

# King David High School

## Inspection report

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LEA	Liverpool - 341
Inspection dates	20 <sup>th</sup> -21 <sup>st</sup> September 2006
Inspected under the auspices of	Pikuach

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

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Type of School	Comprehensive	School address	Childwall Road
School category	Voluntary Aided		Liverpool
Age range of pupils	11-18		L15 6UZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 722 7496
Number on roll	630	Fax number	0151 738 0259
Appropriate authority	Governing Body	Chair of governors	Mr M Steinberg OBE
Date of previous inspection	28th - 31st January 2002	Headteacher	Mrs B Smith

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## Introduction

### Description of the school

The King David High School is a popular comprehensive school. It is the only Jewish high school in the Merseyside and the surrounding area and it attracts the majority of the Jewish community. The number of Jewish pupils has steadily decreased, reflecting the decline in numbers of the Liverpool Jewish community and at present 22% of the school's population is Jewish. Most of the Jewish pupils transfer from the King David Primary School which is on the same campus.

The ethos of the school is one of orthodox Judaism although non-halachically Jewish pupils are considered as Jewish. The pupils come from a wide spectrum of religious observance, but few are from fully practising orthodox homes. The orthodox Jewish ethos pervades the whole school and influences the holiday dates, school lunches, personal, social and health education and school visits.

The 137 Jewish pupils are taught separately for religious education and are expected to sit for GCSE in Religious Studies. The non-Jewish pupils study world religions, including the Judaism module. All the Jewish pupils study Modern Hebrew until the end of Year 9 after which it becomes an optional GCSE subject. The school offers A level courses in Jewish Studies and Modern Hebrew. Currently ten of the Jewish pupils are studying A level Jewish Studies and three pupils study Modern Hebrew, which they take a year earlier than other A level subjects. The Jewish pupils in the Sixth Form who do not take A level courses in Jewish Studies have one discussion period a week.

The socio-economic profile of the full pupil body is very favourable. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well below the national average and there are no Jewish pupils with statements of educational needs. There are four Hebrew speakers in the school. The school has a very high retention rate in the Sixth Form and a very high rate of pupils who continue into higher education.

From the start of this academic year, Modern Hebrew (*Ivrit*) has been incorporated into the Jewish Studies department. Formerly it was a part of the modern foreign languages department.

The inspection took place two days before the Jewish New Year festival of *Rosh Hashanah*.

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## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of its provision for Jewish education

The provision for Jewish Studies at King David High School is satisfactory overall, with elements of strength. These are reflected in the high grades at GCSE and outstanding grades at A level in Religious Education and in Modern Hebrew. Standards in traditional Jewish practices and textual study are unsatisfactory due to the lack of opportunities within the curriculum provision.

There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection when the quality of teaching, the curriculum and the leadership and management were judged to be unsatisfactory. These areas of provision are now judged to be of a satisfactory standard but there remain weak elements that need to be addressed. There has been a marked improvement in self-assessment and in development planning. The Jewish Studies Department now demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Despite the low numbers of Jewish pupils, the school continues to maintain a vibrant Jewish ethos in many areas and this is a reflection of the dedication and commitment of the Head of Jewish Studies and the support of the governors and Headteacher. The pupils demonstrate a positive attitude and a strong commitment to their Jewish identity.

**Grade: 3**

### Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

The pupils in the Sixth Form are highly motivated and they have a very good attitude to work. They have a strong sense of their Jewish identity and through both discussion groups and the diverse school population they appear to be well prepared for university life. The pupils are articulate and mature and are very positive about the school. Jewish Studies and Modern Hebrew students make excellent progress in these subjects. Others have one discussion period a week which maintains their Jewish identity and at times these sessions also further the pupils' Jewish learning.

The pupils carry out well their roles of Jewish responsibility within the school and they plan and lead the annual *Shabbaton* service in the local synagogue. The girls who lead the optional weekly shacharit (morning) service are knowledgeable and confident in this aspect of Jewish practice. Pupils are active in many charities and other local Jewish communal activities and they act as spokespersons for the school and the Jewish community in the wider Merseyside community.

