

JFS

Inspection report

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| LEA | Brent |
| Inspection dates | 3 – 4 April 2006 |
| Reporting inspector | Rev Michael Binstock |
| Team inspector | Mr Jeffrey Leader |

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

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| Type of School | Comprehensive | School address | The Mall |
| School category | Voluntary aided | | Kenton |
| Age range of students | 11 - 18 | | Middlesex HA3 9TE |
| Gender of students | Mixed | Telephone number | 0208 206 3100 |
| Number on roll | 1880 | Fax number | 0208 206 3101 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Mr Russell Kett |
| Date of previous inspection | 9 – 13 Nov 1998 | Headteacher | Dame Ruth Robins DBE |

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Introduction

Description of the school

JFS was established in 1732 and is the largest Jewish comprehensive school in Europe with almost 1900 students on roll including 500 in the Sixth Form. The school was previously based in Camden Town for over forty years, and it relocated to Kenton in 2002. JFS is an orthodox school and the Foundation Body is the United Synagogue. Its students are all halachically Jewish and are drawn from a wide religious spectrum, including those from a wide range of Jewish and non-Jewish primary schools. The levels of attainment of the students' Jewish knowledge and religious observance are diverse. Approximately 5% speak Hebrew as their first language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of its provision for Jewish education

JFS is an outstanding school with the determination and capacity to continue to improve its provision for Jewish education. It knows itself well and takes effective action which improves the academic and personal successes of the students.

The management structure that drives the JE (Jewish Education) department is outstanding and provides strong professional leadership so that teachers feel well supported and are given every help and encouragement to improve. Teaching and learning are very good and teachers relate to students in a most positive way and treat them with respect. Teachers have very secure Jewish subject knowledge and are very good role models. However, there is inconsistency in the quality of marking.

Most students, including those with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress throughout the school. The excellent results achieved in the Religious Studies and *Ivrit* (Modern Hebrew) examinations over the past two years show a trend of continued improvement.

The Jewish Studies curriculum is very good and the range of informal activities is outstanding. In meetings and discussions with a representative sample of students, very positive views were expressed that indicate they enjoy their Jewish Studies and feel secure in the school. They appreciate the high level of care, guidance and support that is available to them. Another significant strength is the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students. Students' behaviour is very good and admirably reflects the Jewish values and ethos of the school.

Grade: 1

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

The recent Ofsted inspection judged the effectiveness of the Sixth Form as outstanding and this inspection supports that view. Students are highly motivated and have an excellent attitude to work. They are highly articulate and are able to discuss topics and debate issues at an impressively intellectual level. They make outstanding progress. Beyond the choices of academic or vocational courses, many sixth formers are Jewishly active. For example, they support Jewish and Israeli causes. The excellent 'Ambassador Programme' helps them to develop strategies for dealing with anti-Jewish or anti-Israel sentiments on university campuses. The Charity Programme formulated by JiEP (Jewish Informal Education Programme) expects sixth formers to be 'drivers and campaign leaders.' Much evidence of this was gathered during the inspection.

Grade: 1

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the quality of marking so that students are informed about what they are doing well and how they can improve

Achievement and standards

Most students, including those with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress throughout the school. At the end of Key Stage 4, all students take the GCSE Religious Studies examination. In 2005, 79% of the students gained A – A* grades, representing an increase of 17% on the previous year. Of the eighteen students with special educational needs, two gained Grade A* and thirteen gained Grades A – C.

The school has systematic procedures to assess students' knowledge and attainment in *Ivrit* (Modern Hebrew) prior to entry to the school. The data is used to set students in their appropriate groups. Approximately 20% entered the GCSE *Ivrit* examination in 2005 and the very high grades achieved were better in percentage terms than those gained in 2004. Impressive results were achieved in Religious Studies and *Ivrit* at AS and A2 level by students in the Sixth Form. The school has identified the need to offer more challenge to the higher achievers in Years 10 and 11 by offering a select group the opportunity of taking Religious Studies at AS level at the end of Year 11.

Evidence gained from observing two text-based lessons indicate that students are meeting challenging targets.

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being

The school judges the personal development and well-being of students as outstanding and inspectors agree. A wide range of activities are provided for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Collective worship takes place daily in the school's beautiful synagogue and frequent *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvah* ceremonies of students are celebrated there. Inspectors observed one of each celebration, and to quote the mother of the *Bar Mitzvah*, 'it made my son feel special.'

There is a charity committee run by students and funds are raised to support a variety of worthy causes, both Jewish and non-Jewish, including the Tsunami disaster appeal. An invitation was extended to all the residents of Norwood to attend the school on *Purim*. Many students volunteered to entertain the guests in addition to raising a large sum for Norwood.

There are strong links with outside agencies to encourage and support students in adopting healthy lifestyles. The CST (Community Security Trust) runs courses for all students to help them feel safe on the streets. Through the organisation 'Drugline Chabad', students are made aware of the dangers of drug abuse, and they learn about other major issues including peer pressure and bullying.

Most students have very positive attitudes about the school and feel that they learn important Jewish values in their Jewish Studies. This is reflected in their very good behaviour during lessons and around the school.

The school enables students to develop the skills that contribute to their future well-being. For example, it runs a business ethics seminar for sixth formers in conjunction with JABE (Jewish Association of Business Ethics). In addition, it encourages students to seriously consider Jewish communal service and leadership as a career choice.

