

# Bury and Whitefield Jewish Primary School

## Inspection report

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LEA	Bury
Inspection dates	9 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> May 2007
Inspected under the auspices of	Pikuach

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

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Type of School	Primary	School address	Parr Lane
School category	Voluntary Aided		Bury
Age range of pupils	3-11		BL9 8JT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 766 2888
Number on roll	173	Fax number	0161 766 3231
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body	Chair of governors	Rabbi A Jaffe
Date of previous inspection	6 <sup>th</sup> and 7 <sup>th</sup> November 2001	Headteacher	Miss C Potter
		Head of Kodesh	Rabbi B Lewis

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Website: [www.bod.org.uk](http://www.bod.org.uk)

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## Introduction

### Description of the school

The Bury and Whitefield Jewish Primary School is a one form entry voluntary aided primary school and the Spear Trust is the Governing Body. The school promotes an orthodox Jewish ethos with the *Va'ad HaChinuch* (Jewish Education Board) as the Rabbinic body that oversees the ethos and the *Limmudei Kodesh* (Jewish education.) The school serves the Bury and Whitefield and Prestwich Jewish communities. All pupils are from Jewish families and to varying degrees, they follow orthodox traditions. The school holds the Healthy Schools and Basic Skills awards. The vast majority of pupils transfer from the school's private nursery into the nursery year of the Foundation Stage, known as the 'Pre-school' class. There is a *Kodesh* (Jewish Studies) teacher in both the Pre-school and the Reception classes on a full time basis.

### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Unsatisfactory

## Overall effectiveness

The Bury and Whitefield Jewish Primary School's provision for Jewish education is good, with some outstanding features. The school's mission statement and aims are clearly stated and they guide the work of the school. These documents focus upon the pupils enjoying their Jewish learning and having the confidence and capability to participate in the services of the local orthodox synagogues. The Governors, Headteacher and Head of *Kodesh* work successfully towards fulfilling these aims.

The strong Jewish ethos is an outstanding feature of the school. It is carefully nurtured by the Head of *Kodesh*. The ethos permeates throughout the school, providing a strong supportive environment in which the pupils' personal development and realisation of their Jewish identity flourishes. The school provides an excellent level of care guidance and support for the pupils. This support extends to organising *barmitzvah* and *bat chayil* courses for pupils when they leave at the end of Year 6.

The school has maintained the good quality of Jewish Studies teaching identified at the previous inspection. The curriculum is good and there have been notable improvements in this area since the last inspection, particularly in the implementation of *Aleph Champ*, a new reading scheme. The school works extremely effectively with outside agencies to promote the pupils' learning outside the school day and to support the parents.

Through the good quality provision the pupils achieve well. By the end of the Foundation Stage, children's achievement in their Jewish personal development and their recognition of a Jewish way of life through *Brachot* and *Mitzvot* is very good. Throughout years 1 to 6, pupils achieve well in their Hebrew reading, writing and general Jewish knowledge. The good support provided enables those with greatest learning difficulties to achieve particularly well. Most capable pupils could be extended further through greater utilisation of their Hebrew skills.

The school has a high staff mobility rate and it rightly recognises that this is a barrier to raising performance. The school benefits from the enthusiasm, knowledge and commitment of its new *Kodesh* teachers. These teachers require a planned professional development programme to complement the effective support that they receive through the good induction and mentoring procedures. Recently, *Kodesh* teachers, when they have become fully qualified have remained in the school as secular class teachers. This is a benefit to the school as a whole as these teachers actively support the Jewish ethos and provide good role models for the pupils. However, their transfer out of the *Kodesh* department is detrimental to its development.

The inspectors agreed with the school's self-evaluation, which indicates that it has a good capacity for improvement. The school's priorities for development are appropriate and are being successfully implemented. There has been

satisfactory improvement in relation to the key issues from the last inspection. Although all the issues have been addressed, the high levels of staff mobility have meant that some of the improved practices, such as how teachers mark their pupils' work, have not been maintained. There are aspects of the provision in which the monitoring and evaluation procedures lack rigour, and the quality control systems are not sufficiently established. These are particularly in the areas of staffing, teaching and learning and evaluating the progress of the pupils over time.

