

Yesoiday HaTorah Girls' Academy

Home School Agreement Policy

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Introduction

This home-school agreement is based on the principles and values on which this school is based and to which the governors, the head teacher and all the staff subscribe. It is hoped that parents and pupils are equally committed to the same ideals and central to this is the partnership developed between the parents, pupils and staff of the school.

Parents' responsibilities

We acknowledge that we, as parents, are the primary educators of our children and have an irreplaceable role to play in supporting our children's learning at school.

Therefore I/we will:

- Bring up my child in a true, strictly orthodox Jewish home, in keeping with traditional, strictly orthodox Jewish values.
- work with the school in supporting the education of my child,
- see that my child attends school regularly, on time, suitably equipped and dressed in full school uniform,
- make use of the contact book/homework diary and encourage my child to use it properly,
- support the aims and values of the school community,
- Work in co-operation with staff to resolve issues and problems that may arise and let the school know of any issues that might affect my child's work, behaviour or attendance,
- encourage my child to be enthusiastic about learning, provide opportunities for home learning and support homework from school,
- support the school's policies and guidelines for behaviour and dress code, which are intended to promote the highest standards of behaviour and discipline,
- encourage my child to show kindness and consideration to others and to always behave appropriately, when in school uniform, on their way to, and from, school,
- participate in whatever way possible in school events,
- treat staff and pupils with courtesy and respect.

Signature(s) _____

Date _____

The School's responsibilities

We acknowledge our responsibility to support parents in developing each child to their full potential.

Therefore we will:

- Instil in the child a deep commitment to true, strictly orthodox Jewish values.
- provide a friendly and welcoming atmosphere for your child and a secure, stimulating and caring environment in which to learn,

- ensure that your child is valued for who they are and helped to make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social, emotional, physical and intellectual development,
- do our best to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, which is well taught and relevant to their needs and their future as individuals and as citizens,
- Work in co-operation with parents to resolve issues and problems that may arise,
- provide you with regular information about your child's progress and with opportunities, via open evenings, to meet with staff to discuss concerns or by appointment at other times,
- send home an annual report on your child's progress,
- keep you well informed about school policies and activities through regular letters and newsletters,
- set, mark and monitor homework suitable to your child's needs,
- contact you if there is a problem with your child's attendance, punctuality or behaviour in class or in the playground,
- inform you of any concerns regarding your child's work or health,
- challenge your child to strive for personal excellence in all they do or are asked to do,
- encourage success and recognise effort and achievement in all areas of student life,
- go beyond the requirements of the National Curriculum and meet, wherever possible, the individual needs of the child,
- try to develop clear lines of communication between home and school treat parents and pupils with courtesy and respect.

Signed (Class teacher) _____

Date _____

Pupil's responsibilities

I am special to my parents and to my teachers. Because I am special, I will try to:

- play well with my friends and be kind,
- come to school everyday and in my uniform,
- be well behaved on the way to and from school,
- try and enjoy being at school,
- keep my classroom and the school clean and tidy.

I also understand that there is only one of me and I have special talents that I must try and use wisely.

Therefore I will try to:

- attend school regularly and on time, bringing with me all the things I need,
- wear school uniform and take a pride in my appearance,
- take care of all school equipment and help keep our school free from litter and graffiti,
- try my best in all my work and be polite, at all times to all pupils, all adults and all visitors to the school,
- be well behaved on the way to and from school,
- behave sensibly so we can be happy and safe as we learn,
- observe all school rules and treat everyone with the respect they deserve,
- try to think for myself and take responsibility for my actions,
- take part in all aspects of school life and be proud of my school.

Signature _____

Date _____

Head teacher's signature _____

Date _____

A copy of this agreement will be sent to the parent(s)/carer(s)/guardian(s) for their retention.

Background and guidance for home-school agreements

Introduction

The governing bodies of all maintained schools are required to adopt a home-school agreement that should go through the school's normal procedures for developing such policies and agreements. This will include consulting the head teacher and senior staff. Indeed, the task may be fully delegated to them followed by the appropriate governors' committee scrutinising the document(s). However, there is a stipulation that before adopting or reviewing this agreement, parents must be consulted. It should also involve pupils, teachers, other school staff and relevant agencies such as the school's attached EWO in the consultation process.

