

YESODEY HATORAH SENIOR GIRLS SCHOOL

Egerton Road, Stamford Hill, London N16 6UB

Kodesh Studies Inspection

Inspection dates

11–12 Kislev 5780 - 9–10 December 2019

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding 1

Quality of Jewish Education:

Outstanding 1

Intent – curriculum design

Implementation – teaching, assessment, curriculum delivery

Impact - achievement

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC)

Outstanding 1

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Outstanding 1

Leadership and Management

Outstanding 1

Summary of Key Findings

This is an outstanding school.

- The quality of leadership and management in Limmudei Kodesh (Jewish studies) is outstanding and a dynamic vision for the school is shared by all leaders and managers.
- The Menacheles provides an outstanding role model of respect and empathy and facilitates the excellent pastoral care provided to students at the school.
- Leaders focus relentlessly on improving teaching and learning, and there is an impressive induction training for new staff.
- The governing body makes significant contribution to the work and progress of the school, and the longstanding and indefatigable Principal offers a unique blend of advice and challenge.
- The Limmudei Kodesh curriculum is outstanding and has improved since the last inspection. Particularly impressive is the high quality of the curriculum within Sedra (weekly portion of the Torah), Tefilla (prayer), Yahadus (Jewish way of life) and Halacha (Jewish law).
- The quality of teaching in Limmudei Kodesh is outstanding. Teachers have consistently high expectations and there is a good focus upon building skills and independence, within lessons.

- Provision for students with special educational needs and disabilities in Limmudei Kodesh is strong.
- The behaviour of students in class and around the school is outstanding. They display respect to adults and empathy for their classmates.
- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students are taught the difference between right and wrong, and to respect the law, within Kodesh lessons.
- The school meets the legal requirements for collective worship and the school has put a lot of effort into making Tefilla meaningful and relevant.
- The extracurricular events offered to students are superb and good middos are built up ubiquitously throughout school life.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of all aspects of the school's provisions.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

To maintain and further improve on the current position the school should:

- Ensure that the teaching of Meforshim (commentaries) within Chumash (textual study of the Torah), leads to the retaining of knowledge in this subject and integrating these Meforshim within the text.
- Ensure that the school maximises the benefit of the professional development opportunities in Limmudei Kodesh, by putting in place a systematic follow up process linked to monitoring and discussions.

Inspection team

Rabbi Dr Yonoson Yodaiken
Rabbi Yeduda Levenson

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

The effectiveness of Leadership and Management of Limmudei Kodesh is outstanding

- The quality of leadership and management in Limmudei Kodesh is outstanding. There is a dynamic and strategic shared vision for Kodesh in which staff, governors and students strive consistently for excellence.
- The Menacheles works seamlessly with the acting headteacher and as a result there is a sense of harmony between the Kodesh and Chol staff. The Menacheles provides an outstanding role model of respect and empathy and facilitates the excellent pastoral care provided to students at the school.
- Since the last inspection, the Menacheles, head of Kodesh and members of the Kodesh leadership team, have driven several whole school initiatives. These include the superb Sedra curriculum, comprehensive assessment and tracking within Limmudei Kodesh, and the introduction of a steering leadership group, which facilitates the strategic direction of the school. It is particularly impressive that this steering group is made up of Kodesh and Chol leaders.
- The Menacheles has appointed and supported a team of middle leaders within subject specific roles. These middle leaders, together with the SENCO, make a considerable contribution to school improvement.
- The Limmudei Kodesh self-evaluation is accurate and comprehensive. Leaders are well aware of the strengths and areas of development and use their evaluation to prioritise and drive improvement.
- Provision for students with special educational needs and disabilities in Limmudei Kodesh is strong and the SENCO carefully monitors the progress of this group of students.
- Leaders focus relentlessly on improving teaching and learning and provide opportunities for professional development of Limmudei Kodesh staff. However, in order to fully maximise these training sessions there needs to be a structured follow up process, which includes monitoring as to whether new strategies learnt by teachers are being used in the classroom. In addition, opportunities should be provided for staff to share these new strategies with colleagues.
- There is a highly robust system of performance management in place, led by the Menacheles and supported by subject leaders, which encourages, challenges and supports staff. Teachers are observed on a regular basis and discussions are held linked to these observations where strengths and areas for development are examined. Particularly impressive is the mentoring induction system provided for new staff.

