

Etz Chaim Primary School

Inspection report

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| Local authority | Barnet |
| Inspected under the auspices of | Pikuach |
| Inspection dates | 11th February 2013 |
| Lead inspector | Jeffrey Leader |

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 | Free School |
| Age range of pupils | 3-6 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | 76 |
| Appropriate authority | Governing body |
| Chair | Mr Adam Dawson |
| Headteacher | Yvonne Baron and Sharon Mullish |
| Date of previous school inspection | No previous inspection |
| Address | 80 Daws Lane, Mill Hill, London NW7 4SL |
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Introduction

Inspection team

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| Jeffrey Leader | Lead Inspector |
| Sandra Teacher | Team Inspector |

This inspection was carried out by two inspectors. They visited five lessons including *tefillot* (prayers). They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of children. One inspector had telephone conversations with the school's *Kodesh* Improvement Partner (SKIP) and the Rabbi of Mill Hill Synagogue. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including children's written work, teachers' lesson plans, the Jewish Studies Curriculum and the school's Self-Evaluation document. *Pikuach* inspectors had a discussion also with HMI (Her Majesty's Inspector) following the protocol that exists between Ofsted (Section 5) and *Pikuach* (Section 48).

The inspection team looked in detail at the following:

- The progress pupils make in Jewish Studies.
- The quality of teaching in Jewish Studies.
- Leadership and Management in Jewish Studies.

Information about the school

Etz Chaim Jewish Primary School is a one form entry primary school with a nursery serving the local community in Mill Hill, North London. It is a school with a Modern Orthodox Jewish ethos where Jewish Studies plays a central role and is integrated into all aspects of school life. The school opened in September 2011 and was one of the first of the government's new Free Schools. The school is currently located in temporary accommodation very close to its permanent site into which it will move in June 2013.

Currently there are 76 pupils on roll, 40 boys and 36 girls. All children speak English as a first language and a small number speak Hebrew as an additional language (9.2%). Regarding special educational needs, 6.6% of pupils are on Early Years/ School Action Plus. There are no children in receipt of pupil premium. In both September 2011 and 2012 the majority of children entered the school Nursery at age-related expectations.

Inspection judgements

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| Overall effectiveness | 2 |
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| The achievement of pupils in their Jewish education | 2 |
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| 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 | 2 |

Overall effectiveness: the quality of Jewish education provided in the school

Grade: 2

Etz Chaim is a good school in relation to its Jewish Studies provision. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Achievement is good and all pupils make good progress including those with special educational needs and disabilities. Children's starting points in relation to Jewish knowledge and practice are generally below the level expected but they get off to a particularly strong start in the Nursery and make good progress through to Year 1. Teaching in Jewish Studies is good at the Nursery/Reception phase and outstanding in Year 1. Pupils' behaviour is excellent which demonstrates that they find their Jewish Studies lessons interesting and engaging. The Jewish Studies curriculum is broad and balanced and is based on five subject strands. Wherever possible Jewish and non-Jewish subjects are integrated enabling pupils to link their Jewish learning to their everyday lives. Sometimes, in Early Years integrated sessions, the lesson objective is not always clear. Pupils' knowledge and understanding is regularly assessed by teachers and their assistants. The main focus for assessment at the moment is Hebrew reading and topic work. Leadership in Jewish Studies is good with some outstanding aspects. In addition to her teaching role, the Jewish Studies Leader has worked hard in a short space of time to support Jewish and non-Jewish teaching staff as well as developing the curriculum and assessment procedures. The headteachers and governing body are supportive of her role.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that Early Years emulates the outstanding practice in Year 1 by (a) improving the quality of teaching so it is always clear what the children are expected to learn and by (b) making sure assessment includes next steps in their Jewish learning.
- Support the continuing development of Jewish Studies by appointing a governor to oversee the work of the department.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Grade: 2

Achievement is good from a basic starting point and all pupils make good progress including those with special educational needs and disabilities. By the end of Year 1 pupils reach the expected standard comparable with the aims of the school. Rapid progress, since the start of the current year, has been made in Year 1. The majority of pupils are able to read compound words in Hebrew. A group of Year 1 pupils read some challenging Hebrew text to an inspector without error. Reception children achieved well in learning the letter *lamed*. This learning was re-inforced by a range of practical hands-on experiences, for example, making the letter *lamed* out of Lego.

Quality of teaching and learning in the school

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning in *Etz Chaim* is good with some outstanding examples especially from the Jewish Studies Leader in Year 1 where, in an observed lesson, all the elements of excellent teaching were present including, for example, clear lesson objectives, a review of previous learning, secure subject knowledge, excellent use of resources, including the Interactive White Board and outstanding classroom management. In this particular lesson, explanations were clear and the teacher checked constantly for understanding. Activities were matched to children's needs and one group of pupils actually constructed a small animated *Purim* play on their iPads using Sock Puppet Software.

Planning in Year 1 is differentiated and personalised to incorporate children's individual needs and interests. This applies to Gifted and Talented children as well as those with learning difficulties. Medium Term Planning details the areas and topics to be taught.

In the Early Years, teaching is good overall but the school realises that there is scope for improvement particularly in the integrated sessions where in activities that relate to Jewish Studies, the Lesson Objective is not sufficiently clear. When children, for example, learn about *Purim* through painting a *megillah* scroll or acting out a *Purim* story, it is not always immediately clear what the children are expected to know and understand. Early Years planning does not relate always to the seven Areas of Learning.