**Grade: 2**

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve learning opportunities for individual pupils within the lessons through an expanded range of teaching and classroom management methods that include the use of information technology

- Provide more time for Jewish Education so that the curriculum can be taught in greater depth to ensure that the pupils have greater knowledge, skills and practice of Jewish prayer, Hebrew reading, translation and textual analysis
- Meet the legal requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all Jewish pupils

## **Achievement and standards**

The school evaluates that the pupils' achievement and standards of work are good. Inspectors judge these to be satisfactory overall. In many respects the achievement of the pupils in relation to the aims of the school for Jewish Studies is good but as a significant number of the pupils are not attaining the "ability to perform religious practices", achievement and standards are satisfactory overall.

Examination results in Religious Studies are outstanding at A level. Compared to all the schools nationally whose pupils take Religious Studies the school is well within the top 10%, and in 2005 and 2006 all the pupils attained either A or B grades. In Modern Hebrew the numbers taking A level are small, but the school has achieved all A grades over the last two years. The standards attained at GCSE are high. In 2006, 91.7% of the pupils attained grades A-C. This is a substantial rise from the 2005 figure of 80%.

Throughout the school the pupils make good progress and gain a good grounding in general Jewish knowledge and modern Jewish history. In Year 9, project work is of a very high standard and the pupils make very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of their specialised subject.

The progress and achievement of the majority of the pupils in traditional orthodox Jewish learning such as prayer, translation and analysis of Hebrew texts are unsatisfactory as these skills are hardly taught. Many of the pupils who enter the school in Year 7 without the ability to read and write Hebrew make unsatisfactory progress in these basic skills.

**Grade: 3**

## **Personal development and well-being**

The pupils' moral social and cultural development is good. The pupils demonstrate considerable pride in and strong identification with their Jewish heritage. The older pupils are vocal, articulate and mature in their support for their Jewish education and the ethos of the school. They identify that being a minority of the school population is both a cause for their positive attitudes towards their religion and also gives them a strong and beneficial exposure to a variety of other cultures. They see this as extremely positive and a good foundation for their future Jewish lives.

The pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory, but their experiences and opportunities are restricted by the few who attend a daily act of collective worship

(*Tefillah*). Few boys attend the optional daily shacharit services but the girls' weekly service is very well attended and those who lead the service exhibit excellent confidence and skills. Girls say coming together at the start of the day gives them a good sense of community and an uplifting experience.

Attendance is very high and the behaviour of most pupils is good except in Year 8 where there are a high number of pupils with behaviour issues and the learning is disrupted. Pupils take initiatives both in school and outside, with the School Council leading the way on healthy eating initiatives.

**Grade: 2**

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

The school accurately evaluates teaching and learning as satisfactory.

The teachers all have good subject knowledge. They demonstrate good skills in preparing their pupils for Religious Studies and *Ivrit* GCSE and A level examinations. In the majority of the lessons seen they demonstrated a satisfactory relationship and rapport with their pupils. However the pupils and the parents identify that this is not always the case.

In Years 7 to 11, due to the small numbers, the Jewish pupils are taught Jewish Studies as a year group in mixed ability classes. This requires the highest level of teaching skills. The teachers' range of classroom strategies is satisfactory but in need of improvement and should include the use of computers, if all pupils are to be fully challenged or supported, according to their individual needs.

**Grade: 3**

### Curriculum and other activities

There has been considerable redevelopment of the curriculum since the previous inspection, particularly for Years 7 - 9. In Years 7 and 8 there are *Bat Mitzvah* and *Bar Mitzvah* courses that culminate in a ceremony at the end of the year. The *Bat Mitzvah* course contains a practically orientated *kashrut* element that the girls speak about very positively and the *Bar Mitzvah* course contains a good module related to *mezuzah*. These courses, followed by the extended project work undertaken in Year 9 are good preparations for the GCSE course. In Years 10 -13 the curriculum has been streamlined to cover the examination syllabus and to this end, it is very effective.

There is insufficient emphasis upon the development of Hebrew reading and writing skills. A catch-up course in Hebrew reading skills was provided for the low attaining

Year 7 pupils in the previous summer term but no evaluation of this is yet available. This is not yet an established part of the curriculum provision and is not provided when the pupils first arrive in order to ensure that they can fully access the taught curriculum.

