

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This inspection was carried out under Section 23 of the Education (Schools) Act 1996. The purpose of the inspection was to report on:

- the educational standards achieved in Jewish Studies (*Limmudei Kodesh*) in the school
- the quality of Jewish education provided
- the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and the school
- the arrangements for collective worship

Other aspects of the school's work were inspected under Section 10 of the Education (Schools) Act 1996 and reported separately.

### 1.2 Basic Information about the School

Name of School:	Clore Shalom Primary School
Type of School:	Voluntary Aided Mixed
Age Range of Pupils:	3 -10
Headteacher:	Mrs Irene Kay
Address:	Hugo Gryn Way, SHENLEY,Herts, WD7 9BL
Telephone no:	01923 855631
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Chair of Governors:	Mr Michael Burman
Co-ordinator of Jewish Studies:	Mr Marc Shoffren
Name of Religious Adviser::	None
Name of Foundation Body:	Governors of the Clore Shalom Primary School
Local Education Authority:	Hertfordshire County Council
Reporting Inspector:	Mr John Gordon
Team Inspector:	Mrs Jean Shindler
Dates of Inspection:	13 -15 June 2001 22 - 24 Sivan 5761

### 1.3 The School, its Catchment Area and Pupil Intake

Clore Shalom Primary School is a recently established one-form entry voluntary aided Jewish primary school situated in the south of Hertfordshire. Like its sister Clore Tikva Primary School in Redbridge the school is one of a small group of pluralistic Jewish primary schools in this country.

The school draws the greater part of its pupil intake from the Jewish communities living in the public housing estates and private residential areas in the satellite towns of south Hertfordshire bordering on the Greater London conurbation. Most of these pupils live within five miles of the school.

The policy of the school is to ensure that places are only offered to children of a Jewish parent who demonstrates a commitment to a pluralist approach to Judaism and support for the ethos of the school or to the children of non-Jewish parents who can demonstrate an involvement in recognised religious activities and support for the ethos of the school.

The school opened on the present site in September 1999 in an existing building which was extensively adapted to provide suitable accommodation for the first phase of its development. This accommodation is now in the process of being extended to provide a new purpose-built block for its Nursery and Reception classes, completion of which is likely to be in the early part of the school year 2001-2002.

At the present stage in its development, the school has a nursery class offering 30 part-time places, a reception class and, in Key Stage 1, one full-size class in each of Years 1 and 2. In Key Stage 2, there is currently a full-size class in Year 3 together with half-size classes in Years 4 and 5.

It is the policy of the school to integrate work in the Jewish Studies curriculum as far as possible with work in the National Curriculum subjects. An L.A.Pincus Foundation grant for funding for the development of a pluralist integrated Jewish Studies curriculum and materials development project was approved in 2000. Hebrew is taught as a modern foreign language for which the school is developing its own teaching materials and resources. Existing class teachers are involved in teaching both the Jewish and secular curricula.

In addition to its Jewish Studies curriculum the school also has a separate Religious Studies curriculum whose purpose is to give pupils an understanding of the beliefs and practices of other major world faith communities as part of their general spiritual, moral and cultural development. This is based on the recently revised Hertfordshire Religious Education Agreed Syllabus. It is the policy of the school to act as a Jewish resource for the other schools in the area using this syllabus.

### 1.4 School Data and Indicators

**Number of Pupils:** The total number of pupils in the main school and nursery is 179, representing a full-time equivalent of 164 pupils. The nursery has 30 part-time pupil representing a full-time equivalent of 15.

**Teaching Staff:** At the time of the inspection the school had 11 teachers including the Headteacher. Of these six are full-time and five part-time, representing a total full-time equivalent [FTE] of 8.4 teaching staff.

Since the school's policy is to run an Interactive Jewish Studies curriculum taught by all classroom teachers, there are no full-time teachers of Jewish Studies. Approximately 70% of the teaching load of the Co-ordinator of Jewish Studies is spent directly on the subject, the rest of his timetable being devoted to teaching secular subjects or to other duties as a member of the school's senior management team. All class teachers are involved to some extent in Jewish Studies but it is difficult to quantify with any degree of accuracy precisely what proportion of each teacher's time is involved. There is no full-time teacher of Hebrew; the present Hebrew specialist teaches part-time for 0.6 of the week.

**Class sizes:** Jewish Studies and Hebrew are normally taught in whole class groups of approximately 30 pupils. There is some remedial teaching in Hebrew in small groups for a small number of pupils, mainly in the current Year 4/5 class.

