## Hasmonean High School for Boys

Holders Hill Road, Hendon, London NW4 1NA

#### **Kodesh Studies Inspection Report**

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

Inspection dates

21-22 Kislev 5784 – 5-6 December 2023

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Quality of Jewish Education. Curriculum Intent – curriculum design Implementation – teaching, assessment, curriculum deli Impact - achievement	Outstanding very	1
Quality of provision for pupils	Outstanding	1

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC), including the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship and personal development including behaviour.

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

#### This is an outstanding school

- The quality of leadership and management in *Kodesh* (Jewish Studies) is outstanding, with school leaders, including governors, sharing a clear aspirational vision for the school. The school's stated aims are to "nurture students to become happy, confident and respectful adults, committed to live a life of *Torah im derech eretz* (*Torah* with respect), which helps students to find their own personal connection with the Torah." The school is successful in achieving these aims.
- The passionate and capable Menahel, together with the CEO and other key members of the leadership team are outstanding role models of respect and empathy, within a culture of healthy challenge and development. Staff feel fully supported in their delivery of *Kodesh* lessons. The *Beis* programme (Year 11-13 provision) is a centre of excellence where leaders offer dynamic and charismatic leadership.
- It is a fully inclusive school where the students and staff are supported, valued, and given opportunities to contribute to the life of the school.

As a result of this and the highly differentiated and well planned *Kodesh* provision students feel enthused and inspired. They develop a pride in being Jewish, doing *Mitzvos* and a love of the *Torah*.

- The Menahel and the senior leadership team have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas of development, which are shared with colleagues within a comprehensive school improvement plan.
- The quality of teaching and learning within *Kodesh* studies is outstanding in all key stages in nearly all subjects. Teachers have high expectations with a good focus upon building skills as well as knowledge.
- The *Kodesh* curriculum is outstanding and caters for a range of abilities and backgrounds. It is particularly impressive within the core subjects of *Gemoro* (Talmudical Studies), *Chumash* (Pentateuch), *Biblical Hebrew* and *Tefillah* (prayer). The curriculum for the teaching of *Halacha* (Jewish law) needs to be reviewed to ensure that topics are taught sequentially and more curriculum coverage is offered, so that students retain a breadth of knowledge.
- As a result of outstanding teaching and an outstanding curriculum which meets the needs, aptitudes and religious practice of students, students, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, make outstanding progress as they move through the school.
- The school's creative and wide ranging spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables students to thrive, and creates in students a love of learning and a reflective approach to all matters spiritual. Much thought has been expended by the leadership in providing meaningful opportunities in formal lessons and through the HIPE (Hasmonean Informal Programmes & Education) programme, for growth in their personal, moral, social and cultural areas.
- The school fulfils its legal requirements to offer a daily act of collective worship and students *Daven* (pray) with good concentration.
- Behaviour is outstanding and students display lovely *Middos* (good character traits) in class and around the school. However, there should be a formal *Middos* programme put in place within each class, which would help to obviate the low level disruption in a very few lessons.

## What does the school need to improve further

- Revamp the *Halacha* (Jewish law) curriculum, so that it is broad and balanced, with a well-sequenced delivery strategy, which will ensure more curriculum coverage and more opportunities to revisit topics, so that students retain a range of *Halachic* knowledge.
- Construct a formal *Middos* programme bespoke to each year group which will support the high level of respect and *Middos* displayed by students. This will help for the low level disturbances within a very few lessons.

• *Beis* students should be given more opportunities to share with others their knowledge and skills. For example, they could contribute to *Halacha* learning in younger classes.

### Information about this inspection

The inspection was conducted by two inspectors who observed in total 25 *Kodesh* lessons. In addition, several learning walks took place focussing upon displays, SEND sessions, playground behaviour and the new accommodation for Year 7. Meetings were held with the executive lead team (ELT), the Menahel, headteacher, representatives of the governing body, head of the main school, head of the *Beis* provision, members of the senior leadership team, including the heads of all three *Beis* options, SENCO, assessment lead, PSHE lead, HIPE leads, assistant head at the Year 7 site, subject leads, and *Kodesh* teachers.

