



# **Crouch End Chaverim Handbook for parents 2014/15**

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# Crouch End Chaverim Handbook for parents 2014/15

*Yehoshua ben Perachiah said:*

*"Make yourself a teacher; acquire a friend; and judge every person favourably."  
(Ethics of the Fathers 1:6)*

Dear Parent,

We have written this handbook to share our vision for the Chaverim, the learning and exploration groups for children, and to provide you with practical information about the groups. However, the best way to really get a sense of who we are and what we do is to come and meet us, and have a conversation with Rabbi Sandra who oversees all learning in the Chavurah.

## **Why have we chosen the above quote to introduce this handbook?**

Why does it say to 'make' and not 'have' yourself a teacher? It is important that a person wants to be taught, trusts the teacher, and accepts that the teacher is not all knowing. 'Making' implies an active relationship, a wish to learn and explore with the teacher. And the best teachers turn you into someone who wants to help others learn.

Why does it say 'acquire' a friend? Isn't that the wrong way to establish a relationship? True friendship does not always come naturally; we have to invest something in it to secure it, whether time or priority.

And what does it mean to judge others favourably? Do 'others' mean our teachers and friends - to give them the benefit of doubt when you disagree, to not assume the worst?

Whichever way you understand this quote, active, open-minded participation and trust are the foundations for Chaverim, and without them we cannot teach a liberal and inclusive Judaism.

## **Creating Jewish identities**

We are called Chaverim (friends) because what really matters in supporting a person in the ongoing creation of a Jewish identity is having a Jewish friendship group, a group of likeminded people with whom you can learn, experience festivals, and enjoy exploring what it means to be Jewish. We are not a school, and we do not teach a national curriculum, and this is reflected in how and what we learn together. Our groups are small, usually no more than eight children in a group, and they are taught in the home of one of the children. Situating Jewish learning in somebody's home is a wonderful way of developing the children's understanding of Judaism and communicates that being Jewish is something that happens every day, everywhere. It is not something confined to a synagogue building or the rabbi's house. Judaism is a way of living, it can help us think ethically about our choices, it encourages us to ask questions and to look for answers. As Liberal Jews we value and encourage exploring our traditions, ethics and rituals, as modern people, in a

modern world. Asking questions and learning to find our own answers, both in traditional Jewish texts and in the modern world, are the cornerstones of our ethos. Whether in relation to a festival or a Torah (Bible) story, or trying to figure out what we mean by God, we encourage open conversations and discussions.

### **Who we are**

Rabbi Sandra has the overall responsibility for all learning in the community and she will ensure she teaches every group at some point in the year. Naomi Kramer is a wonderful teacher who has been with us for a year now, and teaches all levels. Rabbi Sandra and Naomi share the teaching between them, and usually switch groups during the year. Marie Levontine is the organisational backbone of the Chaverim, and masterminds the who, when and where. Lynsey Goodmaker is the administrator of the Chavurah and is also slowly taking over more responsibility for the smooth running of the Chaverim. Deborah Crewe is the Chavurah Committee member responsible for safeguarding issues.

### **Responsibilities**

The Chaverim, and indeed the whole Chavurah, are based on maintaining and forming social bonds with each other. Learning is a part of that, which is why our groups do a lot of activities which are designed to draw them close to each other as responsible people and as Jews. Sharing a snack, hearing about each other's week, learning to work together, and discussing ethics are all part of creating a spirit of Jewish companionship and joy. The bonds that we create together as Jews reach beyond our community, into Liberal Judaism and LJY-Netzer (the youth movement), to Jews globally, and to the non-Jewish world around us. Part of our vision of what it means to be Jewish, and of how we create learning experiences for the Chaverim, includes learning about and participating in tzedakah. A popular translation of this concept is charity, giving money to a worthy cause. Charity, however, is only a small part of tzedakah, and a fuller translation of the word is 'justice', the responsibility to help create a just and righteous society for everyone. This understanding is what underlies the tzedakah projects we do every year with the Chaverim. In order to keep the projects relevant and meaningful we focus on one topic or cause a year, which we decide in collaboration with the Parent's Group and the Children's Council. The Children's Council is one of many opportunities for the children to take leadership responsibility and for their voices to be heard.

### **The role of the family**

Creating a Jewish identity cannot only happen at the Chaverim. The home is the main source of a child's desire to be Jewish and to live a Jewish life, in whatever shape or form that takes. We are here to support and encourage your child's Jewish development alongside your involvement. The essential thing is not whether you have a little or a lot of knowledge, or whether there are one or two Jewish parents in the family. What really matters are your interest, your wish to talk about what it means to be Jewish, and your participation in services and events, at lifecycle rituals or at adult learning sessions. We can impart Jewish knowledge, but we cannot teach your children why Judaism is important or relevant if it is not relevant and important in your life. And that is why the Chaverim is not a separate entity from the Chavurah, the community.

## **Hebrew**

We are not a Hebrew class: our primary aim is not to teach Hebrew literacy skills or modern Hebrew. Hebrew is an important part of our curriculum but we only begin to teach it seriously to children around the age of 10 yrs. As each class only lasts approximately one hour a week, we choose to focus on giving the children a solid Jewish foundation and knowledge before teaching them Hebrew. If we try to teach Hebrew reading skills earlier, we find it can easily stretch over three to four years without the children ever really learning it properly. Hebrew becomes an obstacle, a stumbling block rather than a valued key to open up further Jewish learning. We therefore teach Hebrew reading skills intensively from the age of 10 years old, when the idea of a Bar/Bat Mitzvah begins to lurk on the horizon.

We use a mixture of books, games, apps, and internet-based resources. Here are a few websites:

<http://babaganewz.com/games/zoons>

<http://www.templekolami.org/hebrew-bubble-game-2/>

<http://freehebrewgames.com/>

We can recommend private tutors to help and encourage children who are struggling with Hebrew, or have only joined the Chaverim at a later stage, or who are preparing for their Bnei Mitzvah. Beginning this year, we will also run a Hebrew MOT for adults, whether you are a complete novice, or just need a bit of a refresher course. Please look out for details about it in the Chavurah newsletter.

Once a year, after the High Holidays, the Chaverim will lead a family Shabbat morning or evening service for the whole community, and the older your child is, the more likely they will be reading or singing a prayer in Hebrew. Their participation in this service is very important for their Hebrew skills, for their sense of achievement and participation, and for their understanding of community.

## **Israel**

We are a non-political organisation, and so when we teach about Israel we focus on facts and culture and on all the different people who live in the area. We do not talk about whether a political party is right or wrong, but make sure that the children are aware that there is an ongoing and complex conflict which has no black and white heroes and villains. We are committed to using maps of Israel with the Green Line, i.e. showing the 1967 borders, so that people (especially the younger generation) are not misled into believing that there is not, or that there never has been, a border separating two political entities between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River.

## **Areas of learning**

The areas we teach are roughly divided into six areas; Torah people, post-Torah people, ethics and morality, Israel, lifecycle events, and festivals. As progressive Jews we view the Torah as our foundational story, the way our ancestors tried to make sense of the world, their role in it, and the role of the divine. It is not factual history, and we highlight this in all our teaching, especially in relation to the creation stories.

We teach in an informal environment which encourages discussion and exploration. We use traditional and modern texts, YouTube, movies, the internet, and music to help the children learn. Our aim is for them to discover their Judaism through all their different senses which is why we draw, write, bake, cook, sing and discuss to our heartsery important for their Hebrew skills, special interests, be it sports, music, or nature if it means that they can relate to a topic. In this past year we were lucky enough to have a youth leader teach two of the groups Jewish songs and melodies to sing and play on various musical instruments. This is a project that we are keen to repeat if we can find someone who can teach music and singing so please let us know if you can recommend someone who might be suitable.

<b>Years:</b>	<b>Topics</b>
Reception & Year 1	Festivals Introduction to Torah stories Jewish objects
Years 2-3	Torah stories Festivals Lifecycle Jewish objects
Years 4-6	Ethics Torah people Lifecycle Beginning to decode Hebrew Israel Introduction to prayers
Years 7-9	Ethics Post-Torah people Continuing to learn Hebrew Hebrew prayers Israel Individual research and creative projects, Helping out at festivals
Years 10-11	Duke of Edinburgh Creating a personal moral code Hebrew fluency Learning to take on a leadership role for the younger children.

As the children get older, they might cover a topic they have done before, such as a festival or an ethical situation, but each time it will be done in a different, age-appropriate way, building on what they have learnt before, to reach a deeper understanding.

### **Dates for the calendar**

We have a few dates every year that are important in the life of the Chaverim. The dates vary each year according to the Hebrew calendar. Chanukah, Purim, Pesach and the Chaverim Shabbat service are opportunities for the children to immerse themselves in a festival, and for the older children to begin honing their leadership skills by helping to plan and run different activities for others. At the end of the year, usually at a Friday night community Shabbat in June or July, we have a *siyum*, a celebration and exhibition of what each group has learnt during the year.

### **Membership**

To be a member of a community means seeing each other as like-minded partners and not merely as users of a service that others provide. We do not provide an educational service, we offer the opportunity to create meaningful Jewish relationships for both children and adults. Though it is not a very popular word, community life is based on *brit* (covenant), on the idea that we are in a give-and-take relationship, that being a member is about you as a person and the connections you make, and is not defined by the fees we pay. Living in community, being part of the Chavurah, and part of the Chaverim teaches our children about how to treat others well, about the joy we get from feeling part of something, and about being proud of and engaged with Judaism.

*Please contact Lynsey if you would like a place for your child in one of our classes, giving as much notice as possible in order to assist us in planning the make-up of the various groups.*

See Appendix A for details of our ground rules and policies on:

- Attendance
- Fees
- Priority for members
- Safeguarding
- Special educational needs or other learning issues
- Behaviour
- Drop off/pick up
- Parking/noise
- Parents staying during class
- Food & drink

### **Communicating with you and your child**

You will receive a letter from Rabbi Sandra at least once a term informing you about what each group has been learning and letting you know any updates or special events that will be taking place that might be relevant. As we do not have a wall in a classroom to display our learning, from September 2014 we will be using a closed

group on Facebook, called Crouch End Chaverim, to show you what the children have been doing in class. Do look each week with your child so that they have a chance to tell you what they have learnt, found interesting, or would like to teach you.

*Rabbi Sandra and Naomi are always available for a brief conversation as the beginning and end of each class, but for longer conversations please make an appointment or contact them via e-mail.*

### **LJY-Netzer: our youth movement**

As a constituent community of *Liberal Judaism*, the Chavurah is also linked to LJY-Netzer, which caters for children from years 3-4 and above. 'LJY-Netzer is a youth movement committed to the ideals of *Liberal Judaism*, *Progressive Zionism* and *Tikkun Olam (Repair of the World)*. We fulfil this commitment through informal education, *hadracha (leadership)* and *informed decision-making*'. LJY-Netzer runs weekends in the autumn term, a week-long spring camp, and *Machaneh Kadimah*, their fantastic 2-week summer camp for children in years 3-10 inclusive. They also organise trips to Europe and Israel for students in years 11 and up.

One participant said: 'I just can't believe I got to go on *Machaneh Kadimah* this summer (2013). Never before have I explored my *Liberal Judaism* and reform *Zionism* in such an inclusive environment whilst meeting loads of new people and having such an explosively awesome time!'

See more at <http://www.ljy-netzer.org/about-us/>

### **Parents' Committee**

We have just created a parents' committee to help and inspire Rabbi Sandra to plan and run the Chaverim. We are aiming to meet approximately 3-4 times a year to discuss any issues that have arisen and to plan and help organise specific events. If you would be interested in helping shape your child's Jewish journey, please contact Rabbi Sandra.

**We hope you have found this handbook useful, and we look forward to sharing the learning journey with you and your child.**

## Useful contacts

<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Email</b>
Teacher/Safeguarding officer	Rabbi Sandra	s.kviat@liberaljudaism.or
Teacher	Naomi Kramer	naomi@hitsheet.co.uk
Chaverim Co-ordinator	Marie Levontine	marie@crouchendchavurah.co.uk
Chaverim Administrator	Lynsey Goodmaker	lynsey@crouchendchavurah.co.uk
Chavurah Membership Secretary	Anna Wise	anna@crouchendchavurah.co.uk
Safeguarding officer	Deborah Crewe	d.crewe@me.com



## **Chaverim ground rules and policies**

### **Attendance**

Enrolling your child in a Chaverim class means you are making a commitment to your child attending that class on a weekly basis (or monthly, for our Reception-year 1 group). However, we appreciate that sometimes children will miss a lesson due to sickness, family holiday or other exceptional events. Please let your child's teacher know in advance (and with as much notice as possible) if your child will not be attending class on any given week or will be arriving late. Our policy is that we do not give refunds for classes missed due to sickness, family holidays or other absence. In exceptional circumstances, please contact our Chaverim Co-ordinator, Marie Levontine ([marie@crouchendchavurah.co.uk](mailto:marie@crouchendchavurah.co.uk)) who will consider each case on its merits.

### **Fees**

Chaverim fees are payable a term in advance. Re-enrolment information will be sent out by email towards the end of the previous term. Please ensure you pay your child's fees promptly and by the deadline stated in the email. The Chavurah is run primarily by volunteers and it creates a great deal of extra work for us if we have to chase parents for unpaid fees. Some of our classes are over-subscribed. Paying your child's fees on time helps secure his/her place in the class for the following term. The Chavurah Committee are committed to making the Chaverim classes available to all members' children, regardless of the family's financial circumstances. In cases of financial difficulty please contact our Membership Secretary, Anna Wise ([anna@crouchendchavurah.co.uk](mailto:anna@crouchendchavurah.co.uk)) who will discuss the matter with you in confidence.

### **Priority for members**

As a community we are made up of our members, and we will therefore always prioritise members over non-members when it comes to offering places in our classes. We do accept non-member children if there is space available in a class, but

members' children who wish to join at a later date will be given priority if that class subsequently becomes oversubscribed.

### **Safeguarding**

Keeping children and teachers safe, confident and happy are the building blocks of any learning group. If you are concerned about the welfare of a child attending the Chaverim, or have any questions, please do not hesitate to talk to Rabbi Sandra, who is our appointed safeguarding officer. If it is not appropriate to talk to Rabbi Sandra (for example if an issue has arisen concerning her) then please contact Deborah Crewe (d.crewe@me.com), who is one of the Chavurah's founding committee members. Our teachers and Rabbi attend safeguarding seminars at least every three years, and are DBS-checked (previously called CRB).

### **Special educational needs or other learning issues**

We are an inclusive group, and we strive to accommodate any child who wishes to become a member of the Chaverim. We look at each child as an individual, with their own unique way of dealing with the world. If your child has a special need/receives special needs support at school then please inform us and we will try our utmost to accommodate them. If your child is having trouble in school or if you are experiencing difficulties at home please do inform Rabbi Sandra as it helps us help them in the group. Any such conversations will be in confidence, within the parameters of the Chavurah's child safeguarding policy. Whatever your situation, every child should have the opportunity to learn about their Judaism and Rabbi Sandra will find a meaningful way to achieve this with you.

### **Behaviour**

Teaching our classes in private homes means we have to show extra consideration and thoughtfulness. We ask that you please remind your child to:

- be respectful and considerate,
- follow the instructions given by teachers and the host-parent,
- take off their shoes when they arrive for class,
- remember to take home all their belongings at the end of class.

### **Drop off/pick up**

Please don't arrive earlier than 5 minutes before the class starts and pick your children up promptly at the end of class, unless you have made prior arrangements with the host parent. Some houses have space where the children can wait or play before/after class but some don't, and hallways can get very crowded at changeover time. If your child comes to class on a scooter then please leave it outside.

Please let the host parent know if someone else will be picking up your child after class and make sure they have a contact number in case that person is late. If you are

happy for your child to travel to/from class by themselves then please let the host parent know in writing that you have given permission for this and what arrangements you have made with your child. For example, should s/he phone you when they are leaving after class.

### **Parking/noise**

As our classes are held in residential areas, please be considerate of the host parent's neighbours, for example when parking nearby or if your children are playing outside before/after class. We haven't had any complaints from neighbours yet (as far as we know) and we would like to keep it that way!

### **Parents staying during class**

Please check with the host parent if s/he is happy for you to stay at their house during the class – some homes have a separate room for this and others don't. Unless a parent has been asked to assist with a class, parents should not sit in the room where the class is being held as it can often be distracting for both the children and the teacher. If you have other children with you then you are responsible for supervising them while they are at the host parent's house unless you have made prior arrangements with the host parent.

### **Food and drink**

Please do not give your child chewing gum or sweets to eat during class. If they have any food allergies or dislikes please let us know by including any relevant information on the enrolment form you are sent before the beginning of the new academic year (or upon joining, if at a later date). We do provide a small snack and a drink for each child, usually at the beginning of the class, but we have found that some children need something more substantial before the class begins in order to be able to sit through and enjoy it. If that is the case then please give your child something to eat before they arrive at the host parent's house. Apart from the snack which is provided during class, please do not give your child (or siblings) other food or drink in the host parent's house unless agreed with the host parent.