



Religious School Handbook

Approved by the Education Committee

-----April 6, 2016-----

Welcome to Beth Tikvah Religious School!

Founded in 1996, the Beth Tikvah Religious School is a partnership between parents, students, teachers, and staff. Through positive communication between all stakeholders and a high level of professionalism at the school, we feel we can give all children an extremely positive and quality religious school education. BTS strives to inculcate in each and every student a deep appreciation, knowledge, and understanding about his/her rich Jewish heritage, customs, language, and religious practice. Learning, wherever possible, is hands-on, participatory and engaging. This handbook is designed to address policies that help us to collectively achieve the lofty goals of the School.

Typical Grade Level Schedules

BTS Religious School typically runs for 22 Sundays and 22 Wednesdays during the academic year (usually September through May) as follows:

Grade/Age Level	Wednesday Schedule	Sunday Schedule
Mommy, Daddy and Me (infants/toddlers)		1 Sunday morning/month, 9:30 – 10:30 AM
Gan (pre-school)/K		9 – 10:30 AM
Grades 1/2		9 AM to 12 noon
Grades 3/4/5/6/7	4 PM to 6 PM	9 AM to 12 noon
*Grade 8		9 AM to 12 noon
**Grades 8/9/10		9 – 10 AM

*In 2016-17, Grade 8 will be one hour per Sunday. Starting in 2017-18 school year, grade 8 will become a 3-hour program on Sundays.

** Students in grades 8/9/10 may serve as Madrichim (youth counselors/helpers) Sundays from 10AM – noon and/or on Wednesdays 4-6 PM. This is optional and must be arranged with Cindy Avergon, the Religious School Coordinator.

Overview of Our Curriculum

The following overview describes the content of our academic curriculum. There are specific learning objectives for each academic area which vary according to placement and grade.

Our curriculum focuses on the following core academic areas:

- Ivrit (Hebrew) – At Beth Tikvah we use *Mitkadem* (A Hebrew curriculum for grades two through seven that is based on learning levels and not strictly by grades) to teach Hebrew reading. This is a teacher led self-paced program so that our students can progress at a comfortable rate.
- Tefilah (Prayer)
- Tanakh (Hebrew Bible)
- Gemilut Chasadim (Social Justice, Mitzvot, Ethics, and Acts of Kindness)
- Jewish History: Biblical, European, American, Holocaust studies
- Israel
- The Jewish Year Cycle

Specific grade-by-grade curricula will be posted on the BTS website at the beginning of each school year.

Expectation of Students

1. **Preparation** - All students are expected to arrive at school on time, with homework completed, and with all necessary books and materials to start the day. Parents of students in grades 3-7, please provide a backpack/bag for your children to organize their work. Please be sure that your child comes to school regularly and prepared to learn. If students lose their books, parents will be expected to pay for replacement texts provided by the school.
2. **Homework** - There will always be Mitkadem practice homework, which can be either reading, reviewing or writing assignments. We encourage our students to go at their own pace. However, having stated that, it is always important for our students to at least review Mitkadem class work for a few minutes in between classes. Mitkadem is a build-upon program and we encourage our students to get through at least 2 Ramot (levels) during the year in grade 3 through 6. We request that parents ask children if they have written homework; participate in the homework as appropriate; and work regularly with their children on Hebrew-reading skills.

Attendance Policy at the Beth Tikvah Synagogue Religious School:

1. It is an expectation that attendance at the Beth Tikvah Synagogue Religious School is an important priority for all students and their parents. You are asked to avoid scheduling conflicts wherever possible, and to speak to coaches and other extracurricular activity leaders about the importance of your child attending the Religious School at the beginning of each season.
2. If a child will miss a class or any part of a class, it is requested that the parent notify the school by phone or email as soon as possible prior to the class meeting. Please state the reason for the absence, tardy, or early dismissal.
3. Attendance will be taken promptly on Sunday mornings at 9 AM and Wednesday afternoons at 4:00 PM. Tardies and Early Dismissals will also be noted.
4. Attendance will be reported on Progress Reports sent home to all parents in January and May
5. You, as the parent, are responsible for your child's attendance. If you choose to pull your child for other activities, it may have a serious negative impact on your child's progress, as most learning is sequential, week-by-week.
6. BTS cannot be responsible for learning when students are missing class, are frequently late for classes, or are dismissed early from classes.
7. All missed written work during absences is expected to be made up by students. However, students are never able to make up missed experiences and discussions that have occurred during class time.

Attendance at Religious Services for Students:

1. Specific religious services attendance requirements are posted for each grade. It is expected that these are minimal requirements for each student.
2. Religious services attendance will be reported on Progress Reports sent home to all parents in January and May
3. Each class will participate in at least one service during the year. Please make every effort to note the date(s) of such services to ensure your child’s participation.
4. End-of-the-year certificates will be given to all students who have met or exceeded religious services attendance requirements.

