



Nahamu

Education Policy Position Paper

1. Foreword

The UK's Jewish community has a proud record of placing education at the heart of family life. Hundreds of thousands of Jewish children have benefited from that tradition in their contributions not only to the Jewish community but also to wider British society.

However, this paper from the Jewish charity Nahamu, describes serious educational issues in parts of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community. The recent King's Speech, the first by the new Labour government, has already set out solutions to some of the issues raised in the paper, and includes a commitment to improve compliance around homeschooling by operating a register of children not in school. It also sets out that Ofsted will have stronger powers to investigate the offence of operating an unregistered independent school.

The King's Speech also proposes that the government will seek to raise educational standards and break down barriers to opportunity. This includes plans for all schools to follow the national curriculum.

We welcome this important contribution by the trustees of Nahamu to the debate on these issues, and hope that it may stimulate some former students of these schools to join the debate also.

Baroness Morris of Yardley

Baroness Blackstone

2. Executive Summary

Not all children growing up in the charedi¹ community are being denied secular education. However, many are. This paper sets out current loopholes and gaps in UK education policy and enforcement, and the implications for children, especially boys, growing up in the chassidic² segment of the UK charedi community. We should note that similar issues arise in other countries with large chassidic communities.

However, irrespective of sex, or the type of institution, the systemic goal of the leadership in parts of the charedi community, is that the education in their schools should not provide children with access to a broad and balanced school education, nor access to further education. As a result, many charedi children are prevented from accessing the wider workforce, as there is no route to many career opportunities.

Restricting secular education limits the future autonomy of charedi boys due to lack of literacy, numeracy and recognised qualifications. For girls, the restriction on future autonomy is a consequence of the lack of access to KS5 qualifications and early arranged marriage, which can be socially coerced, and motherhood.

We have set out in this paper our suggested solutions; some of which would require primary legislation. Other solutions require secondary legislation, or simply improved oversight, enforcement and better funding.

We have set out the consequences of denial of secular education and lack of access to qualifications in addendum C. We have also set out more details on the diversity of the charedi community in addendum D. A glossary of Hebrew and Yiddish terms is set out in appendix 5.

¹ Ultra-Orthodox Jewish, plural charedim

² A sub-section within the Ultra-orthodox Jewish community, typically more insular, see glossary for more insight.



3. Introduction

3.1. Overview

Since its inception in 2019, Nahamu has lobbied for better education for UK based charedi children, especially for boys who experience a distinct disadvantage. This policy paper sets out Nahamu's analysis of the current state of secular education for UK based charedi children, alongside the necessary legislative changes needed to address the deficiencies.

It is important to state at the outset that Nahamu is not seeking to prevent or inhibit the charedi community from providing a religious based education to their children. However, we believe that all children growing up in the UK, irrespective of their faith or ethnicity, should have the right to receive sufficient secular education both to comply with UK law and to enable them to make informed choices about their own futures. Nahamu's wider advocacy aims are set out in addendum A.

The issues raised in this paper are difficult to address because of the determination of some elements of the charedi leadership to ensure that their children, particularly boys, do not receive a level of secular education that would enable them to engage fully in wider UK society, including access to tertiary education and participation in the wider workforce. The charedi leadership often justifies the lack of secular education for boys in terms of "not wanting to break a long tradition of continuous Jewish yeshiva style learning"³. An additional rationale is the fear of integration into wider UK society, which might result from young people being afforded access to educational or employment opportunities outside the charedi community.

3.2. Development of full time yeshiva education for boys

Whilst it is appropriate that Jewish schools allocate a significant amount of time for Jewish education, we believe that instruction should take the form of a dual curriculum of secular education alongside Jewish education, along the principle of the "*Torah Im Derech Eretz*"⁴ ideology, which is popular across the Orthodox Jewish world. In this way, students can both study Torah and gain qualifications and skills through secular education to access a wide range of careers. Universal full time yeshiva education is a recent innovation. In previous generations, for reasons of economic necessity, boys were taught a trade alongside their yeshiva studies. This approach is based on the teachings of the Talmud at *Kiddushin* 29a⁵:

"Rabbi Yehuda says: Any father who does not teach his son a trade teaches him theft. The Talmud expresses surprise at this statement: Can it enter your mind that he actually teaches him to steal? Rather, the verse means that it is as though he teaches him theft. Since the son has no profession with which to support himself, he is likely to turn to theft for a livelihood."

In modern Britain, a combination of welfare state provision and support from philanthropic donations has meant that the charedi community has been able to facilitate full time Torah study, without any secular education, for boys of compulsory school age⁶ and beyond, in keeping with the community's ideology that, for men, the best use of time, and the highest goal is full time Torah study.

It should be noted that, even when charedi boys' secondary schools are registered (with the DfE) and do provide secular education, the time set aside for secular education can be very limited, and

³ Some groups have been threatening to leave the UK if yeshivas are required to register as schools and teach secular education; <https://www.thejc.com/news/hands-off-our-yeshivot-or-well-leave-britain-warn-charedi-demonstrators-at-westminster-jp0xrh6f>

⁴ Torah Im Derech Eretz, meaning Torah and the way of the land, the philosophy of Samson Raphael Hirsch.

⁵ <https://www.sefaria.org/Kiddushin.29a?lang=bi>

⁶ Most chassidic boys receive some secular education, even if it is inadequate before their 13th birthday. There are however some unregistered primary schools, see the Times special report, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/hasidic-boys-school-abuse-uk-jewish-education-investigation-london-2023-qx385fx52> and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40Fc12p_exY



most charedi boys leave during, or at the end of year 10, even though compulsory education continues until the end of year 11. Such establishments face additional challenges in recruiting high quality teachers, because they must be male and, in many cases, they are only employed in the afternoons.

3.3. Issues facing charedi girls

The restriction of secular education for charedi girls is of a different nature. Secular education is generally adequate to the end of KS3⁷, but access to externally recognised qualifications may be restricted in order that girls have limited options after they finish school. Even when charedi girls can access KS4 qualifications, access to KS5 qualifications is often limited⁸ as a way of restricting access to tertiary education. Charedi girls are expected to marry young⁹ and children soon follow.

3.4. Methodology and evidence

It is now a decade since whistle-blowers from within the charedi community first asked outsiders to tackle degrading and crippling educational outcomes that are most common for chassidic boys and extend to many charedi boys and some charedi and chassidic girls. Since then, there has been significant press coverage around this issue, which has often relied on individuals embedded within the chassidic community taking significant risks to secure evidence and provide testimony, knowing that change will not come in time to help themselves, but hoping that others, usually their younger brothers, nephews, and perhaps their own sons will benefit.

The difficulties in addressing the problems raised, and our proposed solutions, are discussed at length in the addendums to this paper. However, the issue of methodology needs to be addressed at the outset. How can a problem be solved when much of the evidence is anecdotal? How can leadership be addressed when there is a lack of transparency as to who is providing leadership, and where?

With these difficulties in mind, we have adopted the following methodology in this paper. We have clearly noted where evidence is anecdotal, accepting the limits of that evidence whilst recognising people's accounts of what has happened to them, even if these are accounts that cannot be independently verified. Many of the issues tackled, however, are helpfully verified by those who campaign against the very changes we seek, who do not deny the practices we describe, and indeed who argue vociferously that it is their right to deny their children access to secular education.

We would also wish to stress that Nahamu's founders include observant Jews, including charedi Jews. We write not only with the benefit of first-hand knowledge of the impact of the denial of secular education, but with the broader Jewish commitment of *tikkun olam*¹⁰ and with a firm acceptance of the commandment *aniye ircha kodmim*¹¹ which requires us to address deprivation within our own community before attempting to address it elsewhere.

In light of the recent change of government, this paper includes at, addendum B, specific comments on the Labour Party's educational policy proposals.

4. Summary of our findings in UK charedi schools

Amongst our concerns, which have been extensively documented are:

⁷ Key stage 1 (KS1), up to end of year 2 (age 7), KS2, up to end year 6 (age 11), KS3, up to end year 9 (age 14), KS4, up to end year 11 including GCSE exams (age 16). KS5 up to end year 13 including A-levels, BTEC, or T Levels (age 18).

⁸ Even when seminaries provide A-levels, there is usually limited subject choice, and often the opportunity to only work towards 1 or 2 subjects.

⁹ See Nahamu's paper on forced marriage <https://archive.jpr.org.uk/object-1608>

¹⁰ *Tikkun olam*, social justice, literally, improving the world

¹¹ *Aniye ircha kodmim*; a talmudic phrase meaning "the poor of one's own town come first"



4.1. Unregistered schools with no secular education

Most chassidic teenage boys attend unregistered institutions (known as yeshivas¹²), and receive no instruction in English, maths, science or any other secular subjects beyond the age of 13 (the age of barmitzvah). Neither do they typically sit GCSEs.

