

Dear Parents

School Newsletters may not be high on the list of things to stockpile in fear of a disorderly exit from the EU, but it occurs to me that this is the last introduction I will write before March 29th. Brexit is a topic that I have referred to before in these letters, and it's one that preoccupies me more generally: beyond my natural interest as voter and citizen, it seems to me to touch on issues of community, identity, justice and autonomy that are central to JCoSS and indeed to the Jewish community too.

The referendum we ran here alongside the national one in 2016 showed that JCoSS is a majority "Remain" community by inclination (despite the turnover of students since then, the national vote was a 'once for all' affair so I am only following suit...). But what strikes me is that in one respect the 2½ years since have united the two sides: Remain voters can now join Leave voters in feeling that they have lost the country they used to be proud to call home. The two may yearn for very different things, but both agree that the present is a betrayal of the past, both fear that the values they hold dear are not heard or honoured by those in power, both despair at their willingness or capacity to deliver a solution that reflects what anyone wanted.

How should a school educate students for such a situation? Three things occur to me:

First, we need to continue giving them strong subject knowledge and skills, the same as always. As Judaism has always known (and had to know), education is the most flexible and portable possession of all – both the content that you learn and the skills you acquire on the way are the best training and toolkit you can have, to enable you to adapt to any circumstance. This may seem obvious, but there is a growing realisation across the teaching profession that *the curriculum* (in the broadest sense) needs to be restored to a much more important place in how think of our purpose as schools.

Second, we need to help students develop a strong but flexible sense of who they are: identity is always multi-layered, and we need the resilience to manage unexpected changes in the narratives that shape us. Again, Judaism has an advantage with 6 millennia of experience in adapting tradition to new situations while staying true to its core beliefs. I am pleased to report (as you can read later) that this aspect of our work is highly rated by parents in the recent survey, and is being further enhanced (as you can also read later) by our new provision for Student Wellbeing.

We are pleased to see that the newly proposed Ofsted framework (currently out for consultation) reflects these priorities: it gives less prominence to academic outcomes on their own, and more to the quality of education, with a rich definition of what 'curriculum' means. There is also more prominence for the behaviour, attitudes and personal development of students – which would account for 2 of the 4 judgments inspectors make on a school. It may be a time of uncertainty politically, but it is an exciting time for schools to see the inspection regime talking in such productive and interesting terms.

Thirdly, we need humour. I don't just mean light-heartedness (although that has its place: I'm thinking Purim here...), and I don't mean the maddening farce that has at times seemed to characterise recent parliamentary process. I mean the kind of compassionate, warm humour that supports and upholds us through tough days, months and years: it punctures the puffed up (which often includes ourselves), it delights in the absurd, it plays with expectations, it dances with definitions. For all those reasons it's a deeply serious endeavour, and one we have a lot of at JCoSS.

I suspect the similarity between the words 'humour' and 'human' is a coincidence, but it's a good one and of course a thoroughly Jewish one too. Humour may not make it into the new Ofsted framework, but it's vital for keeping us connected to ourselves, to each other and to our true values. It nudges at those issues of community, identity, justice and autonomy...and it's a lot more fun than Brexit. Wherever we are on March 30th and beyond, I hope we can still laugh about it.

Patrick Moriarty
Headteacher

Jewish East End Experience for Year 10 Limmudei Kehilla Group

by Leah Sholem 10B

As we arrived at Bevis Marks we were met by our tour guide Rachel Kolsky who showed us around and shared some information about the synagogue.

When standing on the main road looking into the shul it was very discreet. This is because in 1656 the Jews were allowed back into the country by Oliver Cromwell and told if they wanted to build a synagogue they'd have to keep a low profile. The synagogue was designed so it blended in with the other buildings surrounding the shul within the electric metal gates. The windows were very big and bland as they were told to keep it simple, almost a church look-alike. However the inside was completely different. I was shocked to see the amount of detail put into the making of this special place. It's very sad to see such an amazing shul and an outstanding atmosphere which was once very full of Jews in the area, now mostly empty. Bevis Marks shul has held Shabbat services continuously for longer than any other Shul in the UK.

