

Cheder Report – AGM – May 2019

The Cheder continues to flourish. We have 110 children on roll at present with the following class by class breakdown:

Gan (Reception) - 3
Aleph (Y1) - 16
Bet (Y2) - 12
Gimmel (Y3) – 18

Dalet (Y4) – 20
Hay (Y5) - 18
Vav (Y6) – 23

We are currently running a joint Gan/Aleph class as the uptake on the Gan class is too low to make a class in its own right viable. This is often the case as parents feel that starting day school is enough for their 4 year old. This has no impact on their learning as there is a lot of repetition in the early years and the teacher is able to differentiate for those who have prior learning/differing needs.

Our attendance rate is good compared to other Cheders – an average of 75%. We know that many of our older students prepare for entrance exams and that has an impact on their attendance.



The morning is split into 2 sessions with the first 45 minutes being devoted to Hebrew and the second hour of teaching is devoted to Jewish Studies. Different classes have made various items of Judaica over the year such as kippot, mezzuzot, tallit, hannukiyot, torah scrolls, challah cloths, tzedakah boxes and dreidels. There have also been baking opportunities with classes making challah, soup, cheesecake, biscuits and doughnuts amongst other things.

At the end of the morning, the parents join us in the hall for our Kehillah time (assembly). During our assembly, we celebrate individual successes with certificates and also upcoming birthdays – the children really look forward to receiving their card and pencil gift. We also learn songs and prayers from the Shabbat services.

Some mornings at Cheder are “off timetable” and we do something a little different. Here are some of the things we’ve done this year:

Shavuot

Shavuot fell on a Sunday morning so we joined the community at the Synagogue for a morning of crafts, planting, up-cycling and considering the 10 commandments. We also had all the scrolls out to look at the section with the 10 commandments and ended the morning with an ice-cream and cheesecake Kiddush!



Israel@70

We celebrated Israel@70 with a themed event. It was our final volunteering/mitzvah event of the last academic year with Norwood. It was all held outside in the lovely sunshine. The children made Israeli flags and themed hats. They painted stones to go to Norwood homes to decorate their gardens. They also made cork coasters which they decorated for the people Norwood supports. Some of the children made mobiles/wind chimes for the trees in the gardens of the homes from twigs, coloured string and keys that they painted. The older children sold hats and cakes (with an Israel themed bake sale) and raised over £200 - Norwood used this money to buy some things for the new communal area in Somers Court. We also had Israeli dancing.



Sukkot

This year we once again ran a drop-in session for the Cheder as well as the wider community. The children dropped in with their parents to make decorations for the Sukkah. We also supported the food collection.

Remembrance Sunday

We joined Radlett village’s initiative to make a sea of poppies through the main street. Every child made a poppy from foam sheets and these were displayed in the Synagogue’s grounds. Kittah Vav joined the Remembrance parade and helped serve teas after the parade. The Cheder observed a minute’s silence and listened to the last post played on a trumpet by one of our madrichim.



Mitzvah Day

Once again we have teamed up with Norwood to run a year-long mitzvah partnership. Each week the children are giving Tzedakah to their class collection bottle (with a competition running to see who can get the most). So far they have raised £216 through their class collections.



For Mitzvah Day we worked with Norwood on a number of projects as follows:

- Gan/Aleph – decorated plant pots that will be used in the grounds at Norwood—they are going to plant them up soon.
- Bet – made coasters for Norwood by upcycling old CDs.
- Gimmel – did a toiletry collection for Goods4Goods—these go to help refugees.
- Dalet – made sandwiches and fruit salads for Sufra (a Muslim foodbank) and wrote letters to the recipients.



- **Hay** – decorated glass jars to add dreidels and chocolate coins that were taken to Norwood’s Chanukah party. They also made Chanukah cards that Norwood were going to sell
- **Vav** – sorted clothing, books and toys for collection and sale in the Norwood shops. Kittah Vav also planned out two fund-raising activities—one a bake sale raising £135 and the other a PJ day at Cheder raising another £100.

