

Yavneh College

Inspection report

LEA	Hertfordshire
Inspection dates	Tues 13 th and Wed 14 th May 2008
Inspected under the auspices of	Pikuach

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

Type of School	Comprehensive	School address	Hillside Avenue
School category	Voluntary Aided		Borehamwood
Age range of pupils	11-13		Hertfordshire
			WD6 1HL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0208 736 5580
Number on roll	223	Fax number	0208 953 2749
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Malcolm Gordon
Date of previous inspection	N/A	Headteacher	Dr Dena Coleman

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Introduction

Description of the school

Yavneh College is a modern orthodox, co-educational, voluntary-aided Jewish school which is part of the United Synagogue family of schools. It was opened in September 2006 and currently has a Year 7 and a Year 8 cohort. The sixth form opens in September 2008.

The majority of its intake is from local Jewish schools with 21% of pupils from non-Jewish schools. Pupils come from families who represent a wide spectrum of Jewish observance and practice. The school is open and tolerant within an ethos and approach which is clearly defined as modern orthodox.

The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The number of pupils registered with special educational needs is average.

Approximately 4 lessons out of 25 per week of the curriculum are allocated to Jewish Studies and there is a timetabled session of enrichment activity each day.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Unsatisfactory

(It should be noted that grading an area of a school outstanding means that the majority of the features are outstanding but there are also areas in which there is room for development)

Overall effectiveness of its provision for Jewish education

Yavneh College has made remarkable progress in its provision of Jewish education in the short amount of time it has been open. The Head of Jewish Studies, together with the Head teacher and Chair of Governors have a clearly articulated vision which is shared with all stake holders

The Jewish Studies department has many outstanding features and constantly strives to reach high standards in all that it does. The school's main strengths include:

- Outstanding leadership
- A very clearly articulated shared vision
- Exceptionally positive relationships within the school
- Excellent care and support of pupils
- Outstanding behaviour of pupils
- Pupils' positive attitudes to their Jewish Studies lessons
- A high standard of current and forward planning
- The development of systems which ensure Jewish Studies subjects are viewed equally to all areas of the National Curriculum

What the school should do to further improve further

- 1) Maintain the high standards it has set itself as it grows in size.*
- 2) Ensure that the depth of the curriculum is not diluted by the attempt to achieve too much breadth*
- 3) Further develop aspects of teaching and learning to reach an over all outstanding provision*

Grade: 1

Achievement and standards

The school has established a rigorous system of assessment within the Jewish Studies curriculum which includes a baseline test administered to pupils on entry to year 7. This is re-evaluated at the end of the first term. The pupils' progress is tracked in all areas of the Jewish Studies curriculum. Targets, both basic and more challenging, are set together with pupils and shared with parents through the report system.

The achievement of all pupils is outstanding. The number of high ability pupils who enter the school in Year 7 without a background of Jewish Studies and who, through 'catch-up' enrichment classes, are able to join top sets in Year 8 is impressive. This is not at the expense of those pupils who enter Year 7 with significant prior knowledge. The flexibility of the Jewish Studies programme ensures that all pupils make excellent progress in knowledge, skills and understanding.

The department has highlighted a number of pupils whose potential has identified them as 'gifted and talented'. Additional provision is planned for these pupils, including preparation and entry to the prestigious International Bible Quiz. Support for pupils with learning difficulties is given during Jewish Studies lessons by Learning Support Assistants as part of whole school provision. Excellent progress is made by pupils in lower groups. Achievements are often at a level which would be expected of higher ability pupils.

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being

Behaviour is outstanding both in the classroom and in more informal settings. Pupils are developing excellent inter-personal skills and their relationship with adults is exceptionally positive. The inspectors were very impressed with the politeness and good manners shown to them at all times

The pupils participate well in the daily *tefillah* (prayer) services where prayers are sung or recited aloud. Pupils observed leading the services did so with confidence and competence. However, some thought should be given as to how to develop the use of periods of time used for quiet prayer and reflective thought.

The school has established a number of ways in which pupils' personal and social development are strengthened through charitable activities. For example, a group of children visit a local Jewish Care home thus making a positive contribution to the wider Jewish community. A number of Jewish and non-Jewish charities are supported by the pupils through *Am Echad*, the school's charity group. Pupils also contribute to the world community and through The Darfur Project MPs were lobbied and awareness raised about the situation.

The Head of Jewish Studies is responsible for many whole school issues including, child protection, the school council and aspects of citizenship, indicating the importance the school leadership gives to these issues in the context of the school's Jewish ethos. Life skills Days, which are run together with organisations from the wider Jewish community, help to further promote the well-being of pupils.

Grade: 1

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

The teaching of Jewish Studies at Yavneh College is good with many outstanding features. These include consistently good planning by teachers, very good classroom management and clear guidelines of what teachers expect of their pupils. Thought has been given to the seating arrangement in the classrooms in order to maximise learning. Attitudes towards Jewish Studies lessons are extremely positive. The inspectors asked many children if they enjoyed their Jewish Studies lessons, all of whom were enthusiastic about them.

