

THE COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

In February 1977, it was decided to set up a Committee of Inquiry to investigate Jewish Studies and Modern Hebrew in both the Primary and High Schools. Memoranda by the Merseyside Association of Jewish Ministers and by the Jewish Studies Staff of the High Schools were almost the entire written material received by this Committee. A request for written comments by parents resulted in just three answers! Immediately following the publication of the Report of this Committee, the Jewish Studies Staff sent in their Observations on the Report.

CONFIDENTIAL MEMORANDUM CONCERNING THE KD HIGH SCHOOL FROM THE
MERSEYSIDE ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH MINISTERS together with
THE RELIGIOUS ADVISORY COMMITTEE, KING DAVID SCHOOLS

submitted to the Committee of Enquiry, February 1977

The spiritual leaders of the community naturally have a serious concern for the schools. They therefore arranged a joint meeting of the Merseyside Association of Jewish Ministers and the Religious Advisory Committee in order to discuss the matter and to produce a draft memorandum.

We consider that there are many ways in which JS can be improved in the school and in this connection, we make the following points:

- (a) The use of Shlichim as teachers is unsatisfactory. By the time they have mastered the English language and the English methods of schooling, it is already time for them to return to Israel.
- (b) Too many secular subjects are taught, especially in the upper school, (4th year upwards). This means that JS cannot receive a proper share of periods within the timetable and it should be stressed that the raison d'etre of a Jewish school is to encourage religious instruction.
- (c) The lack of interest on the part of parents towards JS should be reversed.
- (d) Cookery classes should be geared towards the production and preparation of specifically Jewish dishes. Although the ingredients used in general cookery classes were kosher, the dishes themselves were not Jewish dishes and therefore proved wasteful since they were not consumed when brought home.
- (e) Pupils must acquire basic skills (reading, berachot, basic Jewish knowledge) BEFORE entering the High School. If they do not, they WILL find lessons boring in the High School, for how can a pupil tackle Chumash texts when he cannot read Hebrew fluently?
- (f) The syllabus may possibly not be broad enough in its intentions to allow for various shades of Jewish commitment amongst the pupils. Included in the syllabus should be the development of the Torah tradition and not only the teaching of Jewish laws and customs as performed today in orthodox homes. Needless to say, no pupil, be he from the most irreligious of backgrounds, should be allowed to have less religious instruction on his timetable-- on the contrary, what is required is an increase. Also material which is not religious knowledge must NOT be introduced into the JS syllabus in the guise of religious knowledge.
- (g) External examinations in Religious Studies must not be over-emphasised. The basic purpose of Jewish Studies is to imbue Tora and its values into the pupils and not serve merely as a means to passing another examination.

It is essential for a sub-committee of professionals in the field of Tora studies from both within and outside of the town to review the syllabuses from time to time and make recommendations.

However, as long as the administration of the school demonstrates a non-positive attitude towards Jewish observances and practices, no progress can possibly be made within the individual JS lessons. We all know the comment repeatedly made in Jewish communities that it is no good for pupils to learn one thing at their JS lessons and see quite another at home. It is far more serious when they learn one thing at the school JS lessons and see the reverse enacted within the very school itself. In fact, a most important factor which influences the attitude and interest of pupils within the school is the attitude of the administration of the school towards encouraging Jewish practices and observances.

If an administration is going to remain at best aloof from Jewish practice, or worse, decides not to respect Jewish practice, one cannot expect the pupils to act any better and any attempt by JS staff to teach these practices will largely be nullified. The pupils will naturally consider that the acquisition of Jewish knowledge regarding Jewish practice has no relevance within the school community itself and will therefore interpret logically that Jewish practices have no relevance for "those who are not Rabbis". This in turn will be a direct factor in causing pupils to lose any interest they might have had in JS.

Sadly, the attitude of the administration of the school leaves much to be desired in this matter. We shall therefore go into detail in this memorandum to give concrete examples of this attitude towards Jewish practices and observances. Supporting documentation will be quoted or enclosed.

