

KING DAVID PRIMARY SCHOOL, BIRMINGHAM INSPECTION REPORT

Local Authority: Birmingham

Inspected under the auspices of Pikuach

Inspection dates: 5th & 6th March 2024

This inspection of the school was conducted under section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Type of school: Primary

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of children: 3yrs – 11yrs

Mixed /Single sex: Mixed

Number on roll: 204

Chair of Governors: Simone Bryant

Headteacher: Steve Langford

Address: 250 Alcester Road, Moseley, B13 8EY

Telephone number: 0121 449 3364

Email address: enquiry@kingdavid.bham.sch.uk

School website: <https://www.kingdavid.org.uk/>

Inspection team

Lead Inspector: Ruth Wilkinson
Team Inspector: Laurence Rosenberg

Introduction

Inspectors make judgements on the following three Key Areas:

- The Quality of Jewish Education
- Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development
- Leadership and Management.

The inspection was conducted over two days by two inspectors, who observed Jewish Studies (JS) lessons, assemblies, *Tefillah* (Collective worship), and clubs.

They had detailed discussions with the Headteacher, Head of JS, SENDCO (Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Coordinator), other key teaching staff, governors, teaching assistants TAs, other non-teaching staff, parents and pupils from Early Years to Year 6.

Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work both in their books and on displays.

Joint lesson observations were carried out with the Headteacher, SENDCO and other members of the SLT (Senior Leadership Team) to ascertain their knowledge and expertise in the monitoring process. Inspectors also scrutinised relevant documentation, including policy documents and curriculum. They also reviewed the *Pikuach* questionnaires sent to students, staff and parents.

Information about the school

- King David Primary School is a one-form entry co-education, orthodox Jewish voluntary-aided primary school with a Nursery Class. It was founded in 1843 by the Birmingham Hebrew Congregation and was known as the Hebrew National School. In 1965 when the school moved to its current site, the school was renamed King David School.
- There are 41 pupils on the *SEN* (Special Education Needs) register. This includes 4 pupils with an *EHCP* (Education Health Care Plan). Eighty-three pupils have English as a foreign language and 72 pupils are entitled to Free School Meals. There are 31 members of staff (10 teachers, 8 teaching assistants and 13 support staff).
- The school attracts pupils from a range of faiths as well as Jewish pupils. This includes Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Christian and those of no faith. There are currently 18 Jewish children in the school.

Inspection judgement

Grade

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| Quality of Jewish Education | 1 |
| Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development | 1 |
| Leadership and management | 1 |
| Overall effectiveness | 1 |

What is it like to attend this Jewish school?

- King David Primary School prides itself on being a school community where solid Jewish values are the springboard that welcomes and unites all pupils irrespective of their religion, religious affiliation, or background. All faiths, and those of no faith, share their beliefs and learn from each other about their festivals and customs in a safe considerate environment. Learning about other faiths and learning from pupils of other faiths is encouraged through excellent displays throughout the school. This is also evidenced through PowerPoint presentations designed and made by individual pupils, creating an opportunity to share their own religious festivals in the relevant key stage assemblies. Pupils also partake in a wide range of charitable activities and at the time of the inspection, were preparing to support Red Nose Day and the BBC Pudsey Bear charity for children in need.
- There is a strong sense of respect between senior managers, governors, pupils, teachers and support staff in all their roles. Being educated in an atmosphere of respect and caring in a multi-faith school environment leads the way to understanding the importance of Fundamental British Values. The school strives to provide an environment in which all children are enabled to reach their full potential within the framework of the National Curriculum and the school's bespoke religious studies curriculum.
- The Head Teacher and Head of Religious Studies are proactive in caring about the well-being of all pupils and staff, giving them support within a friendly, caring and supportive Jewish atmosphere. Pupils commented in the Pikuach survey "I feel appreciated by my Jewish studies teachers because they always take time to listen to my answer and see my perspective of the conversation." "They always help and they always make sure that you are understanding the lesson and they also give out praises for everyone's work and are very kind." "I feel like my Jewish teachers appreciate me and get me involved in things all the time."

What does the school do well what does it need to do better?

Quality of Jewish Education

- The structure of religious education in the school reflects the multi-faith school community whilst providing a Jewish education that is rich in content and skilfully differentiated to meet the needs of the pupils. Lessons are timetabled to allow for parallel Religious Education classes for non-Jewish pupils. This has created an outstanding avenue for learning. All lessons observed were productive with pupils being able to talk about what they were learning, the relevance to their lives, or how it related to their own religion or beliefs. Pupils also articulated how their current learning related to previous lessons. When observing a multi-activity

lesson in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the youngest pupils spoke freely about the forthcoming festival of *Purim* and the characters linked to the *Purim* story. The children had the freedom to move around the classroom to choose their activity, which they did with confidence. Hebrew letter recognition was very impressive in the Reception Class. Many of the pupils could already identify some letters in the Hebrew alphabet. They were confident when sharing their knowledge and clearly proud of their achievements.

