

Clore Shalom Primary School

Inspection report

LEA Hertfordshire
Inspection dates 13-14 December 2006
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 | Hugo Gryn Way |
| School category | Voluntary Aided | | Shenley |
| Age range of pupils | 3 – 11 | | Herts WD7 9BL |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01923 855631 |
| Number on roll | 236 | Fax number | 01923 853722 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mrs Irene Blaston |
| Date of previous inspection | June 2001 | Headteacher | Mrs Irene Kay |

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Introduction

Description of the school

Clore Shalom is a single form entry pluralistic school, with a part time nursery, operating in the mornings. It was founded in 1999 by a group of interested people, mainly drawn from the Liberal, Reform and Masorti Synagogues in the South Hertfordshire and surrounding areas. Its religious policies are decided by the Senior Leadership Team and Board of Governors, in consultation with local rabbis of the sponsoring movements. A key member of the Senior Leadership Team is the Jewish Studies Subject Leader, who is also the school's Assistant Head. The school is open to pupils from across the religious spectrum whose families have a commitment to the ethos of pluralism and respect for the traditions and practices of others.

Most pupils come from a radius of five miles. At the time of the last inspection there were full classes up to and including Year 3 and part classes in Years 4 and 5, with the older pupils transferring in from other schools when it opened. The school now has a full class in each year and most pupils in all classes started in the nursery. Internally the school divides years into lower, middle and upper phases that cross National Key Stages.

Ivrit is taught as a separate subject, by specialist teachers. It supports Jewish Studies, particularly in the areas of reading and writing which is where these skills are mainly taught. The school also views it as a National Curriculum Modern Foreign language and therefore inspected by Ofsted.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of its provision for Jewish education

The school's provision for Jewish studies is good with some outstanding features. The inspectors' view matches the school's own assessment of its strengths and areas for development.

There are a number of strengths. The teaching of Jewish Studies is a separate subject but fully integrated with the National curriculum lessons. Jewish Studies is taught by the class teachers and as a result is seamless with pupils seeing Judaism as an indivisible and central part of their education and life. Pupils have a positive and generally enthusiastic attitude to their Jewish learning and they make outstanding progress in their Jewish Studies.

They have good relations with each other and with all adults. The older pupils especially display maturity and carry out their responsibilities with commitment. The school prepares them well for Jewish studies in the secondary schools which many attend, and also for their future lives, especially within the Progressive synagogal movements.

The school has made significant improvement since the last inspection particularly in the areas of curriculum development, where the Jewish Studies Subject Leader has developed and implemented a new curriculum. Development in Ivrit curriculum, teaching and reading standards has been slower, partly affected by staff changes.

Ongoing assessment is carried out well by class teachers. The school has recently started summative assessment directed at bringing all the various assessments together and making full use of the information to inform future planning.

The school has already appropriately identified these aspects as the next areas for development.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

- 1. Fully implement assessment tracking in Jewish Studies, combining the various monitoring systems together, so as to enable the school to fully review pupils' progress and adjust the curriculum accordingly.**
- 2. Continue to develop teaching techniques and strategies in *Ivrit* and raise skills in Hebrew reading.**

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievements and standards of work are good. In this the inspectors agree with the school's own view.

Pupils have good knowledge and understanding, for example Nursery children were able to enact the story of *Chanukah* using advanced words "Selucid" and concepts such as that they "fought the Jews". Year 5 pupils were able to write and perform a *Chanukah* play for their parents.

They are also encouraged to develop independent learning skills. For example Year 4 pupils designing and making *chanukiot* in clay could either follow one of the models provided or design their own, which many did. Pupils are also encouraged to collaborate; working in pairs or groups.

Evidence in most observed lessons showed appropriately differentiated work and the support given by teachers and learning support assistants enables weaker pupils to achieve well. However scrutiny of samples of pupil's written work shows that in some cases there is insufficient differentiation for weaker pupils. Where appropriate the teacher has more able and less able pupils working together so that they can assist each other; this works well.

