

YAVNEH COLLEGE

JEWISH ETHOS POLICY

1. Central Principles and Values

- 1.1 Yavneh College (YC) is a modern orthodox, coeducational, Jewish school, which is part of the United Synagogue family of schools under the religious auspices of the Chief Rabbi, and which celebrates the existence of the state of Israel as being central to Jewish life.
- 1.2 YC is a modern orthodox school out of principle – we believe in it as an ideal, not a compromise. YC believes that the Torah enhances understanding and appreciation of World civilisation while secular studies facilitate comprehension of and commitment to Judaism. We view the two spheres as complimentary and mutually reinforcing. YC will be a school where Jewish values pervade the life of the school, making it into a Jewish school, not simply a school for Jewish children. YC will stress the values and traditions of our rich Jewish heritage while preparing our pupils to meet the challenges of contemporary British society.
- 1.3 YC aspires to shape pupils' ethical and moral character using Jewish values as the guide for distinguishing between right and wrong. By fostering within each of our pupils a love and respect for, and knowledge of, Torah our pupils will develop a world view that transcends school and impacts on their very identity.
- 1.4 To be a Jew is to be part of a family with a shared history, shared memories, and shared traditions. All Jews, regardless of their personal levels of practice, are a part of that family and whilst we are proud to call ourselves an Orthodox school, and that will be reflected in the ethos and curriculum without apology, YC will welcome all Jews and be built upon a culture of respect for those who hold different points of view. We will only be intolerant of intolerance.

2. Ethos and Curriculum

- 2.1 At the most basic level, we want every pupil to acquire/develop the skills and knowledge they will need throughout their Jewish life so that they are comfortable in any Jewish environment. We encourage critical, creative and open discussion of moral as well as intellectual issues. Questions are as important as answers.
- 2.2 We aim for all of our pupils to leave as fluent Hebrew readers who know their way around the Siddur (prayer book) are able to participate when attending Jewish events. Although our Rabbis describe prayer as "Worship of the Heart," and the notion of compulsory Tefillah (prayer) seems like an oxymoron, we would not wish our pupils graduate without this core skill. Tefillah will develop our pupils' spirituality and will link them to other Jews worldwide. To this end, Minchah (afternoon service) will be held daily for all pupils and Shacharit (morning service) will be held bi-weekly, for pupils in Years 7 and 8 as part of morning assembly. Shacharit will also be held on whole-school celebrations such as Purim. At all other times Shacharit will be voluntary and pupils will be encouraged to attend services.
- 2.3 It is the view of YC that the Hebrew language is more than a tool to access classical Jewish texts. It is central to our identity as Jews in the modern world and our identification with the people and State of Israel.
- 2.4 Some pupils will come to the school already equipped with many of those skills. Those who do not have these skills will be given every help and encouragement to attain them. YC will provide a catch-up course in Year 7 to ensure that all its pupils have the requisite knowledge and skills to help them have a meaningful relationship with their Jewish Studies as they progress through our school. This course will focus on key Jewish topics such as Shabbat (Sabbath), Chagim (festivals), Kashrut (dietary laws), and Tefillah.
- 2.5 Jewish Studies at Yavneh College will be taught in sets from the outset, according to ability, not background. Those in higher sets will tend towards use of original texts and wide-ranging sources. This will stretch the pupils academically, nurture their independent learning skills and enable them to appreciate the richness of Torah by engaging with it at first-hand. Those in lower sets will also study texts. Sometimes, the texts may be in English, and there may be less seen texts in the lower sets. However, YC feels that discussion of Jewish concepts without using texts as a springboard is dangerous and detracts from the authenticity of true Torah study.
- 2.6 The establishment of the State of Israel is something of great religious and spiritual significance to YC and the existence of a Jewish State in the contemporary world is something that we will celebrate at our school both in our formal and informal curriculum. It is not, however, YC policy to advocate any particular political stance on contemporary Israeli politics.
- 2.7 YC also intends to educate its pupils as to the beliefs, values and customs of other major world religions, helping to develop within its pupils a feeling of understanding, tolerance, respect and empathy.
- 2.8 YC's formal curriculum will be complemented by a stimulating programme of informal Jewish education and cultural activities, Tzedakah (charity) activities and communal activities. Part of that involves our school not closing at the end of the school day. Our school will remain open for after school activities, both Jewish and general, for pupils and parents alike. Through this extensive programme, pupils will perform Chesed (acts of kindness), discover Judaism by experiencing it first hand, and grow into valued members and contributors to their Jewish communities.

Approved 7 November 2007