

North Cheshire Jewish Primary school

Inspection report

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| Local authority | Stockport |
| Inspected under the auspices of | Pikuach |
| Inspection dates | 2 nd and 3 rd December 2013 |
| Lead inspector | Sandra Teacher |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | 246 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Andrew Joseph |
| Headteacher | Joseph Kelly |
| Date of previous Pikuach inspection | 2007 |
| Address | St. Anne's Road North Heald Green Cheadle, SK8 4RZ |
| Telephone number | 0161 282 4500 |
| Email address | info@northcheshire.stockport.sch.uk |
| School website | www.ncjps.org.uk |

Introduction

Inspection team

Sandra Teacher Lead Inspector

Leon Bernstein Team Inspector

This inspection was carried out by two inspectors. They visited **9** lessons or parts of lessons including *tefillot* (prayers). They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of children. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including children's written work, teachers' lesson plans, the Jewish Studies curriculum, the school's self-evaluation document and the school's improvement plan. This Pikuach inspection was carried out at the end of the five year cycle, the school previously being inspected in 2007.

The inspection team looked in detail at the following:

- The Jewish education curriculum
- The progress pupils make in Jewish education
- The quality of teaching in Jewish education
- Leadership and Management in Jewish education
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including collective worship.

Information about the school

North Cheshire Jewish Primary School was founded in 1970 and is located in the leafy suburbs of Heald Green, within the Stockport Local Authority. It is situated on a large purpose-built campus, with separate buildings for Early Years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The school has a strong Zionist ethos and teaches with a traditional centrist orthodox approach to Judaism. The school stresses amongst its core aims the intention, "to give children confidence and pride about their Judaism and have a strong identity regarding their own community and the State of Israel." Pupils come from all areas of South Manchester. There is a wide range of ability, with 22 pupils having special educational needs, which is below the national average and 23 children who speak English as an additional language, although none of them are at the early stages of English learning.

Inspection judgements

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| Overall effectiveness | 2 |
| The achievement of pupils in their Jewish education | 2 |
| The quality of teaching and assessment in Jewish education | 2 |

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| The extent to which the Jewish education curriculum meets pupils' needs | 2 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development including the duty to fulfill the daily act of collective worship | 1 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of Jewish Education, including through partnerships | 2 |

Overall effectiveness:

The quality of Jewish education provided in the North Cheshire Jewish Primary School is good because:

- The school is successful in meeting the aims of its' Mission Statement.
- Pupils make good progress in their Jewish Studies education and in particular in their Hebrew reading and writing.
- The provision for Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development is outstanding because it is an inclusive community. There is a focus on and enthusiasm for Jewish life and Jewish Studies in particular.
- The school works closely with their families and local neighbourhoods which creates a strong family community.
- Behaviour is impeccable and pupils' attitudes to learning helps to support their good progress.
- The Headteacher and Governors provide visionary leadership and strongly support the new Head of Jewish Studies in moving the school forward.
- The focus on festivals is outstanding and is embraced by all staff throughout the school to support high standards in learning.
- The strength of the curriculum, including *Ivrit*, is that it enables each child to develop a strong Jewish identity of which they are openly proud.
- Displays around the school promote the Jewish ethos of the school.
- The school fulfils the statutory duty of collective worship.

It is not yet outstanding because:

- Teaching is not yet consistently good because it does not sufficiently meet the needs of individuals or groups of pupils.
- In Jewish Studies, systems of assessment do not emulate the rigorous standards in the secular department.
- The Head of Jewish Studies has only been in position since the beginning of the year. He has drafted a very good action plan, but has not as yet had sufficient time to implement it.
- Marking is insufficiently evaluative and therefore pupils do not always know how to improve their work.
- The Jewish Studies curriculum does not fully embrace the philosophy of the Early Years Teaching & Learning, including making full use of the outside area.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To further develop effective tracking systems across Reception to Year 6 which includes a rigorous baseline for each child in all aspects of Jewish Studies and which supports the setting of challenging targets which are monitored termly.
- To ensure that the teaching and learning of Jewish Studies is set within the context of the seven areas of learning within the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- To continue to develop the teaching and learning of the Jewish Studies curriculum within an integrated relevant curriculum.
- To ensure consistently good teaching within Jewish Studies and *Ivrit*.

Achievement of pupils at the school in their Jewish education is good.

Achievement and progress is good for all pupils. Those with special educational needs make the same good progress as their peers and achieve well in their Jewish education.

