

Manchester Mesivta School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134195
Local Authority	Bury
Inspection number	328850
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2009
Reporting inspector	John Coleman HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School (total)	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr I Shapiro
Headteacher	Mr P Pink
Date of previous school inspection	23 March 2006
School address	Beechwood Charlton Avenue Prestwich Greater Manchester M25 0PH
Telephone number	0161 773 1789
Fax number	0161 772 9170

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Manchester Mesivta is an orthodox Jewish school. There is an independent sixth form attached which is funded through links with a local further education college. The school was awarded voluntary aided status in 2004 and moved to its present site in new buildings in 2005. It is much smaller than most secondary schools and provides a dual curriculum where Jewish Studies are taught in the mornings and secular subjects in the afternoons. This inspection focused on the secular provision.

The vast majority of pupils are White British and very few are eligible for free school meals. There are an average number of pupils with a statement of special educational need and most pupils speak English as their first language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Manchester Mesivta School provides a good quality of education for its pupils. It has some outstanding features in the provision for the care, guidance and support of pupils and in the outcomes for their personal development. The school is very successful in achieving its aim to 'develop in pupils a passion for learning that will serve their needs throughout and beyond school'. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning.

Many pupils enter school with standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science which are above those found nationally. However, the range of pupils' prior attainment has increased over time, due to the changing nature of the school's intake from selective grammar school to comprehensive. The result is that there are a greater number of pupils who begin school with standards which are below average. The school curriculum is traditional and has historically been well matched to the needs of pupils in selective education. Standards attained by pupils are in the main above average and achievement is good, but the small number of lower attaining pupils do not achieve as well. The school leadership recognises this and has responded with more vocational choices on the curriculum. These are better matched to pupils' needs and are beginning to ensure that progress is good. It is too soon to measure the impact on exam results.

Following the last inspection the school's leadership responded well to the recommendations. The headteacher has created a senior team which he leads with strong direction and the heads of department undertake an increasingly rigorous monitoring role. The governing body meets statutory requirements and provides good strategic management. Improvements to the quality of teaching mean it is now good due to effective staff development and successful governor policies for the recruitment and retention of staff. However, there is variation in the quality of lessons and this is due to the inconsistent implementation of the schools policies for teaching and marking. The leadership's view of the relative strengths of the school is an accurate one. The capacity of the school to improve is good. A good example of the evidence of this being the improvements made to the schools' provision for information and communication technology (ICT), which given the provisional results for 2008 resulted in all pupils achieving an equivalent A* to C GCSE grade and 85% of pupils gaining an A*/A equivalent grade.

All staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and take a lead in this from the strong and visible presence of the headteacher. The school has a firm moral code which is consistently applied. As a result, pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and pupils say there is no bullying and they feel safe. The religious life of the school permeates every aspect of pupils' experiences. Pupils are provided with daily opportunities for self reflection and they develop respect for themselves and each other. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Relationships between staff and pupils are good, and are built upon the high level of care and interest which staff show towards pupils. The support and guidance for pupils' personal and academic needs are first class, including the contribution of the teaching assistants who work mainly with pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles and the curriculum includes provision for drug and sex education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the curriculum choices available for the lowest attaining pupils and increase the progress they make.

- Ensure the whole school policies for teaching and marking are consistently applied in all classes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Most pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Standards are above average. Approximately 75% of pupils sit their GCSE examinations in Year 10 a year earlier than usual. In the last 3 years around 80% of pupils gained a minimum of five A* to C grades including English and mathematics which is well above the national average. The percentage of pupils achieving the top A* and A grades at 39% in 2008, as shown by provisional figures, is also very high. Pupil performance in some subjects is exceptional. As a result many pupils study AS levels in Year 11 and the success rate for these is high. A small number of pupils complete A levels before leaving the school. Pupils' progress in some subjects such as classical studies and Modern Hebrew is weaker due to difficulties in recruiting staff for these subjects. The progress of the lowest attaining pupils over time is also less strong, due to the traditional and academic nature of the curriculum being unsuited to fully meet their needs. This is being addressed by the school and pupils are now making good progress in more vocational subjects. It is too soon however for this to impact on pupils results in external examinations. Overall, pupils' achievement is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding with pupils being encouraged to think of others and show respect for all. Pupils are polite to visitors and are proud of their school. Attendance is good and pupils are appreciative of the efforts made by teachers and other adults who work on their behalf. 'We work well as a team' said one Year 11 pupil who also suggested that the school is improving year on year. The promotion of citizenship and self-respect gives pupils the confidence to live together in a harmonious community. Pupils value highly their own cultural heritage and have opportunities to discuss the diversity of other cultures in the world. Opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills are promoted through a range of opportunities to be buddies for younger pupils, prefects or members of the school council. The council provides impressive support for charities, and pupils have opportunities to become involved in fundraising to provide wheelchairs for an African community. Pupils also speak very positively about helping others in their local community. Pupils use water fountains and eat fruit throughout the school day and they know why this is important to their health and well-being. This extends to the Sunday swimming classes that include other family members and parents. There are extensive corridor displays which heightened their awareness of the importance of a healthy choice food option.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. There are a wide range of teaching styles from formal instructional approaches to lessons which have an emphasis on practical activities and involve pupils in their own learning. The most

