

Shalom Noam Primary School

East Road, Burnt Oak, London HA8 OAJ

Kodesh Studies Inspection under section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Inspection dates 31 Jan–1 Feb 2023

Overall effectiveness Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management Outstanding

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment Outstanding

Personal development, behaviour and attitude Outstanding

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The leadership and management of the school place a strong emphasis on the Kodesh provision, with 50% of the extended timetable devoted to Kodesh lessons.
- The high-quality Kodesh teaching team features a blend of experienced, veteran professionals and energetic, well-trained younger teachers, who are all excellent role-models to the pupils.
- Pupils enjoy their Kodesh learning and participate with enthusiasm in both the lessons and in the Kodesh clubs.
- The curriculum prioritises the teaching of Hebrew reading and the study of Chumash (Bible), and pupils attain an outstanding level in these two areas, which ensures that they are fully prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils are friendly, happy and relaxed both in the classroom and around the school, and they demonstrate outstanding behaviour at all times.
- The school's SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) programme, which is covered during both Kodesh and Chol (regular studies) lessons and at the bi-weekly assemblies, includes all the Fundamental British Values. Pupils are well-prepared for life in Britain today.
- The SENDco and her team provide a high level of support to those who require it, while early-morning clubs help to provide extra stimulation for the high achievers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The school benefits from a leadership team who have appreciation for, and personal experience in, the Kodesh provision. This creates a whole-school approach to all aspects of the Kodesh studies. For example, the school SENDco and her deputy are former Kodesh teachers, and thus provide very effective support for pupils during their Kodesh lessons.
- There are areas of the general curriculum which are covered during the Kodesh lessons, such as Design & Technology. The PSHE curriculum is taught jointly by Kodesh and Chol teachers, and the fundamental British values are ingrained into the pupils during the Kodesh lessons. By offering a cross-curricular provision, the school extends the Kodesh experience across the entire school day.
- The wide-ranging Kodesh curriculum encompasses a broad range of Kodesh topics, with a sharp focus on excellence in Hebrew reading and in Chumash. Other subjects include Sedra (weekly Bible reading), Mishna, Gemorroh (Talmud), Nach (Prophets and Scriptures), Halochoh (Jewish law) and General Knowledge. Some classes also have regular sessions devoted to promoting good Middos (character traits), utilising the internationally acclaimed material from the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation. Pupils benefit from a solid and well-rounded Kodesh education.
- The Heads of Kodesh conduct separate weekly assemblies for KS1 and KS2. Pupils deliver Divrei Torah (Torah thoughts), share their crafts with the other classes and sing Jewish songs. Kodesh staff lead popular early-morning and lunchtime clubs to provide additional stimulation for the more-talented pupils and to teach new skills.
- The recently appointed subjects leads for both Hebrew reading and Chumash have been successful in raising the profile of their subjects. The school's '18 reading rules' are prominently displayed around the school, and lower-ability readers receive daily support. For Chumash, there are bespoke workbooks for teachers and pupils to use in KS1 and lower KS2, and this is in the process of being extended to upper KS2.
- Parents who came to collect their children at the end of the school day were keen to share their views with this inspector regarding the school in general, and the Kodesh provision in particular. A typical comment was: 'We are so grateful for the happy atmosphere, delightful and exciting activities and constant will to improve.' All parents were effusive in their support for the school leadership and management.
- The school's SENDco team ensure that there is full support for those pupils who require it. They ensure that the weakest 20% receive targeted reading practice on a daily basis, and they check on their progress every half-term. Individual support plans are shared jointly

with both the Kodesh and Chol teachers and are renewed every term. In addition, there are Chumash intervention groups in all classes.

- The school also calls upon a range of therapists, who attend on a weekly basis. Pupils' wellbeing is further supported by the popular school counsellor. One Year Six pupil commented, 'The best thing about the school is the availability of the school counsellor.'

The governance of the school:

- The school's governors have a hands-on approach to all school matters and are closely involved in the running of the school. They work alongside the school leadership in an atmosphere of mutual respect for the benefit of the school community, and they demonstrate a desire to constantly upgrade and improve the school's provision.
- The Chair of Governors and the Deputy Chair meet formally with the school leadership team once a fortnight, apart from regular informal discussions.
- The governors are proud of the exemplary behaviour of the pupils and of their achievements in Kodesh, particularly -but not exclusively- in their Kodesh general knowledge.
- The governors are determined to maintain and even enhance the current high standard of Kodesh provision. This is demonstrated by their insistence on staffing the school with many experienced Kodesh teachers. They have also divided the oldest two classes into two groups, thus enabling a more targeted provision for those pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Lessons were observed in all year groups and across the range of Jewish topics. A common feature was the enthusiasm of both the teachers and the pupils.
- Lessons were fast-paced, with teachers skilfully moving from one activity to the next, thereby ensuring that the information that was being taught was becoming embedded without the pupils losing their enthusiasm.
- During Chumash lessons pupils are taught new Pessukim (verses) using a skills-based approach. This enables pupils to acquire the requisite skills to eventually decode Pessukim by themselves. Despite that, the generous time allotted to Chumash study ensures that an impressive amount of ground is covered, and pupils benefit from the sheer amount of practice that they have in learning Chumash.
- Pupils remain focussed during lessons due to excellent and innovative teaching methods. For example, in Year Six the pupils are taught how to use traditional cantillation to divide the words of a Chumash verse appropriately, thereby making it simpler for them to translate it themselves. Year Four pupils have a twice-weekly vocabulary lesson