Students across the age and ability range were tested in Years 8,9,10 and within the *Beis* provision of Years 11,12 and 13, on their knowledge and skills in the core subjects. Discussions also took place with students from all year groups which focussed upon their experiences within *Kodesh* studies. The inspectors considered the views of 68 parents, 34 members of staff and 182 students, all of whom responded to the various questionnaires provided by the inspection team.

The inspectors perused documentation and policies, including the school's improvement plan and the school's evaluation of its work. Minutes from governing body meetings were also considered. *Davening* (prayer) was observed throughout the school, at *Shacharis* (morning prayers) and *Mincha* (afternoon prayers) in Years 7,8,9,10 and within the various *Beis* settings. During the inspection there was a special focus (deep dive) on the following subjects and phases: *Chumash, Gemoro* and all subjects within Year 7 and the *Beis* department.

### **Inspection team**

Lead Inspector	Rabbi Y. Yodaiken
Team Inspector	Rabbi N. Lieberman

## **Full report**

#### Information about this school

- The school's predecessor school Hasmonean High School was founded in 1944 and became a multi academy school in 2019. Within this process the boys' school became an academy after de-amalgamation from the girls' school. When the predecessor school Hasmonean High School, was last inspected in November 2017 under the Section 48 framework, it was judged to be outstanding in all areas.
- The school caters for a wide spectrum of religious practice within the Orthodox Jewish sector by providing five sets within each year group, and three tracks within the *Beis* department.
  - Track 1, which is the biggest, is made up of set 1 and set 2 in which there is a high level of text work and academic challenge, and through which students enjoy a lifelong connection to *Torah* learning.
  - Track 2, *Beis Chadash* is for the set 3 students and where there is less focus on textual skills, but a big emphasis on practical Jewish living alongside *Gemoro* learning.
  - Track 3, *Beis Chazak*, caters for sets 4 and 5 and wherein the learning is less formal, but where the focus is upon personal growth in Judaism.
- Few students live in the immediate vicinity of the school, with nearly all students living across North West London. The Year 7 provision is situated within the Belsize Park area, in a high quality setting. This second site is a response by the leadership and management to the high demand for places at the school.
- Over 30% of the elongated school day is dedicated to *Kodesh* studies. This percentage is significantly increased if one takes into account the very well attended voluntary extracurricular programmes.
- At the end of their schooling, the vast majority of students graduate to *Yeshivos* (Talmudical colleges) in England and Israel, where they further their Jewish Religious Studies.

#### **Inspection judgements**

# The effectiveness of leadership and management of *Kodesh* studies is outstanding

- All stakeholders share a dynamic aspirational vision for *Kodesh* studies, which involves striving for excellence within a supportive and empathetic approach.
- The experienced and dynamic Menahel leads the school with expertise, integrity and calmness. Leaders feel supported, and the synergy of approach provided by the executive lead team (ELT) facilitates positive change within a harmonious environment. The CEO augments this positivity with his understated and expert approach
- It is noteworthy that during discussions between the inspectors and leaders, leaders attributed their perceived success of the school to their colleagues, rather than taking the credit themselves. This humility and generous spirit creates a very positive culture in which staff are encouraged to contribute, and in which students learn by osmosis. This positive atmosphere created by leaders is conducive to introducing new developments. For example, the enthusiastic response of staff to moving Year 7 to a new site, despite the challenge of putting in so much work to make it happen towards the end of the last summer term.
- The leadership and management team are successful in achieving their stated aims to imbue in their students *Torah im derech eretz* and to strive for excellence in *Kodesh*, Chol and *Middos*. The head of the *Beis* department in Year 11 Year 13 provides outstanding leadership. During discussions with an inspector, he stated that "my foremost strategy is to create joy in learning *Torah* and pride in being a Jew, among the students." *Beis* students in discussion with inspectors expressed just these sentiments.
- The *Kodesh* studies leadership team has been expanded to include an impressive group of leaders including: the head of the *Beis* department who offers exceptional leadership and guidance to staff and students; the head of the main school whose creativity and positivity add so much to the educational provision at the school; subject leads; SENCO; PSHE lead who has constructed a superb fundamental British values curriculum and the HIPE leaders, all working under the expert guidance of the Menahel.
- The leadership team have an excellent understanding of the strengths of the school and its areas of development. Self-evaluation is thorough and accurate, and the leadership team is continuously reflecting upon ways to improve the quality of education offered to students.
- The school has an outstanding curriculum which has been expertly constructed by leaders to meet the needs and relatively wide range of religious practice of students. Particularly impressive are the *Gemoro, Chumash* and *Tefillah* curricula. Subject leads in these subjects develop the curriculum which then facilitates effective monitoring of student progress and helps support staff in their planning and implementation of the curriculum.

