

Responding to diversity? An initial investigation into multicultural education in Jewish schools in the United Kingdom

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The **Institute for Jewish Policy Research** (JPR) is an independent think-tank that informs and influences policy, opinion and decision-making on social, political and cultural issues affecting Jewish life.

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Foreword

In many ways Jewish day school education is enjoying a golden age. Since the 1950s, the number of children at Jewish day schools in the United Kingdom has increased by 500 per cent, with more than half of all Jewish children of primary age (5–11) now attending such schools. In 1999, some 22,640 children went to a UK Jewish nursery, primary or secondary school. In examination results, the picture is similarly positive. Pupils in Jewish secondary schools tend to achieve GCSE and A-level examination results that are considerably higher than the national average. Government inspectors also consistently praise the standards of teaching and the attitudes of staff and pupils in state-sector Jewish day schools.¹ For communal leaders and the sponsors and supporters of Jewish day schools, this is a tremendous success story.

Despite the many positive aspects of Jewish day school education, however, there are also several challenges to be faced. Government inspectors have raised concerns about the teaching of secular subjects and the suitability of accommodation in some strictly Orthodox schools. Among the rest of the Jewish day school system, it is proving hard to recruit and retain well-qualified Judaic subject teachers, with Jewish studies and modern and biblical Hebrew often regarded as the 'weakest links' in terms of academic performance. There are also problems in providing adequate services for children with special educational needs, particularly those with moderate learning difficulties. Finally, there are major demographic fears about the sustainability of the current network of Jewish day schools. Outside the strictly Orthodox community (which has much higher birth rates than the rest of British Jewry), there has been a decline in family size. Indeed, projections by the Board of Deputies of British Jews suggest that by 2015 in Greater London there will be an equal number of (non-strictly Orthodox) Jewish children and actual places for them in Jewish day schools. In other words, these London Jewish schools will remain full with Jewish pupils only if every single (non-strictly Orthodox) Jewish child in the capital chooses to attend one of them.²

Beyond challenges that are particular to Jewish day schools, wider societal forces and government legislation also have an effect. In particular, there are ongoing political debates in the UK about the role of faith-based schools. Proponents argue that parents should be able to educate their children according to their wishes and that pupils in faith-based schools achieve examination results that are typically higher than the national average. Opponents argue that such schools are socially divisive, separating pupils according to their religion and creating a future population with little understanding of, or tolerance for, those with different beliefs or ways of life. Central to these debates are concerns about how schools deal with multiculturalism in the classroom, which in turn is linked to fundamental questions about the overall purpose of schools. Should they be concerned primarily with helping their pupils to achieve the best possible examination results? What role should they play in socializing children? Should schools be focusing more on creating citizens of their country? How much emphasis should there be on acculturating children into being members of particular religious, ethnic or cultural groups? The recent JPR report *The future of Jewish schooling in the United Kingdom* suggests that many British Jewish parents want their children to grow up within the Jewish faith. However, they are also concerned that their children should not be too isolated from the wider world and should grow up to understand, and be tolerant of, people with different religious views and ethnic backgrounds. To investigate these issues further, JPR commissioned Dr Geoffrey Short to carry out this groundbreaking investigation into the teaching of multiculturalism in Jewish schools.

His report provides, for the first time, an analysis by a particular faith or ethnic community into the teaching of multiculturalism in its day schools. It sets out to study the approach of senior management and governors in regard to multicultural education, how this is treated in school prospectuses, and its impact upon, and the views of, children attending Jewish day schools. The report—which represents an initial investigation

1 Oliver Valins, Barry Kosmin and Jacqueline Goldberg, *The Future of Jewish Schooling in the United Kingdom: A Strategic Assessment of a Faith-based Provision of Primary and Secondary School Education* (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research 2001).

2 Rona Hart, Marlena Schmol and Frances Cohen, *Jewish Education at the Crossroads* (London: Board of Deputies of British Jews 2001).

into the issues, rather than a comprehensive survey of all (eighty-three) Jewish day schools—reveals great diversity. Some schools are treating multiculturalism with seriousness and provide models of good practice, while others consider it to be low down on their list of priorities. The report reveals the pressure that state schools are under because of the national curriculum and, following on from this, the unwillingness of some to undertake (as they see it) additional teaching requirements. This is especially relevant given the limited amount of dedicated time that many Jewish schools have for Judaic subjects (which can be as little as two hours a week). The report also reveals general misunderstandings about what the term 'multiculturalism' actually means and, therefore, how it should be taught in the classroom.

Issues surrounding the teaching of multiculturalism are common to schools across the UK and in this respect Jewish—and other faith-based—schools are no different from any others. Nevertheless, there is a strong Jewish tradition of teaching tolerance of other people. Jews are encouraged to give charity to non-Jews, to provide hospitality to strangers and to love their neighbours.³ Moreover, as a non-missionizing religion, Judaism theologically accepts the possibility that believers in other religions can achieve salvation and enter heaven. Indeed, there is a stronger tradition of Jews being tolerant of other ways of life and religions than there is of internal tolerance towards members of the Jewish community who are perceived to break religious or communal rules. *Tikkun olam* (literally 'repairing the world') is also another key Jewish concept that describes the responsibility Jews have to make the world a better place. Given these ideas, a key question for the Jewish community is how to prioritize the different aspects of education, especially given time limitations for state schools brought about by the all-encompassing nature of the national curriculum.

Another important aspect of the debate is the introduction by the current government of a citizenship curriculum. Citizenship education is part of the personal, social and health education and citizenship framework in primary schools and, from September 2002, will be a compulsory subject in secondary schools. Pupils will be expected to

learn about social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy, with the aim of helping them to become informed and responsible citizens who are aware of their duties and rights. This aspect of the curriculum will be assessed by OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) in their regular school inspection reports. The citizenship curriculum will provide an extra (legal) incentive for all schools and parents to reassess how they explain the practices, beliefs and identities of 'others'. The Jewish community already has available at least two teaching guides that may be particularly useful in this respect, *Let's Make a Difference* and *Valuing Diversity*.⁴ These publications have been designed to help (all) schools with the teaching of issues relating to racism, tolerance and diversity and may assist teachers in integrating these elements into their lessons.

Responding to diversity? concentrates on a sample of schools primarily with an all-Jewish intake. There are, however, several Jewish-sponsored schools outside London that take a significant proportion of their pupils from other (and no) faiths. The largest of these is the King David High School in Liverpool. It is interesting to note that these multi-faith Jewish schools have excellent academic reputations and are generally regarded as successful models of social and community integration. An investigation into the strengths and weaknesses of multicultural education and curriculum adaptation in these schools would be a useful addition to Dr Short's research.

Overall, this report provides an indication of some of the issues and challenges facing Jewish and non-Jewish schools in teaching about multiculturalism. It poses questions for both the Jewish community and wider society regarding effective teaching about people from different backgrounds and/or ways of life. It should be viewed as a first step in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the current provision and be the beginning of a wide-ranging communal debate on multiculturalism in schools.

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3 Shulhan Arukh Yoreh De'ah, in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 5, 341; Genesis 18:1–8; Leviticus 19:18.

4 Edie Friedman, Hazel Woolfson, Sheila Freedman and Shirley Mugraff, *Let's Make a Difference: Teaching Anti-racism in Primary Schools* (London: Jewish Council for Racial Equality 1999); Teresa Garlake, *Valuing Diversity: Towards Mutual Respect and Understanding* (Cambridge: Centre for Jewish-Christian Relations 2001).

1 Introduction: multicultural education in multicultural Britain

As a result of large-scale immigration from the Indian subcontinent, the West Indies and elsewhere, British society over the past half-century has become increasingly multiracial and multicultural. The process of change has not, however, been a smooth one. Tensions were present almost from the start and their persistence serves as a constant reminder that the immigration engendered a deep and lasting resentment among sections of the white population. In a bid to deal with the undercurrent of hostility and with related educational issues, schools from the mid-1970s have been exhorted to help the younger generation adapt to the new reality. Jewish schools in both the state (voluntary-aided) and independent sectors have shared in this responsibility. Indeed, the scope for their involvement has expanded as their number has more than doubled over the past two decades. There are currently eighty-three Jewish day schools (135 including nurseries) (Hart et al., 2001; Valins et al., 2001). They are manifestly popular with parents and many are oversubscribed (see, e.g., Symons, 2001), no doubt as a consequence, at least in part, of their academic prowess. Primary schools perform well in terms of Standard Assessment Task (SAT) scores and secondary schools are able to boast impressive public examination results. There is less certainty, however, over the way the schools approach their central aim of promoting Jewish continuity: that is, strengthening their pupils' attachment to Judaism and to the Jewish community (see, e.g., Webber, 2001). Specifically, it is not known whether the schools are able simultaneously to fulfil their *raison d'être* and to prepare their pupils adequately for life in a culturally diverse society. It is the need to shed light on the issue that has prompted this report.

In Britain, multiculturalism emerged as a major goal of educational policy-makers in the 1970s, following the failure of previous approaches to schooling in a multiracial society that were based initially on assimilation and subsequently on integration. Both approaches had been predicated on the need to compensate ethnic minority children for their supposed cultural impediments. The 1977 Green Paper *Education and Schools* heralded the change in official attitude when it argued that, since 'our society is a multicultural, multiracial one...the curriculum should reflect a

sympathetic understanding of different cultures and races' (Department of Education and Science [DES], 1977, 41). By 1981 multicultural education had clearly excited considerable interest, for in that year alone there were no fewer than four major publications on the subject. The most high-profile was the Rampton Report, which was based on the work of a committee set up as a result of widespread concern at the poor academic performance of Afro-Caribbean pupils (especially boys). However, the report recognized the value of multicultural education in *all* schools, irrespective of their ethnic composition. It contended that:

A 'good' education should enable a child to understand his [*sic*] own society, and to know enough about other societies to enhance that understanding. A 'good' education cannot be based on one society only, and in Britain, where ethnic minorities form a permanent and integral part of the population, we do not believe that education should seek to iron out the differences between cultures, nor attempt to draw everyone into the dominant culture. On the contrary, it will draw upon the experiences of the many cultures that make up our society and thus broaden the cultural horizons of every child. That is what we mean by 'multicultural' education. (DES, 1981, 27)

The Rampton Committee expanded upon this definition as follows:

The multicultural curriculum is one which is appropriate to the education of *all* pupils, whatever their background, by reference to a diversity of cultures. The variety of social and cultural groups should be evident in the visual images, stories and information disseminated within the school. However, this selection should not be made in such a way as to reinforce stereotyping of life-styles, occupations, status [or] human characteristics [of] one particular culture. (DES, 1981, 27; original emphasis)

A multicultural curriculum was also advocated as a means of countering the prejudice of white children. The influential Swann Report, accepting the Socratic view of knowledge as virtue, stated:

[T]he role of education in relation to prejudice is...to equip a pupil with knowledge and understanding in place of ignorance and to develop his or her ability to formulate views and attitudes and to assess and judge situations on the basis of this knowledge...[E]ducation should seek to counter any mistaken impressions or inaccurate, hearsay evidence which [a child] may have acquired within the family, peer group or, more broadly, from the local community or the media. (DES, 1985, 13)⁵