successful teachers are able to blend their approach to best suit the needs of the pupils and the content of the lesson. In all classes teachers plan thoroughly and demonstrate very good knowledge of the subjects they teach. Most lessons are aimed at an appropriate level of difficulty for pupils but, in some, the same expectation is made of all abilities and this slows the pace of learning. Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are excellent, and this contributes to the good progress they make. Relationships between pupils and with staff are good. Pupils know their attainment targets in English, mathematics and science, and in the best lessons teachers' marking provides effective guidance in relation to pupils' progress in achieving these. This is not consistent in all classes. Homework is set regularly and the school has an automated telephone system which allows pupils and parents easy access to the details of this. Pupils say that this greatly helps them if they forget or are absent for any reason. Classrooms are tidy and well managed, but most are a little bare and there are insufficient efforts to celebrate pupils' work and to motivate learning. Teaching assistants provide good and effective support and guidance for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It meets all statutory requirements. In Key Stage 3 the secular curriculum is broad and balanced and in Key Stage 4 pupils have increasing opportunities to follow a wider range of courses that are suited to their interests and abilities. The school has improved its provision for ICT and worked with determination to improve vocational education. The small range of extra-curricular opportunities is appreciated by pupils and the more able, gifted and talented pupils are benefiting from enrichment opportunities. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers and benefit from the work of teaching assistants who are focused on ensuring that all pupils do as well as they can. Pupils feel secure that teachers are working hard to help them do their best. The school places importance on the need to ensure that pupils follow courses that are best suited to their strengths and interests. For example, the curriculum pathways have been broadened to include subjects where pupils will perform best. This is indicative of the school's determination to provide a personalised curriculum for all pupils although the school recognises that there is still more to do in this regard.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. All statutory procedures are observed and measures to ensure health and safety are in place. Pupils feel valued and cared for. They feel safe and secure, always knowing that they have someone to help them when they need it. Vulnerable pupils value the support they are given. Pupils' well-being and the celebration of achievement is at the centre of all that the school does and, as a result, pupils grow with confidence into well-balanced young people who are well prepared for the next stage of their learning. Good relationships between teachers and pupils are evident throughout the school. The information on pupils' progress is shared with parents through review meetings and written reports, and appreciative comments from parents include, 'positive and caring school with a dedicated and hardworking teaching force'. Rewards and celebrations are an integral part of school life and this adds to pupils' enjoyment with many being pleased to receive the teachers' praise for good work done. An outstanding feature is the way that all pupils and staff work together within a caring community.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher provides clear direction, and he inspires the staff with his passionate love of the school and through his determination to improve the quality of education which it provides. Since the last inspection a new senior leadership team is in place which provides an effective monitoring role to measure the school's performance. Challenging targets are set for pupils' attainment, which are largely met. There is increasing delegation of leadership responsibilities to heads of department who are knowledgeable about the standards attained in their subjects. This is because staff know each individual pupil very well and they track the progress which they make. The school's evaluation of its relative strengths and weaknesses is an accurate one. Action plans to improve the school give a broad outline of intentions but they lack quantifiable ways of measuring their success.

The governing body is well led by a knowledgeable chair. The clerk to the governors is instrumental in the development of suitable committees, systems and structures which ensure they are able to fulfil their strategic role. Governors are well informed by the headteacher. Most governors are also parents of pupils in the school. They provide appropriate challenge to the school's leadership. The transition from a selective grammar school to maintained comprehensive has been well managed. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good and equality of opportunity is provided through the increasing choice of curriculum options. The school provides good value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Manchester Mesivta School, Prestwich, M25 0PH

On behalf of Mr Cooper and myself I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and talking to you about your school.

Manchester Mesivta is a good school. Your headteacher and all of the staff and governors provide excellent care, guidance and support for you. The teachers are very knowledgeable about their subjects and deliver good quality lessons. You learn well because of this good teaching but also because you work very hard, concentrate well and behave as you should. The school is excellent at helping you to develop into mature and responsible young people with the appropriate skills which you will need in the future. The academic standards which many of you reach are high including English, mathematics and information and communication technology.

Although most of the teaching is good, we want the lessons which are less good to improve. As a result, we have asked teachers to use the school's guidance about lessons more consistently. We have also asked the school to make sure your work is marked better. Although there are more choices available to you when you begin your GCSE courses, we have told the school it should provide even more options.

We wish you every success in the future.