This ensures an innovative and creative outcome which is bespoke to students.

- The school's leadership team provides focussed and effective professional development opportunities. Leaders use lesson observations, both formal, within performance management, and informal, through drop-in sessions, to plan well-targeted support. Inductees receive extra support from senior mentors who provide model lessons and support the planning of their lessons.
- The HIPE team provides an exciting and innovative programme which supports the successful *Kodesh* provision at the school. The HIPE team leader has created a strategy which builds on two fundamental elements. Firstly, it provides students with spiritual and wellbeing support on a drop-in relational level. In addition, the HIPE team provide inspirational events which are exciting and create a love of *Torah* and *Mitzvos.* The HIPE leadership now need to provide a strategic plan which presents activities linked to the wider school provision.
- The governing body makes a significant contribution to the work and progress of the school. Discussions with three of the governors with responsibilities in the *Kodesh* department, reveal that they have a clear grasp of the school's strengths and areas of development. They offer a good balance of support and challenge and are ambitious for continued improvement.
- The governors and school leaders have responded to the need to provide more places for the Year 7 age group and with much dedication, has set up the Year 7 in state of the art accommodation at Belsize Park. Year 7 has a high percentage of students with Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and the extra space supports the successful education of the high percentage of SEND students in this year group. There is a dedicated leadership team there, however the school is correctly now looking to appoint a *Mashgiach Ruchni* (spiritual and personal development lead), who will augment the experienced team who are strategically placed there.
- The personal development of the Year 7 students is enriched by having the extra space within the new site. This has also helped to integrate students from many schools, in a way which is conducive to them settling in well at a new school without having to negotiate sharing space with older students. However, lack of older students on site to look up to, creates a challenge. The leadership team have tackled this by arranging for the Year 7 boys to come to the main school on Sundays and for Year 13 students to go on a rotation basis every *Rosh Chodesh* (beginning of the Jewish month) to the Belsize Park site. In addition, when Year 7 classes are involved with some HIPE activities, they are joined by *Beis* students, for example during the Year 7 *Shabbaton* (weekend programme).
- Parents have a favourable view of the school's educational provision and overwhelmingly feel that the *Kodesh* provision prepares their children well for continued Jewish learning and community work. However, the school needs to consider how they can improve communication to parents so that parents are fully aware of the excellent activities and curriculum opportunities which the school offers.

