

King Solomon High School

Inspection report

LEA	Redbridge
Inspection dates	23-24 JANUARY 2007
Inspected under the auspices of	Pikuach

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

Type of School	Comprehensive	School address	Forest Road
School category	Voluntary Aided		Barkingside, Ilford
Age range of students	11-19		IG6 3HB
Gender of students	mixed	Telephone number	020 8501 2083
Number on roll	929	Fax number	020 8559 9445
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs D Lazarus
Date of previous inspection	1997	Acting Headteacher	Mr S Lewis

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Introduction

Description of the school

King Solomon High School is an average-size mixed Jewish secondary school in Barkingside. It mostly serves the local Jewish communities of Ilford and Chigwell, but a small number of students come to the school from North West London. The official religious status of the school is modern-orthodox and Zionist, but students come from families which represent a wide spectrum of Jewish observance and practice, including a large number who are non-observant.

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 Jewish Studies Department at King Solomon High School has satisfied inspectors that it has now laid down sufficient underpinning processes and procedures to make it a good department. There are still unresolved areas for development. However, the department has capacity and the potential to realise its plans for its future, as outlined by the school and departmental leadership, and it could eventually be outstanding.

The school's main strengths lie in:

- its dedication to maintaining and strengthening the ethos and values of modern orthodox Judaism and Zionism.
- the school's clear vision of what the Jewish Studies curriculum should be offering to its students in order to achieve this.
- the firm leadership given by the Acting Headteacher and the Head of the Department in implementing the Jewish Studies curriculum
- the strong personal religious commitment of the Jewish Studies teaching staff
- the growing personal development and application of the students with regard to their Jewish Studies, particularly in the sixth form.
- the high standards attained by students in public examinations
- the care, guidance and support given throughout the school, but particularly in the sixth form

The main areas for attention lie in:

- o improving the consistency of good practice in teaching, marking and assessment throughout the department
- o compliance with the regulations for daily acts of worship,
- o strengthening the use of Hebrew reading as an underpinning aspect of Jewish studies.
- o involving parents more in understanding and celebrating the work of their children in Jewish Studies.

The school's capacity to improve is reflected in:

- o its strong leadership in Jewish Studies
- o its very clear and realistic understanding of its students' strengths and the barriers to their success in Jewish Studies
- o the commitment to engage all students through an exciting curriculum
- o the maintenance of high standards
- o its ongoing efforts to refine and improve its systems for assessing the performance and attainment of students.

Grade: 2

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

The effectiveness and the efficiency of the Sixth Form is good. Leadership and management of the Sixth Form is good, and the provision offered to students is wide and exciting. About a quarter of all students in the Sixth Form take Advanced Level Jewish Studies, at both AS and A2 levels. A very high proportion of these students complete their courses of study. They demonstrate good analytical and writing skills and they attain standards which are above average. This represents good progress, particularly in the skills of analysis and evaluation of Jewish philosophical and ethical ideas. The large majority of students do not undertake Advanced Level exams, but study a range of appropriate modules on a carousel basis, which range from "Jewish ethics and morals" to "Israel, past and present" and "Judaism for women". These fixed courses are supplemented by an array of effective extra-curricular programmes, such as the "Community Connections" programme, and "The Ambassadors" programme, which successfully impress on sixth form students, the notion that each one of them has a role to play in their community, and that individually, as a Jew, each one of them is an ambassador for their people and for the Land of Israel. These programmes succeed in no small measure because of the commitment and enthusiasm of the sixth form's teachers, but are mostly successful where students engage wholeheartedly in their courses of study. Unfortunately, this is not yet universally the case, and there is a small, but significant minority of students who do not avail themselves of the opportunities presented to them by the school.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure the consistency of all teaching to meet the standards of the best practice.
- involve parents more to school events which display and celebrate what students are accomplishing in their Jewish Studies.
- persist in its efforts to develop and implement a viable scheme of suitable attainment targets and attainment level descriptors covering all the major components of the Jewish Studies curriculum of the main school.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good. Students enter the school from a wide spectrum of prior Jewish knowledge, attainment and skills. They are put into sets in Year 7 according to their prior Jewish knowledge. Students have the opportunities to move sets depending on their progress. This allows for more able students who have had no previous Jewish and or Hebrew education, to be promoted. By the end of Year 9, higher ability students make good progress in their deepening knowledge of festivals, stories and prayers, and use their understanding of Jewish history and Jewish ethics to answer moral and ethical questions appertaining to their lives. For example, their work included a letter to the Prime Minister concerning the matter of wearing religious symbols. Lower attaining students struggle with reading Hebrew and this impacts on the progress that they make in some elements of their work, for example in *Tefillah*. At Key Stage 4, progress is good. All students take GCSE at the end of Year 11. Despite a small dip in 2006 figures, the results for the last three years in terms of A*-C have seen a continually rising trend and students attain results in Jewish Studies which are typically one grade higher than in many other subjects in the school. The positive residuals which are attained are the highest in the school. Students with learning disabilities and difficulties make progress in line with their classmates because teachers know their difficulties well and support them well.

