

# Hasmonean Primary School, London NW4

Inspection report

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LEA	Barnet
Inspection dates	21 <sup>st</sup> – 22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2008
Inspected under the auspices of	Pikuach
Reporting Inspector	Rabbi Geoffrey Shisler
Team Inspector	Mrs Naomi Hollander

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

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Type of School	Mixed Primary	School address	8-10 Shirehall Lane
School category	Voluntary Aided		London NW42PD
Age range of pupils	3-11	Telephone number	0208 202 7704
Number on roll	245	Fax number	0208 202 1605
Date of previous inspection	June 2004	Chair of governors	Mr Jonathan Miller
		Headteacher	Mrs J Rodin

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## Introduction

### Description of the school

Hasmonean Primary School was founded in 1944 by the late Rabbi Dr Solomon Schonfeld as part of the Jewish Secondary Schools Movement in the tradition of *Torah im Derech Eretz* . It was granted Voluntary Aided status in 1995. The school is full and total pupil numbers are 245, 215 in Reception to Year 6, and an additional 30 in the Nursery. Most of the pupils come from families where orthodox Jewish tradition is observed, and *Limmudei Kodesh* accounts for almost 40% of the curriculum time.

The majority of pupils come from the local Jewish communities of Golders Green, Hendon, Hampstead and Finchley, while others come from further away – Edgware, Bushey, Southgate and Wembley.

Extra-curricular *Limmudei Kodesh* for the Juniors, in the form of additional lessons after school, and on Sunday mornings further enhance the level of Jewish knowledge of the pupils.

### Key for inspection grades

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

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## Overall effectiveness of its provision for Jewish education

The school's main strengths lie in:

- \*A strong Jewish ethos that permeates every aspect of school life.
- \*Clear commitment of Head of Department and staff and support of Head Teacher, Principal and Governors.
- \*Strong professional leadership.
- \*Excellent standards of Hebrew reading achieved by most pupils.
- \*The personal development and well-being of all pupils which are a priority in the school.
- \*The pupils' enjoyment of *Limmudei Kodesh*.
- \*Outstanding systems in place for base-line assessments and SATS in *Limmudei Kodesh*.

The weaknesses are:

- \*There is still no SENCO for *Limmudei Kodesh*.
- \*Insufficient differentiation in many of the classes observed.
- \*Little or no use of ICT.
- \*Style of lesson plans not standardised throughout the staff.

There are no key issues, but the school should take note of the points raised in the body of the report.

### Grade: 1

## Effectiveness and Foundation Stage

The quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. The arrangement of the room is conducive to both small group learning and play activities. The ratio of staff to pupils is good, ensuring that the children are nurtured and cared for in an atmosphere of warmth and love.

In the Nursery, children learn to recognise Hebrew letters and play a variety of games, helping them to learn how to identify different

sounds. In one lesson observed, the life of Rabbi Akivah was told using puppets to bring the story to life.

Children sing lots of songs, in both Hebrew and English. They have a totally integrated day, as the *Kodesh* teacher is present all the time, and planning is undertaken jointly with the secular class teachers.

The Interactive White Board is used extensively for *Limmudei Kodesh* and health and safety issues are given constant attention.

Grade: 1

## **Achievement and standards**

Achievement and standards on the whole are excellent. Pupils with learning difficulties are well identified, but there were lessons which inspectors observed in which there was insufficient differentiated work available.

The standard of Hebrew reading is outstanding overall, and the majority of pupils leave the school able to read and write fluently. The school is to be congratulated on its achievements in this area.

Hebrew Grammar is taught throughout the school, commencing in KS1 and a variety of strategies was observed to help pupils learn the fundamental building blocks of the Hebrew language. The emphasis on Hebrew Grammar is a great strength of the provision of *Limmudei Kodesh*, and a major factor in the high standards achieved in the study of Hebrew texts, even in the lower ability groups.

*Mishnah* is taught at KS2 to all ability groups and in after-school lessons, pupils are introduced to *Gemarah*.

The majority of pupils leave the school with an excellent knowledge of the beliefs and practices of Judaism, a very good grasp of the handling of texts and are imbued with a love of learning.

**Grade: 1**

## Personal development and well-being

The school provides many opportunities for pupils to live and practise as fully observant Jews. It has very happy environment and children are polite and well-behaved.

Pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development are well catered for. The daily acts of collective worship comply fully with the requirements of the relevant Education Acts. The response of pupils to them is excellent and, in all *Tephillah* sessions observed, both at KS1 and KS2, children participated with enthusiasm and competence. Although *Tephillah* is taught as part of the curriculum, the *Tephillah* assembly sessions are also used as a medium for teaching; in some observed, the *Davening* was interrupted to explain the meaning of what the children were saying.

