

FULL INSPECTION REPORT FOR
GATESHEAD TALMUDICAL COLLEGE
UKVI LICENCE No: VJJM08VX9

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

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 of 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. These 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 based on 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 the college continues to meet the agreed Standards. The last full inspection of Gateshead Talmudical College was conducted in 2016 and the last interim inspection in 2019 both by the School Inspection Service, which Mainland Education Ltd has now replaced. This is the first full inspection of Gateshead Talmudical College by Mainland Education Ltd.

Characteristics of the college

Gateshead Talmudical College (GTC), also known as Gateshead Yeshiva, was founded in 1929 and moved to its present site in 1931. It is a charitable trust governed by a board of trustees and managed by a group of senior staff most of whom are rabbis. All the students are male Orthodox Jews. Twelve nationalities are represented in the college population, with the majority of students coming from Britain. Just under a fifth of the students are from European countries with

the largest groups from Belgium and Switzerland. Most of the other students are from the USA with a small number from other countries. Nearly all live in residential accommodation on site. Students range in age from 16 to 21. Numbers have increased since the last inspection and now total 376, with 60 students aged under eighteen. Gateshead Talmudical College has gained a worldwide reputation for the quality of its rabbinical education and this is what draws increasing numbers of students to Gateshead from overseas. Applications for the 2023-24 intake were higher than in previous years leading to higher student numbers. Courses are offered at three levels: a foundation course, the main Talmudic studies course and an advanced Talmudic course. The main Talmudic course is at NVQ Level 3 and is accredited by Awards for Training and Higher Education (ATHE). This is the course taken by the 29 overseas students holding Tier 4 visas. Some non-Tier 4 students have their courses accredited for academic qualification recognition in the USA and Canada. The college states that its purposes are the advancement, support and furtherance of Orthodox religious Jewish studies, enabling students to live in accordance with the Orthodox Jewish way of life, and providing a traditional Jewish education that is relevant to laymen, rabbis and ministers. The college is committed to helping less affluent students by means of scholarships and grants and about two thirds of students receive such support.

SECTION A: Main Findings and Actions Required

Main findings

Gateshead Talmudical College (GTC) meets all of the Standards agreed with UKVI. The college has an outstanding reputation for its courses in Talmudic studies for young Orthodox Jewish men. The courses are delivered at three levels and retention and completion rates are very high. Teaching and learning are both excellent. The college has a highly qualified team of tutors, all rabbis, who are acknowledged expert scholars and teachers in Talmudic studies. Well-established systems of teaching and very able students ensure that exceptional progress is made in students' knowledge and understanding. The students receive very good cultural and moral development. They learn 'lessons for life' through their involvement in an Orthodox Jewish religious community with an ethos based on adherence to the law and an emphasis on respect for others. Standards for welfare, health and safety are met, with very well planned policies and procedures for health and safety, including fire safety. Safeguarding requirements are met. Pastoral care arrangements are very good and students are treated with respect and as individuals. The college is well run and finances are managed prudently, so that there is very little risk that students will not be able to complete their courses. Teaching, boarding and dining accommodation are suitable for the needs of the college. Students are well informed about the college before they start their courses. They receive timely updates on their pastoral and academic progress and know who to contact if they have any concerns. Parents are contacted when necessary. There is a suitable complaints procedure.

Overall Main Finding	Compliance	Outcome for the College
The college meets UKVI requirements	The college is compliant	No further action is required

Actions Required

- No further action is required.

SECTION B: Detailed evaluation of the standards

Standards for courses and qualifications

The Standards for courses and qualifications are met. GTC is a world-renowned college which provides courses in Talmudic studies for young Orthodox Jewish men, and attracts students from all over the world. It is oversubscribed and this enables the college to operate a highly selective admissions process which includes a personal interview for every applicant. As a result, the college offers places only to those students who show the ability, aptitude, stamina and commitment to benefit from the demanding pace and challenge of its courses and contribute positively to college and community life.