Faith schools

One of the more contentious issues in the evolution of pluralist approaches to education in Britain has concerned the role of the faith school. The topic was discussed at length in the Swann Report, under the rubric 'the separate schools debate', following demands from sections of the South Asian community, and especially from some Islamic organizations, for their own voluntary-aided schools. Among other things, they were seen as a means of combating 'the Christian-dominated religious education provided by existing mainstream schools' and as offering an 'opportunity to learn about the religious traditions of their own faith communities in a positive and accurate manner'. They were also perceived as a way of countering 'the lack of attention given to the varied history, literature and culture of the Asian

5 It should be noted that there is no universally agreed definition of multicultural education and no agreement either on whether it can be reconciled with the more radical anti-racist education. Carrington and Short (1989, 12) maintain that the goal of multiculturalism 'is to foster mutual understanding and tolerance by changing the perceptions and attitudes of individuals through a pluralist programme of curricular reform. The sympathetic portrayal of a range of cultures and lifestyles in the curriculum is seen as benefiting all pupils...In contrast, anti-racists are primarily concerned with differences in life chances rather than lifestyles and, in particular, [with] the structural basis of racism and racial inequality in schools and society at large. As well as calling for changes in the formal curriculum to include teaching about racism and racial discrimination as part of a wider programme of political education, anti-racists advocate a systematic appraisal of the hidden curriculum to redress racial inequalities in *inter alia* staffing, assessment and grouping procedures'. While some writers, such as Banks (1986) and Bullivant (1986), have attempted to incorporate aspects of anti-racism within their definition of multicultural education, others, such as Troyna (1987), insist that these two conceptions of educational reform are irreconcilable. Throughout this report, the term 'multicultural education' (or multiculturalism) refers to any school practice intended to help pupils relate positively to other ethnic groups. It may or may not involve teaching about racism.

community...and the lack of adequate support and encouragement for "mother tongue" languages'. And finally, it was argued that separate schools would insulate their pupils from racism. However, the Swann Report did not find the case for such schools compelling and maintained that the demand for them would be much diminished if its recommendations were to be adopted. More specifically, the report stated that:

we do not believe a situation in which groups of children are taught exclusively by teachers of the same ethnic group is desirable from the point of view of the children, the minority community or society as a whole...The establishment of 'separate' schools would fail to tackle many of the underlying concerns of the communities and might exacerbate the very feelings of rejection which they are seeking to overcome. (DES, 1985, 519)

In contrast to the Swann Report, it would appear that the present government has relatively few qualms about the role of the faith school in a multicultural society. Indeed, in the 2001 Green Paper *Schools: Building on Success* the government made its support for them unequivocal.⁶ It expressed a welcome for 'more schools provided by the churches and other major faith groups' and stated that 'for the first time Muslim, Sikh and Greek Orthodox schools have been brought inside the state system and are being funded on the same basis as...Church of England and Catholic schools have been for some time' (Department for Education and Employment [DfEE], 2001, 18). But despite this sea change in official thinking, the whole question of faith schools remains highly controversial, as evidenced by the wide-ranging responses to the Green Paper. One of the most frequently articulated criticisms has been that these schools are divisive. In the words of one well-known detractor:

No single type of school founded on religion, be it Church, Temple, Synagogue, Mosque or Voodoo tent, can contribute to the unification of society, even though it purports to instruct its members in toleration. Religions, being

6 The government tempered its enthusiasm in the subsequent White Paper *Schools Achieving Success*. It wanted 'faith schools that come into the maintained sector to add to the inclusiveness and diversity of the school system and to be ready to work with non-denominational schools and those of other faiths' (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2001, 45).

fundamentally irrational, are fundamentally intolerant of each other, and schools set up on the shoulders of religions inevitably propagate that intolerance into future generations. (Atkins, 2001, 7)

Another prominent critic, looking at the prospect of more faith schools against the background of events in Northern Ireland, considered them not only divisive but potentially 'lethal' (Dawkins, 2001). A broadly similar sentiment was expressed, albeit somewhat less intemperately, by the General Secretary of the National Secular Society, who insisted, 'Children of all races and creeds need to mix if we are ever to eradicate racism and religious prejudice' (cited in Kelly, 2001). Not surprisingly, when members of various faith communities were canvassed for their response to the Green Paper's proposals, they were generally sympathetic to the government's stance. For example, the Bishop of Oxford, Richard Harries, acknowledged that religion *can* be divisive but pointed out that 'sociologists reject the charge that religion in the modern world is the cause of conflict'. He added, 'What matters, from the point of view of divisiveness, is not whether a school is secular, Christian, Muslim or Jewish, but how what is taught is taught' (Harries, 2001). Abdullah Trevathen, head teacher of the Islamia Junior school in London, maintained that 'far from being divisive... a faith school can build a child's self-esteem and confidence, qualities that lead to tolerance' (cited in Kelly, 2001). And Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, based his support on research showing 'that successful schools are those that embody a clear ethos, something that is evident in virtually all faith schools' (cited in Kelly, 2001). Some clerics, however, were clearly made uncomfortable by the government's proposals

to expand the number of faith schools. Rabbi Jonathan Romain has been an outspoken critic and, in the aftermath of 'race' riots in the north of England, he argued, 'If Muslim, Christian, Jewish and other children do not mix—and nor do their families—they become ignorant of each other, then suspicious, fearful and hostile' (Romain, 2001, 18).

One of the problems with this long-standing debate about the impact of faith schools on social cohesion is that the claims and counter-claims are underpinned by comparatively little empirical research. There is certainly a dearth of hard data on the policies and practices of such schools *vis-à-vis* multiculturalism. In fact, no major British study has been conducted since the 1980s, when researchers found voluntary-aided schools less willing than county schools to embrace a local education authority's policy on multiculturalism (Ball and Troyna, 1987). This finding was consistent with a contemporaneous survey of fifty Catholic schools in different parts of England and Wales that showed most head teachers considered multicultural education to be relevant only to black students (Working Party on Catholic Education in a Multiracial/Multicultural Society, 1984). Both studies are now rather dated. Moreover, they fail to shed light on how pupils attending faith schools construe their needs in relation to a multicultural society, or on how well they believe their schools have met these needs. With specific reference to Jewish schools and their pupils, this report is intended as a response to these lacunae. The empirical core of the report has a number of strands. Between them they look at how senior management and governors perceive the role of multicultural education in Jewish schools, the way such education is treated in school prospectuses, and the nature of multicultural practice in individual schools and its impact on pupils.

2 Teaching for a multicultural society: the views of senior management

Methodology

The process of negotiating access began with a letter sent to the head teachers of seven secondary and twenty primary schools, outlining the background to the research and explaining its purpose. Six of the secondary schools were central Orthodox;⁷ the other was strictly Orthodox (Hasidic).⁸ Among the primaries, three were Progressive,⁹ fourteen central Orthodox and three strictly Orthodox. An interview lasting between thirty and forty minutes was requested with the head if possible, or with another member of the senior management team if not, and it was made clear that both personal and institutional anonymity would be guaranteed. The head teachers from two secondary schools (one central Orthodox and one strictly Orthodox) did not wish to participate in the research or allow any member of their staff to participate. The heads of five primaries (two strictly Orthodox and three central Orthodox) responded in the same way. Their reasons for opting out were not probed and remain unknown. The sample therefore comprised fifteen primary and five secondary schools.¹⁰ Nursery schools were excluded from the sampling frame solely because of

time constraints. Jewish schools with a substantial proportion of non-Jewish pupils were also excluded, partly for reasons of time, but also because their ethnic composition was deemed sufficiently different from that of the selected schools.¹¹ The sample was not a random one; nor was it representative of Jewish schools in Britain when the research was conducted, for it included only one from the strictly Orthodox sector.¹² However, the sample did reflect the situation on the ground in the following respects: most of the schools in the survey were in London;¹³ they covered all shades of religious opinion within British Jewry; and they included voluntary-aided and independent schools at both primary and secondary levels. Some schools, primary as well as secondary, employed teachers from ethnic minority backgrounds and all of them had a policy of appointing non-Jewish staff when they were considered the most suitable (cf. DES, 1985). Indeed, the heads of two central Orthodox primary schools in the survey were not Jewish and nor were the majority of the secular staff in some of the secondary schools. In fact, just two schools (the strictly Orthodox primary and one of the central Orthodox primaries) had an all-Jewish teaching staff at the time of the research, although each had had a mixed complement in the recent past.

For reasons of consistency, it was originally intended that all interviews would be conducted with head teachers. However, in some cases this was not possible. In five schools (two primaries and three secondaries) interviews were held with directors of Jewish studies, in a further two primary schools with a deputy head and in one school with

7 In these schools 'children are taught according to a traditional Orthodox ethos which varies according to the values and backgrounds of pupils' families. Most schools insist on *halachic* [according to Jewish law] entrance criteria and others require a demonstration of Orthodox religious practice. Schools may be mixed or single-sex and most are in the state sector. Male pupils are usually expected to wear *kippot* [head coverings] and *tzitsit* ['fringes', religious vest worn under the shirt]. Zionism and a "love of Israel" are key aspects in many of these schools' (Valins et al., 2001, 47).

8 'The majority of these schools are private, fee-paying institutions, taking in pupils who are *halachically* Jewish and who are fully Sabbath-observant. The particular Hasidic or other affiliation of the sponsoring community typically determines the schools' religious and practical ethos. Hence, there are a large number of schools representing particular Hasidic groupings. All have the development of a Torah-inspired way of life as their number-one priority. Zionism is not generally an aspect in these schools' (ibid.).

9 'The ethos of these schools is in accord with the principles of the Reform, Liberal and Masorti sections of the Jewish community. Entrance criteria are not based on *halachah*, but pupils' families are expected to demonstrate that their beliefs are in tune with the ethos of the school. Priority for places may be given to those from local Progressive synagogues. Jewish practices, such as the wearing of *kippot*, are generally encouraged but are not obligatory. Zionism and a "love of Israel" are central to the ethos of these schools' (ibid.).

10 The five secondary schools were all central Orthodox; the primaries comprised three Progressive, eleven central Orthodox and one strictly Orthodox.

11 Every school in the sample apart from one had an exclusively Jewish intake, though not in all cases according to Orthodox (*halachic*) criteria. The exception was one of the Progressive schools, where 5 per cent of those on roll were not Jewish.

12 According to Valins et al. (ibid., 5), approximately half the Jewish schools in Britain are strictly Orthodox. Nevertheless, it was decided that the sector ought to be represented in the survey in order to reflect the range of responses to multicultural education found within Jewish schools.

13 Two of the schools (one secondary and one primary) were in Manchester and one (a primary school) was in Leeds.

the head of early years.¹⁴ The interviews were semi-structured and contained ten core questions. These fell into three categories: (1) the importance schools attach to preparing their pupils for a multicultural society; (2) the nature and extent of their multicultural practice; and (3) possible ways of measuring the success of their practice. The questions were as follows:

1 *The importance schools attach to preparing their pupils for a multicultural society*

On a 5-point scale, with 5 as most important and 1 as not at all important, how important is it that this school prepares its pupils for relating to other ethnic groups?

Would it bother you if your pupils were to live their entire lives in a Jewish 'cocoon'?

As a staff, do you ever discuss ways of helping pupils relate to other ethnic groups?

How much importance would you say Jewish parents attach to this school preparing its pupils for life in a multicultural society?¹⁵

2 *The nature and extent of their multicultural practice*

What, if anything, do you *do* in this school to prepare your pupils for life in a multicultural society?