Year 6 pupils prepare *Leining* and deliver *Divrei Torah* in front of the school and all pupils are given opportunities to present playlets, songs and poems at appropriate assemblies.

There are well-established monthly *Ovos Uvonim* sessions so that parents may come to school to learn with their children, and this is becoming ever more popular. An annual *Melave Malka* is held for pupils from Years 5 and 6, as are *Siyumim* when a class has reached a significant point in its learning. *Shabbatonim* are held away from school so as to provide opportunities for children to learn independence.

**Grade: 1**

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## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

The inspectors agree with the school's view that overall, teaching is 'Good.' All lessons observed were at least satisfactory and most good, some with outstanding features. Members of staff are excellent role models and conduct themselves in a professional manner. They are all deeply committed to the pupils and the school.

Teachers show enthusiasm for their subject and have high expectations for pupils' work and behaviour. A variety of incentives is employed to encourage the pupils towards a love of Torah and learning. Regular assessments are made of pupils' work which are used to inform future planning of lessons.

Displays of *Limmudei Kodesh*, both around the school and in classrooms, are vibrant and child-centred, creating an atmosphere conducive to learning and teaching.

*Limmudei Kodesh* and *Limmudei Chol* teachers work together as a team in many areas of the curriculum. The concepts of good *Middos* and *Chessed* are frequently reinforced, and parents are strongly encouraged to be involved in their children's learning by regularly listening to their children's Hebrew reading for homework, listening to *Divrei Torah*, taking part in the monthly *Ovos Uvonim* programme, and open mornings, and similar activities. Interactive white boards are used effectively by some teachers, but differentiated work needs to be developed further, and evidence for this should figure in teachers' lesson plans.

Lesson plans seen by the Inspectors were of a very variable quality. Some were merely indications of the particular verse to be learnt, with no indication of lesson progression, materials to be used, etc, whilst others were of a high standard. Some members of staff clearly do not know how to plan a lesson effectively, and the school needs to standardise the style of lesson plans.

The school itself has highlighted the continuing need to appoint a SENCO, and this would ensure that children at both ends of the SEN spectrum receive maximum support.

**Grade: 2**

### **Curriculum and other activities**

The quality and range of subjects taught is excellent. However, at the present time, although the curriculum for KS1 is well-developed, there is not, as yet, a whole school curriculum, although much work has been done which could lead to the creation of one.

A great emphasis is placed on ensuring that pupils obtain a thorough grasp of Hebrew Grammar right from KS1, which lays excellent and firm foundations which enable pupils to progress in all areas of their studies of Jewish texts. Excellent examples of flash cards and wall charts were observed in use, and individual members of staff are to be highly commended for their innovative and imaginative work in this area. There is good integration with secular studies, combining the intellectual, social and spiritual growth of the pupils with a love of Judaism.

The school places great emphasis on the skill of Hebrew reading, which begins in the Foundation Stage. A Year 5 *Chumash* lesson was observed, which commenced with Hebrew reading from *Tehillim*. The benefits of this are twofold, in that the children are introduced to the Book of *Tehillim*, and at the same time enhance their reading skills.

Pupils gain a love of learning and confidence in their achievements as they progress through the school.

Extra-curricular activities including visits to old-age homes and the promotion of *Tsedakkah*, for non-Jewish as well as Jewish charities, all go towards encouraging children to see themselves as part of the wider world.

**Grade: 1**

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## Care, guidance and support

There is a strong family atmosphere in the school and, as it is a one form entry, members of staff get to know the pupils and their families well. Of the sixty-six parents' questionnaires returned, every one agreed, or agreed strongly that it would be easy to approach the school regarding the Jewish education of their child.

Security and playground supervision are effective and pupils feel safe and secure in the school. They know who they can go to if they have a problem.

**Grade: 1**

## Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the *Limmudei Kodesh* department is outstanding and underpins the school's many strengths. The Head teacher, Principal and Governors are all actively involved in *Limmudei Kodesh* and all work together to ensure that pupils achieve the highest standards.

The enthusiastic head of department provides effective leadership and her observations in the school's SEF demonstrate how well she knows the school and its needs.

She has developed a form of assessment for *Limmudei Kodesh* to bring it in line with the Government's requirements for SATS in secular studies, which is very impressive.

The school is well-aware of its strengths and the areas that need further development. It is therefore well-placed to effect even further improvement.

**Grade: 1**