

# PARENT HANDBOOK



## CHABAD'S ALEF BET PRESCHOOL



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# About Our School \_\_\_\_\_



## **Our Mission**

Alef Bet's mission is to create an emotionally safe learning environment where children feel empowered to explore ideas, develop skills and an understanding of self; and to instill in these children a sense of responsibility toward others and toward making an impact on the world around them.

## **Our Philosophy**

Our preschool aims to foster a lifelong quest and love for learning, while building a strong foundation for social, emotional, academic, physical and spiritual growth. Our educators are specialists in early childhood development and our classrooms and play areas are warm and bright. The spaces “work” to provide an opportunity for learning and growing. Our staff encourages the children to navigate socially and build upon those skills. The teachers inspire the students to use words to express themselves by modeling conflict-resolution and facilitating the development of empathy and concern for others.

We believe that the most important goals of our school are to enhance each child's self-esteem, to respect each child as an individual, to foster social-emotional growth, to create a sense of community and family, and to appreciate the beauty of our Jewish heritage and traditions. Activities and projects in the classroom teach the children about the importance of each holiday and the connection to Judaism they provide.

# Curriculum

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Our curriculum is shaped by:

- Jewish values
- An appreciation and respect for the child's natural stage of development
- The recognition that early childhood is an opportunity for children to develop positive habits, behaviors and attitudes
- The belief that each child possesses a unique inner voice that needs to be heard and encouraged by those around them

What makes Alef Bet so special is our belief that each child is a precious gift. As this magical time of early childhood is honored and respected, the children feel safe to express themselves, knowing that their voices will be heard.





## Curriculum *continued*



### Intellectual

We encourage the children to develop self-motivation, active investigational skills through questioning, exploring and observing, and the thinking and problem-solving abilities needed to thrive in a world of challenge and competition. Children are surrounded with books, literacy experiences and exposure to the alphabet to prepare them for pre-reading and the reading that follows.

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### Social

We encourage each child to work and play with others, to develop language communication skills, to respect the rights and privacy of their peers and most of all to develop feelings of kindness, courtesy, helpfulness and acceptance.

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### Physical

Children are provided constant opportunities to develop their small and large muscle skills, to develop finger strength and dexterity, and arm-eye and body coordination. Class-centered activities focus on small motor skills, while our outdoor play area and our indoor gym give the children the opportunity to work on large motor skills.



## Emotional

Children are encouraged to develop a positive self-concept, to understand the difference between right and wrong and to develop responsibility. They are encouraged to recognize that people are different and to be accepting of others. We help them learn and practice appropriate ways to respond to others and to express their feelings constructively.

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## Integrating Tradition and Jewish Pride

Judaism is considered our foundation and is seamlessly interwoven into our program. Using a multi-sensory approach, Jewish holidays and values come alive in the classrooms, cultivating a wonderful sense of Jewish identity in our students. Our preschoolers share a joyful sense of Judaism and deepen their knowledge and love for traditions and mitzvot.

## Specials

Special programming is provided throughout the school year and you will be notified prior to each event. The children are generally visited each year by the local fire department, the local police department, the public library, dental hygienist and a petting zoo. Additionally, every week the children have one or two “specials.” This year, the regular specials will include Music with Zev, Amazing Athletes, Pop-Up Parsha and Back to Nature (gardening). Changes and updates may happen during the year.



# Arrival & Dismissal

## Drop-Off & Pickup Times



Except as noted on the Calendar, the regular school day is as follows:

Class	Drop-Off	Pickup
Two Day 2's	9:10-9:20	11:50-12:00
2's Half Day	9:10-9:20	12:35-12:45
3's Half Day	9:10-9:20	12:35-12:45
2's Full Day	9:10-9:20	2:50-3:00*
3's Full Day	9:10-9:20	2:50-3:00*
4's Full Day	9:10-9:20	2:50-3:00*
<b>*Friday pickup 12:50-1:00</b>		

**Please note** that there is a ten minute window for drop-off and pickup times. Please drop off or pick up before the close of that time window. Thank you for helping us run the school in an organized and timely way. We know that being on time can be very challenging when dealing with young children and we appreciate your efforts!

Our teachers need time to confer with each other, set up and prepare their classrooms in the morning so that your children will have the most wonderfully well-planned day. Therefore, please bring your child into the classroom no earlier than 9:10am, unless your child is signed up for early care. If something last-minute comes up and you need to drop off early, please check with the teacher or Rochel to see if we can make it work. We always try our best to accommodate our school families.

