

Yesodey Hatorah Senior Girls School

Egerton Road, Stamford Hill, London N16 6UA

Kodesh Studies Inspection

Inspection dates 11-12 Sivan 5774 – 9-10 June 2014

Overall effectiveness **Outstanding** **1**

Achievement of pupils Outstanding 1

Quality of teaching Outstanding 1

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) Outstanding 1

Behaviour and safety of pupils Good 2

Leadership and management Outstanding 1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Students achieve exceptionally well from their starting points to reach standards which are well above average by the time they leave in nearly all subjects. Especially noteworthy is the level of achievement in *chumash* (Torah) and *dinnim* (Jewish law).
- The quality of teaching is outstanding overall, enabling students of all abilities to make rapid progress.
- Students' behaviour is good both within *kodesh* lessons and around the school. Students' attitudes towards learning are good and they are proud of their school.
- The quality of SMSC development provided at the school is outstanding. Students are inspired to love doing *mitzvos* (Torah commandments). They are inculcated with Torah values so that they

are very clear how to interact with peers in an altruistic and harmonious way.

- Students are well cared for by the adults in the school and as a result feel safe.
- The head of *kodesh*, acting headteacher, staff and governors have very high aspirations for the school and a shared vision. The head of *kodesh* provides dynamic leadership of the *kodesh* department.
- The principal supported by a team of dedicated governors offer hands on support to the senior leadership team, acting as critical friends to them.
- The school has recently gone through a turbulent time with the sudden petirah of the beloved and esteemed headteacher, Mrs G Pinter O'H. Her incredible influence, expertise and vision have played such a crucial part in establishing Yesodey Hatorah as the outstanding school it is. Her life's work continues to be a guiding light for all staff and students as they try to emulate her special ways.

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Rabbi Dr Yonoson Yodaiken
Rabbi Nesanel Lieberman

Lead Inspector
Team Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Yesodey Hatorah Senior Girls School serves the orthodox Jewish *charedi* community of Stamford Hill. All members of the community aim to lead modest lives governed by Torah law and values. Yesodey Hatorah was founded in 1942 as an independent school with separate sections for boys and girls on different sites, and 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. There are 319 students on roll with 11 students having a statement for special educational needs. When the girls leave the school all go onto third level education provided by seminaries.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Enhance further the quality of teaching so that all teaching is outstanding and all pupils make rapid progress in all subjects by

- ensuring that teachers' monitoring and feedback to students within their books consistently provides guidance on their next steps in their learning and that teachers give students opportunities to respond
- providing focussed guidance on the teaching of *sedra* (weekly portion of the Torah) and Jewish history, through dedicated training and clear curriculum mapping. This would facilitate the already good standards in these two subjects becoming outstanding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students' achievement in *kodesh* studies is outstanding. This was particularly evident when testing a representative group of students from Years 7, 8, 9 and 10, during lesson observations and through a perusal of students' work.
- Hebrew reading standards are excellent as students read with great accuracy and fluency. In textual study, such as *chumash*, students display an exceptionally high level of skills and are able to work out unseen text well. In addition, their *dikduk* (grammatical skills) awareness is outstanding. Students' work and knowledge of *halacha* is exceptional, with girls from Year 11 achieving a level of knowledge in this subject equivalent to that which can be expected in seminary. Standards in *sedra* and Jewish history are good but less strong than in other subjects. This is due to the fact that in *sedra* the curriculum map is not so well developed and in Jewish history the coordinator for this subject is on maternity leave.
- Discussions with a representative sample of students reveal that they are very positive about the school and are proud of being students therein.
- Several students mentioned that they feel it to be a cause celebre to try and reach the aspirational path set out for them by their beloved former headteacher, Mrs G Pinter O'H.
- Evidence gained from discussions with students demonstrates that they are reflective, confident and articulate. Students enjoy learning *kodesh*.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs receive good support which enables them to make excellent progress. The expert work of the Senco in tracking progress and arranging effective interventions is making a major impact.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is outstanding which enables students to make rapid progress. In-school training is exceptionally well planned and the head of *kodesh* and other members of the senior leadership team offer excellent support for teachers.
- In the outstanding lessons, activities are available to challenge the more able students while the teacher directly supports those of lower ability. Students are encouraged to make their own discoveries and traditional text-based *kodesh* lessons are exciting, participatory and clearly develop independent skills.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent, the pace of lessons brisk and peer assessment is impressive. Learning objects are clearly stated at the beginning of lessons and teachers chart students' understanding of a point before moving on.
- In the few lessons which were only good questioning strategies were not used effectively as only closed questions were being presented to students.
- Although much work has been done on developing consistency of marking in students' books, good practice is not yet consistently embedded in all year groups and subjects. Students are not given enough clear guidance on next steps nor given opportunities to respond.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development is outstanding

- Students' behaviour is good and they are friendly and extremely respectful to adults. The vast majority of students behave well in class and around school, however, there are a small number of girls who disturb occasionally which can affect the smooth running of lessons, particularly within lessons being taught by less experienced teachers. The school is in the process of fine tuning an incentive scheme for good behaviour which would focus more upon supporting good behaviour rather than taking away merits already accumulated. The newly appointed assistant head is leading on this and is taking a strategic view on ensuring the success of this strategy.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding

- 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.
- Teachers take every opportunity within *kodesh* lessons to engender important lessons of how to live an altruistic Torah life. An example of this is within a lesson on *Pirkei Avos* (Ethics of the Fathers) in which students are actively involved in reflecting upon how each and every action is crucial and has an effect on the whole world.