The college delivers courses in Talmudic studies at three levels: a foundation course, which is aimed at younger students coming directly from school having already achieved good grades at GCSE, and often A level or equivalent also, and who have a good knowledge of the Talmud; the main Talmudic studies course, which is taken by students after the foundation year and by those joining directly from Yeshivot in the UK or elsewhere in the world; and an advanced Talmudic studies course which comprises more in-depth study and may lead to further specialisation for those wishing to train to become rabbis later. In the early stages of the course, the main objective is to enable the students to read passages from the Talmud fluently in Hebrew. Once the students are comfortable with this, they are helped to interpret the meaning of the texts and commentaries and thereby develop their knowledge and understanding through active discussion and debate. The discussion sessions are augmented by regular lectures on all aspects of Jewish life, for which the students also have to read and prepare. Thus, as they move through the course, students develop an extensive and in-depth knowledge and understanding of the Talmud and of Jewish religious practice, law, culture, ethics and behaviour, all of which equip them to take a positive role in Jewish life. Course retention and completion rates are very high. On leaving, some of the students may enter a profession, go into business or study further at a university, and many of the college's alumni later assume leading positions around the world in a wide variety of disciplines, including science, business, education and religious life.

The courses are well planned and kept under review by the *Hanholoh* (the senior leadership team). The lessons are based on Jewish sources and traditional texts and are thus compatible with the Orthodox religious ethos of the college. Regular assignments and rigorous assessment enable students to mark their progress through the course which ultimately leads to a Diploma in Talmudic studies. The NVQ Level 3 qualification in Talmudic studies is additionally taken by all overseas students with visas to study in the UK, as required by the terms of the visa. This qualification is open also to the rest of the student body, although not all of them elect to take it. Qualifications are accredited by Awards for Training and Higher Education (ATHE) and meet the definition of an approved qualification for UKVI purposes. All students study full-time. The courses provided by GTC demand

many hours of intensive study and preparation each week, well in excess of the normal expectation of a full-time course of study. While the course of academic study is intensive, the college is also mindful of the need for physical exercise, and reserves time at the nearby gym so that the students can keep fit through exercise and engage in team sports such as football, which they enjoy.

The students are made fully aware, through the prospectus and, more frequently, through contacts in the community and teachers in their former schools or yeshivot, what the GTC course entails and, for non-native speakers of English, the level of English required to start the course. All students with a Tier 4 visa have reached at least the minimum level of English required, but the college can also provide additional English language support through tutors if it is needed.

Standards for teaching, learning and assessment

The Standards for teaching, learning and assessment are met. There is an outstanding level of pedagogy that has high impact on students' progress. The employment of renowned expert rabbinical scholars, who communicate their high expectations clearly and inspire confidence, ensures that students learn quickly. The selective recruitment of very able students enables the college to promote the rapid acquisition of new knowledge and the development of the intellectual skills of debate and interpretation of Jewish religious texts. Academic leaders responsible for teaching carefully monitor the planning and delivery of courses across the college provision.

Students' progress is continuously monitored through the college's long-established technique of a dialogue of detailed questions, answers and observations between the tutor and students during lessons, and through the practice of tutors regularly speaking to students individually. Written work is assessed rigorously both within the yeshiva and by external examiners as part of the process of preparing for and sitting examinations. Students say that they are well informed about their academic progress and are confident in being able to receive individual guidance of a high standard as required. Support with English language is available although the selective nature of the intake means that this is rarely needed.

A unique feature of the teaching and learning provision at GTC is a very large, purpose-built study hall where each day the whole student body of close to four hundred works in pairs studying the Talmud, discussing, debating and taking notes under the supervision of a group of expert rabbinical tutors who circulate to advise and answer questions. When this mass study session is in progress there is a remarkable 'learning buzz' that energises the students and is regarded by them as the main focus of learning at the yeshiva. This daily shared activity is instrumental in the rapid progress students make, and in their enjoyment of learning.

Standards for cultural and moral development of students

The Standards for the students' cultural and moral development are met. Students are polite, articulate and are able to explain clearly their reasons for coming to the college and the positive experience of studying at the yeshiva. The focus of learning in the college is the study of religious texts based on moral values and ethics and their application to daily life. Daily prayers also contribute to the religious, moral, and ethical development of the students. Tutors strive to provide 'lessons for life' and encourage their students to know themselves and develop positive, civilized character traits. Students are assigned a tutor who focuses on their *shiteig* or spiritual development. Volunteer roles within the college community play a part in the development of self-awareness and social skills. Students say that the rigorous demands of the course help them develop self-confidence in their skills of oral and written analysis and debate, and this is evident in their confident participation in lessons and paired study as well as in their written work. The ethos of the college and the experience of boarding help students to develop the virtues of tolerance and respect for others and for different lifestyles, the value of human life and the importance of abiding by the law of the land. The college has anti-bullying and equality and diversity policies. Students have been made aware of the potential for anti-Semitic behaviour and how to deal with it when they are in public spaces. The college has a Prevent policy and staff have received the appropriate training.

