

# King David Primary School

## Inspection report

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LEA	Liverpool LEA
Inspection dates	19 <sup>th</sup> 20 <sup>th</sup> December 2007, 9 <sup>th</sup> 10 <sup>th</sup> Tevet 5768
Inspected under the auspices of	Pikuach

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

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Type of School	Primary	School address	Beauclair Drive
School category	Voluntary aided		Liverpool Mersyside
Age range of pupils	4-11		L15 6XH
Gender of pupils	mixed	Telephone number	0151 722 3372
Number on roll	410	Fax number	0151 738 0136
Appropriate authority	The King David Foundation	Chair of governors	Mrs L Lesin Davies
Date of previous inspection	11 <sup>th</sup> – 13 <sup>th</sup> June 2003	Headteacher	Ms Rachel Roberts

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## Introduction

### Description of the school

The King David is a Voluntary Aided Jewish Primary School serving the Jewish Community of Liverpool and the wider locality. There are 410 pupils on roll of whom 25% are halachically Jewish, coming from homes which, to varying degrees follow Jewish traditional practices. The numbers of halachically Jewish pupils attending the school has dropped by ten per cent since the last inspection in June 2003 and in the main, this reflects the changing size of the Liverpool Jewish Community. Jewish Education, which includes Jewish Studies and *Ivrit*, (modern Hebrew) is taught from an orthodox perspective to the Jewish pupils and takes place in the Greenhill wing of the school. All other pupils are taught Religious Education following the Liverpool Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. Most Jewish pupils attend the adjacent private Jewish nursery before starting the school in the Reception Year, and in Year 6 around 90% of the pupils transfer to the King David High School, which is also on the same site. The school is looking forward to a planned total rebuild in 2010 when the Primary School and the High School will be in linked buildings. The school appointed a new Headteacher from September 2007

### Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of its provision for Jewish education**

Maintaining the Jewish ethos of the school within a context of declining numbers of Jewish pupils is one of the main concerns of the Headteacher and of the Jewish Education teachers. High quality daily Infant assemblies and weekly Junior singing assemblies for all the pupils enhance the Jewish ethos effectively and familiarise the non-Jewish pupils with the Jewish calendar and the corporate celebrations within the school. *Ivrit* is the language of some displays in the Infant hall and is taught in transliteration in the Junior singing assembly where the pupils learn Israeli songs. During the inspection, good quality art displays related to Hanukah were in many corridors and several classrooms; these provided by the National Curriculum teachers. There were no displays or links to the Jewish ethos in the Reception Year classrooms.

The extremely good behaviour of the Jewish pupils in the Jewish education lessons, their willingness to work and their positive attitude are key features of the school. For example, pupils in Year 6 enthuse about the somewhat informal style of the Head of Jewish Education, describing these lessons as "great" and "exciting." Relationships between the pupils are good.

The school rightly evaluates that standards are satisfactory, with some pupils exceeding the school's expectations and others not attaining these. The school evaluates the achievement and progress of the pupils to be good, but inspection evidence is that the pupils' achievement and progress are only satisfactory, the discrepancy due to some imbalances in the provision that prevent the pupils achieving as well as they might.

The impact of the teaching on the pupils' learning is satisfactory overall, even though many individual lessons are of a good quality. This teaching is diluted in part by the timetable, with follow-up lessons that can be nearly one week apart and therefore continuity and the momentum of learning is difficult to maintain. The teaching and assessment practices identified in the school's self- evaluation for accelerating learning are not implemented consistently.

The curriculum for Jewish Education has been improved since the last inspection but remains in need of considerable refinement. Attention needs to be given to ensure that what is included meets the needs of the pupils and promotes high standards. Links between the Jewish Studies and the *Ivrit* curricula are lacking, particularly in relation to the development of reading and writing, with skills taught in one subject not being practised or consolidated in the other. This lack of cohesion reduces the impact of the teaching and inhibits the pupils' progress. The inclusion of more *Chumash* (biblical texts) into the curriculum, a key issue from the last inspection, has taken place, but it is not clear how much time is devoted to this. The Headteacher is intending to link the National Curriculum planning more closely with the Jewish Studies curriculum, a key issue for action from the last inspection.

