

## MENORAH PRIMARY SCHOOL

### INSPECTION REPORT

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LEA	Barnet
Inspection dates	13-14 November '06
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	Primary	School address	36 Woodstock Avenue
School category	Voluntary Aided		Golders Green
Age range of pupils	4-11		London NW11 9SP
Gender of pupils	Mixed, taught in single sex classes	Telephone number	020 8458 1276
Number on roll	429 (including Nursery)	Fax number	020 8209 2140
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body	Chair of governors	Mr J Wolinsky
Date of previous inspection	13-14 November '06	Headteacher	Mrs J Menczer
		Menahel	Rabbi R Atlas

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## Introduction

### Description of the school

Menorah Primary School is an orthodox Jewish primary school, founded in 1944 by the Golders Green Beth Hamedrash, a local synagogue, whose Rabbi, Rabbi Yisroel Meir Greenberg, is the school's Principal. The children from this community form the nucleus of its student body, although the school has grown and now draws its intake from the wider orthodox Jewish community. The school's history, ideology and raison d'être are entwined with its founding community, whose ethos forms the driving force of the school.

Menorah Primary School's stated aims are to instil in its pupils a firm foundation, which will prepare them for a life of religious observance, together with high standards in all areas of the curriculum.

There are several distinctive features of the school, which contribute to its special nature and reflect the values of Orthodox Judaism. Each year group is divided into at least two single sex classes. A sizeable proportion of the timetable is devoted to Limmudei Kodesh, which is integrated into an elongated school day. The school day for juniors begins at 8.40 a.m. and finishes at 4.30 p.m. On two evenings a week and on Sunday mornings there are additional sessions in religious education. Very recently, the school has appointed a Menahel to join the leadership of the school and to lead the Limmudei Kodesh.

### 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 Limmudei Kodesh department of the Menorah Primary School is good overall, with some very good and outstanding features.

The strength of the Limmudei Kodesh department lies in the subject knowledge of its staff and their ability to impart Jewish knowledge, skills and understanding at a level that meets the needs of the vast majority of their pupils. Consequently, pupils make good progress. Staff act as excellent role models and display great care and consideration for their pupils and are very committed to the school. Staff morale is high and pupils are happy and confident within the school environment.

The school's most effective features are: consistently high quality of the teaching; high standards in Hebrew reading; *Chumash*; *Gemoro* for the boys; the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils; behaviour of pupils, and the pastoral care given by teachers.

Areas for development include: preparing a formal curriculum in all areas of Limmudei Kodesh, including subject policies; preparing a Marking and Assessment policy, which would ensure consistency of approach; raising the standards of Jewish General Knowledge throughout the school; clarifying the various roles of the Senior Management Team by preparing clear job descriptions; upgrading the support staff provision within Limmudei Kodesh, and enhancing the induction process of new staff through focused professional development and support.

There has been some clear progress since the last inspection and now the capacity for further progress is very good. The school's new Senior Management Team for Limmudei Kodesh, headed by the new Menahel and supported by the dedicated work and professionalism of the Headteacher, is well placed to meet the needs of the school. There can be confidence that the Limmudei Kodesh provision can be further enhanced in the future. This is evidenced by the impressive evaluation of the school's strengths, weaknesses and areas for development, prepared by the new Menahel in only a very short time since assuming office.

**Grade: 2**

### What the school should do to improve further

- Formulate an in-depth Limmudei Kodesh curriculum in all areas, which will ensure progression and appropriate coverage, and lead onto clear schemes of work being drawn up.
- Raise the standards of Jewish General Knowledge throughout the school by high-profiling this subject for careful planning and assessment, and linking it with a progression of appropriate tests, which will ensure that pupils retain knowledge as they move up the school.
- Ensure that there is a clear management structure for Limmudei Kodesh, where roles are clear and defined by job descriptions.
- Upgrade the resources for Limmudei Kodesh by providing more in-class support, which will help children with special needs and reduce the pupil to teacher ratio in some of the larger classes.

## Achievement and standards

Standards in Limmudei Kodesh, overall, are impressive. The standards achieved by most pupils in lessons that were observed are, overall, good and, in many cases, very good. This was confirmed by a scrutiny of samples of children's written work. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and consistently challenge them to perform at a higher level.

Standards in Hebrew reading throughout the school are impressive, with pupils generally reading with accuracy and fluency. However, as pupils move up the school there is some drop in this standard but, still, good levels of reading are maintained. In *Chumash*, standards are high; particularly impressive is the way that pupils retain superb accuracy in translating *pesukim*, recently learnt. Although pupils have a good knowledge of grammatical aspects of *Chumash*, this aspect is not quite as impressive. Standards in Jewish General Knowledge are unsatisfactory, with pupils not retaining knowledge from year to year. Standards in *Gemoro* for the boys are very good. In all other areas, good levels of achievement are reached.

The level of Jewish knowledge of the pupils on admission to the school is good. The progress of most of the pupils in their Limmudei Kodesh throughout the school is at least good, thus meeting the school's expectations. Underachievement is confined to a very small number of pupils with identified learning or emotional difficulties. There is a need for the school to provide more in-class support in some classes, which would ensure all pupils can reach their full potential.

### Grade: 2

## Personal development and well-being

The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school fully complies with the statutory requirements of a daily act of collective worship by providing *Shacharis* and *Mincha* daily for its pupils. The manner in which *Tefillah* is conducted is a strength of the school and admirably reflects its ethos and Jewish values.

