



Press Release: 24-Hour Residential Seminar for Headteachers of Jewish Schools

At the end of November PaJeS convened a 24-hour residential seminar for 28 Headteachers from a wide range of Jewish primary and secondary schools across the UK. The aim of the seminar, sponsored by UJIA Ashdown, was to give Headteachers time away from the multitude of urgent issues on their desks and instead to reflect on the important challenges facing schools in the future and look at how we could address these through collaboration and partnerships. It was also intended as an opportunity to meet other Headteachers in a relaxed setting.

Animated discussions took place on the current challenges faced by schools and the key areas that Headteachers feel the community needs to focus upon. Among a large variety of issues some of the key topics highlighted were recruitment and retention of teachers, teacher training, leadership development and succession planning, and mental health and wellbeing of staff and students. There was a recognition that schools needed to work together in order to meet these challenges, and PaJeS will be forming working parties to consider these issues further and explore possible resolution strategies.

The group was privileged to be joined by two outstanding guest speakers. Brett Wigdortz, founder and CEO of Teach First, talked about the extraordinary impact the organization has had on recruitment of teachers. He stressed that their success is based on the clear moral purpose, values and vision that are at the heart of what they do, as well as on the excellent mentoring and support that their trainees receive. Anthony Wagerman CEO of Travelex, talked about the Headteacher as CEO and what they might learn from the corporate world. He gave a remarkable insight into his role and how it might relate to that of Headteachers.

Headteachers very much appreciated the time with one another and a considerable number of them made a commitment to continuing to work together and with PaJeS on some of the issues raised.

Andrea Elliker, headteacher of the Wohl Ilford Jewish Primary School praised the “opportunities to share experience and examples of good practice... finding shared ways forward together and resolving current legislative demands collectively”.

Caroline Field, headteacher of Menorah Foundation, described the seminar as “a very worthwhile 24 hours”, and felt that encouraging Jewish schools to work together “should achieve results specifically in mentoring, succession planning and support for staff at all levels”.

Alexis Gaffin of Immanuel College Preparatory School praised the “inspirational speakers” who “delivered messages in accessible chunks.”

Mrs Sarah Simmonds, headteacher of Noam Primary School, found the seminar “extremely worthwhile – the networking is always very welcome, the presentations were excellent and the opportunity to discuss important issues was invaluable”.

Rabbi David Meyer thanked all the Headteachers for attending and participating in this important conference which has helped to clarify the key priorities for the school community. PaJeS looks forward to working with Headteachers to explore possible solutions and to try to facilitate their implementation.