



Becoming BM at New London

Introduction

We are excited to be welcoming you into the BM programme at NLS!

It is our aim that our two-year programme will give our BM students a sense of ownership over the incredible tradition they are inheriting, and the tools to live a Jewish life as they grow. We want them to feel they are achieving something phenomenal. We will offer opportunities to feel part of the community, volunteer, and even serve in leadership roles.

Yoav Oved takes primary responsibility for organisation of the BMs. This includes setting dates and content of what happens 'on the day', helping to find the right tutor, and administration of the BM programme.

Rabbi Natasha Mann is responsible for Shabbat learning and special events, outlined below. Year 7&8 will be learning together in the 2025-2026 academic year. When there are BM of students in the Cheder, the BM class meets on a Shabbat morning (usually); otherwise, they meet on Sundays with the Cheder. The class also meets on some selected Sundays for Tefillin Breakfasts, some selected Shabbatot without a BM, and for other social events.

Parents are invited to a meeting, in the summer term, to be introduced to the programme. We may also ask for parental support in planning and catering events along the way, to build an enjoyable and meaningful programme.

The New London BM Programme

Here are the key elements of the programme:

The Year 7&8 learning sessions take place every week of the Cheder term, either on Shabbatot (when there is a Cheder BM celebration) or on Sunday mornings. This gives us an opportunity to celebrate one another's BMs and get used to the services, without asking for the students to come in twice on a weekend. Rabbi Natasha will be providing a list of dates for the year. This is subject to very minor changes which will be communicated via email and the WhatsApp groups. Please put these dates into your diary as soon as possible.

We also keep up with the parents through the WhatsApp group for your child's birth year and will post reminders of dates. If you are not already in the appropriate group, please contact Rabbi Natasha.

Our curriculum for the BM group runs over two years. The curriculum is aimed at developing and deepening the students' relationships with their own beliefs and what it means to be Jewish adults in the modern world. We also typically find time to talk about mature aspects of Jewish life such as encountering antisemitism and learning about the Holocaust. We endeavour to relay prior to a lesson that it will be on such a subject in case parents want to do any preparation.

Alongside our ongoing curriculum, we also meet roughly once a term for Tefillin Breakfast and intergenerational learning. On those dates, the BM students come to the earlier (adult) service on a Sunday morning to learn how to put on tefillin, and then parents and children enjoy breakfast and a session of learning with one of the rabbis.

At Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we run special services that are supported by the NLS teens. These are not children's services; they are services for those who want a bit more explanation and exploration around the service. These are run by Rabbi Natasha in the Kiddush Hall on the first day of Rosh Hashanah and on Yom Kippur. The BM cohort are now an appropriate age for this service, and we hope to see them there.

If BMs are unable to attend sessions, they will miss much valuable learning and group bonding. We hope families will make this a priority. If you feel you cannot meet all or sufficient requirements of the programme, please make an appointment to discuss this with Rabbi Jeremy.

Hebrew Reading

The BM cohort will continue to participate in Hebrew learning when at the Cheder on Sundays. Children graduating from the Cheder will have been taught to read Hebrew. If you are new to our education provision and your BM-aged child has not learnt Hebrew elsewhere, please be in touch with us at the very earliest opportunity so we can provide timely individual support. Please speak to Yoav so that we can ensure all students can read Hebrew before starting the BM Programme. We are currently looking into running a late summer crash course introduction to Hebrew reading.

Tuition

Maftir (the last section of the Torah portion) and Haftarah tutoring should be arranged outside of BM group learning. We supply BM tutors from within the community. We understand that reading Maftir and Haftarah will not be the right choice for everyone and are happy to look at other options to ensure the BM journey is properly tailored to what is best for the student with the right level of challenge and achievement.

Tuition fees are arranged on a commercial basis between the tutor and the family. Parents concerned about affording tuition fees should contact Rabbi Jeremy in confidence; no child will be denied tuition on the basis of money.

BM students also work on a D'var Torah (mini-sermon) with one of the Rabbis. You will be contacted two or three months before the day to arrange meetings to prepare this important piece of the curriculum.

There will be two rehearsals before the big day. One of those rehearsals will be with Yoav, which can be mid-week at your convenience. The final rehearsal will take place on Friday, at or around 17:00. This is to be confirmed with the cantorial lead of that Shabbat (David or Yoav).

Timing

We recommend that both boys and girls should celebrate their BM at 13 years old. In cases where girls and their families wish to celebrate Bat Mitzvah at 12 years old, we will support this decision and work to make participation in the BM programme fit with this desire on an individual basis.

Attendance at services

Students who regularly attend on Shabbat morning develop a very good sense of what is expected of them on their big day; they develop a familiarity with the prayer service, and, in particular, those elements of the services they might wish to lead on their BM. Regular attendance makes the BM journey much more relevant, and it is also important that you and they feel a part of the community.

Tz'dakah

We see working on a charitable / social action projects as a key factor in becoming a Jewish adult. Charitable options include The Separated Child Foundation (<https://separatedchild.org>), the NLS Asylum Seekers Drop In, and the Masorti Special Needs BM Programme in Israel (<http://www.masorti.org/>). Families may also choose to focus on their own charitable causes.

