

# Beis Yaakov High School

69 Broom Lane, Bury New Road, Salford M7 4FF

## Kodesh Studies Inspection

Inspection dates 25-26 February 2019

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management Good

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment Good

Personal development, behaviour and welfare Good

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Outstanding

Outcomes for pupils Good

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## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The new Menahel (principal) / Headteacher and Head of Kodesh have moved the school forward with vision and passion since the last inspection. They receive firm backing from the supportive and committed Governing Board.
- There are many outstanding Kodesh lessons, and the quality of teaching overall is good.
- Pupils are focussed and engaged during lessons. They ask penetrating and thoughtful questions, and demonstrate excellent mastery of what they are taught.
- The assessment of pupils has improved considerably since the last inspection, although it is not yet fully embedded throughout the school.
- Year 7 pupils integrate smoothly into the school due to an extensive mentoring system.
- Pupils are vibrant and display their personalities. They enjoy school and are kind and caring to each other.
- Year 11 pupils assume many responsibilities within the school's wide-ranging extra-curricular programme.
- The SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) provision is extremely well-developed throughout the school.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of all aspects of the school's provision.

## **What the school can do to improve further**

- Create a suitable behaviour management system to avoid the occasional disruption to lessons and general school life due to girls' boisterous behaviour.
- Create a stand-alone curriculum to comprehensively cover the topic of Yedi'oh Klolis (general knowledge),
- Expand the new assessment and tracking system for all subjects to further inform planning and teaching,
- Strengthen the middle management by appointing suitable Heads of Faculty for all subjects.

## Inspection judgements

**Effectiveness of leadership and management** is good

- The deputy Menahel (Principal) is responsible for the day-to-day running of the school's Kodesh provision, and is respected by all the school's stakeholders. She is supported and guided by the Menahel (Principal) / Headteacher. These two leaders are relatively new to their positions, but have improved the school noticeably since the previous inspection.
- Leaders have nurtured a vibrant environment, where pupils are encouraged to vocalise their thoughts and opinions and to assume responsibility in many activities around the school. Leaders are working on a behaviour management system to curtail those occasions when the vibrancy spills over and disrupts school life.
- The school has successfully recruited a Head of Faculty for Chumash (Bible), and the leadership and management team view it as a priority to recruit further suitable personnel to act as Head of Faculty for other subjects and complete the middle management team.
- There is a comprehensive curriculum map which covers all Kodesh subjects. This enables teachers to plan accurately and allows the leadership to monitor that all classes are following the curriculum closely. However, there is no stand-alone curriculum for Yedioh Klolis (General Knowledge) which leads to sporadic coverage of this topic.
- The teaching staff are energetic and knowledgeable, although many of them are part-time. Lessons are carefully planned and pupils are encouraged to question, analyse and debate the subject matter.
- Assessment is well-advanced within the Kodesh department, and is a combination of both internal and external indicators. When this system is fully embedded in the school, it has the prospect of being an outstanding tracking tool for both teachers and leaders.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of the school's Kodesh provision, and a clear vision for continued progression. This is evidenced by the wide-ranging and up-to-date self-evaluation document and associated improvement plan.
- There is a comprehensive mentoring provision for pupils, with a system of a Mechaneches (mentor) for every class, who is backed up by a Form Tutor. Pupils can, and do, discuss both academic and social issues with their mentors, whom they are happy to trust.
- Year 11 pupils are heavily involved in the extra-curricular activities, as they all assume responsibilities in the various strands of the programme. However, the leadership must confirm how much time it recommends for these activities to avoid a clash with the regular Chol studies.
- The Menahel/Headteacher demonstrated his leadership qualities during the recent tragedy that saw the sudden passing of a former pupil. He

brought together a team of staff and expertly guided the girls in how to grieve for their former classmate and then to move forward positively

- The school's SEN department has a dedicated Kodesh specialist, who works very closely with the school's SENCO. This department has almost 25% of the pupils on its books, for both academic and social/emotional issues.
- For social/emotional issues the SEN team is supported by the school counsellor, the school psychologist, the two senior mentors, the form tutors and the class Mechanchos, and the pupils assert that they truly feel supported when they face issues.
- The SEN department works with the main feeder primary school to screen all girls for their Kodesh reading and textual skills while they are still in Year 6. This enables interventions to be put in place, where necessary, even before a pupil joins the school, which is instrumental in the positive integration of new pupils into the school.
- The SEN department feels that it is given full support from the school leadership, with both staff and resources available for those pupils who require extra assistance in Kodesh reading, grammar or vocabulary.
- Parents are fulsome in their praise for the school and its leadership, as evidenced by their written responses to the recent school survey. The inspectors also spoke to individual parents. One parent recounted how his daughter had struggled in primary school (which was not the main feeder school) but 'was completely turned round' and successful within two months of joining Beis Yaakov.

