

**Alma Primary:
A guide
to our school
for parents and carers**



**Alma
Primary**

עולם חסד יבנה
A world built on kindness

Introduction

At Alma Primary we have created a very special learning community, which welcomes and includes families from across the Jewish community, along with families from the broader community. At Alma, much of our strength is derived from our diversity. As your children will soon be telling you, our guiding north star is to create a *world built on kindness*. We actively welcome families with a wide range of views, life experiences and personal circumstances.

A world built on kindness is not just a slogan: it's at the heart of our values. It's a series of norms and expectations that impact not just on our children and staff, but everyone associated with the school, including our governors and you, our parents. To create the community our values demand, we have certain expectations of how each of our families will consider the needs and feelings of each other. It's about creating an inclusive, warm and welcoming community.

This handbook has been written to ensure that parents and other carers understand our school systems and ethos, so that families can enjoy and grow through all the opportunities Alma has to offer.

This handbook contains practical information about school life that you will use regularly, so please keep it handy so that you can refer to it through the year.

If you have any questions about this handbook, or believe there is information missing that should be included, please contact us at feedback@almaprimary.org. Thank you for reading.

Alma Primary
Version 1.0, Summer 2016

Some basic principles

Our Core. Our core focus is always the learning, wellbeing and happiness of children.

Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes: Alma Primary is a new and rapidly growing school. Whenever we come across an issue we haven't previously considered, we find an additional way to support families, or we develop a new response as a result of circumstances, we will update this guide and notify parents.

Getting the balance right. We always try to be flexible in response to individual children and family needs. However, we also know that within schools it is important to have consistency, continuity and an even-handed approach.

It's about time: We are mindful of the pressures on all parents, particularly working parents. For this reason, we always try to give at least three weeks' notice of trips, performances and other out-of-routine activities, however at times this isn't possible. We also work hard to strike the right balance in terms of how much information we provide to parents, aware that some parents would always like more information and others tell us that we communicate with you too much. We therefore highlight key points where possible.

Less Paper: We try to be paperless wherever possible, or at least to use less paper, as we believe that this helps the environment and makes life easier for most parents. Where you would prefer to receive paper copies of information, please let us know.

Language: there is a Glossary at the back of this Handbook that explains the terms used within this Handbook

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1. About our school

a. What are the school's contact details?

Our main phone number is 020 8343 9988.

The main school email address is office@almaprimary.org

You can email each class directly using Reception@almaprimary.org for the reception class and YearX@almaprimary.org, replacing **X** with the number of the year group (e.g. Year 1's email is Year1@...).

Other useful email addresses are:

Joint chairs of Governors: chairs@almaprimary.org

Jewish Learning: JEd@almaprimary.org

We aim to respond to emails sent to the school office or our admin team within 48 hours, during school opening times. We do not use email during Shabbat (the Jewish Sabbath from sunset on Friday until Sunset on Saturday), and emails received after midday on Friday are unlikely to receive a response until Monday mornings.

Class teachers are generally unable to respond to emails during the school day and will normally respond to emails within 2-3 days. For more urgent matters, please email the school office.

During school holidays we typically check emails once or twice a week, and respond appropriately.

b. How is the school organised?

Alma is a one-from entry school, meaning there is one class of 30 children in each year group. The school is led by the Headteacher, Marc Shoffren, who is supported by the School Leadership Team, which consists of:

- the Assistant Heads
- the School Business Manager

- the Jewish Learning leader.

From September 2016, we will have four classes from Reception to Year 3. You can learn more about all our staff in the Meet our Staff section of our website, under the About Alma section.

c. Where can I find the forms and information I need?

A wide range of forms that parents need can be found in the Virtual Office, under the Alma Parents menu on the school website. These include forms to do with uniform, the lunch menu (see section 2 below), medication, absence requests (see section 3 below) and other practical issues. You can also find a range of school policies on Our Policies page of our website, under Governance. If there is something else you would like to see on our website, please let us know, via our Parents Feedback Form, which is on the school website under the Alma Parents menu.

d. What are the school term dates?

Alma Primary is a free school, which means that the Governing Body has freedom to decide term dates. We usually publish the term dates for the following academic year in January. Current term dates are available on our website, under the Parents menu.

Alma Primary is always closed for the following Jewish holidays, some of which may fall during school holiday periods:

- *Rosh HaShanah* (Jewish New Year) – 2 days
- *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) – 1 day
- *Sukkot* (Tabernacles) – 2 days
- *Shmini Atzeret/Simhat Torah* (Rejoicing of the law) – 2 days
- *Pesakh* (Passover) – 2 days at the start and 2 days at the end
- *Shavuot* (Receiving the Torah) – 2 days

The specific dates of these holidays in each year are included on the School Diary, on our school website under the Parents menu.

e. Who are the staff at Alma?

Pen portraits and details of all our staff are available on the Meet our Staff section of the school website, under the About Alma menu.

Much of the learning in each class is led by the class teacher, but children at Alma benefit from having a range of other adults working with them. These include

- an *Ivrit* (Modern Hebrew) teacher, and for some lessons an Israeli language support assistant (*shinshin*): see Ivrit lessons in section 4.
- a sports coach for one or two PE lessons each week
- a specialist teacher for Jewish learning lessons
- most classes also have a period of time each week with a member of staff who teaches a specialism, such as art or science

From time to time, as a result of training courses or illness, classes may be taught by cover teachers, many of who regularly come into Alma and are qualified teachers.

f. How does the school communicate with parents?

At Alma we try to limit the amount of paper we use and so the majority of our communication is carried out via email. A weekly news-mail is sent out to all parents on Wednesdays and individual class news-mails are sent out on Fridays. The school frequently posts photographs and reports of activities by class in the Learning Blogs, under the Learning menu on the school website.

In addition, parents can download the D6 School Communicator onto a desktop or as a mobile app to receive updates and to check recent news, events and information whenever they wish. We do our best to limit the number of emails sent to parents other than at these pre-determined times.

g. How well is the school doing?

