



RELIGIOUS SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Communications between the Religious School and our Families

We're **Green**. That's why you are reading this online. And you can find most of the other information about our programs and schedules online, too:

Schmooze News

Schmooze News, our monthly Religious School newsletter, is emailed out at the beginning of each month. Read it to enjoy information about all the programs in the Religious School as well as monthly pictures of our students at work and play.

Weekly Religious School Event Information

Every Monday we will send out grade specific emails detailing the upcoming events for Grades Pre-K - 12. You can expect to receive our Pathways Newsletter on Tuesday. Keep an eye out for these to RSVP for upcoming events and important information!

Temple Shaaray Tefila Website and The Weekly

Life can sometimes be unpredictable, necessitating changes in plans made months earlier. Our website is loaded with our schedule, calendar, and program updates for the synagogue community as well as the Religious School.

To get the most accurate and current news about synagogue programs, be sure to read The Weekly from Temple Shaaray Tefila. If you are not currently receiving this email, please send an email to Adam Karol, akarol@tstnyc.org, providing which email address you would prefer to receive this important newsletter.

Office Hours/Communication

The Religious School office is located on the Temple's Third Floor.

Religious School office hours are:

Monday 10:00am – 7:30pm

Tuesday 10:00am – 6:00pm

Wednesday 10:00am – 6:00pm

Thursday 10:00am – 6:00pm

Friday 9:00am – 5:00pm

Sunday 8:30 am – 12:00pm (3:00 on MASA Sundays)

After hours, parents may leave messages on our voice mail system. Our phone number is 212-535-0912. Parents can leave messages for teachers, as needed.

Rabbi Jessica Lenza, Director of Religious School Engagement, and Andrew Paull, Director of Teen Engagement, are available to meet with parents, by appointment. Please do not hesitate to call or schedule a meeting to discuss your child's progress. The Religious School Operations Coordinator and Bnai Mitzvah Coordinator are also available to assist parents and students.

Registration and Enrollment

Registration & Fees

Temple membership is a prerequisite for registration in our Religious School. If you are not current in any of your Temple financial obligations, we cannot process your registration and we will not hold a spot for your child until you are in good standing. It is our policy that all fees need to be paid prior to the first day of school. Students will not be allowed to start Religious School until full payment is received. If you have any questions about this, please contact Amy Schwach, our Executive Director, by email at aschwach@tstnyc.org or by phone at 212-535-8225.

Attendance Policy

Regular attendance is the basis of a successful learning experience. If parents anticipate that their child will miss more than two consecutive class sessions, they should inform the school. *All students are required to attend a minimum of 75% of scheduled class sessions.* MASA families who do not meet this minimum standard may not be eligible to enroll in the program the following year. Parents should contact the Director of Religious School Engagement if children will not be able to fulfill this minimum requirement so that other acceptable arrangements can be made. Should the attendance requirement not be met, receiving or maintaining a bnai mitzvah date may be in jeopardy.

Mitkadem Hebrew Program - Overview and Attendance Policy

Our normal Mitkadem Hebrew program requires three years of attendance, beginning with third grade. Barring extenuating circumstances, such as emotional or learning issues discussed with the Religious School Staff, students will complete this program to our Education Team's standards.

Students who have achieved a satisfactory level of Hebrew skills, like correctly identifying letters and vowels, decoding Hebrew words, and familiarity with our core prayers will be ready to move on to the clergy bnai mitzvah tutoring program approximately a year before their bar or bat mitzvah date. Students who have not attained this level should be screened by clergy before the end of Fifth Grade to establish whether or not they are ready to move on. If the clergy determines that a student has not met these goals, clergy may decide that the student requires extra tutoring.

Students who have not met these goals for the reasons listed below will be required to bear the cost of extra tutoring to bring them to the expected Hebrew level. These students include:

- Students who enrolled after Third Grade
- Students who had poor attendance in Grades Four, Five, or Six
- In addition, students who enroll after Grade Four, whose Hebrew levels are not at the level of their classmates, should be required to bear the cost of tutoring to bring them to Grade level before or simultaneous with their entry into our classroom

MASA Hebrew Tutoring

All students with MASA tutors should plan to arrive at Shaaray Tefila for their individual tutoring sessions early enough to sign in at the front desk, check on the location of their tutoring when they sign in, and arrive in their room on time. If a student is unable to attend their tutoring session, please let the Religious School office know as soon as possible. **There are no scheduled make up sessions for missed tutoring sessions.**

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Program

Students and their families typically receive dates for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration in Fourth Grade. There may be more than one student celebrating on the same Shabbat, depending on the date.