#### The quality of Jewish Education is outstanding

- The Kodesh studies curriculum enhances the ethos of the school and is of a particularly high quality within the core subjects of *Gemoro, Chumash, Biblical Hebrew* and *Tefillah.* The main school curriculum includes *Gemoro, Chumash, Sedra, Biblical Hebrew,* Religious Studies and optional topics, which include *Halacha, Middos, Hashkafo* (Jewish philosophy) *Nach* (Prophets and Writings), well augmented by HIPE lessons. The *Beis* department curriculum includes *Gemoro, Halacha, Hashkafo, Sedra, Biblical Hebrew,* Religious Studies and optional activities including *pre-Shacharis shiur* (lesson), *Gemoro Bekius* (fluency) programme and HIPE activities.
- The school's *Kodesh* studies curriculum, both formal and informal, provides memorable experiences and rich opportunities for high quality learning and wider personal development. The curriculum is well sequenced and carefully planned and offers opportunities to revisit topics at appropriate times. The *Kodesh* studies curriculum provides progression as students go through the school, with the exception of *Halacha*, a subject which the school needs to revamp, so that students will retain knowledge taught.
- Students come from a relatively wide spectrum of religious knowledge and practice, and the leadership team have successfully reflected upon how best to meet the needs of all students. A good example of this is the provision offered within the *Beis* department for Years 11-13 which range from *Yeshiva* style teaching to inspirational philosophical discussions, and as a result students are inspired.
- Most teaching and learning in all key stages and most subjects of the *Kodesh* curriculum is outstanding and never less then consistently good. Nearly all *Kodesh* lessons share the following:
  - Subject specific knowledge and skills taught explicitly.
  - High ambition for all students, including those with SEND.
  - Good pace and lesson flow where knowledge and skills are built with smooth transitions through lesson phases.
  - Independent and active learning being supported through the use of effective questioning strategies and challenging activities.
  - Effective assessment strategies being used.
  - Excellent professional relationships formed between teachers and students.
- In addition, teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. For example, in a Year 8 lower set *Chumash* lesson, the teacher was able to explain in great detail and with clarity the various components of the *Beis Hamikdosh*.
- Teachers provide students with a clear focus as to what is being learnt in the lesson and how this relates to prior knowledge. For example, in a Year 9 *Gemoro* lesson the teacher began the lesson by skilfully evaluating the prior knowledge of students. This involved an interactive discussion about the various ways in which a *Sukkah* (booth) which is higher than the prerequisite

twenty *Amos* (ten meters) can become *Kosher* and suitable for use through restorative actions.

- Teachers set challenging activities with achievable targets based on knowledge of individual students. A striking example of this was seen in a KS3 *Chumash* lesson, in which a group of high achievers was given opportunities to work though *Meforshim* themselves, whilst others were being supported by the teacher.
- There is high ambition for all students based upon clear knowledge of assessment data. During discussions with inspectors, several students referred to how their teachers push them to do the best that they can do, but always within a supportive framework.
- Students are typically well engaged in lessons. In the very few lessons where low level disturbances occurred, too much teacher talk took place and as a result students were less actively involved.
- Teachers successfully differentiate and challenge students of different ability levels through the expert use of questioning strategies. This supports students thinking independently and actively engages them in their learning. A good example of this was seen in a Year 13 *Gemoro* lesson in which students were asked to consider how the locality of a person can impact on the language associated with creating *Kedushin* (betrothal) prior to marriage.
- Assessment for learning is carried out through regular controlled assessment in the core subjects. These formal assessments are augmented by informal written tests and monitoring of pupil standards undertaken by the senior leadership team.
- Resources to support learning throughout the school are effective. However, the school should consider more usage of the traditional *Gemoro* text within bound copies, for students within set two and set three classes, rather than photocopied excerpts. This would prepare students even more for learning in *Yeshivos*.
- Students' attainment and achievement in *Kodesh* studies is outstanding. This was apparent during lessons observed, work scrutiny and when testing a representation group of students from KS3 and KS4. Testing showed a high level of attainment in nearly all subjects, with the exception of knowledge of *Halacha* which was somewhat variable.
- Great emphasis is placed on *Gemoro, Chumash* and *Biblical Hebrew,* and students' knowledge and skills in these subjects are exceptional. Students in the *Beis* department are able to work through a *Sugya* (*Gemoro* topic) in great depth. An example of this was seen in a Year 9 *Gemoro* lesson which focussed upon the theme of the *Chanukah* (Festival of Lights) lighting. Students were able to understand complex concepts relating to *Hiddur* (best way) to do this *Mitzvoh.* In other classes within KS4, students were also able to translate unseen *Meforshim* (commentaries) exceptionally well. *Chumash* skills are underpinned by the high level that students reach in *Biblical Hebrew*, a subject in which results at GCSE and A-levels have been high the past two years.
- Students with special educational needs/disabilities, receive good support which enables them to make accelerated progress. Classes are set at

different ability levels and dedicated staff support students with SEND in a way which builds their self-efficacy.