The Jewish Studies Leader only took up her post in September 2012 and has worked hard to put assessment systems in place, such as levelling for Hebrew reading to enable teachers to track children's progress effectively. Each child's reading is formally assessed every term using the school's Hebrew reading assessment levels. Formative assessment grids are used in Reception to monitor progress on a weekly basis. In Year 1 pupils' Jewish Studies topic work is assessed using formative assessment grids which both the teaching assistants and the teachers contribute to. Knowledge and understanding of *Chagim* (festivals) is assessed formally after each *Chag* (festival). These strong systems have not yet spread to all subjects of the Jewish Studies curriculum. Behaviour in Jewish Studies lessons is excellent. All children want to learn. When an inspector listened to children reading and asked them which school subjects they liked most, half replied 'mathematics' and the other half replied 'Jewish Studies.'

Marking is good and comments made by teachers in their pupils' workbooks are generally helpful and informative.

Clear labeling in *Ivrit* around the school helps to re-inforce Hebrew language acquisition. A wonderful innovation is the use of *Berachot (blessings) Talking Tins*, where children can press a tin in order to hear a *beracha* (blessing), for example, for fruit and learn it.

Quality of leadership in and management and governance of the school.

Grade: 2

The school is to be praised for the appointment of a new Jewish Studies Leader who in a short space of time has already made an impact, sometimes outstandingly so, on many aspects of Jewish learning within the school. She works tirelessly with all the staff to ensure the integrated learning programme is implemented, especially for the non-Jewish staff but also with Jewish Studies teachers to support their professional development. In this role, she receives excellent support from the two headteachers in addition to the SKIP (School *Kodesh* Partner).

The governors are very supportive but as yet, there has not been the opportunity to nominate a link governor to oversee the work of the Jewish Studies department. The school is actively seeking someone to fulfil this role.

The school works well with parents who are overwhelmingly supportive. This is an excellent feature of the school. For example, teaching in *Etz Chaim* is often relevant to children's everyday lives and is followed through by links with the home through homework, support packs for parents and parental workshops on themes such as *Sukkot and Chanukah*. The school is involved also in the SEED Programme and plans to hold a parenting evening taken by the local SEED rabbi, on the theme of *Striking the Balance between Love and Discipline*. A successful Jewish Music programme, 'You and Me Baby' is paid for by the school and taken once a week by a parent.

Members of staff are overwhelmingly supportive of what the school is trying to achieve in Jewish Studies.

Quality of the Jewish curriculum

Grade 2

The quality of the Jewish Studies curriculum is good. It consists of five strands: *Tefillah* (Prayer), Hebrew reading, writing and *Ivrit*, Jewish Way of Life, Jewish Year and *Torah* through the *parshat hashvuah* (the weekly *Torah* portion). The formation of the curriculum has benefited from the input of a team of experts including the SKIP. At its present stage of development the curriculum is generally broad and balanced. The design and development of the Jewish Studies curriculum is from the bottom up i.e. is proceeding upwards from Nursery and then built upon year by year. In its vision for the future, however, the school needs to give thought to what an *Etz Chaim* Year 6 pupil might ideally need to know and

understand by the end of Key Stage 2 before moving on to the next stage of his/her Jewish education.

Although they were not able to observe *Ivrit* being taught, the inspectors were able to judge that the subject makes a good contribution to Jewish Studies.

The school has been innovative in integrating, wherever possible, Jewish and non-Jewish subject areas. In the Early Years, Jewish Studies is not yet embedded fully within the seven Areas of Learning.

Quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Grade 1

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at *Etz Chaim* is outstanding. *Tefillah* (Prayer) fulfils the statutory requirement for collective worship. It is also a very positive Jewish experience in which a love of Judaism shines through when the pupils say *tefillot* (their prayers). Incorporated into the assembly is time for private prayer, when pupils are invited to share a 'please' and a 'thank you.' One child, for example, asked '*Hashem* to help me to read.' Another wanted to thank *Hashem* 'for my mummy and daddy.' Although simple and touching, these elementary, private prayers help to lay a foundation for the children's future understanding of the concept of Jewish prayer. In answering an inspector's question about why we cover our eyes at the start of the *Shema*, one child said: 'we cover our eyes for the *Shema* so we can think.' Spiritual development is reflected also in the school's ILAC programme (I'm Lovable and Capable). This programme enables pupils to set their own class rules based on learning about *Middot* (Jewish values). In the week of the inspection when teaching about the *parsha* (*Torah* portion), the teacher related the act of giving to the *Mishkan* (the Tabernacle in the desert) to the importance of giving of one's best.

Tzedaka (charity) plays a great part in the life of the school. Pupils raise money for both Jewish and non-Jewish causes and consequently become aware of the importance of helping those less fortunate than themselves. The school participates in *Mitzvah* Day by making *Chanukah* decorations for Jewish Old Age homes. It has raised money for Camp *Simcha* and world Jewish relief.

During *Kabbalat Shabbat* (pre-*Shabbat* assembly) older pupils take the lead roles of *abba* (daddy) and *ima* (mummy).

While the school embraces a strong Jewish identity, an area for further development might be a need to consider giving pupils a greater awareness of how people from different cultures can be Jewish. Israeli children in the school, for example, have spoken about their own culture. It would be useful, at a later date, to consider raising pupil's awareness of minority ethnic groups.

The school held successful Jubilee and Olympic events such as a street party and mini Olympics. It held also a successful Grandparents' day. Pupils participated in *matza* baking for *Pesach* and making oil for *Chanukah*. *Etz Chaim* has close ties with Mill Hill Synagogue whose Rabbi is the school's Honorary Principal.

Views of parents and carers

Pikuach invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at *Etz Chaim* School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children. The inspectors received 25 completed questionnaires.

All parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and its Jewish education provision.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement | Description |
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| 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 | Requires Improvement | A school requiring improvement is not 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. |