

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mrs Clare Neuberger
Acting Headteacher
Yesodey Hatorah Senior Girls School
Egerton Road
Stamford Hill
London
N16 6UB

Dear Mrs Neuberger

Special measures monitoring inspection of Yesodey Hatorah Senior Girls School

Following my visit with Jude Wilson, Her Majesty's Inspector, and Nigel Clemens, Ofsted Inspector, to your school on 22 January 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in March 2018. The full list of the areas for improvement that were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hackney. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Brian Oppenheim
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in March 2018

- Leaders and governors must ensure that:
 - they fulfil their statutory responsibilities to keep pupils safe. They should provide pupils with access to appropriate independent and confidential advice. They should ensure that pupils are taught how to keep safe in the wider community
 - decisions on the running and development of the school are in accordance with statutory requirements
 - they meet their statutory duty to provide high-quality, impartial careers advice and guidance so that pupils understand the full range of options available to meet their academic needs and aspirations
 - they give high priority to pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development so that pupils can routinely learn about different cultures, faiths, viewpoints and beliefs
 - they engender pupils’ respect and tolerance for all members of society
 - they review the leadership structure so that roles and responsibilities are clear and
 - leaders can be held to account if they do not fulfil their statutory responsibilities
 - they have an accurate understanding of the school’s strengths and areas for development
 - the school meets the requirements of the national curriculum
 - they review and extend the range of texts and resources available to pupils in order to prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- Governors must ensure that:
 - they set appropriate targets for the principal’s performance and hold the principal stringently to account for his decision-making and the quality of provision.
- Leaders must improve teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that teachers and teaching assistants are given further support, guidance and experiences to improve their practice
 - ensuring that the school’s assessment policy is used effectively
 - providing planned opportunities for pupils to undertake more demanding work

- raising teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation of work, including the quality of handwriting
 - ensuring that all staff have high expectations of what pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities can achieve academically and support them to do so.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 22 January 2020

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher and senior leaders. They also met with curriculum leaders, governors and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors focused on the quality of education and visited English, science and history lessons jointly with leaders. Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils, and scrutinised a variety of documents including curriculum policies and teaching plans.

Context

Yesodey Hatorah Senior Girls School is a smaller-than-average 11 to 16 Orthodox Jewish maintained voluntary-aided girls' secondary school. The school's intake is exclusively from the Charedi community in and around Stamford Hill, Hackney. Consultations with the Department for Education in relation to the school becoming a member of a multi-academy trust are currently on hold.

The deputy headteacher remains the acting headteacher. She is supported by the director of religious studies.

The progress made by the school in tackling the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection

The first monitoring inspection, in December 2018, focused on safeguarding, pupils' personal development and behaviour, and leadership and management. The focus in this monitoring inspection was on the quality of education, especially the curriculum.

Pupils experience a broad range of secular subjects in Years 7 to 11. This includes careers education and guidance. There is a broad range of subjects in Years 7 and 8. In Year 9, pupils choose one extra subject to study in depth. They can choose either art/textiles, business studies, computer studies or childcare. Although pupils can pick only one, this arrangement maintains a broad curriculum.

Most subjects end in GCSE examinations, while some, such as child care, lead to vocational qualifications. This enables pupils to gain a range of appropriate qualifications that meet their needs. However, there are a few anomalies. Pupils take some GCSE examinations at the end of Year 10. Biology is still not taught in full. While this has little impact on overall achievement, it means that pupils are still not making the connections between physics, chemistry and biology as required by the national curriculum.

Leaders have taken appropriate action to improve the planning, teaching and assessment of individual subjects. In science, there is a clear programme that

guides teachers' planning and pupils' learning. Topics are taught in an order designed to prepare pupils for their GCSE examinations. It builds the knowledge and skills which pupils need to gain good grades. In some topics there are links with social issues. For example, in the work on nuclear structure, pupils also look at Chernobyl.

In English, the planned programme in key stage 3 meets the requirements of the national curriculum. Leaders have thought about how the content of the English curriculum is organised and the skills pupils need to achieve well in GCSE examinations.

Overall, the planned curriculum for most subjects provides a logical programme for pupils. The curriculum is successful in helping pupils achieve well in their GCSE examinations. GCSE results are strong. Planning covers what pupils need for GCSE success but is not always ambitious enough.

Leaders have made some progress to introduce a formal curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Year 7 pupils have PSHE education lessons which they say they enjoy. In other years, PSHE education is taught through other subjects, but at present it lacks ambition. The history programme is organised appropriately to meet the requirements of the national curriculum.

Improvements to assessment mean that leaders have some helpful information about pupils' achievements. For example, they identify gaps in pupils' GCSE knowledge. Pupils learn how to answer GCSE questions effectively.

Leaders are highly successful in creating a positive climate for learning. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are strong. Relationships between pupils and teachers are encouraging and respectful. This ensures that lessons are never interrupted. Pupils move around the school sensibly and with a maturity beyond their years. Bullying rarely, if ever, happens but pupils are confident that if it were to take place, it would be dealt with quickly.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The previous monitoring inspection judged that leaders and governors had made significant progress in improving the arrangements for safeguarding. These arrangements remain effective. The school's procedures for vetting staff are comprehensive and the well-maintained records are up to date.

Leaders and governors continue to develop the way they work so that they are more methodical in driving improvement. However, there is still work to do to ensure that they hold subject leaders to account rigorously for the quality of education. For example, subject leaders do much of the work to improve the curriculum and check its implementation in the classroom. This is a positive step

forward, but senior leaders need to monitor this more closely to ensure that developments are effective.

Leaders have tackled some of the weaknesses in the curriculum. For example, there is now a careers education and guidance programme for pupils in Years 7 to 11. However, weaknesses remain in the way that the curriculum is planned and organised. While senior leaders are committed to a high-quality education for pupils, they are not checking subject plans carefully enough. This means they are not in a strong position to ensure a rich curriculum for all pupils.

Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- Senior leaders have focused on improving the curriculum. The introduction of careers education and guidance, PSHE education in Year 7 and vocational qualifications for some pupils are important steps forward.
- Curriculum planning is more systematic. Subject leaders are taking responsibility for the quality of subject planning and the implementation of the curriculum. They have developed programmes that teach topics in a logical order.
- External support has helped senior leaders to identify where there are strengths and weaknesses in subjects.

Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:

- The way the curriculum is organised limits pupils' experiences. An over-emphasis on passing examinations and the lack of biology mean that the curriculum is not ambitious enough.
- The curriculum is successful in enabling pupils to achieve well in their GCSE examinations, but it lacks ambition. Too much time is spent practising answers to examination questions and too little time developing pupils' wider learning.

External support

The local authority continues to support the school in meeting its responsibilities. The work to set up an executive committee to oversee improvements has proved successful. The local authority is also supporting improvements to the curriculum and external consultants have carried out subject reviews. The local authority recognises that there is more work to do to ensure that the curriculum is strong.