Standards for welfare, health and safety

The Standards for welfare, health and safety are met. The administrator responsible for practical day-to-day management of the college premises is meticulous in maintaining up-to-date health, safety and fire safety policies and records including regular risk assessments. He carries out and records daily premises checks for hazards or faults and any problems are dealt with quickly, including those identified by students or staff. Regular PAT testing on electrical equipment, which was being carried out at the time of the inspection in the boarding houses, includes students' own equipment such as fridges. Fire safety requirements are met, with regular fire drills, fire signage and recorded checks on fire safety equipment including emergency lighting, alarms and extinguishers. Senior students are trained as fire marshals and have allocated areas of responsibility within the boarding houses.

The students are very well looked after by the college staff. Good medical arrangements are in place to cope with sickness and emergencies, including first aid requirements, and any accidents are recorded and followed up. All students are registered with a local doctor who reserves daily appointments for the college, and there are two members of the pastoral staff with up-to-date First Aid training on site. The college also readily seeks external guidance and help for students when needed. The laundry system works well. The cleaning staff ensure that corridors, wash-rooms, dormitories and communal areas of the

boarding accommodation are kept fresh and clean, but some of the students' rooms are rather untidy. The dormitories contain telephones, so that staff can be alerted quickly in case of emergency or informed of a student's illness. The college has recently appointed a night-time supervisor to further improve student welfare.

The college has a range of appropriate policies to safeguard students. Regular basic face-to-face safeguarding training for staff is provided by an expert from the Jewish community, so that staff in all areas of the college understand the importance of safeguarding students, and know that they have a duty to do so. The college keeps staff safeguarding training certificates on file, but currently needs a more effective way of recording this training, so that it can quickly spot and provide for any members of staff who miss out. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and his Deputy (DDSL) know the students very well indeed and spend a lot of time talking to them, so that any problem or concern may be identified quickly and dealt with effectively. All of the students spoken to said that they would be happy to turn to these colleagues for help and advice or with a concern of any kind. Both safeguarding leads have undertaken the required higher-level safeguarding training and are aware of local systems, for example for making a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), should the need arise. Arrangements for students' pastoral care are taken very seriously, and each student is treated respectfully and as an individual, so that every effort is made to support their comfort and happiness throughout their time in college. The lead colleagues keep clear and useful notes of safeguarding matters, but the introduction of a computerised system would greatly facilitate cross-referencing of information.

The college maintains accurate records of student admissions and attendance, with details kept up-to-date. The college has a system that enables them to contact UKVI in the event of any problems with the attendance of a Tier 4 visa student.

Standards for the effectiveness and suitability of staff

The Standards for effectiveness and suitability of staff are met. As a prestigious college with a worldwide reputation in the Jewish world, GTC has no difficulty in recruiting and retaining well-qualified and experienced teachers of high calibre, many of whom are renowned experts in their fields. Although staff turnover is low, the college has, in recent years, recruited some younger rabbis to join the tutorial, pastoral and administrative teams who have brought their excellent skills and talents to the established staff and are popular with the students. One of these colleagues has very recently taken over responsibility for staff recruitment, completed the 'Safer Recruitment' training, reorganised staff records, and in the process introduced a new Single Central Record (SCR) of staff appointments. This exceptional piece of work has resulted in a clear and comprehensive document which includes the required information about all members of staff and

the pre-appointment checks that have been made on them. It demonstrates that the college has conducted all the required pre-appointment checks on employees' identity, qualifications, right to work in the UK, and medical fitness, and that these checks have been verified appropriately by college staff. The college has also obtained appropriate references for its employees and made the required checks against Prohibition Orders for teachers and managers where relevant. Enhanced DBS checks have been made for all employees, and an overseas police check has been obtained for all staff who have previously lived or worked abroad. Going forward, it may be helpful for the college to introduce a compliance system similar to the one adopted by other schools and colleges in the UK, whereby a member of the senior management team, trustee or adviser conducts a periodic 'spot check' of the information on the SCR against confidential personnel files to ensure that all the required checks continue to be done, supported by evidence, and recorded accurately.