Have you had problems (of any kind) in promoting relations with other ethnic groups?

Do you have any dealings with JCORE? [The acronym, standing for the Jewish Council for Racial Equality, was explained if necessary.]

Have you read any of their material?

What do you think of it?

3 *Possible ways of measuring the success of their practice*

As far as preparing your pupils for life in a multicultural society is concerned, how would you measure success?

14 I wish to record my thanks to Ruth-Anne Lenga of the Institute of Education in London, who carried out some of the interviews for this study.

15 Although this question does not relate *directly* to the school's attitude towards multiculturalism, it relates indirectly in the sense that the school is more likely to take multiculturalism seriously if it feels under pressure to do so from the parent body.

The schedule was piloted on two head teachers, one primary and the other secondary. As no modifications were considered necessary, their responses have been included in the analysis below. The interviews took place between September 2000 and May 2001 and, as with all the interviews in this study, they were tape-recorded and later transcribed.

Analysis of interview protocols Attitudes towards multicultural education

All but one of the twenty interviewees felt able to rate on a 5-point scale the importance their school attached to enabling its pupils to relate to other ethnic groups. The average ratings are shown in the table below (the higher the score, the greater the stated commitment).

Average rating of attitudes towards multicultural education	
Primary schools	
central and strictly Orthodox	3.6
Progressive	4.7
Secondary schools	
central Orthodox	3.6

Ten of the nineteen interviewees (including the head of the strictly Orthodox primary) responded to the question with a rating of 4 or above. As will become apparent, however, they did not all think it necessary to teach about a range of cultures in order to help their pupils relate to other ethnic groups. Conversely, those who responded with a low rating frequently recognized the importance of their pupils adjusting to an ethnically diverse society, but felt constrained by lack of time to marginalize the teaching of non-Jewish traditions. This latter view is reflected in the following comments.

Such time as [the Jewish studies staff] have they wish to use to draw children into Judaism as opposed to spending some of it teaching them about other religions. The objection [to multiculturalism] is not one of principle; quite the opposite. Because we are an outreach school we see our primary purpose as being to bring them into the fold of Judaism and securing their commitment to Judaism within the time we have. (secondary school, head teacher)

We have a quarter of the day devoted to Hebrew studies and, in addition, we have to fit in the entire national curriculum or the foundation stage and it's a very tight fit. We are concerned about multicultural education. It's definitely on the map, but it's not a major priority because it's felt that by the time the children leave here they need to have a thorough understanding and grounding in their own religion. (primary school, deputy head teacher)

There were just two respondents who did not see their schools (both central Orthodox primaries) as having a responsibility to teach about the multicultural nature of society. The head of one of them said:

We have a tiny fraction who go to non-Jewish schools and I would therefore say it's really the job of the high school to prepare them [for a multicultural society]. I don't think they will be facing the challenges of multiculturalism until a much later stage and therefore our job is to prepare them for transition to the high school.

The other respondent, a director of Jewish studies, wanted to answer the question 'with the lowest possible rating if it means teaching about other groups'. He continued:

It's our job to give the children maximum grounding in Judaism. One of our biggest problems is that we have children who have next to no observance outside the school and I see it as my job to inculcate as much love and knowledge about Judaism as possible.

The majority view, that education for a multicultural society ought to be a priority for Jewish schools, was justified on a variety of grounds. For example:

Our local area is multiracial and multiethnic. I think the world is getting smaller, so that the children who are going to be citizens must be at ease meeting and interrelating with people, and I think that a wariness of others gets in the way of that. I'm very aware that racism is endemic and I think that we have to counteract it with very clear positive action. Children are not naturally anti-racist. (primary school, head teacher)

We do not want to bring up the next generation to be xenophobic or racist. In this part of

London there are many different ethnic groups with whom the children will have to mix and I want [them] to be happy having neighbours of any colour or creed when they settle down. It helps them have a richer life as citizens if they are able to appreciate and celebrate the diversity which makes up Britain in the twenty-first century. I want them to be happy, fulfilled citizens, so the more they know about other people the better. (primary school, head teacher)

A couple of primary head teachers expressed their support for multicultural education more succinctly. One thought it important that Jewish schools help their pupils to get on with other ethnic groups because 'familiarity reduces the threat of prejudice'. The other was keen 'because we live in a multicultural society and the Jewish world can be very insular. Most of our children go on to independent schools where they will come into contact with all sorts of people.'

Schools were also seen to differ in their willingness to embrace a multicultural society when respondents contemplated the prospect of pupils spending their entire lives in a Jewish 'cocoon'. The majority, including a number from central Orthodox schools, viewed the possibility with concern. A few explained why.

Because that is not what Judaism is about. Judaism is about sticking firm to your faith as a Jew, not about living a closed and insular life. (primary school, director of Jewish studies)

They would not really understand about the world if they lived in a Jewish cocoon. It's important that they're confident and bold about their own identity, but the only way they can be that is if they are mixing with other people. (primary school, deputy head teacher)

[Living in a Jewish cocoon] is not real life. I would expect the children to be knowledgeable in the Torah but also to be able to make a living in the non-Jewish world—*Torah im Derekh Eretz*. If they went and lived in a cocoon I would be concerned. (primary school, head teacher)

Half a dozen interviewees claimed not to be bothered by the possibility that their pupils might spend their lives associating only with other Jews. In itself, such a response is not evidence of a reluctance to prepare pupils for a culturally diverse

society, although it might in some cases be associated with a less than wholehearted commitment and in others with outright opposition. Predictably, the two respondents from primary schools who gave a low rating to the importance their schools place on teaching about other traditions were among those unconcerned at the prospect of their pupils living their lives entirely within the Jewish community.

The question of whether relating to other ethnic groups ever cropped up in staff meetings was intended to give an additional indication of the seriousness with which schools treat multicultural education. Although half the sample claimed that the issue had been discussed at staff meetings, it transpired that the phrase 'relating to other ethnic groups' was interpreted rather loosely. Some respondents who replied in the affirmative had in mind issues such as which non-Jewish charities to support, while others just broached the matter tangentially when planning lessons in accordance with the national curriculum and the national literacy strategy. Only three respondents (all head teachers of primary schools) appeared to have discussed the matter in ways suggesting a genuine commitment to understanding and accepting different cultures.

We have had a staff discussion about racist humour and the use of certain terminology in the staff room. (central Orthodox primary school, head teacher)

Yes, when we introduced last year a book about Africa we discussed it as a staff because the children don't see many black faces and [generally] don't know enough about other groups.

Other groups who live in England as well as elsewhere in the world?

Yes. (central Orthodox primary school, deputy head teacher)

[The only issue we have discussed is] how much multicultural RE versus how much Jewish RE. (Progressive primary school, head teacher)

Those who responded negatively to the question included a couple of head teachers whose comments in one instance betray an indifference and in the other a hostility to any suggestion that their schools should involve themselves in educating for a multicultural society.

The whole issue of relating to other ethnic groups is really quite peripheral to how we see our mission. (secondary school, head teacher)

Even staff who might want to do more [multicultural education] realize it's a taboo subject. It's not in the ethos of the school. (central Orthodox primary school, head teacher)

Other things being equal, schools are more likely to engage meaningfully with multiculturalism if they feel under pressure to do so from the parent body. For this reason, interviewees were probed about their perception of parental attitude towards multicultural education. In most schools, the parents were thought to be divided or apathetic. For instance, one primary head remarked that parents' attitudes 'will vary from 0 to 10 on a scale of 0 to 10', while the deputy head at another primary school said, 'I think they would like us to do more. I've heard a few parents mention it, but I don't think it's a big issue for them.' However, in four schools (all of which were primary, including three under central Orthodox auspices) the parents were assumed to be keen on multicultural education.

It's very important. When I interview the parents, a significant proportion ask about multicultural education and how the children learn to live in the wider society, so I felt it was a priority for them and therefore it would have a strong effect on me as a head in responding to their needs. (central Orthodox primary school, head teacher)

It is important to the parents. The majority of our parents know they live in a secular world. They want a Jewish ethos for their children. They want their children to be secure and knowledgeable about Judaism but they would also like the school to talk about other religions. (central Orthodox primary school, head teacher)

I think parents want their children to be able to mix in a multicultural society. The first time I did the Chinese New Year project, about three years ago, the feedback from parents was so positive and each time I've done it the parents have [asked if we are] going to do more, [if] we [are] going to do other religions [and] other cultures, because they really welcomed it. (central Orthodox primary school, head of early years)

Our parents place a very high status on it.
(Progressive primary school, head teacher)

In contrast, there were four schools (all central Orthodox) where the staff clearly had little incentive to pursue multicultural initiatives in the sense of having to respond to pressure from parents.

They attach great importance to secular success. What motivates 85 per cent of our parents is to get the best possible SAT results... Nothing has come to me from parents saying we'd like our kids prepared in a cultural or spiritual sense for a multicultural society. (primary school, director of Jewish studies)

On a scale of 1 to 5, probably 2. The [parents] are much more concerned with A-levels.
(secondary school, head teacher)

It is very rare when parents come here on a parents' day to be asked, 'How much do you teach about other cultures or religions?'
(secondary school, director of Jewish studies)

They don't want [their children] to mix too much. (primary school, head teacher)

In so far as parental views help to shape school policy, it has to be a matter of concern that the heads of two primaries (one central Orthodox and the other Progressive) claimed that some parents chose their school 'because of [the parents'] own racism'. As one of them put it, 'They want their children here because they see it as a white school.'

Multicultural practice in primary schools

In light of the above, the question asking what schools do to prepare their pupils for life in a multicultural society was bound to elicit a range of responses. On the one hand, it was evident that a number of primary schools, regardless of their level of Orthodoxy, were committed to both the curricular and the social dimensions of multiculturalism, recognizing the need to teach directly about other cultures and to create opportunities for their pupils to mix with children from different ethnic backgrounds. The deputy head of one central Orthodox primary spoke as follows:

In planning the curriculum, obviously there are some subjects that naturally lend themselves to studying other cultures in the past and the

present: for example, geography and history. In literature we have books about other cultures. We have books on multicultural maths and the way you can integrate maths and multicultural education. In art and in design and technology we look at other cultures in terms of the artwork that is produced in the school and in music we have songs from other cultures.

At what age do you start doing these things?

Probably in the nursery. For example, reading stories about people in other cultures.

... Would you invite non-Jewish schools to a mock seder?¹⁶

Not for a mock *seder*, but we have children in to our *sukkah*,¹⁷ and to see our Hanukkah presentations. We've had a school come in and do an African dance with drums and we visited their school for a musical event... Another thing is that some schools in Hampshire send along a group of teenagers who are doing GCSE in RE and they visit us to learn about how we teach Judaism, because Judaism is part of their curriculum. I talk to them about the school and its ethos. They meet the Year 6 children and ask them questions and the Year 6 children ask questions of our visiting pupils, and they spend a morning together discussing and comparing their beliefs.

Do the children meet non-Jews in other contexts?

Do you, for example, play football and netball against non-Jewish schools?

Yes.

Other examples of good multicultural practice (as defined in the Rampton and Swann Reports, e.g. DES, 1985, 318) were epitomized in the following comments.

We have introduced into the nursery different cultures. We often do it through Jewish studies. For example, at Purim we get them to understand that people lived in a different way. They also have dolls, pictures and books of people from different cultures. In the reception class we have a whole focus on literacy, where they learn about children from China and Africa. We also do some work with the community. For example, at Pesach we have a

¹⁶ The ritual meal eaten at the start of Pesach (Passover).