The governance of the school:

- The school's governors take their individual and collective roles very seriously, and utilise their professional expertise to support the Menahel/Headteacher in both his day-to-day leadership of the school and in his vision for its future.
- Discussions with the governors indicate a detailed knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for further development. They are full of praise for the achievements of the current leadership team, and determined to facilitate further development within the school.
- The governors conduct regular visits to the school and undertake several learning walks per term to ensure that their 'critical friend' capabilities are sharply honed.

## **Quality of teaching learning and assessment** is good

- The quality of teaching is generally at least good, while many lessons are outstanding.
- In the outstanding lessons, teachers channel the vibrancy of the pupils and challenge them intellectually. They create a stimulating learning atmosphere by involving the pupils and encouraging them to think.
- Teachers use good questioning techniques to draw pupils into lively class discussions, with pupils encouraged to debate each other's viewpoints and to suggest alternative hypotheses to those posed by their peers.
- The pupils focus well during lessons and enjoy their learning. For example, in one Year 10 Tefilloh (prayer) lesson pupils exuded delight as they grasped the insightful explanations offered by the teacher. They also showed a commendable level of recall of topics they had been taught the previous year.
- Pupils have a passionate desire to improve their personal levels of observance of Yiddishkeit (Judaism). They ask sincere, and often searching, questions, which are generally answered in full by their knowledgeable teachers.
- In a small number of lessons, the pace was slower and atmosphere more subdued, as the teacher delivered a rather mediocre lesson.
- Due to the necessity of a complicated timetable, which sees both staff and pupils moving to different rooms for each lesson, lessons do not always start promptly and valuable learning time is lost in the process.
- The teachers care for the girls and bond well with them. In interviews with the pupils it was noteworthy that each year felt that one of their Kodesh teachers was 'the thing I enjoy most at school', because 's/he cares for me' and provides extra help outside lesson time.
- The teaching staff have a good knowledge of their pupils' standard, as achievements in some Kodesh subjects is tracked as part of an integrated system that is connected to the SIMS whole-school computer network. This provides teachers with accurate up-to-date information of pupils' progress at the press of a button.
- The actual assessments are done partly via the school's own comprehensive and differentiated assessment programme, which is currently being updated, and partly via the national KATS (for vocabulary) and Mesila (for Dinnim and Pirkei Ovos) programmes, which are used by similar Jewish schools both nationally and internationally.
- The SEN department utilise the USA-based CVS vocabulary programme to support learners who experience difficulty with their textual skills. Specially-trained personnel withdraw girls from class during the secondary Kodesh subjects, so that they are able to participate and keep up with the rest of the class during Chumash lessons.

**Personal development, behaviour and welfare** are good

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's efforts to promote pupils' personal development and welfare are outstanding.
- Pupils benefit from a comprehensive and effective mentoring provision. Each class has their Mechaneches (mentor) and there is also a Form Tutor for each year to whom the girls can turn for assistance with personal issues. Year 7 and Year 8 pupils benefit from a timetabled period with their Mechaneches every week.
- There is a central database with information about all the girls, including details of any required interventions. Where necessary, the mentors can refer pupils to experienced professionals who are available for consultation at school. Careful monitoring of the database by the Menahel/ Headteacher ensures that all interventions are seen through to their conclusion.
- The personal development programme starts in Year 6 of the main feeder school, so that potential issues can be nipped in the bud.
- The mentoring system is effective both in solving issues at the lower end of the school and also in enabling all the Year 11 girls to succeed within the rigorous academic schedule (without any pupils being off-loaded).
- Attendance at school has vastly improved since the introduction of a fingerprint system that automatically logs the whereabouts of every pupil and the times of their arrival and departure. Interestingly, rather than despising this system, the girls aver that it makes them feel safer at school, as they know that everybody is accounted for.
- Pupils are well-informed regarding all forms of bullying, and they are adamant that there is no bullying at school. Minor disagreements between girls are dealt with swiftly and effectively by the alert staff.
- Pupils are given opportunities to assume responsibility in various ways. Every term, representatives of each year are elected to participate in the school council, and a list of the council's achievements is prominently displayed on a wall in the corridor.
- At the beginning of the school year, Year 11 girls choose which student team they wish to be part of. There are thirteen choices, including responsibility for wall displays, for charity, for editing the school newsletter, for the school choir, for the library and for photographing school events. All teams are directed by the Head of Extra-Curricular Programmes. This develops the pupils' self-confidence and nurtures their creativity, and the school could consider extending this idea to incorporate girls from other classes as well.

