

Clore Shalom School

Inspection report

Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspected under the auspices of	Pikuach
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2012
Lead inspector	Selwyn Ward

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	241
Appropriate authority	Governing body
Chair	Irene Blaston
Headteacher	Irene Kay
Date of previous school inspection	13 December 2006
School address	Hugo Gryn Way Radlett WD7 9BL
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Introduction

Inspection team

Selwyn Ward

Lead inspector

Sandra Teacher

Team inspector

This inspection was carried out with three days' notice. The inspectors visited 17 lessons taught by 13 teachers, with a particular focus on Jewish Studies and the teaching of Hebrew as a modern foreign language. The inspectors visited class and whole-school assemblies, listened to pupils read in Hebrew, and spoke with pupils, staff, and a member of the governing body. Inspectors looked at school planning and policies, school self-evaluation and the questionnaire responses of pupils, staff and parents.

Information about the school

Clore Shalom is a one-form entry primary school with a part-time nursery which operates in the mornings. It was founded in 1999 by a community mainly from the Liberal, Reform and Masorti Synagogues. Its religious policies are decided by the governing body, in consultation with local rabbis of the sponsoring movements. The headteacher is the currently the Jewish Studies subject leader, although a new Head of Jewish Studies has been appointed and is due to take on this role from April 2012. 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 are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language and none are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average. Clore Shalom has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Healthy Schools status.

Hebrew is taught as a modern foreign language.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
The achievement of pupils in their Jewish education	2
The quality of teaching and assessment	2
The extent to which the Jewish Education curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development including the duty to fulfill the daily act of collective worship	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of Jewish Education, including through partnerships	1

Key findings

- Clore Shalom makes good provision overall for pupils' Jewish education. Key aspects of provision are outstanding. Pupils achieve well in Jewish Studies and make good progress in learning Hebrew, although their oral *Ivrit* is better developed than their reading and writing in Hebrew.
- Pupils enjoy a curriculum that is rich in memorable learning experiences. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. As a result, behaviour is exemplary and pupils learn to appreciate their cultural heritage and gain respect for the diversity of Jewish and other traditions.
- The overall quality of teaching is good. Some teaching is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can do, and pupils respond with enthusiasm because they are keen to learn and do well. There are examples of high quality marking that drives pupils' learning, but this is not a consistent feature of marking throughout the school.
- Leaders have succeeded in maintaining high standards in this very well-run school. The partnership with parents is exceptionally strong, contributing to the school's impressive family feel. Parents are very supportive of the school and of their children's Jewish education, and they are kept fully informed through regular newsletters and a website that is accessible and up to date. Because teaching staff are very well supported by school leaders, they have the confidence to teach Jewish Studies even though none are subject specialists. *Ivrit* is taught by specialists.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment in reading and writing Hebrew (*Ivrit*) by:
 - displaying simple labels in Hebrew in classrooms and around the school so that, from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards, exposure to the written language is reinforced
 - reducing the reliance on worksheets in Key Stage 2 so that pupils have more opportunity to write and record in exercise books or on computers so as to allow them, their teachers and parents to more readily track their progress
 - giving pupils more opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT) for learning and practising their Hebrew.
- Increase the proportion of lessons where the teaching in Jewish studies and Ivrit is outstanding by:
 - ensuring that the objectives set out at the start of lessons are always sharply focused on what pupils are expected to learn
 - always allowing time at the end of lessons to summarise the main points for the pupils so as to confirm with them what they have learnt
 - balancing the pace of lessons so that less time is spent in passive listening and pupils have more opportunities for practical activities
 - routinely giving pupils time in every class to read and respond to the comments teachers write when they mark their work.

Main report

The achievement of pupils in their Jewish education

Children join the school with skills and capabilities above those expected for their ages in the areas of learning covered by the National Curriculum. However, many have less knowledge and experience of Hebrew and of the Jewish Studies curriculum than in most other Jewish schools. Pupils are eager to learn. Pupils of all abilities, including the more able and those with special educational needs, make rapid progress, especially in Jewish Studies. By the end of Year 6, they have built a wealth of knowledge of Jewish life, history, tradition and belief. They are knowledgeable about Jewish festivals and take pride in their Jewish heritage. Pupils' written work includes some thoughtful reflection on what it means to be Jewish, even for those who describe the highlight of their experience as the opportunity 'to eat *challah*'. Another child referred to the spirit as being the 'walkie-talkie to G_d'.

In keeping with the school's pluralist aims, a key feature of pupils' achievement in Jewish Studies is their confidence to question and challenge. Although unfailingly polite, Year 6 pupils were not afraid to challenge their teacher's account of prophets as 'messengers of G_d'. Several pupils put forward cogent arguments rationalising the role of biblical prophets as social critics who may have been expressing their own opinions or who may have filtered a divine message through their personal prejudices.

Pupils also make good progress in *Ivrit*. There is a commendable focus on spoken Hebrew, and pupils learn to read and write as they progress through the school. They are not introduced to the Hebrew alphabet until Key Stage 1, however, and they do not learn to decode letters, letter blends and simple words in *Ivrit* in the systematic way this early reading skill is taught in English. An over-reliance on worksheets constrains pupils' writing in *Ivrit*. Not all are dated, which makes it difficult for them to be used to track pupils' progress. Nevertheless, pupils' language development is such that, by Year 6, pupils have the confidence to read and learn a *pasouk* from the Torah scroll to recite in front of the whole school as well as hold a short conversation or role play in *Ivrit*.