Alma is a relatively new school, and is part of the free school programme. This means that we are independent of the local authority (although we have a good relationship with them and use them for a number of services).

Like any other school, Alma is subject to inspection by external bodies and our children take part in a range of national assessments. Alma was inspected by Ofsted (the government body responsible for checking standards in schools) in June 2015. We were also inspected by *Pikuakh*, the body mandated to inspect the faith aspects of Jewish schools under Section 48 of the Education Reform Act, in February 2015. **Both Ofsted and Pikuakh assessed the school as Good with Outstanding features.** You can find summaries and full copies of both reports on our Inspection Reports page of our website, under the Governance menu.

The Governors are responsible for monitoring the standards in the school and look at a range of information in order to inform their views. You can see more about the Governing Body and see minutes of their meetings in the Governance at Alma section of on our website.

h. How can I give feedback or have a question answered?

We like to hear feedback from parents and to answer questions. If you have general comments about a school system, procedure or policy, then you can either email us at the school office, or you can use the Parents Feedback Form, on the school website under the Alma Parents menu. By default this form is anonymous, so please remember to give us your name and contact details if you would like a response.

Queries or comments about your child should always be directed to your child's class teacher. In order to help us with these conversations, please be mindful in choosing a time to talk to us: at the start of the school day class teachers generally don't have time for discussions, so if you need to let us know something urgently about your child then please tell a member of the admin team, or send them an email and they will pass on urgent messages.

Please also bear in mind that while social media can be useful for many things, it isn't the most effective way to get a response to a problem: please email us if you have a question, rather than posting this on social media sites. See section 5 for more on this.

2. Food, money, uniform and other practical matters

a. What uniform do children need to wear at Alma?

Our uniform has been designed to contribute to a positive learning environment while enabling a degree of individual choice and keeping costs low. Children can choose to wear Alma tops in one of three colours (red, navy blue or white).

The Alma Primary uniform consists of the following items:

- Logo polo top* (choice of colours, long or short sleeved)
- Logo jumper or cardigan*
- Navy tracksuit bottoms (Reception class only)
- Navy trousers/shorts (summer)
- Navy skirt/pinafore dress
- Red gingham summer dress (summer)
- Black shoes (no laces)
- Navy, red or white tights
- Red, navy or white hair clips
- Navy, red or white socks
- Book Bag or Rucksack*
- Red school cap*

PE Kit:

- PE Bag*
- Navy shorts
- Navy tracksuit bottoms
- Plain red t-shirt
- Black plimsolls/Velcro shoes

*You will need to purchase these uniform items from the school office, using an [order form](#) which you can find in the virtual office on our website. All other items can be purchased from any uniform or clothes stockist.

Kippot (head coverings)

A *kippah* (head covering) is an important aspect of Jewish practice and at Alma we expect most children to wear a *kippah* for praying, eating and engaging in Jewish learning. Our school community is made up of families from many different backgrounds and practices: whilst some children may choose to wear a *kippah* throughout the day, as in all issues of personal practice, we recognise that for some children it will not be appropriate to wear a *kippah* in school. We ask parents when children start school whether they want their child to wear a *kippah*.

Dressing Up and Non-Uniform Days

Throughout the school year we give children the opportunity to participate in various non-uniform days. These are normally in celebration of a special occasion such as World Book Day, a religious festival or to raise money for charity. There is never any expectation that parents would unnecessarily spend money in order to buy a specific item of clothing or costume for such an occasion.

Hair

We ask all children with long hair, hair below the shoulders or that falls over their face to have their hair tied well back. Hair should be tied up with accessories in the school colours. *Please check your child's head regularly for head lice.* If you find any, please inform the school, as well as checking and treating everyone in your household.

b. How can I pay for school trips and uniform items?

Where possible we try to use paperless systems. We encourage parents to use 'ParentPay', our secure online system for payments. This can be used to pay for uniform, clubs, outings etc. If you experience any problems with ParentPay please contact Jodi Rickless in our school office, for support.

c. Can I pay for school activities with a childcare voucher?

Parents can use childcare vouchers for any childcare costs incurred outside of compulsory school hours. For example, they can be used for Breakfast Club, After School Care, and After School Clubs. For clarity, they cannot be used for lunchtime clubs, music lessons or school transport. Childcare vouchers cannot be used to make a donation to the school, including Quality Contributions. If you are interested in using childcare vouchers to pay for childcare costs incurred outside of compulsory school hours, please contact the school office to confirm which vouchers we accept.

d. What are the school guidelines on food?

There are three key principles governing food at Alma: healthy, tasty and *kosher* (adhering to the Jewish laws governing food). We aim to ensure that children are given healthy food, including a good range of fresh fruit and vegetables. As well as healthy food, we ensure that all our children remain healthy in regard to food to which they may be allergic: this means that there are no nuts in the food we serve and we make special provision for children with different dietary needs.

Some people in our community observe dietary restrictions for religious, health, allergy or other reasons. Our ethos means we need people to feel they can attend a communal event without inadvertently eating something they would find unacceptable or harmful to their health. This in turn means thinking of the needs of everyone who may come to an Alma event, in order to ensure that no-one feels singled out or excluded from participating.

