

## Jewish Ethos Policy

### 1. Central Principles and Values

- 1.1 Yavneh College (YC) is a modern orthodox, co-educational, 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 is a school where Jewish values pervade the life of the school, making it a Jewish school, not simply a school for Jewish children. YC stresses 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 Torah, our pupils 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. Whilst we are proud to call ourselves an Orthodox school and that is reflected in our ethos and curriculum without apology, YC welcomes all Jews and is built upon a culture of respect for those who hold different points of view. We are only 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) and 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 to graduate without this core skill. Tefillah develops our pupils' spirituality and links them to other Jews worldwide. To this end, Minchah (afternoon service) is held daily and Shacharit (morning service) is held bi-weekly as part of morning assembly. Shacharit is also held on whole-school celebrations such as Purim. At all other times Shacharit is voluntary and pupils are welcome 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 join YC in Year 7 already equipped with many of these skills, others do not. Those who do not are given every help and encouragement to attain them.
- 2.5** Jewish Studies at Yavneh College is taught according to ability, not background. We aim to stretch pupils academically, nurture their independent learning skills and enable them to appreciate the richness of Torah by engaging with texts at first-hand. 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 celebrate in our formal and informal curriculum. It is not, however, YC policy to advocate any particular political stance on contemporary Israeli politics.
- 2.7** We educate our pupils as to the beliefs, values and customs of other major world religions, helping to develop within our pupils a feeling of understanding, tolerance, respect and empathy.
- 2.8** Our formal Jewish curriculum is complemented by a stimulating programme of informal Jewish education and cultural activities, Tzedakah (charity) activities and communal activities. Pupils perform Chesed (acts of kindness), discover Judaism by experiencing it first hand and grow into valued members and contributors to their Jewish communities.