

King David Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

LEA	Birmingham
Inspection dates	30 April – 1 May 2007
Inspected under the auspices of	Pikuach

This inspection was carried out under section 10 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of School	Primary	School address	244 Alcester Road
School category	Voluntary Aided		Birmingham
Age range of pupils	3 - 11		B13 8EY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 449 3364
Number on roll	245	Fax number	0121 449 3364
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Dr Michael Wolffe
Date of previous inspection	2002	Head teacher	Mr Steve Langford

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Introduction

Description of the school

King David School is the only Jewish school in the Midlands. Pupils come from different backgrounds, with different levels of knowledge and Jewish experience. The school caters for a variety of children ranging from non- Jewish (Muslim: 50%; other denominations: 15%) to the most religiously committed Jewish pupils (All strands of Judaism: 35%). Its purpose is to provide and imbue the school community with a strong moral focus based on the orthodox teachings and practices of Judaism. Some parents travel considerable distances each day to ensure that their children are able to access all that King David has to offer.

Its pupils reflect the multi-ethnic reality of the city of Birmingham. During Jewish Studies lessons the children are divided into two groups referred to as *Limmudei Kodesh* (Jewish Studies) and the Parallel Group. Generally, but not exclusively, children who identify themselves as Jewish will usually attend *Limmudei Kodesh* lessons while all other pupils attend the Parallel Group lessons.

Although some Parallel lessons were observed, the main focus of this inspection was on the provision for Jewish children in *Limmudei Kodesh*.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Unsatisfactory

What the school need to do to improve further:

Formalise a system of assessment and ensure that marking is consistent and more informative.

Adapt the Jewish Studies curriculum to meet specifically the needs of King David pupils to ensure that it develops progressively each pupil's knowledge and understanding of Jewish religion, observance and practice.

Develop long term planning so that Jewish Studies staff can see an overview of what each year group is expected to achieve during the course of a year.

Investigate ways in which local and national Jewish resources could be accessed and used to support Jewish Studies teaching.

Overall effectiveness in its provision for Jewish education.

The Jewish Studies department of the King David Primary School is good overall. It works closely with teachers of secular subjects so that, wherever possible, secular and Jewish Studies subjects complement each other and re-enforce, in the pupils, a strong sense of their Jewish identity. Practical examples of this collaboration are to be found in subject areas such as music and art.

The strength of the Jewish Studies department lies in the leadership shown by the department's head and the long term commitment of its staff to impart Jewish knowledge, skills and understanding at a level that meets the needs of the majority of their pupils. In this they are ably supported by the school's secular staff.

The school knows itself well and in this respect has a clear idea of how to improve its provision in Jewish Studies.

Relationships between pupils and Jewish Studies staff are very good and enhance the sense of togetherness which pervades the school.

There is an effective partnership between the head teacher and the Head of Jewish Studies and this ensures that pupil progress and teacher effectiveness are not restricted to the school's secular activities but realistically encompasses all aspects of Jewish life and learning.

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards

Whilst pupils' prior knowledge and attainment vary considerably, most, including those with learning difficulties make reasonable progress in line with the school's expectations as they advance from year to year. Reading was variable with some pupils able to read accurately at speed while others sometimes struggled with letter and vowel combinations. Year 6 pupils surprisingly and pleasingly would welcome more individual reading practice.

Nursery children receive a good foundation for Jewish learning which incorporates singing, letter recognition and practical Jewish activities such as laying the table for Shabbat.

In testing, a Year 2 representative group, pupils were able to answer questions on a variety of Jewish topics including festivals, *brachot* (blessings) and the Hebrew months of the year. They were less secure in their knowledge of *Torah* (Bible) and had difficulty in recalling information learned from their *Parshah* (weekly Bible readings) sheets.

Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils enjoy and demonstrate considerate behaviour and positive attitudes. The behaviour of the pupils in Jewish Studies and throughout the school is very good.

Staff and pupils enjoy a good relationship. Pupils are respectful towards their teachers and other adults on the premises.

Observations of lessons, assemblies, scrutiny of pupil surveys and discussions with them show that they enjoy their Jewish learning and are proud of their Jewish identity.

There are daily acts of collective worship both in morning assembly and after lunch in which all pupils, Jewish and non-Jewish participate. Most pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of the basic *tefillot* (prayers). The introduction of *davening* (praying) assemblies for Years 5 and 6 has given children independent, *davening* skills, which are put into practice on Friday morning assemblies when these children enjoy the opportunity to say the *Amidah* (standing prayer) on their own.

Choir practice demonstrated enjoyment and development in many areas of Personal, Social, Citizenship and Health Education. (PSCHE)

A significant strength of the school is its ability to include children and families of different cultures within a strong Jewish ethos.

The learning environment is safe and secure. There are rules in place to ensure safe practice in the school. All members of staff are aware of, and follow, the school's Health and Safety and Child Protection Policies.

Grade: 1

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Where the previous report was quite critical of teaching, this inspection has found a vast improvement in this crucial area of activity. No lesson seen was less than good with teachers displaying many hallmarks of good practice including lesson preparation, effective questioning and good classroom management skills. There was sometimes a tendency for teachers to rush the end of a lesson.

The last report complained of 'an apparent lack of commitment among Jewish Studies staff.' Inspectors this time were impressed by the deep commitment shown not only by Jewish Studies teachers but also by other relevant stakeholders including the head teacher, the Head of Jewish Studies and the Governing Body.

