

HERTSMERE JEWISH PRIMARY SCHOOL

PIKUACH INSPECTION REPORT

Carried out under section 23 of the school Inspections Act (1996)

Its purpose is to report on:

The educational standards achieved in Jewish Studies in the school

The quality of Jewish education provided

The spiritual, moral social and cultural development of pupils at the school

Arrangements for collective worship.

1. INTRODUCTION

Name of school	Hertsmere Jewish Primary School
Type of School	Infant and Junior
Status	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	3-11
Name of Headteacher	Mrs M Bazak
Name of head of Jewish Studies	Mr M Cohen
School address	Watling Street, Radlett, Hertfordshire WD7 7LQ
School telephone number	01923 855857
Name of Chair of Governors	Mr J Arkush
Name of principal religious adviser	Rabbi A Plancey
Name of LEA	Hertfordshire
Name of reporting inspector	Mrs E Korn
Name of team inspector	Mrs L Sher
Date of the inspection	June 12th, 13th 2001 21st, 22nd Sivan, 5761

1.1 Basic information

The Hertesmere Jewish Primary School (HJPS) is a new voluntary aided school established in 1999 to serve the Jewish community of Borehamwood and the surrounding communities of Elstree, Radlet and Bushey. The building was completed in January 2000. The school currently has pupils in the nursery, Reception year and in Key Stage 1. The first cohort of pupils for Key Stage 2 will enter in September 2001. When full, the school will accommodate sixty pupils in every year group to Year 6. The school is under the auspices of the United Synagogue and all pupils are *halachically* Jewish. It enjoys the enthusiastic support of the local Rabbi, the governors, the parents and the community and is already over-subscribed.

At present there are 128 pupils in the reception year and Key Stage 1 and forty five children attend the nursery for mornings only. The socio-economic background of the pupils is above average and the number of pupils with special educational needs is below the average. There are three pupils with statements of educational need and four pupils speak English as their second language. On entry to the nursery, children's spoken language and personal development is generally a little above the average, while their attainment in Jewish Studies is below these standards.

1.2 School data and indicators

Number of full and part time Jewish Studies Teachers	Full time teachers 1 Part time teachers 2 Full time equivalent 2.55
Pupil-teacher ratio for Jewish studies	Key Stage 1 and reception 1:30 Nursery 1:12
Total teaching time per week in Foundation stage	25 per cent of the weekly teaching time
Total teaching time per week in Key Stage 1	25 per cent of the weekly teaching time
Date of Inspection	June 12 th , 13 th 2001 21 st , 22 nd Sivan, 5761

1.3 Record of evidence

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspector days in the school	4
The number of lessons observed	13
The amount of tefillah, and other opportunities for Jewish practice and celebration observed	3 <i>shacharit tefillah</i> sessions, 2 <i>birkat ha'mazon</i> sessions, 6 <i>brachot</i> sessions and
The range and extent of discussions.	Discussions were held with the the Headteacher, The Principal, The Chair of the Governing Body, The Jewish Studies co-ordinator, all Jewish Studies teachers, classroom assistants, pupils and some parents.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 Main Findings

The generally stated aim of the school is to cultivate a strong Jewish identity in its pupils so that they will leave confident and proud of their heritage –builders for future generations- and have the ability to contribute to, and feel part of, the Jewish Community. The provision that the school makes for its Jewish studies and the manner in which the pupils are developing give a strong indication that the school will achieve these aims. Those responsible for the school's leadership have an agreed and clear view of the school's aims but these have not yet been fully and formally documented. Now that the full leadership structure has been established these need to be formalised.

Overall the Hertsmere Jewish Primary School is a school with many strengths and few weaknesses in its provision for Jewish studies. Its strengths have been achieved through care and attention to the appropriateness of all the developments and decisions that have been made. Its shortcomings are mainly related to its lack of long term planning.

This new school has not yet completed the process of identifying standards in all areas of the Jewish Studies curriculum. It has defined these standards for Hebrew reading and writing, using a good system of defining several key learning objectives, attainment benchmarks, for each year group. These are suitably challenging and have been established through considerable ongoing evaluation. It is against these key learning objectives that attainment has been judged for reading and writing. Key learning objectives and expected standards for other areas of the curriculum have not yet been established.

Appropriately the school's priority for learning up to the age of seven is the development of Hebrew reading and to a lesser extent writing. The school is successfully achieving the standards it sets for its pupils in reading and writing for each of the year groups and a few pupils exceed these in Year 1. By the end of the Foundation Stage, the majority of pupils can name all the Hebrew letters, including the final forms. They recognise basic vowels and can blend these with letters. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are word-building lengthy words accurately and with some fluency. In both years of this key stage pupils identify key words that they understand as they read. In Year 2 they also recognise and know the meaning of several common prefixes. The majority of pupils, and in particular higher achievers are well prepared for the study of *Chumash* texts in Key Stage 2. By the end of Year 1 pupils write block letters fluently with good control and the highest achievers write a simple sentence independently. In Year 2 pupils write many letters in script form correctly.

Modern Hebrew (*Ivrit*) is a major focus of the curriculum in Year 1. In this year pupils achieve well and are attaining Level 1 of the National Curriculum for modern foreign languages in speaking, listening and reading and aspects of Level 2 in writing. From the nursery upwards pupils understand and respond to an increasingly complex set of instructions and routines, and they make good progress.

Attainment over the complete curriculum is satisfactory at the end of the Foundation Stage and good at the end of Key Stage 1. Nursery children are developing familiarity with daily and weekly aspects of Jewish living such as the Friday evening home rituals. Reception year children recite many *brachot* confidently. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are familiar with a range of Jewish greetings and symbols and know the numerical value of Hebrew letters using this knowledge to write the date.

