SHALOM & WELCOME

Becoming Bar or Bat Mitzvah signals the acceptance of the privileges and responsibilities of Jewish adulthood. It is therefore not at all the ending of the journey in Jewish education, but an opportunity to grow further into the Jewish community, building on the friendships that the students have made at the Synagogue, to deepening their knowledge, developing their skills and also giving back to the community.

We are proud to offer several ways of enabling our post B’nei Mitzvah students to remain active and involved with the synagogue. The highlights are listed below; with more precise information in the pages that follow:

• **Kabbalat Torah**: This is a two year course combining further learning and Jewish skills with community service. Our students meet once per month at the Synagogue as well as being involved in other areas of community life as set out below including teaching our children, leading Czech Scrolls Museum tours, leading parts of services and helping out at community events.

• **GCSE in Religious Studies featuring Judaism**: This is a two-year study course with an interfaith emphasis. Weekly sessions are currently offered on Wednesday evenings.

• **Help Teaching**: After graduating as a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, some of our young people assist us as Help Teachers and young leaders working with the children of our community at Or Shabbat.

• **Young Docents**: Some of our Teenagers train as museum guides at our Czech Scroll Museum.

• **Wider Jewish World**: We hold social events in tandem with other synagogue communities as well as a European Residential trip for 14-16 year olds such as the one held in Budapest in November 2018. We also encourage our teens to become involved with the Reform and Liberal Jewish Youth Movements in the UK.

• **Lay Reading**: We encourage a number of post-B’nei Mitzvah students and their families to return to take mitzvot in our service, and to lead the first part of the service.

We look forward to continuing this journey with your children and if you would like more information, please do contact the Synagogue Office by emailing admin@westminstersynagogue.org.
Kaballat Torah

A two year programme primarily for students in Years 9 & 10 at school. The programme is open be for members of our own community and those from outside, and includes the following:

• Monthly learning sessions on a Friday evening from 5:30-7:30pm (away from the BM groups). A chance for the group to get together, catch up and further their Jewish education together. Our Rabbis work with this group, as well as speakers who address topics such as Israel, social action, Jewish life on university campus, spirituality and other topics of interest

• Monthly opportunities for help teaching and leadership training at Or Shabbat

• Visits to places of Jewish interest including an interfaith visit and a volunteering opportunity in the community

• A European residential to Budapest with students from other reform synagogues held every other year

• The chance to develop the skills to lead a Friday night service and to develop further service leading skills for the Shabbat morning service

• The chance to develop become an MST Museum guide

• Year 1 culminates in the leading of a Friday night Kabbalat Shabbat service

• Year 2 culminates on Shavuot 2020 with a graduation Shabbat service when the group will collaborate to lead the Shabbat morning service
GCSE in Religious Studies featuring Judaism

At Westminster Synagogue, we think it is key that our young people’s Jewish learning continues past their Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

The GCSE programme offered at Westminster Synagogue gives post-B’nei Mitzvah students (and friends from outside the synagogue who may wish to join them) the opportunity to pursue a two-year GCSE course in Religious Studies featuring Judaism and to achieve a full GCSE in Year 10 or beyond. Students will tackle such questions as “Why do Jewish people vary so much in the way we understand and keep to the laws of Judaism?” or “What do Jews believe about God, the soul and the afterlife?” Given the interfaith emphasis of the course, the students also learn about the history, traditions and ethics of a comparative religion which in this case is Christianity.

Students are given two years to develop their analytical and writing skills, allowing time to integrate their learning from the units into their lives. These skills will help with most other GCSE modules run at school and so can only be a benefit for the students. Throughout the programme, there will be extensive exam practice to make sure students are as ready for the exams as possible, as well as opportunities to experience the Jewish festivals and life cycle events learnt about within the community. All this will strengthen students' Jewish knowledge and ability to write from personal experience.

We are running this two year course for 13/14 year olds at Westminster Synagogue in 2019/20. It is a course that offers fascinating topics and a well-rounded programme of study under the direction of our expert teacher, Janet Berenson.
We are delighted that many of our young people wish to continue to support and be involved with our community following their B’nei Mitzvah.