From this experience I have considered attending shul more regularly as I found the trip very interesting and was able to actively engage in the activities and discussions. Rachel explained how there were seven candelabra hanging from the ceiling. Six were medium sized and the seventh one symbolised Shabbat and was a gift from the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue. There is a replica of Bevis Marks Synagogue in Amsterdam but just twice as big. The candelabra were lit by the caretaker on special events. The process took forty five minutes to complete. The ark had three sections to it unlike at a normal synagogue. Something else which stood out to me was there was a red rope draped amongst one of the chairs. This is because it's reserved for members of the Montefiore family only. I asked Rachel why this was. She said because they have been involved in lots of community work and therefore have earned the place.

After leaving the Synagogue Mr Rosenberg allowed us to go to Spitalfields market for some free time, also to familiarise ourselves with the area. Before going back to the coach we walked to another synagogue called Sandy's Row synagogue. It is also one of the longest still standing synagogues today. On route to the bus we walked past a Jewish food kitchen where Jews used to go to get food if they couldn't afford it. Stew was served there. Our next destination was Stepney Jewish Day Centre. As we arrived there we were nicely greeted and then served either a jacket potato or fish and chips. After helping clean up, we spread ourselves out amongst the elderly. It was a very interesting day and I learnt a lot.

We spoke about their past and they told us some stories. In the centre they had a shared memory room, in case they were to forget anything as they grow older.

It was sad to leave the centre but it was an amazing day.



Parents Survey

Thank you to all those who responded to the Parents' Survey at the end of last term. It was completed for 403 students, with an overwhelmingly positive overall view of the school. We are fortunate to have this strong support from our parent body – the kind of engagement that any school leader would give their eye teeth for, and of course the flip side of those occasions when you have to take us to task about things that are not going so well.

We are grateful for the high value you put on education, and are glad that the highest scoring areas of school life are safety and security, our distinctive ethos, and the way we develop strong values among students. You value the way we promote their happiness and wellbeing, as well as fairness, respect, equality...and good attendance! You appreciate the high quality facilities at JCoSS, and the overall administration and leadership scored very highly indeed.

The survey also gave us useful pointers about where we need to focus attention, and this is clearly in giving better information about students' progress: although the survey said that communication in general terms is good and staff are responsive, both reports and parents evenings were areas of concern across all year groups; you are concerned at the marking of work and – in some year groups – the quantity of work set.

I would like to understand this better and hear directly from parents what would make things better. If you would be willing to be part of a small focus group to discuss these two specific areas, please can you contact Mrs Samuels my PA. I will then select a representative group (which means I may not use every volunteer) and arrange a meeting after half term. This comes at a good time because we were in any case reviewing the academic data we collect on students.

The very top concern, however, was the quality of school meals – and I suppose there is some satisfaction in finding that it is that, rather than something explicitly educational. It is also odd, in that the take up of our school meals – at about 90% of students – is around twice as high as it is in most schools. Would our students really continue to eat school food if it was as bad as (we presume) they have told you? We take that finding with a pinch of salt (or would do if salt was permitted by Government nutritional guidelines) but will of course seek the students' views on what changes they might like to see.

The comments section of the survey was full of suggestions on a wide range of topics (some of them contradictory, as one might expect!). Two issues can be usefully addressed here:

Concern was understandably expressed about the number of lessons covered by supply teachers. Staff are sometimes absent for a variety of reasons (from illness to training to accompanying school trips...all of which are either unavoidable or bring benefits to students in the long run) and we employ a bank of regular cover staff to cover the majority of these. We do know how unsettling it is especially when several lessons in a day do not have the regular teacher present (more likely at this time of year when illness peaks) and we notice the impact on student behaviour also. We have robust policies to minimise the disruption of staff absence and use agency staff only where necessary. We are monitoring this carefully (with Governor scrutiny also) and will continue to do so.

More widely, our staff body is very stable compared to most London schools (I wryly sympathised with one parent who commented 'stop teachers from leaving'!). Our ability to recruit appears anecdotally to be far better than similar schools, but it is undeniably a tough market for teaching posts.