- Parents' views of the school are very positive, with one parent commenting "that the school provides a secure and happy setting for my child". Another parent reported to the inspectors that they cannot ask for anything more from the Menacheles and the school.
- The governing body makes a significant contribution to the work and progress of the school. Discussions with two of the governors with responsibilities in the Kodesh department, reveal that they have a clear grasp of the school's strengths and few areas of weakness. The longstanding and indefatigable Principal offers a unique blend of sagacious advice and challenge, which coupled with his wide expertise, adds a lot to the school's educational provision. For example, when a student is struggling academically or emotionally, he will take a lead role in looking for solutions.

Quality of Jewish Education is outstanding

- The Limmudei Kodesh curriculum enhances the ethos of the school and has been enriched since the last inspection. Particularly noteworthy, is the high quality of the curriculum within Sedra, Tefilla, Yahadus and Halacha.
- The school's Limmudei Kodesh curriculum, both formal and informal provides memorable experiences and rich opportunities for high quality learning and wider personal development.
- The detailed curriculum documents for each year group ensure that each year builds on the last, offering progression and breadth.
- One area for development is within the Chumash curriculum which does build very well on students' translation skills. However there needs to be reflection and analysis on how to ensure that students retain their knowledge of Meforshim. In addition, they need to understand that Meforshim are not separate to the text, but integral to and explain the text of the heilige torah.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding which enables students to make accelerated progress. In the outstanding lessons, activities are available to challenge the more able students, while the teacher directly supports those of low attainment, through differentiated work.
- Teachers have consistently high expectations of all students and they systematically test student's understanding within lessons, intervening when students display a misconception or a gap in their learning. Students have a pride in the work and a work scrutiny of a representative sample of work in KS3 and KS4 showed up a high quality of work. Teachers take every opportunity to imbue values and life skills in the lessons. For example, in a KS3 Sedra lesson, the teacher wove into the Sedra, a meaningful lesson about building up resilience to withstand bad influences.
- Much of the teaching in the core subjects of Chumash, Jewish History, Sedra, Dikduk and Tefilla, focus upon developing students' skills to enable them to become self-sufficient in their learning and davening.

- The students are actively involved during lessons and keen to participate. They thrive on the encouragement they receive from their teachers.
- The school operates a sophisticated assessment schedule to track student progress. It is suggested that consideration is given to assess the way in which students remember Meforshim learnt within Chumash so that they can retain and integrate these Meforshim within the text.
- Parents receive a comprehensive and detailed report once per term which details students' effort and achievement in all areas of Limmudei Kodesh.
- Teachers are adept at utilising the superb classroom resources, including the interactive whiteboards, to create exciting and stimulating lessons. In one such lesson the teacher showed a clip of the Queen to demonstrate how Avrohom Aveinu (Abraham) would be regarded by all those who had contact with him, and that it was highly unusual for a "king" to saddle his own animal, which Avrohom Aveinu did. The teacher used this example to encourage students to display enthusiasm for doing what is right.
- In the few lessons where teaching was not as strong and only good, students spent some time on activities which were secondary in the lesson's objectives. The Menacheles is aware of this and has already provided support to teachers, to help ensure more focus upon lesson objectives throughout the whole lesson.

