

Simon Marks Jewish Primary School

Inspection report

LA	Hackney
Inspected under the auspices of	Pikuach
Inspection dates	24 -25 January 2012
Reporting inspector	Rev Michael Binstock MBE

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 - 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr. Howard Pallis
Headteacher	Mrs Gill Ross
Date of previous school inspection	18 – 19 May 2009
School address	75 Cazenove Road London N16 6PD
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two Pikuach inspectors. The inspectors visited seven lessons covering all year groups with the exception of Year 3. They also observed three assemblies which included *Tefillah* (collective worship). They held meetings with the headteacher, the head of Jewish education, governors, staff and pupils. In addition, they scrutinised the school's documentation and samples of pupils' written work, and analysed 54 questionnaire responses from parents and carers, as well as those from Key Stage 2 pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the quality of leadership and management
- the quality of the curriculum
- the quality of learning, teaching and assessment
- the quality of provision and outcomes for all groups of pupils
- the impact of the school's actions to bring about improvement

Information about the school

Simon Marks Primary School is a one-form entry voluntary aided primary school for boys and girls aged 3 – 11 located in the London Borough of Hackney. The school has occupied its present site in Stoke Newington, North London since 1973 and grew out of the former Clapton Jewish Day School. The school serves Jewish families from a wide spectrum of Jewish knowledge and observance. There are currently 198 pupils on roll with 10% more boys than girls. Most live locally although some come from other areas including the East End of London. There is an equal balance of non-Jewish boys and girls at the school and they account for up to 15% of the roll. They participate fully in all aspects of the Jewish Studies curriculum.

The school aims to provide a rich and relevant Jewish education through which children will gain a commitment to Torah values, a strong Jewish identity and a positive attitude towards Israel. It has a modern orthodox Zionist ethos and as such, is unique in the predominantly ultra-orthodox Charedi community in which it is situated. The majority of pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL) and a minority of them speak Ivrit (Modern Hebrew) as their first language. There are also pupils from various Eastern European countries at the school. Support is given to the minority who are unable to read and write fluently in English. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils transfer to JFS, JCoSS, King Solomon and Hasmonean High Schools, as well as local non-Jewish and Independent schools.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The quality of Jewish education at Simon Marks Jewish Primary School is good overall and there are some outstanding features. The most significant of these is the remarkable progress that has been made since the previous Pikuach inspection conducted in 2009. At that time, a number of serious weaknesses were identified relating to curriculum, teaching, planning and support for pupils with special educational needs. Most crucially, leadership and management were judged as unsatisfactory. Current inspectors are therefore delighted to note the progress that has been made in addressing the weaknesses as well as sustaining, and in some cases, further enhancing the strengths that were highlighted in the report.

Due to the determined efforts and achievements of the head of Jewish education, who is also the acting deputy headteacher, school SENCO (special educational needs co-ordinator), and child protection officer, and with strong support from the recently appointed headteacher, inspectors now judge most aspects of the Jewish education provided at the school as good or better. Teachers confirm that they are given excellent support by the head of Jewish education and they in turn are extremely happy and motivated. They work well as a team and feel valued.

There are good partnerships with other agencies which promote teaching and learning and as a result, the school succeeds in achieving its aim of providing a rich and relevant Jewish education. Pupils are happy in the school, enjoy their lessons, behave very well and gain a good and broad level of Jewish knowledge so that by the end of Year 6, they leave the school well-prepared for the next stage in their Jewish education.

Teaching throughout the school is good overall. In Key Stages 1 and 2, it is good with some lessons judged as outstanding. This ensures that the rate of learning and progress of most pupils are good or better. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding.