- Behaviour was good in all lessons observed, whether taught by the Jewish Studies teacher, a teaching assistant or the Headteacher. Continuity was evident from previous lessons, and this was also the case when a lesson was taken by a cover teacher. Clearly structured planning documents, created by the Head of RE (Religious Education), ensured that all year groups showed progression in their learning and that cover teachers were teaching lessons relevant to that particular class. Linked to Jewish Education and the RE parallel curriculum, teachers complete an assessment grid, monitoring the achievements and any areas of concern for each pupil. The need for this improved assessment and monitoring system was highlighted in the school's previous *Pikuach* inspection and it has now been successfully implemented and embedded in the monitoring of RE education in the school. Additionally, following the recommendation of the previous inspection report, the Head of RE has adapted the Jewish Studies curriculum to meet the specific needs of King David pupils, ensuring that it progressively develops each pupil's knowledge and understanding of the religion, observance and practice.
- Children were highly engaged and motivated in lessons and were very keen to share and discuss completed work in their exercise books. Every book scrutinised showed pride, neatness and thoughtful reflection.
- Popular Parent/pupil workshops are held for each year group. For example, Year 1 make *Tu B'shvat* (New Year for Trees) fruit kebabs, Year 3 make *Challah* (a bread loaf eaten on *Shabbat*), and Year 6 have a *Pesach Seder* (Passover festive meal) together with their parents. At *Chanukah* time, Moseley Church of England School is invited to join in with the King David Primary School festival workshop. The addition of a Kosher Cookery Room has been a great enhancement to the school facilities, making it possible to offer food related activities during the school day. The importance of engaging in charitable activities is emphasised in the school. Pupils participate in national events e.g. McMillan Coffee Morning, Children in Need and Red Nose Day. Teachers are rightly proud of their pupils' participation and achievements in the Etgar annual Jewish Studies quiz, where they were within the top five schools.
- Pupils with additional needs are well catered for within the constraints of local authority funding and staff recruitment. The SENDCO (Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Coordinator), who also has the role of Deputy Head Teacher, is very supportive of the RE curriculum in the school and values the KDSTAR initiative and its effect on the pupils and staff members. In her SENDCO role, she meets with RE teachers, as well as the other members of staff, ensuring that they have a knowledge of their pupils needs and giving them training to use any new support, teaching programmes. Members of staff expressed that they felt supported by the SENDCO.

Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development

- Jewish Personal and Spiritual Development at King David Primary School is outstanding. The inspectors agree with the judgement made in the clearly written, introspective self-evaluation form provided by the Head of RE, together with

substantiating evidence. The school complies with the statutory requirement for collective worship through assemblies, *Tefillot* (prayers), *Bensching* (blessings after meals) and other opportunities for pupils to gather together in delightful and meaningful ways that exemplify and promote the school's ethos "where stars shine".