Behaviour and Safety of Students is outstanding

- The behaviour of students in class and around the school is outstanding. Students display respect and greet adults politely. They run to open doors to staff and visitors alike.
- During the many lessons observed by the inspectors, the behaviour of students was always of the highest quality. This enables teachers to deliver lessons without interruptions, and students to completely focus upon their learning. In several classes, during the inspection, group and paired work took place harmoniously with students displaying respect and empathy towards their classmates, including those with SEN/D.
- During lunchtime and davening sessions, there is excellent decorum with members of the senior leadership team encouraging and rewarding good behaviour. Year 11 Tefilla leads, facilitate the orderly running of Bentching (grace after meals) and support younger girls when necessary.
- Students report that they feel safe in school and that they view the behaviour in school to be very good and having improved markedly since the introduction of more visible leadership within a new behavioural strategy.
- Safeguarding workshops under the auspices of "Shema Koili", are offered to all students. These workshops help them to understand how to stay safe and what to do should they face inappropriate interactions.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development is outstanding

- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Staff present themselves as wonderful role models, and the relationship between all staff is harmonious and respectful, which gives a positive and clear message to all pupils.
- There is good teamwork between staff, which ensures that there is no divide between the Kodesh and Chol staff. This seamless integration of leadership and management cascades down through the school to create a warm and nurturing environment.
- Students are taught the difference between right and wrong, and to respect the Law through the Kodesh curriculum, and they also gain an excellent knowledge of how to be a good citizen.
- Students develop their self-esteem and self-confidence by taking responsibility within the school, and through the many opportunities for public speaking both within class and in assemblies. For example, during the inspection, a student from year 11 presented the advantages of voting for a political party in a most persuasive way. This was part of the British values activities.
- The school meets the legal requirements for collective worship, through twice daily Tefilla (prayer sessions), Bentching, and other opportunities to recite Brochos (blessings). Through all these sessions behaviour is excellent, girls are well focussed on their siddurim (prayer books) and read fluently with concentration.
- The school has put a lot of effort into making Tefilla meaningful and relevant. The Mesiloh Tefilla curriculum is incorporated within lessons, and students are tested at the end of year 10 on their knowledge and skills on this subject. During discussions with the inspectors, students expressed their enjoyment and satisfactions upon completing this course. The recent initiative to add song into Shacharis (morning prayers), has made a positive impact. In a conversation about Tefilla with one of the inspectors, a pupil commented "I really like Tefilla, because it makes me happy because I have the opportunity to daven for others." A year 11 student said, "I love to sing during davening, and I enjoy my role being Tefilla lead," A role which involves organising events, such as on the Yahrzeit of Rochel Immenu (the Matriarch Rachel).
- Teachers take every opportunity within Kodesh lessons to engender important lessons of how to live an altruistic Torah life. An example of this was seen within a lesson on Pirkei Avos (Ethics of the Fathers), in which students were actively involved in reflecting on how our actions and thoughts should never be selfish, but we must always consider the feelings of friends and neighbours.
- Displays in classrooms and around the school are magnificent and highlight amongst other aspects, the importance of doing Chessed (kindness) and speaking nicely about others. Many prominent wall displays illustrate Mamrei

Chazal (sayings of the Rabbis) in a meaningful way. There are also many examples of students' artwork on display on such diverse topics, as the value of money when used for mitzvos and the impact of world leaders on people living in their country and beyond. One display depicts a satnav with the message that the Torah guides us wherever we go.

- The extracurricular events are outstanding which impacts on students' spiritual and moral development so positively. These include regular contributions in assemblies by prominent visitors. The year 7 Bas Mitzvah (ceremony when a girl reaches 12) activities include a major performance for mothers. Year 9 go to visit Flanders in order to understand the context of World War 1, year 10 to York and Ramsgate and year 11 go on a residential shabbaton (over the sabbath).
- Middos development is built ubiquitously into school life. Teachers take every opportunity to imbue these good character traits within Kodesh lessons. Moral awareness is an integral part of the behaviour policy of the school. Students are encouraged to do Chessed, such as visiting the elderly in the local care home for the aged and collecting tzedokah (charity) for worthy causes. There is an effective "buddy system" whereby year 11 girls support those in year 7. Girls are encouraged to take on kabalas (resolutions to improve) and projects such as the Gedolim project in year 10 and the Mishmeres project in year 11 support the development of good middos. In discussions with the inspectors, students commented that the school is like one family with everyone thinking of each other. The Chanukah show performed for mothers and relatives, is highly inclusive and focuses upon an important learning point, as well as it facilitating achdus (unity).