All the food at Alma Primary is certified as *kosher*. Lunches come from a restaurant with a kashrut certificate (a certificate guaranteeing that food is *kosher*) and all other food brought into the school is checked to ensure that it is kosher too. In order to ensure openness and inclusion, food served at Alma will adhere to the following key principles:

- Non-kosher meat, fish or shellfish products are not brought onto the school premises, or served to groups at school and school related events, such as APA activities;
- Prepared food for school-organised and APA-organised communal activities are cooked under the supervision of a recognised kashrut authority, or by an individual or organisation holding a valid kashrut certificate;
- Food can be prepared on site both for educational purposes (e.g. as part of a lesson) and for communal activities, use fresh and/or kosher ingredients and with the prior approval of the Headteacher or School Business Manager;
- Food brought into school must carry a recognised *heksher* (stamp of kashrut) or be listed on www.kosher.org.uk , and must be unopened;
- Grape Juice or wine used for any school events (e.g. *Kabbalat Shabbat*) must be supervised as kosher;
- Any food brought onto the school site, or for off-site events involving children must not contain nuts or peanuts;
- Any food prepared off site by individuals for their own consumption, can only be eaten in the school staff room;
- Where possible food prepared for communal consumption will also allow for dietary needs and preferences, including awareness of allergies and gluten intolerance, so no child goes hungry or feels marginalised because they cannot eat the food on offer or are at risk. In order to enable this to happen, parents are encouraged to let the school know of dietary needs;
- We will actively seek to respond to other ethical concerns including fair trade and organic, to the extent that these are compatible with the requirements of kashrut.

We make every effort to ensure that school events for children and activities held off site, including school trips and residential activities conform to these expectations.

If you are buying food to send into school, it is easy to find food that is kosher in any mainstream supermarket: many well-known UK brands of food of all types are kosher. You can easily find out which foods are kosher at the website: <http://www.kosher.org.uk/koshersearch>, where you can search by brand or food type.

e. How much do school lunches cost?

Currently the government pays the costs of school lunches for children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes. The cost of lunches for children in Year 3 and above is £2.50 per meal. Lunches include fresh vegetables and fruit, as well as meat, fish and vegetarian options.

f. What if my child needs medicine at school?

If your child needs medication for a short space of time then you will need to complete our 'medicines in school' form on the Virtual Office section of the website, under the parents menu, and bring it to the school office, together with the medication. We understand the difficulties facing working parents and aim to offer support, however in most circumstances we can only administer medication that a medical practitioner has prescribed and which your child needs four times a day. Medication, including creams, must not be kept in children's school bags.

If your child has a condition that requires on-going medication or may need emergency medical action at any time, you will be required to complete an Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) together with a member of the admin team and/or SEN team. To do this, please contact us and book a time to meet with us so that we can go through your child's needs.

g. How do we minimise head lice?

Head lice are a common problem in primary school children, including those with clean and short hair. We ask all parents to take appropriate steps to reduce the likely spread of head lice. *Please check your child's*

head regularly for head lice. If you find any, please inform the school, as well as checking and treating everyone in your household. Whenever the school is informed of a case of head lice, we inform the rest of that class immediately. We also require all children with long hair to keep it tied up.

h. How do children celebrate birthdays at Alma?

To celebrate birthdays at Alma we invite children to share treats with their class, which will need to conform to the guidance regarding food (see 2d above). The admin team will contact you in advance of your child's birthday to ask you whether you would like to provide treats and if so, would you prefer to bring in a treat for the class, or purchase treats via ParentPay for the school to provide on your behalf.

Any food that you send into Alma Primary to give out to other children to mark a birthday has to be:

1. Kosher with a *heksher* (stamp to show it is kosher), in its original sealed packaging. The only exception to this is plain fruit and veg, which should be prepared in school.
2. *Parev* (dairy free and non meat)
3. Nut free

In order to avoid complications, we ask that you check with us in advance, before sending in any food to distribute to children.

In addition, we invite children to donate a book to their class to celebrate their birthday. Parents can send in a book of their choosing, or else we are able to offer a range of books to your child, which they can choose and which can be paid for via ParentPay. We welcome parents and family members to *Kabbalat Shabbat* (Welcoming the Sabbath) on the Friday following your child's birthday, where any birthday book will be presented. In the event that your child's birthday falls out of term time, we will still make sure that a birthday celebration goes ahead at a suitable time.

i. What are Quality Contributions and how are they used?

Quality Contributions are a voluntary contribution that we ask all parents at Alma to make in order to support the high quality education we provide. Alma's primary funding is provided by the Government on a per-child, per-year basis. The additional income we receive from Quality Contributions allows us to enhance our budget significantly, taking steps that create exceptional learning experiences for all children at Alma. These include:

- A higher ratio of staff to pupils, benefiting every pupil, every day;
- Staff capacity to run 1:1 and small group work for children, including those who need extra support or need to be stretched;
- Splitting classes on a daily basis so that half the class can focus on reading and writing, while the other half learn *Ivrit* (Hebrew);
- The extensive use of iPads and other technology within every aspect of the curriculum;
- Extensive professional development opportunities for staff;
- Investing in learning materials, books and other resources that will make the children's learning as stimulating and engaging as possible;
- Subsidising school trips so that more are possible in every school year;
- Providing security guards beyond the level allowed for under the government subsidy.

All donations are entirely voluntary and no individual child is treated differently as a result of the choices their parents make. We offer options to make payment as manageable as possible and we encourage all parents to pay something, possibly at a lower level. However, if the total income received from Quality Contributions falls, changes to the level and quality of provision will occur that will affect all children.

3. Timings, transport, attendance and absence

a. What are the times of the school day?

In the mornings we have a 'drop-off window' from 8:20am to 8:40am. Children can arrive at school between these times and should go straight to their class. On Monday to Thursday, children in Reception and Key stage 1 (Years 1 and 2) finish school at 3:20pm and children in Years 3 and above (Key Stage 2) finish school at 3:40pm. On Fridays during the winter months, we finish early in order to allow children and families to get home in time for the start of Shabbat. This means that in November and December we close on Fridays at 1:30pm and in January and February we close at 2pm. For the rest of the year, the whole school finishes at 3:20pm on Fridays.

b. What is the structure of the school day?

Children at Alma normally begin the day with *t'filla* (collective prayer). Classes have a mid-morning break at 10:20am, a lunchtime eat and play period from 12 to 1pm and, on most days, an afternoon break. Broad timetables for each school year are available for each school year on the Our Curriculum page, under the Learning menu.

We provide mid-morning fruit and vegetables for children from Reception to Year 2. Children in Year 3 and above are welcome to bring a fresh fruit or vegetable snack to school to eat during the morning break.

c. What should I do if my child is late to school?