The Early Years Foundation Stage gives the children a good start to their Jewish education. They are beginning to learn about *Shabbat*, *Chagim* and the stories contained in the weekly *parashah*, and how these are linked to *middot*.

Inspectors were very impressed with the detailed knowledge base that older pupils had about the festival of *Chanukah*. Here clearly, all the adults who work with pupils are contributing to learning in Jewish Studies. However, the greatest strength is pupils' sense of identity and pride, which celebrates diversity both within Judaism and between different cultures. Music and song reinforce the *tefillot* they experience first thing in the morning but, rather than being part of a standard service, the pupils sing the songs for pure enjoyment. Key pupils lead the service and recite the *havdalah* blessings.

Pupils make particularly good progress in reading Hebrew. Recognising this as an area for development, the school has put in place a system whereby every pupil is taken out individually to read. However, progress is not always as strong as it could be due to a lack of effective tracking and therefore targets are not always set to help pupils know how to progress in their learning. Learning *Ivrit* also contributes to pupils' knowledge base and even the children in Reception are easily able to understand directions in Hebrew given by the teacher and to respond in Hebrew. Throughout the school, there are signs in both languages to reinforce the reading recognition and the acquisition of key vocabulary.

The integration between Jewish education and daily learning is an area the school is working hard to develop. Some very good examples were seen during the inspection visit, such as the Key Stage 2 *Chanukah* Plays, learning about yeast in Science and then baking *challot*. There are strong links with the literacy curriculum, art and music and design technology. There is clear evidence that the pupils' subject knowledge builds effectively on prior learning. So, for example, in *tefillah*, the pupils had to identify and work out for themselves the Hebrew words from familiar roots.

There is outstanding use of Information and Communication Technology within Key Stage 2 to support good creative learning. Year 6 pupils were able to research independently and find out information for themselves regarding Jewish Fast Days. Pupils agree that there is, "Lots of interactive stuff using iPads and Netbooks."

School leaders recognised that general knowledge needed further input, so have introduced a weekly Jewish Studies Challenge Question. A Year 2 pupil won the award this week for knowing about *Al HaNissim*. This initiative has been greatly enjoyed, with a high level of participation.

The quality of teaching and assessment in Jewish education is good.

- The reason the inspectors reached a judgement of good quality teaching was because they took into account the overall learning experiences of the pupils fostered by every aspect of school life. This included assemblies involving the teaching of *Tefillah* and *Middot*. Visitors to the school enhances pupils' learning about *Chaggim*, for example, the *Matzah* Baking Factory to learn the *dinim* around *Pesach*. The use of interactive displays covers a wide range of topics: such as when learning about *Rosh HaShanah*, the classroom teacher made a display of apple and honey to represent New Year resolutions. Visits to Israel and the Jewish Museum also reinforce other aspects of their Jewish learning.
- The quality of teaching of Jewish Studies in classroom lessons is not always consistently good. In the good lessons seen, particularly in the older classes, pupils were engaged in the activities. For example, they made good use of role play when learning about Joseph and his brothers. Younger pupils when learning about Jewish artefacts which had been hidden in a bag, could identify their uses. Some lessons require improvement because they are not planned well enough to meet the differing needs of either individuals or groups of pupils and often the more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged.
- There is an emphasis on the use of worksheets at Key Stage 1 and this restricts creativity.
- The teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage for Jewish Studies and *Ivrit* requires improvement because the planning does not consider the seven areas of learning and is insufficiently child centred.
- The teaching of *Ivrit* at Key Stage 2 is well planned and executed with lively sessions and a strong focus on reading and writing. With the implementation of the new National Curriculum, and *Ivrit* as a Modern Foreign Language, focus will now shift to developing more fluency in speaking and understanding.
- The school has agreed that assessment in Jewish Studies is an area for development and will build in systems so that every pupil knows what it is they are expected to learn and also how to improve.

The extent to which the Jewish education curriculum meets pupils' needs is good because:

- The Jewish Studies curriculum "seeks to transmit Jewish values, knowledge and skills." The school does this via "Hebrew language, The Jewish way of life, The Jewish year, *Tefillah*, *Torah* and the Land of Israel."
- The Jewish Studies curriculum has good cross-curricular links that are given to the main classroom teachers in order to allow for inclusion within non-Jewish Studies lessons. For example, class teachers produced outstanding presentations on the Festival of *Chanukah* where every single pupil had a role to play which deepened their knowledge and understanding. It was particularly moving to hear the stories of Jewish heroines, Channa Senesh and Helen Keller.
- The school is beginning to use the Jewish Curriculum Partnership material, but it has yet to have its full impact because assessment systems are not fully in place.
- Practical activities enrich the curriculum, such as the *Havdalah* evening and *Shabbat Minyan*.
- The school may wish to consider, at the request of some of the parents, a Jewish Studies family learning programme so that some parents can be more supportive in helping their children with their Jewish Studies.