¹⁷ A *sukkah* is a temporary structure decorated with seasonal foliage, fruits and other vegetation erected during the festival of Sukkot. It is reminiscent of the desert dwellings of the ancient Israelites.

class coming from a Church of England school to share a demonstration *seder* with Year 2. We've also done some [in-service] work for teachers here, learning about Jewish people. We did capitalize on a Kenyan Asian supply teacher who came in. She was Muslim and we asked her to talk to the children about Ramadan. I'm currently talking to a non-Jewish school [close by] to observe our *sukkah*. We use our nursery nurse [who is not Jewish] to talk about Christmas. (central Orthodox primary school, head teacher)

The texts that we've chosen to buy for literacy are very multicultural. The stories we use for assemblies when we're making a religious point about family life or the way people relate to each other [are often] from other cultures in Britain or from across the world. [We don't pick] specifically Jewish examples all the time. We have signs round the school in other languages [i.e. as well as Hebrew and English]. Our RE scheme of work is based on the [local authority's] scheme with some adaptations, so the children learn about the six major religions...and that includes visits to places of worship. Topics across the curriculum, such as food from around the world, give very good opportunities. In geography Key Stage 2 [KS2],¹⁸ there's an 'Invaders and Settlers' topic and when the children study that they talk about migrations within their own family and migrations that have resulted in the multiethnic nature of Britain. There's a foreign location that has to be studied in KS2 for geography... We work with other local schools which have a wider ethnic mix than we do. We work with them on curriculum projects and staff training projects, so we're part of a network of [local] schools. We're part of the local football league [that's about to start next winter], so we're trying all the time to reach beyond the Jewish community and have our children, both in their lessons and in their actual meeting with people, mixing with a wide number of people... We're embarking on a three-school project with two [local] schools based on information and communications technology [ICT] and RE. It's going to be based on learning about festivals in the three schools and doing an ICT information

exchange. (Progressive primary school, head teacher)

We make sure that the books we have in our library are multicultural [e.g. stories about children from different lands]. In our nursery and reception classes, the toys are definitely multicultural [e.g. black and Chinese dolls]. Chinese New Year was last week and the children were told about that in certain classes. There just isn't enough curriculum time to talk about other cultures as much as we would like to. We try to introduce it as much as we can. (central Orthodox primary school, head teacher)

The recently appointed head of a central Orthodox primary was planning to change radically the school's approach to educating for a multicultural society.

We don't do half as much as I'd like. It's a topic that has not been on the agenda in the past. I am certainly pleased about the citizenship programme, as it allows me to bring in a very clear programme of study, introducing world faiths and a comparison of lifestyles. We have a member of staff who's taking charge of citizenship and one who's taking charge of equal opportunities, so they're looking at imagery around the school and the way people are portrayed... We're looking at the relationship between this school and others. In the past, this school didn't necessarily relate to other schools [in the borough], so the experience of some pupils of meeting children who were not Jewish [was non-existent]. So providing opportunities for the children to meet children from a wider social group is one thing that we've taken on very rapidly. We've taken part in sporting activities. We've also invited other schools to visit for a demonstration *seder*. We went on a schools council day and that was working with other schools in the locality, and we're setting up a conference where we can get some of our pupils working with other pupils on setting up a school council. One of the weaknesses of this school is that people do not react positively to people coming in from outside the community. That's part of the attitude we're looking to break down. The presentation of people who are not Jewish has occurred through changes in staffing. So we have a Ghanaian member of staff and some non-Jewish South Africans. We've also had New Zealand Maori support staff.

18 Key Stage 2 is the National Curriculum for years 3–6 (ages 7–11).

In contrast to the above exemplars, a few central Orthodox primary schools were not especially keen to engage in multicultural education. Their minimalist approach was typified by a couple of head teachers.

We are aware of other cultures, but we do not teach multiculturalism or comparative religion as part of the curriculum. However, if it comes up in literature, for example, we will explain certain relevant parts of other faiths and we talk about life in the world. So we don't give them a formal spot in the curriculum, but we do allow issues to come up.

To the extent that the national curriculum is multicultural, you teach a multicultural curriculum.

Yes.

Do you teach non-western music, art and literature?

A little bit, yes.

And what about sport? Do you play against non-Jewish schools?

We have a football team that plays against other Jewish schools. We do play chess against non-Jewish schools and we take part in [the local authority's] annual athletic events against other schools... I am happy to teach children that there are people who lead different lives, but I wouldn't encourage mixing.

To be honest, we don't do that much. If the opportunity arises in personal, social and health education [PSHE], for example, it would come into that, but we wouldn't make a massive effort to do it. If we had the time, then I'd say yes, but it's important that the children have a good solid foundation in their Hebrew studies and are confident in their own religion, so that when they do go to non-Jewish schools they have that confidence to know what they're doing and why they're doing it.

Arguably, one of the more obvious educational response to a multicultural society is to teach about the major religions practised within that society and, as has been seen, Jewish primary schools do this in different ways and to varying degrees. The three Progressive schools in the survey offer the most in-depth and wide-ranging coverage, working systematically through a planned programme. In contrast, Orthodox schools, in so far as they engage at all with other faiths, tend to adopt a less structured approach, exploiting situations as and

when they arise. One school, for example, asks its Hindu caretaker to talk to the children about Diwali at the appropriate time of year, but the event is treated as 'a one-off' rather than as part of a religious studies curriculum. Significantly, not a single respondent, whether Orthodox or Progressive, made reference to their pupils visiting non-Jewish schools in order to observe a religious service or ritual, although some of them invited children from these schools to observe aspects of Judaism, such as a demonstration *seder* or a *sukkah*. In fact, only two respondents said they arrange religious visits of any kind, in both cases taking their pupils to different places of worship. One further point to note about the teaching of other faiths is that a couple of primary school head teachers would not countenance studying a faith that conflicted in any way with Judaism. In the words of one of them, the head of the only strictly Orthodox school in the survey:

We have just brought in [a new textbook] and there is a section on other religions. Every book that comes into the school has to be vetted by me—pictures that are immodest, for example, are torn out. But [the] section [on other religions] was not taken out, except bits and pieces that mention names of other gods. So if there is a section on Hinduism which mentions the name of another god, that section would be taken out.¹⁹

The head of a central Orthodox primary school said, 'We have just had a Japanese week and somebody came from the Japanese embassy and spoke, among other things, about the different religions currently practised in Japan.' Asked if she would do something similar in relation to the ethnic minorities in Britain, she replied, 'We would in principle, but I think there might be some religious groups that we would not particularly welcome into the school, because their religion is so contrary to ours.' Invited to give an example, she mentioned Hinduism.

Multicultural education in secondary schools
Secondary schools, in common with their primary counterparts, were found to differ in the way they

¹⁹ Note that Judaism has traditionally been more accepting of monotheistic than polytheistic religions: the second commandment states, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me', and it also forbids the making of graven images (Deuteronomy 5: 7–8).

prepared their students for life in a multicultural society. There were divergent attitudes, for instance, to teaching about other faiths. In a couple of schools such an expression of pluralism was either explicitly rejected or given a low priority. In the latter case, the director of Jewish studies said:

Many students often ask me why we don't learn more about other religions. The answer I usually give is that the place of the faith school is to prepare students to be happy and understanding of themselves, and when you're clear about who you are, you can relate well to everybody else.

In contrast, the director of Jewish studies at a third school maintained:

A lot of effort is made to teach about the various beliefs of different religions, [such as] different sects in Christianity and Islam. We do that in GCSE, although it's not part of the syllabus... In A-level we have a 'Judaism and Ethics' paper [which] demands that [pupils] understand the ethical approaches of people in wider society, both secular and religious.

This school's relatively positive approach to multiculturalism was reflected in other ways too.

Departments make a concerted effort to bring in the cultures they find around them. For example, in music they learn about Indian music and Afro-Caribbean music, and the same kinds of thing in art. In history, studying the Tudor period, they will learn about Christian beliefs and the layout of churches.

In addition, Year 9 pupils visit Israel, where they 'meet with minority groups. [They] deliberately go to a Muslim village and meet Druze and Beduin. Also, the bus drivers are always Arabs. They build up a strong relationship with the drivers which helps to get over negative stereotypes.'²⁰ As far as relating to ethnic groups in Britain is concerned, older students at the school are encouraged to attend conferences of various kinds, where they meet students from different backgrounds. The school also plays football and netball matches against non-Jewish opposition. However, the director of Jewish studies felt that more could be

done 'in terms of bringing people from the non-Jewish community into the school'. Recalling that a London primary school had recently invited a group of non-Jewish students to learn about Hanukkah, he said, 'That sort of thing would be very interesting and we haven't really done any of that. We haven't invited people from non-Jewish schools to come and see a *Sefer Torah*,²¹ for example, or the *mezuzot* on all the doors.'²²

The other secondary schools were far less concerned to engage in multicultural education. Indeed, in one school the director of Jewish studies seemed unclear as to what it entailed. Having stated that multiculturalism formed part of the PSHE programme, he was asked to illustrate the approach taken. He replied that 'a representative of the local police would talk to us about "the street" and how to be helpful to people and community-focused and how to be vigilant where there could be clashes'. Apart from following the national curriculum and involving itself in local non-denominational sporting competitions, the school appeared to do relatively little to promote either an understanding of, or a sympathy for, cultural pluralism. Pupils studied Islam and Christianity, but only as historical phenomena, focusing specifically on their origins. Moreover, this restricted coverage had to be taught without any outside assistance. As the director of Jewish studies put it, 'We have our own experts in world religions, and the philosophy of the school is to expose the students to other philosophies and other religions not from an external source but from an internal source.'

Another secondary school would not countenance the prospect of inviting non-Jewish students to observe a demonstration *seder*. Indeed, the head reacted to the suggestion with dismay.

No, no, no. Our main concern is that *we* have one so that *our own* children who have never experienced one have one. That's our focus all the time. Give to our own, because there are so many among our own who we may lose to Judaism.

Multiculturalism, however, was not altogether absent from the school. In relation to the curriculum, the

²⁰ Research suggests that contact does not necessarily result in prejudice reduction. The outcome of any meeting of ethnic groups depends on the conditions under which the meeting takes place (see, e.g., Amir, 1969; Cook, 1978).

²¹ A handwritten scroll containing the five books of Moses.
²² Pieces of parchment inscribed with scriptural passages and fixed to the doorposts of Jewish buildings.

head stated, 'Where there is the possibility of choice, teachers actively seek to expose our children to different cultures. For example, the art department every year chooses a theme related to another culture.'

In common with other secondary schools in the survey, this school also maintained a number of links with the wider community, participating in events such as the borough's music festival and its athletics competitions.

Issues relating to education for a multicultural society

Questioning the necessity

As has already been pointed out, not all respondents who claimed that their schools took seriously the need to prepare pupils for a multicultural society interpreted this need in terms of teaching about different cultures. A few maintained that insisting upon respect for these cultures, combined with an emphasis on politeness and consideration, was sufficient.²³ This way of thinking was clearly articulated by the head of the strictly Orthodox school where non-Jewish traditions barely feature in the curriculum. He said, 'Something that we're constantly harping upon in assemblies is the way the children should act with their family, their friends and people on the street, especially in this area, which is extremely multiethnic.' When asked what the school actually did to prepare its pupils for a multicultural society, he replied, 'It's basically just speaking about it. We went through a curriculum last year concerned with how to act towards others. We start talking in this way to kindergarten children.' He added:

There's a difference between preparing children for life in a multicultural society and promoting relations with other groups. We definitely want to prepare them for life in a multicultural society—we want them to be tolerant and respectful of other people, other religions and other societies—but we don't want to integrate our children into the multicultural society. We definitely don't want to.

