



JCoSS NEWS

News from the UK's first cross-communal Jewish secondary school

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In partnership with
NORWOOD

JCoSS Opens to All

At 8am on Monday 6th September, JCoSS - the UK's first cross-communal Jewish secondary school - opened its doors to its first 148 students.

Nine years in the planning, the magnificent £47 million building in New Barnet has overnight become the second most popular Jewish school in the country, attracting students from every section of the community.

Its first intake of eleven year olds includes Orthodox and Reform students in equal measure as the largest groupings, with significant numbers from the Masorti and Liberal traditions, as well non-aligned and Israeli families.

Two-thirds of the students have come from non-Jewish primaries, demonstrating, the school says, its ability to expand the overall numbers entering Jewish secondary education by offering a more open and inclusive ethos.

The remaining third include representatives from almost every Jewish primary school in North London, Essex and South Hertfordshire, with the largest group coming from the neighbouring Wolfson Hillel Primary School. JCoSS's three feeder schools - Akiva, Clore Shalom and Clore Tikva - are also well represented. Copenhagen and Tel Aviv aside, the first intake comes from as far afield as Northwood, St Albans and Rebridge.

Excited students arriving for their first day at school included Rebecca Alter, 11, of Fortune Green. She told *JCoSS News*:

"My parents made the decision for me to go to JCoSS but after Mr Stowe-Lindner came to talk to my school I



JCoSS students release balloons in front of their new school at the end of their first day

knew they had made the right choice.

"I woke up at 5 o'clock because I was very nervous but by the end of the day I wasn't nervous any more. I was excited to go home and tell my parents about my first day at secondary school. I can't wait for tomorrow."

Among the first things which Rebecca and students like her see on entering JCoSS is the school's motto "Elu v'elu..." with its English translation "These and these are the words of God" emblazoned across the Jerusalem stone wall which surrounds the

school's synagogue and multi-purpose hall.

Chosen only after lengthy debates, Headteacher, Jeremy Stowe-Lindner, believes the Talmudic phrase perfectly represents the JCoSS ethos.

"It comes," he explains, "from a story about a dispute between the schools of Hillel and Shamai. Eventually, the dispute is resolved by a holy voice which explains that both schools' interpretations are equally valid.

"This is the ethos of JCoSS. We recognise that our students and their

parents are embarked on many different Jewish journeys. We believe all are equally valid and will teach them with equivalence, whilst encouraging our students to delve into their own stories and the stories of others so that they emerge from JCoSS as high achieving, mature, independent thinkers who make their own choices about how they live their lives."

This cross-communal approach is reflected in the synagogal memberships of the Headteacher, Stowe-Lindner (Hendon United) and the

Chair of Governors, Mike Grabiner (Finchley Reform), with all the mainstream traditions represented on the Governing Body.

Students in the first year are invited to get involved in helping the school to develop its practices within its ethos of inclusion. So while all food is kosher, the school is formally closed on the second day of festivals, and kippot are optional, pupils are free to have their say on the conduct of religious services and other religious practices.

The ethos of inclusion is also reflected in the school's Pears Special Resource Provision (PSRP), developed in conjunction with the charity, Norwood, which supports people with learning disabilities, and children and families in need. A unique facility in a faith school, the PSRP offers seven students with autistic spectrum conditions the opportunity to learn on the same campus as their peers in the main school. Fifty of the school's eventual full roll of 1310 students will benefit from the facilities of the PSRP (see page 4).

These first students will have the run of the whole building after the Trustees resolved to complete the works in a single go. Headteacher Jeremy Stowe-Lindner explains:

"We were determined to ensure that our students didn't end up living in a perpetual building site, so we made the decision to complete the building in one go.

"To be honest it was a huge challenge but it was worth it," he adds. "The result is awe-inspiring."

To visit JCoSS for yourself register now for one of our open days at www.jcoss.org.

JCoSS Open Days



Weds 6th October, 6-9pm
Doors open at 6pm; Talks at 6.30pm and 7.30pm

Sunday 10th October, 2-5.30pm
Doors open at 2pm; Talks at 2.30pm, 3.30pm and 4.30pm

Entrance from Castlewood Road, New Barnet, EN4 9GE

Register today
Email admin@jcoss.barnet.sch.uk (see www.jcoss.org for further details)



JCoSS

Jewish
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High achieving, respectful, the best



**Jeremy
Stowe-Lindner
Headteacher**

I cannot tell you how good it is to have some real students.

