

# YAVNEH PRIMARY SCHOOL

## INSPECTION REPORT

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Local Authority Hertfordshire  
Inspected under the auspices of Pikuach  
Inspection dates 24th June 2019  
Lead Inspector Sandra Teacher

**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 Free  
Age range of children 4-7 years  
Gender of children Mixed  
Number on roll 180  
Appropriate authority Yavneh MAT  
Chair of Governors Mrs R. Levin  
Headteacher Caroline Field  
Address Hillside Avenue, Hertfordshire, WD6 1 HL  
Telephone number 0208 736 5580  
Email address admin@yavnehprimary.org  
School website www.yavnehprimary.org

## **Inspection team**

**Lead Inspector Sandra Teacher**

**Team Inspector Tali Barwin**

The inspectors' visit focused on Jewish Studies (*Limudei Kodesh*) and the provision for Jewish education within the school. The inspectors looked at pupils' work. They visited assemblies, and morning and lunchtime prayer (*Tefillah*). They listened to pupils read in Hebrew. They spoke with pupils, staff, parents, and all members of the leadership and management team. Inspectors looked at school planning and policies, school self-evaluation, leaders' monitoring of teaching, and the online questionnaire responses of parents. The senior leadership team played an active part in this inspection, including attending meetings with inspectors and observing lessons. School leaders agreed with all of the inspectors' judgements. This was the school's first *Pikuach* inspection, and they have not as yet been inspected by Ofsted.

## **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**

Yavneh Primary School (YPS) is a two-form entry, Modern-Orthodox, Jewish free school, which opened in September 2016 in temporary accommodation. It is part of the 'Yavneh Family' and is built on the Yavneh College Campus; an outstanding school which has established itself as one of the highest performing schools in the country, with excellence in teaching and learning and outstanding pastoral care at the core of its provision. YPS places the same emphasis on the importance of a love of learning and care for others. There are currently 180 children on roll from Early Years to Year 2. YPS will expand with a new cohort every year, and will be at full capacity (420 pupils) by September 2022.

The school is heavily oversubscribed, and there has been very little pupil mobility since opening. The school catchment area is small. 50% of the places offered are faith places, and 50% are determined by location. No pupils in the current cohort have opted for an alternative curriculum, and all follow the Jewish Curriculum Programme of Studies.

*Limudei Kodesh* (LK) lessons comprise 25% of teaching time. Additional time is allocated for *Tefillah* (daily prayers) and Friday *Kaballat Shabbat* assemblies. At the school's request, *Ivrit* (Modern Hebrew) was not included in this inspection. It was, however, considered in terms of the impact it makes on Hebrew Reading and wider *Kodesh* learning.

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Outcomes for pupils in their Jewish Education</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Jewish Education</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Effectiveness of Leadership, Management, and Governance of Jewish Education</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Effectiveness of the Jewish Studies/Education Curriculum based on the school's aims and objectives</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including meeting the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship (tefillah)</b>	<b>1</b>

### Overall Effectiveness:

**The quality of Jewish Learning provided in Yavneh Primary School is Outstanding (GRADE 1) because:-**

- The 'Yavneh Way' is well established within this infant school, and is central to its life. The first steps of the school's journey have trod an impressive path, and are leading the way to the next stage.
- This is a school that celebrates its Judaism immediately upon entry, and the ethos which is central to its aims are felt and seen as soon as one walks through the door.
- Displays are of a high standard, and are appropriate to the ages and stages of development of the pupils. For example, newly hatched ducklings are a constant source of excitement, and relate to the *Middah* (value) of *Tza'ar Ba'alei Chayim* (animal welfare). Displays also reflect local issues and charities that the school supports, whilst the *Mitzvah* (good deed) Tree celebrates excellent behaviour and attitudes displayed by the pupils.
- The leadership team, led by the Head of *Kodesh*, is inspirational and relentlessly ambitious, striving for a culture of high aspiration and success for all. This model of best practice is translated into providing high quality teaching and learning for all pupils, so that whatever their background or starting point, they make rapid and sustained progress in their *Kodesh* learning.
- *Tefillah* (prayer) and reflection are central to the spiritual life of the school. This is linked closely to encouraging the pupils to use their BRAINS (a growth mindset project). Pupils are regularly reminded of the school motto: *Olam Chesed Yibaneh - A World Built on Kindness*. This Jewish precept is carried out through acts of good work and charity.
- Partnerships at all levels are well developed, particularly the support provided by Yavneh

College which forms an integral part of the leadership team. Parents from all backgrounds are very supportive of the life and the work of the school, and are proud of the Jewish life and experiences on offer to their children.