Arrival time is not a practical time for parents to engage in discussion with the teachers, since the teachers are greeting and caring for the children at that time. Your child's teacher will always be happy to set up a time to discuss any issues regarding your child with you at a mutually convenient time. If there is a time-sensitive issue that can't wait, please reach out to Rochel and she will make the time to speak with you.

## Curbside Drop-Off and Pickup

Parents and caregivers can either walk their child to the classroom entrance or take advantage of our curbside/parking lot drop off between 9:10 and 9:20 and between 2:50-3:00 weekdays and 12:50-1:00 Fridays. Please wait for a staff member to accompany your child into school if you choose this option.

Half day pickups other than Fridays are done at the classroom entrance please (no curbside option). If you have a need for your child to be brought to the curb, please call the office and we will do our best to accommodate you. (Baby in the car, etc.)

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## Release of Child Policy

If you plan on having your child picked up by someone who is not listed on the Dismissal Authorization Form, please be sure to contact the office via email or phone or notify Rochel or one of your child's teachers. This person may be asked for a photo ID before the child is to be released. Thank you for helping keep our children safe!

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## Security

Alef Bet Preschool has a full time armed security guard on site. We take security concerns very seriously. We constantly monitor situations that would affect the safety and security of our children and make plans accordingly. We will keep parents up-to-date when specific situations arise. We have evacuation and emergency response plans in place to best protect the children and staff in our program. We conduct regular **fire and lockdown drills**. All doors are kept locked at all times. For security reasons, the guard will ask you not to hold the door open for other individuals or to prop the door open, even for a minute. Visitors must wait to be admitted by our security guard.

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## Licensing

We are licensed by OCFS (Office of Child and Family Services), and must abide by all of their rules and regulations. If you have a question or comment regarding these guidelines, please discuss with Rochel.



# Communication

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## Communication

The teachers, office staff and Rochel are always available if you have any questions or concerns. Except in cases of emergency, and routine issues, if you need to speak with a teacher, please call the office or message on our Remini app and your child's teacher will call you at their earliest convenience.

Rochel readily gives out her cell phone number and encourages parents to feel comfortable texting or calling her about important or time-sensitive issues that cannot be dealt with by the office or the classroom teachers. Please be thoughtful that in order to make it possible for Rochel to be able to give the time needed to help with these more serious or timely issues, please avoid contacting her about things that do not fall into those categories.

If the issue isn't time sensitive, but you do want to discuss with Rochel, please email [Rochel@alefbetschool.com](mailto:Rochel@alefbetschool.com). If it is time sensitive, you can certainly text or call. Again, she doesn't want any parent to ever hesitate to call about anything upsetting, even minor, that they have experienced in connection to the school or their family.

Open communication between the director, teachers, and parents is an integral component of Alef Bet Preschool. During the orientation process (home visits and Meet and Greet), please give us your impressions of your child: personality, his or her likes, dislikes, pertinent health information, etc.



## Remini

Remini is our school app where your child has a profile and all their information is stored there. Photos are posted daily and important reminders and messages from the school or teachers are posted here. You can also use Remini to communicate with your child's teachers. The teachers typically don't use electronic devices during school other than to photograph and will respond during breaks or after hours. Again, time sensitive messages should be called in to the office. We also ask that you please be sure to share information with us that may be affecting your child's experience in school, so that we can understand and

address any special circumstances. Examples include health issues or a change at home, such as illness, Gd forbid, or even positive changes such as a family visit or a new sibling. The information you choose to share with us about your family is kept confidential. Since drop-off and pick-up times are necessarily brief and busy times for children, parents and teachers alike, and aren't conducive times for sharing such information, we encourage you to set up a personal conference time with the classroom teachers or to simply send us a message. In turn, the staff will share with you the experiences they have with your child during the day.

## Newsletters

Newsletters are sent home regularly to share with you what your child has been doing in class. Parents are invited to set up a time to come and read a book, supervise an art project, share a special skill (such as playing a musical instrument, assisting with a cooking project), to take pictures or assist in the library whenever possible. If it is not possible for parents to participate in the classroom directly, there are other activities that can be done at home that are very helpful, such as gathering recycled materials for crafts or props for the housekeeping area etc.





## Family Information

Occasionally, parents request contact information of other families to use for invitations or play dates. Your name, address, phone number or email may be given to another parent. You can decline sharing this information by letting our office staff know.