All students who have been enrolled consistently since Third Grade, and who have attended at least 75% of class sessions may be considered eligible to celebrate becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Temple Shaaray Tefila. Eligibility also includes the family being a member in-good-standing of the congregation, payment of all Bnai Mitzvah fees and continuing registration in Religious School. A handbook of Bar/Bat Mitzvah guidelines is available with a more detailed list of requirements.

Preparation takes place under the supervision of Cantor Todd Kipnis. If parents have questions regarding the Bnai Mitzvah experience at Temple Shaaray Tefila, please be in touch with our Bnai Mitzvah Coordinator.

Rules and Regulations Policy

Registration in our school includes the agreement to cooperate fully with Temple Shaaray Tefila's Religious School and accept all rules and regulations for parents and students. Temple Shaaray Tefila Religious School reserves the right to suspend or remove from the religious school any student in the event: (a) the student fails to abide by the rules and regulations of the Temple/Religious School; (b) the Temple/Religious School determines, in the sole discretion of the Executive Director, that a student's behavior, conduct, or performance demonstrates an unwillingness or inability to be productive within the Temple's community; (c) a parent, guardian, or other individual closely associated with the student fails to cooperate with the Temple/Religious School or fails to abide by the rules and regulations of the Temple/Religious School; or (d) the Temple/Religious School determines, in its discretion, that the continued attendance of a student in the religious school or the continued involvement of a parent or guardian with the Temple/Religious School is not in the best interest of the student or the Temple.

Arrival and Dismissal

Arrival and Study Halls

Students are expected to arrive on time unless prior arrangements have been made with the school office. All students who arrive early on Tuesdays are provided with supervised study halls, which open at 3:00pm. In the study halls, students can relax, do their homework, read, draw, play quiet games, or visit quietly with their friends. All students who arrive prior to 3:55pm must come directly to one of the designated study hall rooms. Students are only permitted to sit in rooms that are being monitored by a study hall teacher from Shaaray Tefila. ***This means that there are no students in third or fourth floor classrooms prior to 3:55pm.*** Students will be sent to their classrooms five minutes before class begins at the sound of the early bell.

Dismissal at the End of a School Session

Parents in automobiles who wish to pick up children should wait on the 79th Street side of the Temple. It is illegal and dangerous to stop in the bus stop outside of the Temple entrance on 2nd Avenue. Students will not be allowed to leave the building even if their parent is parked outside the Temple until dismissal is complete and a staff person is available to supervise the student's walk to the parked car.

In order for K-5 students to be dismissed without the presence of a parent or caregiver, parents need to complete the "Unaccompanied Dismissal Form" and return it to the Religious School. If a student is to be picked up by someone not designated on the student's registration form the School Office must be notified in advance in person or by phone (not by email or written note).

In general, parents picking up children in the lobby should determine a specific spot where they will meet each week. Each child must know with whom they can travel. If you have concerns regarding who can and cannot pick up your child, please be sure to speak with the Religious School office. It is strongly recommended by the New York City Police that parents should discuss which streets and modes of transportation they expect their children to use when traveling to and from the Temple. Practicing these routes with children is strongly advised.

We allow students in Grades 6 to 12 to leave on their own.

Sunday Dismissal Policy for Grades K-2

Parents are expected to pick their children up in the Sanctuary on the first floor. We invite parents to join their children during the last 20 minutes of the session in the Sanctuary. Please do not take students out of the sanctuary during t'filah. It is distracting to students and disrupts the prayer experience.

Sunday/Tuesday Dismissal for Grades 3-5

On Sunday, students will be dismissed from their classrooms at the end of the school day and should meet their parents in the lobby. On Tuesdays, parents are expected to pick their children up in the Sanctuary on the first floor. We invite parents to join their children during the last 20 minutes of the session in the Sanctuary. Please do not take students out of the sanctuary during t'filah. It is distracting to students and disrupts the prayer experience.

Early Dismissal

If a child must leave school early for any reason, a parent must notify the School Office and inform us who will pick up the child. The parent may do this in person, by telephone or by email to the School Office (not to the teacher). *For safety reasons, students will not be dismissed early unless such arrangements have been made. **The person picking up the child should come to the Religious School office*** and a staff member will then go to the child's classroom, bring the child to the office, and give the child an early dismissal pass to leave the building. For the safety of our students, no student will be released without following this procedure. Please do not take students out of the sanctuary during t'filah. It is distracting to students and disrupts the prayer experience. Please do not take students out of their classrooms without the assistance of a Religious School staffer. It is distracting and sometimes upsetting to the other children in the class.

