

# Yavneh College

## Inspection report

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<b>LEA</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspected under the auspices of</b>	Pikuach
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8 -9 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jeffrey Leader

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary Aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11-18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	711
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Susan Nyman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr Dena Coleman
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 -14 May 2008
<b>School address</b>	Hillside Avenue Borehamwood Hertfordshire, WD6 1HL
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8736 5580
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8953 2749
<b>Email address</b>	admin@yavnehcollege.herts.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two inspectors. They visited 14 lessons including enrichment and *'Lunch and Learn'* sessions, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, attended *davening* and looked at documentation which included the school development plan, the school's self-evaluation for Jewish Studies, lesson plans, reports, curriculum for Jewish Studies and relevant resource materials.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The provision of Jewish education in Yavneh College.
- The quality of pupils' learning in Jewish Studies.
- Leadership and Management in relation to Jewish Studies.

## Information about the school

Yavneh College is a modern orthodox, co-educational, Jewish high school, which is a member of the United Synagogue family of schools under the religious auspices of the Chief Rabbi. It celebrates the existence of the State of Israel as being central to Jewish life. All the pupils attending Yavneh College are Jewish.

The school opened in 2006 and its original cohort is now in Year 11 and will form the school's first 'home grown' sixth form in the academic year 2011/2012. The present sixth form opened in September 2008 so that the school could offer A level teaching. Its pupils come from a mixture of maintained, independent, selective, comprehensive, Jewish and non-Jewish schools.

Many parents have a professional or business occupation. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. There are no *Looked after Children*. 3% of pupils have English as a second language.

The school has been oversubscribed since it opened.

## 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

Yavneh College is an outstanding school which has many significant strengths:

- pupils attain high standards in Jewish Studies
- pupils make significant progress in Jewish Studies from their starting points when they join the school.
- pupils greatly enjoy coming to school.
- pupils behaviour is outstanding in Jewish Studies lessons and around the school.
- pupils are well-prepared for the next stage in their Jewish learning.
- pupils with specific needs are well supported.
- the school places equal emphasis on the high quality personal development of pupils.
- the school provides a very safe and caring learning environment.
- most of the teaching in Jewish Studies is good or outstanding.
- the focus on text-based learning is a strength of the school.

The Headteacher, Head of Jewish Studies, Deputy Headteacher and staff have worked very hard to create a stimulating Jewish learning environment for all pupils. The demonstrable strength of relationships between staff and pupils means that Jewish learning is at the heart of the school.

Leadership at all levels in Jewish Studies rigorously monitors and evaluates the quality of its work.

Effective partnerships with others promote Jewish learning and well-being and enhance pupils' personal development.

A stimulating enrichment and informal education programme contributes greatly to the Jewish learning and ethos of the school.

There are some of pupils, including those in top sets, who cannot read Hebrew accurately.

*Tefillah* (prayer) is a negative experience for many pupils.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

Improve the quality of provision by:

- Looking for more ways to inspire the pupils in their *tefillah*.
- Achieving its aim of all pupils leaving as fluent Hebrew readers, by developing specific Hebrew reading criteria to assess pupils' accuracy and fluency in their reading.
- Continuing to evaluate and develop the Jewish Studies curriculum to further challenge the more able pupils.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

<b>1</b>
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Attainment on entry to the school varies. Most pupils have attended Jewish primary schools and arrive at Yavneh College with a range of Jewish knowledge and skills. However, more than 20% arrive from non-Jewish schools with very little in the way of Jewish learning. It is much to the school's credit and the 'catch up' systems it uses that many of these pupils make excellent progress moving from the lowest to the highest set during the course of a year. 'Catch up' enrichment classes are appreciated by pupils who enter the school with little background Jewish knowledge.

Pupils, make excellent progress in their Jewish studies when measured against the aims and objectives of the Jewish Studies Department's Units of Work and against its specially devised standards in place for Key Stage 3 pupils. This includes pupils both with and without specific learning difficulties and those pupils identified as Gifted and Talented.

Pupils achieve well because of the consistently high quality of teaching and because of their own very positive attitudes to learning. The school measures each student's attainment by test and examination results and the progress they make relative to their starting points and the personal targets that the school sets for them. Pupils work well together in pairs or groups on tasks, providing mutual support for each other. In some lessons they contribute to the assessment of their own and the work of others which helps them determine how to reach the next steps. Most are fully focused on achieving as well as they can.

Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils display a set of values that lead them to show respect for others although first hand experiences of life in a British, diverse, cultural society is currently more limited.

The school complies with statutory requirements by providing daily acts of collective worship. These take the form of a compulsory, twice weekly, *Shacharit* (morning) service for Years 7-9 and a daily *Mincha* (afternoon) service for all year groups. There is also a voluntary *minyan* held before school which is attended and led by a small number of pupils.

Although the school claims that '*Tefillah* (prayer) will develop our pupils' spirituality' there is

little evidence that this is taking place. There is evidence, from direct observation of assemblies, pupils' questionnaires and discussions, that a substantial number of pupils gain little from the 'prayer experience'. The school is thus faced with a dilemma. On the one hand it realises that by making *tefillah* compulsory pupils will at least be gaining important skills enabling them to 'know their way around the *Siddur*' (prayer book) and an ability 'to participate when attending Jewish events.' On the other hand many pupils are developing a negative attitude towards Jewish prayer which could hinder their spiritual development. Many pupils have suggested that they would view *tefillah* more positively if teachers explained to them the meaning of the prayers they were reciting. The school, through its own questionnaires and discussions with pupils is aware of this issue and has set up a *Tefillah* Working Party to address it. Engagement in *tefillah* is an on-going challenge for most traditional orthodox Jewish schools and not just Yavneh College.

The school's ambitious aim is for 'all of our pupils to leave as fluent Hebrew readers' but in some cases there is a need for further work to ensure complete accuracy. The school needs to give reading more emphasis by tracking the progress of individuals in order for the school to achieve its high expectations in Hebrew reading.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>To what extent do pupils feel safe?</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>How well do pupils behave?</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?</b>	<b>1</b>
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teachers have high expectations of pupils in their Jewish studies and their teaching is never less than good and often outstanding. In the most successful lessons, pupils are motivated by a range of teaching styles which engages them all in their learning. For example, an outstanding Year 7 lesson on *Purim* explored, through pupil created, scripted drama, the emotions and dilemmas of the main characters in the *Purim* story. Another outstanding example was in a Year 9, top set lesson, where pupils were creating their own *Haggadah*. The objectives in this lesson were clear and met the needs of all pupils. Research on the internet was carried out with pairs of pupils constructing explanatory paragraphs which they later shared with each other.

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

In most lessons, teachers use questioning very effectively in order to assess how well pupils have learnt a concept and give immediate feedback to them. Pupils are confident to participate and give extended answers to questions. Their very positive attitudes and behaviour are key features in the majority of lessons and make a strong contribution to their good learning. Teachers and pupils enjoy warm relationships in a climate conducive to learning. Targets and assessment information are used very well as part of teachers' ongoing monitoring and planning for next steps in their pupils' Jewish learning.

The Jewish Studies curriculum is very well balanced and provides a range of pathways to meet the needs of all its pupils. Jewish Studies at Yavneh College is almost all textually based and is taught in sets from the outset, according to ability, not background. Pupils in higher sets tend towards the use of original texts and wide-ranging sources while those in lower sets also study texts but at a more basic level. This focus on text-based learning is strength of the school. All Year 7 pupils participate in a Basic Jewish Knowledge foundation course during *Talmud (Rabbinic discourse)* lessons for their first two terms. From Years 7 – 9 the Jewish Studies curriculum focuses on learning *Tenach* (Jewish Bible), *Talmud* and Jewish History. Schemes of work to support these programmes are divided into units of study with each unit containing lesson objectives, assessment tasks, and links to other subjects in the wider school curriculum. These three areas of curriculum are supplemented by short-term studies related to the Jewish festivals. The school runs also a successful *Bet Midrash* Programme (BMT) for advanced pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. This takes place at lesson times, enrichment times and after school. BMT pupils are taught the same curriculum as their peers but at a more advanced level textually. From Year 10 onwards the curriculum focus transfers to GCSE and A Level Jewish Studies components. The school should now evaluate what is very much an outstanding curriculum and consider extending the more able pupils even further.

The rich choice of curricular and extra-curricular activities available ensures that there are opportunities for all to participate in enrichment programmes.