As Help Teachers, our young people are given the opportunity to observe and assist experienced educators who work with children aged 3-13 at Or Shabbat and in our B’nei Mitzvah programme.

Our teenagers are given leadership training and experience, as well as mentoring and they learn a variety of transferable leadership, planning and facilitation skills which are useful in any walk of life.

Some of our teenagers also return to Or Shabbat to offer occasional volunteer support as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, which we are happy to support.

A number of our Help Teachers progress to taking on more responsibility as Junior teachers and also become Class teachers, as is the case with one of our current educators who has been with us for 12 years, from a student at Or Shabbat to her recent graduation from university!

Our Help Teachers may support learning during our Saturday morning Or Shabbat programme for 3-11 year olds from 9:45-12:45pm or our B’nei Mitzvah programme for 11-13 year olds, which takes place on a Friday from 5:00-7:00pm.
The Czech Scrolls are a very important part of our identity as a community. More than 1300 of the 1564 Scrolls that originally were procured by the synagogue in 1964 are now serving communities throughout the world, and so the Scrolls remain a symbol that connects us to the past, the present and also to the future of the Jewish community throughout the world.

Our Czech Scrolls Museum receives regular visits from the UK and further afield. Our B'nei Mitzvah families are encouraged to visit the museum and often visitors to our synagogue on a Saturday morning stay to attend the museum.

Although we have a number of staff and lay members who are able to serve as guides, we also have a team of young people who are able to lead and support experienced guides giving tours of the museum. We would be very happy to recruit some more young people to join the team and would like to know if your teen may be interested. As well as being a fascinating and very rewarding occasional role for young people who are interested in history and keen to contribute further to our community, it also looks excellent on a CV and can be very impressive to university recruiters and employers in the future.

The guides are trained, and would only be asked to lead tours when they are available, with plenty of notice given either on a Friday evening or a Saturday morning.

The training involves two sessions followed by experience supporting and participating in the tours of experienced guides. Following this, the teenager may wish to offer a tour to their own family before potentially supporting or leading more tours.
Social Activities, European Residential Trip and Jewish Youth Groups

Together with our youth leaders, our young people create a social programme in which we connect them to other central London communities. Recent activities have included ice skating and pizza, sushi making and even a guided tour of the Houses of Parliament.

We also hold biennial European Residential trips such as our last one, to Budapest, Hungary in November 2018, which saw our teenagers join up with young people from another London Synagogue to learn about the Jewish history of the city, to meet up with a Jewish community in another part of Europe, and to have great fun and an unforgettable experience.

We encourage our teenagers to become involved with the RSY or LJY Netzer youth movements. These movements offer our teens the chance to connect with their peers across the UK either on holiday camps, events throughout the year or on residential trips.

The highlight tends to be Israel Tour for 16 year olds at the end of Year 11. Each year a number of Westminster students participate in these tours and they report back as having had a wonderful time and made great friendships. In Summer 2019 we had our largest participation ever.

Many of our Synagogue Staff have been part of youth movements (even taken tours) and still talk about the lifelong friendships they’ve made through them!
Recently a number of our post BM students have returned to lead the synagogue service on a Saturday morning. This has enabled them and their families to remain involved with us and has been particularly appreciated by members of the community.

We are also delighted to offer our young people a mitzvah on the anniversary of their Torah portion.

If your child is interested in leading a service or reading their Torah portion again, please contact the Synagogue Office by emailing mitzvot@westminstersynagogue.org and we would be more than happy to arrange this with you.

Our teenagers also write some amazing Divrei Torah for their B’nei Mitzvah; as such we like to include these in our weekly e-letter on the anniversary of their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. If you would like more information about this, please contact the Synagogue Office by emailing events@westminstersynagogue.org.
Safeguarding

Safeguarding the welfare of children in the community is our uppermost priority and everyone’s responsibility at Westminster Synagogue. All of our staff working with children have been subject to enhanced DBS checks, and have had Child Protection Training. Our Safeguarding Team (as named below) oversee our child protection provision and are the first port of call in the event that you have concerns regarding the safety of any child. Robust procedures are in place to ensure that concerns are dealt with correctly.

