

# Hasmonean High School



**H**asmonean High School has prided itself on its blend of ethical values and an outward looking approach for more than 70 years. Andrew McClusky, executive headteacher of the Orthodox Jewish school, says attitudes and values will continue to shape the school for generations to come.



Andrew McClusky  
Executive Headteacher

Our ethos is 'Torah im Derech Eretz', translated from Hebrew as 'being successful in the wider world without compromising the attitudes and values enshrined in the Bible', goes all the way back to Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld who founded the school in 1944 to educate children rescued from the Holocaust. The school's founder wanted pupils to have a strong cultural identity and to be responsible contributors to wider society. Hasmonean's current leaders are the custodians of an ethos that has served generations of students very well indeed. It

permeates everything that we do, with every child, teacher and parent able to articulate and explain what it means to them.

## Diverse abilities and backgrounds

There are a huge range of children of all abilities and economic backgrounds at the school. There is also great diversity in the staff as one would expect in a London school.

## REPORT CARD

- » Academy status secondary school and sixth form for Orthodox Jewish students based on two campuses
- » Established in 1944
- » Located in Hendon and Mill Hill, London
- » Has over 1140 pupils, including over 280 in sixth form
- » Regularly ranked as one of the top non-selective state schools in the country by The Times and Sunday Times
- » Rated as Outstanding in all categories its last Ofsted and Pikuach inspections.

I am myself, for example, not Jewish whereas the Heads of the boys' and girls' schools are. The family atmosphere together with this range of perspectives and influences makes Hasmonean a very interesting school indeed. We are a dish of strong flavours that combine very well.



Debbie Lebrecht  
Headteacher of  
Hasmonean High  
School for Boys'  
Campus

*“Helping those who are less fortunate is very much part of Hasmonean’s DNA”*

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## **‘Don’t call them your children, rather your builders’**

A line from the Talmud, the record of discussion about the Torah by prominent rabbis up until the fifth century holds great significance at Hasmonean: ‘Don’t call them your children, call them your builders’. It stresses the view that children are the leaders of the next generation, and that we have a duty to support them to be successful and responsible so that they in turn give something back. This giving back starts early. There are major charitable pursuits at the school which result in tens of thousands of pounds being raised annually for local care homes, vulnerable children, ambulance services and countries that have suffered natural disasters. The last campaign was for the victims and families of the Grenfell Tower fire.

Helping those who are less fortunate is very much part of Hasmonean’s DNA. One of the best illustrations of this was a few years ago, when I received a letter thanking me for sending students to deliver food parcels to an old peoples’ home. I thought a colleague had arranged this and went to thank him. Eventually we realised that the students had chosen to do this themselves, without prompting.

We want children to choose to do the right thing in our absence, and to appreciate that morality and decency are privileges, not burdens. We care as much about what they will be like when they are 30 years old as we do about their examination results. Will they always strive to do their best and be decent, good natured and respectful people who show compassion to others? Will they understand the responsibilities that come alongside success? If we can get these things right early on, the

exam results take care of themselves: students want to succeed because they know that success will empower them to help others.

Some of our girls took part in an interfaith ‘Open Door’ project which involved them collaborating with girls from Islamia School for Girls and with girls of different faiths (or no faith) from UCL Academy to explore identity and common issues which affect teenage girls. This inspired one of our students, Ruby Levy, to arrange one of the ‘Great Together’ events in memory of Jo Cox MP. We are tremendously proud of Ruby and all of the students who continue to involve themselves in these kind of collaborations and events.

## **A broad and balanced curriculum**

As a state school, Hasmonean aspires to have the best possible curriculum offer. In this regard, however, we look at the independent schools’ model as a source of inspiration. Our guest speaker programme draws on an extensive network to bring in figures from the army, charities, academia, politics, media and business to inspire pupils. Having produced some extraordinary successful alumni, we are fortunate to be able to also draw on them as partners to support this initiative. We also run a successful enrichment programme, offering more than 30 subjects for pupils ranging from an introduction to the stock market and Chinese culture to interior design.

The breadth of what we offer – from longer hours during the week to Sunday learning – goes above and beyond what most state schools can offer, and we are very fortunate to benefit from generous support from parents, donors and friends of the school at fundraising events.

They enable us to offer great breadth and depth of provision, but also to focus on specific initiatives to drive the school forward. This year's focus is on recruitment and retention to enable us to secure the very best educators for our children.

## A new home for Hasmonean

Hasmonean plans to move the boys' and girls' campuses onto a single site. The boys' school has been located in the same premises in Barnet for many years. Originally built for 350 pupils, it now holds in excess of 600. Given the scarcity of available sites in the area, it is hoped that the girls' site and the surrounding area will be used to bring both campuses adjacent to each other to make our operations more efficient.



**Year 7 boys  
quenching their scientific curiosity**

## Three pillars

Our three key pillars support everything we are trying to achieve. Firstly, we want our religious programme to be inspirational and inclusive, to enable students to be enriched by their own culture and religion but also to have an understanding of others' too. This is achieved through a curriculum that is supplemented by voluntary programmes; a lot of pupils vote with their feet to become involved with those.

Secondly, we want our secular education to be absolutely first rate. Our students really value teachers with superb subject knowledge, and the recruitment and retention of those teachers who can really stretch and challenge students is our number one priority. Giving them enough time to do this job properly is also crucially important: we know that saturating teachers and subject leaders with lessons prevents them from being effective and creative, and we have been working hard to fundraise to protect their time and keep class sizes at a reasonable level. We have also been involved in a pilot programme devised by Dylan Wiliam to embed



**Students celebrating the Interfaith 'Open Door' Project involving Hasmonean High School, Islamia Girls' School and UCL Academy**

*“Students, governors and trustees work very, very hard here. Hasmorean runs on goodwill, and we are blessed with a great deal of it!”*

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Mrs Katherine Brice  
Headteacher of  
Hasmorean Girls'  
Campus  
(From January 2019)

formative assessment, and are currently planning to bring in new initiatives to promote independent and online learning.

Finally, we are adamant that no child will be left behind. Hasmorean is very proud of its achievements in helping children improve, having been ranked highly for improving the progress of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Regardless of their economic status or abilities, we will always do everything within our power to ensure that every pupil is catered for at Hasmorean. Focussing on wellbeing to build a child's confidence and resilience is absolutely key here.

The secret of our success is the relentless aspiration of the whole school community and the tireless patience and compassion of our staff, both those teach but also those who support the pupils and staff in other roles. When I see the hours they spend outside of school hours trying to make a difference, I am reminded of just how fortunate I am to lead a school like this. Staff, students, governors and trustees work very, very hard here. Hasmorean runs on goodwill, and we are blessed with a great deal of it!

**Note:**

From January 2019, Mrs Katherine Brice will be taking up the role of Headteacher of Hasmorean Girls' campus. Mrs Brice is currently Deputy Head Pastoral at City of London School for Girls. In 1992 she joined City of London School for Girls and has occupied the roles of Assistant Head of Senior School, Head of History and Head of Lower School as well as her current role. Prior to this, she has worked as a History teacher at Aylesbury High School and at The Haberdashers' Aske's School.

She holds an MA (Hons) in History and a PGCE from the University of Cambridge, and has published widely in her field of History: *Years of Renewal* (Edward Arnold 1988) ed. Lotherington; *The Early Stuarts and The English Revolution* by Brice and Lynch (Hodder Education 2015); and *The Three Henrys: a novel* (Horsham House 2015).

Mrs Lebrecht will be Acting Head of the Girls' School and will remain as Head of the Boys' School for the autumn term of 2018.