

Cheder Report – AGM – May 2018

The Cheder continues to thrive. We have 121 children on roll at present with the following class by class breakdown:

Gan (Reception) - 4
Aleph (Y1) - 9
Bet (Y2) - 17
Gimmel (Y3) – 20

Dalet (Y4) – 19
Hay (Y5) - 24
Vav (Y6) – 28

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 65%. 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.

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:

Lag B' Omer

Many classes made edible bonfires using a variety of foodstuffs, from twiglets, pretzels and match-makers to create the logs and fruit wheels and icing to make the flames to decorate cakes and biscuits. The morning ended with our own Lag B'Omer “campfire”, where we sat around our mock campfire and had a lovely sing along.



Sukkot

This year we 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. Our Hadracha class ran a Sukkot themed treasure hunt and we shared some books donated by P J Library. We also supported the food collection.



Mitzvah Day

We have taken a different approach to mitzvot, tzedakah and Mitzvah Day this year. We have teamed up with Norwood to run a year-long mitzvah partnership. This was launched with a visit from someone from Norwood who explained to the children about the charity and gave them a raisin pot which they were to empty and fill with tzedakah to be returned to Cheder.

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.
- Bet – decorated photo frames that will be used for the residents at Norwood to have photos of their family in their rooms.
- Gimmel – made sparkly mobiles from CDs that will be hung in the grounds at Norwood. These are a great visual stimulation for the residents.
- Dalet & Hay – made healthy salads for Suфра (a Muslim foodbank) and wrote letters to the recipients.



- Vav – sorted clothing, books and toys for collection and sale in the Norwood shops. They also counted up the returned raisin pot money – we raised over £225. Kittah Vav also planned out a fund-raising activity and ran a sweet raffle last week at Cheder, raising another £70+ for Norwood.

As previously mentioned, this is a year-long initiative and we have launched a 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 have handed out the many first and second certificates and have some children who are on target to receive their third certificate before the end of term.

Chanukah

Unfortunately we had to cancel this session due to the snow day in December. We collected new toys to support Camp Simcha's Chanukah Toy Drive – fortunately this was completed and collected before the end of term.

Tu Bishvat

To celebrate Tu Bishvat, the children completed some tree/fruit related crafts after learning about the festival. We ended the morning with a Tu Bishvat Seder to which parents were invited – we sampled dates, olives, satsumas, mango, figs and raisins.



Purim

For Purim, we continued our partnership with Norwood. We thought about the mitzvah of mishloach manot (sending gifts). The children made Purim placemats, Greggers, Mishloach Manot boxes and fruit baskets. These were all sent to Ravenswood in Berkshire, a home that Norwood supports.



Pesach



In preparation for Pesach, the children all made their own Haggadot at varying levels. The little ones made placemats that tracked their way through the stages of the seder with frog counters and had the plagues on the reverse. The other classes personalised books – adding prayers and pictures for each stage of the seder. Hopefully this helped make their seders at home more meaningful.



Kittah Vav Trip to Norwood

In March, Kittah Vav visited the Norwood warehouse in Acton to follow –up from their Mitzvah Day project. They saw where the clothes that they sorted were sent and did some more sorting of clothing and hangers. They also collected a range of novelty hats that had been donated to Norwood and are planning a fundraising event this term to purchase bean bags, scatter cushions and large games for Somers Court in Edgware, which is a supported living accommodation that Norwood supports.



We are looking ahead to planning activities Shavuot and are planning our own celebrations for Israel at 70 which will include other activities in partnership with Norwood as part of the ongoing mitzvah project. Kittah Gan/Aleph will also be visiting one of the Norwood residences to plant up the pots that they decorated on Mitzvah Day.

We are also looking to see how we can make use of IT in our cheder lessons – we are very grateful to one of our members who has arranged for two of our classes to receive an iPad workshop through Jewish Interactive in the coming weeks. We are looking to see whether we can develop this further – if there is anyone who has an tablets or iPads that they no longer use that they would be willing to donate to the Cheder, please do get in touch – this would greatly enhance our teaching.

We have a strong staff team of teachers and classroom assistants. We have been joined by our Hadracha graduates who are volunteering in the classroom to get further experience. The Hadracha course ran over the first term of the year and it's great to get them to put into practice what they've learnt. Staff have had training on safeguarding in this year and at the beginning of January a large number 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
Head Teacher