The school has a vibrant, informal Jewish education programme which enhances pupils' Jewish experience with a wide variety of activities including sleep-over *Shabbatonim*. It uses external organisations and partners such as Tzedek and JCORE to provide specific expertise and backing. In partnership with the UJIA, the school runs the Yoni Jesner Award which provides approximately 60 pupils with the opportunity to do volunteer work within their local Jewish and non-Jewish communities. The school runs a range of programmes and events to mark the *Chagim* (festivals)

The school conducts an annual Israel Trip for Year 9 pupils. The trip is linked to both the *Tenach* and Jewish History curriculums which bring to life what pupils have learned in the classroom. The school organises also an annual Poland Trip for Year 12 students which links effectively with the Year 12 *Yahadut* programme. The trip focuses on Polish Jewish Heritage as well as the Holocaust. One student claimed that her trip to Poland was '*the best 5 days of my life.*'

Leaders and managers provide for the well-being of pupils, working successfully in partnership with a range of outside agencies. Parents are kept well informed about the work of the school. Advice for pupils is very effective and they are helped by their teachers to make suitable choices in relation to university, *yeshiva* or seminary education.

The *Lunch and Learn* sessions are outstanding with pupils meeting either in small or large groups to learn various topics. Discussion is facilitated by teachers or *Bnei Akiva* recruits.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
The use of assessment to support learning	1
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

A very strong senior leadership team has been developed over time which has contributed to a culture of collaboration and support for staff to reach the goal of high achievement. The leadership of the Jewish Studies Department is excellent and the Head of Jewish Studies receives outstanding support from the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. Excellent management systems are in place, resulting in consistency in the monitoring and evaluation of Jewish studies teaching. The governing body provides effective support and challenge. Safeguarding arrangements are very robust and thorough, and are a very high priority for the school.

Partnerships with the local authority and other external agencies are excellent. The school regularly surveys both parents and pupils so that it can improve provision and make them feel that their voice is important. Data is analysed rigorously to ensure that all pupils are making the expected progress in their Jewish studies.

There are many opportunities for pupils to make a positive contribution to the Jewish and wider community. They select three charities to support each year, a non-Jewish British charity, a Jewish British charity and an Israeli charity. They display active citizenship by participation in social action projects, such as the school's 'Yad Yavneh' soup kitchen initiative.

Pupils make a very positive contribution to the school community, especially through the school council which has representatives from each form who make suggestions about how to improve provision in the school. Examples include setting up a scheme to recycle the school's paper waste and drawing up sanctions for pupils who repeatedly end up with items in lost property. The council undertook also a survey of creative and independent learning in a number of lessons. A pupil panel formed part of the interview process for Assistant Headteachers in Key Stages 3 and 4 and a *Bet Midrash* teacher in May 2010.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>



<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>
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## Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>NA</b>

## Sixth form

Yavneh's home grown sixth form will not become a reality until 2011/2012. Consequently, the present sixth form has transferred in and is small in number. Nevertheless, the provision in Jewish Studies is excellent.

The high quality of teaching and learning is appreciated by sixth form students who recognise the range of teaching strategies employed which make lessons engaging and appropriate to the course level.

The sixth form's Jewish Studies curriculum is in three parts, A-Level and *Yahadut and Bet Midrash*. The A-Level is comprised of Jewish Scriptures and Judaism. This is an A-Level option that has proven quite popular so far and compliments the school's Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 curriculum. All students are required to participate in the *Yahadut* programme which is made up of three hours a week. One hour is where students study source sheets in pairs in preparation for a speaker session during the second hour. The third hour is a volunteering (*chessed*) session which is a part the Head of 6<sup>th</sup> Form's 'Stepping Up Programme'. The sixth form also has a *Bet Midrash* Track which offers three hours per week of high level textual learning in preparation for further study at *yeshiva* and seminary.

<b>Outcomes for students in the sixth form</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The quality of provision in the sixth form</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management of the sixth form</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>1</b>

## Views of parents and carers

Pikuach invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Yavneh College 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 53 completed questionnaires. Parents are mostly supportive of the school and what it is trying to achieve in relation to their children's Jewish education. A significant minority however, are critical of the school's approach to *tefillah*.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
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' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- 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.

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