Teachers make a significant effort to ensure their lessons are exciting and relevant to the children. Lessons were observed involving excellent use of technology such as laptops, visualisers and webquests.

In all lessons observed, excellent behaviour contributed to the learning outcomes. Excellent use is made of peer assessment in which pupils were observed giving feedback to each other in a mature and sensitive manner, highlighting the strengths of written work and oral presentation and making positive suggestions for improvement.

Whilst the school has admirable aspirations for high standards, the emphasis on information giving and detail can result in lessons feeling rushed. Lessons do not always allow sufficient, uninterrupted processing time for pupils.

The whole school Assessment For Learning policy is adopted throughout the Jewish Studies department. Marking, however, does not always reflect school policy and teachers comments on marked work were not always detailed enough to be helpful.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

The Jewish Studies curriculum is remarkably well developed considering that the school has not yet been open for two years. It has been devised and written by the head of Jewish Studies in collaboration with his staff. It is very ambitious with an emphasis on textual learning and skills. Year 7 and Year 8 pupils learn Jewish History, Tanakh (Bible), Talmud and General Jewish Knowledge. Programmes of Studies are in place for all areas of the curriculum together with level descriptors and assessment criteria. The Jewish Studies curriculum has equal status in the school in every respect with the National Curriculum.

Forward planning is a strength of the school. Plans are well developed for when current pupils enter Year 9 and also for the sixth form programme which is due to begin in September 2008. Materials have been produced to support the curriculum and plans are in place to produce printed booklets after a trial period of 2 years. The department is aware of the need to review its priorities as the school grows and should ensure that the depth of learning is not diluted by the attempt to achieve too much breadth.

The school's formal curriculum is enriched by an outstanding and imaginative enrichment programme which includes many of Jewish content. As the school continues to grow, the Jewish Studies department should consider the impact of the optional nature of some of the courses on offer.

The appointment of a teacher with responsibility for informal education will ensure that these activities continue to play a significant role in the overall provision. Years 7 and 8 have already participated in *Shabbatonim* and plans are well advanced for a Year 9 trip to Israel, and a Year 12 trip Poland.

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support

The school provides a safe and secure environment and the school gate is staffed by professional security officers. Provision for care, guidance and support is excellent, and pupils feel confident to share issues with members of staff. There is a school council made up of representatives from each year. Pupils are not elected, but are balloted for. This ensures that a much larger number of pupils across the school have the opportunity to sit on the council. Pupils may put suggestions in a suggestion box, or approach any member of the school council with their own comments and thoughts for consideration.

The school runs a daily enrichment programme in which pupils have the opportunity to select from a very large number of sporting, artistic and cultural activities, which

they choose each term. Last year 90% of pupils opted for a Jewish-based subject including, 'How to lead Grace After Meals,' and 'How to lead a service'. There are currently some ten Jewish-based enrichment activities available to the pupils including a '*Bat Mitzvah* group,' and 'Project Smile,' in which pupils visit a Jewish care home to meet the residents.

Shacharit (morning service) is compulsory on two days of the week and *Minchah* (afternoon service) on a daily basis. The school is aware of the challenges of making daily *tefillah* (prayer) meaningful to secondary school pupils and currently services take place in the respective year groups. The majority of *tefillah* observed was outstanding and the boys chosen to lead the services did so with confidence and competence. Year 8 services encourage pupils to be more independent but this can be at the expense of the quality of the experience. For example, guidance by adults needs to be given to ensure that the boys over *bar mitzvah* age are putting on *tefillin* correctly.

Grade: 1

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the Jewish Studies department are excellent. The vision for Yavneh College has been developed by the Head teacher, the head of Jewish Studies together with the Chairman of Governors. They have succeeded in ensuring all staff, not just those in the Jewish Studies department, understand and share this vision. Mention needs to be made of the outstanding support the Head teacher and Chairman of Governors gives to the spiritual direction of the school.

The head of Jewish Studies is a significant member of the Senior Leadership Team of the school with the status of assistant head teacher. He sets exceptionally high standards for himself, his staff and the pupils and must be commended for achieving so much in such a short amount of time. The questionnaire sent to parents on behalf of Pikuach shows that a significant majority of parents recognise and appreciate these efforts.

The Jewish Studies teachers are excellent role models to other staff and pupils and create a serious yet warm and positive learning environment. The school is continuing to recruit skilled and motivated teachers.

Constant review and reflection is a significant feature of the leadership of the Jewish Studies department and has contributed to the quality and effectiveness of the self-evaluation process.

The school has an outstanding capacity for growth. In its striving for high standards in all that it does, the department would benefit from the support of external experts in Jewish Education who could assist the school in achieving its admirable ambitions as it continues to grow in size.

Grade: 1