//Abbreviations used://

RAC Minutes = Minutes of the Religious Advisory Committee
JSSA Minutes = Minutes of the Jewish Studies Staff Association

THE ATTITUDE OF THE ADMINISTRATION IN THE KD HIGH SCHOOL TOWARDS JEWISH PRACTICES AND OBSERVANCES

Religious services are a most important part of the curriculum and enable pupils to put into practice what they learn in their JS lessons. (The legislators of the 1944 Education Act were also fully aware of the importance of religious acts of worship within the school timetable.)

However, for pupils from Year 4 upwards, there are NO Jewish services. This means that once a pupil reaches the age of 14 or so there will be no opportunity for him to lay tephillin, daven, or hear the reading of the Tora (RAC Minutes: 9.12.75; 3.2.76; 14.9.76; 25.10.76). Thus, the effect of teaching these subjects in JS is largely nullified and pupils start wondering why these subjects were ever included in the syllabuses. An enquiry with the 4th year boys reveals that almost ALL have STOPPED laying tephillin. Senior CHRISTIAN pupils, however, DO have religious services, twice a week.

The Junior Jewish Assemblies have on a number of occasions been curtailed in length or completely cancelled to make time for such tasks as collecting dinner money (see below, "Cancellation of Periods").

Unlike ALL other Jewish schools, there is no Mincha service included in the curriculum. Pupils must give up their afternoon break every day for Mincha and credit must be given here for the 15 or so pupils who daily do make this sacrifice. Sadly, it must be recorded that neither the Headmaster nor the Deputy Headmaster ever attend this service which gives rise to the impression that Mincha

is only for the JS staff and the "frum" boys and not intended for the general community. It is not uncommon for pupils to comment: "Where is Mr Beebe and Mr Savitz?" (In this connection, it might be pointed out that every day Dr Conway, the recently retired Headmaster of the London JFS, would conduct the Mincha service himself.)

Until about six months ago, there had been a flourishing Morning Service held regularly at the High School, in the BETH DAVID. However, as a result of the assembly periods becoming progressively earlier (by 13 minutes over the last 4½ years), this lesson started to encroach on the time previously allocated to the service which in turn caused pupils to be late for their Assembly lesson. Pressure was exerted on pupils attending the services by the Modern Hebrew staff: pupils got into trouble and were even detained. Warnings that this was happening were issued but nothing was done (Memorandum by Rabbi Dr Simons, June 1975: RAC Minutes 7.4.75; JSSA Minutes 6.4.76). The pupils therefore ceased attending the morning services and the Minyan was finally disbanded.

FESTIVALS

On Festivals, when one is in school, it is most important to convey to the pupils the correct Festival atmosphere. Considerable damage is done when it is considered that the Festival "is something that we unfortunately have to put up with". As a consequence, the proper time allocation for Festival observance is denied. Sadly the JS staff have had to fight "tooth and nail" to be given time within the school day to be devoted to the festivals. Whereas they have finally obtained a minimum time allowance for the lower school, for the upper school the presence of a Festival and its reflection in the timetable is virtually non-existent.

The last occasion when the school was in session throughout Chamuka was in 1975. Jewish pupils from Year 4 upwards were EXCLUDED from the Lighting of Chamuka Lights ceremony for almost all the Festival. For a number of pupils this would have been the only lighting ceremony they could experience (JSSA Minutes, 4.12.75). Also in 1975, the entertainment programme was disrupted because the Headmaster made the orchestra members in the upper school return to their science lessons.

Until several years ago, the entire Purim programme consisted of Megilla until 10.00 a.m. (no banging permitted!) and then back to the normal school timetable. Following extensive protests by the JS staff (JSSA Minutes 28.11.74; 4.12.75; 10.2.76) the situation until 1977 had slowly improved with reference to the lower school only. For the upper school, however, Purim still ends at 10.00 a.m. In 1976, the Deputy Head pronounced that it would be criminal for pupils of 5th and 6th forms to miss lessons after 10.00 a.m. Last year, Miss Herman (Head of Music) agreed to put on a performance of the Toy Symphony as part of the Purim celebrations (JSSA Minutes: 13.1.76) but the Headmaster rejected this offer on the grounds that participants in the performance would thereby be forced to miss their normal lessons.