## Grade 2

### What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the range of teachers' skills through a planned staff development programme that complements the current systems so that teachers;-
  - use assessment for learning techniques
  - provide a wide range of well matched activities for the pupils
  - provide opportunities for pupils to use technology.
- Establish formalised and robust systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, evaluating staffing policy, tracking the progress of pupils over time and identifying expectations for the most capable pupils.
- Extend the range and impact of the target setting systems by identifying individual targets for all pupils, linking teachers' marking to these targets and involving the pupils in the evaluation of their learning.

## Achievement and standards

The school correctly evaluates that the pupils make good progress throughout the school and that their achievement is good.

Children make a particularly good start to their Jewish learning in the Foundation Stage where Jewish experiences and values are an integral part of the full curriculum and *Kodesh* staff numbers are high. Children's learning accelerates in the Reception Year and by the end of this year, most children have an understanding of basic Jewish principles such as *brachot* (blessings) and *mitzvot* (laws) and they are able to identify several Hebrew letters.

From this good start, the pupils progress well in the basic skills of Hebrew reading and writing, with many pupils attaining the school's expectations by the end of Year 6. The rate of progress in reading skills has accelerated in the younger classes since the introduction of a new, carefully graded, approach to reading. The majority of pupils are confident when using *siddurim* (prayer books) and are able to read most *tephilot* (prayers) and the *benching* (blessing

after meals). Pupils make good progress in their writing skills, writing block letters accurately in Year 2. They learn to write script letters by the end of Year 4. In Year 6, pupils write in block and script but most prefer to use block letters. Older pupils would make better progress in their writing skills if they had more opportunities to further practise these skills and to write independently.

Pupils with specific learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported, for example by the use of behaviour targets or by support staff and consequently they make good and at times excellent, progress. The most able pupils are not consistently extended in all lessons. They lack opportunities for considering Rashi and other commentators, for individual research at times using computers, and also the time to use their Hebrew knowledge for independent writing.

By the end of Year 6, pupils are well prepared for the Jewish secondary school to which they mainly transfer. They have a good standard of general Jewish knowledge and of the festivals. They are familiar with many of the prayers in the weekday and *Shabbat* services' prayers and they know how to recite these. They understand many Hebrew words and phrases and traditional Jewish concepts and *mitzvot* (laws), particularly those related to care and consideration for others.

**Grade: 2**

## **Personal development and well-being**

The pupils' personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school is very successful in ensuring that pupils have a very good knowledge of *tephila*, and that they are well prepared for their future adult role in the community. All pupils participate in the daily assemblies with enthusiasm, and by Year 6 are able to recite the morning prayers such as the *Shema* (a key prayer) and to be able to *daven* (read prayers) with confidence.

Throughout the school, the pupils practice a healthy Jewish lifestyle. All the boys wear *kippot* (skullcaps) and *tzitzit*, (traditional fringed garments.) Pupils from the Reception year upwards understand that they must wash in a ritual manner before eating bread and say *brachot* (blessings) before food. Throughout the school, the pupils sing *Birchat Hamazon* (grace after meals) with dedication and enthusiasm. Pupils practice Jewish values in their school life and they can identify how they also put these values into practice at home. For example, nursery children collect *Tzedakah* (charity) and Reception children identify how they perform *mitzvot* (good deeds) at home.

Pupils' attendance at the school is very good. They greatly enjoy Jewish studies and the very many opportunities the school gives them to learn about their faith and religion. A year six pupil said "I really like the teachers, they make Jewish studies fun and I learn a lot". Pupils also told inspectors that they felt proud to be members of the school council, where they were able to give staff their views and opinions, which they felt were valued and listened to. The inspectors were greatly impressed with the friendliness and courtesy shown to them by the pupils.

Pupils demonstrate in practical lessons that they are very able to work collaboratively. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, the pupils worked very well in pairs to design and build a model Synagogue. Opportunities for collaboration could be extended to other parts of the curriculum.

Pupils are encouraged to lead a healthy lifestyle. Bottled water is provided for all pupils, and they are taught the value of eating kosher food. The lunchtime menu provides substantial good and healthy food, and pupils understand the meaning of the *brachot* they recite.