Teachers think about their lessons and plan accordingly. However, some lesson plans highlighted more what teachers were going to do in the lesson rather than what they expected their pupils to achieve.

When reporting to parents on their children's progress in Jewish Studies, teachers' initial comments sometimes refer to what the class as a whole has achieved. They then tend to concentrate on the child's nature or behaviour rather than describing what the child is able or unable to do in specific Jewish subject areas.

Teachers use different strategies to assess pupil progress such as effective questioning or recording regular test results. Information on pupils' Individual Education Plans is shared with the Jewish Studies Department and taken into account when setting standards for achievement.

Each classroom has a designated Jewish display area which is used to good effect with up-to-date, attractive displays on current topics and festivals.

There has been an improvement in the provision of resources since the last inspection. Jewish books are to be found in different areas of the school but there did not appear to be any Jewish books in the library. The school needs to invest in a wider range of Jewish books, for example those on modern Jewish history and centralise them in order to make them accessible to pupils and to raise the profile of Jewish Studies still further.

The *Chagim* (Jewish festivals) are celebrated in school.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

This was a major issue during the last inspection. Inspectors felt that what existed at the time did not give 'teachers adequate guidance' on how to take Jewish learning on to a higher level. There was no reference to what children at each stage of their development should be expected to know and do.

Collaboration with a Jewish school with a similar multi-ethnic intake has produced a curriculum for King David that gives much clearer guidance about what levels pupils are expected to achieve within a particular year group. The Head of Jewish Studies is currently adapting this curriculum so that it is suitably matched to the specific needs of the pupils of King David and takes account of their varying levels of attainment on entry to the school and the wide range of standards of religious knowledge and observance of the families that the school serves.

On the advice of the Head of Jewish Studies, the school has become part of the Jewish Studies Curriculum Partnership (run by the Agency of Jewish Education) which has resulted in a *Parshah* (weekly Bible readings) Curriculum being introduced into each class for one hour a week.

The Head of Jewish Studies is one of the initiators of the Northern Forum for Heads of Jewish Studies, which aims to share ideas and resources and provide support for each other. This is supported by the Curriculum Partnership.

The curriculum is fairly broad and balanced and reflects the values of the school by providing a solid foundation of Jewish knowledge and textual skills, while implanting Jewish attitudes, beliefs and practice. There are some good examples of integration

with the secular curriculum including music and art. Formal lessons for the teaching of *Ivrit* (Modern Hebrew) supplement the teaching of Hebrew reading and writing.

The school recognises that the teaching of Hebrew reading is of prime importance but struggles to identify voluntary support that would help to reinforce individual pupil's Hebrew reading skills. Pupils have indicated in discussion with the inspectors that they would welcome an extension of opportunities to continue practising Hebrew reading skills to higher levels.

Extra-curricular activities would enhance the formal curriculum and in this respect the school has just begun an Israel Club.

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support

The provision for pupils' care, guidance and support is good. The school has clear policies on Health and Safety and Child Protection. Most pupils are very happy at the school and enjoy their lessons. They feel very safe and secure and know to whom they should turn in the event they have a problem. The Head of Jewish Studies is a qualified counsellor. She is particularly sensitive in looking after the general wellbeing of the children. Parents often call on her to support children through loss, or other difficult times.

The quality of marking of pupils' work needs to improve so that pupils are made aware of what they do well and what they need to do in order to improve.

Transition planning meetings between the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), parents and the Head of Jewish studies to consider individual children with special educational needs ensures that Jewish Studies is inclusive and accessible to all pupils who enter the school.

Good links exist with parents and outside agencies to support the school's work. Parents' questionnaires received by the inspectors reveal that parents are mainly satisfied and show support for the way the school attempts to achieve its Jewish Studies aims. Some parents felt that better use could be made of local Jewish resources to support learning, particularly in *Ivrit* (Modern Hebrew). Others would like to see homework in Jewish Studies given on a regular basis.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of Jewish Studies are good. The head teacher is responsible for raising the profile of Jewish Studies and is very supportive of the Head of Jewish Studies who is responsible for the improvement in all areas of Jewish education within the school. They, in turn, are well supported by the governing body which is committed to the school's aims which include providing 'an environment in which all children are enabled to reach their full potential within the framework of the

National Curriculum, developing emotionally in a happy and caring Jewish atmosphere.’

Since taking on the role fifteen months ago, the Head of Jewish Studies has done much to address the many concerns highlighted by inspectors during the previous inspection. Together with the head teacher she has broken the barrier that once existed between the secular and Jewish Studies staff. Now both sets of teachers work in tandem to give many areas of study a Jewish flavour. Jewish display is prominent throughout the school and is both attractive and up-to-date. Planning meetings are held on a weekly basis and Jewish Studies teachers are given a clear idea of what they have to do. The Head of Jewish Studies is aware of the importance of monitoring her staff and has begun the process but with a fairly full teaching commitment this is still at an early stage of development.

The Head of the department met with the Heads of Jewish Studies in two other schools in order to learn about their format of assessment with a view to introducing such a system to King David. This is one of the longer-term goals for the department.

The school is very supportive of leadership training and the Head of Jewish Studies is currently participating in the Ashdown Fellowship, a prestigious community leadership programme. It would be useful if Jewish Studies staff could take advantage of local authority courses in time management and integrating curriculum.

Grade: 2