Parent and Caregiver Identification Cards

An additional security measure to ensure the safety of our students involves the distribution of parent and caregiver identification cards to school parents. No one will be allowed to enter the building without an identification card. Please be in touch if you should need additional cards. Each family is provided up to three at the beginning of the year. Cards will be available on Opening Day and in the Religious School office throughout the year.

Classroom Health and Safety

Health Issues

If a child is not feeling well during school hours, every effort will be made to contact a parent. Please be sure we have your most up-to-date cell phone and work phone numbers so that we may always reach you. If a child needs prescribed medication during school hours, parents are expected to advise the Religious School office. Please keep any needed medicines or medical instructions up to date.

Snacks and Festival Foods

Shaaray Tefila strives to be a nut-sensitive community. We order and serve foods without nuts as an ingredient, both peanuts and tree nuts. We ask our congregants and staff not to bring food with nuts into the building. We do not guarantee that all machinery used to produce foods we order will be nut-free. Those affected by this allergy should bring their own snacks and each

family should take personal responsibility for advocating for the safety of their children by checking to make sure the staff is aware of and responsive to individual circumstances.

Students are not permitted to eat or drink in the classroom, except during the snack time that is designated by their teacher. Snacks are provided at each class for students in Grades 3-6 on Tuesdays. Students in all grades receive festival foods in honor of the Jewish Holidays.

Students may purchase snacks in study hall on Tuesday afternoons between 3:00 and 3:55pm. Once students are in the building we do not permit them to exit the building until the end of the school day. Therefore, all food purchases should be made prior to entering the building.

Because many of our students have food allergies or sensitivities, we do not allow students or parents to bring snacks to be distributed in our classrooms.

Additionally, out of respect for the synagogue and in accordance with our kashrut policy, students are asked not to bring in foods containing pork products (e.g. sausage pizza, ham sandwiches, etc.) or shellfish.

Classroom Conduct

Telephones, Cellular Phones, and Other Electronics

A telephone is available in the Religious School office for students who need to call parents during study hall and school hours.

In order to maintain an environment conducive to learning, students are not permitted to use cell phones or other personal electronics in their classrooms. Parents may always contact students by calling the school office and are asked not to call or text their children when they are in class. We do ask students to turn off and put away any personal electronics during Religious School. In some grades we may collect phones/personal electronics at the beginning of our session and return them to the students at dismissal.

Dress Code

We ask that all students dress appropriately for Religious School. Students may wear clothes that are acceptable in their secular schools. Please keep in mind that children will be spending time in the sanctuary. Their dress should reflect their respect for the Temple and for learning.

Religious School is a place of learning. In order to honor the atmosphere at the Temple, we ask that students do not bring in-line skates or scooters or other valuables into the building. Students will be asked to bring these into the School Office during school hours, if they bring these items with them.

Tzedakah

Each day at school, students are asked to give from their own money to Tzedakah projects.

Other Information

Textbooks and Materials

Textbooks and special curricular materials are chosen for use with some grades. A textbook and materials fee is included in each student's tuition fee. Should a student, for any reason, need to replace any materials; it may be purchased at cost through the School Office.

Lost and Found

While the Temple cannot be held responsible for items left behind or lost at school, we make every effort to return items to their rightful owners. Parents are asked to label clothing and school items with their child's name.

School Trips

Throughout the school year, field trips may be scheduled to sites throughout the city. Parents and students will be notified of such trips in advance, and permission forms will be mailed or sent home. Parents may be requested to cover the costs of transportation or entrance fees.

Emergency School Closing

The Religious School and MASA Hebrew Tutoring follows the inclement weather school closing decisions of the New York City Public Schools. While our school remains open in almost all weather situations, parents should use their best judgment in deciding whether or not to send children. Please call the School Office if you have a question regarding whether or not school is open. School closing information will also be posted on the website.

In the event of closing school due to inclement weather on Sunday mornings or at the time of a scheduled MASA program, we will email you. In addition, you can find this information posted on the Temple's website.

Information for Separated or Divorced Parents

Our students grow up in a variety of family constellations. When children have parents who are separated or divorced, it is the policy of the school to provide both parents with information regarding the child, including progress reports, parent handbooks, information about Shabbat dinners, and family program dates and times. Unless the school office is given explicit directions from a judge or family court advising otherwise, we will include both parents in mailings regarding their child's progress and learning. We make every attempt for Religious School to be a place where parents (in spite of their conflicts elsewhere) come together for the mutual support of the growth and religious development of their children.

Gifts to Teachers

We appreciate the many ways that families support our teaching staff. In accordance to parent input, we will provide two opportunities for parents to contribute to the Teacher Gift Fund, once at Chanukah and once at the end of the school year. The Religious School committee asks that parents donate to this fund and do not purchase individual gifts for teachers. Of course, any contributions to this fund are voluntary.