## Grade 1

# Quality of provision

## Teaching and learning

The school correctly identifies the teaching and learning as good with some examples of outstanding practice. Outstanding practice was observed in the Reception year and in Year 6.

A notable feature within all the teaching is the good role model provided by teachers through their very good subject knowledge, their strong commitment to a Jewish way of life and their enthusiasm for Judaism. This permeates their teaching and has a very positive impact, leading to the pupils' good progress and their enjoyment of their Jewish learning. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and the pupils respond accordingly. Teachers inform the pupils of the learning intentions of the lesson and they impart information in a clear manner, frequently using resources such as interactive whiteboards to good effect. Consequently the pupils are motivated and all are included at these times.

Only the best teachers interact sufficiently with the pupils as they work, in order to assess their learning. Too frequently, there is no review of the pupils' learning at the end of the lesson. Therefore opportunities are missed for assessment and reflection by the pupils. Consequently, some of the pupils' tasks are not well matched to their needs and abilities. Mainly these are recording tasks, relying too heavily upon the pupils' English skills and the use of

worksheets, some of which require minimal challenge. In *Chumash* lessons, teachers have high expectations but do not simplify their English translations to aid their pupils' comprehension. During the inspection, no pupils were observed using technology, such as computers, to develop and extend their learning. Marking was a key development point from the last inspection. Teachers marking is accurate but should be more informative, telling the pupils how to improve or describing what they have done particularly well.

In the reading lessons, the new system requires teachers to work together and to teach in a prescribed manner, which they do very effectively. In these lessons, assessment information is used well to grade the work very precisely to the pupils' abilities. There are a range of varied activities that take place at a brisk pace, and therefore the pupils make very good progress.

## Grade: 2

## Curriculum

The curriculum is broad and balanced, and through its quality and range appropriately prepares pupils for secondary school life and gives them the knowledge and skills to enable them to follow and take part in an Orthodox synagogue service. The school follows a deliberate policy of teaching pupils Ashkenazi pronunciation to enable them to participate fully in local synagogue services, which use the Ashkenazi dialect.

*Chumash* skills (reading and translating extracts from Torah texts) are taught in order of priority, with reading skills being the first and major priority and translation skills as the last. There are clearly defined benchmarks and expectations for each year group. An innovation is the '*Aleph Champ*' reading scheme, which is having a good impact on the pupils enthusiasm and raising standards so that by Year 4, most pupils are able to read Hebrew texts fairly fluently. Consequently, expectations for the end of Year 6 have been raised and the school is to review and extend the curriculum to introduce text based skills in Years 5 and 6. The intention is to enable this group of pupils to have a deeper understanding of *Chumash*, *Siddur* and *Hagadah* (*Passover service text*).

The school has a systematic and effective approach to developing Hebrew writing skills. Pupils write in block on entry, developing clear handwriting. Script writing is taught at the end of Year 3, once most pupils have mastered reading block letters. By the end of Year 4, most pupils have developed clear neat writing and can read their own script. Writing skills are not developed further than pupils copying from another source, and the curriculum would benefit from extension opportunities for pupils to write independently, thereby improving their spelling and understanding of grammar.

The curriculum covers the festivals in the cycle of the Jewish year providing progression from one year to the next. Moral aspects are highlighted well. The Jewish fun club and the music club extend the curriculum for the few pupils who attend.

The links between the *Kodesh* and the Foundation Stage curriculum are excellent and they significantly contribute to the pupils' good progress and enjoyment. Within the years 1 to 6, there are satisfactory links to the National Curriculum and teachers make satisfactory use of the skills taught in these subjects. Design technology skills are used in some project work, but predominantly, English skills are practised, at times at the expense of Hebrew skills, for example, when the pupils write words and names in English transliterations. The school should give consideration to the further introduction of technology into the classroom. For example, the greater use of tape recorders would enhance the music curriculum, and more use of interactive whiteboards and IT could be made, to complement the work of Hebrew and history teaching.

The enrichment activities are an outstanding feature of the curriculum. The valuable partnership which the school has arranged with associations such as Seed, who come into school on a regular basis to celebrate festivals and events, and with *Tzivos Hashem*, who demonstrate the practice of *Havdala* and *Shofar* blowing, and young people from the local seminaries, who take assemblies and speak to the pupils about their way of life; all of these add to the richness of the pupils' experience and their enjoyment of their Jewish learning.