The tendency to define multicultural education in terms of respect rather than knowledge was also

23 Ball and Troyna similarly observed 'teachers who felt that the promotion of tolerance and understanding for all cultures was best tackled through the established...Christian ethos of the school and not by the introduction of multicultural education' (1987, 21).

found among a few other respondents. One secondary school head said that, while he does not 'believe in the need to teach about other religions...the pupils are brought up to treat everybody with great respect'. The following comments, expressing the same idea, were articulated by primary school respondents.

They do learn a little about other cultures but the most important thing they learn is to respect other people irrespective of their culture.

It's important that a child who takes on the role of a religious Jew is seen to be respectful to others. You cannot be a religious Jew and not be respectful to other people and other faiths. That doesn't mean that they've got to delve deeply into other religions...but at the same time we want to teach them respect.

A further 'justification' for not teaching in depth about other cultures was put forward by the director of Jewish studies at a secondary school. His contention was that if students feel positively about their own cultural traditions, they will automatically be able to relate well to other ethnic groups.

The philosophy of the school is that the more the students feel comfortable with their own religious identity, the less inhibited they are to relate to other groups. In other words, we don't purport to say you prepare people for relating to other groups by minimizing their own identity and maximizing a group identity and knowledge of a whole lot of other groups as well. We do believe in being able to identify with other groups and most of our graduates go on into the professions, where they have a tremendous amount of interaction with other ethnic groups, and they're able to do it because of their own security and their own identity.

Obstacles to intergroup contact

The 'contact hypothesis' (see, e.g. Amir, 1969) suggests that if Jewish schools are to prepare their pupils effectively for relating to other ethnic groups, and especially if they are to help them deconstruct unflattering stereotypes of those groups, they ought to provide opportunities for their pupils to mix with their non-Jewish counterparts.²⁴ As some

24 As previously pointed out, the contact must fulfil a number of conditions. See, e.g., note 21.

Jewish schools are keen to forge such contacts, it is regrettable that more than half the schools canvassed (eleven out of twenty) referred to obstacles of a religious or secular nature that made such mixing difficult. The one mentioned most often was that activities sponsored by the local authority were sometimes scheduled for a Saturday. The comments below were voiced by two primary heads.

We participate in anything we can so long as they're not on a Saturday—which they often are.

We have a major problem at the moment with the football league because we can't play on a Saturday. [The borough has] made the position quite difficult and we have instructed a solicitor to help us claim our human rights to practise our religion.

Another religious obstacle mentioned on a couple of occasions concerned activities that involved participation in the same team of boys and girls. The head of a primary school recalled 'a principle...established a few years ago that would not [allow] mixed teams', while the director of Jewish studies at a secondary school likewise insisted that they could not 'patronize a local authority activity which is naturally mixed'.

Difficulties of a secular nature took two forms. First, as one acting head of a primary school put it, 'Our initiatives are not always reciprocated. We have exchanges—a Catholic school comes here on Hanukkah—but I find it a little one-sided. I am pushing it rather than them wanting to come here.' There were similar comments from the heads of two other primaries. One was eager to establish links with a nearby (independent) Islamic school, but her approaches had been rebuffed. The other said:

I was surprised that when we had an exhibition here of Jewish life we had schools coming from lots of faraway places, but no interest from local schools. I was surprised at their lack of awareness of the need for seeing [the exhibition], considering the racist and antisemitic views of people in [the area].

The second problem, encountered mainly at secondary level, was antisemitism. One head teacher illustrated the sort of incident likely to discourage Jewish schools from developing closer ties with their non-Jewish counterparts.

When playing chess against other schools, boys have lifted up desk lids and found swastikas and 'I hate Jews' scrawled on them, which is quite disturbing. You can walk through a playground and get comments on the way to a chess match.

A group of pupils elsewhere had experienced an antisemitic incident during a football match and at another secondary school they currently endure antisemitic 'incidents in the street'. The head of a primary school also reported her pupils 'suffering verbal and physical abuse on their way to and from school for being Jewish, which makes it very hard to teach [them] to be respectful to others'.

The Jewish Council for Racial Equality

The need for Jewish schools to provide their pupils with a curriculum that is multicultural (and anti-racist) has been recognized and enthusiastically championed by JCORE. Founded in 1976, the organization aims to 'encourage the Jewish community to play an active role in combating racism and promoting equality of opportunity' (Friedman et al., 1999, 1). It has been involved in 'producing anti-racist educational packs for primary and secondary schoolchildren' and a recent publication, *Let's Make a Difference: Teaching Anti-racism in Primary Schools*, is replete with suggestions for introducing 'children to multiculturalism before tackling stereotyping, scapegoating and racism' (ibid.). In a foreword to the pack, the current Chief Rabbi praised the work of JCORE over the past twenty years or so and claimed that it deserved 'widespread support'. However, there was little evidence of such support among the head teachers and other senior staff who participated in this study. The majority of them had never heard of the organization when it was referred to by its acronym and some had never heard of it by its full name. Moreover, when informed of its nature and purpose, the reaction in one or two cases was hostile. For example, when the head of a central Orthodox primary school was told of the JCORE publication referred to above, she declared:

We don't need that sort of material. It's part of our Judaism. I don't need them to tell me how to relate to non-Jews. We have clear laws of how we have to behave to non-Jews and what we're trying to do is teach our children from that angle—that every person in this world is created by God and deserves our respect, deserves that we treat them as well as we would treat any Jew.

Asked if he had ever read any JCORE publication, the head of a secondary school was almost as dismissive. 'I skim-read it,' he confessed, 'and bin it most of the time.' The director of Jewish studies at another secondary school was potentially hostile. Claiming no knowledge of JCORE, he stated:

If I did receive their material I would need to vet the ethos of the organization and if it involved Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jewry we would have to decline, because we do not get involved in any Jewish organizational structures together with Reform.²⁵

These negative comments reflect a minority view. A more common reaction was to suggest that JCORE's publications and activities had made little impression on school policy.

I have heard of it. My colleague who's deputy head in charge of Jewish studies may know about it.

If I have [read any of their material] it wouldn't have been in the last twenty years, since I was a student.

We get their literature but we don't really have any dealings with them.

We did have a meeting a few years ago, but we don't have any real involvement with them at all. *Have you read any of their material?*
No.

If people send me material I'll be happy to read it. I was given a list of things to check and know about when I took the job and that was not one of them.

It should be noted that even when schools had had dealings with JCORE and were generally sympathetic to its aims, they had not always made much progress in carrying out its recommendations. In one primary school the head recollected having been involved with JCORE in the past: '[The director] has been to speak to the staff, but we haven't implemented their curriculum yet.' The head of another primary that had been

open just a few years had found JCORE material 'very good and very useful'. However, she pointed out that 'it didn't apply to us last year, but when we enter into KS2 it will be very relevant' (in fact, *Let's Make a Difference* is aimed explicitly at KS1 as well as KS2).²⁶ All in all, there were only two schools (one central Orthodox primary and one Progressive) that had put into effect some of the suggestions in the JCORE teaching pack.

Measuring success

The final question posed to respondents asked how they would measure the success of their efforts to prepare pupils for life in a multicultural society, for they all claimed to be doing 'something', even if a few of them attached little importance to it. The least that schools might expect from their pupils is a show of respect for other cultures—especially other faiths—and a generally positive attitude towards a pluralist society. Only a handful of interviewees, however, thought it appropriate to evaluate their multicultural teaching in these terms. One of these was the head of a primary school for whom the pivotal assessment criterion is that her 'pupils display positive attitudes towards people they are unfamiliar with'. Of central importance to another primary head was 'that [the pupils] can deal with other people with respect, tolerance and in a non-judgemental way and that they are interested and aware of differences in society'. The director of Jewish studies at a secondary school similarly spoke about the importance of appreciating other cultures, while the head of another primary school, reflecting a more radical understanding of multicultural education, hoped that his pupils would grow up to 'challenge racism'.

Rather more interviewees, however, answered the question in a way that bore no relation to any accepted definition of multicultural education. For this subgroup, preparing their pupils for a multicultural society seemed to mean no more than helping them to operate effectively in the wider society, almost *regardless* of its ethnic composition. The following comments not only illustrate this aim but, in light of the contrasting comments cited above, demonstrate yet again the range of attitudes and practices in respect of multicultural education that exists within Jewish schools.

²⁵ Note that there are major disputations between the different branches of contemporary Jewry, especially between Orthodox and Progressive (e.g. Reform) forms of Judaism. These disputes particularly revolve around issues of conversion and the levels of stringency required before someone can be classed as Jewish (see Brook, 1989).

²⁶ Key Stage 1 is the National Curriculum for years 1 and 2 (ages 5–7).

We have a history to show that we have a wide range of ex-pupils who are functioning beautifully in the world. (primary school, head teacher)

When children leave the school, are they able to hold down a job with non-Jewish colleagues?

(primary school, director of Jewish studies)

I think we're very successful. Our children integrate extremely well. When they go to

university, they don't have problems. They go on to professions and businesses. They interact extremely well. (secondary school, head teacher)

You've been successful if the pupils are well adjusted, successful, go out to work and are respectful of other people and just generally get on with other people. (secondary school, director of Jewish studies)

3 Interviews with school governors

Background and methodology

The extent to which Jewish schools respond to a multicultural society will depend in part on the attitudes towards multiculturalism of those who govern them. Because of their potential to influence school policy, it was originally intended to interview a substantial number of governors, but in the end time constraints made it possible to speak to no more than a handful. There were five in total, two men and three women, all living in the London area. Between them they represented one secondary school, two central Orthodox primaries and one Progressive primary. One of the primary school governors was also chair of the parents' association at a Jewish secondary school. The choice of interviewees was not random, as they were all nominated by the head teachers of the schools they serve. Inevitably, therefore, a question mark hangs over the extent to which they can be said to represent their own governing bodies, let alone governors of Jewish schools in general. Although none of the governors had attended a Jewish school as a pupil, three of them currently have children of their own in such schools.

The interviews were semi-structured, lasted around thirty minutes and were conducted outside of school premises. Confidentiality was guaranteed. For the most part, the questions were the same as those posed to senior management, with appropriate modifications. For example, instead of asking whether staff ever raise issues relating to multiculturalism, respondents were asked whether such issues are ever raised at governors' meetings. The main difference between the interview schedules presented to senior management and those presented to governors was that the latter were initially requested to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of Jewish children attending Jewish schools.

Analysis of interviews

As can be seen from the comments below, Jewish schools are valued as a means of strengthening Jewish identity, facilitating religious observance and obviating a sense of isolation. They are also perceived as a source of lasting friendship. Significantly, none of the governors saw Jewish schools as an opportunity to limit the children's contact with the outside world.

The children become aware that they are Jewish and grow up to be proud of being Jewish. I grew up during the war and was always slightly hesitant about admitting that I was Jewish.