Copies of our Child Protection, Safeguarding and all other policies relevant to our children’s education programmes are available on the Westminster Synagogue website and also in our religion school area. Please speak to Gary Sakol or a member staff in order to obtain and view the policies.

In the event of concerns about the wellbeing of a child, please speak to a member of our Safeguarding Team in strictest confidence as soon as possible. Alternatively, you may go directly to the Westminster Access Team.

Designated Safeguarding Lead for Westminster Synagogue:
Gary Sakol (Executive Director). Tel 020 7584 3953
Email: gary@westminstersynagogue.org

Westminster Access Team – Tel: 020 7641 4000
(Out of hours – 020 7641 6000)
Email: AccessToChildrensServices@westminster.gov.uk

In the event of concerns about the conduct of a member of synagogue staff, please speak to our Safeguarding Team in strictest confidence as soon as possible, or you may go directly to the Westminster Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) as set out below:

Westminster LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer)
Please call 0207 641 7668 and ask to speak to the Duty Child Protection Advisor or email lado@westminster.gov.uk

Behaviour and Anti-Bullying

We expect and teach our children to treat each other, the staff and the building with respect and care. This is set out in our Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies.
Getting involved with Or Shabbat & wider community

We understand the pressures of modern life, but hope you will make the time to give some of your time to one of the many opportunities available in the community, which will help you to connect to other members and sets an example for your children. Here are a few suggestions:

**Adult and Family Education**

**Modern Hebrew Ulpan** - Want to speak Hebrew like an Israeli? Year-long Ulpan courses for Beginners and Intermediate students will be held on Thursday nights subject to enrolment numbers.

**Hebrew Learning classes** on Wednesday evenings during term time for parents and community members after the Or Chadash classes from **7:45-8:30pm**. We will try to accommodate you whatever your level.

**Torah Breakfasts** and **Torah in the City** are lively discussion groups that focus on the weekly Torah portion. Torah Breakfasts are held termly on Shabbat mornings at the Synagogue, while Torah in the City sessions take place on a Wednesday morning once per month at a location in the city, perfectly situated for a number of our members working in the area.

**Shabbat Lunch & Learn** sessions run throughout the year on Saturdays following the service from **12:45-2:15pm**. These sessions are held as a short series of three, as members explore the weekly Torah portion – we do ask for members to attend at least two of the three sessions.

**Oneg Shabbat Lunches** take place monthly after Shabbat services. They offer the chance to explore prayers, readings, rituals, Torah or some other interesting aspect of Jewish culture. The community shares a potluck Shabbat meal and engage in learning, led by Rabbi Benji, Yael Roberts or guest speakers.

**Or Chadash (Access to Judaism)** is a class which covers all of the essentials of Judaism - a sort of Judaism 101. Topics include festivals, history, customs and Israel. Classes run from **6.30-7:45pm** on Wednesday evenings and are open to all members as well as conversion candidates. Members can attend for a one-off topic or all year round. Contact the Synagogue Office for a copy of this year’s syllabus.

**Museum Guide Training** - On the third floor of Kent House you can experience the dramatic story of the Czech Memorial Scrolls. The current exhibition opened in September 2008 and it has now been more than 50 years since the scrolls arrived at Westminster Synagogue. If you would like to train to be a guide for the museum, please let us know.

**Westminster Chai** – Our annual learning day! Held this year on Sunday, 10th November to mark the start of Interfaith Week, we invite you to join us as we welcome 16 amazing educators into the building for a day you won’t forget! For more information, or to volunteer on the day, contact the Synagogue Office.

**Friday Night Services** – Our Kabbalat Shabbat services begin at 6:30pm. In place of a sermon, we do Chavruta (text study) in the service, with members participating together from their seats.

**Shabbat Unplugged** – Held monthly, our Friday Night Unplugged services include a half hour of learning the melodies before the service from 6:00pm with Yoav Oved.
Committees and Clubs throughout the year

Kiddush Preparation

Providing the Ritual side of the Kiddush or acting as a partner for Kiddush for a BM family – the complement will be returned when you are the celebrating B’nei Mitzvah family. Alternatively, prepare the Communal Side of Kiddush alongside some Or Shabbat families, it’s a wonderful way to meet other parents and support our community.

Meeter and Greeter

After you’ve dropped your child off at Or Shabbat, why not be a warm and welcoming face for members and visitors as they enter our building. It can be daunting to come into Kent House, especially if you don’t know anyone, so why not offer a smile, a hello and a cup of coffee before heading up to the service. We ask that Meeter and Greeters are present from 10:00-10:45am.

Education Committee

Join the Education Committee, which meets quarterly to discuss the wider educational strategy for the synagogue.

Or Shabbat PTA/Coffee Morning Group

This is a new group which meets termly during classes on a Saturday morning. The group serves as an excellent link between our staff and the families and helps us to organise events as well as to fund-raise and to focus on matters pertinent to Or Shabbat. Please speak to Yael if interested.

Westminster Czech Scrolls Committee

The Synagogue is fortunate to possess two Torah Scrolls from the collection of 1564 scrolls received by the Scrolls Trust in 1964. One of them is on loan to Or Shabbat and is from the town of Přeštic in what was formerly Czechoslovakia. This year, the Commemorative Service for those who perished from the towns of Přeštic and Horažďovice will be held on Friday 22nd November and we invite all members to attend.

Westminster Young Professionals

This committee has recently formed to provide events and education for the Young Professional market. If you feel you would be able to lend a hand in marketing, logistics, coordination, finance or just as a volunteer, please get in touch.

Westminster Purim Players

Every year we hold a Purim Spiel; telling the Purim story through different genres (Harry Potter, Beatles, ABBA, Grease, Star Wars, Fiddler on the Roof) and if you are theatrical in any way – be it writing, directing, acting or costumes - please contact the Synagogue Office to lend your talents.
Dates for your Diary

Friday 13th September - B’nei Mitzvah Chavurah Supper
Saturday 21st September - Selichot Supper, Study and Service
Sunday 29th & Monday 30th September - Erev Rosh Hashanah & Rosh Hashanah
Tuesday 8th & Wednesday 9th October - Kol Nidre & Yom Kippur
Sunday 13th & Monday 14th October - Erev Sukkot Shira & Sukkot First Day
Sunday 20th & Monday 21st October - Erev Simchat Torah & Simchat Torah
Friday 8th - Sunday 10th November - BM Westminster Residential Trip
Sunday 10th November - Westminster Chai
Sunday 17th November - Mitzvah Day
Sunday 17th - 24th November - Peace of Mind
Friday 22nd November - WS Czech Scrolls Commemorative Service
Friday 27th December - Westminster Chanukah Celebrations
Sunday 23rd February - Westminster Questions?
Friday 6th - Sunday 8th March - BM European Residential Trip
Monday 9th March - Purim Spiel and Celebrations
Wednesday 8th April - First Night Seder
Monday 20th April - Erev Yom HaShoah with WLS
Thursday 28th May - Erev Shavuot Service and Supper
Friday 19th June - B’nei Mitzvah Graduation

Useful Contacts

Our Rabbis
Rabbi Benji Stanley - rabbi@westminstersynagogue.org
Rabbi Dr Thomas Salamon, Rabbi Emeritus - thomas@westminstersynagogue.org

Education Enquiries
Yael Roberts, Director of Community and Education - yael@westminstersynagogue.org
Nivi Chatterjee Duari, Office Administrator - admin@westminstersynagogue.org

Lifecycle Enquiries
Ben Shaw, PA to Rabbinic Team - ben@westminstersynagogue.org

Festival and Cultural Event Enquiries
Jon Zecharia, Events and Communications Manager - jon@westminstersynagogue.org
Louise Wendel, Events Coordinator - louise@westminstersynagogue.org

Membership Enquiries
Hilary Ashleigh, Membership Administrator - hilary@westminstersynagogue.org

Executive Director
Gary Sakol - gary@westminstersynagogue.org