Strictly speaking, the DfES guidance applies only to pupils of statutory school age in maintained schools and City Technology Schools. However, many schools with either nurseries or sixth forms are following an inclusive approach, introducing agreements that are appropriate to the needs of very young and older pupils respectively. Similarly, a number of independent schools are seeing the advantage of following this line of development, with appropriate emphasis, for example, their residential nature.

The DfES asked OfSTED to carry out a survey of good practice, before introducing its own guidance document on Home-School agreements. OfSTED found, amongst other things that:

- the process of finding out and discussing what parents, pupils and staff want from one another is of great value - almost as valuable as the eventual product. It creates genuine awareness of differences and agreement on basic policies such as discipline and homework.
- the most successful and workable agreements arise out of, and are clearly linked to, the school's policies and practices. They are part of a whole school approach to partnership with parents and pupils.
- the agreement provides clear expectations for each of the partners involved. Parents, in particular, feel more confident about what is expected of them.
- parental help is valued and given status as an important factor in pupils' learning.
- pupils are given responsibilities as well as rights and feel some control over their contribution.
- where guidance and training on how to help children is provided, parents report increased confidence and a sense of value in what they contribute.
- the agreement provides a good starting point in discussion with pupils, parents or staff when difficulties arise. It also provides a regular method for reinforcing agreed good behaviour and attitudes.
- consistent use of the agreement as part of the school's approach improves behaviour and gains greater commitment from pupils.

The agreement itself should set out the school's aims and values (its mission statement) as well as the respective responsibilities of the school, its pupils and their parents. It should include pupil attendance, behaviour and homework.

The governing body must take reasonable steps to ensure that all registered parents or carers of pupils aged 5 to 16 sign the parental declaration, showing that they understand and accept the agreement. Pupils may also be asked to sign. Refusal to sign an agreement should not result in adverse consequences for a pupil or parent and cannot be made a condition of entry to the school.

Content of the agreement

The DfES recommends that the agreement outlines school policies on:

- the school's aims and values;
- the school's responsibilities in relation to all pupils of compulsory school age;
- parents' responsibilities while their child is registered at the school; and

- the school's expectation of its pupils.

In particular, it should cover:

- the standard of education;
- the ethos of the school;
- regular and punctual attendance;
- discipline and behaviour;
- homework; and
- the information schools and parents will give to one another.

The following may be helpful in considering how to deal with these topics in the agreement.

Standard of Education

This could say something about the standard of teaching parents could expect; that children have the right to a broad and balanced curriculum; and how the needs of all children of all abilities and aptitudes will be met. This might also draw attention to the statutory school targets for National Curriculum assessments, GCSEs and vocational qualifications.

Ethos of the School

The agreement could refer to the school's particular character and spirit. For example, it might say how this is conveyed through the attitudes expected of pupils and staff. It might also say how the school ethos is reflected in the way pupils relate to each other, how pupils relate to staff, and how the school relates to the community it serves. As part of this section, the agreement could refer to the school's mission statement and its aims for pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development.

Regular and Punctual Attendance

The government attaches great importance to home-school agreements as an additional means of promoting regular attendance. The agreement should make it clear that parents or carers:

- are responsible in law for ensuring that children of compulsory school age receive full-time suitable education;
- understand that where the child is registered at a school, the law requires regular attendance and this means attending school punctually on every day and for the whole school day during term time, unless there is a good reason (such as illness) for absence;
- are responsible for notifying schools if their child cannot attend;
- if attendance problems do develop, they are expected to work actively with school staff and the education welfare service to solve them; and
- do not have a right to take children on holiday in term time and any leave of absence must be granted, in advance, by the school.

For their part, schools are responsible for alerting parents as soon as possible when their child is absent.

It may be necessary to clarify expectations where there are particular problems. For example, the agreement could refer to the time that the morning register is taken if punctuality is a cause for concern and/or refer to the school's policy on granting leave of absence.

Discipline and Behaviour

Promoting good behaviour and discipline in pupils should be a partnership between home and school. Parents have a vital role in fostering good behaviour, and parental influence is critical in shaping pupil attitude and behaviour.

The agreement should make clear that the pupil will be expected to observe the school's discipline and anti-bullying policies, and that parents and teachers need to work together to maintain good behaviour and discipline.

Homework

Agreements should set out clearly what is expected of pupils, parents and teachers in relation to homework.

Parents should have a right to be consulted over changes to, or developments in, the school's homework policy.