**Teaching Time per week:**

Class	Hebrew	Jewish Studies
Reception	2 hrs 30 mins	3 hrs 15 mins
Year 1	2 hrs 25 mins	2 hrs 30 mins
Year 2	1 hr 45 mins	2 hrs 45 mins
Year 3	2 hrs 40 mins	2 hrs 25 mins
Year 4/5	2 hrs 05 mins	4 hrs 00 mins

The total weekly teaching time for combined Hebrew and Jewish Studies in the Nursery Class is approximately 2 hours 30 minutes.

**1.5 Record of the Evidence Base of the Inspection**

The inspection was carried out by a team of two inspectors over three days beginning on Wednesday 13 June 2001, three weeks after *Shavuot*. The Section 10 inspection of the school by an OFSTED team had taken place three months previously, beginning on 12 March 2001.

During the present inspection, observation was undertaken in 21 separate lessons, amounting to 38 timetable periods, as follows:

Class	Nursery	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4/5
Lessons	2	3	3	3	3	8

Of these six were Jewish Studies lessons, nine were Hebrew lessons and six were lessons in other subjects of the secular curriculum into which some element of Jewish subject matter had been integrated. These latter were lessons in Literacy [4], ICT [1] and Music [1]. There was no opportunity to see lessons in other subjects such as History, Geography or Art in which similar interactive work may also take place. Samples of children’s work, including written work, were examined.

Collective worship (*Tefillah*) was observed five separate assemblies; attention was given also to the movement of children about the school and in the playground.

Discussions took place with the Headteacher, with the Deputy Head concerning the school’s policy and practice in Assessment, Recording and Reporting and the marking of pupils’ written work, with the Co-ordinator of Jewish Studies and the specialist Hebrew teacher and other members of the teaching staff. Prior to the inspection, there was a meeting of parents with the inspection team who also had a meeting on another occasion with the Chairman and certain members of the Governing Body.

School policy documents, the school development plan and other information about the organisation and management of the school, as well as budget figures as they affected the provision of Jewish Studies and Hebrew teaching were all examined both prior to and during the inspection. Parents’ written responses to questionnaires on Jewish Studies and Hebrew teaching in the school were collected and scrutinised.

## 2. SUMMARY

### 2.1 Main Findings

1. Since the inception of the school a great deal of effort by the Headteacher and her senior staff has been devoted to the development of a curriculum for Jewish Studies and Hebrew that is in full accord with the ethos of the school.
2. Sound progress has been made in formulating the general aims and objectives of the Jewish Studies curriculum and in seeking to integrate them into the delivery of the secular curriculum.
3. The strength of commitment of the Headteacher and all her staff to the ethos and curricular goals of the school is very evident. In this they are excellent role models for the children. They ensure that throughout the school there is a strong emphasis on upholding moral values and behaviour, stressing both their Jewish and universal character.
4. Pupils' attitudes and responses to their Jewish Studies and the religious life of the school are very positive.
5. The quality of most of the Jewish Studies teaching observed was at least satisfactory and, in the case of half the lessons seen, good. Childrens' progress and achievement in most Jewish Studies lessons seen were sound when judged by the school's expectations and in two of the lessons were good.
6. Regular sampling and monitoring by the Co-ordinator of Jewish Studies of integrated lessons with a Jewish Studies element should continue so as to ensure the accuracy and quality of Jewish factual knowledge is maintained.
7. Close attention should continue to be paid to children's written work in Jewish Studies with feedback adequate to prevent error reinforcement and to ensure improvement.
8. The high adult/pupil ratio in Jewish Studies classes ensures that pupils with special educational needs are well supported and helped to make satisfactory progress.
9. The teaching seen in two-thirds of the Hebrew lessons was good or very good. The high quality of the teaching of Hebrew as a living oral language achieved by the specialist teacher provides an excellent methodological model for all her colleagues. Children's progress and achievement in two-thirds of the lessons seen were at least satisfactory and in three of the lessons observed were good or very good.
10. Present approaches to the teaching of Hebrew reading to pupils experiencing difficulties need to be reviewed. A study of the techniques and methodologies used in other literacy and reading schemes would be beneficial.
11. Further refinement and development of present procedures and instruments for the assessment of both children's progress and difficulties in the acquisition of Hebrew reading skills should continue. This would facilitate further improvement in individual target setting for children experiencing difficulties.
12. The school's daily assemblies and collective worship are of a high standard and quality. The encouragement of family presence and participation at the end-of-week *Kabbalat Shabbat* assemblies is

a major strength of the school. The school complies fully with the requirements of the Education Reform Act 1988 regarding daily acts of worship.