- Year 7 girls work collaboratively with the extra-curricular staff to create themes for their Basmitzvah activities, which serve as an entree to the responsibilities of Jewish adult life.
- The girls learn about the importance of being healthy and the school has excellent provision for both indoor and outdoor PE sessions, where trampolining is the most popular sport. An innovative form of exercise takes place every Friday with popular whole-school dancing to music sessions in the playground.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils around the school is generally good, if rather noisy.
- There is excellent decorum during both the early-morning and lunchtime whole-school prayer sessions, where there is only a skeleton staff in the auditorium together with the girls.
- The pupils show respect for strangers by holding doors open for them in the corridors in a respectful manner, and by rising in greeting when they enter and leave classrooms.
- In the classroom there are infrequent instances of low-level disruption by some pupils. Between lessons, pupils also take time to move from one classroom to the next, which has an impact on the tight timetable.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development** is outstanding

- Leaders have created a palpable spiritual atmosphere in the school, which results in a pupil body that is relaxed yet purposeful. The day commences with a communal prayer session in the school hall, which is led by pupils and conducted in a dignified and sombre manner.
- The girls are encouraged to be contemplative during their Chumash, Novi (prophets) and Dinnim (Jewish law) lessons, and to discuss and/or question spiritual and moral concepts.
- Weekly Mechaneches periods for Year 7 and Year 8 pupils address a range of social and moral issues. These sessions are highly acclaimed by the pupils.
- There are many inspiring wall displays -created by the girls- that add to the SMSC development of the pupils. Several displays highlight the lives of suitable role-models, both male and female, whilst others note the individual undertakings by girls to promote higher moral standards within the school community. Yet further displays depict various Jewish cultural scenes.
- A wide-ranging buddy scheme groups Year 9 pupils with Year 6 girls who are planning to join the school. This connection continues with the Year 10 pupils helping their Year 7 counterparts to settle seamlessly into the school. Although the scheme officially ends at the end of Year 10, the connections are so strong that many of them continue into Year 11. Both the older and younger pupils benefit from this arrangement.
- Pupils exhibit a passion and excitement for their Kodesh lessons. For example, Year 11 girls engaged in a heated debate during a lesson to clarify the exact boundaries of the laws of Muktzeh (not moving certain items on Sabbath), as they struggled to clarify how best to uphold the sanctity of the Sabbath.
- Leaders have arranged for an expert London-based educationalist to visit the school once a fortnight and engage Year 11 in philosophical discussions, as it encourages pupils to question aspects of their faith and to debate the answers that are proffered
- The British values of rule of law, democracy, individual liberty and mutual respect are addressed throughout the Kodesh curriculum, and leaders have mapped out how all the fundamental British values are covered during the extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils are encouraged to develop their social skills and cultural awareness by doing acts of Tzedokoh (charity) and Chessed (kindness) in the local community and further afield. The girls regularly visit both the Beenstock Home and the Heathlands Village Care Home to entertain the elderly and disabled, they raise money for Ezra Care on Rosh Chodesh (semi-festival to coincide with the new moon at the beginning of the Jewish months), they volunteer on Shabbos (Saturday) afternoons to run Shabbos groups for primary school



children and they sell poppies at the beginning of November to mark Armistice Day and to support the Armed Forces community.