The biggest advantage is that it gives them a total sense of identity. They learn about their religion but not as a bolt-on. It's part of their everyday education. They look at how their religion affects everything they do. They're also mixing with other Jewish children. One of the problems for many Jewish children [in non-denominational schools] is that they are the only ones. They are out on a limb. That was something I experienced as a child.

Their religion is part of their everyday life. As much as we can do at home, it's not the same if they're at a school teaching them different values to our own. They've made wonderful friends. That, I think, is a very important part of their lives. Our older children have friends whom they met at Jewish nursery school, and I don't know if that would've happened with non-Jewish friends. I don't think they have the natural empathy.

To give them what I didn't have: a very secure sense of being Jewish. They're proud of being Jewish, but it doesn't cross their heads that they're special. They'll know far more about being Jewish than I ever knew.

Only one respondent considered that there were no disadvantages attaching to Jewish schools. The others were conscious of their potential to inhibit pupils' willingness and ability to relate to non-Jews.

Potentially, there's a risk of a ghetto mentality, but I think most people these days are aware of those problems and certainly at [our school] there's a great deal of outside contact with other organizations and non-Jewish schools.

There is a danger that they won't mix with non-Jewish children. They won't realize that outside of their school life there is a wide diversity, that not everyone is Jewish.

The [risk is they] don't mix with other religions or races and I think that's part of growing up—that we should be aware of and meet and have a

lot of contact with other races and religions. My two older children [who went to non-Jewish secondary schools] certainly did that, but I can't say the same for the other two [who attend Jewish secondary schools].

One way of getting round this problem suggested by a couple of respondents was to teach about other faiths. Indeed, the lone governor of the secondary school highlighted as one of its weaknesses a failure to provide such teaching. Her concern was based largely on the conviction, central to multicultural education, that 'ignorance breeds prejudice'.

Another governor recognized the risk of social exclusivity inherent in Jewish schools but saw it as largely theoretical.

The obvious thing to say is that they're not going to meet any non-Jewish children, but because my children live in England, they meet non-Jewish children all the time. They have neighbours who are not Jewish, we have close family friends who are not Jewish, so they're not being brought up in a ghetto.

Overall, the governors attached considerable importance to the role of schools in helping to prepare pupils for relating to other ethnic groups (the mean rating on a 5-point scale was 4.5). However, when asked if they knew what their schools were actually doing *vis-à-vis* multiculturalism, there was some uncertainty.

I'm aware of the links the school has with non-Jewish organizations.

Such as?

I'm not familiar with the detail.

I know they've done some interfaith work, because I've seen that on display. I know they've done some work with a local church. Beyond that, I'm not certain what they're doing.

They do have speakers from different walks of life in the A-level years. I don't know if they're from different religions.

Asked if they were happy with what their schools were doing to foster multiculturalism, two governors thought there was room for improvement. In both cases (one primary and the other secondary) they wanted more emphasis given to the teaching of other faiths. For a third governor, however, the question seemed irrelevant. This was

not because she saw education for a multicultural society as unimportant, but because she considered the quality of Jewish studies teaching in her school to be inadequate and felt that the need to remedy this should take precedence.

The question about pupils living their entire lives in a Jewish 'cocoon' met with the unanimous response that for children to isolate themselves in this way would be undesirable. In the words of a governor of an Orthodox primary school:

The children should not be too inward-looking. [My family] live in both worlds and I'd like to think that what we learn from our Jewish community we can take to the outside world and benefit them and vice versa.

There was also consensus when the governors were asked whether issues relating to multiculturalism had ever cropped up at their governors' meetings. None of them had participated in such a discussion, although the governor of the Progressive school said, 'I think it will [be discussed] as we have on the governing body people who are very keen on involvement with other faiths.'

The questions relating to JCORE met with a very similar pattern of response to that given by senior management. Just one of the five governors was familiar with the acronym and only a couple had heard of the organization when it was referred to by its full name. None had read a JCORE publication.

The final question looked at governors' perceptions of the importance that parents place on schools preparing pupils for life in a multicultural society. In just one case was it assumed that the parents would probably give the issue a high priority. Another respondent did not feel able to speak on behalf of the parents, while the others conjectured that it was not a major concern.

I suspect they don't attach that much significance to it to be honest. The parent body is generally very strongly culturally Jewish and mix very largely with other Jewish people.

I'd say [the parents'] main priority is to get a good education for their children. The second factor is that their children should have a Jewish education, and some of the more aware parents would want their children to have a good relationship with other [groups].

4 School prospectuses

In order to gain further insight into the importance that Jewish schools attach to educating for cultural diversity, an analysis was undertaken of the content of eight primary and four secondary school prospectuses. The primary school prospectuses were selected at random and, as expected, they all devote much space to academic accomplishment, mentioning specifically the extent to which the SAT results of their pupils exceed the national average. Equally unsurprising is that they dwell on the *Limmudei Kodesh* (Jewish studies) aspect of the curriculum, designed, in the words of one prospectus, to 'give children pride and pleasure in their own religious and cultural heritage'. More often than not, the prospectuses also allude to the schools' facilities and their extracurricular activities. As far as the secular curriculum is concerned, they refer, usually at length, to its different dimensions, making clear the areas covered in each of the nine national curriculum subjects. None of them, however, comments on the multicultural components of the various programmes of study. There is no mention, for example, of teaching about non-western music, art or literature. Indeed, with a single exception, the prospectuses are silent on how schools prepare their pupils for life in a multicultural society: almost all of them employ the phrase 'the wider community', but none contains evidence that they are concerned to instruct their pupils in the traditions of other ethnic and religious groups, as the following extracts illustrate.

Our health, sex and citizenship education programmes are taught within the basic curriculum, teaching our children to lead a healthy life and be responsible members of the wider community.

We try to create an awareness in the children of their responsibilities to one another and to their teachers within the school, as well as to the wider community outside.

The children are taught the importance of giving *tzedaka* [charity] and helping others less fortunate, and they are encouraged to be aware of and take part in the wider community in which they live.

One primary school appears to go further, describing itself as having 'an awareness of other

faiths and cultures', but there is no indication of what this 'awareness' amounts to in practice. Teaching about other faiths is actually referred to in just one prospectus. The school concerned, one of the three Progressive primaries in the survey, has among its stated aims to teach 'respect and understanding for all religions'.

The children learn about each religion, the lives of members of that faith community, gain an understanding of the values that underpin them and relate this to their own experience and feelings.

In addition, the prospectus insists in its home-school agreement that parents 'encourage [their] child to have a positive attitude to other religions and all people'.

The four secondary school prospectuses examined were similar to those of most primary schools in the low status they seemed to attach to educating for cultural diversity. In fact, this issue barely warrants a mention, with prominence being given instead to academic achievement, *Limmudei Kodesh*, the secular curriculum and the range of scientific and other facilities in the school. Just one prospectus makes explicit reference to cultural diversity. In listing the aims of the school concerned, the Chief Rabbi writes of its desire:

to create in its pupils an integrated personality whose Jewish identity is knowledgeable, secure and proud, a spur to achievement and responsibility, and a challenge to exemplary citizenship in an ethnically and religiously pluralistic society.

Although the prospectus goes on to talk about preparing its pupils 'to become responsible members of both the Jewish and wider communities', nowhere does it refer to teaching about the cultural traditions of the different groups that make up the wider community. Similarly, another school prospectus contains an address to parents from the head teacher that states, 'You...want to make sure that they know how to mix with confidence in the wider world.' Once again, however, there is no indication of what the school actually does to further this aim. The closest that a third prospectus gets to

acknowledging multiculturalism is to announce, on its first page, its commitment to the 'development of thoughtful, tolerant, responsible and caring young citizens'. And in the fourth prospectus there is a strong suspicion that, in teaching about 'the wider society', the school is gearing itself primarily towards preparing its pupils to succeed vocationally. The relevant passage reads as follows:

It is the School's aim to educate boys and girls to conduct themselves in strict adherence to the Orthodox Jewish lifestyle throughout their lives. In addition, it is the School's purpose to provide its pupils...with the knowledge and skills to enable them subsequently to take their place in society, for example in the worlds of Jewish learning, teaching or social service, or in the general academic, professional or business worlds.

5 Learning about cultural diversity: the pupils' perspective

Interviews with secondary school students

In order to gain a fuller and more rounded picture of how Jewish schools are responding to the multicultural nature of society, opinions were sought from a cross-section of pupils. This part of the report focuses on the views of fifteen boys and twelve girls selected at random and in more or less equal numbers from four secondary schools. They were all volunteers and, with the exception of three Year 11 (ages 15–16) students (two girls and a boy), were all in the sixth form (ages 16–18). Having been given a guarantee of confidentiality, the students were interviewed individually for around twenty minutes between February and May 2001. The semi-structured interviews contained the following core questions:

How long have you been at this school?

Did you go to a Jewish primary school?

What advantages, if any, do you see in Jewish children attending Jewish schools?

What disadvantages, if any, do you see?

One of the arguments against Jewish schools is that the pupils will not know how to get on with people who are not Jewish. How do you feel about that?

Do you have any non-Jewish friends? [If not] does that bother you?

Do you feel that this school does enough to prepare its pupils for life in a multicultural society? What has it done? What more could it do?

Do you learn about other religions in this school?

Would you send your own children to (a) a Jewish primary school and (b) a Jewish secondary school? If not, why not?

Analysis of interview protocols

Approximately two-thirds of the students had received all their formal education in Jewish schools and had had limited opportunities to form close

friendships with non-Jews. In the majority of cases this does not appear to have troubled them, as they were more concerned to make friends with fellow Jews. Indeed, many of them saw the facilitation of such friendships (and, concomitantly, the diminished scope for intermarriage) as a major advantage of Jewish schools. In contrast, having little or no *contact* with non-Jews was seen as a problem by a substantial number of students and as a serious disadvantage of Jewish schools.

You only have contact with other Jews. It might distance you from non-Jewish people, so you don't know how to react to them and talk to them. (sixth-form boy)

I don't know any non-Jewish people. I mix with them, but I don't know them. (sixth-form boy)

You're in a closed environment which means that you're used to that daily life, so when you go out into the wider world you're not prepared for the slightly different ways in which non-Jews might act. (sixth-form girl)

A lot of children in this school are clueless about what goes on outside the school because their whole lives revolve around their Jewish social life. When they go [into the outside world] they're going to have a few shocks. If you're ignorant of other people's way of life, it's much harder to communicate with them. (Year 11 girl)

Just mixing with Jewish people is not very helpful for later life. (sixth-form boy)

The only other major drawback to Jewish schools—mentioned by half a dozen students—was not learning about other cultures. As one boy put it:

I hardly know anything about other religions apart from what I learned in my non-Jewish primary school. I'm a bit disappointed about that, because I think it's important to know about other religions as well.

A variation on this theme was articulated by a sixth-form girl, who said:

Had I gone to a non-Jewish school I would have been around other cultures and people with different opinions, whereas in any Jewish school it's based around one opinion, one religion.

Although some of these young people were critical of their schools for denying them an opportunity to meet with non-Jews, most did not believe that going to a Jewish school had made it more difficult to relate to other groups. As can be seen, their views were sometimes influenced by personal experience.