Please make every effort to ensure your child arrives at school by 8:40am every day. The beginning of the school day is an important time, when key ideas are often introduced. In the event that your child arrives after 9am, the class register will have already been taken so you

will need to take your child to the school office and enter them into the late book.

If your child regularly comes late to school, then we will contact you to explore how we can work together to address this.

d. What should I do if I am late collecting my child?

We expect parents to make every effort to collect children on time, but we do understand that transportation problems mean that occasionally, parents or carers can be a few minutes late. If you are unable to collect your child/ren at the end of the school day, please try to arrange for another parent or a family member to collect them and call the school office to let us know. If lateness becomes a regular issue for a family, then we will meet you to look at how to address this.

e. What should I do if my child is ill?

We like to have our children in school, provided they are well, as much as possible, however when children have communicable illnesses, it is important that they do not spread these to others.

Children who have vomited or have diarrhoea will need to be kept away from school for a period of **48hrs in which there has been no reoccurrence of the sickness**. If there is medical evidence to confirm that the sickness results from a non-communicable disease or from something which is unlikely to spread to others, this can be reduced to 24 hours. *In order to bring your child back to school before a period of 48 hours with no recurrence, please email the office to explain the medical advice you have been given. We will then aim to respond as quickly as possible to verify whether it is possible to bring your child back to school earlier.* Please wait to receive this confirmation from us before you bring your child back to school.

f. What should I do if my child has a medical appointment?

For any appointment which means your child will miss half a day or more, please complete our leave of absence request form, available in the Virtual Office on the school website. You can also ask for a paper copy in the school office.

For upcoming medical appointments that are less than half a day (e.g. coming to school an hour late or leaving an hour early), please email the school office to let us know.

g. What should I do if I want to take my child out of school for other reasons?

We have a legal duty to follow up on absences and requests for any planned absences must be made to the school office. To do this, please complete an absence request form which can be found in the Virtual Office section of our website. We are usually unable to authorise absences which are term time holidays, however there are a few, very limited exceptions to this. In order to help us make an appropriate decision in regard to absence, we ask you to supply evidence (such as an invitation etc.) when requesting a leave of absence for a family event or similar occasion.

In the event that we are unable to grant permission for a requested absence and you still choose to take your child out of school, then the current guidance from the government requires us to notify the local authority about this. The local authority (whichever local authority you live in) may choose to impose a fixed penalty notice which is currently set at £60, per child, per parent for each absence. This means that two parents who take their three children out of school could be fined £360. We have no control over the decision of the local authority to impose a fine and any money collected does not go to Alma Primary.

h. What extended school and extra-curricular activities (clubs) are available?

We currently offer both a breakfast club and afterschool care facilities. Breakfast club runs from 7:40am to 8:20am and afterschool care runs from 3:20pm to 5:30pm: both facilities currently run Monday to Thursday only.

When children are in Reception, we restrict the number of additional breakfast and afterschool care sessions they can book until they are settled in and we are confident they can manage a very long day. Please talk to the school office if you would like to know more about this.

In addition to our breakfast club and afterschool care, we offer a wide range of lunchtime and after school activities for children. Information and details on costs and booking for these are sent to all parents in advance of the start of term. Reception children are invited to join these clubs from the spring term.

We also offer a range of individual music lessons, including violin, guitar and piano for children from Year 1 and above. For more information on these, please contact the school office.

i. What are the arrangements for the start and end of the day?

We are currently developing our drop-off and pick-up arrangements in advance of the move to our new site, which we will be sent out to parents and included in the next version of this Handbook.

j. Are children allowed to bring scooters to school?

We strongly encourage children to walk and ride either bikes or scooters to school. For this reason, our new site will have a scooter and bike park area and we hope to run a 'park and stride' system which would suit scooters well.

k. What is the closest public transport to the school site?

Our new site in Whetstone is close to Totteridge and Whetstone station and is well served by public transport. A full transport guide including bus routes, tube and train details, is available on the school website and from the office, as part of our School Travel Plan.

4. Learning at Alma Primary

a. What do we teach children at Alma?

Alma has an innovative, unique curriculum, which we have developed to ensure that children have rich and vibrant learning experiences. You can find more about our educational philosophy in the Our Learning Philosophy section of our website, in the Learning menu.

Class teaching carefully blends key skills areas such as mathematics, English, technology, *Ivrit* (modern Hebrew) and PE, with a wider knowledge base and understanding of science, Jewish studies, history, geography and the arts. Learning is based on exploration, creation, investigation and discussion.

The curriculum is structured around a “topic” for each half-term, including such diverse areas as medicine, London, heroes, time and social change. Each year the class choose their own topic for the final half of the summer term. You can find a guide to each year group’s topics in the Our Curriculum section of our website, under Learning.

The school frequently posts photographs and reports of activities in our Learning Blogs, under the Learning section of the school website.

b. What support do we offer for Special Educational Needs?

Inclusion is at the centre of our aims and values. We believe that inclusion is successful when attitudes are welcoming, positive and empathetic, as well as when there is sufficient and appropriate support for the child, the parents and the school, ensuring the establishment of good links. Our priority is to ensure that every child with special educational needs has access to the right support and to this end we will work hard to maintain links with parents and health, social care and education professionals.

You can find out more about our support for Special Educational Needs and our school office in the SEN page of our website, which is under the Learning menu.

c. How do teachers assess children's progress?

Our approach to assessment (measuring children's progress and attainment) focuses on understanding, knowledge and skills. Progress is monitored through on-going assessment, giving each child both the challenge and the support that they need in order to maximise their learning. Children take part in a full range of national assessments, including the end of Key Stage assessments (SATs) taken in Year 2 and Year 6, and the national phonics check taken at the end of Year 1. We also evaluate children against a range of national expectations under the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile at the end of the Reception.