For the past fifteen months, I have been the Headteacher of a school which has not quite existed. Ever since I was appointed, I have been preparing for this moment to make sure that JCoSS really delivers on everything that it promises. Plans on paper are all very well, but my job has been to bring them to life.

First, the building. As you can see from the pictures here JCoSS is a spectacular learning environment: the magnificent central hall, the music rooms, the resource centre with the spiral staircase, the dance and recording studios – I could go on.

But great facilities are all very well; my job has been to make this marvellous building work as a school: classrooms kitted out with the best equipment, state-of-the-art IT, a school day which makes the most of mornings, when children learn best, and oyster card-style technology deployed to save time at registration.

I'll give you just one example. My last post was in an all girls school. I know how quickly eleven year old girls stop running around, playing the games children should play, when they move schools. Instead, they start copying the older children worrying about their looks and accessories.

Now obviously our first students will not have that problem, but from 2011, I've made certain that our eleven and twelve year olds have a playground all to themselves, to allow them to ease their way into teenage-hood, rather than have it thrust upon them.

Then, there is the staff. I've spent much of the past year putting together what I believe is the most incredible team. For example, there's Mr Moriarty, the Deputy Headteacher from Haberdashers, where he worked with some of the brightest students in the country. Our Assistant Heads, Kate

Lightman and Hayley Follett, from JFS and Friern Barnet respectively. Laurie Rosenberg is a former Headteacher from Simon Marks Jewish Primary School.

What all our staff share in common is that they are high achievers – most are in their 30s or early 40s - and they have already held very senior posts in some of the best schools in the country.

All our teaching and support staff are fully committed to our outstanding new school. But the other thing they share is a common belief in JCoSS and its ethos. This is a team that really believes in open, inclusive Jewish education, outward looking, welcoming of all, but determined to set for itself and its pupils the very highest standards, stretching them to the full.

Our Pears Special Resource Provision is another example of our outward-looking inclusive school. Under David Wilson's superb leadership and with Norwood's support, the PSRP is already establishing itself as a groundbreaking new provision for autistic children in a mainstream school.

And finally, there's the students. I admit that a tear may have welled up when the first students walked in, smartly dressed in their brand new uniforms on their first day of school. These are our pioneers. And they, as much as me or any of our staff, will shape our school.

They are outstanding students for an outstanding school. Just good luck? Possibly, but I think it is more than that. How else do you explain becoming the second most popular Jewish school in the country even before we've opened? I think it's this: the community as a whole has bought into JCoSS and everyone who comes here wants to be a part of something special. A new way of doing things: high-achieving, cross-communal; respectful; the best.

It's an amazing project and it has only just begun. Please join us.

JCoSS: A Day in pictures

Photos by
Graham Chweidan



7.55am: Our first student arrives



8.05am: Last minute preparations for the big day



12.40pm: Time to eat



1pm: And time to play



8.15am: More students arrive on foot



1.30pm: Planting a seed for a new beginning...



8.20am: Others come by coach



8.45am: Headteacher, Jeremy Stowe-Lindner, welcomes students



2pm: Head of Jewish Studies, Laurie Rosenberg, leads a special Rosh Hashannah assembly



4.10pm: A moment of reflection for the Headteacher



9.50am: Our first lessons...



12.05pm: Exploring the new building...



3.15pm: Students and teachers get ready for the balloon release

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www.jcoss.org

Your Questions Answered

By Mike Grabiner, Chair of Governors

Is JCoSS for me?

You will need to decide for yourself. To help you, come to one of our Open Events, visit our website and read our prospectus.

What you can be sure of is that all our students are taught by enthusiastic senior staff in brand new facilities in an amazing building. What's more, however you practise your Judaism, you will find someone else at JCoSS who shares your approach. In our first year, we have attracted students from every section of the community from Orthodox to secular, with those from United Synagogue and Reform backgrounds the most heavily represented. Around a third of our students come from Jewish Primary Schools but two thirds don't and, whatever you believe, your views and practices will be respected.

How will JCoSS stretch my child?