I don't think it's true [that we can't get on with non-Jews], because we do have lives outside the school. I have a lot of non-Jewish friends and go to a lot of parties with non-Jewish people. I'm still friends with a lot of people from my non-Jewish primary school. (sixth-form boy)

I seem to get on well enough with non-Jews. I go to dance clubs where 95 per cent are not Jewish and I get on well with them. I also work with people who are not Jewish. (sixth-form girl)

I have friends who left [this school] after Year 11. They went to a sixth-form college and had no problems making friends. Also, I personally don't feel I'll have any problems. (sixth-form boy)

Two other reasons were advanced for discounting the argument that Jewish schools make it harder for their pupils to mix with non-Jews. The first was that 'the skills you learn in a Jewish school, like how to make friends and interact, will generally be the same in any community'. The second was that as 'we're [not] totally different people', there should be no problem in getting along. However, a couple of students did not dismiss the argument entirely. Aware of individual differences, they maintained that going to a Jewish school could inhibit interaction with non-Jews 'for some people'.

Although most respondents were unimpressed by the argument that a Jewish school makes it more difficult for pupils to relate to non-Jews, the majority (seventeen out of twenty-seven) said that they had only Jewish friends. Asked if they were concerned about such a restricted social compass, most said they were not, but a handful (all boys) confessed to having certain reservations.

One of the things I'm looking forward to about going to university is the wider community. I do

see value in having a multicultural group of friends. I just think there's something missing in having a closed circle of friends.

When I go to university I will have to make [non-Jewish friends] and it will be harder if I don't have them originally.

I'd like to meet non-Jewish friends but they're not easily accessible if you go to a Jewish school.

I suppose [having non-Jewish friends] might have helped with general development and education.

So far in my life it hasn't been too much of a bother, but I'm beginning to worry about what's going to happen at university.

The tendency for secondary school students to socialize only with other Jews might in fact be greater than the above suggests, for many of those who claimed to have friends from other cultures acknowledged that their closest friends were Jews.

Opinion was again divided when the students were asked whether they thought their school had prepared them adequately for life in a multicultural society. To a greater or lesser extent, a significant number were dissatisfied, objecting specifically to certain aspects of teaching about other faiths. Several complained that such teaching had been entirely absent prior to the sixth form (and in one school it had been introduced only at that stage 'as a result of pressure from the students'). As one of them put it, 'They don't really allow you to learn about anyone else. It's surprising how little people in this school know about other social circles. They just don't know about non-Jews.' Some criticized what they saw as the superficial treatment of other faiths. In the words of one sixth-former, 'I'd say that I know more about Hinduism from having a neighbour who's a Hindu than from what we've done in this school.' Predictably, in view of these comments, it was suggested on a few occasions that Jewish studies should metamorphose into religious studies. But action of this kind would not address a further source of resentment that stemmed from having Jewish staff teach about other faiths. Such teaching was objected to because it was seen as not coming from 'an unbiased perspective'.

There was a very different reaction from other students to the absence of a multifaith dimension to the curriculum, or to the minimalist approach to multiculturalism adopted in some schools. One

sixth-form girl, for example, was clearly irritated by the suggestion that her school should teach about other faiths.

As a Jewish school it's their duty to give us the background to our own religion. As far as other religions are concerned, it's up to the individuals themselves to research into [them].

Another student reflected the opinions of some senior management cited earlier when she said:

In terms of understanding other people's religion, I don't know how much I would know about that, but I don't know how necessary that is so long as I can be polite and respectful.

Although in a small minority, this student was not alone in seeing education for life in a multicultural society in terms of politeness and respect. Together with one or two others, she also believed that she was adequately prepared for such a society having acquired generic 'skills for getting on with people, like tolerance and listening to other opinions'. But a more common reaction to the question of how their schools had prepared them for cultural diversity was to mention social mixing, although in this context reference was made only to sporting fixtures of various kinds. Exchange visits with non-Jewish schools for reasons unrelated to sport was the only suggestion proffered (and then by just a few) when students were invited to say what more their schools could have done to help them adapt to a culturally diverse society.

The final question attempted once again to identify any unease felt by students at the way their school had tackled issues relating to multiculturalism. They were asked whether they would send their own children to Jewish schools. While a clear majority (twenty out of twenty-seven) said they would have no qualms about doing so in respect of both primary and secondary schools, a few were less committed, though not for reasons that had anything to do with multiculturalism. In fact, just two students objected on these grounds, one of them responding as follows.

Would you send your own children to a Jewish primary school?

No, because a couple of my friends went to a Jewish primary school and I saw how they turned out. They just know about Jewish stuff and nothing else and they're just involved with

Jewish people.

A Jewish secondary school?

I'd rather send my kids to a non-Jewish school, so they could learn about other stuff and meet other people instead of being stuck with just Jewish people.

The other student (and the only one known to be of mixed parentage) would not let her children attend a Jewish primary school, because, as she put it, 'I wouldn't particularly want them in such a closed circle of friends and I wouldn't want them coming home saying: "Did you know, Arabs did this..."' Even my friends do this and they're fifteen and sixteen.' However, she was less opposed to the idea of sending her children to a Jewish secondary school. The deciding factor here would be the academic quality of the school relative to those in the surrounding area.

There was one other student who expressed doubts. He was 'not entirely sure' about his children attending a Jewish secondary school, although he felt more positively about the primary phase. He said, 'I probably would [send them to a Jewish primary school], though at the same time ensuring that [they] had a balance of either a social club or something else that wasn't necessarily Jewish.'

Interviews with younger children

The sample comprised eleven boys and fourteen girls and was selected at random and in almost equal numbers from Year 6 (ages 10-11) classes in four London schools (three central Orthodox and one Progressive). All were volunteers and were interviewed individually for about ten minutes, having been given a guarantee of confidentiality. The semi-structured interviews were undertaken between January and May 2001 and contained the following core questions:

How long have you been at this school?

Do you like it?

Tell me some of the best things about this school?

Is there anything about it that you don't like?

Do you like being in a Jewish school?

Is there anything about being in a Jewish school that you don't like?

Some people might say that if you go to a Jewish school you won't know how to get on with

people who are not Jewish. What do you think about that?

Do you have non-Jewish friends?

Would you like to go to a Jewish secondary school or to a non-Jewish secondary school, or are you not bothered?

In this school do you learn about other people and their way of life?

Do you learn about other religions?

Analysis of interview protocols

At first sight, there is a justifiable concern that a high proportion of these children will grow up without an adequate understanding of cultural diversity, for most of them (twenty-two out of twenty-five) had been at their primary school since the reception class and many had previously attended a Jewish nursery. Moreover, a substantial number (eighteen out of twenty-five) were planning to attend Jewish secondary schools, where, as has been seen, teaching about the multicultural nature of British society tends not to be a priority.

Interviews with the children attending the three Orthodox schools indicated that little or nothing was being done to foster an awareness and appreciation of other traditions over and above what was demanded by the national curriculum. Responses to the question 'In this school do you learn about other people and their way of life?' revealed that teaching about different cultures was either minimal (involving, for example, a one-off 'session' on an Asian festival) or lacking in relevance to contemporary British society.

In assembly [the Head] told us about the Chinese New Year.

We learn about the people who were not Jewish and were in the Bible, but we don't learn about other people like Hindus and Buddhists.

We usually concentrate on the daily subjects and Judaism, but sometimes visitors come in and talk to us. They're not Jewish and we ask questions, but they're the only real opportunities we get to do that.

What sort of visitors?

We had a group of teenagers who came in and they wanted to learn how Jews lived. They asked us questions and we asked them questions, so each side learned the other's way of life.

In Jewish history last year we were learning

about all the horrible things the [ancient] Egyptians did.

I think we learned once about some other culture, but we hardly do that.

When the children were asked directly whether they learn about other religions, a few referred to doing something on the odd occasion. Most, however, simply said 'no' or 'not really'.

The situation was very different in the Progressive school, where all six children mentioned the project they had undertaken the previous year on the world's major religions. Some of them referred specifically to an exchange visit with a Catholic school.

In Year 5 [ages 9–10] we did world religions, which taught us quite a lot. We went to a Hindu temple and to a mosque, and what we did with the Catholic school was fun.

Last year we did a programme with a Roman Catholic school and we got to know them all and we understood what the differences were between Christianity and Judaism and we found that we weren't that different.

Last year, when we were doing the world's religions project, we mixed with a Catholic school and then they went to a big synagogue in London and we did things with them there as well, so we kind of did an exchange.

Although many of the children in the survey had received all their formal education in Jewish schools and had been taught little about non-Jewish cultures, almost all of them rejected emphatically the argument that attending a Jewish school makes it more difficult to mix with non-Jews. The following comments are representative.

Not true at all, because I think every person is the same no matter what religion they believe. You can still get on with people just the same.

That's not true. I've got loads of friends who are not Jewish up my road and when I go on holiday I make lots of non-Jewish friends. We're all individuals, so I don't see why I can't be friends with them.

I don't think that a friend has anything to do with religion unless you want to talk about it. I think that's silly, because you don't socialize with people because they're Jewish but because

you want to be friendly with them, or if you're lonely.

Not true at all. I have loads of non-Jewish friends. All my sister's friends are mostly Christian or Hindu or Buddhist, and I get on really well with [them].

Confirmation of the children's confidence in relating to non-Jews came in answer to the question about the kind of secondary school they would like to attend. Not only did five of them opt for a non-Jewish one and seven express no preference, but none of the children who had elected to go to a Jewish school had done so because they felt unable to get on with non-Jewish children. On the contrary, they had made their choice for positive reasons, wishing, for example, to continue learning about their faith or to remain with their friends. Although one or two signalled a partiality for Jewish company, there was no suggestion of an implicit rejection or wariness of non-Jews. In all probability, such confidence reflects the fact that the children associate with their non-Jewish peers in a variety of settings. They often strike up friendships with the children of neighbours or with those they meet on holiday or at out-of-school clubs of various kinds. In one or two cases they were close to friends of older siblings.

In common with the secondary students, a few children thought there might be something in the argument about pupils at Jewish schools not knowing how to relate to non-Jews. One girl thought this was 'true sometimes', implying that the critical factor is the personality of the individual. Another girl attributed more significance to the proportion of one's education spent in a Jewish school. She said:

If you went to a Jewish primary school and a Jewish secondary school and then to a university with lots of mixed people, I think it might be hard, but if you go to a Jewish primary school and a mixed secondary school, then I think it will be easier.

Despite the insistence of the vast majority that attending a Jewish school was no barrier to relating easily to non-Jews, nearly all of those who were asked (eighteen out of twenty) said either that most

of their friends were Jewish or that their close friends were. Three children admitted that they never have any contact with non-Jews. Remarks such as, 'I don't really know anyone from a different religion', 'I don't know any people who are not Jewish' and 'I don't really meet non-Jewish people' must raise concerns about the possibility that *some* Jewish students will leave school ill at ease with the non-Jewish world even though they do not foresee any problems at the primary stage.

In the three Orthodox schools, where little was done on multicultural education, many of the children did not seem to attach a high priority to learning about other cultures. They were generally happy with their school, saw going to a Jewish one as a largely positive experience and such criticisms as they had tended not to relate to the curriculum. However, a minority of children (seven out of nineteen) believed that Jewish schools were inclined to ignore other cultures and this neglect was something of which they disapproved. For example:

If you go to a Jewish school then you've got all Jewish friends and you don't really have much connection with other religions, but if you had non-Jewish friends then it would be interesting to see what they learned. If you go to a Jewish school you learn just about Jewish things, but if you go to a mixed school you hardly learn about Jewish things, so it would be better to go to a Jewish school for me, but I'd like the opportunity to learn a little bit about other religions.

