

Jewish Community Secondary School (JCoSS)

Inspection report

Local authority	Barnet
Inspected under the auspices of	Pikuach
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2012
Lead inspector	Selwyn Ward

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	342
Appropriate authority	Governing body
Chair	Mike Grabiner
Headteacher	Jeremy Stow-Lindner
Date of previous school inspection	N/a
School address	Castlewood Road New Barnet London EN4 9GE
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Introduction

Inspection team

Selwyn Ward

Lead Inspector

Sandra Teacher

Team Inspector

This inspection followed the recent Ofsted inspection and was carried out with three working days' notice. The inspectors visited 10 lessons taught by seven teachers, with a particular focus on Jewish Education and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The inspectors visited class and whole-school assemblies, listened to students read in Hebrew, and spoke with students, staff, the School Improvement Partner and members of the governing body. Inspectors looked at school planning and policies, school self-evaluation and the questionnaire responses of pupils, staff and parents.

Information about the school

JCoSS opened in new, purpose-built accommodation in September 2010. Founded with a commitment to the ethos of pluralism, tolerance and mutual respect, it was part of a parent-led initiative to cater for students across the entire spectrum of faith within the Jewish community, including secular Jews as well as those affiliated to Liberal, Reform, Masorti and Orthodox synagogues. The school is not affiliated to any one of these denominations. It is a school which admits six forms of entry to Year 7 each year (180 pupils). It currently has students on roll only in Years 7 and 8. Its projected roll by 2016 is 1,310, making it an above average-sized school when it reaches capacity. The school is opening a sixth form in September 2012. Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is above the national average because the school incorporates special resource provision for up to seven students in each year group with autistic spectrum disorders.

The school has science college status. It has the Investors in People award and Healthy Schools status. Hebrew (*Ivrit*) is taught as a modern foreign language. At the time of the inspection, formal and informal Jewish Education were in the charge of temporary leaders because the substantive leaders were on maternity leave.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
The achievement of students in their Jewish education	2
The quality of teaching and assessment	2
The extent to which the Jewish Education curriculum meets students' needs	2
The extent of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development including the duty to fulfill the daily act of collective worship	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of Jewish Education, including through partnerships	2

Key findings

- JCoSS makes good provision for students' Jewish education. It provides a stimulating curriculum that successfully promotes Jewish values through a wide range of subjects, including the school's science specialism, as well as through Jewish Education. Students in the special resource provision benefit from excellent facilities and care, and are helped to make good progress in their Jewish Education.
- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students respond very positively to the injunction in their 'golden rules' to 'Be a *Mensch*.' As a result, behaviour is good and students are eager to learn. They are equally keen to play their part within the broad Jewish community and through their support for a wide range of charities and voluntary enterprises. Assemblies and tutor group sessions provide opportunities for reflection, but these do not all meet the statutory expectations for a daily act of collective worship.
- Teaching is good. Teachers drive lessons forward at a brisk pace so that a great deal of work is done by students. Assessment is thorough, although the students do not all understand how their key skills are to be developed year-on-year through Jewish Education. There is not a routine expectation that they respond to questions that teachers pose when they mark their work. The work in lessons is not always matched closely enough to the widely different prior learning and capabilities of the students.
- Leaders have had remarkable success in establishing a successful and innovative new school. Though there have been temporary changes in the leadership of Jewish Education department, these have not been allowed to

disrupt the continuing development of a strong Jewish Education curriculum through which pupils make good progress. Parents are very supportive of the school and are happy with all that it provides. However, a significant minority would like to see their children make faster progress in learning Hebrew (*Ivrit*).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further accelerate students' learning by:
 - more closely matching work to the different capabilities and starting points of the students
 - ensuring that students all understand how their skills are developed through Jewish Education as they move up the school
 - making greater use of Hebrew letters as well as anglicised versions when referring to Hebrew terms in Jewish Education
 - routinely giving students time to read and respond to the comments teachers write when they mark their work.
- Ensure that assemblies and tutor group sessions provide opportunities for reflection that satisfy the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

Main report

The achievement of students in their Jewish education

Students join the school in Year 7 with above-average attainment in English and mathematics. However, their prior knowledge and experience of the Jewish Education curriculum, and of Hebrew, varies widely and is generally lower than in most other Jewish schools. Notwithstanding this, the school sets highly ambitious targets for students' progress in Jewish Education over the course of Key Stage 3 because these are based on their prior attainment in English. Students make good progress in their Jewish Education over their time at the school. By the end of Year 8, students have a well-developed understanding of Jewish values and a respect for the plurality of beliefs and practices represented within the school and wider community. Some work is of a particularly high standard. For example, in Year 7, students looking at stories from the *Torah* portraying sibling rivalry, have not merely recounted the stories of Cain and Abel, and Joseph and his brothers, but have analysed, compared and contrasted these different texts. For some students, progress is outstanding. Disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those in the special resourced provision, make similarly good progress to their peers. The school's comprehensive tracking systems have identified, however, that girls in Year 8 have generally made faster progress than the boys.

The teaching of *Ivrit* as a modern foreign language contributes to students' developing Jewish Education. Students' confidence in reading *Ivrit* is growing, although there are missed opportunities to reinforce learning, for example by reproducing the words in Hebrew letters alongside the versions transliterated into English when Hebrew terms are referred to in Jewish Education.

