

KOL CHAI RELIGION SCHOOL



HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS



UPDATED JULY 2004

KOL CHAI RELIGION SCHOOL FACTS

Welcome to Kol Chai, a friendly, vibrant community where we encourage all members to play their part. At Religion School, we demand a certain amount of involvement in your child's Jewish Education and we ask that you agree to this before joining the community.

PARENTS` MORNINGS

Each class holds a Parents` Morning during the Pesach Term. This is an opportunity to experience, first hand, how we teach your child and to find out how you can support us. You should be prepared to take a full part in the morning`s activities.

During the morning you will meet with the Head Teacher and the Rabbi. This enables us to explain our methods for teaching Hebrew and Jewish Studies and offers you the opportunity to ask us questions.

OTHER LINKS WITH PARENTS

Children may bring home a Hebrew homework reading book. There is a place for you to sign indicating that you have heard your child read and also make any comments you feel appropriate. Teachers will often use the telephone or e mail to invite you to Religion School events, to ask if everything is alright if your child is absent for a few weeks or to voice any concerns they might have about work or behaviour. An annual report is sent home at the end of the Summer Term. However, the teachers are *always* willing to discuss any concerns or questions you may have. The end of the morning is preferable since the beginning is always rather busy! The Head Teacher's contact details can be found inside this handbook and also in Koleinu.

CLASS SIZES

We aim to limit each class to a maximum of 20 - splitting larger classes as soon as a new teacher becomes available.

STAFFING

Each class has a teacher and at least one assistant who has undergone a year`s training. Most classes are staffed by experienced teachers - some with professional teaching qualifications or Jewish Education qualifications. Almost all our class teachers are also members of the community, since we believe this contributes to the high level of commitment to our children`s Jewish Education. A minority of classes are taught by trainee teachers who have already spent two years as trained teaching assistants. However, they receive ongoing support and advice.

COMMUNICATION

Please read the weekly notice board displayed at the entrance to the school and the termly diary. There are also display boards inside the school. Your children will enjoy showing their displayed work to you so please take a moment to look. E mails are an important means of communicating with you so please let me know if you change yours. We also use the telephone and sometimes send a notice home - check your child's bag!

FEES

In line with all R.S.G.B. communities, we do not charge for education. However, we do ask a modest amount each year, to cover books and materials. You will be contacted separately about this. In line with synagogue policy, no child is excluded from any activity in the case of financial difficulties. Please contact the Head Teacher in the strictest confidence.

IMPORTANT

- Please make sure your child attends regularly - it isn't fair to put them in the uncomfortable position of always having to "catch up." This also makes the teacher's job doubly difficult.
- Please BE ON TIME! After 09.45 your child is LATE and you are to blame, NOT your child. If you don't think Religion School is important enough to be on time for, why should your child?
- Drinks are provided at break.
- Chewing Gum is NOT allowed on school premises.

PLEASE support what we teach, even if you choose not to practice it at home. NEVER denigrate what your child learns. If you demonstrate a love of Judaism at home, bring your child to synagogue a little more often and become an active member of our community, our job is easier. REMEMBER - EDUCATING YOUR CHILD INVOLVES A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN US AND YOU.

LET`S MAKE BEING JEWISH FUN - TOGETHER!

Jacky Martin





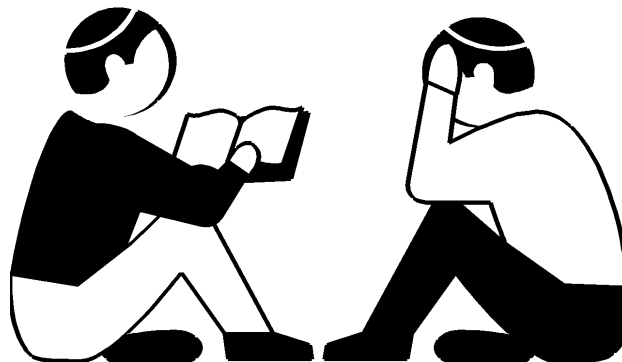
CLASSES

“Family Gan” – a pre-school class for children *and* their parents for those up to and including “Reception Year”

Alef	Year 1
Bet	Year 2
Gimmel	Year 3
Dalet	Year 4
Hay	Year 5
Vav	Year 6
Zayin	Year 7
Mitzvah	Year 8

Post Bar Mitzvah/GCSE	Year 9 & 10
Teaching Assistants` Course	Year 10

Kol Chai also organizes Residential weekends away for some classes. These weekends are great fun and a valuable extension to the syllabus. The children are encouraged to take part in the RSGB Summer Schemes.

