

Menorah Primary School

Inspection report

LA	Barnet
Inspected under the auspices of	Pikuach
Inspection dates	29 February - 1 March 2012
Reporting inspector	Rev Michael Binstock MBE

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 – 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed (boys and girls are taught separately)
Number on roll	
School (total)	442
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Wolinsky
Headteacher	Mrs J Menczer
Date of previous school inspection	13 - 14 November 2006
School address	The Wohl Campus 1 – 3 The Drive London NW11 9SP
Telephone number	020 8458 1276
Fax number	020 8209 2140
Email address	office@menorahprimary.barnetmail.net

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Introduction

Inspection team

Rev Michael Binstock
Rabbi Yaakov Heimann

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice and ran concurrently with the Ofsted Section 5 inspection. The inspectors visited thirteen lessons covering all year groups. They inspected a good balance of boys and girls classes and tested a representative group of boys and girls from Years 3 and 6. They observed ten davening sessions taking place in most classes and *bensching* (Grace after Meals) recited by Key Stage 2 pupils. They held meetings with the Menahel, headteacher, governors, staff and pupils. In addition, they scrutinised the school's documentation and samples of pupils' written work, and analysed 133 questionnaire responses from parents and carers.

Information about the school

Menorah Primary School is a well established two-form entry voluntary-aided school for strictly orthodox boys and girls aged 3 – 11. All lessons with the exception of the Nursery are conducted in single sex classes. The school was founded in 1944 by the Golders Green Beth Hamedrash Congregation (GGBH) and the synagogue's Rav, Rabbi Y M Greenberg is the school's Principal. A large proportion of families belong to GGBH but some are from various other orthodox communities. Most live locally although some come from further afield including Edgware and Finchley.

Approximately 40% of the curriculum is devoted to *Limmudei Kodesh*. The school aims to achieve a high standard in both secular and Jewish education and to instil in its pupils a firm foundation which will prepare them for a life of religious observance. There are 442 pupils on roll including the Nursery with a fairly equal balance of boys and girls. The school is oversubscribed.

Less than 4% of pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL) and support is given to the minority who are unable to read and write fluently in English. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils transfer to various schools including Hasmonian High School, Menorah Grammar/High School, Pardes House and Beth Jacob Grammar School.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

- The quality of *Limmudei Kodesh* at Menorah Primary School including the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. The school achieves its aim of instilling in its pupils a firm foundation which will prepare them for a life of religious observance.
- Much progress has been made since the previous Pikuach inspection in addressing the weaknesses whilst sustaining, and in some cases further enhancing the many strengths that were highlighted at that time.
- Pupils' achievement in *Limmudei Kodesh* is mostly outstanding. They enjoy their lessons and have very positive feelings about their school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Most lessons observed were at least good or better and some were outstanding.
- The quality of the curriculum has greatly improved since the previous inspection and is now outstanding. It is broad and balanced and meets the needs of all individuals and groups of pupils.
- Governors play a very active role and they make a significant contribution to the work and direction of the school.
- The overwhelming majority of parents are very supportive of the provision for *Limmudei Kodesh* at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the quality of the *Limmudei Kodesh* curriculum by completing the topics of *Poroshas Hashovua* (Weekly Torah portion) and *Yedioh Kelolis* (Jewish general knowledge)
- Improve the quality of assessment to include level descriptors in all subject areas

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The levels of pupils' attainment and achievement in *Limmudei Kodesh*, including those with learning difficulties or other special educational needs, are mostly outstanding. Great emphasis is placed on gaining Hebrew reading and writing skills and these are well developed as pupils progress through the school. Most pupils in Year 6 are able to read unseen and difficult texts with an impressive degree of fluency and accuracy and this represents an improvement since the previous inspection when it was noted that there was a drop in the standard of Hebrew reading as pupils move up the school.

