

# SIMON MARKS JEWISH PRIMARY SCHOOL INSPECTION REPORT

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Local Authority      Hackney

Inspected under the auspices of Pikuach

Inspection dates      20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> June 2017

Lead Inspector      Rabbi Yaakov Heimann

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

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Type of school      Primary

School category      Voluntary Aided

Age range of children      3-11

Gender of children      Mixed

Number on roll      154

Appropriate authority      The Governing Body

Chair of Governors      Howard Pallis

Headteacher      Lisa Campbell

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## Inspection team

**Lead Inspector** Rabbi Yaakov Heimann

**Team Inspector** Susy Stone

**Shadow Inspector** Daniel Gastwirth

## Introduction

The inspectors looked in detail at the following:

- Outcomes for pupils in their Jewish education.
- Quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Jewish Education.
- Effectiveness of Leadership, Management, and Governance of Jewish Education.
- Effectiveness of the Jewish Studies curriculum based on the school's aims and objectives.
- Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including meeting the statutory requirement for a daily act of Collective Worship (*Tefillah*).

## Information about the school

- Simon Marks Primary School is a one-form, voluntary-aided, primary school for boys and girls age 3-11 situated in the London Borough of Hackney. It has occupied its present site since 1973.
- It has a Modern Orthodox Zionist ethos with a focus on pupils reading and speaking *Ivrit* (Modern Hebrew).
- It is situated in a predominately ultra-orthodox, Chareidi community. The school has seen a declining number of pupils over the past few years and is working hard to address this. There are currently 154 pupils on roll, which includes those in the nursery.
- The school serves both Jewish families from a wide spectrum of observance, as well as non-Jewish families. About 50% of pupils are Jewish. Non-Jewish pupils fully participate in *Tefillah* (Jewish prayer) and in all aspects of the Jewish Studies curriculum.
- The school has had a number of changes in leadership recently. At the time of the inspection there was an acting headteacher who has been in place since February 2017. There is no current Head of Jewish Studies. Permanent appointments for these posts have been made for September 2017.
- At the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils transfer to JFS, JCoSS and King Solomon High schools, as well as local non-Jewish schools

## Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Outcomes for pupils in their Jewish education	3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Jewish Education	3
Effectiveness of Leadership, Management, and Governance of Jewish Education	3
Effectiveness of the Jewish Studies/Education curriculum based on the school's aims and objectives	3
Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including meeting the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship (tefillah)	2

### Overall Effectiveness:

The quality of Jewish learning provided in Simon Marks Jewish Primary School requires improvement (Grade 3) because:-

- Although guidance is given to Jewish Studies teachers on teaching methodology, the content of and time allocated for Jewish studies is left to their discretion. This is because at the present time, there is no Head of Jewish Studies to guide and direct them.
- Whilst parts of the curriculum are clearly defined, for example *Chagim* (Jewish Festivals) and *Ivrit* (Modern Hebrew), other parts of the curriculum are not clearly defined and the teaching of *Chumash* (Bible) has stopped.
- Not all pupils are able to read Hebrew accurately and fluently by the end of Year 6.
- Some assessment of pupil progress takes place but it does not accurately inform future teaching and learning.
- Pupils do not always make sufficient progress in their Jewish Studies lessons.

### The school has the following strengths:

- Behaviour of pupils around the school is exemplary.
- There is a focus on good *middot* (improving character traits).
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors, including a recently appointed dedicated Jewish Studies Governor, know their school well and recognise both the school's strengths and its areas for improvement.

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

- The school needs to have a clear Jewish Studies framework detailing expectations for all year groups, in all Jewish subject areas.
- The quality of teaching needs to improve so that all teaching in Jewish subjects is at least good.
- The incoming Head of Jewish Studies needs to work closely with senior leaders including governors to monitor, improve and support Jewish Studies teaching and learning.

## **Outcomes for pupils in their Jewish education require improvement (Grade 3) because:-**

- Pupils' learning and engagement within Jewish Studies, though sometimes good, varies in quality.
- Pupils' achievement in some areas of the Jewish curriculum is weak. As a result, not all pupils are acquiring the necessary Jewish Studies skills.
- Some assessment of pupil progress takes place, but these are not detailed and therefore do not effectively inform future teaching and learning.