Attendance is good and the evidence gained from lesson observation and discussions with pupils confirms that they thoroughly enjoy their Jewish education. The views of pupils are taken seriously and issues are raised by means of the effective school council. For example, the best way to raise charity was discussed and a decision made, which impacted on the whole school approach to *tzedokoh*. Pupils understand and appreciate the importance of leading healthy lifestyles and the school provides many opportunities for them to do so. Behaviour is very good and pupils display an impressive degree of *derech erez* to visitors, teachers and peers. Continually, during the inspection, pupils opened doors and greeted members of the inspection team. During one discussion with a group of pupils, one child was heard reminding a peer to say 'thank you' to the inspector at the end of the discussion. This mutually supportive peer interaction is encouraged by the Headteacher, Menahel and all staff. The display in the corridors is effective and reinforces good *middos*.

The school generally offers a calm environment for pupils. Pupils contribute to the Jewish and wider communities in a variety of ways, for example by collecting money for *tzedokoh*, visiting old people in local old-age homes and taking part in a community choir presentation.

Pupils are encouraged to develop responsibly throughout the school by way of the prefect and monitor roles as well as a "Buddy" programme, where older pupils are twinned with younger children, which helps Key Stage 1 pupils deal with problems should they arise.

**Grade: 1**

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. During the inspection, fifteen lessons were observed, 80% of which were good or better; the rest being at least satisfactory.

Teachers act as excellent role models for their pupils and conduct themselves in a most professional manner, being deeply committed to the school. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour, and pupils respond with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Where teaching is good or better, the pace is brisk, and pupils are involved and interested. Clear targets are set at the beginning of lessons, as delineated in impressive lesson plans. In these lessons, questioning techniques are good, and classes are well managed. Teachers offer praise and encouragement and, several times during the inspection, staff were observed giving emotional nurturing to pupils. It is particularly impressive to see how teachers offer a caring and supportive approach to their pupils. In those classes, which are less than good, objectives are not clear, and pupils are only partially engaged in their work. Larger classes, particularly in some of the girls' classes, present a challenge, which would be overcome by more support staff being available in these lessons.

Resources used are generally appropriate and facilitate high quality teaching and learning. However, in some lessons, such as two of the Jewish General Knowledge lessons, there would have been a benefit in using the interactive whiteboards to present information.

Assessment of pupils' progress has improved since the previous inspection. However, an Assessment and Marking policy needs to be drawn up, which would improve assessment techniques and ensure consistency of approach. The induction process to support new staff is satisfactory, but could be enhanced by linking this process to a series of competencies, which new staff need to master and in which they should be supported by a mentor. This mentoring would be achieved effectively by having a new staff member working together in the same year group as a parallel, more experienced teacher.

**Grade: 2**

## Curriculum and other activities

The curriculum for Limmudei Kodesh has a central place in the school's curriculum and is, overall, satisfactory. It supports the school's aim and ethos to instil into its pupils a firm foundation, which will prepare them for a life of fully committed Torah observance. The syllabus is well balanced and is appropriate to the needs and interests of the pupils. The curriculum displays breadth across a wide range of Limmudei Kodesh subjects, ranging from basic Hebrew reading, *Chumash*, *Rashi*, *Nach*, *Sedra*, *Dinim* and Jewish General Knowledge to the learning of *Gemoro* by the boys in Years 5 and 6. However, the present *Ohel Torah* programme should be incorporated and integrated into the school day so that the teaching of *Gemoro*, *Mishnayos* and, in some classes, *Nach*, can fully benefit all pupils.

The formal written curriculum is unsatisfactory and does not provide effective guidance to teachers. The new Menahel is correct in his high priority of creating an effective curriculum. The new written curriculum should take into account progression throughout the school, coverage so that pupils can build upon previous knowledge and skills, and differentiation to deal with the needs of pupils with different levels of achievement.

**Grade: 3**

### **Care, guidance and support**

The provision for support, guidance and welfare is outstanding. The school provides a safe and secure environment for its pupils. On several occasions during the inspection, staff were seen encouraging children to put on their coats before going outside or talking in a very encouraging and emotionally nurturing fashion. The Headteacher and the new Menahel operate an "open door" policy, and children discuss issues with them and other staff members on a regular basis.

Security in the school is very effective. There is a full-time security officer, who ensures that everyone is carefully vetted before being admitted onto the school premises.

Teachers show care and sensitivity to children of lower attainment or those who have other learning difficulties. It is necessary, however, to build on this care and to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those in very large classes, by providing more support staff in Limmudei Kodesh. The Limmudei Kodesh SENCO carries out her work effectively, screening children for difficulties and taking out pupils from class for one-to-one support. The school has explicit Anti-Bullying and Health and Safety policies and effective arrangements for safeguarding pupils at all points in the school day.

There is strong support by parents for the school. 114 completed questionnaires were received by the inspection team and several parents made telephone calls to the lead inspector, with an overwhelming majority supporting all aspects of the school. The school is effective in the way it deals with parents' concerns about what their children learn or how their pupils interact with friends and teachers. Appropriate information is available to parents regarding future educational choices for their children.

**Grade: 1**

### **Leadership and management**

The quality of management in the school is sound. The school has recently appointed a new Menahel. He has made an excellent start in his new role, as evidenced by his very good self evaluation of the school's strengths and areas of development. He is well supported by the very competent Headteacher, governors and the Principal. Other members of the Limmudei Kodesh Senior Management Team offer a great deal to the school. However, it is crucial that there is clarity of senior management roles, and definitive job descriptions are drawn up.

Strengths of the management team include: creating high staff morale; good communication with parents; effective procedures for managing pupils around the school, and a very promising capacity for development within this new Senior Management Team.

Areas for development include: creating a written curriculum, which would then facilitate effective assessment and tracking of pupils' progress; enhancing the induction process, and providing opportunities for effective mentoring.

The governing body carries out its duties in a very professional and supportive way, acting as a "critical friend" to the Headteacher and Menahel.

**Grade: 3**