Attainment in *Tefillah* is good. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils know many basic *tefillot* of *shacharit* and the meaning of many aspects of the first paragraph of the *shema*. They say

their *tefillot* fluently and most are able to read the prayers accurately. *Ha-motzi and Birkat Hamazon* (prayers before and Grace after meals) are said with respect and motivation.

Pupils throughout the school make good progress in their Jewish learning. By the end of the Foundation Stage children's attainment is satisfactory which represents good achievement and progress from a relatively low base. Pupils continue to make good progress and achieve well throughout Key Stage 1 so that their attainment at the end of Year 2 is good overall. All groups of pupils appear to make similarly good progress. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support and make good progress. The school's policy of providing regular reading homework and *sidra* sheets and the support these receive from the parents is a major contribution to the good progress that all the pupils make.

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and response to Jewish Studies are very good and are a strength of the school. Pupils are enthusiastic and exhibit very positive attitudes towards their learning. They are motivated and interested. They respond very knowledgeably to questioning and answer enthusiastically and intelligently. Pupils enter assembly in an orderly manner. At these times they sit quietly and behave with appropriate decorum and respect, concentrating well as they following the words. Throughout the day in all areas of school life pupils co-operate very well with each other and with adults. They are respectful and polite to each other, demonstrating an ability to be guided by the school's Jewish code of behaviour.

The school complies with the statutory requirements to provide a daily act of worship for all its pupils in Key Stage 1. Collective Worship makes a significant contribution to the schools' aims and ethos. *Tefillah* sessions have a positive impact on the Jewish values and ethos of the school. Planning for *tefilla* is clear. Throughout assembly and the reciting of extracts from the *Shacharit* (morning) prayer there is an appropriate very good atmosphere. Jewish Studies teachers support pupils when they say their prayers in Hebrew enabling them to follow in the *Siddur* (prayer book). The nursery *tefillah* sessions are separate. In all sessions more consideration should be given to providing girls with appropriate role.

Teaching of Jewish Studies is good overall. It is good in the foundation stage and very good in Key Stage 1. All teachers set a good role model for Jewish values. They have a good subject knowledge and activities are innovative to retain pupils' interest and concentration. The work of support staff is planned to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are supported well in lessons.

In the nursery teachers provide a learning environment that actively supports Jewish learning and develop this through discussion and intervention. These teachers welcome children at registration in Hebrew, but in regard to their pronunciation, the role model they set needs to be considered. In the Reception year teachers make the important bridge to Key Stage 1, but retain the practical emphasis appropriate to the age group.

Teachers in Year 1 use a very wide range of activities and they provide their pupils with bright attractive books whereas in comparison in Year 2 worksheets are often mundane. Year 2 teachers provide considerable challenge and original methods of presenting work. They have a very good relationship with the pupils and the pupils respect them.

Teaching of Hebrew language is generally good. Teachers successfully develop children's understanding of commands and instructions from the nursery upwards. They address all language skills in a lesson but there is not sufficient emphasis on spoken language

through role play. Teaching of music to extend pupils' Jewish knowledge is excellent. This teacher has high expectations of behaviour and of musical standards.

Overall the quality of assessment is good. Reading records are well maintained. The school sometimes targets support to individual children selected for social and emotional reasons, reflecting the schools' ethos of caring and *chesed*. There are end of year assessments that feed into informative end of year reports to parents. As the curriculum for Key Stage 2 is defined assessment criteria need to be established.

Monitoring systems are an area that this new school needs to develop. There are no whole school assessment and monitoring systems for Jewish Studies to enable the co-ordinator to maintain an overview of standards and progress. The school does not establish an initial baseline when pupils enter from which it can evaluate the progress of individuals or of cohorts. Nor does it have a satisfactory assessment and tracking system to monitor pupils' progress as they move through the school.

The Jewish Studies curriculum is broad and balanced and appropriate for the needs, interests and abilities of the pupils. It promotes the aims of the school and fosters a love and knowledge of Judaism and the intellectual, social and spiritual growth of the pupils. The curriculum shows breadth across a wide range of subjects while placing importance on Hebrew reading and writing. The school has a Zionist outlook and Israel links into every curriculum area, with a State of Israel focus during the third term.

Jewish Studies is an integral part of the school's provision, approached in a similar manner to the National Curriculum and the Foundation Curriculum. In the nursery the 'stepping stones' of the Early Learning Goals are used to promote the study of Jewish themes. In the Reception Year and in Key Stage 1 planning in Jewish Studies follows the same process and structure as planning for secular subjects. In Year 1, the school uses a lively and interactive commercial programme to teach pupils modern Hebrew and Jewish Festivals. There are very good cross-curricular links between Jewish Studies and areas of the National Curriculum. ICT is used to enhance reading and spelling.

Provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is very good and is a strength of the school. Pupils develop spiritually through very meaningful opportunities for prayer and as a result of the sensitive and enthusiastic way in which the *parashah*, Jewish values, *Torah* and festivals are taught.

The provision that the school makes for pupils' social development, to learn to live together in harmony and show care and concern for each other and their environment is good. The cultural development of the pupils is satisfactory, but needs to be further developed to incorporate customs of various Jewish groups.

The school generally provides equality of opportunity for all of its pupils in lessons, but needs to ensure that in language lessons special needs reading groups are not withdrawn before they have opportunity to participate in the oral sessions.