The other area to clarify once again is student toilets: contrary to what some of the comments implied, all we have done is to convert one set of 6 cubicles so that they can be used by both boys and girls. That is all we currently plan to change: there are and there will always be plentiful toilets in the school for all (you might even say we are flush with them...) and the huge majority are single-sex.

Thank you again to all parents who took part in the survey.

Patrick Moriarty

Oxbridge

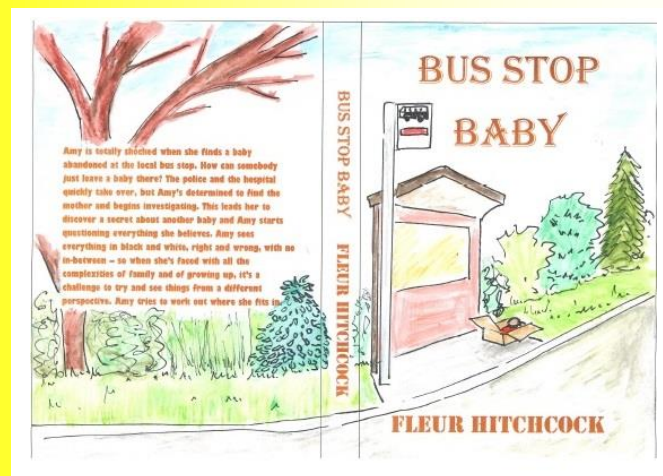


We would like to share the fantastic news (which you may have already seen in the Jewish press) that 13 students have received offers from Oxford and Cambridge this year, and a further 2 have offers for Medicine courses elsewhere. These are all very competitive courses and we are very proud of their successes which reflect the high quality of the applicants, and also the strong support they have received from our Oxbridge Programme led by Mr Boxer.

LRC News

Each of our Year 7 students were fortunate to receive a free book last term as part of the Bookbuzz promotion, organised by the BookTrust and kindly sponsored at JCoSS by the JPA.

The students were asked to design an alternative book cover for their new book and as usual the standard of work was very high. We are pleased to announce that the winner of this year's JCoSS competition is **Sophie Matkovits (7N)** with her design for *Bus Stop Baby* by Fleur Hitchcock. Sophie will receive book tokens as her prize.



The following students' designs were also highly commended and they were each able to choose some free books to encourage even more reading for pleasure. All their entries have been entered into the nationwide Bookbuzz competition, along with Sophie's:

Millie Ash 7Y, Emily Bentwood 7N, Lara Bozo 7N, Maya Bruck 7R, Nikhita Essex 7R, Sara Foster 7S, Faith Hyman 7B, Rachel Koffman 7W, Oscar Phillips 7F, Kobi Richards 7W and Lara Sitton 7W



Students Visit UK's Biggest Jobs and Careers Event

A group of Year 11 students had the opportunity to meet representatives from more 200 organisations at the UK's biggest careers and jobs show - Skills London - in November.

The event was held at the ExCel Centre in Docklands and, apart from meeting employers, students also had the chance to attend presentations and get 'hands-on' with activities ranging from operating a camera in a TV studio to bricklaying.

Companies represented covered a wide range of career sectors – from engineering and technology to health and hospitality, business and finance. The National Theatre, ITV, UK Parliament, High Speed Two (HS2), Hyatt Hotels and IBM were among the exhibitors, as were representatives from the uniformed services, Further Education colleges and universities.

It was the third time JCoSS students have attended the event. The idea is to provide them with an insight into some of the opportunities available to them after Year 11.

Work Experience – Appeal for Help

Could you or your employer offer a Work Experience placement to one of our Year 12 students for one week this summer (July 8-12)?

We want to offer a range of opportunities which are interesting and inspiring for students and in previous years the support we have had from JCoSS parents has been fantastic.

Work Experience is a very important step in helping to prepare young people for the wider world. It also provides vital material for students to draw on when it comes to writing the Personal Statement part of their university applications.

If you or your employer is able to help, please contact Ms Lewis: hlewis@jcross.barnet.sch.uk or Mrs Robinson: srobinson@jcross.barnet.sch.uk and we will forward you a short form to complete.