## **2.2 Key Issues**

1. The school should continue to review and develop its Jewish Studies schemes of work paying particular attention to making clear how progression is to be achieved in topics and themes which recur year on year.
2. Staff development should use all opportunities to improve the Jewish Studies factual knowledge base of all teachers.
3. The school should ensure that it acquires and produces Hebrew reading materials in sufficient quantity and variety to promote Hebrew reading skills' acquisition by all pupils.
4. The school should continue to develop its procedures for identifying the specific difficulties of pupils with problems in learning to read Hebrew. It should identify techniques for improving the progress of such pupils and of measuring that progress.

## **3. STANDARDS IN JEWISH EDUCATION**

### **3.1 Achievement and Progress in Jewish Education**

3.1.1 A large proportion of the original intake of Clore Shalom Primary School has transferred into the school from other, non-Jewish, primary schools. In the school's judgement many of these children seem to have received little or no previous Jewish education and many have come from homes where levels of formal observance and knowledge of Jewish religious practice are very variable.

3.1.2 At the present stage in its growth the school is thus faced with a dual task in developing its syllabuses and schemes of work for Jewish Studies and Hebrew. The prime task is to evolve appropriate curricula and expectations for those children who will spend the full number of years of statutory primary education in the school, extended by time spent in the Foundation Stage classes.

3.1.3 In relation to the expectations of the school, attainment and progress in almost all these lessons were at least satisfactory, with two good lessons being seen in the Reception class. Where progress was less than satisfactory in one lesson in another class, it was due more to the limitations in the quality and quantity of some of the resources being used. In yet another class (Year 3) it was because the unimaginative nature of the task and the quality of the outcome did not justify the total amount of lesson time devoted to it.

3.1.4 The school also has to take into account how to meet the needs of those older children who have entered the school part of the way through their primary education. They will have a more limited amount of time in which to acquire some degree of proficiency in Hebrew and to be given a grounding in Jewish belief and practice before they reach the point of transfer to a secondary school. Levels of expectation and performance for some of these children seem to be lower than one would hope to find, especially in the acquisition of basic reading skills in Hebrew.

3.1.5 It is the policy of the school to rely more on oral discussion, drama and art than on written work as the main medium of learning and reinforcement in Jewish Studies. Nevertheless pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 have some opportunities for creative writing or reporting and recording the results of

discussions in their Jewish Studies. Some examples were seen in the exercise books scrutinised during the inspection. In some of these, the quantity of such work appeared to be small and most of what was seen was not headed or dated.

3.1.6 **Hebrew** is taught primarily as a modern foreign language with the main emphasis placed on developing children's listening comprehension skills and active oral speaking skills, above all in the Nursery, Reception and Key Stage 1 classes. Attainment and progress in two-thirds of all Hebrew lessons observed were satisfactory or better and in one-third of them good or very good. Children for the most part respond with enjoyment to oral work in the simple situational contexts in which new material is introduced. Most are able to use new vocabulary and structures in simple statements and reply fluently and confidently in question and answer work.

3.1.7 Hebrew reading and writing skills are progressively introduced from the beginning of Key Stage 1 when children are secure in the oral language they have acquired. Attainment in most classes is broadly in line with the school's expectations as expressed in its Draft Hebrew Attainment Targets. The exception to this, however, is the present Year 4/5 class where many pupils are still experiencing difficulty with letter recognition and in decoding Hebrew words. This limits the progress that they make in many lessons because they are unable satisfactorily to access the work set.

3.1.8 There are a small number of children in the school for whom Hebrew is their mother tongue. There is some differentiation of work for them in Hebrew lessons, particularly during the group activity phase. Two Hebrew-speaking parent volunteers come into certain lessons to help these children with this work but the school acknowledges that suitable arrangements are not yet in place to ensure adequate planning and preparation.

### **3.2 Pupils' Attitudes, Behaviour and Response to Jewish Studies**

3.2.1 The response of most pupils to their Jewish Studies lessons was good. In the Nursery, Reception and Year 1 classes in particular children showed precisely the kind of lively interest and personal involvement in their work that one would hope to see at their age and stage.

3.2.2 Where timetable constraints oblige Jewish Studies lessons to be placed in longer blocks of time in the afternoon, many children find it difficult to maintain concentration. This was particularly true of two separate lessons seen on the Friday afternoon. In the Reception class children became a little restless having sat too long on the carpet. In the Year 3 class the task set did not satisfactorily occupy most of the children for the duration of the lesson time.