All staff effectively monitor the personal development of the pupils who feel well supported through the warm and caring relationship of the teachers. Contrary to some parental views, inspection findings are that the school provides a good range of information to its parents who are kept well informed of the curriculum and are encouraged to play an active part in their child's Jewish education. Parents have regular opportunities to discuss their

child's progress in the nursery and there are suitable settling in arrangements from the nursery to the Reception Year.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils generally receive the same level of support as they do in their secular lessons. On occasions when Jewish special needs are identified these are recorded, but the process of writing individual education plan with specified Jewish learning targets does not take place.

This new school has already made some effective links with the community and another similar Jewish school. The Mayor has visited the school on two occasions. The school has developed effective links with the local orthodox Rabbis.

Overall the leadership provided for Jewish Studies is very good. In the short time that the school has been open and the co-ordinator has been appointed the school has made very good progress. The Jewish studies department is well managed and organised. A consistent teaching style has been achieved. Monitoring has been very rigorous and led to the complete restructuring of the curriculum. The curriculum has been defined with clear progression and continuity. During this process careful attention has been paid to child development and to how young children learn and consequently the curriculum is presented appropriately.

The school is now at an important stage in its development as it prepares for its first cohort of Key Stage 2 pupils. The school's vision for this Key Stage has not been recorded nor has it been shared with the parents, who are understandably concerned at this lack of information. There is a lack of forward planning for the development of Key Stage 2 and the projected identification of the learning outcomes for the end of Year 6 need to be established in order to give direction for development. There is a comprehensive Jewish Studies Development Plan. This document requires restructuring to make it focused with clearly identified priorities and measurable success criteria.

The Headteacher is extremely supportive of Jewish studies and has made some good decisions for its development, such as the adoption of an attractive Hebrew scheme. The local rabbi is a familiar figure providing continuous support for senior staff and the wider Jewish curriculum. Governors have overseen the creation of the school and continue to support it well, making good decisions, including very positive financial decisions for the future development of Jewish studies.

A strength of the school is its good number of staff and the commitment and enthusiasm they show. The classroom accommodation is good and the department is well resourced in lessons. However Jewish studies staff do not have a dedicated base for their resources or from which to work. In the Key Stage 1 classroom libraries and in the main school library there are very few books of Jewish interest. Classrooms and corridors are beautifully decorated with displays labelled in English and Hebrew.

2.2 Key issues for action

To further develop this new Jewish School the Governors, Headteacher and Head of Jewish Studies should:-

Produce a Jewish Studies School Improvement Plan with

- Clear priorities for development
- Specific success criteria

Establish its learning outcomes for Key Stage 2 by

- Identifying in broad terms its learning outcomes for the end of Year 6
- Defining the key objectives for each of the year groups in this Key Stage
- Including assessment criteria as the Key Stage 2 curriculum is developed.

Establish monitoring systems so that the Head of Jewish Studies can:-

- Track the progress that each pupil is making
- Identify individual learning targets for pupils
- Share these with parents and pupils.

3. STANDARDS

3.1 Achievement and progress in Jewish studies

Overall attainment is satisfactory at the end of the Foundation Stage and good at the end of Key Stage 1. This judgement is based upon the whole curriculum and learning that the pupils experience.

The school is in the process of establishing attainment benchmarks, key learning objectives, for each age group. These standards have so far been defined for Hebrew reading and writing up to the end of Key Stage 1. These are clear, appropriate and manageable. They are suitably challenging and have been established through considerable ongoing evaluation. It is against these that attainment has been judged for reading and writing. Key learning objectives and expected standards for other areas of the curriculum have not yet been established.

Appropriately the school's priority for learning up to the age of seven is the development of Hebrew reading. A lesser priority is Hebrew writing. The school is successfully achieving the standards it sets for its pupils in reading and writing for each of the year groups and at the time of the inspection a few pupils were starting to exceed these in Year 1.

Attainment in reading at the end of the foundation stage, that is at the end of the reception year, is satisfactory. Children in the reception class can confidently recognise and name each letter of the *aleph bet* including the final letters. They identify the direction of print in Hebrew. They know the sound of each letter, and that vowels influence letter sounds. At present they can blend two vowels with consonants. By the end of the year, if they continue at the rate seen in the inspection, children should achieve the school's objectives of being able to blend vowels with letters.

The attainment of pupils in Year 1 is good. Apart from those with special needs, most pupils have the word-building skills to read two or three syllable words accurately and some are fluent. They recognise several key words and read these fluently. Most pupils write block letters neatly and accurately and independently write their name in Hebrew. Pupils understand simple graded texts and can write missing words into simple sentences. Some pupils are starting to write simple sentences independently.

Attainment in reading and writing in Year 2, at the end of Key Stage 1, is satisfactory. Higher-achieving pupils are currently attaining the schools expectations for this year group. Average and below average pupils should attain these standards by the end of the Key Stage. All pupils, apart from those with special needs, read accurately and with some fluency. Higher achievers have mastered the complexities of the closed syllable in their reading. All pupils can identify key words, words that they understand, as they read, and also several common prefixes. Higher attaining pupils have a wider vocabulary and more

secure knowledge of prefixes and these pupils in particular are well prepared for the study of *Chumash* texts in Key Stage 2. All pupils write many letters in script form correctly.

Attainment in other areas of the curriculum, 'The Jewish way of Living' and the weekly *Torah* reading is satisfactory at the end of the foundation stage. Nursery children are developing familiarity with the structure of the traditional Friday meal and its accompanying rituals. They can discuss this with confidence and with a sense of enjoyment. They are not as familiar with aspects such as preparations for Shabbat. They name basic Jewish objects such as *mezuzah* and *Torah*. In the reception year children recite many *brachot* in their daily routines. They can confidently give correct reasons to differentiate the *brachot* for the fruit and vegetables they eat. In lessons children recognise and respond to basic commands given in Hebrew.