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## Weather Emergencies

In case of severe or hazardous weather, we may have to close or delay school opening hours. We typically follow the local school district decision. When the local school district announces a delay rather than a closing, we may or may not follow their lead. We notify parents of any schedule change by email and Remini as early as possible, usually by 6:30am. In the event of severe weather or other emergencies during the school day, it may be necessary to close school early. We will notify parents and guardians by phone, email and/or text to pick up their child before the designated emergency closing time. In an emergency, immediate decisions may be made. We will make every attempt to contact you, authorized family members, or specified friends. If you are going to be out of town, please notify your emergency contacts and let us know whom to contact in an emergency.

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## Absences

Please let the office know via email or the teacher via Remini if your child will be absent that day. We are always concerned about our little students and if your child is unwell, his/her classmates will call your child on the phone to wish them well. If you are away or your child is out for another reason, letting us know will be helpful so that the class doesn't make an unnecessary "Get Well" call:)

Credit for illness and/or family vacation: Every child is enrolled for the entire school year. Since most of the school's costs are fixed and do not vary according to daily attendance, the school cannot issue refunds or credits for sick days, holidays, early withdrawal or family vacations.



# Meals and Snacks

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## Hot Lunch

We create a homogeneous atmosphere by serving meals family-style, having teachers sit with the children during meals, and by encouraging conversation and positive mealtime etiquette. Our food service ensures that all children are served nutritious foods in appropriate amounts for their dietary needs. Sample menus for breakfast, lunch and afternoon snacks are available in the office. Children will be encouraged, but never forced, to try each food item.

Our school is strictly Kosher and nut free. We also put a focus on promoting healthy eating habits. Jerusalem Pizza and Mauzone Caterers of New Jersey cater all of our lunches and snacks.

- Fresh fruit and vegetables are served daily.
- Snacks are balanced with appropriate amounts of fruits, liquids and starches.
- We do not serve juice, sugary snacks or candy, with the exception of birthday cupcakes and a small amount of grape juice for Shabbat party.
- Please avoid sending snacks from home unless your child cannot eat the snacks provided by the school, in which case we ask to please refrain from sending any sugary snacks.

## Birthdays

Children love to celebrate their birthdays at school and we encourage arranging a class celebration. Please contact your child's teacher at least one week in advance so that a mutually convenient time and date can be arranged and mini cupcakes, which can be ordered through our website at least a week in advance please. This avoids issues of kashrut and allergies.

You may also choose to select something from your child's class birthday wishlist to give to the class. We want to show our children that we can also celebrate by giving to others!

Parents and/or family members are welcome to join for a 15 minute celebration in the classroom. Please reach out to your child's teachers to set up a good time to visit.





## **Clothing**

When choosing your child's school clothes, please keep in mind that easy, comfortable and washable clothing is best. Choose simple and practical clothing that is free of complicated fastenings, and easy to handle in the bathroom. Washable paints, art projects and materials can be very messy, even for those children who wear smocks. Beautiful clothing can get in the way of fun exploration! Please clearly label all of your child's clothing with his/her name. For safety purposes, children should wear sneakers or other rubber soled shoes daily. Please try your best not to send your child in flip flops, ballet slippers or the like. (We acknowledge that you may not always have a choice!)

## **Outdoor Play**

School policy is that the children play outdoors if the weather is 35° degrees and above. Please make sure to send in weather appropriate clothing (snowsuit if snowing, rain boots etc). Parents are responsible for applying sunscreen to their child prior to arrival at school please. (Other than during the summer program, when parents are asked to submit a form for sunscreen application at school.)



## **Toys from Home**

Children are often very possessive of personal toys and will not share them easily or they become very upset when lost or broken at school. We welcome stuffed or soft animals, soft dolls and blankets needed for comfort or as a sleep aid for our napping 2s. We also believe that television or movie superhero toys based on aggressive and violent stories can lead to similar behavior in the classroom and often do not promote the Jewish ideals that we teach at Alef Bet. Thank you for helping us instill values of goodness and kindness in our kids!

# Health and Safety

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## **Sick Policy**

Please do not send your child to school if they are ill. If they have a fever of 99 degrees or above, if they are vomiting, have diarrhea, or have any contagious condition (conjunctivitis etc.), they must be kept home for a minimum of 24 hours AFTER the symptoms abate (without the aid of medication).