Textual study of *Chumash* features prominently in the curriculum and in all lessons seen, the standards achieved are good to outstanding. The testing of representative groups of boys and girls from Years 3 and 6 reveal that Year 3 boys achieve good to very good standards of translation and comprehension and Year 3 girls demonstrated outstanding levels of achievement in these skills. In Year 6, the standards achieved by both boys and girls in *Chumash* are mostly outstanding and inspectors were impressed by their levels of comprehension of the texts and selected *Rashi* commentaries. It was equally impressive to note the high standards that Year 6 boys have attained in the study of *Gemoro* and the pride they demonstrated as they explained to the inspector what they were currently learning.

The improved curriculum for the teaching of *Yedioh Kelolis* (Jewish general knowledge) includes some excellent material produced by the Menahel and this is reflected in the standards of pupils' Jewish knowledge, previously judged as unsatisfactory, which are now good and in some cases, outstanding.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and their behaviour in lessons and as they move around the school is mostly outstanding. It is evident from lesson observations and discussions with pupils that they have very positive feelings about the school. Comments such as 'I like school because its friendly and teachers take care of us' were made to inspectors. They enjoy their lessons and are extremely keen to participate and volunteer information. They told inspectors that they make progress and feel they are well supported.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. They are mostly thoughtful, caring and responsive to each other's feelings and needs. For example, a pupil was observed helping another who was confined to a wheelchair due to an accident resulting in a broken leg. This beautiful example of *chesed* (kindness) was heart warming. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility, for example through the school council which provides them with a valuable opportunity to express their views for the benefit of the whole school. Another worthy scheme is the 'Buddy' programme where pupils from Year 6 go to the Nursery to offer support to the children.

The school fulfils its statutory requirement of providing a daily act of collective worship and the sincere manner in which pupils *daven* with due *kavonoh* (devotion) is exemplary.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
How well do pupils achieve over time and enjoy their learning?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and Jewish life skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being, where appropriate	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including collective worship and behaviour	1

How effective is the provision?

The quality of provision for *Limmudei Kodesh* has improved greatly since the previous inspection. The Menahel is to be highly commended for ensuring that in addition to sustaining, and in some cases further enhancing the many strengths that were highlighted at that time, great strides have been made in tackling the various weaknesses that were identified.

Limmudei Kodesh takes place on Sunday mornings for all boys in Years 5 and 6. This provision, formally referred to as 'Ohel Torah' is now fully integrated into the weekly *Limmudei Kodesh* timetable and as such, addresses a weakness identified in the previous Pikuach inspection.

All lessons observed were at least good or better with some outstanding practice noted. Most teachers display excellent classroom management skills and they have a great rapport with their pupils. They are extremely secure in their subject knowledge and are outstanding role models for pupils to emulate. They exude a warmth and love of Torah which inspires the pupils. Teachers exploit every opportunity to highlight good *middos* (character traits) and in their *Chumash* lessons, they focus on *dikduk* (grammar) which contributes to the development of pupils' impressive translation and comprehension skills. Good and imaginative use is made of the interactive board to enhance learning. For example, in one outstanding *Chumash* lesson, the teacher skilfully combined the traditional rote learning of the text with the aid of modern technology. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and are aware of the need to provide for all groups of pupils. They are improving in their skills of differentiated teaching and examples were seen during lesson observations. These include the varying levels of questions targeted appropriately at pupils to match their abilities and selecting the most able to commence reading and translating a new *posuk*. Provision for weaker pupils and those with SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) has greatly improved due to the increase in the number of classroom assistants. As a result, many classes are split into different ability groups and some pupils are withdrawn from the class for one-to-one support. These interventions have fully addressed a key issue in the previous Pikuach inspection report and have had a positive impact on the standards of pupils' achievement. The *Limmudei Kodesh*

department benefits from a designated SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) and she liaises with the school SENCO. Where required, pupils with SEND have IEPs (individual educational plans) and these are regularly reviewed. The needs of gifted and talented pupils are mostly met with suitable work that provides appropriate challenge but the school is aware that this provision could be further improved.