- One innovative programme is the annual Year 10 senior citizen Purim party, where the girls invite senior members of the wider Jewish community into school for an afternoon of seasonal entertainment.

### **Outcomes for pupils** are good

- Pupils make very good progress from their starting points, and are well-prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils in the older classes have the Hebrew reading, vocabulary and grammar skills to tackle unseen texts in both Chumash and Rashi.
- In the middle and younger classes, pupils would benefit from a structured Yedioh Klolis schedule.
- During classes, girls exhibited a high standard of knowledge and understanding of the Dinnim (laws) of Shabbos during their end-of-topic revision. They also recalled well the subject matter they had studied in lessons they attended last year.
- Pupils display self-respect and self-confidence, coupled with modesty in dress. They were friendly and respectful when chatting to the inspectors.
- The girls of the oldest class, Year 11, are mature and have leadership qualities. This is due to the many opportunities they have to assume responsibility in a variety of school activities
- Pupils look and sound happy around school, and they derive enjoyment from their Kodesh studies. They are proud of their school, and particularly of the sense of Achdus (unity) within the pupil body. When asked by the inspector what they would do to improve their school, all the pupils responded that their school didn't need improving.
- Prayers are approached with seriousness and sincerity. This was evident during the whole-school prayer session, which was conducted with decorum and with minimal adult supervision.
- Pupils aver that they are making very good progress at school. This is based on the results of their assessments plus feedback from teachers. Parents are kept in touch with their progress as they receive an informative annual written report plus termly updates.
- Girls show sensitivity towards their peers and to those less fortunate than themselves by engaging in various acts of kindness both within and outside school. Pupils of all years prepared a beautiful condolence book for the family of a former classmate, who had left to join another school and then passed away in tragic circumstances. The book included pledges of how each girl would improve her Middos (character traits), and was done in collaboration with the girls of the school that the deceased classmate had moved to.

## Information about this school

- Beis Yaakov High School was founded in 1957, and became an academy in 2012. It serves the Orthodox Jewish community based in Salford, Bury and Manchester. The Va'ad Horabbonim (committee of rabbis - Rabbi YY Wreschner and Rabbi Y Friedman) is the school's overall authority on all spiritual matters.
- The school aims to: 'Provide a positive, inclusive environment for learning and growth which promotes excellence and inspires students to discover, develop and fulfil their potential and to become independent lifetime learners.'
- Beis Yaakov High School is an over-subscribed three-form entry voluntary-aided school for Jewish girls aged 11 to 16. There are currently 334 pupils on roll, an increase of more than 25% since the last Kodesh inspection in 2014.
- In 2018, the school had the fifteenth highest Progress 8 results out of more than 6500 voluntary-aided schools up and down the country.
- Kodesh studies take up approximately 30% of the curriculum, and this is supplemented with extra-curricular activities.
- The proportion of pupils with an EHCP (educational health and care plan) is close to the national average, as is the number of those on the SEND register. However, this is above average for an orthodox Jewish school.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 18 lessons in all classes from Year 7 to Year 11, covering all subjects, and they observed the twice-daily communal prayers.
- Meetings were held with the Principal/Headteacher, the Head of Kodesh, the Chair of Governors, the Kodesh Governor, a third governor, the school and Kodesh SENCOs, the extra-curricular co-ordinator and with several members of staff.
- The inspectors observed pupils at break, at lunch and around the school, met with groups of pupils of all years, and tested groups of pupils of Years 7, 9 and 11 on their knowledge of Chumash & Rashi, Hebrew reading and Yedioh Klolis.
- The inspectors perused the Kodesh curriculum map, studied school policies, self-evaluation documents and improvement plans, and scrutinised a selection of pupils' Kodesh exercise books.

## Inspectors

Rabbi Nessanel Lieberman  
Rabbi Yehuda Levenson

## School details

**Unique reference number** 138698

**Local authority** Salford

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

**Type of school** Secondary

**School category** Academy converter

**Age range of pupils** 11-16

**Gender of pupils** Female

**Number on roll** 334

**Appropriate authority** The governing body

**Chair of Governors** Mr David Ziskind

**Menahel/Headteacher** Rabbi Nissan Wilson

**Deputy Menacheles/  
Head Of Kodesh** Mrs Sara Reif

**Date of previous inspection** 19-20 March 2014

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