On our enquiring into the nature of the projected programme for Purim this year (1977), we found that the situation had deteriorated. The JS staff had proposed the same programme as per 1976 Purim (JSSA minutes 13.1.77). However, both the Headmaster and Deputy Head wanted to exclude 4th year pupils (in addition to the exclusion of the 5th and 6th year pupils), from the Purim celebrations and

to give instructions that they follow normal timetable lessons throughout the afternoon. In addition, the Head and Deputy Head wishes to increase the number of lessons and decrease the length of Purim celebration with reference to the first three years. After strong objections had been lodged by Rabbi Simons, the governors agreed to retain the programme for the first three years as in the past, but to exclude from it the 4th year pupils and those higher in the school (i.e. the majority of Jewish Pupils in the school). It could be pointed out at this juncture that not a murmur of protest is recorded when the entire school misses an ENTIRE DAY on account of Speech Day, half a day because of a sponsored walk, and half a day every year because of the swimming gala.

The Manchester King David^{High} School (which is now flourishing, this year 130 applications from Jewish pupils were received for 90 places -- and next year 170 applications are expected) will have the following arrangements for Purim:

Morning: Service and Megilla (remainder of morning arrangements not finalised at time of writing, but not more than one lesson will be included);

11.00-12.00 a.m. Lunch.

Entire afternoon: Carnival, for WHOLE school, comprising fancy dress, play, competitions etc. The Headmaster will also appear in fancy dress. Purim kits are to be distributed in both Primary and secondary schools, by courtesy of Lubavitch.

The Head of KD, Liverpool, High School, has forbidden the distribution of these kits.

SCHOOL TRIPS

School trips provide an excellent means of illustrating how precepts learned in JS lessons are not just theoretical ideas but can be put into practice. If non JS staff organise the trips and encourage JS practices, the implication is that Jewish practices are to be encouraged by all Jews and not just JS staff.

Around 1974, various trips designed to include Jewish pupils, with non-kosher food and Shabbos desecration had been arranged by the Deputy Head and others. As a result of intervention by Rabbi Simons, these trips were cancelled.

Last term an overnight visit to London to the Pompeii Exhibition had been arranged by the Deputy Head. The itinerary included a non-kosher breakfast at a non-Jewish hotel and no provision was to be made for davening. The Headmaster was fully aware of these arrangements but he raised no objections. Rabbi Simons, on learning of the arrangements, proposed alternative arrangements (see attached sheet, Document I), despite being informed by the Deputy Head that no interference on Rabbi Simons part would be tolerated. Later, however, the format of this visit was altered to that of a daytime only visit, which would commence at 8.00a.m. at Lime Street Station. Being 2nd February, it was still too dark to daven Shachrit, before setting out and the RAC hoped that suitable arrangements would be made enroute for Shachrit (RAC Minutes: 14.12.76). A few days before the trip, some pupils informed Rabbi Simons that no such arrangements were included in the itinerary by the Deputy Head. This was confirmed by the Deputy Head to Rabbi Simons, and the Deputy Head insisted that they were running on a tight schedule and that therefore there was no time for davening (!) and that pupils must make private arrangements. Rabbi Simons then informed him that he considered it to be the organisers' responsibility to make suitable arrangements and his opinion was given to the Deputy Head in writing. (see attached letter: Document II).

During Chol Hamoed Sukkot 1975, there was a very successful trip which proved beneficial to the pupils to Lubavitch Centre in Manchester. Fifty or so pupils participated. The RAC strongly recommended repeating the experience during Chol Hamoed 1976 (RAC Minutes 14.9.76). The Head however refused to sanction such a trip and recommended that it take place on a day when the pupils were on holiday (see appended note: Document III). This was an educational trip and not an outing and should have been authorised to take place on a school day -- and surely such a trip reflects the very raison d'être of being in school on Chol Hamoed. It should also be mentioned that for the same day requested for the Lubavitch trip (Tuesday of Chol Hamoed) a geography field trip WAS permitted (JSSA Minutes: 18.10.75; RAC Minutes: 25.10.76).

SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES

A disturbing feature of the atmosphere at the school, not conducive to producing a Jewish atmosphere within the school is that at the school assemblies on Wednesdays and Fridays, the hymns sung are Church hymns. The RAC is most concerned by this fact and has recommended that this assembly be secularised entirely (RAC Minutes: 15.2.77). Parents have also conveyed their own concern over this matter to individual ministers of religion.

CANCELLATION OF PERIODS

If the school administration does not show respect for JS periods, we cannot expect pupils to do so. We recognise that it is inevitable that sometimes periods must be cancelled or curtailed to make way for extra-curricular activities, but it is most important that all subjects on the curriculum shoulder the same degree of cancellation of individual lessons for such periods.

A number of years ago, the RAC being increasingly concerned about the fact that JS studies were being... were being singled out for exploitation for precisely this purpose, discussed this matter with the Head who gave them the assurance that this activity would cease. Sadly this assurance was not fulfilled and fifth form external examination and mock briefings were given during JS periods with annual regularity (JSSA Minutes: 13.1.76; RAC Minutes: 14.12.76). JS assembly lessons and Jewish assemblies have been cancelled or shortened to include collection of dinner moneys etc. (JSSA Minutes: 13.9.74; 13.1.76; 10.2.76; 6.4.76; 31.1.77; RAC Minutes: 7.4.76).

(We are however PLEASED to report that since mid-February 1977, for the first time in our memory, the JS period on 16.2.77 was extended by 15 minutes. Also the time to collect dinner money on Tuesday 22.2.77 was taken mainly from the morning periods -- this has only been done once before, after pressure from the JS staff on 5.10.76 (JSSA Minutes: 18.10.76), but unfortunately, a complete complete cancellation of Jewish Assembly took place on 6.1.77 (JSSA Minutes: 31.1.77).

A similar attitude is shown by putting most of the JS and Modern Hebrew periods for years 4 and 5 outside the main timetable. Despite the recognition that this is an unsatisfactory situation, (e.g., see letter from Chairman of Governors to the Headmaster: 2.5.75; RAC Minutes: 9.12.75) and despite written undertakings and commitments (e.g., see same letter, Minutes of Jewish Studies Sub-Committee, letter from Chairman of Governors to Chairman of Staff Association 19.6.75), this unsatisfactory situation still persists. The attitude of the pupils is that since the administration places these periods outside the timetable, they cannot attach much importance to JS and so why should they (the pupils)?

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this memorandum has been to demonstrate the situation that has prevailed during the last few years at least in the King David High School. In our opinion, the effect of the relative contribution of the administration to the needs of religious and secular activities of the school curriculum has had a devastating effect on the pupils when formulating their own attitude towards Jewish Studies and Jewish commitment.

All the points herein mentioned can be easily rectified by the administration and by so doing would help encourage the right atmosphere in the school which itself is so important in order to conduct successful JS programmes of study.

Respectfully submitted by:

Merseyside Association of Jewish Ministers

with the

Religious Advisory Committee, King David
Schools.

DOCUMENT NUMBER 1

TO: H. Lachs Esq., ^{Chairman}
Religious Advisory Council,
Headmaster,
Mr. Savitz.

FROM: Rabbi Simons.

DATE: 15th November 1976.

Proposed arrangements for trip to London re
Roman excavations in January 1977.

BREAKFAST

On previous day, food packages to be prepared in school, containing
buttered rolls, tomatoes, cheese, etc.

DINNER

At the JFS Comprehensive School (which is quite near Euston Station),
JFS and their kitchen staff have agreed. Official permission must
still be obtained from the school meals service and JFS will ask
for such permission.

SERVICES

It is hoped that the organisers will make suitable arrangements
regarding davening and if a Synagogue is near the hotel, attendance
by the boys for Shacharit will be arranged.