Celebrate Your Simchah with a Gift

In order to allow the Synagogue to function sustainably, we rely on donations for 25% of our annual income. We ask all families celebrating a BM to make a donation to New London as a way of marking this meaningful rite of passage.

Our suggested donation is £1,300, though we understand that for some families this will not be feasible and that a smaller donation will be more appropriate. Equally, you may feel that you want to express your gratitude to the Synagogue through a higher level of gift.

We will be in touch following your family's celebration to ask you to arrange the donation. Thank you in advance.

Practical Information for Kiddush

BM families usually sponsor the community Kiddush in celebration. We are grateful to donations to the Kiddush Fund. For a basic Shabbat Kiddush of up to 70 people, the minimum donation to the Kiddush Fund would be £350. This can of course go up depending on what you would like to order and the number of expected guests.

We have a specific kosher caterer that we work with for Kiddush (Daniel's Bakery). We do not use external caterers. Please contact the office to discuss any Kiddush details (office@newlondon.org.uk).

Full Participation in the BM Programme

We are working to achieve a BM programme that includes:

1. On the day:
 - a. Parental blessing and BM donning their new tallit before the Torah service
 - b. Being called to the Torah for an aliyah (blessings over Torah reading)
 - c. Chanting from the Torah, usually the Maftir (final, short section)
 - d. Chanting the Haftarah and its blessings
 - e. Sharing a short D'var Torah (sermonette) with the community
 - f. Potentially leading parts of the service
2. During the two-year programme:
 - a. Regular learning with the BM class
 - b. Regular Shabbat morning attendance and attendance at other BMs
 - c. Attendance at Tefillin Breakfast and other learning/social events
 - d. Undertaking a personal Tz'dakah project

Where families are unable or unwilling to meet these standards, we will work on an individual basis with the students, exercising discretion as appropriate.

What Happens Afterwards?

All students are encouraged to complete the two-year programme even if their BM falls before the end of that period. We give graduates from the BM programme opportunities to further their Jewish education. We hope the programme will feed into these formal and informal programmes:

- **Cheder Madrichim Opportunities:** We believe that the best way for our BMs to take ownership of their Jewish identities is for them to become Jewish leaders at NLS. Our new BMs can become a part of the teaching staff at the Cheder, working with the teachers to educate and inspire their younger peers. This is a paid role.
- **GCSE Jewish Studies:** We hope to run this two-year course for 13-15-year-olds at NLS when we have sufficient numbers.
- **NOAM Club and Noam Summer Camp:** Noam is the jewel of the Masorti movement and Noam camps have an outstanding reputation. We will ensure that you receive information in good time.
- **Returning to the Bimah:** It is always lovely to call up our teenagers again! By the time the BM is complete, saying the aliyah blessings will be a breeze. We would also love to have them back on the bimah to read their Haftarah again or lead any parts of the service they have learned. We typically have NLS teens reading from Torah in the Hall Service on Rosh Hashanah and introducing chapters of the megillah during Purim.
- **Teen Events:** We run several events for the teens throughout the year, including the annual Friday night murder mystery dinner, adventures on the town (which have included scavenger hunts, climbing, and axe throwing), sleepovers, and the High Holy Day Hall Services.

Questions answered

How much does the student and his/her family have to do?

Our hope and expectation is that all members will **commit to the two-year programme**, support their children in their journey by accompanying them to **services on a regular basis**, and help the work of the tutors by **practising with their children** to ensure they make progress with their preparation. That said, we will continue to welcome families who are unable to meet these aspirations.

How can the family participate in the service on the day?

The order of service and opportunities for participation will be discussed with Rabbi Jeremy a few weeks before the day. We offer three aliyot (call-ups) on the day, along with the BM aliyah, which can be communicated with us closer to the day. There are also a selection of other honours to offer to family and friends.

Who Can Have a BM at New London Synagogue?

BMs at New London are for those who are halakhically Jewish and are members of the community. To discuss any matters relating to halakhic status, please contact either of the Rabbis.

Can we sponsor the Kiddush?

Of course you can! There are a range of options; please contact the office for more details.

Summary of the Time Commitment

Initial meeting to explain programme.

Cheder programme on Sundays (when there is no BM) and Shabbatot (when there is a BM).

Tefillin Breakfast (8.45am start) once a term.

Shabbat meals and outings as organised.

The calendar for the coming academic year will be sent out in advance.

Who to contact

In the first instance you should contact Yoav Oved to discuss setting a date and finding a tutor – yoav@newlondon.org.uk.

Other contacts:

Rabbi Jeremy Gordon – rabbi.jeremy@newlondon.org.uk – 07973 713 193

Rabbi Natasha Mann – rabbi.natasha@newlondon.org.uk – 07498 231 920

Head Teacher Gabriella Spencer-Hope – chederhead@newlondon.org.uk

Office (re Kiddush or call-ups) – office@newlondon.org.uk



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