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

The school has already identified areas for further development and is focusing on:

- Extending further opportunities for outdoor learning during *Limudei Kodesh* lessons.
- Enhancing the use of *Limudei Kodesh* interventions to consider the particular needs of those pupils who learn more quickly or those who find learning more difficult.

### **Outcomes for pupils in their Jewish Education is Outstanding (GRADE 1) because:-**

- All pupils are enthusiastic about their *Kodesh* learning and will tell you that they “love everything about *Limudei Kodesh*”. They feel that “lessons are fun”, and that they “always learn new things.”
- Pupils’ achievement in their Jewish education is good overall, and they are learning exceptionally well. The school has developed a clear tracking system for each area of Jewish learning which shows how the majority of the pupils are achieving above what might be typically expected for their age group and ability level. Staff meet weekly to discuss the progress of each pupil, so that any gaps in learning are quickly identified, and interventions are put in place. This is an area that the school is developing even further, and time and effort have been spent in training the Israeli *Sherut Leumi* assistants from Israel to promote *Ivrit* speaking, listening and reading skills. Pupils’ Hebrew reading skills are extended by daily opportunities to read with older students from Yavneh College. Parents are encouraged to read with their children at home, and are offered support so that they can work more efficiently with them. Children will leave *Kitta Bet* (Year 2) with strong levels of religious literacy, knowledge and vocabulary.
- *Hachana* - the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) - provides a rich and stimulating start to school life and *Kodesh* education. Classrooms are well set out, and resources are plentiful in support of *Kodesh* learning. Strong cross-curricular links and integration within the Seven Areas of Learning provide a holistic and meaningful approach to learning. This was demonstrated by the topic on food, which looked at *Kashrut Basari* and *Chalavi* (Kosher meat and dairy) whilst learning about different food groups, as a way of understanding the world. The school recognises that outdoor learning is still an area for ongoing development, but the outside café is a great hit with the pupils when preparing their kosher snacks and teas.

### **The quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment in Jewish Education is Outstanding (GRADE 1) because:-**

- High-quality teaching enables all pupils to do their best. Teachers have a thorough understanding of pupils’ needs, and tailor their teaching to give them the best possible chance of success.
- A key feature is the way pupils are encouraged to be independent and resilient by discussing their ideas with others. Teachers use every opportunity to get pupils to talk about what they are doing. This has a positive impact on their learning, especially in developing their *Ivrit* language and communication skills. This was demonstrated in the *Parasha* (Torah Portion) lesson, where pupils were given clues using magnifying glasses, spyglasses, and top-secret papers. They excitedly came up with the correct answer of the *Meraglim* (spies) through sharing their ideas with their partners.

- Teaching is highly effective. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly, so that pupils are clear about what to do and what is expected of them. One of the strengths of this planning is that it is flexible, allowing teachers to capitalise on pupils' enthusiasm and engagement, and adapt lessons to meet their needs and interests. As a result, the planning enables teachers to build knowledge, skills and understanding in a structured way over time. For example, in reading or learning the *Brachot* (blessings), teachers ensure that pupils are confident and not left behind. Those who make especially rapid progress receive work that deepens their understanding, allowing them to develop their *Kodesh* skills further. For example, sessions with Rabbi Chapper (the school Rav and local Rabbi of the community) who encourages them to ask big questions about *Hashem* (G-d) and the world. Those pupils who find learning more difficult are given additional help and support. This is an area that the school is continuing to develop.
- Teachers set work that is challenging and attracts pupils' interest. This stretches their thinking and ensures that expectations are high. For example, best use is made of fun games such as Ludo and Twister where Hebrew letters and vocabulary are incorporated. Pupils are highly engaged and enthused by the high-quality teaching. As a result, they make impressive progress and the most able can read well and write in Hebrew script.
- Pupils' excellent attitudes to their work is a central plank in the school's efforts to ensure that learning is first-rate. Pupils concentrate well, and are completely focused on their work, often persevering to overcome difficulties. They are being given the tools to learn independently, and are able to participate fully in all areas of Jewish life.
- Assessment is thorough, and used effectively to help plan lessons and provide support for pupils when needed. Teachers are skilled at checking how well pupils are learning, and provide effective support at the right time. Teaching is well supported by teaching assistants who are deployed effectively and have a strong impact on pupils' achievements. This ensures that all pupils make swift progress from their starting points.
- Teachers are skilled at advising pupils about how to improve their work, by using the school's agreed procedures. This advice is often incisive, and pupils are keen to use it in their next piece of work. This was seen across the school, including in Hebrew literacy, where teachers' advice was especially helpful in building pupils' confidence.
- The school's work to promote pupils' Hebrew literacy and language skills through opportunities to speak *Ivrit* is proving effective. As a result, pupils become increasingly articulate as they move up the school, and are able to read and write fluently in Hebrew. The teaching of Hebrew phonics is systematic and carefully planned. Teachers have a secure understanding of how to teach phonics, and use accurate pronunciation to demonstrate the sounds that letters make. Pupils are given opportunities to practise their phonics in different ways that help to develop their reading and writing. As a result, progress is strong.