The quality of teaching and assessment

Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Pupils are motivated to do well because they like their teachers and are eager to please them. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils of all abilities can do, and pupils enthusiastically rise to the challenge. In an outstanding lesson that combined literacy with Jewish studies, Year 5 pupils drew on their understanding of the *Megillah* Purim story to analyse character and motive. More-able pupils were pressed to apply their understanding of characters from the story to contemporary figures, finding parallels, for example, between David Cameron and the Persian Emperor Achashverosh.

Most lessons move forward at a brisk pace, but sometimes teachers' introductions go on for a long time, which can mean pupils sitting listening on the carpet for periods of more than 30 minutes. This limits opportunities for practical activities. Teachers mostly set out learning objectives at the start of each lesson, but these are not always sharply focused on what it is that pupils are expected to learn. Sometimes they mainly set out the task for the lesson. Learning is not always summarised during or at the end of the lesson so pupils can be sure to consolidate what they have learnt. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils used laptops for research and Early Years Foundation Stage children used sound recorders but, throughout the school pupils have few opportunities to use ICT as a tool for learning Hebrew. In the best *Ivrit* lessons, teachers use the target language for almost all the instructions to pupils. This was seen, for example, in an outstanding session for Reception children, who quickly understood what the teacher and her puppet wanted them to do because she gave Hebrew instructions with clarity and expression.

There are examples of high quality marking that identifies for pupils what they need to do to move their learning on. However, this is not consistent across the school. There are examples of teachers posing questions in their marking to which pupils respond, building a productive learning dialogue. In other cases, the comments teachers write go unheeded. This is because time is not routinely set aside in every class for pupils to read, reflect on and respond to teachers' marking.

The extent to which the Jewish Education curriculum meets pupils' needs

There is much that stands out about the curriculum at this school. The school has

been innovative in integrating Jewish Studies into cross-curricular topics that often mirror those in the National Curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 3 study Ancient Egypt, as they do in most primary schools, but here the topic is linked to the story of the Exodus. Teachers make learning exciting and fun by devising memorable learning experiences. This was very much in evidence in an outstanding session in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Using the outdoor area, teachers and support staff dressed up and acted out the roles of characters in the story of Moses in the bulrushes. The children lay on mats so they could peek over the bank as the school pond doubled as the Nile, watching excitedly as Pharaoh's daughter found the floating crib. The re-enactment brought the story graphically to life. It was new learning for most children, most of whom were unfamiliar with the story. Some had initially assumed the baby was 'Baby Bunting' from the nursery rhyme. Inspired by the dramatic experience the children returned to their classrooms and quickly settled to relevant follow-up activities including sequencing pictures to recount the story and writing their own captions for drawings of scenes from the account. A group worked with Pharaoh's daughter to bathe and dress dolls representing the baby. Gender stereotypes were eschewed as boys joined in alongside the girls.

What stops the curriculum from being outstanding is an overdependence on worksheets for *Ivrit* and the lack of opportunities for pupils to use ICT as a learning tool in this subject. Though the school offers a stimulating learning environment, opportunities are missed to reinforce word recognition and reading in Hebrew through labelling everyday objects in this modern foreign language, in the way that many non-denominational schools routinely label in French.

The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including the duty to hold a daily act of collective worship

As parents confirm, it is the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development that particularly stands out at this school. Reflecting the school's pluralist philosophy, pupils quickly learn to respect the diversity within Judaism and Jewish belief, as well as in other faiths and traditions in the United Kingdom and wider world. Clore Shalom's partnerships with schools in Israel and Belarus have helped to broaden pupils' horizons. Pupils have raised generous funds to help their counterparts in Belarus who live in less advantaged circumstances.

Pupils' exemplary behaviour is an outcome of their excellent moral development. They get on together exceptionally well, working productively in pairs and small groups. Their individual confidence means that, at times, groups can be entirely composed of leaders, but sensible attitudes do not allow mutual bossiness to get in the way of constructive working and productivity. A parent wrote to relate how her daughter and a friend had found a £5 note on the ground, 'I asked her what she thought she should do and she told me that at school she had learnt what the *Mishnah* had told them to do, and so they put it in the charity box at the local shop.'

Though some pupils say they do not especially like *tefillah*, whole-school assemblies are a nonetheless joyous celebration where every child shows respect. In the *havdalah* assembly first thing Monday morning, almost all joined in in Hebrew chants and a tuneful recital of blessings. This gave the week an upbeat purposeful start. On

other mornings, *tefillah* starts the day in every class, with the class teacher supported by pupils from Year 6. Pupils *daven* although their singing and recitation is sometimes by rote rather than reading from the *siddur*. All the class and whole-school assemblies fulfil the school's statutory duty to hold a daily act of collective worship.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of Jewish Education, including through partnerships

Even though Jewish studies is taught by non-specialists, the subject is very well managed so that there is no loss of impetus and all staff have the confidence to teach the integrated curriculum. A teacher explained. 'The time spent with me in developing subject knowledge, planning and assessment has been fantastic.' Another member of staff described the headteacher as 'an inspirational leader to staff, parents and, of course, pupils'. The school works in partnership with other pluralist Jewish schools and has developed productive ties with schools from other denominations.

What particularly stands out about the leadership and management of this school is the way its ethos is reflected in its celebration of diversity and promotion of equal opportunities. Pupils of all abilities do well because expectations are consistently high throughout the school. It is the continuing variation in practice in aspects of teaching and assessment that result in teaching overall that is good rather than outstanding. *Ivrit* is managed well so that pupils make good progress, especially in conversational Hebrew.

Parents greatly appreciate the excellent communication they have with the school. Newsletters show the school very much at the hub of the community. Because it caters for pupils that come from families encompassing several different Jewish traditions and none, it has become a shared focal point.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.