- Students develop their self-confidence by assuming responsibilities within the school. There is an active school council whereby girls plan events and discuss school issues. In Year 11 all girls are part of a student structure in which they lead on organising and arranging key areas. These include head girls, year book heads, *dinim* heads, social heads, *chessed* heads, technical heads, class heads, literacy and display heads. This impressive structure enables each girl to feel fulfilled. As a result of this and the friendly atmosphere in the school, girls report that they are “so proud to be students at the school”. One girl stated “we feel part of a big family” and another said “I am so privileged to learn at Yesodey Hatorah”.
- Display in classrooms and around the school are of an exemplary level and highlight the importance of doing *chessed* for others, of speaking nicely, seeing the good in others and always being *emestic* (honest).
- Students are actively involved in *chessed* both within school and for the community. The *chessed* heads in Year 11 have organised support for needy local families, visits to the elderly, *tzedaka* drives and the tutoring of weaker students, as well as the lost property initiative within school.
- Students learn to appreciate and respect Jewish culture and traditions. Despite quite a diverse variety of backgrounds within the school body, students display great respect for others’ traditions which may be different from theirs. In addition, the school’s ethos and practice continuously imbue the girls with a respect for others of different religions and culture. The inspectors noted that staff members who are of a different religion feel most respected by the students and privileged to work in such a supportive and harmonious setting.
- Arrangements for *tefillah* (prayers), assemblies and for students to *bentch* (grace after meals) meet the requirements for collective worship. *Davening* sessions are inspirational and meaningful and allow students to pray for the welfare of others.
- The enrichment events, which support the curriculum, are outstanding. These include regular guest speakers, the school show which takes place on Chanukah, outings, *melava malka* (meal after the Sabbath), events around the festivals such as Purim, Tu B’Shvat, Pesach and Succos, Year 10 residential trip and Rosh Chodesh (1st day of month) events. All of these serve as an inspiration to the students in all four strands of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Particularly impressive is the school show which Year 11 organise completely. It includes acting, singing and dancing, with every girl in Year 11 having a leading role. Each student in the school takes part and the older girls display great consideration and sensitivity in caring for younger girls, in ensuring a most professional and serene event which is enjoyed by students and parents.

Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding

- The head of *kodesh*, acting headteacher, principal, staff and governors have very high aspirations for the school and a shared vision. This is clearly being influenced by the special path set for the school by the previous headteacher, Mrs G Pinter O'H, whose life's work is being perpetuated by the present leadership and management.
- The head of *kodesh* provides dynamic leadership and is very supportive to both staff and students. In addition the senior leadership team and staff act as excellent role models to the girls. This ensures that the atmosphere at the school is very warm and positive and conducive to growth. The warmth and kindness of the senior leadership team have been pivotal in creating the high morale of staff at the school.
- The training opportunities for *kodesh* staff are excellent. There is a completely integrated approach to professional development with the *kodesh* and secular staff sharing training opportunities. There are two in-house teaching and learning consultants who support staff in their pedagogic strategies. One area for development in training is within the teaching of sedra and Jewish history. Induction procedures are superb with the senior leadership team investing much time in new staff. However, systems need to be put in place to deal with the increasing number of temporary staff who work for a very short time at the school.
- Tracking procedures are superb with girls' progress being charted in all subjects as they go through the school. This information is used by staff in ensuring that all students receive the support they need. In addition, the Senco uses this tracking information to analyse if the students with SEN/D are making sufficient progress and whether to put students on the SEN register. The work of the Senco has really made a bit difference to the school. Students are well supported and gain confidence due to these focused interventions. The school recently received an award from Simms for its tracking systems.
- The principal and governors are highly committed to the success of the school and are closely involved strategically, acting effectively as critical friends. In addition, the principal is involved in the day to day running of the school. He offers outstanding support to the staff.
- Regular lesson observations are carried out by the senior leadership team as part of performance management for teachers. As a result, staff now carry out more formal lesson planning and are far more confident in employing a variety of teaching techniques. This work has had a very positive impact and has led to outstanding teaching and rapid progress.
- The quality of the *kodesh* curriculum is outstanding and includes all of the subjects appropriate to the backgrounds and expectations of the

students and their parents. There is an appropriate focus upon skill building and independent learning. All strands of the curriculum are levelled which facilitates planning and assessment. This is quite unique as few schools have in place such a sophisticated curriculum map. Particularly impressive are the *dinim* and *chumash* curricula which facilitate the very high standards reached in these subjects. An area for development is within the *sedra* curriculum and in particular how to present the key points of the *sedra* to students, rather than just focussing upon a few points.

- Links with parents are strong and they are very supportive of the school. Reports are sent home three times a year and open evenings take place twice a year. Parents report that they feel like real partners in their daughters' education.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number 2044318

Local authority Hackney

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

Type of school	Senior girls school
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	319
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr T Bibelman
Head of Kodesh	Mrs R Fein
Telephone number	0208 826 5500
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