The school's view of itself is accurate and its track record of implementing change shows it is well placed to build on its strengths.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide teachers with further opportunities to develop their skills in differentiation so as to meet the needs of all groups of pupils including those of higher ability
- Ensure that all groups of pupils can achieve their full potential according to their skills, needs and interests, by providing personalised learning programmes and effective and challenging targets
- Improve the quality of marking pupils' work by correcting errors and ensuring that their work is presented neatly

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Lesson observations throughout most of the school and testing groups of pupils from Years 3 and 6 reveal that most, including those with learning difficulties or other special educational needs, achieve well in their Jewish studies. Hebrew reading and writing standards overall are good and those tested were able to read with a good deal of accuracy and confidence. In the Ivrit (Modern Hebrew) lessons observed, most pupils understood questions and instructions from their teacher and made a good effort to respond in Ivrit. Year 6 pupils demonstrated an impressive standard of attainment in their understanding of spoken Hebrew.

Pupils are keen to learn and confirmed that they enjoy their Jewish studies. In discussions with pupils, many positive feelings were expressed. 'Simon Marks is a friendly school' was the comment of one Year 6 pupil. Another said 'the school feels like a family'. However, pupils did make negative comments about the quality of the school meals and the state of the outside toilets.

Pupils feel safe in school and know that they can speak to their teachers if they have a problem. Pupils' behaviour is at least good and is often outstanding. They have a very clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and are polite and courteous. They are mostly thoughtful, caring and responsive to each other's feelings and needs. For example, a pupil was observed helping a younger one to get up after a fall and took her to an adult. They grow in confidence and enjoy taking responsibility through the school council which provides them with a valuable opportunity to express their views for the benefit of the whole school. They raise *tzedakah* (charity) that benefits worthy causes, both Jewish and non-Jewish, for example, St. Joseph's Hospice. These positive attitudes, together with their good academic achievement, make a valuable contribution to pupils' development of skills for their future economic well-being.

The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is

outstanding. An atmosphere of spirituality pervades all aspects of Judaism they experience at the school. The school fulfils its requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship and *Tefillah* is taken seriously and conducted with devotion and enthusiasm. Emphasis is placed on respect for every one and all cultures within this modern orthodox environment. The school is a diverse multi-faith community but functioning within a strong Jewish ethos and this enhances the pupils' awareness of, and respect for those of other faiths and cultures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve over time and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance	3
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being, where appropriate	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including collective worship and behaviour	1

How effective is the provision?

The quality of provision for Jewish education is good and has improved greatly since the previous Pikuach inspection when it was judged to be satisfactory. Attention has been given to each of the weaknesses previously identified and in all cases improvement has been noted.

Due to the structure of the Jewish studies timetable, inspectors were only able to observe seven lessons. All year groups including the Nursery and Reception classes but with the exception of Year 3 were seen once by one of the inspectors only. The quality of teaching and assessment are good overall with some examples of outstanding practice. Most teachers plan their lessons meticulously. The best lessons are characterised by the lively style of the teacher and the brisk pace of the lesson. Work is challenging and pupils are kept on task because lessons are exciting and motivating. All teachers are aware of the importance of ensuring that all groups, including the more able and gifted and talented make progress commensurate with their abilities, and teachers take this into account in their planning. Whilst this provision has improved considerably since the previous inspection, this is an area in need of further development.

The teaching of Ivrit (Modern Hebrew) is a strong feature of the Jewish curriculum and is very effective. The focus is on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. The school has made specific provision for those who need to improve the fluency of Hebrew speaking and listening in Key Stage 1 and is in the process of introducing this in Key Stage 2. Those who are recognised to be gifted and talented are also targeted and it is clear that these pupils are making good progress. With more time

and the sharing of good practice, the school believes an even more marked improvement would be seen and confidence levels would rise exponentially.

The good quality of the curriculum is enriched by material produced by the JCP (Jewish Curriculum Partnership), for the teaching of *Chumash* and the *Tzedek* curriculum for the teaching of Jewish values. There are also some extra-curricular activities including the school choir, *Shabbatonim* and a Hebrew club.