The school may well have a separate homework policy and reference should be made to this or it can be incorporated in this policy.

Information Schools and Parents will give to one another

Good communication between the school and the home is essential. For example, parents should know when to expect a written report on their child's progress and how they can discuss their child's progress with a teacher. They should be made aware of the importance of telling the school about any issues that might affect the child's work or behaviour. They should be encouraged to approach the school if they have any concerns or feel there is a problem. It might be helpful to make clear whom they should contact in the first instance.

The agreement could also refer to information that teachers can provide to parents about how they can help their children at home with their homework.

General complaints procedure

All parents have a right to have any complaints properly considered, although this will not always mean that a complaint will be upheld.

Regulations to be made will place a requirement on governing bodies of maintained schools to set up procedures for dealing with all complaints (not just those from parents), unless the complaint is covered by another statutory procedure such as a curriculum complaint.

The intention is that regulations will set a framework for handling complaints, so that schools can deal effectively and quickly with all complaints. The regulations will set time limits for dealing with complaints. All schools should consult parents about the operation of their complaint procedures.

Governing bodies will be required to monitor the complaint procedure and review it annually. The home-school agreement could detail the school's complaints procedure and set out the intention that all complaints will be handled sensitively and responded to in writing as soon as possible.

Schools may also wish to clarify responsibilities in other areas where this would be helpful. However, it is important that home-school agreements do not become too detailed or full of jargon. Detailed documents can be off-putting. Where appropriate, the agreement might refer to a particular policy of the school, for example on special educational needs, and say where it might be found, e.g. a summary of the SEN policy can be found in the prospectus.

Style and communication strategies

It is generally agreed that these agreements will work best where they are:

- the product of a genuine discussion between all parties involved, including pupils through curriculum work under the personal, social and citizenship programme of the school;

- balanced, fair and even-handed to all backgrounds - culturally, religiously and ethnically;
- agreed and not imposed;
- introduced as part of a whole school approach to working with parents and the community;
- clear and meaningful to parents, particularly where they may be socially disadvantaged, or whose first language is not English.

It is essential that the style of writing and its tone are positive and unambiguous so that staff, parents and pupils are in no doubt as to what is expected of them. The agreement should be translated into the principal family languages being used in the school's catchment area and communicated orally where parents may have difficulty in reading either in English or their family language. The agreement must be workable, without too much detail and, as already stressed, take account of different family backgrounds and domestic circumstances, such as both parents at work, single parent situations, pupils who are themselves carers, cultural prohibitions and religious duties.

This means that all commitments and undertakings, which form part of a home-school agreement, should be free from discrimination, in any form, and stereotyped assumptions about particular groups.

Monitoring and review

As with all policies, the agreement must be monitored and reviewed regularly preferably every two or three years and take account of the agreements of other local schools where siblings may be attending. Substantially different agreements being followed by children in the same family can be a cause for confusion and breakdown.

Monitoring should be at several levels: pupils through the school council; staff at staff meetings; and governors through reports received from the head teacher. Monitoring and reviewing can be done using questionnaires as well.

Breach of the agreement

Breaches of the agreement by parents or pupils are not actionable through the courts. The head teacher should not discipline or exclude a pupil for a breach of the agreement. However, if the pupil breaches the agreement by seriously breaking school discipline, they may be disciplined or excluded in accordance with the school's discipline policy.

Governing bodies should not include any terms or conditions that would be unlawful or unreasonable as far as the law is concerned, for example, requiring parents to make a financial contribution to the school, or refusing to waive any requirement on school uniform in cases where the parent and child cannot comply for religious reasons such as the wearing of a head dress by Sikh pupils.

Governing bodies, in consultation with parents, should consider sensitively and carefully what to include. They should avoid anything which either side would find unreasonable and unacceptable. Possible examples in this category include: requiring parents to attend an excessive number of parents' evenings or meetings at inconvenient times; requiring parents to agree to make "voluntary" contributions to purchase expensive books or equipment; or including unrealistic promises or demands.

The agreement should also avoid putting very specific requirements on one side while making vague promises that are difficult to monitor on the other. It should be remembered that the Secretary of State has a reserve power to ban the use of particular undesirable provisions.

Other relevant policies and procedures

1. School discipline

2. Exclusions
3. School Uniform
4. Attendance and absence
5. Bullying
6. Detention