Religious School Service Attendance Requirements

Gan/K	1 Friday Night
Grades 1/2	2 Friday Nights
Grade 3	3 Friday Night
Grade 4	3 Friday Nights 1 Saturday
Grade 5	2 Friday Nights 2 Saturday
Grade 6	2 Friday nights 3 Saturday
Grade 7	4 Saturday
Grades 8+	Students are now considered adults in the community. As such, they are expected to attend an appropriate amount of services yearly

Progress Reports:

Progress Reports will be sent home to parents/guardians twice yearly, in January and early May. They will include the following:

1. Accurate attendance, including early dismissals and late arrivals
2. Religious services attendance to date in meeting minimal requirements
3. Academic Progress in major curricular areas, especially Hebrew

Parental/Guardian Meetings with BTS Staff:

Communication is the lifeblood of the community, and is a vital part of the education process. Teachers will make every effort to communicate with parents as much as possible. If you request a meeting, please note the following:

1. It is expected that all meetings be scheduled in advance between parents/guardians and staff members of the Beth Tikvah Synagogue Religious School, except for extraordinary or emergency situations.
2. All meetings shall be held in a private space to respect confidentiality issues.
3. A Beth Tikvah Synagogue staff member has the right to request another staff/board member be present during a meeting with a parent or guardian.
4. All meetings will be conducted with appropriate decorum and with respect.

Protocols for Resolving Disputes

Any issues or concerns you may have regarding your child's progress or the school's programs of study should be handled according to the following protocols:

1. If the issue is regarding classroom concerns, then the parent/guardian is asked to set up an appointment with the appropriate teacher(s) first, according to the meeting guidelines listed above.
2. If the issue is not resolved to the satisfaction of either party, then an appointment should be made with Cindy Avergon, Coordinator of Religious School.
3. If the issue is still not resolved, then an appointment may be made with the Vice President of Education, whose contact information is posted at the end of this Handbook. Depending on the issue, the VP Education may request other members of the Education Committee to be present at that meeting. All decisions of the Education committee are final.

Notices to Parents

Most information for parents is sent to parents by email. Occasionally, important information also will be handed out to students in class. Newsletters are e-mailed to families weekly. These contain news about classroom and educational activities and other important announcements. It is the parents' responsibility to read newsletters and to keep abreast of appropriate information contained therein. Please keep the school and synagogue informed of any updates in addresses, email or phone numbers, and please let us know if email is not a convenient way to reach you. Please refer to emails and the school calendar for important dates and updates to class schedules.

Peer Mentors

We have a student list of peer mentors available to work with your students outside of class. Please see Cindy Avergon, Religious School Coordinator, for Beth Tikvah approved peer mentor list. These peer mentors work in conjunction with Miri Sharon, Mitkadem teacher, to:

1. Help students with Mitkadem Hebrew Program, vowels, roots, reading practice
2. Read with a student or listen to a student read to you (reading fluency) in-between classes, confidence building
3. Help to prepare and study for Ramah testing
4. Help with Tefilah (Hebrew Prayers)

Food Policy

There are students in our school who have a potentially life-threatening allergy to nuts.

- Absolutely no nuts or food products containing nuts are ever to be brought into the building.
- All pre-packaged items brought into the building must be kosher.
- Homemade items must be either dairy or pareve.

Snow Policy/Cancellation Procedures

If school is to be delayed or canceled due to inclement weather, you will receive an email and the cancellation will be posted on the Beth Tikvah website:

<http://www.bethtikvahsynagogue.org>

- **Wednesdays:** If Westborough Public Schools cancel school, or have early dismissal, or cancels all after-school activities, Beth Tikvah Religious School will be canceled. A decision will be made by 1:00 PM on Wednesdays.
- **Sundays:** School closing on Sundays will be determined by the Vice President of Education in consultation with the Religious School Coordinator by 8:00 AM.

Always check emails and our website. If in doubt, or if you have any questions email or call Cindy Avergon, Coordinator of Education.

Contact Information

Cindy Avergon, Coordinator of Education

E-mail: cavergon@aol.com

Phone: 508-616-9037, option 3.

BTS Physical Address: 45 Oak St, Westborough, MA 01581

BTS Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1042, Westborough, MA 01581

Website: <http://www.bethtikvahsynagogue.org>

Education Committee

- Jonathan Rappaport, VP Education
JonRappi1@gmail.com
- Benita Amsden
- Michael Smith



Acknowledgement Form

Please Print

Student Name(s):

Parent/Guardian Name(s):

This is to acknowledge that we have received a copy of the Beth Tikvah Religious School Handbook. We understand we are responsible for the contents in this Handbook, and agree that we and our children will adhere to the policies it contains. In case we misplace this Handbook, we acknowledge that it may be found on the Beth Tikvah website, www.bethtikvahsynagogue.org.

Signed: _____

Date: _____