

Yesodey Hatorah Senior Girls School

Egerton Road, Stamford Hill, London, N16 6UB

Inspection dates 10–11 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students thrive very well and attain above average standards in GCSE examinations. They make good progress, with a minority making exceptionally good progress.
- Achievement is consistently outstanding in mathematics.
- Behaviour and safety are exemplary; students work diligently and take responsibility for their work.
- Provision for students' development is strong. The emphasis on respect for self and others underpins students' awareness of human dilemmas and shared common interests with others beyond their community.
- Leaders work productively and creatively with the local authority and consultants to develop new approaches to school improvement. Together, they are driving changes in curriculum provision, teaching and training to raise standards further.
- Members of the senior leadership team work very well together. They are committed to school improvement and have led the school well through a turbulent period. They have the loyalty of staff and the overwhelming trust and support of the community to do the best for students and the wider community.
- Governors know the school very well. They are supportive and hold the school to account well.
- Leaders and managers, including the governors, have skilfully sustained the founding principles and ethos of the school by carefully combining the ethos and values of their faith with all that is taught.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are demanding and set challenging targets. As a result, students aspire to achieve well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Senior leaders' vision to develop the workforce to help them gain additional professional qualifications is at the early stage of development. This is particularly so for middle leaders.
- The culture of best practice in teaching and learning is not at a consistently high enough level to enable the vast majority of learners to excel.
- Students make slower progress in English and standards achieved in the subject vary from year to year. As a result, students' progress overall is affected.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 parts of lessons, 11 of them jointly with members of the senior leadership team and a consultant who works at the school part time.
- Meetings were held with the principal, headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, three groups of students, parents, and the Head of Secondary Schools from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked closely at the school’s work, including the school improvement plan and development plan, minutes of the governing body, students’ work and progress over time, documents and policies relating to behaviour, safeguarding, the curriculum and information on achievement and attendance. The inspectors also analysed documents on leaders’ monitoring and evaluation of the school’s effectiveness, as well as external reports on the school’s work.
- The Orthodox Jewish Charedi community does not use online communication, the internet or other media and parents could not take part in answering the online Parent View survey. The parental questionnaire was sent to parents and the 51 responses returned were taken into consideration.
- Inspectors also took account of the 46 responses from staff.
- This inspection was undertaken at no notice and was part of a wider trial of testing out the feasibility of unannounced inspections.

Inspection team

Carmen Rodney, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Christopher Allen	Additional Inspector
Caroline Pardy	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- All students are from the Orthodox Jewish Charedi community of Stamford Hill and wider afield.
- An above average proportion of students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is well below average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the additional government funding provided for students known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority is well below average. The low take up for free school meals is not an accurate reflection of the high proportion of students who are known to be eligible for the funding. Factors affecting this entitlement are beyond the control of the school
- The stability of the school population is well above average.
- The headteacher was appointed at the end of the summer term, 2014. Following the loss of the long-standing headteacher, the school appointed an interim headteacher who is now the current senior deputy in the senior leadership team. This team includes the principal who works with all senior leaders, including the governors, to safeguard the interests and the values and ethos of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Focus the leadership and management at all levels on accelerating the process of developing the professional skills of middle leaders and teachers by:
 - ensuring that middle leaders are provided with high quality professional development training to equip them with the skills and attributes necessary to lead and manage the expanding department structure
 - ensuring that every member of staff has access to gaining professional qualifications that will sharpen their skills to improve outcomes for students.
- Develop teaching further by ensuring that teachers focus sharply on their questioning techniques to probe students' understanding and increase their language skills by giving students more time to think and explain their views.
- Accelerate the rates of students' progress in English by ensuring that every teacher is a teacher of English and literacy is fully integrated as part of the cross-curriculum work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The leadership team, under the new headteacher, works very well together. The distributed leadership model is used very well to create a corporate vision to drive school improvement without compromising the core values and ethos of the Jewish faith.
- The senior team, with the support of governors and staff, has responded well to the changing demands of the National Curriculum and statutory requirements.
- Although the headteacher is new, she is forthright in building on the established work of the founding leaders, that of her predecessor and other senior leaders. Senior leaders are committed to maintaining the vision of high expectations and improvement.
- The first inspection report in 2006 identified the previous leader as 'innovative and inspirational'. These characteristics remain among the new leaders. The school, as a trailblazer, continues to blend traditional and modern values. These underpin the positive approach the school uses to make important changes. For example, students now study a wider range of subjects that include, for example, triple science: physics, chemistry and biology for the most able; music, computer science, art and design, textiles and food technology. The curriculum is now much broader and serves to enhance students' learning. Attention to the needs of individuals allows some students to fast-track GCSE examinations in mathematics, for instance, before pursuing additional or AS-level mathematics, with excellent results.
- The *Kodesh* (non-secular) covering Jewish studies, includes many aspects of the *Chol* (secular) curriculum. Subjects covered in both curricula provide students with insight into understanding the laws and values of the land and the wider world. For instance, in considering the Spanish Inquisition, students learn about and compare historical events with discriminatory practices in the 21st century which are linked to the Equality Act 2010.
- Senior leaders and governors consciously work very well with parents when dealing with different aspects of the school curriculum, such as personal and social education. The *Kodesh* curriculum is used thoughtfully and dovetails well with the school curriculum as efforts are made to ensure that students understand issues on relationships within the boundaries of their faith.
- Subjects offered are kept under review to meet the wishes of students and parents. Consultation with parents has led to the removal of vocational studies as an alternative pathway, primarily as more traditional subjects are the preferred choice in the community.
- Roles and responsibilities and lines of accountability are clearly defined. Line management meetings are regular and rigorous systems for monitoring students' progress and teachers' performance are fully in place. As a result, staff know that they are fully responsible for students' achievement.
- Although middle leaders monitor and evaluate their departments, all are not fully equipped with the professional leadership and management skills to drive improvement. The school has a very good understanding of how well it is doing, but recognises the necessity of building leadership skills among middle leaders in order to sustain high expectations and build capacity.
- Targets for accelerating students' progress to higher levels are measurable and set to a specific period, thus enabling senior leaders to identify the support staff might need or reward linked to improvement.
- The school takes great care in ensuring that all aspects of students' development are addressed. Very good care, guidance and support, combined with good outcomes, ensure students are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The school works exceptionally well with parents, who spoke glowingly about the school's high expectations for all students irrespective of their ability.
- Other partnership work with similar local schools is contributing to the school expanding its work, in particular the curriculum and its provision of professional development for staff.
- Spiritual development is a strength enabling students to sustain their values while learning about other major faiths. Similarly, the study of literature from other cultures, musical performances and concerts, and playing a range of musical instruments, including African drums, allow students to enter other worlds and engage in community cohesion. This is particularly so when the students take part in charitable and enrichment activities locally, nationally and internationally. Social skills are excellent.
- The local knows the school well and has carefully considered complex issues facing the school against a background of religious values versus modernity. Senior officers have used their authoritative and advisory roles to provide a range of advice, in particular legal, professional and common sense wisdom, which has served the school very well. For instance, the local authority was appropriately involved in the appointment of the new headteacher. The local authority has also been instrumental in providing consultants, and in training governors and teachers. Further work is planned to equip teachers and middle