We also build in self-assessment strategies, so that as they grow older, children are able to accurately evaluate their own progress.

d. When can I meet my child's teacher?

We hold Learning Journey meetings twice a year with families to discuss the progress children are making. We encourage parents to bring their children to these meetings. These meetings are an opportunity to share children's achievements, to discuss any problems a child is facing and to agree specific next steps for each child to focus on. We also offer a time for parents to talk to their child's *Ivrit* teacher at Learning Journey meetings.

At the end of the year, we sent parents a celebration of each child's learning, which includes some of their key successes.

If you have any concerns about your child's learning, social development or wellbeing, we encourage you to book an appointment to talk to your child's class teacher at any time. To do

this, please e-mail your child's class teacher (yearX@almaprimary.org) or the school office to request an appointment.

Please note that if you book an appointment before or after school and you would like your child to be in breakfast club or after school care so that you can talk without them, then you will need to contact the office in order to book and organise payment for this.

e. What is the school's approach to home learning?

At Alma we give children exciting learning experiences within school, but there are also good opportunities for children to learn outside of school, either with parental support or through independent learning activities.

Since children spend a great deal of time in school, we need to be sure that the tasks and activities we ask them to do at home have some clear benefit. Academic research into primary school homework shows that overall, homework doesn't make a significant difference to children's progress; , however, there are some ways in which learning activities done at home can help children's broader learning.

We send home learning tasks each week, which include creative projects, activities that help to develop identity, and opportunities to develop practical skills which support children in gaining confidence. Some tasks are 'required', i.e. we expect all children to do these, and others that are optional, which means that parents can choose whether a child does these. Required activities are explained to the class and a copy of the activity is put in the child's home learning folder. Optional tasks are explained in our weekly class news-mails. We aim to clarify the task by including the following elements in the explanation: Purpose, expectation, timing, support, resources, reminders, due date and feedback. For more on this, see our full home learning guidance document in the Resources for Parents page of our website, under the Learning menu.

f. What is the school's approach to behaviour?

At Alma Primary we believe that good behaviour underpins teaching and learning and children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour. At Alma Primary children are expected to:

- Show respect to other people and their property, through words and actions;
- Use hands or words to help, not to harm;
- Accept responsibility for the things they do;
- Try to do their best;
- Listen to feedback

The following actions and attitudes are ways in which children can support the behaviour for learning code:

- Respond politely and respectfully to all members of staff;
- Actively listen to others;
- Disagree with others respectfully;
- Be helpful and kind to everyone;
- Appreciate and celebrate differences;
- Understand their feelings and the feelings of those around them
- Ask for help or tell an adult if they are unhappy.

When problems occur, we work with children and their families to address these and may seek support from outside agencies, if we judge this to be necessary.

Extreme cases of behaviour will be dealt with by internal exclusion, where pupils are placed in isolation from the rest of the school under the direct supervision of the Headteacher. In the event that a child's behaviour is unmanageable in school, he/she will be temporarily excluded as a last resort. More on behaviour can be found in the Behaviour for Learning Policy under the Our Policies section of our website, which is under the Governance menu.

g. What approach does the school have to reading books?

Developing skill in reading, along with a love of books, is one of the most important aspects of primary education. In order to facilitate this, we have invested in a high quality library, which children have the opportunity to visit on a weekly basis. As well as library books, children are given two 'home readers' to take home each week. These are books that reflect each child's reading ability. Over the holidays we often send home additional home readers, in order to support children during the break from school routine.

In addition to printed books, the school also invests in 'RM Books', a digital library that offers unlimited access to children's books for parents to access from tablets or computers. Details for this system can be found in the Resources for Parents page, in the Learning menu of our website.

h. What performances take place at Alma?

We believe that performance is an important element of developing children's communication skills, confidence and self-esteem. In order to support children in this important area, there are class assemblies and plays that take place at regular intervals during the year. Parents are invited to attend class performances, which normally take place at the end of the school day, and we usually send parents notification of these approximately three weeks before the performance date.

During the seven years that children are at Alma Primary, we aim to ensure that each child is given a significant role in a play or assembly, so that every child has opportunities to develop their skills. We appreciate the important role that parents play in supporting children to learn lines, prepare costumes or props and to engage in their class performance, regardless of the part they are playing.

We offer children opportunities to learn a variety of musical instruments at Alma Primary and know that child's musical

development is linked to the opportunities they have to perform. In order to give each child an individual opportunity to shine, we encourage children who have had more than two terms of musical tuition at Alma to give a mini-recital to the rest of the school at one of our regular assemblies, on a Tuesday afternoon or as part of *Kabbalat Shabbat* on a Friday afternoon. We invite parents (or another relative) to join us for the assembly to enjoy their child's musical development. We also encourage performances by other school groups and individuals.

i. How do we teach about other beliefs?

Alma has a strong commitment to ensuring all our children learn to respect the beliefs and practices of others, by gaining a good understanding of other beliefs and through meeting people of different religious traditions. We regularly invite speakers from other religions and belief systems to talk to our children and to ensure that they understand religious celebrations and key events in the calendar that have a spiritual significance.

j. How do we teach *Ivrit* (modern Hebrew)?

At Alma Primary we teach *Ivrit*, modern Hebrew, as a contemporary, living language. In Reception we use *Chalav u'Dvash*, an early years programme that introduces children to everyday oral Hebrew, engaging their senses and using a range of songs and games to bring the language to life in the classroom. We start to introduce reading and writing once children have a good grasp of the oral language, using *Tal Am*, an *Ivrit* language programme developed in Canada.

On Mondays to Thursdays, our classes are split into two groups so that half the class learn *Ivrit* with a teacher and language support assistant for approximately 45 minutes, while the other half of the class stay with their class teacher and the class LSA to work on phonics and writing. These groups then swap over. This system allows each child to focus on language acquisition in both English and Hebrew with a teacher to

child ratio of 1:8 for around 3 hours a week. We are able to do this because of the support provided by parents through Quality Contributions (see section 2, above).

k. How do we teach about Israel?