By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are attaining well in some aspects of their learning. Pupils in Year 2 are familiar with a range of Jewish greetings and symbols. They can confidently state the numerical value of Hebrew letters and use this knowledge to write the date. They have a satisfactory knowledge of the main elements of many *parshiot* and festivals. They are starting to understand the structure of the *Torah* and use Hebrew words in this context confidently. They recognise instructions given in Hebrew.

In Year 1 pupils learn modern Hebrew. They are achieving Level 1 of the National Curriculum for modern foreign languages in speaking, reading and writing. Pupils reply to simple questions slowly, in whole sentences, and are able to select the appropriate gender form of the verb. They understand a simple dialogue and can express their likes and dislikes. All pupils have some knowledge of the weekly *parshah* and higher attaining pupils sequence the main incidents. In this context they name the current *sefer* and know the meaning of *Bamidbar*.

Attainment in *Tefillah* is good. At the end of the Foundation Stage children are familiar with many *brachot* and say them clearly. They know how to wash their hands in the ritual manner before *hamotzi*. In assembly, reception children sing and many are able to point to the words in their *siddurim*. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are familiar with many *brachot*, and sing several sections of *Birkat Hamazon*, following the words carefully. They know many basic *tefillot* of *shacharit* and the meaning of many aspects of the first paragraph of the *Shema*.

Pupils throughout the school make good progress in their Jewish learning. Children enter the nursery with less than average Jewish knowledge. By the end of the Foundation Stage children's attainment is satisfactory. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout Key Stage 1. Their attainment at the end of the Key Stage is good overall. In both key stages pupils achieve well.

All groups of pupils appear to make similarly good progress. In lessons there was no obvious difference in attainment between girls and boys although in Year 2 the two higher achievers selected for reading were both boys. This was not the case in Year 1. Pupils with considerable support from home tend to be within the higher attaining groups, but this is not exclusively so. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support and make good progress. Younger pupils in the year groups make similarly good progress to older members of the class.

The school's policy of providing regular reading homework and *parashah* sheets and the support these receive from the parents, is a major contribution to the good progress that all the pupils make. The wider school curriculum also has a positive effect on pupils' progress.

For example, in ICT lessons pupils practice their skills of changing fonts and colours as they draw Hebrew letters and in music lessons many songs support the Jewish curriculum.

3.2 Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and response to Jewish studies

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and response to Jewish Studies is very good and is a strength of the school. In Jewish Studies lessons pupils are enthusiastic and exhibit very positive attitudes towards their learning. In discussions pupils indicate that they have a very positive attitude to Jewish Studies and that they enjoy the lessons and the practises of the school.

Throughout the school from the nursery and reception to Year 2, pupils' responses to Jewish Studies are mainly good and sometimes very good or excellent. Pupils are motivated and interested in lessons. They are able to concentrate for sustained periods of time remaining focused on their tasks. They respond very knowledgeably to questioning and answer enthusiastically and intelligently. At times when religious rituals take some time to perform, such as when all the class wash hands before saying *hamotzi*, pupils respond well and responsibly. They carry out the ritual washing carefully and purposefully and most sit still and wait patiently, in silence, for their colleagues before reciting the *brachah* for bread in unison.

Pupils co-operate very well with each other and with adults in all areas of school life. They are respectful and polite to each other. They are particularly mindful of the feelings of others, recognising and celebrating each other's achievements. Youngest pupils are able to take responsibility for themselves and make choices when necessary

All the lessons observed were orderly. Pupils behave very well during lessons and excellently in assemblies. Pupils' behaviour both inside and outside the classroom is very good. They display excellent *derech erez* (respect) towards visitors and teachers. They are polite, friendly and responsive to visitors. Classes line up in a quiet and orderly manner. They are patient and wait quietly when necessary. They take care of their outside environment and displays on the walls and make very good use of the facilities provided for them. The pupils are aware of the school rules, and have ownership of them. Their behaviour and relationships demonstrate an ability to be guided by the school's Jewish code of behaviour. This is reinforced by what they learn in their Jewish Studies lessons and by the role models provided by all the adults around them.

3.2 Collective worship – tefillah

The school complies with the statutory requirements to provide a daily act of worship for all its pupils in Key Stage 1. Collective worship makes a significant contribution to the schools' aims and ethos. *Tefillah* (prayer) sessions have a positive impact on the Jewish values and ethos of the school. All classes begin their day with classroom *tefillot* (prayers) On designated days, the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception) classes pray together and all the Key Stage 1 classes pray together. This ensures the *tefilla* sessions are age-appropriate and meaningful. On other days the reception children join the Key Stage 1 pupils for assembly and the nursery have several *tefillah* sessions, each with a small group of children.

The school has been in existence for almost two years. The Jewish Studies Co-ordinator has been in post since September 2000 and a Collective Worship Policy has not yet been

formulated. However, medium term plans for *tefillah* are clear and well thought through for the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

At all times during collective worship there is a very good atmosphere. The pupils come in an orderly manner and sit quietly. They behave with appropriate decorum and respect.

In the Foundation Stage assembly all pupils participate enthusiastically. They are able to identify *tefillot* as their teachers sensitively prompt them. The singing and participation of the pupils is moving and there is a strong spiritual element to the prayer sessions as they and their teachers sing the prayers together. Age-appropriate *siddurim* are provided for pupils, so that children in the reception class are able to follow the *tefillot* pointing at the words accurately. Jewish Studies teachers support pupils when they say their prayers in Hebrew enabling them to follow in the *Siddur* (prayer book). Very good oral feedback encourages the pupils to pray with enthusiasm and respect.