Congratulations to the following students whose poetry will shortly be published in Poetry Escape - Poets From South Central after they entered the Young Writers' Poetry Escape competition:

Elisha Koseleff, Shai Amzallag, Rachel Dvorkin, Talia Levi, Sam Rose, Lucy Jackson, Leo Schulkin, Millie Hayeem, Maya Bruck, Daniel Solomon, Maya Milner, Nathan Bloom, Gilda Roberts, Maya Davis, Nicholas Rennick, Sasha Gold, Noah Fagelson, Nadav Gordon, Johua Ellis and Maia Noy

Check to see if your child's work has been featured on our JCoSS Art Studio Instagram Page, where we celebrate students' artwork from all Year groups.



Classics Week Returns for a Fourth Year!

The Greeks and Romans were back at JCoSS in the week beginning 28th January. Our fourth annual Classics Week was highly anticipated and this year saw our Classics students take greater control.

The school took on a golden tint as KS3 English students studied the myth of King Midas and his golden touch. This tale asked students to reflect on the old saying 'be careful what you wish for', and the creative responses were stunning. With rap performances, paintings, poems, cakes and even 3D sculptures, our KS3 students really showed off their talents. Students' work was on display in the heartspace for all to see, and winning students, took part in a workshop with the author Philip Womack. He challenged us to put Greek gods in the modern world, with hilarious responses including Aphrodite reimagined as the goddess of dating app Tinder and Hercules as an amateur body builder with a huge Instagram following.

Year 12 students took on the role of decorating the school in a classical theme, and took the opportunity to show their love for famous classicist Mary Beard, as well as their classical take on some famous memes. This set the scene for our many activities provided by GCSE Latin students, including myth quizzes, a popular Latin test and even a 'stick the head on the Hydra' game designed and made by Ace Rockman in Year 10.

The fun continued into the classroom, with Year 7 taking part in Latin taster lessons to get a taste of an ancient language and Year 8 studying some Latin wisdom. Sixth form Classics students enjoyed lectures by Caroline Bristow, who managed to link ancient epic to the Marvel universe to teach us about the importance of myth in society. Latin students in all year groups were lucky enough to take part in a consultation on Latin textbooks. This might not sound like everybody's cup of tea, but anyone who has studied the Cambridge Latin Course knows that Caecilius and his family stay close to our hearts, and there was heated debate over what were the best bits and favourite characters. We are proud that our students have had input into the development of a new and improved Cambridge Latin Course.

Students even took over assembly, with Nik Markov and Matthew Krisman from Year 8 and Elliott Salem and Zach Krisman in Year 10 writing and presenting an assembly for younger years. Our Year 13 Classics ambassador, Jade Harris, gave an assembly to Year 9 students on the wonders of the classics world. All were praised for their confidence and speaking skills.

All that is left to say is a huge thank you to all the students and teachers who took part. Through their enthusiasm and hard work, Classics was truly celebrated by the JCoSS community.



IJE Update

Things have been busy as usual in the IJE world. We have held 2 Rosh Chodesh celebrations this half term, welcoming over 30 Jewish community and charity organisations into school to engage our students in Jewish learning and engagement. Of course we have also had plenty of opportunity to enjoy our famous Rosh Chodesh biscuits, which were upgraded to brownies for Adar!

We were delighted to welcome all the youth movements to JCoSS in order to promote the wealth of summer activities available for our students. Some of the movements also took part in our Tu b'Shevat celebrations this term, enjoying our fruit table and tree themed games.

We are very proud of the amounts raised by Year 8 at this term's Yom Tzedaka, in aid of the Young Barnet Foundation, which is one of our school's chosen charities. Over £600 was raised in the course of one day which is a great achievement for all of the Year 8 forms.

Our Alan Senitt Leadership Course for Year 10 students and our JCoSS Leadership Academy for Year 12 are both well underway, with the Alan Senitt cohort working on a refugee related project and the Leadership Academy students working on a project for Purim.

Finally a new innovation came to the JCoSS enrichment day from IJE with the inauguration of the JCoSS Israel Café. Students spent the enrichment day preparing sabich, malawach and shakshuka from scratch and 'selling' them in the heartspace. The price... simply being able to order in Hebrew!