3.2.3 It is evident that most children thoroughly enjoy their Hebrew language lessons and respond with enthusiasm to the brisk pace of the lesson, the stimulating techniques, language games and varied activities that are an integral part of the work in this subject. Comments in the questionnaire responses received from parents amply confirm this.

3.2.4 Children's behaviour in class and in the daily life of the school is in general commendably good and it is clear that the issues of morality and belief presented to them in their Jewish Studies lessons and in school assemblies have meaningful significance for them and the way they conduct themselves.

### **3.3 Collective Worship**

#### *Provision*

3.3.1 The arrangements for daily worship (*tefillah*) enable the school to comply fully with the requirements of the Education Reform Act 1988 for a daily act of collective worship. Each day begins and ends with a prayer taken from the *Birkat ha-Shachar*, said either collectively in the hall or in the classroom. Daily assemblies are held for the main school in the assembly hall and on Wednesdays in the Summer Term the Reception class is also included. These assemblies are led by the Headteacher, generally assisted by the Jewish Studies Co-ordinator and the specialist Hebrew Teacher.

3.3.2 Class teachers sit close to their classes and take an active role by joining in with their children, setting a good example of participation and, at the same time, leading and encouraging children's participation.

3.3.3 No opportunities were observed for pupils to lead *tefillah* in these assemblies but they do make a major contribution to the *Kabbalat Shabbat* assembly on Fridays when there is usually a strong attendance by parents and relatives.

3.3.4 There is a separate daily assembly for pupils in the Foundation years led by their teachers and a separate *Kabbalat Shabbat* for nursery children and their parents and relatives on Friday mornings.

#### *Planning and Content*

3.3.5 These occasions are a strength of the school. The Headteacher sets a high standard in terms of content, participation and behaviour. Most pupils join in enthusiastically during *tefillah* and behaviour is very good.

3.3.6 The school's assemblies are intended to provoke thought and reflection. Their prime purpose is to convey a moral message to the children and stimulate an understanding of the connection between Jewish tradition and text and the children's own experiences. The liturgical content is largely drawn from a limited repertoire of the most important *tefillot* (common prayers) in the *Siddur* (Daily Prayer Book). There are plans gradually to widen the range of prayers in use and, as they assume meaning for the children, to increase opportunities for pupils to take lead roles in leading prayer.

## **4. QUALITY OF JEWISH EDUCATION**

### **4.1 Teaching**

4.1.1 The quality of almost all the Jewish Studies teaching seen was satisfactory and often of good quality. Where teaching was good, the teacher used a variety of strategies appropriate to the task and developmental stage of the children, had clearly explained objectives and allowed adequate time for children's tasks to be completed.

4.1.2 Where teaching was not satisfactory, it was because the teacher's initial explanation of the aims of the lesson was unclear, took too long to put over and left many children confused about what the subject matter was and what the task consisted of. The class teacher and the Learning Support Assistant then had to take up further time repeating all this to children individually before they could begin work.

4.1.3 For the most part the teachers' knowledge base was adequate for the topics they were teaching. However, some instances were noted where a teacher's knowledge was insecure in important factual detail and to an extent that could affect a later lesson. Careful monitoring by the Co-ordinator and careful self-monitoring by teachers themselves would avoid such situations.

4.1.4 Good teaching was seen in particular with the Nursery, Reception and Year 1 classes and also with Year 5 pupils. In a Year 1 lesson about the migration of Patriarch Abraham and his wife Sarah from Haran to the Promised Land two teachers used a well-planned team-teaching approach to good effect, with a variety of activities to retain the interest and attention of the children. This resulted in the successful completion of a diorama as a concrete reminder for the children of what they had just learnt.

4.1.5 Good and effective cross-curricular Jewish Studies teaching was also seen in Literacy lessons with the Year 5 group. In one of these, an examination of the biblical story of Joseph afforded good



opportunities to the teacher to get the pupils to discuss the moral issues involved, empathise with the different characters in the story and record their impressions by the device of diary writing.

4.1.6 Almost without exception, the quality of Hebrew teaching seen was of a good or very good standard, especially where the main objective was the development of children's listening comprehension and oral speaking skills. The teacher's expectations of pupils were high, the pace of the teaching was brisk and demanded the full attention, alertness and involvement of all children throughout.