The Key Stage 1 pupils concentrate well throughout. They say their *tefillot* fluently and most are able to read the prayers accurately. They answer questions related to their *tefillot* with confidence. The children do not use a *siddur*, however a child points effectively to relevant and appropriate posters in the hall. The assembly is attended by the Head teacher and the Religious Studies staff who all participate in the prayers, which are said at a pace that enables all the pupils to participate. The use of music adds to the spirituality of the experience and a thought for the day would enhance the proceedings further.

Hamotzi and Birkat Hamazon (prayers before and Grace after Meals) are said with respect and motivation. The pupils understand what they are saying and why they are saying it. They are always well-behaved during these periods and *brachot* and *Birkat Hamazon* are an integral part of the school's daily life.

In the nursery on most days *tefillot* are said in class groups. In the nursery class observed the consistent approach to a modern Hebrew accent used in the rest of the school was not followed. Nursery teachers need to pay careful attention to pronouncing the Hebrew words correctly and using the school's style of pronunciation.

4. QUALITY OF JEWISH EDUCATION

4.1. Teaching

Teaching is good overall. It is good in the foundation stage and very good in Key Stage 1.

All teachers set a good role model for Jewish values, reflecting the ethos of caring for others and caring for Jewish values. They show respect and listen carefully to the responses of pupils and pupils appreciate this by responding well and working hard. They show respect for prayer books and help pupils to behave similarly

All teachers plan lessons well, in a consistent style, with appropriately challenging clearly defined learning objectives. Resources are always ready. Changes in tasks are managed well so that no time is lost. They make good use of the available computers and use bright software appropriate to the ages of the pupils and the curriculum. There is a good pace to all lessons and activities are innovative to retain pupils' interest and concentration

.Most teachers in the foundation stage have a very secure understanding of how young children learn and they plan their lessons accordingly. In the nursery teachers successfully integrate Jewish studies into their daily learning towards achieving the secular Early Learning Goals. They provide jigsaws with Jewish themes which leads to discussion and

learning and there are bookshelves dedicated to books of Jewish interest for children to browse through. In the domestic home play area they encourage role play with a Jewish interest by providing appropriate artefacts. An addition would be a *mezuzah* for the doorway to the 'home corner'. This would extend learning, as children readily identify the real *mezuzah* on the classroom door. *Tefillah* is used as an opportunity for personal development. Children are encouraged to lead the proceedings and they are known at that time as 'the rabbi.' Children are welcomed at registration in Hebrew.

Teachers in the reception year are starting to make the important bridge to Key Stage 1 teaching, but retain the practical emphasis appropriate to the age group. They mainly have good methods for managing children. They plan their lessons into three elements, an introduction, a practical activity when children work in groups and a conclusion when all the class are together. When teaching *brachot* they make good use of real and imitation foods in the introduction, making the situation and the learning as real as possible. However the follow-up practical tasks set for children tend to be over-complex. When teaching letters and vowels the practical part of the lesson is taught very successfully using a range of methods including tactile and visual experiences to create real and not superficial learning. In these reading lessons it is the introductions that are not always as clear as they should be and teachers do not dwell sufficiently on the new learning to take place, and focus children for the task. The conclusion of the lesson is invariably well used to draw together children's learning.

Teachers in Key Stage 1 have very good subject knowledge. This is used very well, for example by explaining the roots of Hebrew words they prepare older pupils for the study of *chumash* texts. Teachers of the oldest class tend to under utilise the English skills of their pupils for gathering information and also for recording and reflecting on their work. In contrast, when directly class teaching and in discussions the same Year 2 teachers provide considerable challenge and original methods of presenting work that holds their pupils' interest. *Parshiot* are also explained well to younger pupils who are provided with a range of activities. These pupils use bright attractive books but in Year 2 worksheets are often mundane in comparison, and tend to lack an open ended challenge. In previous work over the year there was not a noticeable difference between higher and average attaining pupils, nor was all the work marked or a context provided. The provision of constructive written feedback needs to be further considered as a tool for moving pupils learning forward. and to help pupils reflect on previous learning.

Teaching of Hebrew language is generally good. It is achieved through the use of dual languages, English and Hebrew. Teachers successfully develop children's understanding of routines and instructions from the nursery upwards. In the dedicated language lessons they use a range of methods such as themselves participating in role play, mine, tapes, flash cards and discussion. They address all language skills in a lesson but there is not sufficient emphasis on role play for pupils during the group work sessions.

The work of support staff is well planned. These staff are frequently used to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are supported well in lessons. Work specific to special needs and low-ability pupils is usually provided and invariably there is an adult at their side to help them integrate and participate in the lesson. On occasions teachers establish withdrawal groups so that pupils with special needs can work as a small group, particularly when reading is the learning objective.

Teachers set homework consistently and to good effect. Reading homework differs for the ability range. There is a *parashah* sheet that provides points of discussion to reinforce work undertaken at school.

Teaching of music to extend pupils Jewish knowledge is excellent and makes a significant contribution to the pupils experience of Judaism. The lessons are inspiring and enable pupils to participate with obvious enjoyment. The music teacher has high expectations of behaviour and of musical standards. The background of the songs are explained, many of which are in the Shabbat services and the context in which they are to be performed. During the inspection pupils were preparing for their *Chagigat H'asiddur* when Year 1 pupils receive from their parents a *siddur*, a considerable milestone in their learning and development. The teacher in these lessons created in all the pupils the appropriate air of excitement and pride in their Jewish learning.