leaders with a wider range of professional skills.

■ The governance of the school:

- A new and experienced Chair of Governors leads an established board that provides effective support and challenge. Governors are knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the school, based on their links and involvement with departments. This provides them with insight into the actions needed for further improvement. They ensure that the school is outward looking without changes affecting the integrity of the community's values and ethos. For example, governors have worked closely with senior leaders and an examination board to ensure that the school complies with regulations when themes and topics conflict with religious values.
- Governors use staff appraisal well to challenge performance and staff know that a pay rise is not given unless targets are met. They are fully conversant with the use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors' financial management of the budget is secure and governors ensure that it is audited regularly. They also ensure that all requirements relating to safeguarding are met and kept under review.
- Governors monitor the school's work through regular visits and presentations, although not well established at departmental level. Their collaborative work and frank discussions with the local authority have contributed to the school moving forward. For example, the governors have worked jointly with the local authority on the appointment of key staff, including the headteacher, and in relation to sanctioning professional developmental programmes for staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The attitudes and behaviour of students are exemplary because of the pervasive trust and mutual respect they have for each other and adults who work with them. Relationships are mature and at all times excellent.
- Students' industrious approach and tenacity in lessons are strong features that contribute to their good progress. This was very evident during the inspection. The passion for learning is consistent, as seen when students were rehearsing in music, engaging in physical education, reading and discussing in history or English, considering frequency tables in mathematics or when receiving one-to-one support. The overwhelming majority of parents who took part in the inspection spoke emphatically about the strong work ethic which persists in the home and holiday periods.
- Students settle down to work very quickly and demonstrate a high level of cooperation and willingness to listen without being prompted. As a result, time for learning is not lost and teaching progresses at a quick pace.
- Students develop a good range of leadership skills throughout their time in the school. This is linked to the wide range of leadership roles they can carry out. Each role is structured and linked to a job description, which varies from head girl to producing high quality newsletters, to leading discussion on current affairs to being in the choir or running social events. Leadership roles also extend to Year 11 mentoring Year 7 students as part of the transition process. This is another aspect of helping students to keep and feel safe.
- The school's work to keeping students safe is outstanding. Groups of students spoken to say they are very safe and secure in their school. Inspection evidence supports this. Parents who took part in the inspection fully agree with this view.
- Students say they are very well cared for and always have someone they can turn to should the need arise. They spoke confidently and assuredly that bullying is indeed very rare in their school. They are aware of different discriminatory forms of bullying through both the *Kodesh* (religious) and *Chol* (secular) curriculum.
- Strong moral values underpin students' behaviour towards each other and their awareness of keeping safe. Students therefore understand how to keep safe, and also have a good grasp of other cultures and religions through the work on safety undertaken in subjects such as Hebrew studies, English, history and mathematics. The cross-curriculum approach to considering, for example, 'differences' and 'bias' increases students' grasp of issues linked to bullying.
- Exclusions are very low and used only as a last resort. Attendance remains above average for secondary schools.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is effective in helping students to learn well. Teachers have high expectations of their students

and the level of challenge is unremitting.