- Students display a serious approach to *Davening* and concentrate very well during *Tefillos. Davening* sessions have a deep impact upon the spiritual development of students as they are given many opportunities therein to reflect upon their connection with *Hashem. Davening* is central to school life with many students learning before *Davening. Tehillim* (Psalms) are often recited for ill people, as well as for the wellbeing of people living in Israel affected by the current war.
- Students enjoy their *Kodesh* lessons and are able to reflect upon and discuss *Torah* values and *Mitzvos*. In discussions with students, several reported how they find *Kodesh* studies to be exciting and that these lessons prepare them well for the future. For example, in a Year 13 *Gemoro* lesson, students were challenged to ask the next question in the *Gemoro* and successfully did so within an atmosphere in which the *Gemoro* learning came alive through the thrust and parry of interaction between Rebbe and students. This type of experience prepares students exceptionally well for *Yeshiva*.
- An impressive outcome is that the school caters for a wide spectrum of religious practice and knowledge and empowers students to feel a sense of pride in being a Jew. This is evidenced by the way that students within the *Beis Chazak* and *Beis Chadash* programmes are engaged in *Kodesh* studies. One student from *Beis Chadash* shared with the inspector how valued he feels because of the options he can choose which are commensurate with his religious knowledge. An example of how the school provides for this wide spectrum was seen in the Year 12 *Gemoro* lesson in which a set one cohort were involved in a *Yeshiva* style *shiur*. Students took copious notes and asked searching questions, following on from their preparation for lessons during *Chavrusah* (paired learning) sessions earlier on in the day. In contrast within a set three class where the same topic was being taught, the focus was on making the *Gemoro geshmak* (enjoyable) and relevant within a much smaller group. There was much less text work, but lots of discussion. In both classes learning was focussed with a high level of engagement.
- Evidence gained from discussions with students demonstrates that they love learning *Kodesh* and that they are reflective and independent learners. Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Over 90% of students graduate to learn in the *Yeshivos* of their choice in Israel and in England.

#### Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding

• Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Staff present themselves as excellent role models and are very well liked by students. In a discussion with one group of students, they unanimously stated that the greatest strength of the school was the way that their *Kodesh* teachers care for them and are committed to the success of each student.

- Students are encouraged to reflect and have opportunities to consider topics and themes on a deeper level. Many examples of this were seen during the inspection. In one lesson, the class were asked to consider why the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) could not wear the priestly clothes outside the *Beis Hamikdosh* (Holy Temple). It was impressive to observe how well the students attempted to answer this question.
- The *Kodesh* staff successfully imbue in students a love of *Torah* and *Mitzvos* through their enthusiasm and obvious love of teaching *Kodesh*. Students display a thirst for knowledge as exemplified by students' excitement upon hearing *Torah* insights or questions asked by the inspectors. The HIPE team support this excitement through creative and uplifting activities which are enjoyed by students. A student from the *Beis* department shared with an inspector that "at a previous school we learnt *Torah* to succeed in tests, but here we learn *Torah* because it is so *Geshmak* (pleasurable)." Another student confided that "Hasmonean provides an atmosphere where everyone wants to succeed and grow in *Torah*."
- The *Kodesh* curriculum is immersed in spiritual and moral growth and offers much inspiration to students. As one parent put it "*Kodesh* studies are exciting and inspiring, the school has transformed my son's view of learning, character building and giving to others, in a most positive way."
- Students are taught to differentiate between altruistic actions and selfish ones and given much direction on unpicking what is right and what is wrong. This is conveyed within formal lessons emanating from *Gemoro, Chumash, Tefillah* and *Biblical Hebrew, Sedra* in KS3 and the *Hashkofo* (Jewish philosophy) lessons which run throughout the school. In addition, the HIPE activities provide opportunities to build connections with the HIPE team and with all the *Rabbonim* and inspirational people who take part in these activities.
- The outstanding Fundamental British Values curriculum weaves its way through the school curriculum and school year, continually offering students guidance on making good choices. In addition, students learn about other cultures and the importance of respecting people who are different.
- Students' self-efficacy, confidence and enthusiasm are built up effectively. They are encouraged to take part in organising voluntary events and learning programmes and are highly committed to make meaningful contributions to the school and beyond. A striking example of this was seen during the inspection when the students who had produced an inspiring musical video to lift the spirits of so many, within the context of the dire circumstances in Israel, shared their production with the inspectors. In addition, students in Year 8 and Year 9 utilised their ICT skills to provide background media support for the teaching of *Gemoro*, in the form of cartoons illustrating sections of the *Gemoro* being learnt.
- The school fulfils its statutory requirements of providing a daily act of collective worship through the *Shacharis* and *Mincha* prayers. *Davening* is of a high quality, with students displaying good concentration throughout. During the inspection, students recited special paragraphs of *Tehillim* imploring *Hashem* (G-d) to protect people living in Israel and to bring peace to the region.