4.2 Assessment

Overall the quality of assessment is good. Reading records are well-maintained and are informative with analysis of each pupil's progress. There are class targets for reading and writing. These are appropriately challenging but are not shared with the parents. The school is starting to identify and target individual children, providing additional support, primarily using information from lessons. Sometimes pupils are selected for social and emotional reasons, and reflect the schools' ethos of caring and *chesed*.

Records are kept of pupils' general performance. These are mainly accurate and are used to place pupils into groups. The school analyses some pieces of pupils' work in detail to provide a summative end of year assessment. These are the sources of evidence for the detailed end of year report to parents. Not all assessed work is dated or related to the learning objectives of the year group, and this limits its effectiveness as a tool for monitoring progress. Assessment criteria need to be established as the Key Stage 2 curriculum is planned.

Monitoring systems are an area that this new school needs to develop.. There are no whole school assessment and monitoring systems for Jewish Studies so that the co-ordinator can maintain his overview of standards and progress. The school does not establish an initial baseline when pupils enter from which it can evaluate the progress of individuals or of cohorts. Nor does it have a satisfactory assessment and tracking system to monitor pupils' progress as they move through the school. Progress is considered on whole class terms. Target setting for individuals or groups of pupils has not yet been established to identify the individual's needs in order to move forward.

4.3 Quality and range of the curriculum

The Jewish Studies curriculum is broad and balanced and appropriate for the needs, interests and abilities of the pupils. It promotes the aims of the school and fosters a love and knowledge of Judaism. The curriculum promotes the intellectual, social and spiritual growth of the pupils.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and is appropriate to the needs and interests of the pupils. It shows breadth across a wide range of subjects while placing importance on Hebrew reading and writing.

The Jewish Studies curriculum covers four main areas each containing sub areas. These are **Torah**, incorporating *sidra*, *chumash* and oral law (*mishna* and *halachic* sources), **Jewish Living** (*tefilla*, theme projects on the Jewish way of life and the Jewish calendar)

Hebrew (reading, writing and language including vocabulary, speech and comprehension), **Jewish history**, (links to all areas of the curriculum and the history of the land and people of Israel, modern and biblical – with an emphasis on key characters and periods). As the school has a Zionist outlook, Israel links into every curriculum area, with a State of Israel focus during the third term.

In Year 1, the *Tal Am* programme focuses on the learning of Hebrew letters and vowels. This lively and interactive programme makes use of a variety of activities to teach pupils *Ivrit* and Jewish Festivals. The *Tal Am* programme provides the pupils with a foundation for learning classical Hebrew and *Chumash*

In Year 2 there are excellent strategies being used to teach the children to form their letters in Hebrew script. However, this area of their learning would be further enhanced if pupils were encouraged to write familiar words independently in Hebrew whenever possible.

In the nursery, the curriculum is integrated with Jewish Studies wherever possible. Teachers exploit opportunities to use the stepping stones of the Early Learning Goals to promote the study of Jewish themes. These include making clay candlesticks for *Shabbat* and carrying out observations of candles burning and encouraging the children to use words to describe what they see. Pupils have opportunities to play imaginatively in specially prepared environments such as the synagogue, the Jewish home and Jewish festivals. Many displays in the nursery depict Jewish themes and festivals including a poster of children reading Hebrew books inviting the children into the Book Corner. The nursery resources include puzzles of Jewish interest and religious sites in Israel e.g. the *kottel*. The curriculum includes opportunities for pupils to learn about and to celebrate significant events related to the State of Israel.

In the reception class, pupils spend one hour and 5 minutes per day on Jewish Studies. In Year 1 pupils spend one hour and 15 minutes on Jewish Studies and in Year 2 they spend 1 hour and 20 minutes per day on Jewish Studies. The lessons take place at different times depending on the day of the week. Times are carefully thought through and are fairly distributed throughout the week.

In the Reception Year and in Key Stage 1 planning in Jewish Studies, follows the same process and structure as planning for secular subjects with a Matrix for the yearly plans, medium plans for every half term and weekly short-term plans. Topic areas are progressively planned for the different year groups for the teaching of prayer, Hebrew, the Jewish Year, reading, Jewish Living; however the plans for the different *parshiot* are not yet complete. The school is following its planned curriculum in Jewish Studies lessons.

There is evidence of planned differentiation of work to three attainment levels. In addition there is planning for pupils with special educational needs to receive a great deal of support from teachers and classroom assistants so that they have full access during Jewish Studies lessons.

There is very good evidence of cross-curricular links between Jewish Studies and other areas of the National Curriculum, such as, English, science, mathematics, ICT, art, music, history, geography, design and technology, dance and drama. These links are evident in the many outstanding displays on the walls and in excellent music and dance lessons observed. ICT is used to enhance reading and spelling.

Homework is carefully thought through in the reception year and in Key Stage 1 and is designed to actively involve parents in their children's Jewish Studies lessons and to consolidate work learned in the classroom.

4.5 Pupils' moral, spiritual, social and cultural development

Provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is very good and is a strength of the school. The school promotes the pupils' spiritual and moral development by effectively developing a school culture which is deeply concerned with the importance of being respectful to all people and where the adults in the school are very good role models for the children. All members of staff are committed to the school ethos. The Jewish Studies curriculum has a great impact on and permeates through all aspects of school life. The children know right from wrong and this is reflected in their relationships with all members of the school community. The children are constantly reminded of the school's values of concern for others.