- Teachers create a positive learning environment where expectations of learning are supported by knowledgeable staff whose enthusiasm to accelerate learning lead to well-structured lessons. These are paced and make good use of a range of resources to illustrate specific teaching points. As a result, most students can demonstrate how well they understand the work when applying the concepts taught. This is evident in most subjects, but more specifically in subjects such as mathematics and citizenship where students consistently make excellent progress in the GCSE examinations.
- Strengths of teaching are the quick pace and questioning to develop students' understanding of the topic being taught. However, these strengths are also relative weaknesses as teachers do not always give students enough thinking time to explain and extend their responses.
- Teaching is effective when students are given time to respond to questions. When this happens, students revel in giving detailed answers and appraising each other's views. This was well illustrated in a Year 11 mathematics lesson when students used mini-whiteboards to work out, assess and present answers to the whole class. The school is aware, however, that talk is not always used well to explore learning and extend students' communication skills.
- Good teaching over time is exemplified by, for example, the use of well thought out homework to develop learning, quality marking and detailed commentary, with emphasis on literacy skills that picks up weaknesses and suggests how students can improve. Students spoken to indicated that the 'green pen' marking helps them to improve their work.
- Good teaching over time is also typified by teachers' knowledge of their students. Teachers know students very well and use information on their starting points and tracking information on their progress to plan and group students. Work is carefully and sensitively matched to the needs of students, and because expectations are high, all students strive to do their very best. It is therefore not unusual to see students striving to achieve the higher levels or grades possible.
- Teaching assistants work supportively with students through discussing, explaining and illustrating teaching points. This enables the very few students receiving additional support to keep up with their peers in the classroom and make good progress.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students' achievement is good. On entry to the school, prior attainment in most year groups is average, with the occasional year group being significantly above average. As a result of effective teaching and a zest for learning, all students make good progress, with a minority exceeding progress over time.
- The quality of learning is consistently good because expectations of what students can achieve are high; students are motivated and the quantity and quality of work in their books confirm that they are challenged to achieve well.
- By the time they reach the end of the Key Stages 3 and 4, standards are above average in the majority of subjects. In Year 11, each student takes between 10 and 12 GCSE subjects. Since the last inspection, in 2006, virtually all students leave the school with five or more GCSE grades A* to C. Over a number of years, the school has remained in the top 20% for similar schools nationally.
- All students achieved standards that were significantly above average in 2013, particularly in mathematics with 53% achieving A* or A. This was a decline on the 2012 results when 83% achieved similar grades. Students consistently excel in mathematics and this high standard in the subject has been sustained since the last inspection. Nevertheless, these well above average results in, for example, additional science, art and design, core science, English literature, geography, history and home economics mask the relative weakness in subjects such as English language and classical studies.
- Students' slower progress in English, a point noted in the previous inspection report, in comparison to mathematics, science and English literature, persist. The majority achieve the higher grades in English. However, the school's review of students' literacy skills found that students do not have a strong culture of reading quality literary texts to increase their understanding of different genres and writers' use of language. Furthermore, a minority, who speak English as a second language, are not exposed regularly to a language-rich environment to develop good repartee. In addition, attainment on entry in reading and writing is not accurate. Over the last two years, swift action has been taken when students enter the school. All are now tested, so personalised support in literacy is tailored to their needs. Increased attention to implementing reading strategies has resulted in students making at least expected progress, with most making good progress.
- Expectations in terms of progress for disabled students and those with special educational needs are similar to other students in the school. Most make good progress. For example, the most able students

with specific needs, such as autism, successfully gained higher GCSE grades in all subjects and the top grades A* and A in mathematics and science. These students have full access to the curriculum, emphasising the school's approach to equality of opportunity for all students. Regular monitoring of students' progress to identify the impact of progress and achievement is frequent and rigorous so that changes to support can be made immediately.

- The attainment gap for the very few disadvantaged students eligible for additional support narrowed in relation to their achievement in English and in science. These students outperformed their peers in science. However, they made slightly slower progress in mathematics.
- Students identified as speakers of English as an additional language made at least the same expected progress as their peers. Inspection evidence indicates that targeted one-to-one support for students in class enables them to achieve well.

What inspection judgements mean

School	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	133599
Local authority	Hackney
Inspection number	449427

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	All-through
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	331
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Theo Bibelman
Headteacher	Mrs Rivky Weinberg
Date of previous school inspection	12-13 September 2006
Telephone number	020 8826 5500
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