4.2. Registered schools with minimal or no secular education

Even before barmitzvah, secular education in chassidic boys registered primary schools is often limited to 45 to 60 minutes a day. In some cases, pre barmitzvah age chassidic boys in registered schools receive no secular education at all. Many of the registered independent charedi boys' secondary schools have limited time set aside for secular education, resulting in limited GCSE attainment.

4.3. Many chassidic boys are illiterate in English and are unable to express themselves in writing in any language

In a disturbing number of cases, UK resident teenage chassidic boys are wholly unable to speak, write or read English. Further, the languages used in chassidic yeshivas (Yiddish, Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic) are generally not written by the boys (beyond basic sentences). For this reason, many boys are functionally illiterate in any language.

4.4. Spurious home-schooling claims

When asked, chassidic parents often claim to be home-schooling their sons¹³, whereas in fact these boys are spending up to 60 hours per week in a yeshiva, without secular education, and are receiving no secular education at home.

4.5. Registered charedi boys' schools end after year 10

Most of the registered charedi boys' secondary school finish at the end of year 10. As a result, most charedi boys in the UK do not stay in school until the end of compulsory education, at the end of year 11¹⁴.

4.6. Restriction of chassidic girls' education

Girls typically receive a broader secular education than boys, but many topics in the GCSE curriculum are redacted;¹⁵ as a result, the curriculum is not taught in full. However, some chassidic girls only study towards 3-4 GCSEs, with limited subject choice¹⁶. Although there are a few maintained charedi girls' schools offering KS5, it is rare for chassidic girls to be offered the chance of taking 3 A-levels (or BTEC equivalent) and rarer still for them to have the opportunity to attend university. Most chassidic girls have an arranged marriage within 2-3 years of sitting their GCSEs and many are mothers by the time they are 20.

4.7. False compliance

Nahamu has gathered testimony from former students as well as current parents, who report the fact of dishonest representations being made to Ofsted inspectors. Examples of such false compliance include work being shown to inspectors that has not been completed by the children, and theoretical timetables being produced for the sole purpose of persuading Ofsted inspectors that

¹² Yeshiva - Institution for Jewish boys to study Jewish texts full-time.

¹³ That is, if they are even asked by the Local Authority why their child is not in school. In many cases the local authority does not have the information regarding children not in schools to make these enquiries.

¹⁴ School leaving age is the last Friday in June in the academic year of the child's 16th birthday, <https://www.gov.uk/when-you-can-leave-school>

¹⁵ <https://humanists.uk/2018/06/26/state-faith-school-caught-redacting-textbooks-by-humanists-uk-rated-inadequate-by-ofsted/>

¹⁶ Some chassidic girls' independent schools do not offer any science GCSEs.



an adequate level of secular education is being taught.

5. Summary of recommendations

Our recommendations, which are set out more fully in addendum E, are:

5.1. Enforcement of universal right to education

We believe that all children in the UK, irrespective of their sex, faith, ethnicity, or background, have a right to a broad and balanced education, which includes recognised qualifications. Some charedi parents choose to deny secular education to their children, but others are desperately unhappy that their children are not receiving any secular education, as they are prevented from choosing schools which provide a reasonable standard of secular education as a result of family and community pressure.

The Human Rights Act 1988¹⁷ provides that each child is entitled to education¹⁸, and that parents can choose a school according to their religious convictions. Responsibility therefore falls upon the state to ensure that all children receive a broad and balanced education, and that all schools, including independent faith schools, ensure that children are not denied their right to such an education, including teaching towards qualifications which will enable the choice of a wide range of careers.

We believe that the provision of such an education is possible in a manner which respects a parent's right to choose a school. We believe that charedi (including chassidic) parents should be able to ensure that their children receive religious education. However, we believe that such religious education can be provided in registered schools, alongside an adequate secular education.

5.2. Closing loopholes and gaps

The current legal framework that governs the provision of education in the UK has too many gaps and loopholes which make it difficult to address non-participation in a broad and purposeful education. Many charedi community leaders exploit such gaps in order systemically to deny charedi children a suitable level of education.

5.3. Changes in legislation required¹⁹

5.3.1. School registration

All institutions providing full time education for children of compulsory school age should be required to register as schools.

5.3.2. Register of children not in school

A register of home-schooled children should be set up to ensure that home schooling is taking place, and is adequate and appropriate to the child's needs, and is not used as a disguise for those who are in fact attending unregistered schools (mentioned in King's Speech²⁰).

5.4. Other changes needed

We believe that further additional changes are needed to ensure that charedi children receive a

¹⁷ The First Protocol, Article 2 Right to education. "No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions."

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents>

¹⁸ The First Protocol, Article 2 Right to education. "No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions."

¹⁹ See Schools Bill, which contained provisions for the regulation of independent educational institutions and a register of home-schooled children. It was dropped on 7 December 2022.

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/47054/documents/2038>

²⁰ Reference to Flick Drummond Bill in previous government <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3574>



broad and balanced education. Further details on each point is set out in addendum E.

- 5.4.1. Independent schools that fail children on minimum academic standards, or with serious building safety or safeguarding issues, should have their charitable status removed and ultimately should be shut down.
- 5.4.2. The [School Attendance Order](#) (SAO) process should be improved.
- 5.4.3. Consideration should be given to making 16-18 education mandatory, with an enforcement mechanism, and an exhaustive list of qualifications (A-levels, BTEC, T levels, apprenticeship, International Baccalaureate).
- 5.4.4. All schools, including independent schools, should be required to provide a weekly minimum number of hours of secular education.
- 5.4.5. The [independent schools' framework](#) should be amended such that independent schools are required to offer recognised qualifications at both KS4 and KS5, including a minimum GCSE (or equivalent) offering at KS4 and A-level, BTEC, T levels (or equivalent) offerings at KS5.
- 5.4.6. Invigilated testing should be mandatory for inadequate independent schools at KS2 and KS3.
- 5.4.7. Schools that provide education for any pupils of secondary school age should be required to map out pathways to KS4 and KS5 qualifications.
- 5.4.8. More funding and oversight should be provided to Local Authorities to support home-schooled children and children missing from education.
- 5.4.9. More maintained charedi schools should be opened, including KS5 provisions.
- 5.4.10. More funding and oversight should be provided for charedi children with Special Educational Needs.

6. Other concerns

6.1. Equality Act

We believe that a review into the Equality Act, including the ability of faith schools to restrict the employment of teachers who are exclusively members of that faith, even for secular subjects, is needed. Such a review should consider both the religious concerns at stake, and also the impact on the children's education as a result of such a restriction. We note that charedi boys' schools often only employ male teachers despite there being no specific Equality Act exemption to allow this. Other issues relating to the Equality Act that we have identified in charedi schools are set out in appendix 1.

6.2. Extremism

We believe that the government should be monitoring all schools for evidence of extremism. See appendix 2.

6.3. Relationship and Sex Education (RSE)

Ofsted reports on charedi schools have been focusing on the lack of RSE or the limited nature of the British values curriculum offered. We believe that the resistance to RSE and British values has at times provided a smokescreen to not improve secular education. It is important that concerns relating to the teaching of these subjects and values should not be employed as a distraction from the broader concerns in relation to the failure to teach basic literacy and numeracy skills.

We suggest that Ofsted visits should focus primarily on the provision of teaching and the quality of the education and qualifications through all key stages and whether children are being educated to be ready for employment and an autonomous life at the end of KS5. See appendix 2.



6.4. Admissions in maintained schools

We are concerned that, in some cases, maintained charedi schools have admission policies that do not comply with the [Schools Admission Code](#), and charedi maintained schools are using unregulated lotteries and other methods to exclude children whom they do not want to admit. A review of admissions in charedi state schools is required, as the limited number of places available has resulted in unfair practices.

Further, the process for challenging admissions policies through the [Office of the Schools' Adjudicator](#) is not effective. See appendix 3 for more details and recommended updates to the School Admissions Code.

7. Conclusions

We believe that several legislative changes are needed to improve secular education for charedi children. As set out in this paper, we believe that there is overwhelming evidence that gaps and loopholes in current legislation are being exploited to deny UK children the education to which they are entitled.

Our recommendations include:

- A requirement for full-time institutions catering for children of compulsory school age to be required to register as schools.
- A requirement for local authorities to maintain home-schooling registers.
- Improvement in the current SAO process, and an enforcement mechanism to ensure that children stay in education or full-time training to either age 18 or the end of year 13.
- A review of the types of education that should qualify as 16-18 education (including externally recognised qualifications).
- A requirement for independent schools to prepare students for a minimum number of GCSEs (or equivalent external recognised qualification) in set core subjects.
- A minimum stipulated time per week for core curriculum subjects at each key stage.
- A requirement for all schools that end at a non-standard age (i.e. not year 6 or 13) to set out a viable pathway to the next phase, and how their pupils will obtain external qualifications at both KS4 and KS5.
- The removal of charitable status from independent schools which continually deliver sub-standard academic results or have safety or safeguarding concerns, and ultimately their closure.
- An update to the School Admissions Code, including ensuring that lotteries are run by the Local Authorities or the DfE (and that parties involved in lottery selections have no communal or vested interests).
- A review of the Office of School Adjudication process for school admissions policies challenges.
- A review of how extremism is assessed in schools.
- A review into the application of the [Equality Act in schools](#), and how parents can challenge practices that are contrary to the Act.
- A DfE investigation into setting up more maintained charedi schools.

