude towards Judaism since joining the school (from another Jewish school). Another parent mentioned that the foundation in Jewish studies and practice that the children receive at this school continues to have a remarkable impact on her teenage children. There was universal praise for the teachers, the Kodesh lessons and the assemblies.
- There is currently no dedicated Kodesh SENDco. Instead, the Head of Kodesh takes responsibility for flagging any SEND concerns for discussion with the school's two SENDcos. The SENDcos, in cooperation with the Head of Kodesh, then create strategies and put in place relevant Kodesh interventions to support those pupils who require it. Due to the close co-operation between the Kodesh and Chol

teams, this approach works successfully, and pupils with SEND are well provided for during their Kodesh lessons.

The governance of the school:

- The school's trustees and governors have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the Kodesh provision. They are in frequent and regular contact with the School Rabbi and with the Head of Kodesh.
- Trustees and governors are passionate about the importance of creating and maintaining high levels of Kodesh provision. They make themselves available as and when required to support the Kodesh staff. One example of this commitment is the financing of the three teachers that teach Chumash to the KS2 classes, which enables all pupils to be taught at their levels.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- The quality of Kodesh teaching is generally outstanding, with pupils fully engaged in the lessons.
- Key features of the lessons include: Strong pupil-teacher relationship, brisk delivery, superb use of tailor-made IT resources, excellent participation by pupils, good use of questioning, appropriate use of reward systems, and targeted praise for participants.
- In the Year Four Chumash lessons, pupils were taught the same material at three different levels by three outstanding teachers. This enabled all the pupils of that class to be fully engaged in the learning at their individual levels.
- Teachers use their individual talents and a variety of methods to ensure that the pupils absorb the Kodesh lessons. In one class this was done via song and music. In another class it was done via games on the SMARTboard, and in a third class it was the quality of the teacher's drama skills that captivated the pupils.
- The teachers act as excellent role-models for the pupils. In interviews with the pupils, when they were asked how they would change the school if all the Kodesh teachers left and they were in charge, the response was, 'The first thing we would do is to bring back the Kodesh teachers!'
- The text-based lessons, such as Chumash and (to a lesser degree) Mishna, focus on translation and grammar skills for at least one lesson a week, with the aim that pupils should be able to read and study texts by themselves by the time they leave school. Ivrit is also taught with that goal in mind.
- 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. There is a relentless pursuit for excellence in reading, and pupils do reading practice for homework all the way through until Year Six.
- Pupils do not start Chumash lessons unless they are proficient in their reading. Even after they start Chumash, a proportion of the lesson is still spent on practising and honing reading skills.
- 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, via both written tests and oral interviews, so that a clear picture emerges of each pupil's ability and level of progress.
- There is a conscious school-wide effort to involve SEND pupils in as wide a range of activities as possible. Teachers integrate them into lessons at every opportunity and deal capably with their individual needs.

Outcomes for pupils:

- Due to the tailor-made curriculum, clear and detailed guidance for Kodesh teachers, excellent resources and high-quality teaching, pupils make outstanding progress in their Kodesh studies. By the time they are in the highest two classes, pupils are able to draw upon their Chumash skills to decipher 80%-90% of unseen Chumash texts.
- Pupils enjoy their Torah learning. This inspector entered into an impromptu Torah discussion with a class of Year Six pupils, which covered topics ranging from Succah to Chanukah to Mezuzah to Tzitzit, where pupils displayed a love for learning and impressive knowledge of Jewish topics.
- 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.
- Older pupils performed admirably when tested on reading more complicated texts including unseen phrases from the weekly Haftorah. They were not quite so fluent when tested on unseen Rashi texts (the school's curriculum calls for the more gifted pupils to be able to read Rashi fluently).
- Pupils were unanimous in their opinion that they are making very good progress at school. They feel that the detailed assessments are instrumental in creating a feeling of regular and sustained progression.
- 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 SEND benefit from professional support which enables them to take a full part in lessons and to make above-average progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

