

# Beis Yaakov High School

## Inspection report

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|---------------------|------------------------|
| LEA                 | <b>Salford</b>         |
| Inspection dates    | 22 – 23 March 2006     |
| Reporting inspector | Jeffrey Leader         |
| Team inspector      | Rabbi Malcolm Lebrecht |

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

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|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Type of School              | Other secondary      | School address     | Park Lane          |
| School category             | Voluntary Aided      |                    | Irlams o'th Height |
| Age range of pupils         | 11 - 16              |                    | Salford, M6 7RQ    |
| Gender of pupils            | Female               | Telephone number   | 0161 7369286       |
| Number on roll              | 193                  | Fax number         | 0161 7378443       |
| Appropriate authority       | [The governing body] | Chair of governors | Mr. A. M. Brandeis |
| Date of previous inspection | NA                   | Headteacher        | Rabbi Y. Goldblatt |

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## Introduction

### Description of the school

*Beis Yaakov* is a Voluntary-Aided girls' high school, serving the Orthodox Jewish community and is situated in the city of Salford. It opened in January 2005 to replace the independent Jewish High School, which closed in December 2004. It caters for pupils in the 11-16-age range, but also has a small Sixth Form, which is still in the independent sector, and is funded separately. There are currently 193 children on roll.

Approximately 80% of its pupils come from the *Yesoiday HaTorah* Primary School. The remainder comes from Broughton Jewish Cassel Fox Primary School including a few from independent Jewish Primary schools in Manchester, or from schools in Leeds and Liverpool.

## Overall effectiveness in its provision for Jewish education

The *Limmudei Kodesh* department of the *Beis Yaakov* School is good overall. It works closely with colleagues in the *chol* department so that, wherever possible, *chol* and *Kodesh* subjects compliment each other and re-inforce, for the pupils, a strong sense of their Jewish identity. A practical example of this is in the quality and quantity of display around the school.

The strength of the *Kodesh* department lies in the subject knowledge of its staff and their ability to impart Jewish knowledge, skills and understanding at a level that meets the needs of the majority of their pupils. Consequently, pupils make good progress.

Good teaching however is not simply defined by the ability to impart knowledge. It also consists of the ability to plan lessons effectively and assess pupils' progress in a way that will enable them to improve still further.

The school knows itself well and in this respect has a clear idea of how to improve its provision in *Limmudei Kodesh*. It recognises that lesson planning is an area for development. A formalised *Kodesh* curriculum would help in lesson planning.

The school is making important strides in the area of assessment by not only assessing pupils' abilities in *Kodesh* during their time at school but also assessing the *Kodesh* capabilities of potential pupils before they arrive in the autumn. Marking is one area of assessment that needs to be addressed more closely.

Relationships between pupils and *Kodesh* staff are very good and can only enhance the sense of *achdus*, which pervades the school.

The dynamic and visionary Principal of the school is also the head of *Kodesh* and this combination of roles places him in a unique position to carry the school forward to greater achievement.

**Grade: 2**

## What the school should do to improve further

The school should monitor the views of the pupils more closely in respect of the School Council.

The school is already addressing the issues relating to planning and assessment. It should also improve the talents of some very good teachers still further by introducing them to the exciting possibilities of using more modern resources such as inter-active whiteboards, which would enhance the content of their teaching. The school acknowledges this need and it has already seized the initiative by developing some exciting, *Kodesh-based*, PowerPoint programmes. This need will become even more apparent when the school moves to its new premises.

It is important that pupils feel valued and in most cases at *Beis Yaakov*, they undoubtedly do so. Nevertheless, there were a few instances of work being left unmarked by teachers. Where work was marked, comments were sometimes restricted to a grade rather than a comment, which would inform a pupil about her strengths or weaknesses and enable her to act on them.

## Achievement and standards

GCSE results in *Kodesh* related subjects are good overall.

Pupils are self-motivated and are expected to do well. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and often challenge them to perform at a high level. In every *Kodesh* lesson seen, pupils made progress. There were many examples of pupils using strategies previously learned to tackle new words and concepts in, for example, *Nach* and *Rashi*. There were examples of pupils asking thoughtful questions and examples too of them responding to difficult questions with carefully considered answers.

Standards in *Kodesh* are good and sometimes very good. In this respect, the school meets the needs of individuals very well. There are pupils on the special educational needs register and the support for them in Jewish Studies is very good. They make good progress. One highly experienced Jewish Studies teacher is responsible for identifying, assessing, monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress in Jewish Studies. Together with the SENCO she arranges one to one tutorials on a weekly or fortnightly basis in order to monitor progress.