We teach about Israel in an open and honest manner, celebrating the significant achievements of Israeli culture and science, but also recognising the difficulties and complexities of contemporary Israeli society.

Israel is part of the daily experience for Alma students. Through songs, prayers, discussion of current events, maps, pictures, and books, we foster our pupils' love and appreciation of Israel and their knowledge of the country. As our children move into Key Stage 2, we also begin to explore the history of the modern Jewish state, Israeli culture, literature and science. We talk about the country's importance for many religions and the ways in which we can be a part of Israel's ongoing development.

5. Sports, school visits and activities

a. What outings and visits do children do?

We believe that outings are an important part of children's learning, so we organise regular trips to places of interest including museums and art galleries, places to explore the natural world and to see performances at theatres or concert halls. As with all activities, we aim to give at least three weeks' notice of outings.

Visits so far have included the Little Angel Marionette Museum, London Zoo, the Bank of England and JW3, the London Jewish community centre. Our curriculum plans for future years include taking children to the British Museum, the Wallace Collection and the Globe Theatre.

We use public transport where possible to take children to venues in London since this is safer, more economical, better for the environment and helps children to develop the skills needed to use public transport.

b. How do we keep children safe on trips?

Children's safety and wellbeing is always at the centre of our planning for off-site activities. Teachers conduct pre-visit checks, make careful assessments of the likely risks involved in trips and put in place measures to address any concerns they identify.

c. What residential activities do children at Alma take part in?

When children are in Year 4 and above we will be organising residential trips for each class. These will include a *shabbaton* (Friday night sleepover) and more extended trips to other parts of the UK.

d. What contributions are parents asked to make for trips?

In order to provide a balance of activities and costs, we aim to limit spending on non-residential outings to no more than £20 per child per

term. This usually means that each class does one major trip per term, however on occasion we find ways to enable a class to do two or more trips in a term for the same budget.

The contribution we ask parents to make to trips covers the costs of transportation and entrance to venues. Where there are additional charges for sessions or presentations, we often subsidise these from the Quality Contributions parents make.

e. What sport and PE activities are offered at Alma Primary?

We aim to help children develop a positive relationship to exercise and good habits that will prepare them for living healthily. Our children have two Physical Education (PE) lessons each week, one of which is normally taught by a specialist coach and one led by the class teacher. These lessons cover a range of areas including ball skills, athletics and dance.

In addition to regular PE lessons, we offer a range of sports activities and clubs, some of which run during lunchtimes and some after school. These include multi sports, karate, dance and football. We are always happy to offer additional sports, so please let us know if you have a suggestion for a club.

6. School Life and Ethos

a. What is our school ethos?

The ethos, values and principles of the school were established by the school's founders in 2012-2013. The name of the school reflects our ethos of Jewish ethics, spirituality, commitment to academic study and engagement with the world. You can see how all this is encompassed within the word Alma at the 'About our Name' page of our website, under the About Alma menu.

The school motto is based on a phrase that comes from Psalm 89: "*Olam Chesed Yibane*", which we translate as "A world built on kindness".

The four key pillars of the school ethos are:

- Excellence in teaching and learning;
- Inclusivity and diversity;
- Identity and values;
- Nurturing each child to achieve their best.

You can find out more about the school ethos and our values in the About our Ethos page of our website, under the About Alma menu.

b. What does it mean to create "a world built on kindness" in our school?

Creating a 'world built on kindness' is central to the approach we take with children in understanding our actions and addressing challenges.

We hope that being part of the Alma community is also an invitation for parents into a world built on kindness. This means, among other things, ensuring that everyone in the school community feels included. It means accepting and considering of the needs of others, whether it is people with disabilities, those in same-sex relationships, those from different faiths and beliefs, or those who have different ways of being Jewish.

It means carefully considering the kinds of food to serve at events which members of the school community are invited to, and ensuring that activities at communal events do not conflict with the religious beliefs or dietary needs of Alma families, in order to avoid excluding families.

Equally, for parent events and social occasions, it means being sensitive to the different financial situations people face, and avoid making arrangements that will routinely embarrass or exclude some families.

Above all, it means thinking carefully about all aspects of our activities, not only thinking about what works for the majority, but ensuring that events enable all members of our school community to participate.

Our school community is made up of many different types of family including single parent families, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) families, as well as families from across the Jewish community and those from other religions and families who have no religious practice. We aim to ensure that all families feel equally included and welcomed within our community.

In order to do this, in our communication with parents we do not make assumptions about who children live with and we talk with children about the differences in their family make up, including grandparents, single parents and LGBT parents.

When families are invited to religious activities, we aim to ensure that explanations are available so that everyone can understand and participate. We also strive to ensure that the range of experiences across the year include activities which reflect the diversity of the school community.

c. How do we promote mutual respect?

We promote relationships between staff and parents that are founded on a respect. We strive to treat parents with respect at all times, acknowledging their insight and understanding of their children. In return, we expect parents to treat all staff with courtesy and respect at all times. When difficulties or misunderstandings arise, we ask parents to approach them calmly with an assumption that constructive dialogue can resolve most issues.

d. When are families welcome to join us?

We welcome parents and family members to join us for a range of activities throughout the year. Each Friday we invite parents to join us on Fridays for *Kabbalat Shabbat* (welcoming in the Sabbath) and throughout the year there are a range of events, including class assemblies and whole school celebrations, to which parents are invited. Some activities are targeted at specific groups, such as events for grandparents, which we run from time to time. Information about the events and links to our on-line sign-ups are sent out to parents and put on the D6 School communicator (see communication, below).

e. What *tzedakah* (giving to those in need) do we do?

One of the ways we help children to understand the idea of 'a world built on kindness' is to support those in need. Throughout the year we ask families to support a range of social action activities, including collecting money, food, clothes and other items. We give to a range of national and international causes which include charities who work in the UK, Israel and other countries. Some of the causes we support have a specifically Jewish focus, but many have a broader outlook.