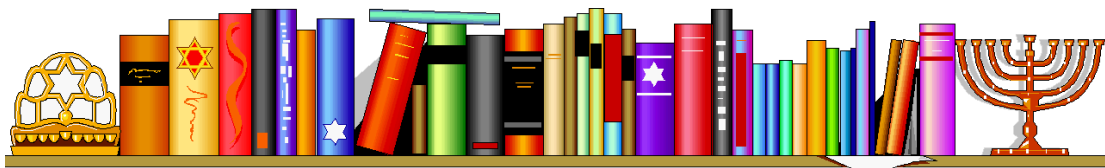


B`Nei Mitzvah at Kol Chai



All Kol Chai children are encouraged to have a Bar or Bat Mitzvah at the age of 13. Usually, they take the first part of the Shabbat service and leyn their portion from the Torah. They practice the service during a Sunday morning at Religion School with their Mitzvah class teacher and their Torah portion is taught individually by a "Portion" Teacher, who is allocated to them by the Rabbi. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah date is usually booked by you, in consultation with the Rabbi, no more than two years before the child's 13th birthday.

Our Religion School is not merely a place where children learn to read Hebrew and acquire some Jewish knowledge. It is a vital part of our Jewish community and as such we hope that your child will gain an enriched, life long commitment to their Jewish heritage. They will make Jewish friends, have positive Jewish teenage role models, be involved in synagogue activities and be encouraged to join in activities taking place in the wider Jewish world. Towards this end, it is our policy to *insist* that children attend our Religion School at least two years before their Bar/Bat Mitzvah, i.e. Year 5, and preferably earlier than this. **A Bar or Bat Mitzvah at Kol Chai is conditional upon this attendance.** We realize that there may be exceptions to this - for example if your child is attending a Jewish Day school - and the Rabbi will look at each case on it's own merit. Only under exceptional circumstances will we change this policy.



Post B`nei Mitzvah Programme

Many children continue their Jewish education and involvement with the synagogue after Year 8.

At Kol Chai, we offer a **GCSE Jewish Studies** course for children in school years 9 & 10.

In the second year of the programme there is also the opportunity to undergo an **Assistant Teacher Course**. This qualification is endorsed by the Leo Baeck College Centre for Jewish Education and enables teenagers to apply for paid work as assistants at Religion school. It is also accepted as part of the “Community Service” element of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

The two year Post B`Nei Mitzvah Programme is designed to enable students to take both courses if they wish.



Both courses are also open to students from other communities who join Kol Chai for a nominal fee as student members in their own right.

Hebrew at Kol Chai

The Hebrew lesson takes up approximately one hour a week and in that time we hope that the children will:

- have fun.
- realise that Hebrew is the language of the prayer book, and is the language spoken in Israel.
- learn to read.
- understand what they read.
- be able to read for their Barmitzvah.
- learn and understand some basic Hebrew.

We start with the RSGB Hasafer Sheli - 'My Book'- series:

The first year is entirely oral and is titled ' **Al Peh**' (by mouth). The children learn a basic vocabulary so that when they start to read the following year, they will have some understanding.

From the second year onwards, the children work from **Hasafer Sheli, Books 1-6**. The books introduce the letters in a prescribed way so it is not until Book 6 that they have been taught all the letters.

The children should understand the words so they generally read fairly easily and with meaning.

There is whole class teaching, but the children are also divided into smaller groups for reading and games (which still give reading practice but in a "fun" and informal way).

- All are generally working on the same page at the same time.
- We use extra work sheets and games to keep everyone busy.
- Assistants work with the groups.
- **If they are away, they miss out; regular attendance is essential.**

After completing "Hasafer Sheli", various reading programmes may be used. These include "Time for Prayer" and a follow on programme to Hasafer Sheli, again produced by RSGB, which is based on the festivals. The RSGB Siddur is also used.

Homework: The "Hasafer Sheli" books are kept at Religion School so the children can't leave them at home! Instead the children are given Hebrew Reading homework folders (made by Kol Chai), with Hasafer Sheli photocopies and pages from other books. Please try to read with or listen to your children each week. We have very little time on Sunday mornings and the children need to practice at home if they are to read fluently and begin learn Hebrew as a living language. A few minutes several times a week is better than long sessions now and then!



USEFUL CONTACT NAMES

Rabbi

Dr. Michael Hilton

Religion School Head Teacher

Jacky Martin

Synagogue

434 Uxbridge Road, Hatch End, Middlesex HA5 4RG

Tel: 020 8421 1582

Email: admin@kolchai.org