Eve Sacks

Nahamu chair

1 September 2024

Attachments:

Addendum A-E

Appendices 1-5



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ACCOMPANYING NAHAMU EDUCATION BRIEFING

Addenda

- A** Nahamu's Advocacy
- B** The Labour Party's Education Policy Proposals
- C** Consequences of denial of secular education
- D** Diversity of charedi communities
- E** Further Details on Educational Asks

Appendices

- 1** Equality Act
- 2** Our other Concerns
- 3** Admissions in Maintained Schools
- 4** Twitter X thread highlighting safeguarding issues
- 5** Glossary



Addendum A

Nahamu's advocacy

Nahamu's advocacy focuses on a series of systemic harms faced by members of the charedi community in the UK. We categorise the harms that we have identified under the following sub-headings:

- **Denial of education:** Issues of concern include unregistered schools, substandard education in registered schools both at primary and secondary levels, lack of access to recognised qualifications resulting in exclusion from further education, and subsequent limited career opportunities.
- **Forced marriage:** Often victims do not realise at the time of their marriage that they have been subject to coercion as community members are groomed from childhood to agree to marry a stranger chosen by their parents. As a result of these coercive practices, individuals may be subject to marital rape and coerced reproduction. Some women are unable to leave a marriage due to honour-based abuse or “get” abuse²¹.
- **Coerced criminality:** Within the community, there is a normalisation of earning cash in hand which is not declared for income tax. This practice facilitates fraudulent benefit claims and money laundering.
- **Covering up of abuse:** The culture within parts of the charedi community may result in the protection of the predator whilst the victims are shunned. This includes child, sexual and domestic abuse at times by a predatorial high status communal figure, such as a Rabbi. The power of the gatekeepers to restrict unmediated access to community members has meant a lack of studies into the prevalence of abuse in this community, and whether the incidence of such abuse differs from that of wider society.
- **Denial of autonomy:** Overlapping with spiritual and honour-based abuses, this includes enforcement of women's draconian dress code, women's forced head shaving and the prohibition of women driving. For both genders, there is a lack of choice or access to hobbies, careers, friendship groups, literature, entertainment, and mainstream media. The concern that any behavioural breaches in community expectations will impact one's children's marriage prospects keeps most charedi parents in line.

²¹ Get Abuse: when a Jewish man refuses to grant a religious divorce, once the marriage is over, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62c6df068fa8f54e855dfe31/Domestic_Abuse_Act_2021_Statutory_Guidance.pdf paragraph 82 and 83 see here: <https://lawandreligionuk.com/2022/05/17/withholding-religious-divorce-controlling-and-coercive-behaviour-moher/>



Addendum B

Government policy

Recent government initiatives have sought to improve the educational outcomes for those who have traditionally been unable to access high quality secondary education. However, there are many additional challenges with improving standards within insular groups, particularly when the groups' religious leaders resist changes to their traditional schooling methodology and ideology.

The Labour Party has set an education mission that, under their leadership, education policy should:

“Break down the barriers to opportunity at every stage, for every child by reforming education and childcare systems, raising standards everywhere, and preparing young people for work and life.”²²

Our Concerns with “hard to reach”

We are concerned that “hard to reach” children will be excluded from this mission, as some religious leaders are pro-actively resistant to breaking down barriers, raising standards, and preparing their children for employment or life in modern Britain. When parents do wish to improve their children’s educational attainment, they are often subject to family and communal pressure to send their children to substandard community institutions. The failure to address the needs of children in insular groups which are hard to reach, such as the charedi community, should be regarded as a species of “soft bigotry of low expectations”²³ currently enabled by light touch government regulation. To ensure that “no child is left behind”²⁴, more controls are needed to improve the standard of educational provision in the less regulated independent sector.

The Human Rights Act 1988²⁵ provides that each child is entitled to education²⁶, and that parents can choose a school according to their religious convictions. When parents do not want to educate their child, it therefore falls upon the state to ensure that the child will receive a broad and balanced education, even when that child attends an independent faith school. Children’s rights extend to the receipt of teaching towards recognised external qualifications which will enable a wide range of careers options. We believe that the provision of such an education is possible in a manner which facilitates a parent’s right to choose a school according to their religious conviction.

Loopholes and gaps

The current education system in the UK has too many gaps and loopholes which facilitate non-participation in a broad and purposeful education. Community leaders utilise such operational gaps, and charedi children are being pushed into the gaps such that many are systemically denied an acceptable and suitable level of education. Unless attention is devoted to closing these gaps, charedi children, particularly boys, will not benefit from the Labour Party’s mission.

²² <https://labour.org.uk/missions/>

²³ A term famously first used by US President George W Bush regarding low standards of schools in black neighbourhoods, he was referring to the practice of expecting less from members of a disadvantaged group and thus implicitly encouraging those people not to reach their full potential.

²⁴ <https://nochildleftbehind.org.uk/> Children can be trapped in an intergenerational cycle of poverty.



Addendum C

Consequences of denial of secular education and lack access to qualifications

1. Interaction with other systemic harms

Nahamu has identified other systemic harms that arise due to the denial of secular education. For example, the charedi lifestyle is expensive (large families, private schooling, expensive kosher food, the need to live within walking distance from a synagogue). Without access to a wide range of careers, many are forced to rely on government benefits²⁷, which may be supplemented by cash-in-hand earnings. Similarly, a lack of ability to earn outside the charedi community can mean that young families are dependent on grandparents and charitable provision from other sectors of the Jewish community (connections with which have been established by senior members of the charedi community) to supplement their household budget. This results in parents becoming dependent on government benefits and beholden to the grandparent's or community leaders' educational preferences.

2. Lifelong disadvantage

Children who are denied a broad and balanced education in independent charedi schools often suffer lifelong disadvantage. The denial of education intentionally limits charedi children's ability to lead an autonomous and financially independent adult life. It is important to understand that one of the aims of the charedi provision of education, which is both limited and insular, is a deliberate intention to restrict the child's potential career opportunities. The rationale is that attendance at university or a vocational training course, or indeed participation in the wider workforce, would result in them meeting peers beyond their insular group, with the resultant concern, that with better education, they might choose an autonomous adult life after exposure to wider British society.

There are other reasons that charedi schools should have better secular education; an argument for improving education to improve charedi men's dignity has been made by charedi headteacher and activist Eli Spitzer²⁸.

3. Denial of Access to Qualifications

There is currently a requirement that a broad and balanced education be provided in schools, although independent schools are not required to offer recognised external qualifications. We believe that all secondary schools (including independent schools) should be required to offer certain core external qualifications for the following reasons:

- A lack of qualifications can contribute to lifelong disadvantage.
- A lack of qualifications makes it extremely difficult to determine whether the education provided is "broad and balanced".
- Many schools engage in "disguised compliance" during the Ofsted inspection process. A requirement for children to be entered for recognised qualifications would promote A-level of transparency over what was being taught, and the quality of the education. For this reason, we also advocate for KS2 and KS3 invigilated testing in inadequate independent schools.
- Charedi schools intentionally limit their pupils career opportunities and pathways to tertiary education by not offering externally recognised qualifications.

²⁷ Child benefits are withdrawn above an income threshold. Those who can claim for 7 children or more have a marginal tax rate over 100%, see Dan Needle's analysis, <https://taxpolicy.org.uk/2023/09/24/70percent/> and anecdotally this incentivises receiving cash in hand earnings as a top up. Recent analysis demonstrates that many of those claiming high levels of child benefit are likely to be charedi, given the high numbers in Hackney, Haringey and Salford <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/money/tax/families-more-than-13-children-claiming-thousands-benefits/>

²⁸ <https://elispitzer.com/2019/08/28/chol-and-the-dignity-gap/>



Addendum D

Diversity of charedi communities

Nahamu's educational concerns do not arise uniformly in all parts of the charedi community. Some parts of the charedi community allow their children to sit A-Levels examinations and to attend university or vocational courses provided the student lives in the family home. This approach balances the ability of a young person to access educational opportunities with parental concerns around assimilation into wider society.

The nature of the limitation of educational opportunity is different for charedi girls compared to charedi boys, and for chassidim compared to other charedim.

1. Chassidic communities

Chassidism is a movement that started in the mid-eighteenth century in what is now the western Ukraine. Its founder was a Rabbi Yisroel, known as the Baal Shem Tov. His students and successors founded several different groups. Today there are a half-dozen large groups, about a dozen medium-sized groups, and dozens of smaller ones. The largest is Satmar, which comprises about 100,000 people worldwide.