Understanding and verbal use of Hebrew starts in the Nursery where standards are very good. Some older pupils have a good understanding but others struggle. This may be due to the good programme used in the Foundation Stage, for which the school does not yet have an equivalent for Key Stages 1 and 2. *Ivrit* teachers speak instructions in the language. Throughout the school Hebrew words and terms appear on displays and signs and are used in speech. However a good opportunity is missed in the names used for the school teams, where old-fashioned anglicised names are used for the twelve tribes, instead of the original Hebrew, with which the pupils might better identify.

Reading and writing start in Year 3 and standards in the school are variable. By the end of Key Stage 2 the most able pupils are able to read well, but the average and less able pupils do not reach an age-appropriate level. Few examples of writing were seen and they were mainly of individual words or short phrases. The school has just purchased a Hebrew word processing programs for pupils. Both in reading and writing some pupils confuse letters for others that sound or look similar.

The school states that former pupils who attend the Jewish secondary schools cope well with Jewish Studies and *Ivrit* in Year 7.

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being

Clore Shalom's provision for its pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is outstanding. The pupils really care about each other and the school community as a whole. A major emphasis is placed by the school on helping pupils to feel secure in their spiritual and religious growth, with Jewish values at the core.

Relationships between staff and pupils are outstanding. Children are consistently welcoming, helpful, friendly and kind. Behaviour is very good with clear and efficient systems in place encompassing appropriate rewards and sanctions. Attendance is very good and pupils are clear about leading healthy lifestyles.

Pupils learn about other religions as part of a discrete Religious Studies Curriculum which was inspected under the recent Ofsted inspection.

The school fully meets statutory requirements for provision of daily *tefillah* (collective worship) each day. Year 6 pupils take turns to lead *tefillah* in other classes and they serve as excellent role model for the younger pupils as well as empowering the oldest children to lead services.

The content of the *tefillah* is relevant to the school's pluralistic character and children take an enthusiastic part in recital of prayers and songs, using the school's own *siddur* compiled by the Jewish Studies Subject Leader. *Parasha* assemblies are held each week for Years 1-3 and 4-6 and are led by the Headteacher and Jewish Studies Subject Leader respectively. Pupils take an active role and standards of behaviour during the assemblies are exemplary.

Evidence based on lesson observations and discussions with pupils confirms generally positive attitudes to being Jewish and learning about Judaism generally. Respect for Jewish customs and traditions is exemplified and encouraged throughout the school day and life of the pupils. As an integral part of the school's inclusive ethos, girls and boys are offered equal access to all aspects of religious ritual activities.

Grade: 1

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Teaching in Jewish Studies overall is outstanding and all lessons seen were either outstanding or good. The subject is taught by pupils' class teachers who therefore deliver all parts of the curriculum except for *Ivrit*. This enables integration with the National Curriculum subjects as well as the delivery of Jewish studies through other lessons, which is very successful. Class teachers receive effective support, particularly with regard to Jewish subject knowledge,

from the Jewish Studies Subject Leader, who is able to ensure that all have the appropriate subject knowledge. This is in part achieved by having the more specialist skills of reading and writing primarily done by the *Ivrit* teachers and the study of texts taught only in the top three years.

Rather than devote time from Jewish Studies lessons to teach festivals when they occur, an appropriate aspect of the festival will be covered in National Curriculum subjects. For example during the inspection dimensions of the forthcoming festival of *Chanukah* was taught to Year 1 in literacy and Year 4 in Design & Technology. This allows Jewish Studies to concentrate on teaching the festival in depth once or twice during the pupil's school life.

Planning and delivery of lessons is of a high quality. Teachers assess pupils' progress and plan accordingly. Baseline assessment has started this year, which is the beginning of a more systematic and comprehensive assessment scheme that will enable better identification of standards achieved and progress made and to assist in the further raising of both.

Resources are good. Use of Information and Communications Technology both by teachers and pupils was seen in a few lessons.