Our Very Own Mr Laurie Rosenberg on BBC Radio 2 - Pause for Thought

Mr Rosenberg has recently broadcast a series of Pause for Thoughts on BBC Radio 2.

Copy and Paste this link to hear them

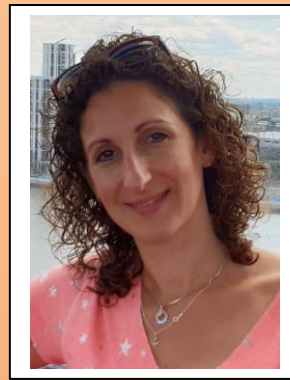
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Emotional Wellbeing: A Warm Welcome

“Health: it’s not just what you are eating. What you are thinking and saying are just as important” Freshus

My first month here at JCoSS as the Emotional Wellbeing Practitioner has been really positive. It is exciting to work with an inspirational staff team and thriving students! So, firstly thank you to you and your children for being part of that.



Mrs Overlander-Kaye,
Emotional Wellbeing
Practitioner

My role is to develop a culture of positive Wellbeing in school life; for students, staff and parents. I will be working across the whole school to further promote resilience, confidence and independence.

It is evident that if we have good mental Wellbeing we are able to feel confident, express emotions and work productively. We can achieve academically, build and maintain healthy relationships and develop the resources to deal with challenges when they arise. A sense of well being enables us to actively choose how we respond to situations and feel that what we do in life is worthwhile. I look forward to developing and cementing these life skills here at JCoSS.

According to a recent Public Health England document, “Research evidence shows that education and health are closely linked. So promoting the health and wellbeing of pupils and students within schools and colleges has the potential to improve their educational outcomes and their health and wellbeing outcomes.”

Knowing where to start in improving our Wellbeing can be overwhelming and I have spent my first month at JCoSS observing and learning the school, with a view to putting the right sort of provision in place. For now, these generic suggestions may be a starting point for you and your children as a way to explore and enhance your Emotional Wellbeing together. Enjoy challenging yourselves so that they are more than just bland intentions, and really add something near to your daily practice.

1. Really **connect with people around you** and develop good relationships.
2. **Be active** and find an activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life.
3. **Keep learning** and enjoy developing new skills and knowledge.
4. **Give to others** by finding a small or large act of kindness.
5. **Be mindful** and more aware of the present moment.

I will be hosting parent / carer focus groups to discuss your views and recommendations on Wellbeing at JCoSS. If you are interested in being involved please do contact me on joverlander-kaye@jcross.barnet.sch.uk

JCoSS Key Dates – Second Half of Spring Term 2019

Date	Time	Description
Mon 25 th Feb	8.30am	Start of Second Half of Spring Term (week two)
Mon 25 th Feb – Fri 1 st March		Y12 Mid Year Exams
Wed 27 th Feb		Y9 Immunisations
Mon 4 th - Wed 6 th March		Y11 2 nd English & Maths Mocks
Thurs 7 th March		Rosh Chodesh Adar 2
Fri 8 th March		Y9 & Y12 Careers Fair
Mon 11 th March	4 – 7pm	Y9 Parents' Evening
Wed 13 th March	2.30 – 4.30pm	Y7 Grandparents' Afternoon. Please RSVP to the SchoolPost e-mail sent to all Y7 parents
Tues 19 th March	7pm	Soloists' Concert
Wed 20 th March		Fast of Esther
Thurs 21 st March		Purim. Early closing at 1.45pm
Tues 26 th March	7pm	Robert Shrager Lecture. Please RSVP to the SchoolPost e-mail sent to all parents if you would like to come
Thurs 4 th April	7pm	Choral Concert
Wed 10 th April	4 – 7pm	Y12 Parents' Evening
Fri 12 th April	1.05pm	Early Closing for End of Term

- Timings follow a normal school day unless otherwise stated
- After half term, school closes at 2.15pm on all Fridays until the end of the school year (unless otherwise stated)
- Pesach starts on 19th April and ends on 27th April
- Students return to school after the Pesach Holidays on Monday April 29th at 8.30am (week one)