The curriculum is supported by a good range of enrichment activities that significantly enhance the pupils' enjoyment of their learning and their future wellbeing by extending their knowledge of traditional Jewish practices. There is little

continuity in the provision between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and some good practices started in Key Stage 1, such as the weekly written explanation and questions related to the *sidrah* (weekly Torah portion) for parents and children to discuss together are not continued in Key Stage 2.

The pastoral care, guidance and support has been a priority and is of a good standard. Academic monitoring of the pupils' progress is well established at Key Stage 1 but it is at an early stage of development in Key Stage 2. The process of identifying individual targets for the pupils' future learning is not established.

The Head of Jewish Education has been deflected from pursuing aspects of this leadership role, such as rigorously addressing the key issues from the previous inspection, through a perceived need to address other priorities. Governors have been very supportive of the Jewish Education, but they have not been sufficiently demanding or rigorous in their monitoring, such as by setting deadlines for actions. The Headteacher has invigorated and professionalized the department by structuring the development planning. Of the five key issues for action from the last inspection, all have been mainly completed or are planned for action, but elements such as monitoring the pupils' progress and setting individual targets for future learning remain areas for improvement.

Although the school fulfils its statutory duty in relation to Collective Worship, the lack of daily morning *tefillah* (Jewish Prayer) sessions for Jewish Key Stage 2 pupils is a weakness, inhibiting the pupils from fulfilling their potential and limiting their ability to participate in adult Jewish life.

There is planned professional development for the Jewish Education staff, alongside the National Curriculum staff, in teaching techniques designed to accelerate pupils' learning and this should supplement their good subject specific skills. Training in the use of computerised interactive whiteboards and the purchase of these resources for the Jewish education department are planned.

The provision for the Reception Year children in the school is not in accordance with current guidance on how young children learn and should be taught. These children are making good progress in their knowledge of Hebrew letters and they enjoy their lessons. Relationships with their Jewish Studies teachers are good and the children feel safe and secure in these lessons, but they are working in too formalised a manner without planned opportunities for developing independence. Activities are not linked together sufficiently, nor are there planned support activities that children can choose from in order to explore and consolidate their Jewish learning.

The Jewish learning of the children in the Reception Year is fragmented by being confined to the Jewish Studies lessons and morning assembly and is cut off from their activities within their main classroom. They lack opportunities to explore their Jewish learning further at other times of the day and to express their Jewish identity within their main classroom, such as through role play.

## Grade: 3

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils are attaining the standards of which they are capable through developing a system for monitoring their progress, assessing their learning and identifying their targets for future learning that is coherent with current procedures used by National Curriculum teachers.
- Refine the Jewish Studies and *Ivrit* curricula so that they are integrated, particularly for developing the basic skills of Hebrew reading and writing, they meet the needs of the pupils, have appropriate time allocations for each element, and convey the appropriate information to the teachers who deliver them.
- Provide staff development through training and observing good practice in other Jewish schools with a particular focus upon the Foundation Stage and upon providing cohesion, continuity and progression within the Jewish Education provision.

### Achievement and standards

The school's self-evaluation document perceives children's baseline Jewish knowledge and attainment upon entry to the school to be lower than it was ten years ago but states that there is no assessment data to support this statement. Nor did it give any indication of the impact of the feeder Jewish nursery from which most pupils transfer.

The school's self-evaluation also identifies that in general, most pupils at all stages are significantly less knowledgeable than ten years previously in both Judaism and *Ivrit*. The school has no data upon which to either substantiate or dispute this statement.

Hebrew reading skills are of prime importance for the pupils' future Jewish wellbeing and the pupils appear to make steady progress in these skills. Most children in the current Reception Year recognise the first few letters of the aleph-bet and by Year 2 most are consolidating their knowledge of the final letters. By Year 6 almost all pupils said that they can read Hebrew accurately, and two thought that they read fluently, reflecting similar standards to those identified at the time of the previous inspection.

The inspectors largely agree with the school's view that overall, standards attained by most pupils at all key stages are satisfactory when judged against the expectations of the school. Overall achievement, however, is judged to be satisfactory rather than good though it is clear that some pupils do achieve better than this and many more might do so if more challenging targets were set in some parts of the Jewish Studies curriculum, in written work and in *Tefillah*.

Factors that impede achievement are:

- Where there is inadequate marking of written work by teachers who mostly tend to tick a piece of work without giving a mark or comment for quality or an adequate explanation of what needs to be done to correct mistakes.
- Where there is no follow-up to ensure that written mistakes are corrected by the children so that there is no reinforcement of error.

