

KOL CHAI RELIGION SCHOOL



HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS

UPDATED December 2010

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 in class Gimmel upwards 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 *a/ways* 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. Where possible 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 Movement for Reform Judaism 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 09.55 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





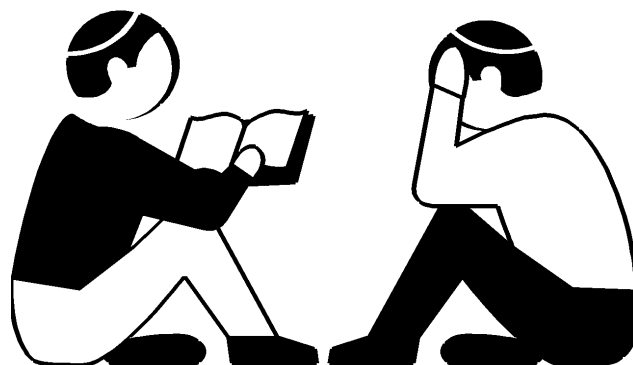
CLASSES

“**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 RSY Summer Schemes.

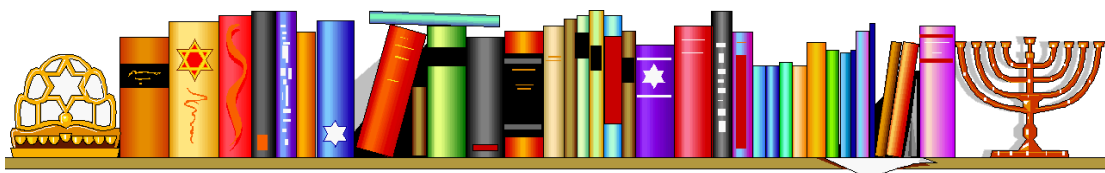


B`nei Mitzvah



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.

Kol Chai offers 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 Leo Baeck College - CJE 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 for a nominal fee as student members in their own right.

Hebrew at Kol Chai

There is a 45mins Hebrew lesson, 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 use a variety of schemes.

We start with the Hasafer Sheli- 'my book'- series. After the second year we use Shalom Uvracah – a Hebrew Primer. Once the children have completed this book we use Z'man L'Tefilah: The time for Prayer. Children also practice reading directly from the Reform Siddur.

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

In the second year they use the books - **Hasafer Sheli**, These books introduce the letters to many of the words which they have learnt orally in the previous year. The children should understand the words so they generally read fairly easily.

In the third year they will start using the **Shalom Uvracah** Hebrew Primer. They will revise some letters which they have learnt previously and then progress onto the rest of the alphabet.

In their pre Benei Mitzvah year they use **Z'man L'Tefilah**

- The first part of the Hebrew lesson is taught as a class.
- The children are then put into ability groups when working from the text books. As much as possible children are put into groups of 2 working with a teacher. The ability groups are fluid and children will be able to move up or down depending on their progress.
- Use of computer programmes and the internet is available and encouraged.
- **If they are away, they miss out; regular attendance is essential.**

Homework: After the second year the children are given Hebrew Reading homework folders (made by Kol Chai), with work sheets in or website details. The homework complements the Hebrew which has been done in the class. Homework folders are collected in each week and checked by either the Head Teacher or the Hebrew co-ordinator.

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 to learn Hebrew as a living language. A few minutes several times a week is better than long sessions now and then!



Jewish Studies

Each week there is a 45 minute Jewish studies session for each class. There is a Jewish Studies syllabus which each teacher follows.

Class	Festivals	Bible/History	Ethics	Ritual
Alef	General introduction to the festivals as they occur.	Bible stories “Let’s Discover The Bible”	Israel “Let’s Explore Being Jewish” (Israel)	Shabbat and T “Let’s Discover
Bet	“Holy Days , Holy Ways”	Jewish Counting Numbers and what they symbolise including numbers in Bible Stories.	Tzedakah – make Tzedakah box, choose class charity and think of a way to raise money. “Let’s Discover God” Children begin to explore basic concepts about God – our Covenant with God, how and why we perform mitzvot, how we talk to God and how we can act in God’s image.	Shabbat “Lets Discover the whys, wh observance. C exploring the time of rest an Make items fo and Cholah cl
Gimmel	Biblical stories connected to the festival.	Bible Stories “A Child’s Bible, Lessons from the Torah” Bible stories highlighting their timeless moral and spiritual truths and applying them to the personal concerns of today.	Mitzvot “BJL Mitzvot Folders” Children look at mitzvot and values as the core values of Jewish traditions.	The Synagogu “The Synagog People” The s ritual objects; house of pray house of mee Use Round th
Dalet	Concrete and more abstract images of the festivals.	Torah. The five books of Moses and what they contain. “The Ten Commandments” Exploring the moral lessons of the Ten Commandments with timeless stories, stories from the Bible, Talmud and Jewish folklore.	“ Partners with God” Children explore ideas of God and holiness and discover a Jewish vocabulary for thinking and talking about God.	“The Life Cycl Birth events, Weddings/Ma using primary and values ex
Class	Festival	Bible/History	Ethics	Ritual
Hay	Study festivals by looking at different symbols and food used. Also as part of the Jewish year cycle. See Ritual column.	“An Introduction to Jewish History” Highlights of Jewish history from the age of the patriarchs to the destruction of the Second Temple, and from the Bar Kochba rebellion to the completion of the Talmud.	“To Learn is to do” Text-based study of <i>tikkun olam</i> using Torah, Torah commentary, and other primary sources	Kashrut. Study foods a The Jewish ye the names of festivals fit in. “The Book of customs and alongside eac ancient tradit
Vav	Study at the festival by looking at the different names given to them	Journeys and Wanderings – the story of Abraham and his life with Sarah. The story of the spies. Temples and Synagogues – the story of David and Solomon.	“Why be Different.” What makes us different as Jews? Upholding values different from those taken for granted in our secular society.	Tzedakah Degrees of ch others. Discus Tzedakah in th “Basic Judaism

Zayin	Study the festivals as they relate to the children in their world.	Roots. Children find out about their “roots” and study the flight from Eastern Europe at the beginning of the 20 th century. They look at where the Jewish people settled, the work they did and the conditions they were faced with. Kristallnacht, Kindertransporte and some individual stories of Holocaust survivors are touched upon.	Israel. Current issues and life inside Israel.	The Haggadah A detailed look using the Tanach the text of the own to use at
-------	--	---	--	--

Third Session

In the third session there is a varied programme often using more informal education techniques.

Twice a term we have a Tefilah (prayer) session. This brings the whole school together and develops a familiarity with the Siddur and its use.

Approximately 4 times a term sessions are “option” sessions. The children are given a variety of options which they can choose from including art, craft, drama, cooking, singing, and dance. Each term these options have a general theme, often covering a topic which is not otherwise covered in the syllabus.

Some weeks the third session activity is based on a forthcoming festival.

Children who go to Jewish day schools may attend these sessions even if they are not regular attendants on other Sunday mornings.