Since the previous inspection, the time provided for teaching Jewish Studies has been reduced in all years and in Year 9 there are now only two lessons a week. This is insufficient time to develop the pupils' knowledge and understanding of traditional Judaic prayer and practices and skills such as textual study. In discussion, the pupils in Years 8 and 9 note these limitations with regret. The curriculum is planned with insufficient regard to the Jewish calendar. An example of this is that almost no teaching about the festival of *Rosh Hashanah* took place. This situation is unsatisfactory. Where time allows, extra-curricular activities such as lighting the *Chanukah Menorah* and a full *Shacharit* service on a *Chol Ha'Moed* (Intermediate Day) in the festival of *Succot* take place at the appropriate season.

The history element of the curriculum is good; a strong bias towards Israel and its history, orthodox influences and current events, all contribute well to the pupils' Jewish well-being and future ability to stay safe. The inclusion of Modern Hebrew into the department offers good opportunities for future development. An excellent innovation is the inclusion of an extended residential experience in Israel for pupils in Year 9. This is in liaison with a school in London and places are limited. Plans are progressing towards an additional Israel experience for all Jewish pupils.

There is satisfactory curriculum continuity with the King David Junior School and the two schools are looking to provide support for the pupils during the transition.

### Grade: 3

## Care, guidance and support

There are satisfactory assessment practices within the Jewish Studies department and good systems for monitoring the pupils' progress. There are different assessment systems for *Ivrit* and the challenge now is to combine the best of both. There are also good systems for intervening if the pupils are identified as under-achieving.

It is unsatisfactory that there is still no daily act of collective worship. The school provides only one compulsory full Jewish prayer assembly a week. The limited number of pupils who pray on a daily basis means that few pupils learn the important life skill of *davening*.

The school organises an annual *Shabbaton*, visits to the local Jewish old age home and Israel and many opportunities for *tzeddakah* (charitable acts). The ethos of the school is Jewish and the majority non-Jewish pupils and staff identify with it. The rhythm of the year revolves around the Jewish festivals. All outside trips involving Jewish pupils must adhere to *Shabbat* and *kashrut*, so that no Jewish pupil is disadvantaged. The Head of Jewish Studies is consulted on all school policies and relevant issues, to ensure the Jewish ethos and values of the school remain

protected. Links with external agencies such as Lubavitch and Aish provide good guidance and support within a range of extra-curricular opportunities.

**Grade: 3**

## Leadership and management

The school's evaluation of the leadership and management of Jewish Studies as being satisfactory is accurate and the school shows a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

There has been a good improvement in many areas since the previous inspection, much of which has been driven by the Headteacher's priorities for departmental development. There is now a clear management structure and procedures to measure performance and there is a clear job description for the Head of Jewish Studies. A rigorous self-review of the department has taken place. The Head of Jewish Studies has a secure knowledge of this department and precisely identifies the barriers for development but is less confident in evaluation skills.

The leadership and commitment of the Head of Jewish Studies is good in relation to successfully maintaining and promoting the Jewish ethos throughout the school and in instilling within the Jewish pupils a positive Jewish identity and knowledge of their Jewish history, an understanding of their social responsibilities and in preparing them for adult life. There is a good commitment to the Jewish pupils' future economic well-being through the emphasis placed on good examination results, but this is not balanced by a similar commitment to their knowledge of synagogue prayers and traditional Torah study.

There were four priorities for improvement from the previous inspection and these related to management, curriculum, collective worship and special needs. Overall there has been satisfactory improvement. There has been good improvement in management and all developmental points have been addressed. There has been satisfactory improvement in the curriculum even though the inclusion of "text work in *Chumash*" remains missing. The present provision for collective worship does not meet legal requirements and this remains an unsatisfactory situation. The provision for special educational needs is not yet satisfactorily addressed. Although the needs of the pupils are identified not all teachers demonstrate the skills of supporting them successfully in the classroom and the school is actively looking to appoint support staff.

The long serving governors show commitment to the school and the governor responsible for Jewish Studies is knowledgeable and supportive. However the Governing Body has allowed the time for Jewish education to decrease and it has not ensured that legal requirements in relation to collective worship are met. The pupils feel that their voice is heard in formalised systems such as the School Council and informally by the Head of Jewish Studies listening to their views. He is dedicated to their support and guidance. The views of the parents are not regularly sought. The response to the parental questionnaire was high and approachability was seen as a



school strength. However a substantial minority of parents indicated a range of concerns, some of which are recognised by the school.

**Grade: 3**