Grade: 1

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

The teaching demonstrated by the Jewish Studies staff is mostly very good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers have very secure Jewish subject knowledge and their commitment to developing their students Jewishly means that lessons are never less than engaging and are quite often stimulating. Teachers make full use of the latest technology available in the classroom which means that Jewish topics are presented in a modern and sophisticated way. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. This is reflected in the number of students giving up their free time to join staff in lunch and learn sessions. Students learn very well. The knowledge, skills and understanding learned in formal lessons is very well supplemented by a wide range of exciting Jewish educational experiences provided by JiEP.

Lessons are well balanced and move seamlessly from teacher explanation, to discussion, to student activity. Students are very well managed and good levels of discipline are achieved. Planning for Jewish Studies is clear and well structured.

Teachers test their students on a regular basis. They listen and respond appropriately to them and wherever possible praise them and build on their responses. Interaction between teachers and their students is very good and this plays an important part in the support and encouragement of students' Jewish development.

Unlike their secular colleagues, Jewish Studies teachers have had no benchmark for measuring student progress in subjects other than GCSE and A Level. Consequently,

assessing how well a student is doing in general Jewish Studies relies either on a response to questions in the classroom or the quality of students' written work. Managers are aware of this issue and have already appointed a member of staff to develop effective assessment strategies across the JE department.

Marking is inconsistent and examples were observed of unmarked work. Where work was marked, the accompanying comments were sometimes limited and did not provide the student with the encouragement or challenge to improve. In one class, however, the standard of marking was very good with comments clearly telling students what they were doing well and what they had to do to improve.

The two strands of teaching – both formal and informal are impressive. Some of the discussions in the informal teaching sessions were particularly engaging.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

The overall quality and range of the curriculum is very good and the provision for informal education (JiEP) is outstanding. The curriculum enables the school to achieve its aims to give students a positive view of Judaism, to improve their Jewish knowledge and to secure examination success. It is very suitably matched to the needs of the students by taking account of their wide range of abilities, levels of Jewish knowledge and observance, and their attainment on entry to the school.

The curriculum for years 7 – 9 focuses on the Books of the *Torah* and is supported by appropriate schemes of work. These have been thoughtfully produced so that they address issues that students can relate to in their everyday lives. Examples include friendships, racism and assimilation. Strong links are evident between the Jewish and secular curriculum, notably, with regard to the teaching of citizenship and PSHE (Personal Social and Health Education). Year 10 students commence a two-year programme based on the Religious Studies GCSE syllabus. As an enhancement, broader Jewish perspectives are introduced within the syllabus.

The opportunities provided by JiEP are rich and varied. For example, there is a weekly lunch and learn session held in the Synagogue which attracts over 100 students. Other examples include Israel schemes, trips to Eastern Europe, and dealing with hostility on campus. Links have been forged with major communal organisations including Aish, JLE and Tribe and the contribution they make enrich the curriculum immeasurably.

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support

The recent Ofsted inspection found that provision for the care, guidance and support of students is outstanding. This inspection fully concurs with this judgement. The school cares for its students exceptionally well, including those who are new to the school and those who are known to need particular attention and special vigilance. The induction of students new to the school is excellent. Students from feeder primary schools visit the school prior to entry and their needs are carefully assessed.

The school takes all reasonable steps to promote the health and long-term well being of students and staff, and ensures their safety, both in and away from school, through the prevention of accidents and other causes of injury. Security within and outside the school is very effective and ensures the safety of its students as they move between buildings and departments.

The importance of healthy and safe living is promoted by JiEP through its 'LifeSkills' sessions. During the inspection, the Director of Drugline Chabad spoke to students on the dangers of experimenting with drugs. There were also excellent interactive sessions dealing with teenage issues including matters relating to relationships.

Students know that if they are in difficulty or have a problem, there is an adult in whom they can confide. The school also has a system where older students act as mentors for the younger ones. This is especially prevalent in the *Bnei Mitzvah* scheme where older students are responsible for the *leining* (*Torah* reading) performed by a *Bar Mitzvah* or the presentation given by a *Bat Mitzvah*.

The school provides students with information and impartial guidance that are effective in leading them towards appropriate further study or career. From a Jewish perspective, the JE department ensures that students, should they so wish, are guided towards possible Jewish choices. When the school holds a 'University Fair', for example, it ensures that *yeshivot* and seminaries are represented. Visiting heads of *yeshivot* and seminaries are invited to speak to older students who might be interested in taking up the *yeshivah* or seminary option before or instead of attending university.

Grade: 1

Leadership and management

Leadership and management in the JE department are excellent. There is a clear vision, a sense of purpose and high aspirations for the school, its students and staff. The inspirational and strong leadership shown by the Deputy Headteacher with responsibility for Jewish Studies provides the JE department with a clear educational direction. The JE department has a delineated managerial structure with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The Deputy Headteacher provides the drive and direction for raising achievement, while the Head of Jewish Studies and his deputy effectively manage the resources and processes to make this happen. The

leadership team provides good role models for other staff and students. This results in a positive climate for Jewish learning that permeates the school and helps create a positive ethos which reflects the school's commitment to good relationships and an effective Jewish learning environment.

Teaching and curriculum development are constantly monitored, evaluated and supported and teachers are encouraged to develop professionally. A commitment to staff development is reflected in effective induction and professional development strategies.

Grade: 1