Pupils' learning is generally outstanding with most pupils making appropriate or better progress. They mostly work well and generally finish the planned activity within the time scheduled. They are interested in the subject and are generally very positive. They are able to explain what they have learnt or are doing and offer mature and thoughtful contributions. The more able pupils are capable of working problems out for themselves. For example a Year 4 pupil was asked what total number of candles would have been used by a specific day of *Chanukah*. This had not been covered in lessons but the pupil managed to work it out and found the inspector to give the correct answer.

Grade: 1

Curriculum and other activities

Since the last inspection the school has made great advances with its curriculum. The Jewish Studies Subject Leader created and successfully implemented it, tailored to the aims of the school. It is appropriately balanced and broad and building on knowledge gained in previous years, it is developmental. It concentrates on Jewish practice, knowledge and history. Pupils from Year 4 and upwards are introduced to textual work, primarily *Tenach* and *Mishna*, which are taught in context for example comprehension of the subject, the history of the period, together with some translation work. Reading and writing Hebrew are mainly taught in *Ivrit* lessons, which has its own curriculum.

As well as a separate subject Jewish Studies is also fully integrated with the National Curriculum throughout the school. For example a Year 6 class report writing in Literacy used the theme of 'Righteous gentiles during the *Shoah*'; Year 2 pupils having learned about Joseph in the *Parasha*, made a huge coloured coat made from a range of materials in a Design & Technology lesson and Foundation children did a range of counting and number conservation activities related to *Chanukah*. This is an excellent model of integration, with class teachers delivering the Jewish Studies at the same time as the National Curriculum. It also provides the pupils with a very positive message that everything they learn is linked.

The school works closely with two sister primary schools, who share a common pluralistic approach. Materials, such as the school's Jewish Studies curriculum as devised by the Jewish Studies Subject Leader, are shared with staff from these schools.

The school also enjoys close links with its local Jewish and other faith communities including visits to local synagogues and other places of worship. Reciprocal visits are made with the local state school at festival times. Pupils also visit old peoples' homes. A *Shabbaton* for Year 4 has been held, where the children and staff experienced a full pluralist Shabbat together, having created prayers and activities to celebrate as a community.

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support

Clore Shalom's care, guidance and welfare are outstanding. There are clear guidelines and policies with regard to anti-bullying, Health and Safety and Child Protection as well as effective arrangements for safeguarding pupils throughout the school day. Effective site security measures are constantly in operation.

The dedication and commitment of all staff enhances the one-team approach to ensure the very best in guidance, support and care for all pupils. Learning Support Assistants are effectively deployed in all classes which ensures high quality support for all pupils at all times of the school day.

Year 6 pupils and their parents are given valuable advice and support regarding transfer to secondary school. Priority is given to all eligible pupils for entry to Yavneh, the Jewish secondary school in Hertfordshire, with other pupils going to JFS or non-Jewish schools. Based on discussions with Clore Shalom's Senior Management Team, pupils settle in well into their respective high schools.

Grade: 1

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. The Jewish Studies Subject Leader is responsible for both the Jewish studies and ethos of the school and in this he is fully supported by the head and other members of the Senior Leadership Team. The whole leadership; staff, governors and the committee of rabbis of the sponsoring movements, are dedicated to the vision of a pluralistic Jewish school which celebrates diversity of belief and practice.

The Jewish Studies Subject Leader has created a new curriculum which underpins the school's aims and enables the subject to be taught according to its values. He provides inset and supports class teachers enabling them to deliver the curriculum. Monitoring of lessons is done by senior staff. As summative assessment has only recently started it is too early to make a judgement on its use. He is also responsible for *Ivrit*, where development has been hampered by change of staff and priority being given to Jewish Studies.

The voluntary parental contributions are added to the school's general budget and used to fund Jewish studies, *Ivrit* and other costs particularly associated with running a Jewish school. The department uses its annual allocation appropriately.

Parental responses and comments indicate high levels of satisfaction with the school overall.

The school identified correctly its strengths and the areas for development and is well placed to make further improvements.

Grade: 2

