

SCHOOLS ADMISSIONS CODE

The decision of the Supreme Court in the JFS case has forced all Jewish schools to revise their admission arrangements.

These webpages are designed to assist all parents and carers wishing to apply to schools under the religious authority of the Office of the Chief Rabbi (OCR). It may be useful for others as well.

Contact details and links to all US and OCR schools are listed. You will need to contact each school for more information.

FAQs

1. What does the Supreme Court Judgment mean in practice?

The Supreme Court held that orthodox Jewish schools can no longer give priority to halachically Jewish children.

The School Admissions Code allows the religious authority of schools with a religious character (sometimes called faith schools) to 'provide guidance for the admission authorities of schools of their faith that sets out what objective processes and criteria may be used to establish whether a child is a member of, or whether they practise, the faith' (para 2.52). The Chief Rabbi has recommended that schools under his religious authority should develop tests of Jewish religious practice (download below) which can be used for this purpose. It is by no means satisfactory, but is the best option in order to remain compliant with the School Admissions Code. The Chief Rabbi has provided guidance that the tests be based on the three basic pillars of Judaism: Torah, Avodah and Gemilut Chasadim, which loosely translate to Jewish education, prayer and voluntary community service

2. So what do I have to do?

When applying to a Jewish school or nursery under the religious authority of the Office of the Chief Rabbi, you will need to have completed a Certificate of Religious Practice (CRP). A copy must be sent direct to the school or nursery together with relevant supporting documents and the school's Supplementary Information Form (SIF). You should keep a copy of the CRP and its relevant supporting documents for future use.

If you wish to gain points by United Synagogue Shabbat morning service attendance, you must first register at the synagogue you and / or the child will be attending. Check the synagogue's website for registration details and its office opening hours. This should be undertaken online or by email wherever possible. Please note: registration cannot be undertaken on a Shabbat or Yomtov.

The recording of synagogue Shabbat morning service attendance starts on 1st April 2010 for Essex United Synagogues and on 8th May 2010 for other United Synagogues.

3. I am a member of an orthodox synagogue, so why do I have to complete a CRP?

In order to be a member of a synagogue, one has to pay a fee and for orthodox synagogue membership one has to be halachically Jewish. Following the Supreme Court judgment, we have been advised that synagogue membership cannot be used as an admission criterion.

4. Does this apply to all schools and nurseries under the religious authority of the Office of the Chief Rabbi?

Almost all: both voluntary aided (state) and independent schools and independent nurseries are affected by the Supreme Court ruling and must comply with its requirements.

5. Have all schools adopted the same CRP?

No: but all Greater London OCR secondary schools are using the same form and most of the primary schools and nurseries (their form is slightly different from the secondary school form), so there will be less need to fill in multiple forms.

6. Where can I get these CRP forms?

They will be available from the schools' offices and/or websites and the schools' Local Authority.

7. The CRP has three sections. What are they?

All to be undertaken over a specific period of time, they are:

1. Synagogue Shabbat service attendance,
2. Jewish educational activities,
3. Voluntary Jewish communal, charitable or welfare activities.

The main difference is that at secondary level, only the participation of the child is to be recorded, whereas at nursery and primary, it is the child and/or its parent/guardian.

8. My personal circumstances prevent me from attending synagogue Shabbat services enough times to gain sufficient points. What can I do?

You can gain sufficient points without synagogue Shabbat service attendance.

9. Can parents or children just check into a synagogue and then leave straight away?

Absolutely not. Points will not be awarded for simply arriving at synagogue, recording attendance and leaving straight away. Synagogues are required to decline to record attendance on that basis.

10. I cannot attend Jewish adult education courses in my local synagogue. What can I do?

There are lots of educational opportunities organised by most United Synagogues and non-members are welcome to attend. There are also many other opportunities elsewhere. A non-exhaustive list is included on this site and will be updated as new information becomes available, but you should always check with your local United Synagogue first.

11. I am not sure about volunteering. What does it cover?

There is a non exhaustive list of volunteering opportunities on this website but, once again, your local United Synagogue should be your first port of call. In a United Synagogue, you should contact the synagogue's Administrator or Project Chesed at the US (020 8343 5688) who will put you in touch with your synagogue's Care Coordinator

12. How can I volunteer as I cannot spend time away from home?

There are many volunteering opportunities which can be carried out from home, eg by phone, on the internet, etc. Almost all United Synagogue communities have Care Coordinators, as do many other communities. Call Project Chesed at the US (020 8343 5688) who will put you in touch.

13. In order to undertake voluntary work, will I need a Criminal Records Bureau check?

In some instances it is necessary to have a CRB, particularly if you intend to volunteer to work with children or vulnerable adults. It will be best for you to ask the organisation with which you volunteer.

14. Will my child receive preferential treatment if we achieve more than the minimum number of points required for school admission?

Absolutely not. The CRP is not an examination, but a method of establishing whether the child/family practises the Jewish faith: that's all.

15. I've still got questions about the CRP, which I don't think you have answered. What can I do?

Please contact the school to which you are applying.