The present procedures used by the Jewish Studies and *Ivrit* departments for assessing pupils' progress are not adequate for the purpose and are not properly in line with those used for measuring progress in the secular National Curriculum.

The school's assessments of pupils' progress are currently being made in terms of whole subjects rather than specified attainment targets within the different areas of study covered by the subject. Precisely what pupils are expected to know or do to achieve a given grade level on the 1-5 scale used is not clearly defined.

Attention needs to be given to these points as a matter of priority so that judgements can be more informative and form the basis for setting valid individual targets to help children improve their attainment and reach higher standards.

### **Grade: 3**

## **Personal development and well-being**

Children entering into the Reception Year are keen and eager to learn. They want to help each other and to complete their tasks. This desire to complete their work accurately, to try hard and to persevere is a characteristic of the pupils throughout the school. The behaviour in classes is of a very good standard and pupils are attentive and receptive. Some older pupils are perceptive, as one Year 6 pupil stated, when referring to Jewish Education "the teachers are nice in this school and if you have a nice teacher you learn better". In Key Stage 2 classes, the higher achieving pupils respond confidently. Inspectors have noted that in some Key Stage 2 classes, the pupils who find the pace and standard of the work too high tend to be quiet and somewhat withdrawn, and they are not enjoying their learning as much as they should. These findings are in accordance with the school's own self-evaluation. Several parents, with children who have recently made the transition from Key Stage 1 into Key Stage 2, have identified that their children are not enjoying their learning.

Attendance of the Jewish pupils is good and there have been no exclusions during the last year. In discussion, pupils from all age groups identified that they feel safe in the school and are confident that they can receive support should they need it.

The pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and their cultural development, in terms of their knowledge of Jewish culture is satisfactory. Older pupils are keen to accept responsibilities for others, such as leading the blessings

before and after lunch. The pupils' links with the community are good and they support the local and wider Jewish community in many ways and with many charitable acts. Inspectors disagree with the few parents who consider these links to be inadequate. Pupils in Year 6 confidently identify leading a healthy Jewish lifestyle as eating *kosher* food, keeping the Ten Commandments and giving *tzedakah* (charity). Their understanding of keeping safe through activities such as road safety are good but an understanding of keeping secure from a Jewish perspective is not as familiar to them. Pupils' future Jewish wellbeing although satisfactory, would be better assured if they were more familiar with the traditional songs of the Jewish liturgy, particularly for *Shabbat* morning services and the full *birkat hamazon* (blessings after food.)

## Grade: 2

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

Within the years 1 to 6, the overall impact of the teaching on the pupils' learning is satisfactory although within most of the individual lessons observed during the inspection, the teaching was of a good standard. The basic skills of Hebrew reading and writing are taught well in the *Ivrit* lessons but are not sufficiently practised and consolidated within in the Jewish Studies lessons. Therefore the benefit of the good teaching is not fully reflected in the pupils' learning.

The quality of the teaching for the Years 1 to 6 has improved considerably since the previous inspection, where some was of an unsatisfactory standard. There are many good features within this teaching. These include subject knowledge, appropriate teaching methods and the pace of the lessons. Ensuring that there is the time within the lessons to observe pupils' work and give some individual attention to those that need it, is a consistently good feature within the teaching. Pupils are managed well through effective use of praise and rewards, and discipline is very good.

Many aspects of the teaching identified in the school's self-evaluation that consolidate and accelerate learning, such as asking pupils to reflect upon their learning at the end of the lesson, are not consistently implemented. Teaching styles and expectations are very different and pupils need to adjust to accommodate these.

The higher attaining pupils are confident and involved, answering questions, benefiting from good relationships with their teachers and their praise and this contributes significantly to their positive attitudes and desire to work hard.

Contrary to the school's self-evaluation that work is presented at three ability levels, a high proportion of the work is presented as if all the pupils in a class are at the same ability level. There is a lack of extension work for the high ability pupils and the

work is too challenging for some other pupils, who struggle to keep up with the pace. The lack of classroom assistants, or use of information technology within the teaching, inhibits the support provided for these groups of pupils.

There are some good examples of teaching involving parents in the education of their children. The weekly *sidrah* sheets for Year 2 pupils are good and the parents support their children's learning well with these activities. Parental support could be extended and parental responses suggest that this would be welcomed.