Every student has gifts and talents. JCoSS is an academic school offering a varied curriculum and has an active policy of inclusion. We stretch all children to achieve their full potential and we have a declared target for our first cohort to be in the top 10% of UK schools for progress. We use setting to stretch all students and the main sets are in Mathematics, Hebrew and Science and, where appropriate, we will challenge students to take exams early. We are determined to ensure that students compete for the best universities, under the guidance of our Deputy Headteacher who has supported over 300 successful Oxbridge applications.

How do I get there?

By private coach, public transport or car sharing. Already in our first year we operate private coaches from across North London, South Herts and Essex, with one overground and two underground stations also within walking distance or a short hopper bus ride. For more details on routes, check out our website.

How do I apply?

You apply for JCoSS through your local authority. If JCoSS is your first preference you need to put it top of the application form as this is the only way to guarantee you will be offered a place if there is one available. Your local authority forms need to be returned direct to the local authority by 31st October 2010.

In addition, you also need to fill in a Supplementary Information Form (SIF) for JCoSS. This will enable you to show that, if JCoSS is oversubscribed, you are entitled to be given priority. You can print out a copy from our SIF from our website, www.jcoss.org. This needs to be returned to the school by 1pm on 26th November 2010.

What are the faith admission criteria and how do I fulfil them?

We give priority to Jewish children as defined under our admissions criteria (see our website for full details.) Our approach is to find ways to count people in rather than to exclude them. You can qualify through synagogue membership, attendance or commitment to Jewish education, or community or charitable work. Once you have qualified, we don't assign points to candidates, so our tie-breaker is simply distance from the school gates.

What can I learn from your open events?

Our Open Events on 6th and 10th October will be the main opportunities for those considering JCoSS to see round the school, meet with our teachers and first cohort of students, and hear from our Headteacher. Given that we will have been open for only a month, some of the walls may be a little emptier than in an older school and the all-weather pitches will still be being finished. Should you choose JCoSS, these pitches will be fully operational for our 2011 intake and your children will be amongst the first to use our state-of-the-art IT equipment, sports facilities, music and dance studios, and science labs. They will be our pioneers, shaping the school for those who follow for generations to come.

JCoSS's Super Dynamo

JCoSS News reporter, Ben Rich, talks to the school's new Assistant Headteacher with special responsibility for science, Hayley Follett

From the first time of meeting her it is clear that Hayley Follett, JCoSS's Assistant Headteacher, is one of life's enthusiasts.

How else to explain that, within minutes, she has me (who once scored just 17% in a biology exam), picturing a fifty foot model of a DNA double-helix, without breaking out in a sweat? In fact, I'm excited: the aforementioned helix is to be built by this year's first intake and will flow from top to bottom of JCoSS's magnificent atrium.

There's more. Soon she has not just me but Headteacher, Jeremy Stowe-Lindner – a Historian by profession and temperament – waxing lyrically about the design of the building which allows students to see exactly how the heating systems and electrics work.

She describes the new JCoSS building as “one huge science project just waiting to be explored.”

“I'm going to fill one room with plants and leave another empty. Then the students will use the built-in CO₂ monitors to learn about respiration,” she enthuses (I'm quickly corrected when I say “breathing”).

Hardly surprising then, with this dynamo (I hope I've used that word correctly?) leading their bid, JCoSS has become the first non-academy school ever to be awarded specialist status (in science) even before it opens. Follett explains:

“Specialist status gives us a huge advantage, enabling us to run new projects and get access to equipment and experts that other schools only dream of.

“I mean,” she continues, her exciting mounting once more, “our Design and Technology faculty has its own laser cutter – most other schools would love to get their hands on a piece of kit as sophisticated as that. And we're going to be able to run a project in the first term to build and programme our own lego robot, with Year 7s – unheard of.”

She continues: “And then we'll be running our own equivalent of the BBC Royal Society Christmas lectures – except we call them “festive” – not

just for parents as well as students. That's proper school science – things that go bang, change colour, boffins with over-long arms to wave...”

She's almost breathless and the enthusiasm is infectious. It seems unfair to pin her down with biographical details: married; two kids aged six and seven, born and raised in Potters Bar; University in Manchester at the old Institute for Science and Technology, which was then one of the leading science universities in the world. To this CV she adds 16 years teaching in various schools across North London, the last nine as Head of Science at Friern Barnet School just down the road.