### **The effectiveness of Leadership, Management and Governance of Jewish Education is Outstanding (GRADE 1) because:-**

- Leaders' commitment to give pupils the best education possible is unmistakeable, and all are united in their vision for excellence. High expectations and a strong sense of purpose ensure that pupils' achievements are centre stage. High-quality leadership is evident across the school. Two of the leadership team are trained *Pikuach* inspectors. Senior leaders successfully encourage teachers who are newer to teaching to develop their leadership skills. This creates a pool of expertise that drives improvement.
- The curriculum is well planned to provide pupils with a rich and varied range of experiences. It makes an important contribution to their achievements.

- The Trustees hold leaders to account effectively. Their considerable expertise means that they are adept at providing support, and know how to balance challenge with encouragement. Consequently, they play a significant role in ensuring that the school continues to improve its work.
- Leaders provide Trustees with a broad range of relevant information and analysis about the school's performance. This is supplemented by regular visits to see the school in action, and talking to pupils and staff. This enables Trustees to ask searching questions and, where necessary, to challenge leaders' assumptions.

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

- Many parents expressed a desire to have more time to discuss their children's *Kodesh* learning. The school is aware of this issue, and is considering the best way to ensure that this can be improved.

### **The effectiveness of the Jewish Studies curriculum based on the school's aims and objectives is Outstanding (GRADE 1) because:-**

- Leaders have made the best use of research within Jewish Education and have planned a well-organised and forward-thinking curriculum, taking into account what all pupils should achieve by the end of their schooling. The curriculum strands which include *Tefillah*, *Halachah* (Jewish law), Hebrew reading, *Torah* and Israel, are carefully devised to ensure progression as the pupils move up the school. The aim is to prepare them for transition to Yavneh College with a high level of Jewish study skills.
- The Head of *Limudei Kodesh* has utilised her expertise and those from Yavneh College to build a robust, tailor-made curriculum. A parent commented: "The Jewish education being provided is outstanding. My son is continually engaged in his Jewish studies, and each week loves to share his knowledge and sing the songs he has learnt at school with us on Shabbat."
- *Ivrit* (Modern Hebrew) is integrated well into the *Kodesh* curriculum, through its continual use throughout lessons, in *Tefillah* and in displays around the school. Pupils develop not only a love of Israel, but also a good knowledge of its history, geography and culture. Pupils sing the *Hatikvah* (Israel's national anthem) at the end of *Kabbalat Shabbat* morning assemblies.
- The school recognises the importance of Hebrew reading, and has adapted the Hebrew reading scheme and incorporated *Shalom Ivrit* (another scheme) with positive results. Hebrew reading is regularly tracked, and interventions provided when needed.
- Where possible, the school integrates aspects of the *Kodesh* curriculum with secular studies, so that pupils appreciate that they can live as a Jew in the modern world. PSHE lessons cover families and relationships from a Jewish perspective. Pupils talk about whether it is right to have 'good or bad secrets' when learning about *Lashon HaTov* and *Lashon HaRah* (gossiping). Other examples include a *Parasha* (Torah Portion) lesson related to the learning taking place in the secular classroom, and a café in the outdoor area which has *Brachot* (blessings over food) listed. A parent commented: "I love how they integrate both Jewish and secular studies."
- In addition to the Jewish education curriculum, the Yavneh Primary School invests in other initiatives. The school enjoys a close relationship with Yavneh College students on the *Am Echad* Enrichment programme. *Am Echad* is the *Tzedakah* initiative at both schools, and college students have worked with primary pupils on fundraising through it.
- Efforts are made to offer parents sessions on Hebrew reading, or any other Jewish topic they would like, to enable them to be better placed to support their children with their Jewish studies work at home.