Children at Alma are frequently involved in selecting the causes we collect for and we always try to help children understand the importance of *tzedakah* and social action, by showing them pictures and talking to them about the impact of their actions.

f. How can you volunteer?

Part of what makes Alma different is that we want parents to be genuinely engaged with the school and be able to play an active part in contributing to its success and development. Firstly, there are some volunteering roles that we ask all parents to play their part in, particularly the rota for security, drive & drop and park & pick up

There are also many opportunities to or to help out on a regular basis, for example:

- being a volunteer librarian;
- listening to children read;
- helping to coordinate our systems and activities;
- supporting the admin team with office-based work.

Finally, you can volunteer to do something on a once-off basis, such as:

- accompanying your child's class on an outing;
- being the class "mystery reader" one week.

We also have opportunities for family members to become involved in the governance of the school (see section 6j below).

If you are interested in taking up any of these volunteering opportunities, please sign up at [Getting Involved](#) link on the school website, under Governance, or contact the school office.

g. Observance of *Shabbat* (the Sabbath)

As with Kashrut, there is a broad spectrum of practice relating to Shabbat. The key aim of this guidance is to establish a school community and an environment in which consideration is given to individual beliefs and practices in order to ensure inclusion and harmony.

- Alma Primary will not organise events which would require families, staff or governors to use transportation to travel on Shabbat. For

this reason any school organised events (such as a *shabbaton* (residential over the Sabbath), or other residential activity, will start a minimum of 1 hour before the locally established start of *Shabbat* and end no earlier than 30 minutes after the locally agreed conclusion of *Shabbat*. The same condition will also apply to any activity which occurs over a 'Yom Tov' (a festival that is designated as a holy day);

- Any school activities which occur during *Shabbat* and/or *haggim* will be organised and conducted in way that allows full inclusion of everyone in the school community. In order to do this we ensure that any activities preclude the use of mechanical or electrical devices and that there are no shared activities which use musical instruments;
- Preparation of food during any school organised residential will similarly avoid the need for cooking of food during *Shabbat* and ensure that any food cooked for a residential that occurs over *Shabbat/haggim* is prepared well in advance of the start of *Shabbat* or the festival, and is kept warm in an appropriate manner. If food is prepared off-site, then it will need to be delivered to the school/site in advance of the start of *Shabbat/Hag*;
- In order to ensure that all members of the community are included in all school activities, we will ensure that no 'Alma-related business', are organised or conducted during *Shabbat*, from Friday candle-lighting time until an hour after sundown on Saturday. Candle-lighting and *Havdallah* times for London (and other cities) throughout the year are available at www.hebcal.com/shabbat/?city=GB-London. Similarly, Governors and staff are asked to avoid any Alma related electronic communication or similar work during *Shabbat* and/or *haggim*;
- We ask that families make every effort to avoid holding events that are intended for a group of children or for the whole of a child's class on Saturdays or major festivals. Whilst we recognise these dates are often more convenient because of the availability of venues etc, such activities can be very excluding to families whose

celebration of *Shabbat* and festivals mean their child cannot take part in such activities. For these children being regularly excluded from parties and celebrations can be deeply upsetting.

- Consideration should also extend to considering the food served at birthday parties, since this too can create dilemmas for families. If in doubt, we ask families to clearly explain to other parents what food they will be serving and check if this will cause any problems for them and their children.

If difficulties arise, we encourage all involved to start from a principle of respect and make effort to engage in a dialogue in order to resolve the problem.

h. What is the school's guidance on using social media?

Many parents and other family members have social networking accounts, which they may use to celebrate children's achievements, share important moments, or discuss or share views about school issues. We have a set of guidelines about using social media that aim to protect children and also maintain good relationships between parents and the school.

Social networks provide a quick and easy way to express frustrations or concerns, however when it comes to school matters, it is rarely appropriate to do so. If you want to give us feedback or raise concerns, then these are best done either directly to a member of staff, via the feedback form on the school website or via the formal Complaint process (see below).

The following is a (non-exhaustive) list of general guidance on the uses of social networking sites. ***In order to help us, please avoid the following:***

- Do not name children or post any comments about children who attend Alma Primary. In particular never post negative or offensive comments about any child at our school or another;

- Do not post negative/offensive comments about specific staff or make defamatory statements about the school or staff at the school;
- Do not make allegations or complaints about children, staff, volunteers or Governors at Alma Primary;
- Do not use social media to generate or encourage negative attitudes towards a child or adult at the school;
- Do not post comments which are derogatory about any social group on a school forum (including shared parent sites etc.);
- Do not post comments that threaten violence, even if intended as a joke.

In order to avoid upset or distress to other parents and/or members of staff, please consider whether something is appropriate before posting any information on social networking sites about the school, its staff, its pupils or anyone else associated with Alma Primary.

In particular please consider whether a comment you post is likely to cause some form of emotional or reputational harm to individuals and/or the school, which would not be justified, particularly if the school has not had a chance to investigate or respond to a complaint.

i. What is the Alma School Council?

The School Council is a group made up of representatives from each class from Year 1 upwards, who meet on a fortnightly basis. We will be electing our first School Council during the 2016 autumn term and will be working with the children to establish the procedures and processes for this group.

j. What does the Governing Body do?

Alma Primary's Governing Body, together with the Headteacher, has responsibility for strategic planning and policy making within the school. The group of 18 Governors are appointed for 4 years and they work in partnership with the school staff to promote high standards of

educational achievement at the school. Governors are not delegates of any constituent groups, regardless of how they were appointed; they all have a duty to ensure that the views of all the stakeholders of the school, including children, parents, staff and the local community are considered carefully in debate and decision-making.

The full Governing Body meets twice each term, with one 'formal' meeting at which minutes are taken and one seminar at which topics are discussed in greater depth, more informally. Most matters are delegated to the four permanent sub-committees. Governors sit on these sub-committees, along with co-opted committee members, and report back to the Governing Body each term. Each committee has a name in both English and Hebrew:

- **Learning-Limmudim** – responsible for curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment and standards;
- **Children-Yeladim** – responsible for admissions, SEN, Safeguarding, e-safety, diversity;
- **Operations-Tiful** – responsible for premises, Health and Safety, budget and financial management, security;
- **People-Anashim** – responsible for staffing and volunteering.

You can read more about our Governors in the 'Governance' section of our website, including their individual biographies and details of what expertise and skills they bring. On our website you will also find a register of business interests, which all of our Governors have signed, and the minutes of the formal Governing Body meetings. If you want to get involved in our governance, you can let us know by using the Getting Involved link on our website, under the Governance menu.

k. What does the Alma Parents' Alliance do?

The Alma Parents' Alliance (APA) is a group of the school's parents who support the work of the school, teachers and children to bring our school community closer together in whatever ways we can. The APA

is made up of parents from across the school community, who are led by an executive group of a chair, secretary and treasurer. The APA organise a range of social and fundraising events and support the *tzedakah* (charitable) activities of the school. The APA is also a co-ordinating body to facilitate any Alma family, teacher or child in need of practical or emotional support in times of need.

More information about the APA is available on the Alma Parents Alliance section of the website, under the Alma Parents menu.

7. Protecting children and Other Concerns

a. What should I do if I have a safeguarding concern?

We take the protection of children extremely seriously. If you are concerned about a safeguarding issue relating to a child at Alma, please book an appointment with one of the designated child protection officers, Marc Shoffren or Jodi Rickless.

b. What happens if my child is involved in an accident or an incident?

We provide a safe environment for children to learn and play, however, from time to time children do get injured at school and, where appropriate, we report on such injuries to parents. Many injuries that occur are the minor bumps and scrapes that constitute a normal part of childhood, so we will only report on an injury to parents if there is cause to warrant this. If the injury is more than a mild scrape, we explore the cause in order to determine if this was an accident or an incident.

If the cause of the injury was found to be without intention, such as a child tripping over or a collision in the playground, then this is considered to be an accident, for which we complete an accident form.

In the event that we find the cause of the injury was an intentional action by another person, then we class this as an incident and write to parents of all children involved to explain the injury and the action we have taken in regard to the perpetrator.

In both cases we send home two copies of the report form, one of which we ask to be signed and sent back to school. In the event that parents are dissatisfied with the outcome of an incident we have reported on, then they can use the form to express their concern and request further discussion.

c. What approach does the school take to digital images of children?

We know that some parents are concerned about digital images of their children appearing on websites and social media. When children join the school we ask all parents to let us know if they are happy for photos or video footage of their child to be used.

For this reason we regularly remind parents at school activities and performances to only record their own children. If we are notified that parents have taken photos of other children and put these on public sites, then we will ask them to take these down as soon as possible.

d. How do we give feedback, raise a concern or make a complaint?

In many cases, a private and confidential discussion with a teacher or a member of the leadership team will be an effective way to solve an issue. There is also a Feedback Form on the website (under Alma Parents) that you can use at your convenience to raise an issue or ask a question, either by name or anonymously.

In a more serious situation, the school's formal complaints process offers a way to address a problem. You can find the Complaint form in the Virtual Office, under Alma Parents on the school website. We always deal with concerns raised by parents in a professional, cooperative and appropriate manner.

e. Can we bring four legged friends or other pets to school?

We are fond of animals, however some of our children can be very scared of dogs (even the friendly ones). Please do not bring dogs or other pets to school. If you need to bring them with when you come to collect children, please let us know in advance and ensure that they are tied up outside the railings and not close to the school gates.

f. Can children bring mobile phones to school?

We expect that children will be brought to school and collected by an adult or responsible person, so there is no reason for children to bring personal devices, including mobile phones, to school. For this reason, and because of the safeguarding issues as well as the practical problems that often come as a result of having electronic devices in school, children are not allowed to bring mobile phones or other electronic devices to school. The only exception to this occurs when children are in the final term of Year 6, when we encourage children to come to school with a mobile phone, as part of the child's preparation for transition to secondary school.

9. Glossary

General Terms

Parents: throughout this guide we use the term 'parents' to include any adults with parental responsibility, including adoptive parents, carers, step-parents etc.

School: we use the terms 'Alma', 'Alma Primary' and 'the school' to refer to any activities of Alma Primary, its governance, committees and groups.

Term: we use 'term' to refer to activities or events run during the 3 term times of the year, as defined annually by the school calendar on our website. Except when we talk about terms of use

Jewish Terms

Please note: when the letter H is underlined (as in Hag below), the sound is pronounced as "ch" in the Scottish "Loch".

Hag/Haggim: the Hebrew term for Jewish festivals, some of which broadly conform to the guidance on Shabbat (below).

Shabbat: the Sabbath, which for many Jews starts an hour before sundown on Friday and ends at sunset on Saturday night. Shabbat is often seen as a period of rest so during this time some Jews will avoid doing work and may not use mechanical or electronic devices.

Yom Tov: A special category of festivals in which some Jews avoid working etc.

Hol HaMoed: the intermediate days between the start and end of the festivals of Sukkot and Pesakh.

Tzedakah: Giving justly, the process of supporting others through financial or other means.

Kabbalat Shabbat: the welcoming in the Sabbath celebration on Friday afternoons

Educational Terms

EYFS: The Early Years Foundation Stage, a term used by the government for the preschool, nursery and reception classes.

Key Stage: A government term for the different periods of educational development.

LSA: Learning Support Assistant, sometimes referred to as a Teaching Assistant (TA). A member of staff whose supports teachers and children.

SATs: Statutory assessments, currently carried out at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 measuring children's progress in maths, reading and writing.

SEN: Special Educational Needs, a term used to describe children who have identified learning needs.

SENCo: Special Educational Needs Coordinator, the person responsible for leading on the provision of support and intervention for children with identified educational needs.