- A recent innovative addition to the school is 'KDSTAR'. This whole school focus has made a significant contribution to the palpable ethos of the school and is stitched throughout everything that the school does. The idea was introduced through a school-wide series of CPD discussions as well as parental and governing body consultations. A parent commented in the *Pikuach* Parent Survey, "The kids do learn good values and KD STAR with their teachers, and they are so supportive to the children and make such a difference." The KDSTAR is a skilfully created acronym of: *Kedusha* – holiness, *Derech Eretz* – kindness and respect, *Simcha* (Joy), *Torah* (learning to be our best selves), *Achdut* (Unity) and *Ruach* (Spirit). These together make up the characteristics of a perfect King David 'Star Pupil'. Pupils, governors and all members of staff, whether working in teaching or non-teaching roles, could articulate what it is to be a KDSTAR. They were deeply proud of the impact it is having on every facet of the school. This was reflected by the Headteacher who stated, "KDSTAR is embedded in the curriculum." In one RE lesson a pupil shared his views on *Achdut*, the feeling of unity, stating that "stars can only be seen in a constellation". Another pupil in Year 6 expressed how much they were looking forward to Ramadan and that they also loved reciting the *Shema* (daily prayer that signifies God's unity) since "we are all unique and made by *Hashem* (God)".
- The behaviour of pupils around the school, in lessons and at break times, was exemplary and calm; pupils were proud to talk about the school. They felt safe and cared for and knew whom they could talk to if they had any issues or concerns. Pupils were keen to share their respect for the school and each other in lively conversations at break time, during lunch and in-class.
- In a session with the School Council one pupil referred to *Ruach*, as "seeing the spirit in everyone, we can't see it with our eyes, but you can see and feel it in your hearts", and another child stated that when he prays in the Mosque "I feel close to God". In a follow-up conversation he stated that his Jewish learning in RE had helped him to become more aware of his own relationship with God.
- The pupils have recently embarked on a whole school project on the *Noachite Laws* (Seven Laws of Noah), and how these apply to all humanity. This was introduced to help the school in their work on *Achdut*. The Head of RE's outstanding practice includes a passionate desire to promote the personal spiritual growth of all pupils and adults throughout the school. Along with the Headteacher, she has an insightful awareness and understanding of the school's demographic and faith profile and uses it positively to pursue the objectives set out in the school's mission statement and ethos. During the inspection, a Holocaust survivor visited the school to speak to Y6 pupils. A local Pastor together with some children from a local CofE school joined the pupils at King David Primary school for the event. The Chair of Governors opened the session by playing the theme music from Schindler's List on the violin. It was a very moving and memorable event for the eldest pupils in the school as well as for the staff. In a follow-up conversation she added that spirituality was "locked in the soul" through the KDSTAR concept and helped by the uniqueness of the school which is a paradigm of community cohesion. This sentiment was also acknowledged at a recent visit to King David Primary School by the Chief Rabbi.

Quality of Leadership and Management:

- The quality of Leadership and Management is outstanding. This was evident in meetings with governors and senior managers who were passionate about the importance of a Jewish School, whilst upholding the multi-faith nature of the school community as paradigm of living harmoniously together in today's society. The Headteacher was complimented on his strong commitment to the school's religious ethos in the parent and staff surveys, "Mr Langford does a sterling job of supporting the Jewish studies and making it a real priority." Members of staff voluntarily voice their gratitude for the support and organisation they received from the Head of RE as was reiterated in a comment in the staff survey, "Our Head of Jewish Studies is supportive of all staff and their particular situations."
- Senior staff have ensured that recommendations from the previous *Pikuach* inspection have been brought to fruition. This has resulted in structured and purposeful long-term planning, enabling Jewish Studies staff to have a clear overview of what each year group is expected to achieve during the course of a year.
- Recruiting suitable teaching and supply staff is challenging due to the demographics of the school. The senior managers, including the Headteacher, also take on the role of teaching assistants and cover teachers, when necessary. This enhances the closeness of the school community and gives the Headteacher a more in-depth knowledge of pupils and their abilities. They are also proactive in recognising the excellent skills and professionalism of some of their long-standing teaching assistants and support staff and are enabling them to extend their roles within the school when there is a teacher absent. As part of their professional development, the Head of RE arranged for teaching assistants to visit a Jewish primary school in London, which they found very helpful.
- There is a very strong feeling of belonging in this school, from staff members, pupils, parents and governors. This was articulated by their well-respected security guard, lunchtime supervisors, pupils and parents. The leadership and management of the school are key in creating and maintaining the positive attitude and the very important ethos of respect for all. A true skill for life.

What does the school need to do to improve?

- Some anxiety about the situation in Israel was reflected in the parental survey. "My child notices that the school has heightened security which wasn't properly explained why?", "Police presence is making my child very worried." Occasionally there is a need for the school to keep parents informed more quickly of any changes that may be stressful for the pupils. Parents who approached the *Pikuach* inspectors before and after school were exceptionally positive about the increased police and security presence, and pointed out that children have become more comfortable with it over recent months. They referred to how the school's values emphasised the community atmosphere."
- To address the staff recruitment issue, it may be necessary to look at alternative options, even as a temporary measure, e.g. teaching *Ivrit* (Hebrew) through a zoom link, enlisting the help of the student community and parent/grandparent volunteers.

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| Statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship (tefillah) | Met |
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Summary of Questionnaires

Pikuach invited parents and carers of pupils at King David Primary School, Birmingham to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 16 people responded to the survey.

Pikuach invited pupils at King David Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 52 pupils responded to the survey.

Pikuach invited members of staff at King David Primary School, Birmingham to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. 9 out of 31 members of staff responded to the survey.

GLOSSARY

WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN:

| GRADE | JUDGEMENT | DESCRIPTION |
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| 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 | Requires Improvement | A school requiring improvement is not 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. |