Chassidism is similar to other charedi groups in most respects. The most important difference is that chassidim belong to organised groups led by a Rebbe, while non-chassidic charedi Judaism works on a congregational basis and has no larger organised group that it belongs to, even though the rabbis and congregants often are graduates of the same yeshivas and look to the heads of their yeshivas as their teachers and leaders.

In practical terms, due to the ability of the Rebbes to dictate global rules²⁹ chassidic communities tend to be more insular with stricter rules than other charedi groups, with Yiddish often being the language spoken in the family home.

2. Chassidic education

a. Chassidic boys' schools

Almost all the unregistered boys' schools "yeshivas" are associated with various chassidic sects³⁰. These institutions take in boys in the year after their barmitzvah (age 13, equivalent of year 9). They typically run for long hours (Sunday to Thursday, 7:30am to 9pm) and Friday morning, with short holidays (Jewish festivals and three weeks in the summer). The language of instruction is Yiddish, and the education consists entirely of Jewish textual learning (texts are in Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic). The boys study mostly in pairs (*chevruta*) with some lectures given by teachers. Testing is primarily oral; in many cases the boys are not able to fully express themselves in writing (beyond basic sentences) in any language. There are no formal qualifications and secular education (such as maths, English or science) is completely absent.

Chassidic boys' primary schools are known as chedorim and run from age 3 to age 13. Many of these institutions are only registered with the DfE for students up to age 8 or 11 despite having 12 and 13 year-olds on the school roll³¹. Standards vary by sect, but it is common to have only 45 minutes per day of secular education. In some sects there is no secular education before age 7, or after age 11.

²⁹ The Belz driving ban reached the national press in 2015. Many Chassidic sects have the same rules, which are ongoing. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/jun/05/ultra-orthodox-jewish-sect-belz-women-driver-ban-illegal-equality-commission>. Other examples include the requirement for married women to shave their heads under their hair covering. <https://forward.com/culture/187128/ex-hasidic-woman-marks-five-years-since-she-shaved/>

³⁰ Including in Stamford Hill; Satmar, Bobov, Vishnitz, Belz

³¹ This is acknowledged in some Ofsted reports, although we have also heard reports of boys in year 7 and 8 being taught offsite during Ofsted inspections, likely as the school is not registered for these year groups, and because the boys do not receive any secular education.



Many of the boys do not speak English at home, and most of the secular teachers are unqualified³².

We are also concerned about child safety and safeguarding in both registered primary schools and unregistered yeshivas. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this paper to set this out in detail, we are concerned about a long-standing tradition of corporal punishment³³, justified by the verse in Proverbs 13:24 “Spare the rod, spoil the child”³⁴.

b. Chassidic girls’ schools

Chassidic girls do not have the same religious requirement to study Jewish texts (in fact many religious texts are forbidden to charedi girls³⁵). As women are expected to be the breadwinners, especially in the early years of marriage when men are in full time learning, chassidic girls receive secular education sufficient for them to work, usually within the community, including teaching in charedi schools.

Most chassidic girls start school bilingual in English and Yiddish, and religious studies are often taught in Yiddish. The curriculum is very different to the boys’ religious studies curriculum and is limited to material that the girls would need to know; bible stories, rules of the Sabbath and keeping kosher, as well as modesty rules. Nevertheless, it took an inadequate Ofsted rating of the Vishnitz Girls School noting that in early years, all communications with the children were in Yiddish, for the teaching to be delivered in English³⁶.

Secular education in maths and English is generally adequate, particularly to the end of KS3. Our concerns are more around the limited curriculum at KS4 where elements of the GCSE syllabus are not taught (either redacted from textbooks, or special charedi textbooks are used)³⁷. We are also concerned with the limited GCSEs especially in independent schools³⁸ (in some schools no science GCSEs are offered), and even the flagship maintained Yesodey Hatorah Girls Senior School has previously not offered biology or combined science GCSE³⁹.

Most chassidic girls, even those who perform well at GCSE at maintained schools, do not have the opportunity to study towards 3 A-levels in a suitable range of facilitating subjects⁴⁰, although vocational qualifications are offered, including at the Be’er Miriam seminary housed in the

³² There are workshops run by Hackney council to educate the teachers in chassidic schools in how to teach English literacy, but the impact will be minimal due to the lack of time the teachers have to teach literacy and numeracy.

³³ https://twitter.com/Posenlzy/status/1769716572304642367?t=tTUdDHn0Hwyyrp2T_gXvMQ&s=08 see appendix 4

³⁴ Catholic schools went to the House of Lords arguing in defence of corporal punishment, using this same verse as a religious imperative. However, in a 2005 decision, the court ruled that even with a deeply held religious belief, religious practise was limited when other human rights were at stake.

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200405/ldjudgmt/jd050224/will-1.htm>

³⁵ “Rabbi Eliezer says: ‘Whoever teaches his daughter Torah, it is as if he taught her *“tiflut”* [translated as promiscuity], Talmud Sotah 3:4 https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Sotah.3.4?lang=bi.

³⁶ <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/27/138516>. Inspection 1 March 2022

³⁷ Topics that are avoided include: romance (English literature), anything to do with other faiths (English literature, history), anything to do the age of the earth or the big bang (geography, physics), anything to do with reproduction or evolution (biology). For example, a charedi school teaching a GCSE History course that covers nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain will not teach the suffragettes’ campaigns and a GCSE Biology course will not cover human reproduction, see here: <https://humanists.uk/2018/06/26/state-faith-school-caught-redacting-textbooks-by-humanists-uk-rated-inadequate-by-ofsted/>

³⁸ See Beis Rochel D’Satmar girls the only GCSEs offered were (numbers in brackets indicates number of entries) art (10), English language (53), geography (47), mathematics (53). As the DfE website indicates that there were 135 pupils, the average achievement was 1.2 GCSE each. We spoke to a former pupil who only sat 2 GCSEs. <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/school/100293/beis-rochel-d-satmar-girls-school/secondary/subjects-entered>

³⁹ The parent we spoke to had a daughter who attended a few years ago, but the most recent DfE data, <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/school/133599/yesodey-hatorah-senior-girls-school/secondary/subjects-entered> indicates that 19% achieved Ebacc; likely did so by taking physics, chemistry and computer science (64 entries for mathematics, there was only 1 entry for biology, 60 for chemistry, and 40 for physics.)

⁴⁰ Only Lubavitch Senior Girls offer 3 A-levels over 2 years, however, the subject offering is limited, see note 64.



maintained Yesoday Hatorah Senior school (which does not have its own maintained sixth form). Courses are offered in book-keeping, IT, floristry, silk painting, and hairdressing⁴¹. The lack of access to (facilitating) A-levels means that Chassidic girls who perform well at GCSE do not have a pathway to tertiary education.

3. Litvish Education

The non-chassidic part of the charedi community is referred to as *Litvak* or *Litvish* charedim, or Lithuanian charedim, or *Misnagdim*.

a. Litvish girls' schools

Several of the Litvish charedi girls' schools are maintained, and girls complete GCSE courses in a reasonably wide range of subjects, although our concerns about redacting "unsuitable" topics also apply⁴². Those in maintained school will typically sit more GCSEs than those in independent schools, and many girls will perform extremely well. The maintained schools do not all have a sixth form so the girls go to seminaries where there can be an option to sit A-levels (generally only 1 or 2 with very limited subject choices)⁴³. When charedi girls' schools do have a KS5 offering, the A-levels offered can be often limited⁴⁴.

b. Litvish boys' schools

Some charedi boys' schools do prepare their students for GCSEs. These schools are almost all independent and most end after year 10 when the boys progress to yeshiva, despite still being of compulsory school age. Outcomes vary; some schools offer a range of GCSEs, such as Menorah Grammar School (independent, inadequate) and Mesivta in Manchester (maintained, requires improvement). The only charedi boys' school that offers A-levels (including a good range of facilitating subjects) is Menorah Grammar School⁴⁵. These schools face significant challenges in delivering secular education; limited time set, lack of prioritisation by the senior leadership and difficulties in finding suitable male teachers.

At other charedi registered boys' schools the standards are lower, ranging from a few GCSEs to some schools where the boys are only offered the opportunity to sit GCSEs in maths and English, possibly only at foundation level, perhaps sitting the exams at a different school⁴⁶. We saw the year 9 timetable for one of these schools, and the time allocated to secular education was 6 hours a week, with half of these secular lessons taking place after 4pm. It would also be common for some boys to drop out after year 9, or during year 10 to attend yeshiva, so these boys would not be entered for any GCSEs. There appears to be no local authority (or other) follow up when boys leave these schools after year 10 when they are still of compulsory school age.

⁴¹ <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/4043454/accounts-and-annual-returns>

⁴² <https://humanists.uk/2018/06/26/state-faith-school-caught-redacting-textbooks-by-humanists-uk-rated-inadequate-by-ofsted/>

⁴³ Seminaries / Sem are 16-18 institutions for charedi girls.