In the event of a pandemic or the like, Gd forbid, we will work hard as we have done in the past, to be guided by common sense and calm to keep our school community safe. We follow legal guidelines while simultaneously placing great importance on keeping our children anxiety free, emotionally safe and to provide for them the most normal and consistent school environment that is possible. We at Alef Bet are dedicated to sensibly protecting the physical and emotional well-being of our young students.

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## **Medication**

Several staff members at Alef Bet are certified in CPR in case of emergency. Our staff is not permitted to dispense medication, with the exception of antihistamines for a severe allergic reaction (in the form of Children's Benadryl or child-specific EPIPEN). If your child has any allergies that may require use of an EPIPEN, please be sure to provide the medication and review its proper usage with your child's teacher.

Please be aware as well that our teachers are required by New York State Law to report suspected child abuse and/or neglect.

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## **Toilet Training**

Our teachers work with parents to assist in toilet-training. When parents feel their child is ready for toilet-training, we ask that parents begin this teaching at home. We will follow through and encourage the child while in our care (the child must be showing signs of readiness). Teachers will remain in communication with parents throughout the process to ensure consistency from home to school. Your child may try pull-ups during the process. We ask that the child be dressed in "child friendly" clothing. The best items for children to wear are shorts and pants with elastic waistbands. Please avoid tight clothing, pants with snaps and zippers, "onesies" and overalls, as these are difficult to remove quickly. Our teachers may not apply diaper rash creams or lotion without written authorization please.



# Behavior and Discipline



## Conscious Discipline

Alef Bet Preschool follows the guidelines of Conscious Discipline. Conscious Discipline is an emotional intelligence program where children learn to express their emotions, resolve problems with words, and work with others. It was developed by Dr. Becky Bailey, an author and early childhood educator. It is designed to create an environment where the motivation to behave comes from the nature of the relationships a child has with others. The best way to discipline a child is something all parents think about. What is the best way to show your child the correct way to behave, without ordering them around? How can you teach your child to behave properly because they know it's right? One of the main messages of Conscious Discipline is that when people feel loved and valued, cooperation flourishes. Whether it's used in a classroom or home environment, the goal is to help your child connect with those around them and develop caring relationships. Instead of using punishment and rewards, Conscious Discipline encourages problem-solving, cooperation, and acceptance.

In doing this, your child can learn how to problem-solve, become more accountable for their own behavior, and gain self-control. Please contact Rochel to learn more about this program.



## Biting

Biting can be a normal stage of development for young children who are teething and still developing their language skills. It is usually a temporary condition that is most common between 13 and 24 months of age. If this behavior develops into a repeated pattern that endangers other children, we may have to take action to protect the other children in our care.

Corrective action may include having the child professionally evaluated to see if therapeutic services are needed to resolve the issue. The parents may be required to hire a “shadow” at their own expense until other therapeutic services are provided in order for the child to remain in the program.

## Student Evaluations

It is the policy of the school that we reserve the right to require an evaluation of any child whom we believe is having significant difficulties functioning in the classroom. We also reserve the right to require additional support if we are unable to meet any child’s special needs in the classroom. Additional support may include occupational, physical and/or speech therapists, and/or shadows, at the parents’ own expense or by the parents arranging services through CPSE. The school may require the parents to cover additional services as needed until CPSE services are given. Please contact Rochel if you need help applying for services.







## CONTACT US

### **Alef Bet New Rochelle**

1228 North Ave  
New Rochelle, NY 10804

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**Dana Bonime, Office Manager**

[Dana@alefbetschool.com](mailto:Dana@alefbetschool.com)

Phone: 914-712-8332

### **Alef Bet Harrison**

130 Union Ave  
Harrison, NY 10528

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**Sarra Lorbert, Office Manager**

[Sarra@alefbetschool.com](mailto:Sarra@alefbetschool.com)

Phone: TBA

### **General Inquiries**

[Office@alefbetschool.com](mailto:Office@alefbetschool.com)

### **Rochel Butman, Director**

[Rochel@alefbetschool.com](mailto:Rochel@alefbetschool.com)

[WWW.ALEFBETSCHOOL.COM](http://WWW.ALEFBETSCHOOL.COM)

It is our highest priority to create the  
most wonderful early childhood journey  
for your family.

If there is anything we can do to  
enhance your experience, please let us  
know.

Thank you for being a part of the  
Alef Bet Preschool family!