Please let me have any comments on the above.

DOCUMENT NUMBER 2

C. G. BEEBE, B.A. (HONS.)
HEADMASTER

TELEPHONE: 051-722 7498



THE KING DAVID HIGH SCHOOL
CHILDWALL ROAD
LIVERPOOL
L15 6UZ

31st January 1977.

Mr. A.M. Savitz.
Organiser,
Pompeii Trip.

Dear Mr. Savitz,

From our conversation this morning, I was upset to learn that no arrangements were being made by the organisers of the Pompeii trip to London, for davening during this trip. I feel I ought to put in writing my view on this subject, which I informed you in our conversation.

In my view, when a Jewish School arranges a trip and the pupils are under the jurisdiction of the school throughout the period of a particular service (in this case Shacharit and Minchah), then the organisers should make the necessary arrangements for davening.

It is too dark to daven Shacharit before setting out on this trip.

Yours sincerely,

C. Simons
(Rabbi Dr.) C. Simons
Director of Jewish Studies.

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Organiser,
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DOCUMENT NUMBER 3

NOTE FROM HEADMASTER REGARDING PROPOSED LUBAVITCH TRIP

RS

22 ix 76

re RAC minute 5

I trust that these trips are
intended for Wed or Thu,
not Mon or Tue.

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KING DAVID HIGH SCHOOL

MEMORANDUM TO COMMITTEE OF ENQUIRY FROM JEWISH STUDIES STAFF

February 1977.

Following the letter from Mr. Frank Gaier dated 14th February 1977 requesting the Jewish Studies Staff to submit information and ideas to the Committee of Enquiry, the Jewish Studies Staff have met together and prepared this memorandum.

1. Parental attitude to Jewish Studies

Several times each year, there are parents' consultation evenings. Whereas queues are waiting to see the secular staff, the J.S. tables are virtually empty. Before each such evening, parents receive a form in which they can ask for appointments to see the various subject teachers. An analysis of such appointments for the last parents' evening was made.

Requests for consultations by parents of 2nd Yr. Pupils.
14. 2.77

Maths 65%
English 64%
French 46%
Latin 34%
Geography 20%
Science 17%
History 16%
Modern Hebrew 5%
Art 1%

Jewish Studies 0%

As can be seen in the entire year, not even one parent asked for an appointment to see a member of the J.S. staff. Sadly, the same pattern occurs for every Parents' Consultation Evening. If parents take no interest in their children's religious instruction, how can we expect the pupils to do so?

2. Lack of Jewish atmosphere

The Jewish Studies Staff are deeply concerned by the lack of Jewish atmosphere in the School. Some examples are touched upon in various parts of this memorandum.

When the pupils are in school for a minor Festival (Chanukah, Purim, Chol Hamoed) the administration should ensure that the entire school are able to have time devoted in the timetable to the observance and celebration of the Festival. It should certainly not be necessary for the Jewish Studies Staff to have to fight for time for these activities. If these days are going to be subject to normal school timetable, then the teaching in class of the observance of these Festivals is going to be largely nullified.

3. Pupils entering High School.

Pupils entering the High School are often unable to even read Hebrew properly and lack the most basic Jewish knowledge (e.g. Berachot, Festivals). They are also ill-equipped to deal with texts from Siddur or Chumash. Enclosed are analyses regarding basic Jewish knowledge of pupils entering the High School in 1975 and 1976. We are pleased to note that there is a slight improvement in the 1976 intake, although the basic knowledge is still weak. On the other hand, however, the religious home background of the 1976 entry was far higher than the 1975 entry. It is often difficult to distinguish King David Primary School pupils from those who have come into the school from elsewhere.

The attitude of most pupils who enter the school is not positive towards Jewish Studies and this is certainly tied up with the fact that they have not mastered basic skills by the age of about 11½. This in turn will result in lessons seeming boring.

A building needs to be built on strong foundations. If the foundations are weak, the building will crumble.