4.1.7 Most of this teaching took place in the *Pardess* (the name given to the specially equipped Hebrew language-teaching room) where the school's specialist Hebrew teacher acted as lead teacher. The regular class teacher accompanied each class and participated in the teaching, generally most actively during the group activity stage of the lesson. The class Learning Support Assistant was also present and, with some classes, a volunteer adult helper too. Thus the adult-to-child ratio tended to be high and this provided opportunities for a high degree of adult help, guidance and stimulus during group work.

4.1.8 Individual lesson planning in these lessons was sound, generally following a standard pattern. Objectives were clear and where a new feature was being introduced, the teacher had chosen the linguistic material very carefully so as to avoid overloading the children, restricting the vocabulary to the essential for dealing with the topic or grammatical structure in question. This was usually immediately followed up with some form of active language game to test and reinforce comprehension.

4.1.9 The school's Draft Hebrew Attainment Targets set out a year-on-year programme for introducing basic Hebrew reading skills, progressively developing and extending them as children move through the year groups from Reception to Year 6.

4.1.10 Teaching of reading was seen in lessons in all classes from Reception onwards. With the Reception class and Years 1 to 3 a portion of the initial stage of each Hebrew lesson was devoted to dealing with some reading skill issue: recognition of individual consonants and vowels, discriminating between them, practising their phonic values, decoding single words, leading up to the reading aloud of short phrases or sentences. These were all carefully related to contexts and situations well familiar to children and printed word, phonic values and visual illustration were always kept in close association.

4.1.11 The group activity stage of these lessons provided useful opportunities for reading reinforcement work. Good use was seen being made of a LanguageMaster machine which plays back the soundtrack recorded on the tape strip embossed on sets of Hebrew reading flashcards. Other groups were seen looking at 'Big Books' with simple Hebrew story captions whilst listening on headsets to the soundtrack on a cassette being played on the Listening Centre playback machine.

4.1.12 The school has shown enterprise in building up its own bank of recordings of the texts of Hebrew 'Big Books' by adapting suitable books of this kind with original captions in English. However, care should be taken with pointing so as to minimise the chances of error reinforcement when children read from them without expert teacher supervision.

4.1.13 From Year 4 onwards the school's declared aim is to teach the reading of not only Modern Hebrew but also the Hebrew of the Siddur, including practising reading the Siddur as a text on a regular basis. In fact, no extensive teaching of this kind with the present Year 4/5 pupils was seen during the inspection. As explained in para 3.1.4, currently some older pupils have entered the school with little background Hebrew knowledge, this seems to be directly related to the generally low level of Hebrew reading performance of many in this group and the special problems that they are experiencing with letter recognition and decoding of whole words. One group seen seemed not to know the names of the letters of the Aleph-Beth and so did not have this basic aid to identifying the phonic value of Hebrew consonants.



4.1.14 Only a more systematic and intensive approach to the development of Hebrew reading skills will ensure that the school's aims are fulfilled for this group of pupils as for all others before they reach the point of transfer to secondary school. Many useful and relevant techniques can be found in other reading teaching programmes including those for English as a Second Language,

4.1.15 In their Hebrew and Jewish Studies teaching, as well as in assemblies, almost all the teachers made effective use of published and imaginative self-made two-dimensional visual aids. Some use of three-dimensional artefacts was also seen.

4.1.16 In Hebrew language lessons frequent use of cassette recordings of Israeli popular music was made not only to create a lively atmosphere but also to signal the end of one learning activity and the transition to another phase of the lesson. Good use of guitar accompaniment to singing was also made in assemblies and some of the Jewish Studies lessons seen.

## **4.2 Assessment, Reporting and Recording**

4.2.1 Assessment, marking, reporting and recording procedures for the school are standardised across the whole curriculum. Practice in Jewish Studies and Hebrew is meant to be consistent with that for other subjects.

4.2.2 A sample of Jewish Studies written work in a number of children's exercise books selected by the school was scrutinised for quality of marking and correction. In accordance with recommended current practice and the school's policy, no indication of any mark or grade for individual pieces of work was seen in the books though for some of them the teacher had written a short encouraging comment. Where errors were indicated by the teacher, there tended to be no written note by the teacher to show what was needed to correct the error or make improvements. This does not give the child satisfactory feedback. Nor could it be seen from these books to what extent written correction or improvement was being done by children or followed up later by the teacher. Some correction is done by children on small whiteboards but this leaves no permanent record for children to refer to later.