The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Behaviour is outstanding because pupils think deeply about their own and others' experiences and try to relate them to a clear set of personal and Jewish values. This was seen in the form of collective worship in an Assembly, when Jewish values, visiting others in the local community and having a positive attitude themselves and others was a central theme which underpinned the clear message of respect for themselves and for each other. The new Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, confirmed this on a recent visit, and in his honour the children sang two *Chanukah* songs, in preparation for performances later that week.

Pupils are very polite and respectful of each other because all adults act as good role models. This was seen in the corridors, in the dining room and in the lessons themselves. The children were aware of, and respectful of, other cultures and of the range of practices within Judaism as seen when they were interviewed at random within their peer groups and with children of other ages. They could identify, for example, different customs at *Pesach*, *Rosh Hashana* etc. and showed an admirable tolerance of those whose practices differed from their own.

All pupils and staff celebrate the vast amount of Jewish activities taking place throughout the year, including *Siddur* ceremonies, *Chazak* Week (supporting their Jewish identity whilst developing their understanding of other religions and cultures), Funky Fed Day (supporting children in the Jewish community with special needs), the 'North Cheshire DED Coffee Shop' initiative (inviting senior members of the community into the school) and the 'Israel Experience'/'Made in Manchester' week.

All children were fully engaged in all aspects of school life in a respectful way as a result of clear expectations and routines set by the Leadership team and all staff. Behaviour in and around the school was impeccable because children all knew boundaries and had clear expectations set by the Head, the leader of Assembly, the staff and the older children.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of Jewish education is good.

The school is to be praised for the appointment of a new Head of Jewish Studies, who is also the Deputy Head of the school, who in a short space of time has worked closely with the Headteacher and Jewish Studies Governor to put a rigorous Development Plan for Jewish Studies in place. The new Head of Jewish Studies has already made an impact on many aspects of Jewish learning within the school. He is working tirelessly to embed new teaching and learning practices as well as reviewing the curriculum in order to ensure that the allocated hours for Jewish Studies are used in the most effective way possible.

The Headteacher shows an outstanding drive and commitment to Jewish Studies and is working closely with the Head of Jewish Studies in order to ensure that the same rigorous standards that are expected throughout the school also apply to Jewish Studies and *Ivrit* lessons. Jewish Life is clearly integrated within all aspects of school life, with the Headteacher and Head of Jewish Studies looking for cross-curricula links to blend secular and Jewish education. This is something that pupils like and is clearly a strength of the school. For example, the Key Stage 2 *Chanukah* plays focus this year on heroes. These plays have been developed by the main classroom teachers with some Jewish input from the Jewish Studies teachers. All staff are fully engaged in the Jewish life of the school and this helps to create a true community atmosphere as demonstrated when a non-Jewish teacher wished the children "*Chag Sameach*" at the end of the school day.

Since the new Head of Jewish Studies has been appointed, it is clear that he has spent a tremendous time forging links with other schools and educators in order to help ascertain what is considered as 'best practice' as well as what should be included and excluded from the Jewish Studies curriculum. In addition, the school has good links with local Rabbis and the Jewish and non-Jewish communities who are involved in the Jewish life of the school.

The support that the governors give to Jewish Studies is outstanding. They have appointed a link governor to work with the Headteacher and Head of Jewish Studies in further developing the Jewish education within the school. This link governor is not only involved in strategic development, but also gives of her time to come into the school on a regular basis to support Hebrew reading and other activities. The governors are very aware of the challenges that exist within Jewish Studies and *Ivrit* and work in a supportive manner together with the Headteacher and Head of Jewish Studies in order to ensure their development.

It is clear that staff, pupils, parents and governors are overwhelmingly supportive of the Jewish ethos of the school.

Views of parents and carers

Pikuach used the recent school parent survey and their own on line questionnaire. Parents were generally positive in their answers to all the questions and said:

- "We like the way the school balances children from different Jewish backgrounds."
- "A lovely school which encourages the pupils to treat all as part of one big family."
- "My child enjoys learning about Judaism and has a strong Jewish identity."

Glossary

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. |
| Grade 2 | Good | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. |
| Grade 3 | Requires Improvement | A school requiring improvement is not providing adequately for its pupils. |
| 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. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |