

FULL INSPECTION REPORT FOR BEIS SOROH SCHENIERER SEMINARY

UKVI LICENCE No: 88CFBXTG0

Education oversight inspection of private further education colleges on behalf of the Home Office's division of United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI)

The overall inspection findings for this college

UKVI Standards for

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|--|------------|
| courses and qualifications are | MET |
| teaching, learning and assessment are | MET |
| the cultural and moral development of students are | MET |
| welfare, health and safety are | MET |
| the effectiveness and suitability of staff are | MET |
| financial sustainability, leadership and governance are | MET |
| premises and accommodation are | MET |
| information and complaints are | MET |

Compliance with UKVI Standards

The college meets all the UKVI Standards

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose and scope of the inspection

Mainland Education is an approved educational oversight body authorised by the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) section of the Home Office to inspect privately funded further education colleges in England, with a Steiner, Montessori or Eurythmy basis or background, or with a clear religious purpose. Inspection is designed to assess the college's compliance with the Standards for colleges agreed with the Home Office. The Standards cover the quality of education and welfare provided to all students, including those from overseas who are sponsored by the college for Tier 4 visas, and, where applicable, those who are under eighteen or are vulnerable adults. On-site student accommodation, where provided, is assessed for compliance with the Standards but is not subject to a full boarding inspection. Inspection provides objective and reliable reports on the extent to which colleges meet the Standards. By placing reports in the public domain, the information they contain is available to students, the UKVI, and the wider community.

Inspection takes account of the context of each individual college, and of how it evaluates its own performance and demonstrates its success. It helps colleges, their staff and trustees/governors/proprietors to recognise and build on their strengths and to identify and remedy their weaknesses in relation to compliance. The inspection also takes account of the college's financial performance over the last two years for new providers and since the last inspection for established providers. An assessment is also made of the college's financial sustainability going forward, on the basis of information provided by the college. Prospective students, their parents and agents should make their own enquiries into the financial viability of institutions before accepting a place.

Colleges are subject to a full inspection once every four years which is conducted by two inspectors over two days. In the intervening years, colleges receive an interim inspection and are kept under review. All reports state whether or not the college continues to meet the agreed Standards.

The last full inspection of Beis Soroh Schenierer Seminary was conducted in 2016 by the School Inspection Service, which Mainland Education Ltd has now replaced.

Characteristics of the college

Beis Soroh Schenierer Seminary, (BSSSEM), is a well-established private Jewish college of further education for orthodox young women, located in Manchester. The seminary aims to fully prepare girls for their future, spiritually, culturally and practically. It provides a two-year religious programme of advanced limudei kodesh (Jewish studies) alongside secular courses leading mainly to qualifications at Advanced Level, or to those in vocational subjects accredited by the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC). A training course to teach Jewish studies is offered to students in their second year. The seminary works in partnership with Salford City College whose visiting female staff deliver the secular courses on the BSSSEM site.

The college currently has 160 female students on roll, 106 of whom are aged under eighteen. Almost all students board on site in school accommodation. Most of them hail from Jewish communities in the United Kingdom, many from the local community in Manchester, but the student population is also enriched by girls from the United States, Canada, Israel, France, Switzerland and other European countries. Currently, the seminary sponsors twenty-one international students with Tier 4 visas under the Student Sponsorship scheme.

SECTION A: Main Findings and Actions Required

Main findings

Beis Soroh Schenierer Seminary meets all the UKVI Educational Oversight Standards. The seminary is held in high regard by its students who say that they enjoy their time there and make friends for life. They receive good information about their courses, which are well matched to their needs, equip them for their future lives as responsible citizens and committed members of the orthodox Jewish community, and provide them with recognised academic and/or vocational qualifications and practical skills. The quality of the teaching is good, and draws on both the scholarly expertise of rabbis and the expertise of well-qualified and experienced teachers from Salford City College. The students progress well and achieve good results in public examinations. The students' spiritual, moral and cultural development is at the heart of the seminary. Through their learning and vibrant boarding community, the girls are sustained in their faith and cultural heritage and develop strongly into responsible and confident young women. The seminary takes very good care of their welfare, health and safety. Safeguarding procedures are up to date and meet legal requirements. The required checks are made on the suitability of staff, and records are well maintained. The premises are secure. Fire safety checks are carried out regularly and recorded appropriately. A recent fund-raising drive among alumni has augmented the seminary's finances, which are managed carefully, and will enable planned improvements to take place. The premises and accommodation are suitable but in need of some refurbishment. Students report that they are happy at the seminary but know how to complain if necessary.

| Overall Main Finding | Compliance | Outcome for the College |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| The college meets UKVI requirements. | It meets all the Standards. | It will receive interim checks and a further full inspection in four years |

Actions Required

- **No action is required**

SECTION B: Detailed evaluation of the standards

Standards for courses and qualifications

The Standards for courses and qualifications are met. The seminary offers a good range of courses which are very well matched to the its educational purpose and ethos. The courses are at a suitable level for students who are felt to be ready for intensive training in a one- or two-year programme in the Kodesh curriculum and in academic or vocational further study. Prospective students are given clear information about the level of competence in English that is expected, and they are required to have previous experience of Jewish studies before being accepted into the seminary. Tier 4 students from non-English-speaking countries must provide evidence of having reached Level 4 in English in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and must be able to function in English. A course for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), as well as good support from teachers and other students, enables those who need it to access all the taught provision of the seminary.

The whole morning session of each day is devoted to lectures by highly qualified and experienced rabbis who instruct all the students in understanding the key concepts of the Torah: philosophy, ethics, law, civic responsibilities and their religious and moral value in life. All students are tested on their understanding of these concepts, and reports on their progress are regularly provided to parents. The course in Jewish studies is challenging and are pitched at a suitably high level. This course does not normally lead to an externally accredited qualification, but some students, including all those on Tier 4 visas, take a qualification in Jewish Studies that is accredited by the Awards for Training and Higher Education (ATHE) and this equips them to teach Jewish studies.

In the afternoons students have access to a range of A Levels or vocational courses leading to Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications. The recent transition from The Manchester College to Salford City College as the provider of these courses caused some administrative disruption, including a break in the provision of reports to parents on the students' progress in the vocational courses, but this has been overcome and students continue to achieve well. The externally accredited courses are taught on-site at the seminary by Salford City College staff. The girls may choose to study for A Levels in English, mathematics, biology, psychology or art, or they may follow a vocational course in Early Years education, childcare, creative digital media, or textiles and design. All the qualifications offered are approved by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). Recent accreditation of the seminary by ATHE as an independently-recognised centre is valid until June 2026.

The courses and qualifications on offer to Tier 4 international students meet the definition of an approved qualification for UKVI purposes. All the students follow courses that taken together require full-time study. Taught time per week exceeds twenty-four hours in total. Completion and qualification rates are very high, with a significant proportion of students achieving the highest grades, for example, last year's A Level results showed that about a third of students achieved an A grade.

Beyond the Kodesh and secular curriculum, the students take part in a Chessed programme in the local community which they organise for themselves. Helping with cooking, baking and childcare in a local orthodox home, helps to consolidate their knowledge and understanding of Jewish culture while giving them an opportunity to be of practical service to others. The pandemic has restricted the college's capacity to arrange the European tours that were usually part of the second-year experience at seminary, but there are plans to re-instate these. More local forays, for example to Liverpool, have taken place; the first-year students completed a three-day hike in North Wales; and more recently girls took part in a long weekend of water sports and outdoor activities in Devon, returning via London to visit the Holocaust exhibition at the Imperial War Museum.

Standards for teaching, learning and assessment

The Standards for teaching, learning and assessment are met. Teaching is of good quality. A range of effective teaching styles is employed throughout the seminary which enables the students to make very good progress. The Jewish studies course is taught by rabbis who are well-qualified and knowledgeable professionals. They deliver their subject matter in the traditional form of a lecture, at intervals posing questions or inviting students to ask questions themselves. The lectures cover complex religious and philosophical themes which challenge the students and help them progress in their religious and cultural understanding, and in their personal and spiritual development. The students concentrate, make notes and apply considerable intellectual effort. They say that they enjoy learning.

The afternoon sessions consist of academic and practical courses, chosen by the students, which are taught by visiting female staff from Salford City College who have appropriate subject qualifications and good teaching or practical experience. These courses are very well-planned and lessons are well-structured to help students make good progress so that they achieve well in both academic and vocational subjects. Resources are good and are used well. Explanations and communications are clear. These studies enable the students to broaden their knowledge and practical skills, and this ultimately increases their future employability and life choices. Some of the samples of students' work seen were exceptional and bore witness to the fact that they had been very well taught. The afternoon classes are organised and managed by a highly efficient senior member of the Salford City College staff who assures the quality of the teaching and checks that students are in lessons and remain on task. Her input is valuable, because while the vast majority of students work hard and make very good progress, not all of them display the same level of commitment to the afternoon sessions. Assessment is an integral part of all courses and the students generally have a good idea of the progress they are making and how to reach the next level. In addition, students are assigned a weekly session with a tutor in which they can discuss their work and seek additional help when needed.

Standards for cultural and moral development of students

The Standards for the cultural and moral development of the students are met. The seminary provides excellent opportunities for the students' spiritual, moral and

cultural development, and it is clear that the young people grow in maturity and develop their personal qualities and self-confidence strongly during the time they spend at BSSSEM. One of the seminary's core aims is to supply a warm and safe environment that bolsters girls' self-confidence and develops an innate sense of self-worth, while encouraging them to learn how to live peacefully with others. BSSSEM's arrangements do this very well indeed. This is achieved through skillful teaching, a well-planned programme of Jewish studies, and a warm and happy boarding environment in which students develop the virtues of tolerance and respect, and learn to live peacefully alongside others, respect the law and the rules of the seminary, and behave responsibly. The girls are strongly supported by the two Aim-HaBayis and by other staff in the seminary who take great interest in each and every one of them, and ensure that there are opportunities for everyone to find something that they can excel in so that they can discover their place in the world. The all-round instruction in Jewish culture and traditions which they receive, together with practice in cooking, baking, dress-making and childcare, prepares them well for their future lives as Jewish wives and mothers and for running a Torah-true household and raising children. There are also many lively opportunities outside of the formal teaching programme for the students to enjoy their time in seminary and develop their personal interests. These include drama, music and dance, expeditions to Liverpool and Llandudno, and hiking in the Welsh mountains. At the end of a recent school expedition to Devon, the proprietor of the hostel they stayed in praised warmly the girls' conduct and attitude, saying that they were 'the nicest group of students she had hosted'. International and British girls mix extremely well, and together create a vibrant student community. The girls report that they enjoy their time at seminary and make friends for life.

The seminary has ensured that, apart from the rabbis, there are only female staff in the seminary. However, many of these staff are drawn from the multicultural and multi-faith society in Manchester, and this enables the students to be aware of other faiths, cultures and lifestyles. The seminary might consider extending students' cultural awareness and understanding further by inviting occasional speakers from other sections of the community.

Standards for welfare, health and safety

The Standards for welfare, health and safety are met. The girls are given first class support throughout their course. The two Aim-HaBayis provide exceptional pastoral care: they know the students extremely well and ensure that they are very well cared-for. Medical arrangements are strong and the seminary can call on the Hazolo, Jewish medical emergency service, which responds very rapidly to any healthcare concern. There are also a number of trained first-aiders on the staff. The seminary serves wholesome and nutritious meals in an appropriate and hygienic environment. Boarding systems work well, so that the students' welfare, health and safety are well cared for, and the girls confirm that they are very happy. The seminary is in the process of recruiting some additional night-time supervisors to strengthen the boarding team.

The seminary has a safeguarding policy which is in line with its declared aims and ethos and has been updated to reflect the latest government guidance. The policy is underpinned by effective safeguarding procedures. The Principal is the

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), and there are three other members of staff who are part of the DSL safeguarding team, all of whom have received up to date Level 3 training. The DSL is in contact with the Salford LADO, and understands the local systems for making a referral, although this has not been necessary in recent times. Basic safeguarding refresher training, which is booked for all staff at the start of the autumn term, will include all the seminary's agency personnel, so that the seminary can be sure that any member of its staff will treat a safeguarding concern consistently and respond appropriately. A checklist is kept of all attendees at training, so that anyone who cannot attend the face-to-face event can receive the requisite training online or from one of the DSL team.

There is 24/7 security for the college premises. Visitors must register at the main office on arrival where their identity and DBS status are checked. The seminary has been investigating a more secure system for keeping track of which girls are on the premises or off-site, for example when they go out during free time or to Chessed duties, and when they return. The seminary is working with its security agency partner to introduce cameras and face recognition technology during the summer break. This will provide accurate and up to date information which is vital, for example, in the event of fire or other emergency.

Regular fire drills take place and records show that students leave the buildings quickly. There are weekly checks on fire alarms which are also recorded appropriately, and a senior member of staff walks around the buildings on a regular basis to ensure that fire doors and exits are operational and that all exit routes are kept clear. This, too, is recorded systematically. Senior students are the named night-time fire marshals and understand their role. Admissions and attendance records are kept carefully and meet requirements. Administrative staff follow up all student absences quickly and know how to report to UKVI any problems with the attendance of Tier 4 students.

Standards for the effectiveness and suitability of staff

The Standards for the effectiveness and suitability of staff are met. The seminary has recruited and retains sufficient appropriately qualified and experienced staff to operate effectively and support its aims and ethos. The Principal has undertaken Safer Recruitment training and is involved in all staff appointments. The seminary's recruitment policy follows closely the latest government guidance in *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022*, and its procedures are implemented fully. This ensures that every care is taken to safeguard students by appointing staff who are checked and vetted as suitable to have contact with young people. Advertisements for posts include a job specification and the essential skills for the role; referees are required to complete a standard reference form; and the seminary verifies all references by telephone. There is a fair selection procedure with safeguarding questions included as a standard part of the interview process. This ensures that successful candidates share the values of the seminary and support its commitment to safeguarding young people.

Thorough checks are made on employees' identity, nationality, right to work in the United Kingdom, medical fitness, criminal record history, and qualifications, where relevant. An overseas police check is requested for employees who have lived or

worked abroad. The Single Central Register records correctly the outcome of all the required staff checks which the seminary has conducted, and these are signed and dated appropriately, with evidence held on individual staff files. The seminary has gained written assurances from partners such as Salford City College and the companies which supply security guards and cleaning staff, that they have also made the appropriate checks on their named employees. The identity of any new or substitute member of the agency staff is checked on arrival. There has been no occasion to do so, but the seminary is aware of its duty to report to the authorities the dismissal of a member of staff on safeguarding grounds.

Standards for financial sustainability, management and governance

The Standards for financial sustainability, management and governance are met. The financial management of the seminary is sound, and this gives confidence that the current and next year's students will be able to complete their courses. However, since the last full inspection in 2016, the number of students on roll has fallen by about thirty per cent, mainly due to the uncertainty created by the Covid pandemic and by changes to visa requirements for European students. Enrolment for this autumn has now increased, and a recent fund-raising drive among alumni has been successful in providing substantial funds to sustain the work of the seminary and support its planned developments.

The Principal, trustees and senior staff have provided appropriate policies and procedures to guide the seminary's work, and ensure that it is supported with satisfactory resources. They work together effectively to ensure that the seminary's strengths are maintained and that any weaknesses can be identified and remedied. New staff appointments being made for the autumn term 2023 are intended to further strengthen the management and smooth-running of the seminary.

Standards for premises and accommodation

The standards for premises and accommodation are met. The seminary is located on a single site which houses all teaching, boarding and social areas. The buildings are located within secure grounds protected by security personnel. The buildings and accommodation are generally fit for purpose, and enable courses to be taught effectively, although the decorative condition of some areas, including the boarding accommodation, now shows a need for refurbishment. Rooms used for the morning Jewish studies sessions are very full when students are in the classes, but they cope well with this, and the rooms are suitably ventilated. The classrooms used for the afternoon vocational courses allow more working space.

Outside spaces around the buildings are generally pleasant and attractive and are well-used by the students for recreation and relaxation. They are clean and tidy and are monitored by caretaking staff to ensure that they remain safe, serviceable and hazard-free. Some felling and pruning of overgrown trees and bushes along the back perimeter fence is planned for the summer holidays. Food is prepared on site and is served hygienically. Facilities have been inspected by the local food standards agency and comply with relevant regulations. The post of caretaker,

which had been vacant for some time, has been filled recently so that routine maintenance work can now be carried out more effectively.

Standards for information and complaints

The Standards for information and complaints are met. Local, national and international Jewish community links through alumni and their families are a key part of informing prospective students and their parents about the work and reputation of the seminary. The prospectus and website are well designed and explain clearly what students can expect. They provide helpful information but have not yet been updated to refer to the current vocational programme provider, Salford City College. Parents receive regular reports about their daughters' academic progress and personal well-being. Students know how to complain, and who to complain to if they have concerns. No formal complaints have been made in recent years.

SECTION C: SEMINARY AND INSPECTION DETAILS**Details of seminary**

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Name of seminary | Beis Soroh Schenierer Seminary |
| Address of seminary | 474 Bury New Road, Salford, M7 4NU |
| Telephone number | 0161 792 7770 |
| Email address | admin@bsssem.co.uk |
| Proprietor | Beis Soroh Schenierer Charitable Trust |
| Name of Principal | Rabbi Y. Marmorstein |
| Licence number | 88CFBXTG0 |
| Type of seminary | Private Jewish Seminary of Further Education |

Details of student body

| | |
|-----------|-------------|
| Age range | 16-19 years |
|-----------|-------------|

| Number on roll | | Male | Female |
|----------------|------------|------|--------|
| | Full Time: | - | 160 |
| | Part Time: | - | 0 |
| | Below 18 | - | 106 |

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|-------------|---------|
| Annual fees | £11,100 |
|-------------|---------|

Details of inspection

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|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Type of inspection | Educational Oversight: Full | |
| Inspection Team | Reporting Inspector: | Mrs. Jane Cooper |
| | Supporting Inspector: | Mr. Peter Jones |
| Dates of inspection | 6-7 June 2023 | |