⁴⁴ Yesoday Hatorah Senior Girls (Stamford Hill) and Beis Yaakov (Manchester) are two maintained charedi girls' schools that do not have a KS5. Beth Jacob High (Hendon) independent, has year 12 only. Menorah High School for Girls (maintained) serves the more modern part of the charedi community and offers a good range of A-levels, but its intake is exclusive, so it is not an option for chassidic girls whose parents would be open to them studying towards three A-levels.

⁴⁵ Very little information is available online; at Menorah Grammar 26 students were entered for 26 A-levels and 15 level 3 qualifications. The subjects offered at A-level included: maths, physics, economics, chemistry, biology, English literature, history and geography. The average grade was "C". The school has had 4 Ofsted inspections since 2020 and it remains inadequate.

⁴⁶ Some schools have no GCSEs per the DfE data but the boys might sit maths / and or English language GCSE at another school. One parent told us that her son had expected to sit both maths and English (at foundation level) but in error he was only entered for one GCSE. He didn't pass it.



Addendum E

Specifics of educational changes needed

More details of the specific recommendations in section 5 of the paper are set out here.

1. Require yeshivas to register as schools when they cater for children of compulsory school age (5.3.1)

The now scrapped Schools' Bill (subsequently referred to as 'the Bill') would have closed a loophole whereby yeshivas do not qualify as schools, as they do not provide an education suitable for children of compulsory school age. As a result, yeshivas fall outside the scope of regulation and thus the boys attending such institutions are unprotected from a substandard education. The Bill would have changed the definition of a school so that a yeshiva, with students of compulsory school age, would be required to register.

Any new legislation should be sufficiently robust to pre-empt new loopholes; for example, the creation of multiple "part time" institutions that individually fall outside the "hours in education" requirement of the legislation. The new legislation should criminalise all those involved in running unregistered schools for children of compulsory school age (not just the "proprietor", who might be hard to identify). The legislation should also establish serious penalties for breach of the requirements, including substantial prison terms. If the only possible consequence of a conviction is a fine, money will be raised within the community to pay it.

Local councils should be in possession of information regarding any institutions or individuals being used by a parent for the home-schooling of their child even if their child is stated to only attend that institution or receive support from an individual for a small part of their education. This requirement is relevant not only to monitor quality of educational provision but also for safe-guarding purposes.

It was estimated in 2016 that there were approximately 500 post barmitzvah⁴⁷ charedi boys in each school year in Hackney and Haringey attending unregistered yeshivas⁴⁸. This figure is now likely to have increased and stands in stark contrast to the approximately 25 boys per cohort who attend the only registered post barmitzvah charedi boys' school in the area: Yesoday Hatorah⁴⁹. It should be noted that only 6 boys sat GCSEs in maths and English language in summer 2022⁵⁰ at that school, although it is possible in other years the cohort is larger. As such, over 95% of charedi boys in these boroughs receive no measurable secular education after their barmitzvah (in some cases the secular education ends earlier, after year 6)⁵¹.

Additionally, even when an independent charedi boys' secondary school is registered, there is often no provision for year 11. The boys sit a restricted number of GCSEs in year 10, and then attend unregistered yeshivas in year 11 when they are still of compulsory school age. These "year 11 yeshivas" should also be required to register as schools.

2. Register of children not in school (5.3.2)

The Bill also provided for increased compliance around home-schooling and would have required Local Authorities to maintain registers of home-schooled children. We believe that this legislative

⁴⁷ Barmitzvah at age 13. Chedorim usually run until year 8 but it's common for year 8 (and sometimes year 7) to have no secular education. Some chassidic primary schools are registered as 3-11, some as 3-7 and some as 3-13.

⁴⁸ <https://www.jpr.org.uk/reports/rise-and-rise-jewish-schools-united-kingdom-numbers-trends-and-policy-issues>

⁴⁹ <https://get-information->

schools.service.gov.uk/Establishments/Establishment/Details/100287?searchQueryString=tok%3D8T189uzj%26startIndex%3D850%26Count%3D881

⁵⁰ <https://www.find-school-performance-data.service.gov.uk/school/100287/yesodey-hatorah-school/secondary/subjects-entered>

⁵¹ One of the chedorim, Tashbar, does not teach any secular at all even to primary school age boys, see the Times investigation by Andrew Norfolk: https://youtu.be/40Fc12p_exY?si=l4clymehFO_rx5ML



change is essential. As set out above, when asked by the local authority, chassidic parents will often claim to be home-schooling their sons, notwithstanding that they are in fact spending up to 60 hours a week in a yeshiva and receiving no home-schooling whatsoever.

The rules on home-schooling should be recast to make it clear that parents of children who are studying full-time outside the home cannot claim to be home-schooling their children. A register of home-schooled children should be maintained with regular in-person visits (including unscheduled visits) by the local authority including an objective way of measuring educational outcomes. Such measures are required to ensure that the parents are in fact providing a full-time education at home that is suitable for school age children.

Local councils should be in possession of information regarding any institutions/individuals being used by a parent for the home-schooling of their child even if their child is stated to only attend that institution or receive support from an individual for a small part of their education. This is relevant not only to monitor quality of educational provision but also for safe-guarding purposes. This was picked up by the Flick Drummond private member's bill in the previous government, and was mentioned in the recent King's Speech.

3. Independent schools that fail children on minimum academic standards, unsafe buildings or with serious safeguarding issues, should be shut down (5.4.1)

Independent primary schools that fail to provide basic literacy and numeracy, or independent secondary schools achieving GCSE results below a certain acceptable floor, or KS5 institutions that do not offer suitable KS5 qualifications should, if they are unwilling or unable to introduce fundamental reform, be shut down. These schools contribute to lifelong disadvantage, and there should be no place for them in modern Britain. The same should apply when serious safeguarding issues have been established, as these schools are not safe places for children.

More needs to be done to assess academic achievements in charedi independent schools for children with additional needs. Following such assessments, the provision to meet the needs for such children should be determined. Those schools with poor facilities, low-quality care, or teaching inadequate for the specified needs of their students should be closed.

4. Improved School Attendance Order (SAO) process (5.4.2)

The SAO⁵² process should be updated to ensure that it is effective⁵³ at getting children, who are not enrolled in registered schools, into suitable (maintained) schools. Local authorities should receive sufficient funding to ensure that every child missing from education, or where home education is sub-standard, can be allocated a suitable maintained school.

There need to be sufficient places in suitable maintained schools for the local authorities to allocate places to ensure all the children can attend suitable schools. Parents must either accept the place offered at the maintained school or demonstrate that they are opting for a registered (and thus approved) independent school. Additionally, the consequences for non-compliance (fines) are too low.

5. Consideration should be given into making KS5 mandatory with an enforcement mechanism (5.4.3)

In 1998, the then Labour government legislated that all children should remain in full time education until they reached 18 years of age. However, whilst the intention was good, there is no legal enforcement mechanism, and full-time education after age 16 is not well defined. We recommend

⁵² <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/legal-action-to-enforce-school-attendance>

⁵³ We were told by Hackney council that they will not use the SAO process for charedi boys of secondary school age as "we do not have any suitable maintained schools for them."



that consideration is given to the school leaving age being changed to the last Friday in June in the academic year of a young person's 18th birthday. After that point, and until the end of June in year 13, the young adult could be themselves subject to a school (or education) attendance order.

We also recommend that the definition of full-time education for 16 to 18 year old students is clearly defined to exclude institutions solely providing religious instruction, see section 8 below.

6. Require schools to provide a minimum number of hours of secular education (5.4.4)

Many of the registered charedi primary schools are only allowing for 45-60 minutes of secular education a day, in the late afternoon, and some children, in some year groups receive no secular education at all. The amount of time a school should be dedicating to core subjects per week (in total) should be set out in legislation, e.g.

- English and maths (at KS1) 15 hours
- English, maths and science (at KS2) 20 hours
- English, maths, science, humanities & language⁵⁴ (at KS3) 22 hours
- Set aside for GCSE teaching (at KS4) – see section 8 22 hours

The time commitment should be set so that these rules would not have any impact on most schools, for example performing arts schools which successfully achieve dual curriculum⁵⁵. Schools which do not meet this threshold, particularly where KS2 or other SAT or GCSE exam results are poor, should be put under special measures to allow time for supervised external monitoring and, if they still fail to comply, they should be shut down.

This legislation should also consider the time of day that the secular education takes place; it is common in charedi boys' schools for the secular education to only, or mainly, take place in the afternoons or early evening. We would recommend that all these hours of secular education should be during the core school day (8:30 – 15:30) with at least half taking place before 12:30.