- The pupils are relaxed, happy and settled at school, and treat each other with respect and thoughtfulness. For example, in discussions with groups of pupils, it was noteworthy that all the pupils listened to the one who was talking and treated their comments with due respect.
- Behaviour in class, around the school and in the playground is outstanding. Pupils emulate the courteous and friendly manner that the SLT and members of staff display towards each other and towards the pupils.
- The school has devised a Magnificent Middot programme, which sets clear guidance on the standards of behaviour expected at school. This system is based on Torah values and connected to the Fundamental British Values. Pupils are awarded tokens at assembly for displaying model behaviour, and a prominent wall display highlights these achievements, which in turn informs the pupils as to what is considered praiseworthy behaviour.
- Visitors are made to feel genuinely welcome by both staff and pupils. The pupils were keen to engage in friendly conversation with the inspector, both in formal and informal settings, and to share their considered views in a frank manner.
- Pupils 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, and on 'Grandparent & Relative morning' pupils are invited to give visitors a tour around the school. Year Six pupils organise the popular termly 'House Team days', and they form the editorial board for the school newsletter.
- Older pupils vie for the opportunity to become a member of the Chesed (kindness) committee. As part of the application process they have to explain why they wish to do so. This encourages pupils to reflect on the importance of performing Chesed.
- At the weekly Kabbalat Shabbat (welcoming the Sabbath) assemblies there are a variety of pupil-led activities. Pupils present a Torah thought, discuss Halachot (laws) relevant to Shabbat, give updates on Chesed and Tzedakah (charity) activities, and perform skits relevant to the weekly portion of the Bible. Parents and grandparents of performing pupils are invited to participate in the assembly, and they invariably take up the invitation.
- A range of extra-curricular activities make an important contribution to the development of the pupils. One teacher runs a Harry Potter Club, at which he introduces the pupils to a variety of entertaining Jewish topics. Year Six pupils benefit from an annual residential trip.
- Pupils feel that the school takes their personal welfare seriously. Pupils aver that they are well-cared for and that the school's leadership –led by the Headteacher- are eminently approachable. They are grateful for the healthy options at school lunches.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding

- Northwest is a spiritual school. Upon entering the school, the displays feature religious items, such as Chanukiot (candelabras) for Chanukah (Festival of Lights). The wall displays promote the Magnificent Middot programme, Torah teachings, Chessed activities and Tzedakah achievements.
- All classes recite their morning prayers daily in their classroom, and KS2 pupils gather every Thursday for a prayer assembly. At this assembly there is a focus on selected sections of the daily prayers, which are explored in depth and involve pupil-led activities. Prayers are then recited in unison and pupils display sincerity as they do so.
- This inspection took place a week before the Jewish festival of Chanukah, and the spirit of Chanukah was evident throughout the school. Nursery pupils were engaged in baking traditional doughnuts, Reception staff were putting the final touches to the Chanukiot made by the pupils, Arts and Crafts lessons across the school featured pictures and models of Chanukiot, Year Five were learning about the Ancient Greeks in their History lessons and came to assembly in their Greek outfits, and the PTA were running a highly-popular Chanukah Shuk (market) for pupils to purchase Chanukah presents for their families. (One Year Three pupil bought a present for the Head of Kodesh!)
- The school's values are underpinned (in the Magnificent Middot programme) by Torah concepts, which tie in seamlessly with the Fundamental British Values of law and order, knowing right from wrong, democracy and displaying respect for those of different cultures and lifestyles.
- There is a designated member of staff to promote Chessed in the community, which includes charity and inter-faith activities.
- Pupils put forward their names for membership of the Chessed committee. This committee chooses different charities to sponsor, and they promote their charities and aim to garner as much financial support as they can. 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.
- Year Four have linked to a school in Ghana, with staff and pupils exchanging letters with their counterparts. The pupils have also arranged collections of money, toys and other useful items, which they sent to Ghana.
- Pupils from Year 3 and Year 5 meet pupils from the nearby Al Sadiq 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.

Information about this school

- North West London Jewish Day School was founded in 1945 and converted into an academy in September 2015. The Principal is the school's overall authority on all spiritual matters, whilst the School Rabbi is responsible for day to day matters.
- NWLJDS is a single-form entry voluntary-aided school for Jewish boys and girls aged 3-11. There are currently 204 pupils on roll.
- 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 bi-weekly assemblies and a choice of extra-curricular clubs.
- 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 JFS, Immanuel College and Hasmonian High School.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited lessons in all classes from Nursery to Year Six, covering all subjects, together with the Head of Kodesh. He participated in the weekly Tefillah (prayer) assembly, and observed both morning prayers and Bentsching (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 Chessed co-ordinator and with several members of the Kodesh staff. The inspector also met with parents at the end of the school day, perused files of feedback from parents and engaged with members of the PTA at the Chanukah Shuk.
- The inspector observed pupils at break, at lunch and around the school, met at length with groups of pupils of Years 5-6, and tested pupils of Years 3-6 on their knowledge of Chumash (Bible), Hebrew reading, Ivrit and Jewish General Knowledge. Pupils of Years Two, Four and Five were tested on their reading.
- The inspector examined the Kodesh assessment and tracking systems, studied test papers, scrutinised samples of 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 | 204 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Principal | Dayan Ivan Binstock |
| Chair of governors | Mr Ashley Donoff |
| Chair of trustees | Mr David Landy |
| Headteacher | Miss Judith Caplan |
| School Rabbi/Deputy Head | Rabbi Ronen Broder |
| Head of Kodesh | Rabbi David Wilk |
| Date of previous inspection | 15-16 November 2017 |
| Telephone number | 020 8459 3378 |
| Email address | admin@nwljds.org.uk |