**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 Outstanding (GRADE 1) because:-**

- The school fulfils the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship. During *Tefillah* (Prayer) all pupils were fully engaged, and when given private time to speak to G-d, the opportunity was used by all. Pupils clearly understood the difference between a request and thanks to G-d, and shared their ideas.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of *Tefillah*. One pupil commented: "G-d even understands it if you say it in English." Two pupils from Year 2 were discussing whether prayers are always answered. A parent commented: "Overall, my daughter has a strong sense of Jewish identity and discusses some quite heavy philosophical matters at home as a result of the brilliant Jewish education at Yavneh."
- Spiritual development is at the heart of Yavneh Primary School. There is a wealth of experiences for them to develop.
- The ethos of the school, 'The Yavneh Way', is fully integrated throughout *Kodesh* and secular studies, and is clearly articulated and reflected by the pupils. They are well behaved and polite at all times. They move within the classroom and around the school in a calm and measured manner.
- Assemblies play a key role in developing meaningful insights into the non-materialistic world. After hearing a story told by the Headteacher, pupils were actively engaged in discussing the moral principles of *Ahava*, *Chesed* and *Achdut* – Love, Kindness and Unity. Even at a young age, they were able to articulate and explain the importance of these traits.
- There is a wealth of exciting and stimulating experiences that are meaningful and fun. These include a *Brachot* (blessings) scavenger hunt in Tesco supermarket, a *Shabbat UK* recipe book, 'Ask the Rabbi' sessions every *Rosh Chodesh* (beginning of a new month in the Jewish calendar), jungle-themed *Purim* activities and activities from GIFT and SEED. The most recent event was a midnight feast at *Shavuot* (Festival commemorating the giving of the *Torah*), at which pupils were inspired to reflect on the tradition of learning *Torah* throughout the night.
- Displays of a Jewish nature can be found all around the school, including 'The Yavneh Way' at the entrance, the *Kotel* (Western Wall) with requests from pupils and a *Tzedakah* (charity) display where pupils were able to explain why those charities were chosen, and how they would help children less fortunate than themselves.
- The link with a local Catholic school supports pupils' understanding of other faiths and cultures. It was fascinating to hear pupils talk about their visit to this school.

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

The school should continue to maintain the progress made in this area and persist with innovative practice.

## Views of Parents and Carers

Pikuach invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils at Yavneh Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. The response was overwhelming and highly positive with very few negative views, although there were some thoughtful and helpful suggestions. The comments below encapsulate some of their views:

*Unlike many of her friends, my daughter did not go to a Jewish nursery. She very quickly started to learn about the chaggim and has also introduced a repertoire of songs into our Friday night dinners! She spends all year looking forward to her turn as Shabbat Ima and it is very special to be invited to be a part of Kabbalat Shabbat when she is involved. The school provides lovely activities for chaggim alongside Seed, which again parents can be involved in. I think Yavneh are doing a fantastic job of educating our children about Judaism in a fun and exciting way!*

*I'm a Jewish adult educator and have been so impressed by the Jewish education at Yavneh Primary. The energy, creativity and professionalism of Jewish studies is truly impressive. The model Seder was a case in point. Slick, fun, educational... I was very impressed. My son says Limudei Kodesh is his favourite lesson.*

*We do not receive updates on our child's progress unless specifically asked for, as it is not part of the school's focus week/meeting process.*

*Kodesh in my son's favourite subject. He is able every week to explain about the upcoming holiday or the parasha of the week. I am so happy to teach them in a way that makes him love the subject.*

*No concerns at all. Child enjoys the secular and Jewish education.*

*Yavneh Primary's provision of Jewish education is excellent. Our son is deeply engaged with Jewish life, practice and culture and we very much appreciate the school's inclusive, modern orthodox ethos.*

*My daughter has made exceptional progress in Jewish Studies since starting at Yavneh. Her Hebrew reading is nearly fluent. She has a wonderful general knowledge with regards to the parasha and chaggim. She loves talking about what she has learnt in JS and enjoys taking part in all Jewish activities on offer at school. We couldn't ask for anything more.*

*The enthusiasm of the Jewish studies staff is catching. My children love learning about the sedras, and coming home to discuss the lessons they have learned and the values we aspire to that come straight from the Torah. Yavneh Primary is everything I hoped a Jewish primary school would be and more. Our children are so lucky!*

*I do think we need slightly more feedback about how our children are progressing, although this can be requested. The school makes sure that all the Jewish festivals are celebrated and that the kids do exciting things for them. Even non-religious/non-Jewish children are excited by the festivals/festivities.*

*We are very pleased with the levels of Jewish studies at YP. Our child is excited to come home and do his homework for the subject, especially reading/translating his Shalom Ivrit book. He can regularly be heard belting out Anim Zemirot well past his bedtime and generally seems very happy with everything.*



# 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.