4.2.3 Some evidence of the recording by the specialist Hebrew teacher of levels of attainment and progress of some pupils was seen. Where this related to reading skills, mostly in connection with the recognition and decoding of individual Hebrew letters or consonant or consonant/vowel clusters, it clearly had a diagnostic value in determining children's rate of progress, in identifying children's difficulties and in helping set targets for them. The range of feature being noted could be further elaborated and more systematic use could be made of them. There is scope for using an adult Hebrew reading helper or a suitable Learning Support Assistant working under the direction of the specialist teacher for this task.

## **4.3 Quality and Range of the Curriculum**

4.3.1 Since its inception the school has been developing its own Jewish Studies curriculum which is intended to be interacting as far as possible with the work being undertaken in the subject areas of the secular National Curriculum. Opportunities for cross-curricular interaction have been taken with regard to Literacy, Art, ICT, Music as well as History and Geography. They have not been sought with regard to the teaching of the Religious Education syllabus.

4.3.2 The Jewish Studies curriculum encompasses the study of Jewish History, Jewish texts, Israel and the Jewish people of the Diaspora, and Jewish Belief and Practice. It places a very high premium on the importance of the key concepts of *tzedakah* (giving of charity), *tikkun 'olam* (setting the world to rights and concern for the environment), and *gemilut hassadim* (practical performance of good deeds). Pupils are reminded of them again and again each day during lessons, school assemblies and collective worship.

4.3.3 Sound progress has been made in formulating the general aims and objectives of this Jewish Studies curriculum but there are other issues still to be addressed. For example, the Topic Map contains the barest of detail ; no real guidance and more precise indication are given to show what progression is envisaged from year to year, as children go up the school, when planning projects and classwork about each of the annually recurring cycle of Jewish religious festivals. Nor is there any indication of what progression is envisaged from year to year in dealing with Feelings and Emotions in the Spring Term programmes of all classes from the Nursery to Year 3.

4.3.4 Similarly, the detail of the timing and the order in which topics are presented and interact across the whole curriculum would benefit from more thought and critical review. There are instances where the order in which topics are dealt with and presented to pupils seems to be arbitrary and lacking in logic, making it difficult for the children themselves to see any connection between the subject matter of successive lessons.

4.3.5 This was certainly evident when, during two days of the inspection, the Year 4/5 class had successive lessons on two quite disparate subjects. One dealt with the Jews of Cochin and the other with the ownership of property in Jewish law. As this class had apparently been studying India during the previous term, it might have been logical from the point of view of cross-curricular integration for the topic of the Cochin Jews to be dealt with then.

4.3.6 Also integral to the curriculum is the teaching of Hebrew, in the first instance as the common language of the modern Jewish world but also with an appreciation of its role as the ancestral language of prayer, the Torah and the Prophetic Writings and other sacred literature that make up the Jewish Bible.

4.3.7 At the present stage of development of the school, the major emphasis has been on developing children's ability to listen to and understand simple conversational modern Israeli Hebrew and to give them confidence in being able to reply to everyday questions and make their own statements in simple Hebrew. These broad objectives are sound and the resulting performance of children in these skill areas is generally of gratifying quality and to the evident satisfaction of the majority of parents.

4.3.8 Some interesting initiatives have been taken in devising materials for developing pupils' basic Hebrew reading skills in classes up to and including Year 3. However, since the school has reservations about using many of the published Hebrew readers for beginners available in this country, a critical limiting factor is the school's present capacity to produce from its own resources a greater variety and quantity of suitable graded reading material for different ability groups.

#### **4.4 Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development**

4.4.1 A major strength of the school is the care and attention it gives to the spiritual and moral development of its pupils. This is inspired by the Jewish values that are fundamental to the school's ethos and guide the work of the school in all it does.

4.4.2 To help promote the spiritual and moral development of pupils, the school stresses these Jewish values at every opportunity. They are highlighted in the classroom, in assemblies, on wall displays and through the behaviour of adult members of the school community. The Headteacher together with the staff act as excellent role models for the children.

4.4.3 One delightful expression of this aim is the *Mitzvah* Tree frieze which is a noticeable feature of the main hall of the school. It is a constant visual record of positive behaviour and helpfulness to others by the child and adult members of the school community. This and the many other displays relating to Judaism and Jewish values, together with the quality of the Hebrew notices around the school including the entrance and other communal areas, are a constant reminder to all pupils, staff and visitors of the Jewish dimension and ethos of the school.

4.4.4 Pupils and staff show a high level of respect and concern for each other and for the belongings of others and school property. This is reflected in the physical environment of the school which demonstrates a high level of cleanliness and tidiness. It was noteworthy too that older pupils, learning how ancestral laws concerning the returning of property were discussed in the Mishnah and Talmud, were able to see how far these Jewish values underlie the school's Lost Property policy today.

## **4.5 Equality of Opportunity**

4.5.1 The school operates an Equal Opportunities policy, both in regard to equal access to the curriculum and to the treatment of pupils in the classroom, thus fulfilling the school's pluralistic ethos of promoting tolerance and respect for all in practice as well as in theory. As part of the pluralistic ethos of the school, boys and girls are given equal opportunity to participate in all Jewish religious practices.

4.5.2 Teachers are sensitive to the needs of children whose first language is not English and most seem to cope well in class. Children with special educational needs are also supported by the school's policy of ensuring that the class teacher and support staff are actively involved in the Hebrew and Jewish Studies lesson.

## **4.6 Support, Guidance and Welfare**

4.6.1 The school provides a safe and secure environment for all its pupils and this is in complete accord with its Jewish ethos. The policy of providing a Learning Support Assistant for each class ensures a high level of practical and personal support for all pupils both during lessons and through the rest of the school day. Effective site security measures are in constant operation.

4.6.2 The size of the school makes it possible for the Headteacher to know all the pupils and their families and this gives confidence to parents when they wish to approach the school on matters of concern. The school's policy of responding to parents by telephone or in person, rather than in writing, is highly effective.

## **4.7 Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs**

4.7.1 There are currently 32 pupils with special educational needs, one of whom has a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The Headteacher also fulfils the role of Special Needs Co-ordinator in the school. In general, provision for children with special educational needs is good. The high staff/pupil ratio ensures that pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make satisfactory progress.

4.7.2 The specialist teacher of Hebrew does not participate in review meetings but is well informed about pupils' special needs through weekly meetings with the Headteacher. The Hebrew teacher produces a Register of Special Educational Needs in learning Hebrew to supplement the normal one produced by the main school with regard to National Curriculum subjects.

4.7.3 Information about pupils including those with special educational needs is disseminated at the daily early morning staff meeting. Teachers' planning takes into account the need for differentiation for children with special educational needs and children who are gifted and talented.

## **4.8 Partnership with parents and the Jewish community**

4.8.1 Parents are involved in many aspects of the school's activities including making resources and aids for teaching Hebrew and hearing children read Hebrew.

4.8.2 The school produces an excellent weekly newsletter for parents and this includes a summary of the *Parashah* for the week and 'Table Talk', a suggestion for a discussion at the Shabbat table. It also includes a mention of the child or adult member of the school community who has been awarded the weekly *Mitzvah* leaf, the Hebrew Word of the week and information about work that children are doing in class. The beneficial value of this information was highlighted by parents at their meeting with inspectors prior to the inspection.

4.8.3 In addition, the school runs a programme of family education events throughout the year and this has been well supported by the schools' families and a number of local synagogue communities.

4.8.4 The school is building up solid links with other schools, both Jewish and non-Jewish.. Through participation in initiatives set up by the Centre for Jewish Education (CJE), the school's Jewish Studies and Hebrew teachers have made mutually beneficial contacts with colleagues in the Clore Tikvah and Akiva Primary Schools on matters of curriculum and methodology. The school also acts as a resource for other schools studying Judaism within the framework of the local Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.

4.8.5 A link has also been made with a school in Israel and it is hoped that this will develop further in the future through class-to-class e-mail contact and other common interests and projects.

4.8.6 The school's outside links encompass the local general community as well as the wider Jewish community. Pupils have visited the Morton House Old Age Home in Hemel Hempstead.

## **5. MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL AND THEIR IMPACT ON JEWISH EDUCATION**

### **5.1 Management**

5.1.1 The senior management team of the school consists of the Headteacher, her Deputy and the Co-ordinator of Jewish Studies, a fact that emphasises the importance of the Jewish dimension in the whole curriculum of the school. They, the staff and the Governors of the school are all deeply committed to the idea that inspired its original promoters: building a Jewish school with a pluralist, inclusive and egalitarian approach to Judaism and Jewish education.

5.1.2 Now, at the end of the second year of the school's operation, the most obvious impact of this aim can be seen in the firmly established set of Jewish and universal moral values and standards which so strongly infuse the informal curriculum of the school, its Jewish Studies policy and those of the other subjects of the secular curriculum with which Jewish Studies interacts.

5.1.3 To ensure that the school can develop its Jewish Studies provision along pluralist lines, the school put up a proposal and funding bid to the L.A.Pincus Foundation in Israel for a two-year curriculum and materials development project over the period September 2000 – July 2002. This has received approval in principle but, at the time of the inspection, no funding had yet been received from that source.