I can't learn about the other religions. I want to learn about Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism, but I don't know about any of them. *Why do you want to learn about other religions?* Because I find it very interesting to find out about other customs. I only know about Jewish customs.

A few children considered the need to learn about other faiths and to interact with a broader cross-section of society so important that they had decided to transfer at the end of Year 6 to a non-Jewish secondary school. One girl, when asked why she would prefer a non-Jewish school, said, 'Because I want to learn about the different religions and I just want to mix with other people.'

6 Summary and discussion of main findings

This study has demonstrated clearly that Jewish schools cannot be seen as a monolithic entity in terms of their attitude towards preparing pupils for a multicultural society. While some treat the process seriously and provide models of good practice, others appear to regard the whole notion as largely an irrelevance and are reluctant to do much more than what is demanded by the national curriculum and the national literacy strategy. The most positive attitudes to cultural diversity were found among the three Progressive primary schools and it may be no coincidence that one of these schools published the only prospectus containing a reference to teaching about other faiths. Conversely, the schools that were indifferent or hostile to multiculturalism were, in all cases, central Orthodox. However, there are no grounds for assuming that schools under Orthodox auspices are uniformly unsympathetic to multicultural education. Some of them, particularly at primary level, recognize the need to help their pupils relate to other ethnic groups. They are keen to establish links with non-Jewish schools and, while they do not make any curricular provision for teaching about other faiths, are none the less happy to exploit any opportunities that arise to draw their pupils' attention to aspects of these faiths. Some respondents from central Orthodox schools were also keen to stress that they would do more to foster an awareness of cultural pluralism if time permitted.

Although the majority of head teachers and other senior staff accepted the need to equip their pupils for life in a multicultural society, a number of them seemed to have little idea of what such provision entails. It was sometimes seen as involving little more than learning to respect people whatever their ethnicity and behaving accordingly. To others, it appeared to mean enabling their pupils to integrate into society in order to succeed vocationally. It has to be a matter for concern that some respondents failed to realize (or refused to acknowledge) that it also requires, as a minimum, a study of other cultures and particularly other faiths. With perhaps one exception, prior to the sixth form secondary schools did not engage seriously with religious beliefs other than Judaism, and even in the sixth form the treatment the topic received was felt by some students to be inadequate. The neglect was

also evident in a number of primary schools and some Year 6 children noted and resented it. Indeed, a few were sufficiently perturbed by the omission to opt for a non-Jewish secondary school. Even where there was learning about other faiths, it never involved pupils observing a non-Jewish religious ritual or service and in only two schools did children visit different places of worship. In so far as a significant and growing proportion of Jewish children now receive all their formal education in Jewish schools, it seems likely that many are destined to enter adult life with little or no understanding and appreciation of the religious diversity of the modern world.

As to establishing contact with non-Jewish schools (a practice in line with current government thinking), there was some evidence of cooperation on schemes of various kinds, but these joint ventures were confined to primary schools. Across the age range there were also sporting contacts, other forms of competition and cultural occasions when Jewish and non-Jewish schools would get together, but it is doubtful whether gatherings of this nature provide much opportunity for meaningful learning about other ethnic groups.²⁷ That said, it is to be regretted that Jewish schools were sometimes prevented from joining in events sponsored by the local authority because these were arranged for a Saturday. Equally regrettable is the fact that efforts made by Jewish schools to establish links with their non-Jewish counterparts were sometimes not reciprocated. And it should be remembered that a couple of secondary schools may have been discouraged from developing such links in the wake of antisemitic incidents.

Limited contact with schools in the wider community would not seem to be a problem for the generality of pupils in Jewish schools, because, as the study suggests, they are likely to mix freely with non-Jews in their leisure time. Certainly, the young people participating in this survey did not believe that attending a Jewish school had inhibited them in this respect. However, the extent of their

27 However, according to the 'contact hypothesis' (see, e.g. Amir, 1969), one of the conditions necessary for the development of positive attitudes between different groups is that any encounter should involve a cooperative activity.

mixing might be questioned in light of the finding that their close friends were typically Jewish. For some of the older students in the study, the relative lack of contact with non-Jewish schools *was* seen as a problem and, in a few cases, appeared to reinforce a sense of estrangement from the non-Jewish world. These students had no non-Jewish friends and were uncertain, especially as they contemplated university, about their ability to relate to other ethnic groups.

In view of the importance that JCORE attaches to its work in schools, it was surprising to note its minimal impact. This was unexpected, not least because the organization enjoys the Chief Rabbi's imprimatur, as well as the support of the Reform movement. Some head teachers and senior staff and some governors were only vaguely aware of its existence, and even among the handful of schools that had had dealings with it some had yet to implement its recommendations. Lack of familiarity with the teaching pack *Let's Make a Difference* is especially unfortunate, as its concern is not merely to acquaint Jewish children with other cultures but to help them understand and combat racism. It will be recalled that very few staff, none of the governors and no prospectus made any sort of reference to the latter.

It would be unwise to read too much into the views of the governors who participated in this study as they were few in number and may well have been unrepresentative of the totality of governors of Jewish schools. It is nevertheless of interest to note that none of them could recall the issue of multicultural education ever having cropped up at a governors' meeting. This would suggest either that the governing bodies of the schools concerned are broadly satisfied with what is being done with regard to multiculturalism or that the issue is not a priority for them. That it might well not be a priority for governors in general was indicated by the finding that those interviewees who were sympathetic to multiculturalism were none the less uncertain as to what their schools were doing to promote it.

School policy on a range of issues is likely to be shaped, or influenced to some degree, by the concerns of parents, and it was for this reason that senior staff and governors were asked to gauge the level of parental interest in multicultural education. In a minority of schools, the parent body was thought to take the issue seriously. More often, it was assumed to be divided or indifferent, a reaction that may help to explain the rather woolly references to 'the wider society' in most of the prospectuses examined.

7 Suggested policy implications

- 1 Teachers in Jewish schools ought to be fully conversant with issues relating to education for a pluralist society. At the very least, they should be aware that while treating others with respect may be a *sine qua non* of such education, it is quite inadequate as a definition of even the most conservative approaches to multiculturalism. In order to foster a better understanding of the relevant issues, *including the need to combat racism*, umbrella organizations such as the Agency for Jewish Education, the Centre for Jewish Education and the Association of Jewish Teachers should consider arranging training courses that deal with the role of the Jewish school in a multicultural society.
- 2 A number of Jewish schools, both primary and secondary, need to reappraise their attitude towards teaching about other faiths, not only because such teaching has merit in itself but because some pupils believe that an exclusive emphasis on Judaism, and a concomitant neglect of other cultures, impoverishes them both intellectually and socially.
- 3 It would benefit students who spend their entire lives in a Jewish milieu if schools were to provide rather more opportunities for them to interact with their non-Jewish peers. Local education authorities could help in this respect by scheduling fewer events to take place on Saturdays or on Jewish festivals.
- 4 JCORE needs to raise its profile in schools. To this end it might consider, if it has not done so already, making its activities and publications known to governing bodies in addition to head teachers and other staff. In view of the power of governors to shape school policy, it might also offer its expertise to the Agency for Jewish Education in connection with their training programme for governors.
- 5 Those governors committed to multiculturalism should take a closer interest in the part their school is playing to promote a pluralist society. They should encourage their schools to pursue pluralist initiatives wherever they are deemed compatible with the Jewish ethos of the school.

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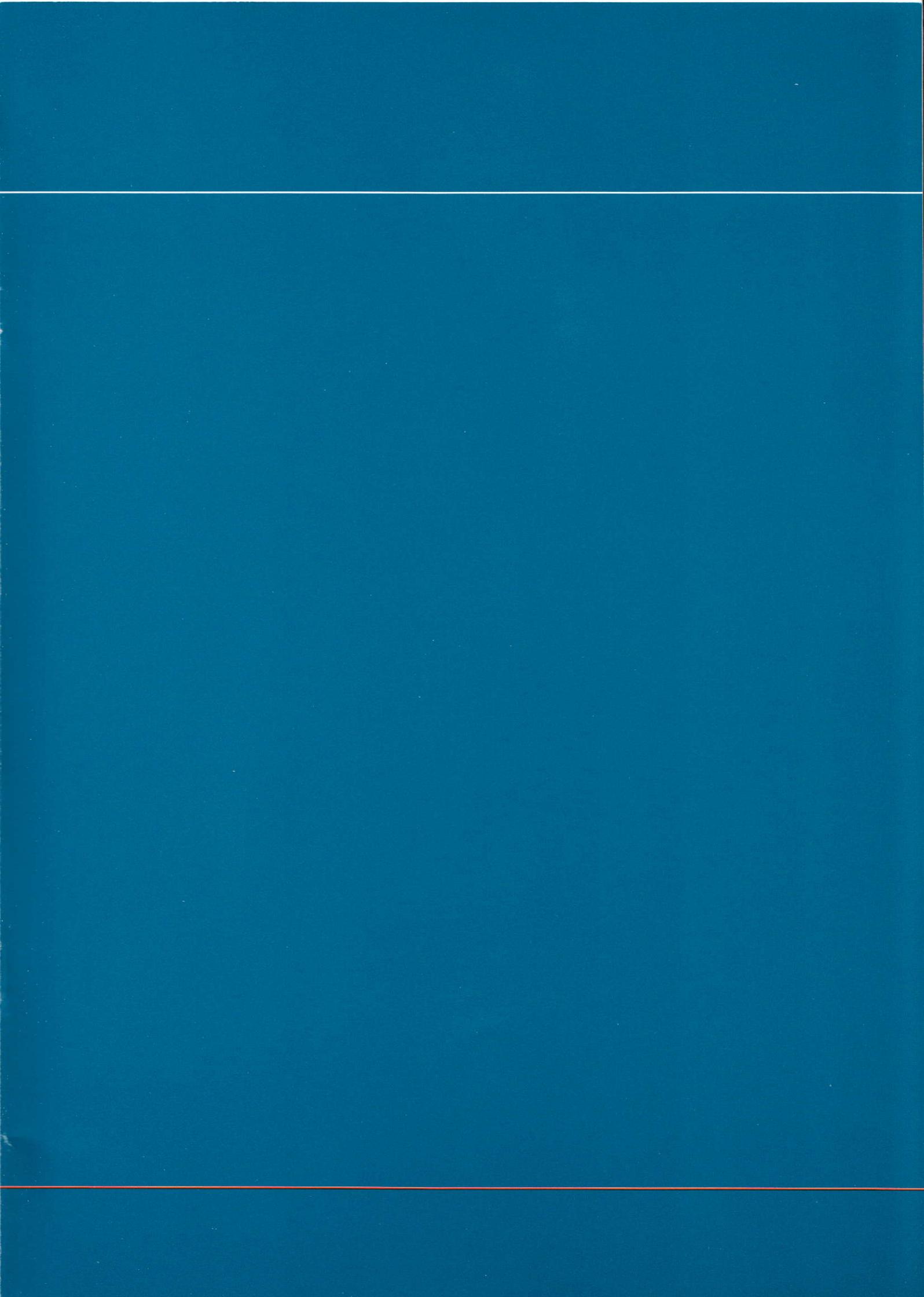
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