The high quality support provided by teaching assistants and support teachers who all participate fully in Jewish education activities is notable as an exemplar of good practice. Pupils form trusting relationships with their teachers and are encouraged to participate fully in lessons, for example, by answering teachers' questions and actively joining in *Tefillah*. Good planning was seen for pupils with special educational needs and for those of higher ability including those who are gifted and talented. Whilst it is clear that these pupils are given consideration by all teachers during the lessons, there are no IEP's (individual education plans) for Jewish Studies or Ivrit. The head of Jewish Education, who is also the whole school SENCO is keen to improve provision by the introduction of IEP's.

The school is committed to the integration of Jewish Studies with the National Curriculum. One excellent way in which the school achieves this aim is by means of the 'Creative Links' programme whereby the teachers of Jewish Studies, Ivrit, Jewish music and secular studies collaborate most effectively in order to produce their lessons for the topic they choose together. The example scrutinised by the inspectors was the topic of 'Rights and Responsibilities'. The Jewish input for this topic focuses on the theme of '*kol Yisrael arevim zeh lazeh*' (All Jews are responsible for one another). The Ivrit component provides further reinforcement and the teaching and learning are enhanced through music and dance.

The quality of marking pupils' work has improved since the previous inspection and some helpful and informative comments were noted. However, a number of mistakes went uncorrected and some of the work observed was presented in an untidy manner.

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Lessons and *Tefillah* are personalised and contribute to the children's enjoyment and participation whilst building a love of Judaism and Jewish learning. An outstanding example is that every child has their own personalised first *siddur*, illustrated with photographs of themselves on each page. Staff both in the Jewish Education department and throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage work well together and this close liaison leads to a very integrated curriculum which benefits all groups of children. In the Jewish Studies lessons, some instructions, questions and information are given in Ivrit, thus enabling the children to learn a modern foreign language within a naturally integrated curriculum. A major strength of the school is the provision of music, and this is particularly so in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This cross-curricular activity helps bind together Jewish religious practice and spirituality, *Tefillah* and the *chagim* (Jewish festivals), as well as most other curriculum areas.

The previous inspection report described the resources for Jewish education as 'barely adequate'. Whilst this is certainly no longer the case and some excellent

resources are now available, still more are required. Most significant is the lack of interactive white boards for Jewish studies whereas this resource is available in every secular class. Inspectors were informed that the funding for interactive white boards has now been made available. Also lacking is the provision of a computer for the use of the Jewish Studies teachers. A computer would greatly enhance their capacity to provide inspiring resources and this would add greatly to the quality of teaching and learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The previous inspection report in May 2009 judged leadership and management as unsatisfactory and the current inspectors have been impressed by the major progress that has been made in moving the school forward since then. From scrutiny of the school's documents and records and regular discussions with the head of Jewish education throughout this inspection process, inspectors are aware of his clear vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations for the school, its pupils and staff. With strong encouragement and input from the current headteacher, the head of Jewish education provides excellent leadership and a clear educational direction for the Jewish Studies teachers. They are regularly monitored, evaluated and supported and they are encouraged to develop professionally. They in turn hold him in high regard. Morale in the department is high and teachers commented on the positive team spirit that pervades throughout the school. The cohesion between the Jewish Studies and secular staff who work together towards shared goals is a strong feature.

The school is totally committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity and this is reflected in the fact that all pupils regardless of their gender or faith have equal access to the Jewish studies curriculum. Governors are supportive of Jewish education at the school and have recently appointed a United Synagogue rabbi to act as link governor with responsibility for liaising with the head of Jewish Education. The school enjoys effective partnerships with other organisations which add to the quality of pupils' Jewish learning and do much to enhance their personal development.

The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion is outstanding. There is a link governor with responsibility for this activity and she

works closely with, and gives valuable support to the head of Jewish education. Examples of community cohesion include the school's involvement in Holocaust Memorial Day and the Three Faiths Forum through which Simon Marks has links with a Christian and Muslim school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Pikuach invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Simon Marks Jewish Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	82%	12%	4%	2%

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.

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. Pikuach inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.
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What inspection judgements mean

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills at any given point in time.
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.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.