The school tries hard to ensure that the curriculum is appropriate to individual pupils needs and prepares them with the knowledge for their *Bar* and *Batmitzvot* appropriately.

## **Grade: 2**

### **Care, guidance and support**

The level of care provided for pupils is excellent. The child protection officer has received formal training and has cascaded training to all members of staff. The new legislation for providing criminal record checks for all staff has been fully complied with. The staff know all pupils extremely well. Pupils are confident that they are cared for and valued. They confirmed to inspectors that they feel happy, secure and safe in school.

The provision for collective worship is good. This extends from the nursery throughout the school and the procedures are modified appropriately to the pupils' age. There are many opportunities for parents to attend and to observe their child's improving skills. Pupils have some opportunities for taking responsibility, and leading the services, but the school should consider providing more, in particular for the oldest pupils in the school.



The school offers excellent support to the significant number of its pupils with severe learning difficulties and disabilities. They are therefore able to make very good progress.

The school has initiated sound assessment systems for the pupils from Year 2 to monitor the pupils' progress. These are better developed in reading than in other areas of the curriculum and they guide teachers in how to support their pupils' learning. There are class targets for pupils in all year groups and in reading some pupils have personal targets for developing their learning. The assessment system is not yet sufficiently developed to enable teachers to monitor the progress of pupils from one year to the next.

The nursery department has very good induction arrangements. Pupils are able to start their school life with confidence. Transition arrangements for Year 6 pupils to the next stage of their education are well developed. Staff from the receiving secondary schools visit to meet the pupils and arrangements are in place for pupils to visit their selected secondary schools for 'taster' days.

The school is very successful in imparting the Jewish ethos of care to its pupils, and the whole school community is calm and caring. The mission statement that children should be taught respect for themselves and others is well understood and practised by both staff and pupils.

## Grade 1

## Leadership and management

The school rightly identifies the leadership and management of the school to be good and inspectors judge some features to be outstanding. The combined impact of the Head of Jewish Studies, the Headteacher and the governors is outstanding in the manner in which they set a clear direction for the school, promote excellent standards of care and maintain the orthodox Jewish ethos in accordance with the school's mission statement. They deservedly enjoy high levels of parental and pupils' satisfaction.

The school's self evaluation is accurate and leaders recognise the school's strengths and weaknesses. The Headteacher and the Head of *Kodesh* invest considerable time effectively supporting staff by providing a weekly counselling session to address teachers' concerns and they identify the impact of this support. However, the school does not have rigorous quality assurance procedures for observing teachers in the classrooms and through this, identifying their future training needs.

Systems to monitor performance are in place, but are informal and they lack rigour. For example, pupils' reading is monitored termly but there is little evaluation of the progress that each pupil makes and how their learning should be extended.

The school's leadership has ensured that there is equality of opportunity for all and that there is no discrimination and this is reflected in the pupils' outstanding personal development.

There has been satisfactory progress towards achieving the key issues from the previous inspection. The input from the Head of *Kodesh* has been good, however staff turnover has meant that not all improvements have been maintained and become embedded practice.

The governors fulfil their duties well. Through the *Va'ad Ha'Chinuch*, the governors regularly monitor standards and provision. They provide strong guidance and support and in many respects, they know the school very well. They are fully committed and provide good guidance and support to the Head of *Kodesh* but they have not ensured that he receives his full entitlement to appropriate training to support his role in the school.

A constant issue for the school is the level of staff turnover and this has a severe impact upon the speed with which the department can develop. To its credit, the school has a good record of supporting teachers' to acquire professional qualifications. However, once trained these teachers are not retained by the *Kodesh* department of the school. Governors have not evaluated the impact of the high staff turnover and their staffing policies, to ascertain if they are receiving best value for money.

Inspectors judge that some staffing decisions have been excellent. For example, the school has invested heavily in the Foundation stage where there is a full time *kodesh* teacher in each class. This investment provides a very firm basis upon which future Jewish learning is built and contributes significantly to the good standards within the school.

## **Grade 2**