## 5.2 Staffing, Resources for Learning and Accommodation

### *Staffing*

5.2.1 The school is at present adequately staffed with class teachers though, in the case of the present Year 3 and Year 4/5 classes, class teaching can only be covered by employing part-time teachers who share the load. All but one of these are qualified teachers. Part of the teaching timetable of the Co-ordinator of Jewish Studies is also currently devoted to teaching Year 5.

5.2.2 It is the school's policy to integrate work in Jewish Studies and National Curriculum subjects as far as possible. Thus whenever a vacancy for a class teacher occurs, it needs to appoint teaching staff who are also able and willing to teach Jewish Studies in this interactive context. At least some minimal competence in Hebrew is also required.

5.2.3 There are learning support assistants for all classes and this ensures a good adult/ pupil ratio in all year groups. Whenever the children of any year group come to the *Pardess* for a Hebrew lesson with the specialist teacher, both their class teacher and learning support assistant normally join them.

### *Learning Resources*

5.2.4 The school is gradually building up its stock of resources for the teaching of *Ivrit* and Jewish Studies. At this stage, the main school library contains very few books in Hebrew and very few books for Jewish Studies in either English or Hebrew though class libraries contain a limited number. The main stock of story and resource books in Hebrew is kept in the *Pardess* which is where they are most used at present. As pressure on the *Pardess* as a teaching base increases with the growth of the school, the school could consider placing duplicates of many of these books in the main school library. This could then, if necessary, function as a space for developing extensive reading in Hebrew.

5.2.5 Learning and teaching materials for Hebrew are largely concentrated in the *Pardess*. Since the school has expressed considerable reservations about many of the published Hebrew language course materials currently available, it is currently engaged in developing and producing its own. In the light of its expectations for the development of Hebrew reading skills in pupils in year 5 and the future Year 6, the school should consider whether it is building up a sufficient variety of suitable simple graded Hebrew reading books, in sets of sufficient number for group reading.

5.2.6 The range and potential of much of the teacher-made teaching resources seen for *Ivrit* is proof of the enterprise of the staff concerned. Review and quality control of the accuracy of the Hebrew text is vital to establishing the value of this material.

5.2.7 During the course of the inspection, valuable use of audio and visual equipment (such video players and the overhead projector) to enhance the impact of Hebrew and Jewish Studies lesson material was observed. Interesting use was made of computers and computer software to allow pupils to learn how to create a database relevant to a Jewish Studies topic.

### *Accommodation*

5.2.8 There is a main multi-purpose school hall which can be divided off by a screen of folding panels from a smaller *Beth Tefillah* (prayer hall) which has an *Aron Kodesh* (Torah Ark) with its own Torah scroll. This ensures that there is adequate space for a whole school assembly or separate assemblies for both the main school and the Foundation Stage classes.

5.2.9 The school's arrangements to devote one spacious classroom (the *Pardess*) solely to the teaching of Hebrew are good. This serves as the main teaching base of the specialist Hebrew teacher where resources can be concentrated and it is the room to which all classes except for the Nursery class come for their Hebrew lessons.





### **5.3 Efficiency of the School**

5.3.1 The school has access to the services and facilities of both the Centre for Jewish Education (CJE) and the Agency for Jewish Education (AJE) for help and guidance on resources and methodology. It has also had support from the Melton Centre in Jerusalem in connection with staff in-service training.

5.3.2 There is a generic document defining the roles of all subject co-ordinators in general terms but no specific job description was seen defining the precise duties of the Co-ordinator of Jewish Studies in relation to his subject responsibilities. Neither was one seen defining the precise role and duties of the specialist Hebrew teacher.

5.3.3 The Co-ordinator should be monitoring the integrated work of class teacher colleagues more frequently, especially where their Jewish Studies knowledge base needs to be made more secure. Occasional joint team teaching of a lesson often provides a less formal way of doing this than by direct observation and affords opportunities for improving knowledge levels during joint lesson planning and post-lesson analysis. One lesson of this kind (see para.4.1.4) was seen during the inspection.

5.3.4 Present arrangements in the ICT room do not make it easy for a full class of 30 children to work efficiently. The room as at present laid out only has room for 10 work stations, at each of which only two children at a time can normally work comfortably. If a third pupil is added, s/he has to sit behind the others. As was seen in one Jewish Studies/ICT lesson in the room, it is harder for this third child to feel involved in the practical work at the keyboard and screen and interest and concentration were easily lost.