The school provides very good opportunities for the pupils to develop spiritually. This is achieved through the very carefully thought through and therefore very meaningful opportunities for prayer and as a result of the sensitive and enthusiastic way in which the *parasha*, Jewish values, *Torah* and festivals are taught.

The provision that the school makes for pupils to social development, to learn to live together in harmony and show care and concern for each other and their environment is good. Provision for Jewish cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils learn well about their own culture and traditions. However, the Jewish cultural development of the pupils needs to be further developed, so that within the context of the Jewish Studies curriculum children learn about the customs of other Jewish groups such as Sephardic Jews and Chasidic Jews.

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

The school provides equality of opportunity for all of its pupils in lessons. Most able pupils are identified and provided with a suitable additional challenge. Pupils with identified special needs are all included although at times some of these pupils are withdrawn in Year 1 for additional reading too early, and at these times they do not participate in the oral session of the language lessons. These pupils should be withdrawn after the oral session and before the reading and writing tasks take place.

The school kitchen meets the highest *kashrut* standards and there is a lift to the upper floor of the building for pupils with physical disabilities.

Opportunities for boys are more noticeable during tefillah and the school should endeavour to minimise these differences when appropriate. At times suitable roles are found for girls during *tefillah*, such as pointing to the words of the tefillot, but girls do not say a *brachah* at *tefillah* to match with the *brachah* for *tzitzit* recited by boys. In the nursery boys lead the service and other opportunities for leadership and prominence are frequently not given to the girls.

4.6 Impact of support, guidance and welfare on pupils' Jewish education and development

The relationship between teachers and pupils is warm and caring and the emotional support provided for pupils is good. Pupils feel well supported and are able to ask questions safely without embarrassment. The school provides a satisfactorily safe and secure physical environment for its pupils. However in the early mornings before the pupils

arrive at school and in the late afternoons after they have left, the front gate is unguarded and left open. This could be a safety risk.

Positive guidance is provided for pupils and parents regarding Jewish observance. The Head Teacher, Head of Jewish Studies and all the Jewish Studies teachers are sensitive to the various levels of observance of the pupils. Every effort is made to support parents by providing them with guidance on how to help their children with their Jewish Studies homework and through termly meetings about the curriculum to be covered and weekly newsletters.

The Head Teacher, the Head of Jewish Studies and the Jewish Studies teachers play an effective role in monitoring the personal development of the pupils, but no policy for monitoring pupils' personal development is yet in place.

The Head Teacher holds a weekly 'surgery' for parents providing counselling for them which is sympathetic to Jewish beliefs.

Suitable information and settling in procedures keep parents well informed as pupils move from the nursery into the reception classes. The school has not had any children in Key Stage 2 and as the school expands and pupils move into the first class of Key Stage 2 the school has made provision for keeping parents informed of the changes they can expect.

4.7 Provision for pupils with special educational needs

The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. In all classes there is additional support provided to ensure that they are included. Support staff are informed before lessons of their role so that their work is well-focused. Pupils generally receive a similar level of support as they do in their secular lessons, in the same manner, frequently from the same member of staff. Support staff are more involved with the decisions relating to pupils work in secular studies than in Jewish studies.

Jewish studies staff are familiar with the special needs of pupils identified in the secular school and with their individual educational plans and the targets that are set. These are supported well in Jewish studies lessons. Special Educational Needs in Jewish studies are occasionally identified, and these are recorded, but Jewish studies staff do not complete the process by writing an individual education plan with specified Jewish learning targets.

4.8 Partnership with parents and the Jewish community

Eighteen parents attended the parents' meeting. There was, however, a high return of questionnaires.(91), giving high approval rates to many questions. Most parents indicated that the school gives children a good understanding of Jewish values(97%) and that the school encourages high standards in Jewish Studies(96%). 95% of parents feel that their child enjoys Jewish Studies. 93% of parents feel that the school encourages families to play an active part in the school's Jewish life. 91% of the questionnaires indicate that their child enjoys collective worship/*tefilla*. 84% said that they find it easy to approach the school with any questions or problems about their child's Jewish education. 80% of parents are satisfied with the amount and range of work in Jewish studies that their child has to do at home and. 75% feel that the school has helpful links with the wider Jewish community. 68% of parents feel that the school responds well to diversity in Jewish culture. 51% of parents feel that the school provides a good range of Jewish extracurricular activities, visits and special events.

The questionnaire returns show that a substantial minority of parents feel that the school does not provide a good range of Jewish extra-curricular activities, visits and special events. The children are not yet in Key Stage 2 and the school should be able to address this area of provision as the age of the children grows. The questionnaires also indicate that some parents do not feel that the school responds well to the diversity in Jewish culture. This is an area that the inspection findings indicate needs to be further developed.

Close links are maintained between the school and the parents. Contrary to parental views, inspection findings are that the school provides a good range of information to its parents. Parents are kept well informed of the curriculum and are encouraged to play an active part in their child's Jewish education. There are termly curriculum meetings held to explain the curriculum to parents. In addition, a weekly news-letter describes what pupils have been learning and offers suggestions to parents, helping them to consolidate their children's learning. There is a Home-School Agreement in which both secular and Jewish Studies staff participate

The school has a very active PTA which organises many fund raising functions as well as education evenings for parents. The PTA provides refreshments for parents and children whenever functions such as a model *Seder* or *Chagigat Ha'Siddur* are held in the school.

A minority of parents do not find it easy to approach the school with any questions or problems about their child's Jewish education. A parents' meeting to further explain aspects of the Jewish Studies curriculum may help to clarify these parental concerns.