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well catered for by the school's Jewish Studies and informal education curricula. Most students enjoy their Jewish Studies and are keen to explore the opportunities they offer for developing their Jewish identity. Many are actively involved in local

community activities which afford them possibilities for developing vital leadership and team skills.

Inspectors were especially favourably impressed with the serious response and general intellectual maturity displayed by Years 12 and 13 students in their Jewish Studies lessons and in the enquiring way they interacted with their teachers.

Recent modest attempts to encourage students to participate in an early morning *Shacharit* minyan and in a short lunchtime *Minchah* service should be persisted with to provide support for those present students who are from observant homes and a basis from which to revive and expand this key spiritual activity across the school in the future.

Grade: 2

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is at least satisfactory with some good features. Many teachers are in early stages of their professional development. The majority of lessons seen by inspectors were good. However, there was considerable variation in quality, and lessons ranged from good to inadequate.

In the best lessons, teachers plan well and set clear learning objectives. They make good use of resources, particularly the interactive whiteboards, to enhance teaching and learning. Teachers challenge students' thinking through good question and answer sessions which require explanations and justification of ideas. They have high expectations for their students' learning. Students are well motivated and complete their tasks enthusiastically. Teachers have particularly good rapport with the students. However, in the weaker lessons, teaching methods do not sufficiently engage learners; the level of challenge is insufficient and there is a tendency for students to lose interest and engage in inappropriate behaviour, which the teachers do not always know how to control.

Though the department has a marking scheme which gives recognition to effort as well as attainment, marking is inconsistent. Some students know their targets and are systematically given clear advice about how they can improve their work, but this is not universally the case.

Assessment procedures are well set out and the school is beginning to use the potential of its SIMS management software to track the progress of students and teaching groups. Some teachers make good use of assessment information to plan suitably challenging work and set targets for all groups of

students. However, this is not yet sufficiently embedded in the general practice of the department.

Grade 3

Curriculum and other activities

The formal Jewish Studies curriculum of the school provides for all students to follow a programme of Jewish Studies throughout their career in the school from entry into the school in Year 7 until the end of Year 13. In Years 7 – 11 there are three timetabled periods per week for Jewish Studies., each typically of approximately one hour, In addition, all students in Years 7 – 9 study *Ivrit* as a modern language This makes some, but not yet sufficient contribution to maintaining and improving the reading and comprehension skills they need for dealing with Hebrew texts from the *Tenach* (Bible) and elsewhere which they encounter in the course of their Jewish Studies. Evidence from students and from their parents indicates that the majority of students enjoy their Jewish Studies and that through them the school is largely successful in strengthening their sense of a positive Jewish identity and preparing them for their future lives as adults conscious of their Jewish heritage. The provision of daily acts of collective worship is, however, an area in which the school is not fully meeting requirements. The school is aware of this and has plans to fulfil this aspect of the curriculum.

In Years 12 – 13 all students including those who are not taking 'A' level courses in Jewish Studies follow a general Jewish Studies programme for one period per week which it is intended to increase to two periods per week. In addition, those students who are taking 'A' level Jewish Studies have a further four timetabled periods of specialised teaching per week.

There is a sufficient allocation of time to Jewish Studies, but the school does not comply with the regulations concerning a collective act of worship.

Throughout the school there is a well developed and varied programme of informal Jewish educational activities and opportunities (JIST) to complement the formal Jewish Studies curriculum. Evidence taken from students throughout the school demonstrates how popular and attractive this is for the majority of them.

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support

The care, guidance and support of students throughout the main school is generally good; in the Sixth Form it is outstanding. Good use is made of the relevant local authority and local, national and world Jewish communal support services. There are opportunities for suitably qualified parents to be involved in the support of students with special needs.

In all other respects, school policies and practices as well as the messages embedded in both the formal and informal Jewish Studies curricula are good and are designed to encourage students to conform to a morally, spiritually and physically healthy Jewish life-style.

The school has effective arrangements in place for the supervision and safeguarding of students on site by teaching and non-teaching staff throughout the normal school day. On-site security measures conform to best practice.

Grade: 2 (Years 7 – 11)
1 (sixth form)

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. The acting Headteacher has considerable experience of Jewish Studies, and brings new vision for the department's development. He is well supported by a very effective head of department, who has only been in post for two years, but who is rapidly improving his management skills, and by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic governing body who share his vision. The department has established a firm set of processes and procedures which not only underpin current advances, but point to a strong future. This has already led to some improvements in students' behaviour in classes, but has yet to impinge fully on the development of more positive attitudes to learning and behaviour in all lessons. Through the department's accurate self-evaluation, senior leaders have a good idea of its strengths and weaknesses. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored and good practice is shared to bring about overall improvement.

The improvements made in the relatively short time that the acting Headteacher, and head of department have been in post, together with the success of the strategies they have already implemented indicate that there is a good capacity for further development.

The Governing Body have yet to fully fulfill their statutory responsibilities in ensuring that all pupils have the opportunity to take part in a daily Act of Collective Worship.

Grade: 2