Good assessment procedures to support learning are in place and these have further improved since the previous inspection. They include weekly written tests in *Chumash* and *Gemoro*, and twice yearly formal written tests in *Mishnah* and *Nach* (Prophets). In addition, the Menahel regularly furthers pupils and the school's Principal does so twice yearly. The Menahel wishes to further develop assessment by establishing benchmarking across the year groups.

Samples of exercise books reveal that many pupils take pride in their written work and some very neat and tidy work was observed. Topics scrutinised include *Nach* and *Kashrus*. Mistakes are corrected but comments are limited to praises such as 'well done' and 'good work'. It would be of value to pupils to receive information that will guide them as to how they can improve.

The formal written curriculum which was previously judged as unsatisfactory is now outstanding. The Menahel has achieved his aim of creating a structured curriculum that ensures progression so that pupils can build on their knowledge year on year as they progress up the school. Particular attention has been given to the topic of *Yedioh Kelolis* which was previously identified as a weakness. Resource material for this includes 'Boxes of *Yedios*'. This novel idea consists of a variety of questions and tasks on *Yomim Tovim* (festivals) and is used as an extra-curricular activity. When pupils feel they are ready, they present themselves to the Menahel to be tested. They then receive prizes for correctly completing the activity. The Menahel has also commenced the process of producing a curriculum for the teaching of *Poroshas Hashovua* with some very attractive and appropriate resource material and schemes of work. Whilst this material needs to be extended to all *sedros*, the structure has been formulated so that teachers now have clear guidance to enable them to plan future lessons.

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Circle time contributes to the children's enjoyment and participation. Children were observed davening with feeling which enhances their spiritual development. There is good integration between the *Limmudei Kodesh* and secular curricula. For example, in a Nursery lesson observed, children were making *greggers* after having previously learned about the topic of noise. There is a good range of activities that are well supervised and children are kept actively engaged in a calm but purposeful learning environment. Good planning ensures that the individual needs of all the children are clearly recognised and appropriately met.

The curriculum is enriched through partnerships. For example, outside educational consultants visit the school and the Menahel is a member of the IPDJS (Institute for Professional Development of Jewish Schools) The school provides extra curricular activities and these include an excellent school choir, shofar making and visits to a matzo bakery.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The quality of leadership and management in relation to *Limmudei Kodesh* are outstanding. The previous Pikuach inspection report noted that the Menahel had 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. Evidence gained during the current inspection confirms that the Menahel's clear vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations for the school have ensured the successful development of the *Limmudei Kodesh* department to its present high standard. The Menahel is fully supported by the headteacher and they work together in a spirit of mutual respect and co-operation. Teachers recognise and appreciate the effective support that they receive and feel that they are valued. They in turn work with total dedication and enthusiasm.

The school would greatly benefit from strengthening the management structure to assist the Menahel in taking forward the important task of curriculum development and assessment. This would enable the Menahel to further enhance his outstanding leadership of the *Limmudei Kodesh* department whilst maintaining his considerable teaching schedule.

The governors make a very significant contribution to the work and direction of the school. The nine executive members of the governing body have specific roles and there is one with responsibility for whole school staffing and curriculum. The chair of governors meets weekly with the headteacher and he is available at other times if required. In discussions with the chair of governors, it is clear that he and his colleagues have a keen grasp of the school's strengths, as well as those areas that need further development in order to take the school to the next level. A particular area that they are giving attention to is how best to strengthen the management structure of the *Limmudei Kodesh* department.

The analysis of questionnaire responses from parents and carers indicate that the overwhelming majority of parents are extremely supportive of the school although a significant minority disagree that the school provides a good range of Jewish extra-curricular activities, visits and special events.

The school effectively promotes community cohesion. Examples include pupils' involvement in the annual walk to raise funds for HKMS (Hospital Kosher Meals Service), regular visits to residents in SAGE Nursing Home and an annual visit to the East End to distribute *mishloach monos*. In addition, a group of non-Jewish children with severe disabilities were invited to join in a school assembly.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Pikuach invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Menorah Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspectors received 133 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 245 families registered at the school

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	80%	20%	-	-

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
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Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Pikuach inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills at any given point in time.
- Progress:** the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.