The nursery school encourages parents to attend the *kabbalat shabbat* ceremony in which their child is participating. Parents are informed well in advance about this ceremony to enable them to make the necessary arrangements to attend. Parents make *chanukiot* (a candelabra) with their child in preparation for the festival of *Chanuka*. The nursery teachers are kept informed about the needs of new children entering the nursery through the completion of a child profile by parents or carers. Parents have regular opportunities to discuss their child's progress in the nursery and they are kept well informed of the curriculum through the school weekly news-letter.

The school has some links with other schools. A neighbouring Jewish school visited the school for a combined *Tu b'Shvat* tree planting ceremony, and a non-Jewish school visited. The Mayor has visited the school on two occasions and recently between 1000 and 1500 Hertfordshire school pupils attended an exhibition hosted by the school to enlighten the general community about Jewish practices.

L I F T (Learning is Fun Together) workshops about Jewish Festivals and songs are held to encourage and support parents so that they can play an active part in their child's education.

The school's religious advisor(principal) is a member of the governing body and he makes a significant and important contribution to the school. The school has developed effective links with the Rabbis of the orthodox synagogues whose communities include families at the school. The Rabbis participate in many school events and are involved in the school.

5.MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL AND THEIR IMPACT ON JEWISH EDUCATION

5.1 Management

Overall the leadership provided for Jewish Studies is very good. The Headteacher is extremely supportive of Jewish studies and has made some good decisions for its development, such as the adoption of an attractive Hebrew scheme. The local rabbi is a familiar figure providing continuous support for senior staff and the wider Jewish curriculum. Governors have overseen the creation of the school and continue to support it well, making good decisions, including very positive financial decisions for the future development of Jewish studies.

In the short time that the school has been open and the co-ordinator has been appointed the school has made very good progress. The Jewish studies department is well managed and organised and staff are well led. The co-ordinator's philosophy has been shared with staff and a consistent teaching style has been achieved. The curriculum has been defined with clear progression and continuity from nursery to Year 2. During this process careful attention has been paid to child development and to how young children learn and consequently the curriculum is presented appropriately.

The co-ordinator monitors and evaluates the education provided and in conjunction with the Headteacher decisions are made. Monitoring has been very rigorous and has led to the complete restructuring of the curriculum. An outcome of these evaluations and discussions are the learning objectives for reading and writing.

The governing body and the senior managers of the school now need to address the longer-term needs of the school. They share similar views, aims and aspirations for the school, and these need to be formalised and fully documented. The school is presently at an important stage in its development as it prepares for its first cohort of Key Stage 2 pupils. The school's vision for this Key Stage has not been recorded nor has it been shared with the parents, who are understandably concerned at this lack of information.

There is a lack of recorded forward planning for the development of Key Stage 2 and the projected identification of the learning outcomes for the end of Year 6. Without these there is insufficient direction for development and at present very little planning for Key Stage 2 exists. This is now essential. The Jewish Studies staff is to increase to nearly double in the next year and new teachers will not be able to plan efficiently without a structure to guide them.

There is a comprehensive Jewish Studies Development Plan. This document requires restructuring to make it focused with clearly identified priorities and measurable success criteria. The establishment of such a plan would support the co-ordinator as he leads the subject forward and enable the Headteacher and particularly the governors to increase their monitoring role of the school's progress.

5.2. Staffing, resources for learning and accommodation

A strength of the school is the commitment and enthusiasm of the staff. The number, qualifications and experience of the teachers to the demands of the Jewish Studies curriculum is good. The Jewish Studies Department consists of the Head of Jewish Studies who is a qualified teacher and has a Masters degree. He has a full-time position. There are two part-time teachers, one of whom has Qualified Teacher Status. All the teachers are experienced and have very good subject knowledge. The teachers are all very good role models for the pupils who often express their respect and admiration for their teachers. This is confirmed by the parents who feel that the teachers enthuse the pupils.

The match of the number, qualifications and experience of support staff to the demands of the Jewish Studies curriculum is good. Pupils of all attainment levels receive good support in Jewish Studies lessons.

The arrangements for the professional development of the Jewish Studies staff is satisfactory. There are regular departmental meetings to discuss curriculum and teaching and at these times staff receive considerable in-service training from the co-ordinator, who has attended a number of courses since his employment began at the school in September 2000. In addition good internal support is provided for the Newly Qualified Teacher, who has not had opportunity to attend any induction courses. The Jewish Studies staff have all attended Performance Management in-service training and training in Stress Management.

The classroom accommodation used to effectively deliver the Jewish Studies curriculum is good. However there is insufficient accommodation provided for Jewish Studies teachers to store their resources and to prepare their lessons.

The Jewish Studies department is satisfactorily resourced with many posters, music and singing cassettes, work-books, reading books and visual aids. Some of these are the support materials provided with the *Tal Am* Programme. Age-appropriate *Siddurim* (prayer books) are used by the pupils in the Foundation Stage with colourful posters being used by the older classes for *tefilla*. The Nursery contains a sufficient number of books of Jewish interest for young children, however in the Key Stage 1 classrooms and in the library there are very few books of Jewish interest. Classrooms and corridors are beautifully decorated with displays which contain pupils' work. All displays are labelled and contain captions in English and Hebrew. This demonstrates that the school effectively integrates its Religious Studies and secular curriculum. The school has recently acquired an attractive range of software for the computers and this is used effectively for the teaching of Hebrew reading and spelling.

The effectiveness with which the school plans for the deployment of Jewish education staff, resources and finance is good with the Governors having made a positive decision to finance the deployment of the best Jewish Studies teachers and resources.