## **The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in Jewish education requires improvement (Grade 3) because:-**

- Teaching is not good in all areas of the school's Jewish education provision.
- Where teaching is not effective, planning does not ensure a clear learning pathway through the lesson, and activities are ineffective in enhancing pupils' learning. Teaching is not always focused on the learning needs of different groups within a class. Time is not well managed so that opportunities are missed both to consolidate learning and to respond effectively to pupils' questions and comments.
- In *Ivrit* (Modern Hebrew) work books, assessment of pupils' learning follow a whole-school system. Nevertheless, some development is needed to ensure that feedback from teacher to pupils is clear and concise and subsequently supports improvement.
- In some lessons, pupils are not encouraged to take an active part in their learning.
- Year 5 pupils told inspectors that they had increased their knowledge about Jewish Festivals.
- In one observed Religious Education, lesson teaching was good because:
  - learners were supported with well-prepared resources, including the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to display text in both Hebrew and English. As a result, pupils were focused and engaged, and learning proceeded at a good pace.
  - additional adults were clear about their role and intervened in a timely and effective manner to support learning.
  - the lesson was well-paced, suiting the needs of all learners in the class.
  - learning was enhanced by relevant, cross curricular links to History and Science.
  - talk partners were used effectively so that pupils were able to share their knowledge.
  - the teacher asked open-ended questions which helped to further develop pupils' interest and understanding.

- Learning about *Chagim* (Jewish Festivals) is supported and linked to teaching in Literacy. There are integrated tasks for the festivals of *Shavuot* (Pentecost) and *Purim*. However, there is no clear evidence of work provided to support or challenge pupils at different levels of ability. In addition, whilst assessment procedures follow good practice in other subjects, opportunities are missed to specifically assess the Jewish learning aspect within a subject.

### **The effectiveness of Leadership, Management and Governance of Jewish Education requires improvement (Grade 3) because:-**

- Although leaders, including governors, have an awareness of the impact of Jewish values on aspects of school life and share an overall vision for the school and Jewish Studies teaching, there are no strong links between this vision and the school's self-evaluation for Jewish education.
- The vision for Jewish education is not sufficiently developed. An updated and well thought through curriculum would help to reflect the school's vision more accurately.
- Although teachers have received training in methodology which has led to some improvement in teaching and learning, there is presently no Head of Jewish Studies to guide them on what to teach and how much time to allocate to each subject.
- Although the strategies adopted by the leadership, including governors, have had some positive impact, they are not yet sufficiently rigorous to bring about sustained improvement.
- With the appointment of a new Head of Jewish Studies and dedicated governors, the inspectors feel that that the school has the capacity to improve.

### **The effectiveness of the Jewish Studies/Education curriculum based on the school's aims and objectives requires improvement (Grade 3) because:-**

- Although some aspects of the curriculum are good, for example *Chagim* (Jewish Festivals) and *Ivrit* (Modern Hebrew), other areas of the curriculum are not of a similar quality.
- Curriculum content does not always engage the interest of the pupils and encourage them to work hard and achieve satisfactorily in order to make progress over time.
- The Jewish Studies curriculum does not currently reflect the ambition of the school. For example, the school aims to teach *Chumash* (Bible) but this is not being taught.
- The existing curriculum lacks detail and depth and needs to improve. A curriculum map with clear, expected outcomes for the end of each Key Stage, supported by a School Improvement Plan related to Jewish Studies is required.
- There is also too little guidance for teachers as to what specifically should be taught for certain Jewish topics.
- The school has started the process of developing and updating the curriculum. In *Ivrit*, the use of the *Ivrit B'Click* curriculum contributes to the Jewish life of the school by promoting the use of Hebrew as the language of the Jewish people.
- Jewish Studies staff also use United Synagogue documents on the teaching of *Chagim*.
- The senior leadership team, together with both secular and Jewish Studies staff, have worked hard to create some cross-curricular projects to enable the children to link their Jewish learning to other subjects of the curriculum and their everyday lives. For example, a recent Art Day about *Tu B'Shevat* provided an opportunity to study different artists while

making a link to trees and fruit. The challenge is to use these opportunities more to focus and embed Jewish learning.