### Grade: 3

## Curriculum and other activities

The delivered curriculum is satisfactory overall although in relation to the school's expectations, it is good in certain aspects. It is essentially the same as the one in use at the time of the last Pikuach inspection with additions to reflect some of the key issues for action from this report. The school's self-evaluation is that the curriculum it offers is good and that it is "... under constant review due to the ever changing pupil body" but inspectors found little evidence of this. Within the current time allocated for Jewish Education, there are pressures to deliver all that the curriculum hopes to teach, particularly in Year 3 where the time allocated is particularly short. The effective solution to this problem may lie in part in extending the school day. The balance and progression within the curriculum is not assured as there are no planned time allocations for each element, such as *Chumash* and *Mitzvot*.

The development of the basic skills of Hebrew reading and writing, once pupils have learned to decode print, are not clearly defined in the curriculum documentation. The Jewish Studies lessons available for observation on the two inspection days, provided no opportunity for assessing how children coped with familiar or unseen *Siddur* or *Chumash* texts in Hebrew. The only *Chumash* lesson seen was with a small Year 2 group studying *Parashat Va-Yechi*. The worksheet in use gave brief quotations from the text in English translation only and the summary of events in the narrative was likewise in English. In *Ivrit* lessons it was difficult to assess the extent to which Hebrew reading skills as a tool to elicit meaning are developed. Such reading of Hebrew as was seen was neither of short nor of more extensive written passages. It largely involved sight-reading of single new vocabulary items that had just been practised by whole class oral repetition.

In Key Stage 2 classes, sound work containing much that was good was seen in lessons devoted to moral issues: the study of the concepts and *Mitzvot* associated with *Tzedakah* and also of the *Middot* (moral qualities) involved in situations created by *Leshon Ha-Ra'* (spreading untrue rumours). These issues were approached at a level and in a way well suited to the age and stage of the pupils' development and successfully engaged and held their attention.

Enrichment activities are good. Both the formal Jewish Studies and *Ivrit* curricula are enhanced by the positive emphasis given to teaching Israeli songs in Hebrew and Israeli folk-dances to which all children respond with enjoyment. The school is also



aware of the need to make links across both the secular and Jewish curricula and there is evidence for the areas in which this is being attempted.

One aspect of provision for the Jewish pupils of the school which is not at present being addressed falls under the heading of 'sex education'. This is of particular relevance for Year 5 and 6 pupils as they enter the pre-adolescent stage and need guidance in coping with the changes in emotions and personal relationships that this stage brings. The present Year 5 curriculum does include the heading of Hygiene but seems to focus largely on the area of *Kashrut* and its hygienic significance.

### **Grade: 3**

## **Care, guidance and support**

Throughout the school the teachers know their pupils well and they give specific support and guidance to the pupils on an individual basis. For those with special educational needs, the procedures for pupils' academic guidance and support are more formalised and consistent within Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2. There is effective continuous recording of the pupils' progress throughout this Key Stage. The process of setting individual targets for future learning is at an early stage of development throughout the department. Reports for pupils in Key Stage 2 do not provide sufficient guidance, identifying attitudes rather than ability, without strengths and areas of relative weakness being clearly identified.

The pastoral support provided by the Head of Jewish Education, much of it on an informal basis, is very good. The school has robust systems for safeguarding its pupils and for supporting those that are more vulnerable within the community, linking well with the appropriate local Jewish agencies. Within lessons, health and safety issues are carefully regarded. The school provides good guidance on *kashrut* as a healthy way of Jewish life. It provides kosher, nutritious meals, but as yet it is not providing pupils with choices of fresh fruit and vegetables. It has ascertained the views of parents and pupils on the school meals and these are noted, but not yet fully implemented. Systems to monitor pupils as they move from one key stage to the next are not formalised and systems to ensure that pupils are well supported as they transfer to secondary school are in the planning stage of development.

The guidance provided for daily Collective Worship is generally sound at Key Stage 1 where there is a daily assembly attended by all pupils, both Jewish and non-Jewish, in the Reception and Year 1 and 2 classes.