Outcomes for Student in their Limmudei Kodesh Education is outstanding

- Students' achievement in Kodesh Studies are outstanding. This was apparent during lesson observations, work scrutiny and when testing a representative group of students from KS3 and KS4.
- Students' knowledge of Halacha is exceptional, with girls from Year 11 displaying a knowledge of Hilchos Shabbos equivalent to that which can be expected in Seminary. In textual studies, such as in Chumash and Nach, students display an exceptionally high level of skills and are able to work out unseen text well. This is underpinned by the Dikduk lessons which students thoroughly enjoy. However, students' retention of Meforshim is less strong and they do not consistently read Meforshim into text. The senior leadership team are aware of this and are preparing a detailed strategy to improve this aspect of the teaching of Chumash.
- The Mesiloh program in Tefilla is taken by all girls, which ensures that a very high standard is reached in this subject. Students reported to the inspectors

that they thoroughly enjoy the challenge presented in doing this learning program.

- Evidence gained from discussions with students demonstrates that they love their Limmudei Kodesh and that they are reflective and independent learners.
- Students with special educational needs and disabilities, receive good support which enables them to make accelerated progress.
- Results in Dikduk are consistently strong. However, results last year were slightly down due to it being a cohort with some students with extra needs.

Information about this Inspection

- 17 Kodesh lessons were observed, and two classes were visited during a learning walk.
- Meetings were held with the Menahel, Acting Headteacher, Senior Leaders, SENCO, a number of teaching staff, Principal, Representatives of the Governing Body, Middle leaders and, members of the Steering team, which is made up of leaders both Kodesh and Chol as well as two specialist consultants who work part time at the school.
- Pupils across the age and activity range were tested on their knowledge and skills in the core Limmudei Kodesh subjects, and discussions took place with students to seek their views on the school and in particular the Limmudei Kodesh provision.
- The school's assessment and tracking systems were scrutinised, as was work in students' kodesh books, in most year groups in the core subjects.
- The inspectors considered the views of 34 parents who responded to the questionnaire provided by the inspection team.
- The inspectors perused documentation and policies, including the school improvement plan and the school's own evaluation of its work.

Information about this school

- Yesodey Hatorah Senior Girls school serves the Orthodox Jewish Charedi community of Stamford Hill. Yesodey Hatorah was founded in 1942 as an independent school, with separate sections for boys and girls, on different sites, with junior and senior departments. The girls' senior department became a voluntary aided maintained school in 2005, when it moved into its present superb, then new, accommodation. The school aims "to deliver a high quality education which is firmly based on Torah principles, combined with the national curriculum". There are 314 students on roll with the proportion of students who require special educational needs support being below the national average. The proportion of students who have an education health and care plan is above the national average. The school was put into special measures following the Ofsted inspection of March 2018, On a

follow up monitoring visit on 10th January 2019, the school was deemed to be taking effective action towards the removal of these special measures.

School details

Unique reference number	133599
Local authority	Hackney
Lead Inspector	Rabbi Dr Y Yodaiken

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

Type of school	Senior School
School category	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	314
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair	Mr T. Bibelman
Acting Headteacher	Mrs C. Neuberger
Menaheles	Mrs R. Fein
Prinicpal	Rabbi Pinter
Date of previous inspection	9-10 June 2014
School address	Egerton Road, Stamford Hill, London N16 6UB
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