- *Tefillah* in the *Beis* department is a beautiful spiritual experience with students displaying utmost respect for prayer and superb quality of concentration. One student in discussion with inspectors said, "when we *Daven* in school I feel very close to *Hashem."* The *Davening* is augmented by questions on the *Sedra,* and *Halacha* points, which are provided immediately after *Shacharis.* It was impressive to observe a Year 9 student deliver a daily *Halacha* point after *Mincha,* which was keenly listened to by classmates. *Beis Chazak* and *Beis Chadash* students also take part in *Tefillah* sessions which are tailor made to meet their needs. These sessions are also conducted in a respectful and refined way, with good engagement by students.
- The school could provide *Beis* students more opportunities to say *Divrei Torah* (words of *Torah*) to others and to share their knowledge and skills. It would be beneficial if, for example, *Beis* students would take part in delivering *Halacha* to younger classes.
- The many extracurricular activities and events are outstanding, which impacts positively on students' spiritual and moral development. These include learning sessions before school, *Daf Hayomi* (daily study of *Talmud*) programmes at lunchtimes, *Chazarah* (revision) sessions, *Beis Siyumim* celebrating the completion of tractates of *Gemoro* and the trip to Poland for Year 12. Much thought is given to HIPE activities because of the wide spectrum of Jewish practice and knowledge amongst students. Some of the significant events organised by HIPE include the virtual *Beis Hamikdosh* (Holy Temple) programme, Year 8 *Bar Mitzvah* events, Year 7 *Achdus* (team building) trips, Year 11 and Year 13 *Shabbatons, Purim* and *Chanukah* events. In addition, the *Rosh Chodesh* and Sunday learning programmes are effectively delivered.
- Students present as being polite and behaviour throughout the inspection was excellent, with only a few examples of low level disruption in a few lessons. Students are respectful to their teachers and are caring and empathetic towards each other. A beautiful example of this was observed within a KS3 lesson, in which one student pointed out to the inspector how his classmate was the best at describing in his own words the sequencing of the *Gemoro*. The school should now provide formal *Middos* programmes in each year group, which will help to obviate any low level disruption in classes. Throughout the inspection, students typically displayed exemplary *Middos* in their interaction with the inspectors, and with each other, whether in the corridors, during *Davening*, in lessons or within discussion groups.
- Students are encouraged to take part in outside school communal activities. These include KEF, GIFT and Shabbat Walk. In addition, many take part in Ezra, Sinai and the Mizrachi Yehudi programme, organisations in which Hasmonean boys play a lead role.

## What inspection judgements mean

OUTSTANDING	GOOD	REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT	INADEQUATE
The quality of	The quality of	The quality of Jewish	The quality of
Jewish education is	Jewish	education requires	Jewish
outstanding	education is at	improvement	education is
	least good		inadequate
At least 2 of the	At least 2 of the	All other key areas require	Are inadequate
other key	other 3 key	improvement	in
judgements are	judgements are		safeguarding
outstanding with	good and the	No inadequate judgement	or any of the 4
the others at least	third, requires		areas
good	improvement, is		Also does not
	already		adequately
	improving in		provide
	this third area		collective
			worship

## **School details**

Unique reference number	137539

Local authority

Barnet

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	751 (of which 277 are sixth form)
Appropriate authority	Board of Trustees
CEO of the Trust	Mr Andrew McClusky
Chair of Kodesh Studies	Mr Joseph Halberstadt
Chair of Trustees	Mr Gary Swabel
Menahel	Rabbi Jeremy Golker
Headteacher	Mrs Miriam Langdon
Date of previous inspection	1-2 November 2017
School address	Holders Hill Road Hendon
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School website	http://www.hasmonean.co.uk