As previously mentioned, this is a year-long initiative and we are continuing our Mitzvah Passport scheme to encourage the children to think about mitzvot all year round rather than for just one day. Each class has a set of mitzvah challenges that they are completing, some based around the festivals and others based around their curriculum. For each mitzvah they complete, they get a sticker/stamp on their passport. Four stickers gets them a certificate, 8 stickers gets them a certificate and a badge and 12 stickers will get them a certificate and a prize. We handed out around 15 top prizes at the end of the last academic year and are hoping to exceed that this year.

Chanukah

For Chanukah, we ran a “round robin” of activities, with children completing Chanukah based quizzes or scavenger hunts, making dreidel mobiles (again with grateful thanks to Kathryn Michael who came in to help run the activity), playing dreidel, making cards and Chanukah jars for tea lights. There were also doughnuts of course!!

Tu Bishvat

For Tu Bishvat this year, each class considered the environment and what we can do to help. We held two Tu Bishvat Sederim where we continued the theme by bringing in our own reusable cups; we sampled a variety of fruits and juices. Parents and grandparents were invited and both children and adults took part in leading parts of the service.

Purim

For Purim, we continued our partnership with Norwood. We thought about the mitzvah of mishloach manot (sending gifts). Each class completed a different mitzvah again, we aimed to send gifts and goodies to Norwood to enhance their Purim party and we received some lovely thank you messages:

- Aleph—decorated and filled Mishloach Manot boxes with kosher treats that were donated
 - Bet—Made hats, masks and bracelets
 - Gimmel—made fancy greggers by up-cycling plastic bottles
 - Dalet—decorated glass jars and bracelets for a future fundraiser
 - Hay— decorated and filled fruit bags with donations from the Cheder families
 - Vav—made Pesach cards for the older members of our community.
- Of course we all came in fancy dress too and had Hamantaschen!



Pesach

In preparation for Pesach, the children all made their own bag of plagues to use at their own seder with different things representing each of the plagues. As a Cheder, we had a chocolate seder where everything in the seder was replaced by something sweet - e.g. fruit dipped in chocolate sauce instead of Karpas, sour sweets for maror, marshmallow fluff & chocolate spread for charoseth, chocolate eggs as well as chocolate milkshake instead of wine and of course chocolate matzah! Great fun was had by all and we compared and discussed the symbolism.



At the end of last year, as we will do again this year, we held “Graduation” assemblies where we celebrated the successes of all of our children by awarding everyone with their own certificate of achievement over the year. We invited representatives from Norwood (our own member Julian Anthony who worked for Norwood). They came and presented certificates to all of the children and we were able to present them with goodies requested like cushions, bean bags and games to be used in Somers Court, one of the Norwood residences. Kittah Vav also had their own graduation service which they led on a Friday night at Shul.



You can see how much voluntary work our students and staff put in over the course of the year. It was great that the Cheder were nominated for 2 awards at the Norwood Award’s Evening. We were successful in receiving a Special Recognition Award and Rabbi Celia, Nikki and myself were pleased to go and receive it on behalf of the whole Cheder.

We have a strong staff team of teachers and classroom assistants as well as the work done behind the scenes with resourcing and keeping paperwork in check by Nikki. We are joined by our Hadracha class who are volunteering in the classroom to get further experience. The Hadracha course runs over the course of the year and it’s great to get them to put into practice what they’ve learnt. Staff have had training on an IT package that can be used in the classroom and at the beginning of January a some of the staff attended a training day run by the Liberal and Reform movement – this is a great opportunity to train alongside teachers and assistants from other synagogues, giving an element of choice in the training sessions taken. I would like to heartily thank our staff for their dedication to Cheder and their enthusiasm which makes all of the above activities possible.

As you can see, we have a full and varied programme on offer for our children. If you would like to know more or would like to see some of what we get up to, contact me on headteacher@radlettreform.org.uk for further information.

Carol Green
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