- A curriculum that includes appropriate levels of challenge and creative activities is required, so that pupils are more engaged and encouraged to make progress.
- The school curriculum should keep up to date with the developments and innovations being made by leading Jewish curriculum organisations and other Jewish schools.

**The quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including meeting the statutory requirement for a daily act of Collective Worship (tefillah) is Good (Grade 2) because:-**

- The school meets legal requirements for Collective Worship through daily *Tefillah* (prayer). Pupils demonstrate understanding of why they pray and join in the singing with enthusiasm. Some pupils are confident to lead prayer.
- Some teachers are able to lead prayer and help the pupils to understand the content, whilst others use the IWB (Interactive Whiteboard) to display Hebrew and transliteration. Younger pupils are encouraged to participate by earning 'Tefillah (Prayer) Star' awards. KS2 pupils told inspectors "in Jewish Studies we learn the meaning and why we say the prayers".
- Pupils show respect towards each other and to adults. They are polite and care about the feelings of others. Adults model respect and courtesy towards pupils, other members of staff and visitors. An inspector observed a teacher saying to a pupil, "We do not know Hebrew so we are learning from you".
- Pupils behave very well around the school; they are polite and courteous and able to explain the behaviour code and why they observe it, though they do not make links between their behaviour and their Jewish values.
- Pupils listen well to instructions from adults and act on them immediately.
- Displays support the teaching of Jewish values. For example, in the cloakroom area where children wash, there is an attractive 'Blessings' display which prompts the children to consider questions such as 'When do we bless?' and 'What are we thankful for?'
- There is marked respect for the diversity of the school community. In a Key Stage 1 class, the register was answered in different languages. In Key Stage 2, a pupil was sensitively encouraged to join in a lesson about 'Creation stories' by participating in Portuguese.
- Pupils visit a local Moslem school and in return are visited by them.
- In a Religious Education lesson, pupils responded with awe and wonder to the Jewish Creation story.
- Pupils, staff and parents all expressed their enjoyment of the celebration of festivals at the school.
- The school is actively developing learning linked to festivals. Reception children were able to explain that they made smoothies on *Shavuot* (Pentecost); a pupil said "because they are dairy".
- However, there are missed opportunities to make explicit links with Judaism and Jewish values. In a Religious Education lesson about 'Creation' there was no reference to *Shabbat* when talking about the Seventh Day. When describing a recent residential visit, Year 6 pupils were unable to cite any examples of Jewish content apart from kosher food.
- Parents and pupils expressed regret at the lack of a member of staff able to teach Jewish music.

## **Views of parents and carers**

Pikuach invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils at Simon Marks Jewish Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. The comments below encapsulate their views:

### **Quotes from Survey Monkey**

*The teaching of Hebrew is in my opinion not challenging enough and more should be done to focus on the language itself aside.*

*My son has received an excellent Jewish education at Simon Marks in particular the annual Seders are and continue to be the highlight of the school year.*

*The Seders have been produced to a really high standard and the children's enjoyment of learning really shows through.*

*There needs to be more time in the curriculum for Jewish studies.*

*We had a whole conversation with my daughter about her clothes in Hebrew!! I am so pleased she has been enthused in this way and has learnt so much.*

*The teaching of Hebrew is in my opinion not challenging enough.*

*I feel that sometimes the Jewish studies is understaffed and can be stretched at times.*

*I believe that there are opportunities to give the children some more practical activities such as making challah or participating more fully in the October Shabbat UK programme that is supported by the Chief Rabbi.*

*Overall our child is definitely progressing well in Jewish studies.*

# GLOSSARY

## WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN:

<b>GRADE</b>	<b>JUDGEMENT</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupil's needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Requires Improvement	A school requiring improvement is not providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils.