

Parent Handbook

Table of Contents

CONTACT INFORMATION.....	2
HANDBOOK OVERVIEW	2
DECLARATION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION EXCLUSIVITY.....	3
ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES	3
STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS.....	4
ATTENDANCE POLICY	4
HEALTH AND SAFETY.....	5
PROGRESS REPORTS.....	5
INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY.....	5
COMMUNICATION	6
SNACK GUIDELINES.....	6
DISCIPLINE POLICY	6
ANTI-BULLYING POLICY.....	7
CLASS DINNERS AND SPECIAL EVENTS.....	8
B’MITZVAH (BAR AND BAT MITZVAH) PREPARATION	9
IN CONCLUSION... ..	9

CONTACT INFORMATION

<u>POSITION</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>	<u>PHONE NUMBER</u>	<u>EMAIL</u>
Congregation Shalom		978-251-8091	Website: www.congregationshalom.org
Director of Education	Deborah Morrissey	978-251-8091	eddirector@congregationshalom.org
Rabbi	Shoshana Perry	978-251-8515	rabbi@congregationshalom.org
Temple President	Becky Abrams		president@congregationshalom.org
School Committee Chair	Lisa Lyman		edchair@congregationshalom.org
Office Administrator	Sandy Moore	978-251-8091	edassistant@congregationshalom.org
Bookkeeper	Bonnie Nojeim	978-251-8091	bookkeeper@congregationshalom.org

HANDBOOK OVERVIEW

This handbook was developed by the Congregation Shalom School Committee to assist your family in preparing for your child's religious school experience. The information contained in this handbook highlights the guidelines and procedures followed by the Congregation Shalom Religious School.

Kavod

The word *kavod* is generally interpreted as **respect, honor and dignity** and so one who lives a life of *kavod* is then **one who acts with respect, honor and dignity**. Our school principles are based on *kavod* and inspiring others to act with *kavod*.

Providing your child with a positive Jewish educational experience is the major goal of Congregation Shalom's Religious School. The teachers are committed to helping your child develop a positive Jewish identity, as well as providing the knowledge that is necessary for Temple involvement and participation in Jewish life. However, as parents, you are your child's most significant teacher. By providing your child with the support and encouragement needed

to get the most out of Jewish education, they will be more likely to have a successful and positive experience. There will be opportunities for parental involvement and enrichment activities throughout the year and we encourage parents to get involved.

The School Committee welcomes your feedback and is available to answer any questions you may have.

DECLARATION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION EXCLUSIVITY

The Union of Reform Judaism (URJ) has a policy that all children who attend religious school in Reform synagogues are being raised as Jews and are not being formally educated in any other faith. This also means that all life-cycle ceremonies that the child participates in must be exclusively Jewish. Registering your child in Congregation Shalom's Religious School is an acknowledgement that you will abide by this principle

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

Parents are asked to have their child in class on time and to pick them up promptly at the conclusion of class. Arrival and dismissal procedures are designed to ensure the safety of all of our children.

- **Authorized People to pickup** - During registration, each family will list people that are authorized to pick up the student each day. Only authorized people will be allowed to pick up students.
- **Park and walk-in** - At drop off time, the authorized adult must park in a designated parking spot and accompany their children into the building.
- **Park and pick-up** - At pick up, the authorized adult must park in a designated parking spot and come into the building lobby to retrieve their children from the child's classroom at the end of school.
- **Wait in the lobby** - The authorized adult must wait in the lobby to avoid disturbing classes that may still be in session.
- **Pickup at classroom door** - The authorized adult must pick up their children from their classroom. Parking or dropping off children in the fire lane alongside the building is not allowed.
- **Front door key fob** - No student should have a parents' security fob at any time. This is a safety issue. Any key fob found will be taken from the student and a parent will need to collect it from the Director of Education.
- **Early dismissal** - Parents are strongly encouraged not to dismiss students early,

except in the case of an emergency, as it disrupts instruction and can cause safety issues regarding student supervision. If a student is to be dismissed early, parents are to notify the teacher/Ed Director before class starts, if possible. In the rare event of early dismissal, the parents must go to the child's classroom to escort them out of the building. **In the case of an emergency, students can be reached by calling the temple's phone line at 978-251-8091 or emailing the Director of Education.**

- **Late Pickup** - If you know you will be delayed in picking your child up, please call the Director of Education at 978-251-8091 who will inform your child.

REMINDERS: Please remind your children of the above procedures. In addition, make sure your child understands that each time they exit the building, it must be done through the lobby doors. Please also remind your child that under no circumstances should they be walking around the building, or down the driveway. The safety of our community is of the utmost importance and we will do our best to monitor and avoid these situations, but we need your help.

STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS

Clothing ought to be attuned to the occasion, suitable for the location, respectful of the other people participating and reflective of our self-image. We hope that clothing will enable students to feel present and comfortable, without distraction. When in doubt, please reach out to the Ed Director or Rabbi for assistance.

Electronic devices, including but not limited to mobile phones and game systems, are not permitted during class time, unless expressly allowed for the practice of Hebrew, or in a class where the teacher has expressly allowed the technology and is using it for the furtherance of education. If a student is found using an electronic device for purposes other than stated above, the teacher will remove the device and a parent needs to pick the item up from the teacher or Director of Education's office.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Congregation Shalom is committed to a program of excellence for our students. It is therefore expected that students will attend Religious and Hebrew school regularly. This will help to guarantee continuity of learning and solid integration into the classroom and religious school environment. Prompt and regular attendance is essential for the proper education of your child and effective operation of the school. Students will be expected to make up all missed work. **If your child will be absent please contact the teacher and Director of Education.**

The Board of Trustees has established that a minimum of 80% attendance and/or satisfactory

completion of course work, be required annually in order for students to matriculate to the next grade level. The Rabbi and the Director of Education have the authority to withhold matriculation and/or Bar or Bat Mitzvah if the child does not complete the required work.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Student health information is collected at the time of registration including any special restrictions or medical situations. This information needs to be updated annually and as any changes in the child's health status occur. Please feel free to discuss any special needs with your child's teacher and the Director of Education.

Children with symptoms of illness should not be sent to school (including, but not limited to, a fever of 100 or above). If a child appears too ill to function normally in the classroom, or develops symptoms of illness while at school, parents will be asked to pick up their child from school.

In the event of illness or emergency, the school will contact the parents at the phone numbers listed on the registration forms. If the parents cannot be reached, the school will contact those listed as emergency contacts on these forms. If any numbers where you might be reached change, please notify the school in writing immediately at eddirector@congregationshalom.org or call 978-251-8091.

PROGRESS REPORTS

Hebrew School: Communication regarding Hebrew School progress and development occurs throughout the school year. A written report is sent out halfway through the year and encouragement to practice and what to work on is communicated before the summer break.

Religious School: In late January/early February, there is an individual Parent/Teacher conference-time planned with your child's teacher during Religious School hours. Closer to that time, a schedule will be sent out with time slots for parents to meet with teachers. During Parent/Teacher conferences, the Director of Education and Rabbi will have interactive programming prepared for students during class time. Additionally, Religious School teachers will send class-wide academic updates on a regular basis.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

Congregation Shalom's School cancellation policy is NOT linked with the Chelmsford Public School's closing announcements. This means that you cannot assume that classes are canceled just because Chelmsford has no school. We will decide to cancel school if weather conditions

warrant by 1:30 PM on a weekday, or by 7:00 AM on Sunday. **Religious/Hebrew School closing announcements will be sent via email.** When deciding whether to drive to school in inclement weather, please use your own best judgment.

COMMUNICATION

It is our goal to provide effective and timely communication to the families of our congregation.

Email is our primary means to send out announcements and upcoming events. Please let us know if you don't use email, if you do not check your email frequently, or **if your email address has changed.** If you are not receiving email, please notify us immediately. All class lists and other important information are sent via email.

If your e-mail address has changed, please notify:

The Temple Office at office@congregationshalom.org and
The Education Director at eddirector@congregationshalom.org

Other methods of communication used include:

- **Keeping Connected** (the monthly synagogue newsletter email)
- **Weekly Updates** (the weekly synagogue email)
- **Weekly School Update email**
- **Class summaries, updates, reminders and notifications from the teachers.**
- **TV in the lobby**

SNACK GUIDELINES

Congregation Shalom is a nut-free building. Please ***do not send any*** peanuts, tree nuts, peanut butter or foods made with nuts or nut oil to the temple during school hours (as opposed to foods which are "processed in a factory with nuts," which are allowed). Our ability to provide our children with a safe nut-free environment depends on your attention to and compliance with this policy.

If a student does bring an allergenic food to school, it will be taken from them and a safe alternative snack will be provided.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Our discipline policy will be guided by a commitment to *kavod* – the basic respect due to both teachers and to other students and to our physical space. Actions will be brought back to the question: Did the person act with or without *kavod*? In addition, we are keenly aware that we will only achieve our education goals if there is respect and cooperation between teacher, student and parents.

Positive behavior will be encouraged and reinforced in each classroom, but techniques may vary with each situation. **Physical punishment or inappropriate language is never used and is never acceptable.** “Unacceptable” behavior is defined as any behavior which is disruptive to the class or harmful to students and/or the teachers.

The following guidelines will be used to deal with disciplinary situations. In all instances listed below, a note will be filed in the student’s academic file. In cases where the situation is deemed more serious, one or more of these steps may be utilized.

- Render a verbal warning to the student.
- Discuss the situation privately with the student.
- Inform the Director of Education verbally and/or in writing.
- Contact the parents about the disruptive behavior in consultation with the Director of Education.
- The student and teacher may meet with the Director of Education to discuss the situation.
- The teacher or Director of Education may call the parents to inform them of this meeting.
- The Director of Education and teacher will meet with the parents and the student to try to resolve the problem.

In extenuating circumstances, the family and student will meet with the Director of Education, the Rabbi and the School Committee Chair to determine next steps that may include, but are not limited to, suspension or expulsion from attending Religious and Hebrew School classes.

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Congregation Shalom is committed to a safe environment for all students, free from harassment, intimidation or bullying. Bullying in all its forms, whether verbal, physical, or psychological, is completely unacceptable. Bullying, by definition, can be any single incident or pattern of behavior directed at another person that results in that person feeling intimidated or harassed,

or results in the physical or emotional injury of the person.

Bullying can take many forms including, but not limited to: slurs, rumors, jokes, innuendos, demeaning comments, cyber-bullying of any kind, pictures, pranks, gestures, physical attacks, threats, or other written, on-line, oral or physical actions.

Efforts will be made to work with the student, family and teacher to work to create a plan that is effective for everyone. If a student engages in any form of harassment, intimidation or bullying, as determined following a reasonable investigation by the teacher or Director of Education, the teacher or Director of Education may take the following actions:

- The teacher will remind the student of the rules of proper behavior in the classroom.
- The teacher will take steps to resolve the situation in class.
- The teacher will ask the student to report to the Director of Education.
- The teacher and/or Director of Education will contact the parents if deemed appropriate.

In cases where disruptive behavior continues or in cases where the behavior issue is severe, the Director of Education will request to meet with the parents and the student to discuss the situation further. Parents may be asked to attend future classes with the student and/or to sign a behavior contract along with the student.

The Director of Education, in consultation with the Rabbi, Chair of the School Committee and/or the President, will have the right to engage in additional remedial action as is deemed appropriate, including removal of the student from the class on a temporary or permanent basis or expelling the student from the school.

As appropriate, the Director of Education in consultation with the Rabbi, Chair of the School Committee and/or the President, reserves the right to skip any of the above-mentioned steps and respond more directly or strictly to more serious conduct issues.

Our teachers are committed to treating all students with dignity and respect. Our expectation is that students will treat their teachers and classmates in the same manner, in and out of school.

CLASS DINNERS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Building a cohesive community is important to supporting our child's positive Jewish education experience. Monthly (free) Shabbat dinners are an important part of that community-building and we encourage all students and families to attend. Participation in these family dinners every month fosters a feeling of belonging, support, and inclusion for the students in Congregation

Shalom Religious School.

Class dinners begin at 6pm and are followed by a Family Shabbat at 7pm. Each month a different class helps to lead the Family Shabbat service. Check the calendar on the Synagogue Website to find out the dates of the class dinners dedicated to each grade.

In addition to class dinners, families often have the opportunity to participate in other special events as part of the School and Temple community. Special events may include holiday themed parties, potluck dinners, or special Havdallah services. Participation in these special events is also highly encouraged as a means of expanding your child's Jewish learning and membership in a vibrant community.

B'MITZVAH (BAR AND BAT MITZVAH) PREPARATION

The B'Mitzvah milestone is a major event in the life of a Jewish child. Attending Religious and Hebrew School is one of the many requirements for becoming a B'Mitzvah. The school curriculum support the B'Mitzvah journey and the student's continued Jewish life. Important details about the B'Mitzvah process are articulated in the B'Mitzvah Handbook, which families receive when their child is in 6th grade. It is also available electronically on the Temple website in the Members Only section.

IN CONCLUSION...

The School Committee hopes you found this handbook helpful. It is designed to assist families in preparing for your child's religious school experience at Congregation Shalom.

As a reminder, you, as parents, are your child's most significant teacher. We are honored to be able to support you as you guide your children through their Jewish education

Revised: October 2024