7. Amendment to the independent schools' framework such that independent secondary schools are required to offer recognised qualifications at both KS4 and KS5

• Qualifications at KS4

We recommend that all schools prepare all children for a minimum of 6 GCSEs (or similar recognised qualifications (iGCSEs, intermediate level of the International Baccalaureate, National 5 (Scottish qualifications)) in defined core subjects; English language, English literature, mathematics, combined double science (unless the student is studying all 3 sciences; physics, chemistry and biology separately⁵⁶) and at least one further subject). The only exceptions should be for children with special needs who have an EHCP or a school following the national curriculum of another country (in which case the child must be entered for the appropriate recognised overseas qualifications that are of an equivalent standard to GCSE).

We are particularly concerned that where charedi schools do offer the opportunity for children to sit recognised qualifications, they are offering non-facilitating GCSEs such as food technology, or business studies rather than facilitating subjects. The reason for this is likely to related to concerns around some of the content of facilitating subjects: for example, reproduction or evolution in biology, or the big bang theory or carbon dating in physics. However, not having facilitating GCSEs means that KS5 and future choices are reduced. We believe that it would be preferable to offer facilitating subjects even with "gaps" in curriculum coverage than give the children a 2nd tier

⁵⁴ Biblical Hebrew is an EBacc GCSE so this could be the language provision.

⁵⁵ <https://globalacademy.com/study/global-academy-curriculum/>

⁵⁶ Charedi schools avoid offering combined science or biology GCSE; this limits career options.



education with non-facilitating GCSEs⁵⁷. It is for this reason that we advocate for certain compulsory core GCSE subjects.

- **Qualifications at KS5**

A full range of facilitating A-levels (or equivalent such as the International Baccalaureate, A-levels or the new Advanced British Standard) should be offered by all institutions that cater for children of all academic abilities to include the facilitating A-levels: Mathematics, English (either literature or English language and literature), physics, chemistry, biology, history and geography. Offering a full range of facilitating A-levels would allow for students to choose 3 humanities essay-based A-levels or 3 maths and science A-levels or a mix of both to cater for all aptitudes (with exemptions for maths schools where all students enrolled have a particular aptitude for maths and science)⁵⁸.

Alternatively, providers that cater for less academically able students could offer BTECs, T-levels or support apprenticeship schemes.

Currently yeshivas and girls' seminaries that educate children aged 16-18 count as "full time education" for the purposes of KS5 education⁵⁹ despite the education often being wholly based on religious texts, or operating via cooperation agreements with local colleges to allow an extremely limited range of A-levels. Independent KS5 institutions should be required to offer a range of qualifications, including resits of English and Maths GCSEs (on a similar basis to maintained KS5 institutions).

We are concerned that when seminaries do offer A-levels, the subject choice is based on the skills sets of existing teachers, or on the perceived suitability of the subject content, and this can mean the provision is either niche (i.e. not suitable for all the girls in the cohort such as mathematics⁶⁰ or art) or not facilitating for entry to tertiary education (i.e. photography). The A-levels are often taught by unqualified teachers. Additionally, often the A-level offering is deliberately restricted to 1 or 2 subjects (hence the concern over niche subjects) to avoid the girls obtaining the qualifications necessary to access further education. This restriction provides an element of intentional coercion for an adult life as a religious wife and mother of many children.⁶¹ We are also concerned that some KS5 16-18 seminaries provide very limited qualifications e.g. in flower arranging, or NVQ to bright students, who have performed well at GCSE thus deliberately limiting their career opportunities.

8. Invigilated testing should be mandatory in some circumstances at KS2 and KS3 (5.4.6)

When Ofsted reports show that an independent school's educational curriculum is limited, that

⁵⁷ Secondary schools that do not prepare children for 6 GCSEs should be shut down. Gaps in provision (in respect of topics that conflict with religious belief, such as evolution) should not be a reason for shutting down schools if the GCSE attainment is similar to the national average.

⁵⁸ We are particularly concerned with charedi schools that claim to offer "geography" or "physics" A-level but then say it's not viable as only one pupil wants to take it. Schools should be required to teach all core subjects to A-level even if there is only one student. Maintained schools should get the funding to enable this.

⁵⁹ Some charedi 16-18 "KS5" institutions also count as colleges for the purposes of student visas, despite offering no recognised qualifications.

⁶⁰ A-level mathematics is a facilitating subject but likely only suitable for around 50% of a cohort, hence not ideal if it is one of only two or 3 A-levels on offer.

⁶¹ For example, at Lubavitch House Girls Senior, one of the few charedi state schools to offer A-levels, the following A-levels were offered (the number indicated the number of girls entered for each subject); Accounting/Finance(3), Art & Design Fine Art (1), Art & Design Graphics (6), Art & Design Photography (5), Biology (1), Chemistry (1), English language (2), Psychology (5) [https://www.find-school-performance-data.service.gov.uk/school/145609/lubavitch-house-school-\(senior-girls\)/16-to-18/subjects-entered](https://www.find-school-performance-data.service.gov.uk/school/145609/lubavitch-house-school-(senior-girls)/16-to-18/subjects-entered). At Beth Jacob Grammar School, one of the few charedi independent schools to offer A-levels; the A-levels entered were as follows: Art & Design Fine Art (1), Art & Design Photography (11), Biology (1), History (1), Mathematics (3), Biblical Hebrew (8).



school should be subject to annual externally invigilated end of KS2 and KS3 testing⁶² covering English and maths at KS2 (not necessarily the same tests as the SATs for maintained schools) and English, maths and science at KS3. We believe that this approach is necessary due to the incidence of false compliance, and the difficulties of gauging exactly how “inadequate” the education is. We note that, when similar tests were introduced in chassidic schools in New York, evidence emerged that the teachers were participating in cheating.

Without externally invigilated testing it is hard to differentiate between Ofsted graded inadequate schools where pupils are literate and numerate and can easily catch up in year 7, compared to totally substandard inadequate schools where children are not able to read, write or even speak English.

9. Schools that do not have provisions for all year groups should be required to map out pathways to the next phase (5.4.7)

Unless a school ends at the end of year 6 or year 13, the school should be required to map out a pathway to the next phase of education. This pathway should be disclosed either in the Ofsted report or in the DFE online data, including both what the standard pathway to the next phase of education is, and the number of children who followed either this pathway or another acceptable pathway to the next stage of education in the preceding 3 years. For example, a school ending at the end of year 8 or year 10 would have to demonstrate the pathway for the pupils to sit GCSEs in year 11 in a different registered school. It is imperative that the pathways are clearly mapped out, and that the destination school will take the pupils with pre-conditions. Academic pre-conditions would be acceptable for an A-level pathway in year 12, but not for a GCSE pathway following year 8 or 10.

Many charedi boys’ schools end after year 8 (chedorim) or year 10, with no pathway of where the pupils will proceed to for GCSEs (as currently they attend unregistered yeshivas). Many girls’ charedi schools end after year 11 with no provision of a pathway for A-levels. Pathways to A-levels, T-levels (or equivalent) should be required for both independent and maintained schools for children of all ability levels.

10. Funding for Local Authorities (5.4.8)

Local Authorities should receive appropriate per child funding to support any of the following:

- Home-schooled children
- Children in independent schools described as inadequate or requiring improvement
- Children missing from education

This funding would allow the local authorities to run effective School Attendance Order processes, maintain lists of children not in education, make regular home visits to children being home schooled, make regular visits to independent schools that had persistently poor Ofsted grades or low results in tests⁶³ or GCSEs, and to invigilate routine testing of pupils in inadequate schools to ensure that there is no cheating.

In extremis, the local authorities could send qualified teachers into inadequate independent schools to ensure that children are not disadvantaged by their parents’ decisions to send them to schools that are not providing them with adequate secular education.

11. Open more maintained charedi schools (5.4.9)

There are charedi parents who would like the option of sending their children to charedi maintained

⁶² Perhaps in year 6 and year 9. Regardless of what is chosen the testing must be externally invigilated and other steps taken to ensure that there is no cheating (e.g. if same paper used in many schools, the tests would have to be run concurrently with invigilators).

⁶³ We advocate for invigilated testing at KS2 and KS3 for children in inadequate independent schools.



schools. The creation of a maintained charedi boys' secondary school in London⁶⁴ would allow the Local Authorities to issue School Attendance Orders when boys were missing from education, as currently in London, there is no charedi boys' state secondary schools; despite there being three girls' maintained secondary schools, and a charedi state boys' secondary school in Manchester which has a smaller charedi community. As a result, some charedi parents send their sons to Hasmonean High School for Boys. However, Hasmonean Boys is already very oversubscribed.

Additionally, a maintained sixth form college should be opened for both charedi girls and boys. These sixth form colleges would offer a pathway to KS5 qualifications including both A-levels and BTECs or equivalent for all charedi children.

The removal of the 50% faith cap for free schools is a welcome step to facilitating more charedi maintained schools, however, this should be done alongside a review of the Schools Admissions Code (see appendix 3). It is not clear that charedi groups will be willing or able to set up free schools given the level of expertise needed to launch a successful free school bid.

One of the barriers to charedi independent schools teaching secular education to an adequate standard, is a lack of resources to employ qualified teachers; whilst the schools ask for fees from the parents, they are run on a very limited budget (due to the limited ability for charedi parents to pay fees at A-level common in other independent schools). Therefore, the terms of employment may not appeal to qualified teachers of secular subjects. The schools all have charitable status, but the financial arrangements of these schools is beyond the scope of this paper. However, we note that if a Labour government were to remove charitable status from these schools, their financial position may worsen dramatically, and many may become unsustainable⁶⁵.

A risk of opening a new charedi maintained school is that some community leaders may tell parents they are forbidden to send their boys to a school with secular education; therefore the approach of opening a new maintained charedi boys secondary school would only work in conjunction with the shutting of inadequate independent and unregistered schools, and an improved system of school attendance orders.

Maintained sixth form colleges should be opened for both charedi girls and boys, in London, Manchester and Gateshead. These sixth form colleges would offer a pathway to KS5 qualifications including both A-levels and BTECs or equivalent for all charedi children. Realistically most charedi independent schools that exist at KS4 are too small to be able to offer a range of facilitating A-levels or equivalent, as many only have one class per cohort.

12. Special educational needs (5.4.10)

Additional training and resources are required to ensure that children with SEND are adequately catered for within mainstream provision in charedi schools. The specifics of what provisions are needed are beyond the scope of this paper, but they must address the current onerous financial burden on charedi parents to pay for tutoring, teaching assistants, or other support that the child might need within the school day, as well as moving away from the current pressure to place charedi children with SEND in specialist schools, some of which operate at a very high level, but reduce integration, and others, which are often unregulated and do not meet educational needs.

⁶⁴ Particularly in Hackney / Haringey where currently circa 600 boys per school year are attending unregistered institutions.

⁶⁵ Some schools do not officially charge fees but "demand" charitable donations of a set amount per child per year.



Appendix 1

Equality Act issues

A review into the Equality Act (including the ability of faith schools to only employ of that particular faith is needed,) taking on board both the religious issues at stake, and also the impact on the children's education.

1. Difficulties in recruiting teachers

Charedi boys' secondary schools (and in some cases primary schools) will not employ female teachers. Whilst the Equality Act might be concerned with discrimination against female teachers who apply for jobs in these schools⁶⁶ the disadvantaged parties in this arrangement are the boys, as only allowing male teachers makes recruitment very difficult, and inevitably leads to lower standards, and difficulties in recruitment.

2. Parents' evenings & school shows

Charedi boys' schools usually only invite fathers to parents' evenings, whilst charedi girls' schools only invite mothers to parents' evenings and school shows. These restrictions apply in some maintained schools e.g. only allowing women to attend school shows at girls' schools. At some co-ed primary schools, whilst boys are allowed to sing in shows, girls can speak but not sing. If parents raise an objection that this practice is contrary to the Equality Act, they are told that the school's Rabbi has decided the policy, and unless the parents have a budget for expensive legal action there is not much they can do about the discrimination.

3. Admissions in both maintained & independent schools

Some admissions criteria in maintained and independent schools seem to be contrary to the Equality Act. Examples include:

- Admissions in chassidic independent schools preventing women who drive from enrolling their children. There is no objection or review mechanism for admissions in independent schools.
- Admissions in charedi maintained schools not allowing children a place if the mothers have been seen in "immodest clothing". This is subjective and modesty standards are different for men and women, however, when prospective parents have challenged this via the Office of the School Adjudicator, the Adjudicator has upheld admissions policies focussing on women's dress code⁶⁷.

4. Dress code for mothers, female pupils and teachers

Some Orthodox Jewish schools set out dress codes for mothers, female staff members and female students as follows:

- Girls must wear skirts and cover elbows. Male pupils can wear trousers and short sleeves.
- Mothers must wear skirts and cover elbows for school pick-ups or to attend school events such as school shows or parents' night, whereas fathers can wear trousers and short sleeves.
- Female teachers (whatever their faith) are required to wear skirts and cover elbows. In some schools, married women may be required to cover their hair.

Although we know of multiple breaches of the Equality Act by charedi schools, without budgets for expensive legal action, parents have no method to address these breaches.

⁶⁶ Is maintaining these schools as "all male spaces" a reasonable exclusion under the Equality Act?

⁶⁷https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/61dd64c6e90e07037ba76b27/ADA3781_Yesoday_Hatorah_Senior_Girls_School_Hackney+10_January_2022.pdf ADA3781, paragraph 28/29 women's dress code as a religious activity.



Appendix 2

Our other concerns

1. Limitations of Ofsted reports

It is a matter of concern that charedi independent schools can receive a “Good” Ofsted even when children only obtain a minimum number of GCSEs, and pupils are off-rolling at the end of year 8 or 10 with no pathway to another registered school. Ofsted reports should focus less on whether lessons on British values, PHSE, RSE are provided or whether safeguarding is adequate, and instead should focus more on educational standards, academic qualifications and pathways to the next phase of education. We await new guidelines about Ofsted reports.

2. Extremism in schools

Extremism in schools should be assessed, but not by Ofsted. A separate body, perhaps operated out of the Home Office, or the Commission for Countering Extremism could monitor extremism, alongside Prevent, and be given a watching brief on concerns arising in these schools including non-violent, inward-facing extremism. Examples of our concerns around religious extremism:

- The Equality Act concerns listed in appendix 1.
- In co-ed primary schools, children being split by gender for religious studies, with the boys learning Talmud. The girls learn a variety of subjects, and these are covered in different ways which can result in girls studying alternative religious texts or spending time learning practical domestic tasks, such as checking salad leaves for bugs. The same principle applies in secondary schools that have a girls’ division and a boys’ division.
- Redaction or omission of parts of the national curriculum or GCSE content, such as:
 - Science: reproduction, carbon dating, big bang, evolution
 - History: Reformation of the Church, women’s suffrage, references to other religions
 - Geography: Plate tectonics (and age of earth)
 - English: Literature containing romance, other faiths, or reference to drugs or alcohol
- Refusal to participate in sports’ tournaments or other activities with children from schools of other faiths, or with Jewish children who are not charedi, such that charedi children have a totally insular and isolated upbringing, never meeting any other child with a different worldview.
- Avoidance of activities with children of the other gender (for example, a single gender Jewish secondary school not wanting to take part in a Holocaust education event in a co-ed Jewish secondary school).

3. PHSE and Relationship and Sex Education

Registered charedi schools that *are* inspected by OFSTED often find they fail when they decline to teach children about relationships, including lesbian, gay and bisexual relationships, and gender reassignment. Whilst PSHE and RSE are important, and we believe, crucial to a child’s development, affording a school’s ideological opposition to delivering those parts of the curriculum the same weight as failure to adequately deliver core curriculum subjects can obscure or even disguise a school’s reluctance to deliver secular education.

Charedi children are in need of PSHE and RSE, perhaps more so than other children, because many are expected to marry and have children as soon as possible in accordance with strict cultural expectations for universal early marriage, as part of the *shidduch* system. With no curriculum enforcement, and indeed, limited take-up for KS5 education as outlined elsewhere in this paper, it is appropriate that PSHE and RSE are delivered in an explicit way in KS4, with teaching around consent and bodily autonomy taught from KS1. We believe these should form part of a proactive approach to



safeguarding, and that refusal to teach and discuss these concepts openly and confidently communicates a significant safeguarding risk in of itself.

However, this safeguarding risk, and all safeguarding within a school environment fall within a local authority's duty to investigate and mitigate against. We believe that Ofsted inspections are not the best way to monitor and implement safeguarding within a school, and that the safety and wellbeing of charedi children would be better served if local authorities used their already substantial powers to ensure that all children, including charedi children, are safe.

4. Interaction with Family Courts

We note that in court cases when one parent wants to send the child to a charedi independent school and the other wants a broad and balanced education at a maintained school, two Ofsted reports can be considered side-by-side. In one case, we saw a "good" charedi school where the boys only obtained 1 or 2 GCSEs compared to an "outstanding" state school with a KS5 provision offering a range of facilitating A-levels, with the narrative that the education was similar. The judge ruled the child was to attend the charedi school⁶⁸, which has since been downgraded. Ofsted has confirmed to us that GCSE or other academic outcomes, are not currently considered in their grading process, and so it is difficult to compare a report from a maintained school to a report from an independent school.

⁶⁸ The student left education at the end of year 10, when the charedi school ended, with no GCSE qualifications (he sat one but achieved grade "3".)