using the CVS system. Pupils are split into small groups and supervised by four adults as they challenged themselves and each other to recall the translation of several hundred Hebrew words.

- Teachers prepare and deliver outstanding interactive lessons that engage the pupils. In the Sedra lesson in Year Three, the pupils were moving across the classroom in two groups as they acted out the Egyptians chasing the Israelites and the splitting of the Red Sea. In a Mishna lesson the pupils played a game whereby they had to discover the correct translations to Mishna words which were hidden around the classroom.
- The Associate Head of Kodesh has pioneered an extensive Yedioh Klolis (general knowledge) curriculum which pupils learn outside school and are assessed on it at school. Many pupils acquire an extraordinary amount of Yedioh Klolis knowledge by the time they leave the school.
- Gifted pupils are also stretched during early-morning clubs where they learn extra Mesechtos (tractates) of Mishna and study classical Bible commentaries.
- Pupils with SEND are well supported within the classroom, and reading support takes place during lessons as the pupils seamlessly leave the classroom for a few minutes and then call the next pupil to take their place. Teaching assistants are with their classes throughout the school day, and thereby have a strong knowledge of the capabilities of all the pupils.
- There is regular and ongoing assessment for all topics, both formative and summative. The summative assessments include weekly written tests, and teachers use the information gleaned from the assessments to plan for further lessons. All results are tracked by the Heads of Kodesh, and they maintain detailed data for analytical purposes, particularly in Hebrew reading and in Chumash.

Outcomes for pupils:

- Due to the unique curriculum, which focuses both on skills and on covering ground, pupils in the higher classes are able to decipher unseen Chumash texts with confidence.
- Pupils achieve a very high standard in reading, and are able to read fluently and accurately unfamiliar and complicated words, including texts from the weekly Haftorah (culled from Nach) and from Onkelos (which is in Aramaic).
- Many pupils attain an outstanding level of proficiency in Yedioh Klolis, and five Shalom Noam pupils were among the top six achievers in the international Chidon competition which tests general knowledge based on Nach.
- Pupils were not as fluent in their Gemorroh, but nevertheless they reach the level necessary for them to progress at high school.

- Pupils' Hebrew script writing is well-developed. However, there is inconsistency between classes in the formation of some of the letters.
- Pupils with SEND are able to participate in lessons due to the individual support they receive from learning support assistants and due to the teachers making a special effort to include them in class activities such as house team points.
- When talking to the inspector, pupils asserted that they knew they were making good progress because they were becoming able to study Chumash by themselves and because they had the feedback from weekly and termly assessments.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

- Pupils at Shalom Noam are content and happy, and conduct themselves in a mature, confident and refined manner.
- The behaviour in class and around the school is outstanding, and pupils greet visitors in a polite, friendly and respectful manner. Many pupils who passed this inspector in the corridor reacted with a smile and/or a friendly greeting.
- Fundamental British values are taught at assemblies, during Sedra lessons and during PSHE lessons (which are taught by both Kodesh and Chol teachers). Older classes follow the Middos programmes devised by the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation.
- The school furthers the personal development of pupils by selecting representatives from each class to participate in the school council. There is also a head boy or girl plus a deputy each term, and Year Six pupils also act as monitors.
- Pupils gain practice in public speaking by delivering Divrei Torah (Torah thoughts) at both the KS1 and KS2 assemblies.
- Apart from the early-morning learning clubs, there are nine lunchtime clubs which all enhance the pupils' personal development. There are clubs for reading, times tables and for Chidon preparation. There are also clubs for games and for learning new skills such as chess, singing and typing.
- There is a school counsellor with whom the pupils can discuss their welfare and other personal issues. Pupils can book an appointment with her by leaving a note in her box, and they appreciate the opportunity to spend quality time with a sympathetic and caring adult.
- When questioned about how they are encouraged to lead a healthy lifestyle, pupils responded that the school has a healthy eating policy, they have a healthy eating day, a wellbeing project, PSHE lessons and a Heads Up programme. They were able to repeat lessons they had learned from these activities.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding

- Shalom Noam is justifiably proud of its successful spiritual provision for pupils. A full 50% of timetabled lessons are devoted to Kodesh topics, and this is supplemented with weekly assemblies and Kodesh clubs. This creates a spiritual atmosphere that permeates the school.
- The wall and table displays in the corridors and classrooms feature a wide range of Kodesh topics, and there is an outstanding Jewish history display which runs the length of the school hall, and covers major historical events over the past 5,783 years. The display also shows the major general history events of the same period, which is indicative of the school's approach - to inject spirituality even when Chol subjects are discussed or taught.
- The boys proudly display their Tzitzit (garment with fringes worn under a shirt) and Cappsels (head coverings) and pupils can be heard discussing points from Kodesh lessons whilst walking along the corridors.
- The formal school day starts with Shacharis (morning) prayers in all classes (apart from the Early Years children, who chant their prayers later in the morning). There are further acts of collective worship with the recital of Bentching (grace after meals) after lunch, and the Mincha (afternoon) prayer by upper KS2 classes. All prayers are recited in unison, loudly and slowly, in a serious fashion.
- The school imbues its pupils with moral values primarily through the Kodesh lessons, either during Sedra lessons or during PSHE/RHE lessons (some of which take place during Chol time) and also via the internationally acclaimed Middos programmes of the Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation.
- Pupils are strongly encouraged to be involved in Tzedokoh (charity) projects, and there are three Year Six Tzedokoh leads. A list of charities supported by the school is prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school. Pupils speak excitedly about their involvement in charitable work.
- The school council has visited a local food bank and organised a food collection to benefit local needy families. During the past year, pupils also collected items for families from Ukraine who were affected by the war with Russia.
- Pupils from Muswell Hill Primary School will be visiting Shalom Noam to judge a poetry competition, and the school council of Barnet Hill Academy (a Muslim school) was hosted by counterparts at Shalom Noam for an event focussing on friendship and community.
- Assemblies at the school this year have focussed on Diwali, the Chinese New Year and Black History Week, whilst pupils study from texts such as 'My Blue Hijab' and 'Journey to Jo'berg' to promote their knowledge and understanding of other religions and cultures.

Information about this school

- Shalom Noam Primary School was founded in 1999 and became a Voluntary Aided school in 2019. The school is under the spiritual authority of the OCR (office of the Chief Rabbi), who have sanctioned Rabbi N S Liss as the school Rov. Mrs Esther Chody (Head of Kodesh) and Rabbi Zvi Cohen (Associate Head of Kodesh) are responsible for the day to day running of the Kodesh department.
- Shalom Noam is a single-form entry school for Jewish boys and girls aged 3-11. There are currently 236 pupils on roll. The school has grown from 153 pupils to full capacity in the last five years. It is housed in a brand-new purpose-built building, and it has excellent resources.
- The school's ethos stresses the primacy of Torah and steadfast religious observance, while engaging positively with the modern world.
- The school aims to meet the needs of Orthodox Jewish families by providing a high standard of Kodesh and secular education, whilst imbuing their children with a love of learning and fostering positive Middos (character traits).
- The Head of Kodesh has been in post since the founding of the school, and the Associate Head of Kodesh joined the school in 2003.
- Jewish studies take up 50% of the extended curriculum, and this is supplemented with weekly assemblies and a choice of extra-curricular clubs. Years Five and Six have two teachers each for Kodesh.
- The proportion of pupils on the SEND register is slightly above the national average. 2.5% of pupils have an EHCP (educational health and care plan).
- At the end of Year Six, the pupils transfer to Jewish schools - mostly to Hasmonean High School or to Menorah Grammar/High School.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited lessons in all classes from Nursery to Year Six, covering all subjects, together with the Head of Kodesh, and observed morning prayers in all classes across the school.
- Meetings were held with the School Rov, the Chair of Governors and members of her team, senior leaders, middle leaders, the SENDco and her deputy and with members of the Kodesh staff. The inspector also met with parents at the end of the school day and perused records of feedback from parents.
- The inspector observed pupils at break and around the school, met at length with groups of pupils of Years Four to Six, and tested pupils of Years Two, Four and Six on their knowledge of Chumash (Bible), Hebrew reading, Mishna, Gemorroh (Talmud) and Jewish General Knowledge.
- The inspector examined the Kodesh assessment and tracking systems, studied test papers, scrutinised samples of pupils' Kodesh exercise books (Years Two to Six), perused copious files of the school's Kodesh documentation and studied the Kodesh Improvement Plan.

School details

Unique reference number 146803

Local authority London Borough of Barnet

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 236

Appropriate authority The governing body

School Rov Rabbi N S Liss

Chair of governors Mrs Nahva Rose

Chair of trustees Dr Jeremy Rees

Headteacher Mrs Chaya Posen

Head of Kodesh Mrs Esther Chody

Associate Head of Kodesh Rabbi Zvi Cohen

Date of previous inspection This is the first Section 48 inspection

Telephone number 020 8908 9491

Email address office@shalomnoam.org

Inspector

Rabbi Nathaniel Lieberman