The school has moved to assess pupils' progress in relation to their *Kodesh* capabilities, by testing them during their last year at primary school. In addition, the school will analyse the results and advise on what needs to be done to ensure that each child is at an acceptable *Kodesh* level before entering *Beis Yaakov*.

**Grade: 2**

## Personal development and well-being

The five outcomes - being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being – as expressed in the government's document 'Every Child Matters' are addressed by the school, sometimes in distinctive ways consistent with its ethos and foundation.

Within the Jewish Studies curriculum '*Shmiras Haloshon*' is taught throughout the school, and extends to many aspects of social skills, including sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others and ways to apologise to those one may have hurt. At every opportunity *Kodesh* teachers stress the importance of maintaining good *middos* in one's everyday life.

In its self-evaluation, the school maintained that there is a 'strong family atmosphere present in the school and that 'pupils demonstrate a caring and responsible attitude'. The inspection supports this view. Some Year 1 pupils, for example, spoke warmly about how friendly the older girls were to them and how much they valued this friendship.

The School Council established in November 2005 gives representatives from each form the opportunity to express the views of the classes. However, some Year 1 learners sometimes felt that their opinions were not respected.

**Grade: 2**

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

At present none of the *Kodesh* teachers has qualified status. The school is moving some way to address this by placing selected unqualified staff on a government accredited, initial teacher training programme.

Many of the lessons seen were good, some very good. None were less than satisfactory. Teachers know their subjects well and are able to deliver the teaching of *Kodesh* to a high level. However, a strange anomaly exists. On the one hand, teachers are achieving good results but do so mainly through a traditional approach to *Kodesh* teaching. In these lessons, teachers lead from the front, ask questions and explain new concepts. Resources are often limited to worksheets. Real lesson planning is at a premium. The overall level of planning in the lessons seen was unsatisfactory. To its credit, the school recognised this well before the inspection and is introducing strategies that will improve planning considerably and in the process will help make some very good *Kodesh* teachers into excellent practitioners.

Teachers use different strategies to assess pupil progress. These include regular tests and specific questioning in the classroom. However, the standard of marking needs to improve.

The school has recognised that effective assessment of pupil progress and achievement is a vital teaching tool and is crucial to raising standards even further.

**Grade: 2**

## Curriculum and other activities

The school has no formalised *Kodesh* curriculum. As it exists, the curriculum is broad and covers many areas including – *Chumash, Rashi, Nach, dinim* and *tephilloh*. It however, is hostage to the availability of good *Kodesh* teachers. This means that the school employs teachers with a certain *Kodesh* specialism and builds its curriculum around their expertise.

The great majority of pupils are well served by the *Kodesh* curriculum, which in many ways matches the full range of their aspirations and capabilities. Enrichment programmes enhance the curriculum and are interesting and relevant. They include visiting speakers who support a current Jewish festival or topic.

The traditional *Kodesh* curriculum is supplemented by GCSEs in Jewish Studies and Biblical Hebrew.

**Grade: 3**

## Care, guidance and support

As most pupils transfer from school to seminary, the school leaves vocational advice and training to seminary staff. These arrangements satisfy the majority of the school's families. However, career advice is provided for individuals requesting it.

All pupils interviewed felt that there was a member of staff they could turn to for guidance and support if necessary.

Pupils feel safe and cared for in the school's environment.

The level of devotion and *kavonoh* demonstrated at *Mincha* was truly inspiring. The pupils are expected to *daven shachris* at home before school begins. As they *daven Minchah* in school and are expected to either *bensch* or say *Al Hamichyoh* at lunchtime, the school meets the statutory requirement of providing collective worship on a daily basis.

**Grade: 2**

## Leadership and management

The Principal is an inspiring figure who motivates staff through his dedication to the school and its drive to succeed. His staff sees the Principal coping with the steep learning curve since Voluntary Aided status was achieved, and are encouraged to improve themselves. The Principal's leadership style is largely democratic. He spends a lot of time and energy discussing issues with staff and pupils, ensuring they 'buy in' to his vision for the school. He shares his problems with staff, and reassures them that the senior staff will support them in this time of great change for the school.

The Leadership team of Headteacher, Deputy and School Coordinator, provides an effective management structure, which is well supported by the Governing Body. It works closely with Form Teachers and Pastoral Staff to create a healthy learning culture.

The Principal is also the head of the *Kodesh* department. While this may seem an additional burden to the already immense task of building a new school and managing the chol teaching and learning programme; it does in fact, give him a unique overview of whole-school development.

There is clear evidence that the Governing Body supports the school well. The Chair of Governors in particular has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. He and his colleagues challenge and support the senior management team in their shared determination to improve the school still further.

The quality and effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation is impressive.

**Grade: 2**