Appendix 3

Admissions in maintained schools

1. Schools Admissions Code

A review of the Schools Admissions Code (“Code”) is required as unfair practices have arisen in charedi maintained school admissions, due gaps in the process, allowing schools to exclude families they do not want. A lack of oversight and an overreliance on self-governance has meant that charedi schools can manipulate lotteries to ensure selective intake⁶⁹. We are also concerned that primary schools can prioritise nursery children, as there is no right of appeal to those who are not allocated a nursery place. We recommend an update to the Code as follows:

- Any lotteries for school places must be run by the local authority, using auditable software, to avoid the risk of them being manipulated; parents must always be told whether they were entered into the lottery, and if not, why not.
- Religious practice form must be directly returned to schools by parents. Religious leaders should not be asked to return the forms to schools.
- Parents must be told which priority group their child was assessed under⁷⁰.
- Nursery places must not be used for priority into reception as the Code has no process for parents to appeal when they don’t get a nursery place.
- Any sign-offs by religious leaders must only be for matters that can be objectively agreed and verified by both parties, such as Church, Mosque, Synagogue or religious lecture attendance.
- Schools should not be allowed to use dress code, hair coverings, use of make up or nail polish, or access to the internet, smart phones, TV, cinema or similar criteria for admissions.
- Faith leaders must not be asked to comment on these self-assessed criteria (i.e. things that can’t be independently verified). Further it must be clear exactly what is required to qualify.
- Prospective parents must only be used for current religious observance over the preceding one-year period; parents must not be asked about past or future observance.

2. Process for Objection to Schools Admissions Policies

Further, the process for challenging admissions policies via the Office of the Schools’ Adjudicator (“Adjudicator”) is being abused. When admissions policies are found by the Adjudicator to be non-compliant with the Code, the school can implement new policies which are similarly non-compliant. However, the new policies are then out of scope of the existing challenge, and a new challenge would be needed in a subsequent year, which is likely to be too late for the person who made the original challenge.

We suggest that the objection process needs to be amended, such that after a challenge, the Adjudicator should have to review the updated admissions rules to ensure compliance with the Code, and that no further changes should be allowed for a fixed period.

3. Fair Access Protocol

Additionally, we recommend that children in independent schools without a track record for academic qualifications should automatically qualify for the Fair Access Protocol⁷¹ (on a similar basis to children “out of education for 4 weeks or more”) when a parent goes to court to obtain a place for them at a maintained school.

⁶⁹ <https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/education/school-admissions/20-000-727>

⁷⁰ When parents submit certificates of religious practice, schools have been disregarding them, for example if any of the governors claim to have seen the mother wear “immodest clothes” at any point in the past.

⁷¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6124ab6ae90e0705410757e8/FAP_Guidance.pdf



Appendix 4

Twitter Thread by Izzy Posen 17 March 2024

<https://x.com/PosenIzzy/status/1769716572304642367?s=20>

'A spokesperson for the community said [...], "Our Torah education is not only known for its safety let me tell you a personal story: 1/

Around a year and a half ago, I happened to be in central London and I bumped into a very similar protest that was taking place, complete with Yellow Stars and melodramatic and hyperbolic placards and slogans. 2/

The protesters didn't recognise me, although I recognised them well - I knew them all from my former community (some are even close family members). They're the known suspects, from the extremist and fundamentalist end of the London charedi spectrum. 3/

One of the protesters was handing out flyers to passersby containing their propaganda on how safe the charedi education system is and how government regulation is only a ruse to assimilate all Jews and bring about a spiritual Holocaust. 4/

That very guy - the one making the argument about the safety of their education system and the lack of need for government oversight - was a teacher in the primary school I went to, who once beat me so hard that I blacked out and had face bruises for weeks. 5/

That guy was such a brutal teacher, that he was kicked out of my school - a school in which corporal punishment was a daily occurrence - for being too brutal to the kids. And this very guy was one of the spokespeople for how safe these institutions are for kids. 6/

I went to a primary school where child beating was a daily occurrence - a normal part of the school day. Many of my fellow pupils had physical scars lasting for weeks and have mental scars lasting for life. 7/

This school made my childhood a living hell, and was a prime cause for the significant anxiety that I suffered from throughout my teenage years and to this day. This school is still open and running to this very day. 8/

These schools are anything but safe places for children. They need oversight. They need regulation. I talked more about my experience in this school on a BBC interview 6 years ago:

<https://youtu.be/sK2wXHNGs4g?si=j7NnICidG1N1z6g9> 9/

and this doesn't even begin to scratch the surface on the education issue and about the fact that thousands of chassidic boys grow up without a rudimentary understanding of the language and culture of their own country, or with basic skills in maths, science etc. /End

Also, how absolutely disrespectful to the victims and memory of the Holocaust to abuse it in such a hyperbolic and self-serving way! The government of a liberal and tolerant country - a country that has welcomed in your ancestors as refugees and whose benefits system you abuse and live off - isn't committing another Holocaust just because it expects you to abide by the same rules as everyone else. You don't want government regulation? Fine, then be self-sufficient. Produce graduates that can support themselves without being addicted to benefits from tax-payer money. You want the government to leave you alone, except when it comes to financially propping up your lifestyle.



Appendix 5

Glossary of Hebrew and Yiddish Terms

Aniye Ircha Kodmim – A Jewish teaching that translates to “The poor of your city should come first”, it is used to show that when fighting injustice, one should not ignore those that one observes in their own community.

Barmitzvah – On their 13th birthdays, Jewish males become barmitzvah i.e. adults in Jewish law and are then obligated in Jewish observance in their own right. A barmitzvah is a Jewish lifecycle event and is usually celebrated with family and friends.

Charedi – Relating to, or of, e.g. a charedi school. Can also describe an individual member of the community e.g. a charedi man.

Charedim – plural of charedi. Charedim are a more insular section of the Orthodox Jewish community that aims to keep outside influences on their way of life to a minimum to preserve Jewish tradition as they see it. Charedim is a broad term that encompasses several communities including Chassidim and Litvaks / Misnagdim (see below).

Chassidic – The Chassidic movement is an Orthodox Jewish movement started in the 18th century by Rabbi Yisroel, the Ba’al Shem Tov. His students spread out across Eastern Europe and began their own communities, which developed into today’s Chassidic dynasties. Chassidic means related to, or of, chassidim e.g. a chassidic school or custom. Chassidic teachings are usually from Rebbes (Grand Rabbis or leaders) or other influential Rabbis within their communities.

Chassidim (singular Chassid) – Chassidim are groups of Orthodox Jews who follow chassidic teachings and customs. These groups are led by a Rebbe (Grand Rabbi or leader) who instructs his followers on how to live their lives. This instruction often goes beyond the realm of religious matters and can encompass things like dress codes, whether one’s wife can drive or which schools one can send their children to. An individual person in one of these groups would be called a chassid.

Chedorim (singular cheder) – A cheder is a school for Jewish boys, that focusses mostly, or sometimes entirely, on Jewish studies. They serve boys up until 13 years old.

Chevruta – A chevruta is a learning partner – students traditionally learn Jewish texts aloud in pairs, reading, translating, and discussing the text together, using each other as sounding boards to understand the text and its applications to Jewish life.

Get – A get is the Jewish legal document that ends a marriage (and allows the individuals to marry someone else in a Jewish ceremony).

Kiddushin – Kiddushin is the name of one of the tractates in Talmud. It’s also part of a Jewish marriage ceremony, the details and laws of which are the primary concern of this tractate.

Litvak – A member of the charedi community that originated in Lithuania. The originators and members of this community mostly opposed the spread of chassidic teachings and customs from the late 1700s and on. Members of this community, and their institutions, would be described as Litvish.

Misnagdim – Charedi Jews who are opposed to chassidic teachings, customs, and groups.

Rabbi – Rabbis are individuals (mostly men in Orthodox communities) who are well versed in Jewish law and qualified to make decisions or give instruction in this area. Most synagogues are led by a Rabbi.

Seminary – An education institution for post high school girls where they receive further Jewish education, sometimes alongside secular qualifications.

Shidduch – A shidduch is a proposed match for marriage, often made by a professional matchmaker



(shadchan), but can also be suggested by friends or family members.

Talmud – (also known as gemara). The Talmud is an early body of work, consisting of many tractates, dealing with Jewish law and forms the basis of Jewish text study and law to this day. (There are 2 Talmuds: the Talmud Bavli compiled by the Jewish sages in Babylonia in around 500CE, and the Yerushalmi compiled by sages in the Land of Israel in around 400CE. The former is the one that has been most learnt and commentated on throughout the history of Jewish learning.)

Tikkun Olam – Literally meaning “fixing the world”, it’s a term used in many Jewish spaces for things like social justice.

Torah – Torah broadly refers to all Jewish studies and texts. (In certain contexts, it specifically refers to The Pentateuch, i.e. the Five Books of Moses.)

Torah Im Derech Eretz – Phrase coined by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) in response to the Enlightenment in Europe, and universal education that followed. Teaching Torah together with Derech Eretz (literally “the ways of the land”) i.e. a broader education that will enable the student to participate in the wider society in which they live and earn their own livelihood. Hasmonean High School was set up in line with this ideology.

Yeshiva(s) – A Yeshiva is a boys’ educational institute which teaches only (or at least mainly) Jewish studies. They can cater to students from 13 years and up, but there are some that only start from 18/19 and have students into their 20s.