Whilst there, she also became an advanced skills teacher, which Follett explains as being a bit like doing a mini-Ofsted Inspection for individual teachers; and then working one day a week for the local authority to inspect and help other science teachers across Barnet improve their skills and develop new, innovative teaching methods.

She offers that, with JCoSS's specialist status, she and colleague Laura Korn, Head of Maths, (formally of Immanuel College) will continue supporting local primary schools, going into Hadley



Hayley Follett gets enthusiastic about science

Wood, Friern Manor, Livingstone and Akiva, to support the teaching of Year 6 science and maths.

There is no need to ask Hayley Follett if she is excited about the prospective of teaching at JCoSS. That much is self-evident. So instead, I close by asking what will make JCoSS different. Again, she's at full throttle:

“If we deliver everything we've got planned it will be an amazing place. I'm staggered by the quality of my colleagues and, frankly, since the students started I've been blown away.

“But it's the ethos of the place which really gets me: the discipline and the eagerness to learn; the sense we're all pulling in the same direction.

“During our induction,” she concludes, “we developed some Golden Rules for behaviour at the school. My favourite one is “Be a mensch.” That's what JCoSS is all about. All the parts support the whole.”

And then she starts explaining how the building's super-smart light sensors provide a perfect learning opportunity for her new Year 7s...

JCoSS

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Have you got your JCoSS Prospectus?

For copies call Lara Samuels on 020 8344 2220 or email admissions@jcoss.barnet.sch.uk



The Student View

Rebecca Alter, 11, of Fortune Green is one of JCoSS's 148 first students.

Here she gives a student eye view of her first day at her new school...

My parents made the decision for me to go to JCoSS but after Mr Stowe-Lindner came to talk to my school about JCoSS I knew they had made the right choice.

This morning I woke up at 5 o'clock because I was very nervous. However, I was very excited about putting on my uniform, especially my blazer as I've never worn one before.

I got to the bus stop at 7:30 and luckily there were other children there. Although there were loads of us on the bus, the journey was very quiet because I think we were all a little bit scared.

When we arrived, everyone cheered and started laughing. The building looked so big compared to my old school. We were led into the hall but there were no chairs – I hope they get some soon [editor: they have!]. Mr Stowe-Lindner and Mrs Kaye (Year 7 Co-ordinator) welcomed us. I listened but really just wanted to explore the

building and talk to my new friends.

After assembly I went to my classroom and met my form tutor. I got my electronic identity card which I need for registration and to buy food. They also gave me a purple JCoSS memory stick which matches my uniform – cool.

Break was really good fun as I had a chance to explore. The best place was the cafeteria as they had yummy food – the Hash Browns were delicious.

I then went back to my classroom for a lesson on 'learning'. I was put into a group to make a tree of learning out of straw – ours was the best. Then we had a treasure hunt which was like a tour of the school and really fun.

Everything is new and clean and my favourite places are the cafeteria because it has multi-coloured seats and is so bright and the library because it is quiet and cosy – well quiet when I'm not there!

At lunchtime I had the best Spaghetti Bolognese and fruit salad. Everyone was chatting and I met some really nice people. Then I went outside with my friends.

In the afternoon there was a special Rosh Hashanah assembly. Then we went back to our class and planted seeds in pots, which we each took home. We have to bring them back when they have grown.

The end and best part of the day was when we all went outside and were given balloons to celebrate the opening of JCoSS. We all had to let them go at the same time – it was really cool to see

so many purple balloons in the air. At 4 o'clock our buses came to take us home. The journey was much livelier than in the morning – I wasn't nervous any more. I was excited to go home and tell my parents about my first day at secondary school. Can't wait for tomorrow.



Norwood provision launches

The Pears Special Resource Provision (PSRP), a unique facility at JCoSS catering for the individual needs of those with autistic spectrum conditions, also opened its doors to its first intake of seven students on 6 September.

Inspired and developed by Nor-

wood, the PSRP is equipped with a variety of teaching environments and therapeutic spaces, including a replica of a one-bedroom flat to help prepare older students for independent living.

Under the leadership of David Wilson, Director of the PSRP, specialist staff support students to learn alongside

their peers in the main school.

Norma Brier, Chief Executive of Norwood, said: “The PSRP allows JCoSS to provide a truly inclusive Jewish education to children of all abilities – a first in the UK – and will provide its students with the support they need to achieve their full potential.”