Standards for financial sustainability, management and governance

The Standards for financial sustainability, management and governance are met. The college is managed sensibly and sensitively by the Hanholoh, which takes a strategic view of the college's current and future needs and is well aware of its strengths and areas for development. The Hanholoh meets regularly, reaches informed decisions and plans accordingly. There is a range of good quality, comprehensive policies to guide all aspects of the college's work and these are reviewed and assessed for their suitability on an annual basis by the senior team. The college manages its finances prudently and for the benefit of students, many of whom receive help with fees, in line with the principles of the college. Through sound management, careful planning and generous donations from the Jewish community in the UK and overseas, the college is well able to cover its liabilities and fund more ambitious plans, for example for the proposed development of a new accommodation and administration block. The risk that students will not be able, through lack of funds, to complete the course for which they enrol is negligible.

Standards for premises and accommodation

The Standards for premises and accommodation are met. The classrooms are fit for purpose with suitable dimensions to accommodate the classes. They have good lighting and ventilation, and enable courses to be taught effectively. A notable feature of the teaching accommodation is the very large main study hall referred to earlier in the report. This hall, although densely populated when the whole college is in session, is a well organised and inspiring place of study. The boarding accommodation occupies a large part of the premises reflecting high student numbers. It is of satisfactory quality overall: clean, with adequate space

and with suitable heating, bathroom and shower facilities although subdued in terms of decor. A number of the bedrooms are untidy and more should be done to monitor and remedy this, given the close quarters students experience over long periods of time when sharing with several others. The college has a medical room where boys can be isolated, with suitable bathroom facilities nearby. There is a clear system for reporting sickness by telephone and for attention and care to be administered to the student. The college says that it would be able to accommodate a student with special needs or disabilities by adapting teaching and boarding arrangements accordingly, and this occurred when some students were isolated in one part of the college during the Covid pandemic. The large refurbished dining hall is clean and well equipped but lacks decorative features. The on-site kitchens are designed to meet Jewish food preparation requirements, and are well equipped and cared for. The kitchens have been given a five star rating by the local food standards agency. Nourishing kosher meals are provided and the boys say that the food is good. Specific dietary requirements and allergies are known to the kitchen staff who need this information, and can be catered for. In addition, the boys have access to student kitchens in the boarding accommodation where they can make snacks and drinks for themselves; and some also bring fridges and freezers to store their food.

Standards for information and complaints

The Standards for information and complaints are met. Although there is no website, the prospectus accurately reflects provision. The main channel for the distribution of information about the college and its reputation is the Jewish community and its thriving network of contacts worldwide. The students say that they have very good knowledge of the college in advance from recommendations of the college at their previous schools, from family members and others in the community who are GTC alumni and through a well established scheme for pre-course taster visits to the college. There are good systems of communication through the pastoral and academic contacts that tutors have with their students. Results of tests and examinations are shared with students and any need for improvement identified. Students say that they value the regular meetings they have with their tutors about their progress and well-being. Parents frequently contact the college for updates on their sons' progress and tutors will contact them if there are any concerns they wish to share. Students are aware of how to complain and say that they would not hesitate to contact their tutors or college administrators in the first instance. The college has a formal complaints procedure and a system for recording formal written complaints, although there has been no occasion to do so in recent years.

SECTION C: COLLEGE AND INSPECTION DETAILS

Details of college

Name of college:	Gateshead Talmudical College
Address of college:	88 Windermere Street, Gateshead NE8 1UB
Telephone number:	0191 477 2616
Email address:	talmudical@btopenworld.com
Proprietor:	Gateshead Talmudical College
Name of Principal:	Rabbi A. Gurwicz
Licence number:	VJJM08VX9
Type of college:	Independent Jewish Further Education

Details of student body

Age range	16-21		
Number on roll:		Male	Female
	Full Time:	376	-
	Part Time:	0	-
	Below 18	60	-
Annual fees:	£ 10,660 per annum		

Details of inspection

Type of inspection:	Education Oversight: Full		
Inspection Team:	Reporting Inspector:	Mr. Peter Jones	
	Supporting Inspector:	Mrs. Jane Cooper	
Dates of inspection:	16 th -17 th January 2024		