The quality of teaching and assessment

Relationships throughout the school are good. Teachers' expectations in Jewish Education lessons are high and teachers motivate students to work hard and try their best. Behaviour is mostly managed well by teachers. Students collaborate effectively in pairs and small groups when asked to do so. In the main, lessons are well planned with varied activities that appeal to students' different learning styles. These include hands-on activities for students who are considered to learn best through practical tasks. Teachers' planning does not, however, always match work to students' different capabilities and prior learning. These often vary widely, even within classes that are set by ability. In the most effective lessons, teachers' probing questions draw out more detailed, thoughtful responses from the students, as when, in a Year 7 Jewish Education lesson, students were pressed by the teacher to 'go deeper for me' in explaining the rationale behind their answers. In the best lessons, students are periodically reminded of their learning objectives so that they are aware of what they should be learning.

Assessment is a strength in this school. Each student's progress is carefully tracked and analysed so that timely support can be provided where a student falls behind. This progress tracking covers Jewish Education, as it does other key subjects. Work in Jewish Education is regularly marked, often with comments and probing questions aimed at moving students' learning on. The impact of teachers' marking is lessened when students are not routinely expected to read, reflect on and respond to teachers' comments or the questions they pose in their marking.

The extent to which the Jewish Education curriculum meets students' needs

The Jewish Education curriculum has been tailored to meet the specific aims and ethos of the school, reflecting and respecting all strands of recognised beliefs and practices within the Jewish community. It enables students to develop and inform their Jewish identities by focusing particularly on values and ethics. Students learn about and are challenged to apply the traditional rabbinic technique of learning through their own and each other's questioning. As a result, students develop as confident and articulate youngsters. During the inspection, students in Year 8 were exploring the notion of *Tikun Olam* (repair of the world) and of ways in which each, as individuals, could contribute to such a mission. Though students know the levels at which they are working in Jewish Education, they do not all understand how their skills are expected to develop as they move up the school.

Just as key skills such as literacy and numeracy are reinforced through cross-curricular links with other subjects, so too is Jewish Education. Students in science used information and communication technology to research Israel's environment. A history and geography field trip to York offered students the opportunity to trace the fate of York's Medieval Jewish community. Students are encouraged to map their personal history and genealogy. In art, students have examined, amongst others, the work of Marc Chagall and of modern Israeli artists. In the reflective 'Heart Space' that forms the entrance lobby to the school, displays include a tree leafed in 'helping hands' made in design technology lessons and linking to the themes developed in

Jewish Education. A display of 'Autistic Heroes' highlights as role models the achievements of people with autism.

The school's formal curriculum is enhanced through what is described at JCoSS as the informal curriculum. This celebrates key Jewish festivals, often highlighting relevant parallels with modern society, so that, for example, the celebration of *Pesach* this year drew attention to the persistence of slavery in the 21st century in the context of the story of the Israelites' freedom from bondage in Egypt. As a student explained of the informal Jewish Education curriculum, 'I felt the Jewishness in me for the first time.'

The extent of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including the duty to hold a daily act of collective worship

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional, and shows through in the very good relationships between students, and the empathy and respect which they show for the diversity of beliefs and practices. As an extension of the values promoted through the curriculum, students take a very active interest in the community. They are keen to perform *mitzvot* and raise substantial sums for a range of charities. In the words of a student, 'My previous school taught me the *mitzvot*, but this school teaches me how to put them into practice.' Students already have an impressive track record of voluntary work. This is especially remarkable given the ages of the students, still only at the start of their secondary education. During the inspection, at a ceremony attended by the Chief Rabbi, nearly 40 students received awards for their voluntary work. JCoSS takes the notion of a 'student council' to the next level and beyond. Students are not merely elected to a 'parliament' but they also have the opportunities take on specific 'cabinet' responsibilities for portfolios such as health, sport and culture.

There are opportunities for formal prayer for those who want to take them up, and these include celebrations of *Shabbat* and of Jewish festivals. All students participate each day either in a year group assembly or a tutor session, and these are often of a high standard. These include opportunities for reflection but not all sessions meet the current statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of Jewish Education, including through partnerships

In establishing the school, the governing body have searched the world for a suitable model. At the heart of JCoSS is its partnership with parents and with the wider Jewish community, and the school's values are shared among the whole school community, including both Jewish and non-Jewish staff. Within a very short period, the headteacher, leadership team and governing body have been highly successful in establishing a school with a pluralist ethos that has attracted students from a diverse range of Jewish denominations, and parents are very happy with almost all that the school provides. Leaders' monitoring of provision is very effective, and the strength of succession planning is evident from the fact that short-term changes in leadership of Jewish Education and informal Jewish education have not been at the expense of

provision or outcomes for students. The strategic planning of leaders and the governing body is ensuring a smooth roll-out of the curriculum and facilities as JCoSS expands each year to reach its full size as an 11–18 school. They have also established high-quality special resource provision for autistic students which is appropriately integrated with the school's mainstream provision.

Effective partnerships have been developed with other schools around the world, including in Israel, Ghana and France, as well as with other faith and secular schools in different parts of the United Kingdom. These links have helped to broaden students' horizons.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.