4. Periods outside timetable

Ironically, the only subjects with periods outside the official school day are Jewish Studies and Modern Hebrew and for the 4th and 5th years, the majority of these periods are outside the timetable! The absurdity of this situation was brought home in a number of memoranda written by Rabbi Simons in the Spring of 1974 but the Headmaster expressed his opposition to integration in an open letter to Rabbi Simons in April 1974. That Summer, a compromise was arranged by (the late) Levi Gertner in which two of the five periods outside the timetable would be brought in for the 4th and 5th years. Nearly three years have passed but this has not been implemented despite a written commitment from the Chairman of Governors, (letter enclosed). The Governors in both 1974 and 1975 (letter to Chairman of Staff Association from Chairman of Governors 19.6.75) stated that a working party of staff would be set up to actively continue the search for a solution. In 1974, the Governors changed their minds and the working party never materialised (see J.S. sub-committee minutes 2.12.74) and in 1975 it met once for 1½ hours and the matter was then conveniently forgotten about. After it had been decided that it was more important for games and P.E. to be inside the timetable rather than Jewish Studies, an undertaking was given nearly two years ago that the non-integration of Jewish subjects would only continue for a further one term (or possibly one year). (See notes on Staff meeting 12.6.75).

Regrettably, every commitment, undertaking and understanding in this matter that has been made has also been broken.

Cause of this problem:

This problem arises due to the fact that the pupils are studying more examination subjects in the 4th and 5th Years - a total of 10 plus P.E. - than any other school. As a result of this, Jewish Studies and Modern Hebrew periods are delegated outside the timetable. A table of the other Jewish High Schools in the country showing the number of periods for Jewish subjects in the timetable and the numbers of examination subjects studied is enclosed.

Is the studying of all these examination subjects educationally advantageous and does it enable the school to obtain better examination results? The secular staff have respectively stated that the pupils are studying too many subjects (e.g. see Staff Report 9.10.75) "a ten-subject course is too demanding for almost all of our pupils. Not only do few pass all subjects (only four of last year's 5th form gained 10 O-levels) but many do not complete the course". This is supported by an analysis of the examination results for the last 4 years (analyses enclosed) which clearly shows that virtually all the pupils cannot cope with 10 subjects.

Effects of this problem:

Having Jewish Studies outside the timetable causes numerous problems regarding lateness and absenteeism. Although lists of defaulters are handed into the administration nothing seems to be done about it. If a teacher is ill, it is not possible to find a substitute. Furthermore, psychologically, pupils consider this subject inferior because it is the only subject pushed outside the timetable and the prestige of Jewish Studies is also reduced.

As a result of holding 4th and 5th year periods at the time when one should legally be holding a religious service, the 4th and 5th years have no opportunity whatsoever for davening, tehillin and hearing the Torah read. The progressive earlier commencement of this lesson has caused it to overlap the Beth David Shacharit service and has caused its consequent disintegration.

Solution to this problem:

The removal of one subject from the curricula of the 4th and 5th years resulting in the studying of 9 examination subjects plus P.E. would be beneficial from the secular side. (The secular staff have recommended this). It would also solve this problem regarding Jewish subjects which by its very existence denigrates Religious Instruction in the Upper School.

5. Sixth-Forms.

After considerable effort by the Jewish Studies Staff, we have succeeded in getting one period per week of Jewish Studies for the Sixth Forms written into the timetable. However, every year it happens that some pupils are also put down to be in a secular lesson at the same time as the Jewish Studies lesson. The secular lesson is given precedence over Jewish Studies, despite the fact that a secular subject has nine periods in the Sixth form, whereas Jewish Studies has only one. This means that some pupils are not even timetabled for one Jewish Study lesson. It is hard enough to get Sixth Forms to attend Jewish Study lessons. This task is made much more harder when they see that any secular period will over-ride Jewish Studies.

In other schools, such as J.F.S. or Carmel College, with a like range of religious outlooks of pupils, there are no less than three Jewish Studies periods on the timetable for the Sixth form and no secular subject is allowed to over-ride any of them.