Where the school does however, diverge from practice in almost all similar Jewish schools elsewhere is in failing to allow the Key Stage 1 girls to rise and recite the "girls' prayer" (...*she'asani kirtzono*...) immediately after boys have said their prayer for putting on *tzitzit* (prayer garment worn only by boys). This deprives the girls of the equality of opportunity to say their own special prayer until they attend Key Stage 2 prayers.

At Key Stage 2, Jewish pupils *daven Shacharit* (recite the traditional morning prayers) once a week and on other days they participate in an act of Collective

Worship together with the non-Jewish pupils. The lack of daily *Tefillah* (prayer sessions) is a particular weakness that may seriously inhibit the progress of many pupils in developing confidence in their ability to function as worshippers in a synagogue context.

The progress of the Jewish pupils would be further enhanced if the school were to introduce reading from the *sidrah* (Torah portion) of the week on the appropriate days in its prayer assemblies. This would enable Jewish children, not all of whom may be regular attendees at ordinary or children's Shabbat services, to be familiarised as early as possible with what happens at this central point in a Shabbat service. It would provide boys and girls with a direct incentive to learn their full Jewish names and know their religious status and ancestry as children of *Cohanim*, (descendants of Aaron the High Priest) *Levi'im* (descendants of Moses) or *Yisraelim*, members of the general Jewish population. It would provide a realistic context in which boys would learn how to perform the duties of *Petichah*, *Hagbah* and *Galilah* (activities within the service) confidently, well before they meet them as topics of study in the Jewish Studies curriculum in the second half of the Spring Term of Year 6. It would also provide the context for boys to learn to read the *Brachot* (blessings) recited before and after being called to the reading of the Law and to become familiar with the *Mi-sheberach* (personalised) blessing recited for them afterwards.

### Grade: 3

## Leadership and management

The new headteacher is providing a driving force for change and a stimulus for development and therefore the capacity for improvement although currently satisfactory is potentially good. She is ensuring that there is improved planning for development to address perceived shortcomings: management training, a formalised process for monitoring the teaching, the introduction of computer technology and the development of the fledgling Jewish library are all planned. Performance Management has been introduced for all the Jewish Education staff.

There has been satisfactory progress on implementing the key issues from the previous inspection and most elements of these have been addressed. The governors are strongly supportive of the efforts of the school and are they are fulfilling their statutory responsibilities for determining policy. They are currently reviewing all school policies, including those for religious education and sex education. Their monitoring of the provision and the standards has been regular but not sufficiently demanding. As yet, Governors are not ensuring that standards of learning and teaching are as high as possible nor do they know whether all pupils are appropriately challenged and supported.

The Head of Jewish Education provides a good role model for the pupils. He has a good relationship with the pupils and this is reflected in their good attitudes. Following an assessment of the needs of the pupils by the Head of Jewish Education, emphasis has been placed upon cultural activities such as after school art clubs with a Jewish dimension rather than in-school activities. The action points from the previous inspection have therefore not remained as the priorities for development and this has impacted detrimentally upon the speed and rigour with which they have been tackled. Although officially a middle management position, the role of Head of Jewish Studies requires many senior leadership skills and training for this role should be provided.

The school's self-evaluation and discussions with Jewish Education teachers identify many perceived barriers to the pupils' learning, all of which they consider to be outside of their control. These teachers have all been at the school for some time and have not visited other Jewish schools and therefore they consider their difficulties to be greater than those experienced in most other similar Jewish Schools. Inspectors noted that their identified barriers are no different to those found in most other Jewish schools of a similar ethos and that these external difficulties have been over-estimated.

There are some anomalies within the provision in relation to equality of opportunity within the Key Stage 1 assemblies. The school goes a long way towards helping the non-Jewish pupils to participate with knowledge in the corporate celebrations of the school, but introducing them to the *Ivrit* language in a structured manner as an additional means of facilitating this process has not been considered.

The views of pupils and parents have been actively sought in relation to school meals and to Jewish Studies. The out of school hours annual *Havdalah* ceremony and *Kabbalat Shabbat* service are very popular with the pupils and their families, who would welcome more of these sort of activities.

Leadership ensures that pupils are taught in a safe environment and the staff recruitment and vetting procedures are robust. There are good links with outside agencies and the local Jewish community to support the pupils. These include links with the Agency for Jewish Education's graduate teacher training programme. The transitions between the feeder nursery, the primary school and the High school and between key stages 1 and 2 to facilitate continuity in learning could be better co-ordinated.

**Grade: 3**