

Welcome to
Bet Torah
Nursery
School

2020-2021

60 Smith Avenue
Mt. Kisco, NY 10549
(914) 666-7595
nurseryschool@bettorah.org

****For 2020-2021, a COVID-19 addendum to this handbook has been provided to all parents. ****

Welcome to Bet Torah Nursery School

We are pleased to welcome you and your children to an exciting year at Bet Torah Nursery School. Our professional staff has created an exciting, warm and nurturing program geared toward promoting the personal growth and development of each child with a focus on play, socialization, kindergarten readiness and a strong sense of Jewish identity.

Hours of Operation

Kitah Katan	Tu/Th	9:30-11:45am
2 year olds	MWF, Tu/Th or M-Fri	9:30-11:45 am
3 and 4 year olds	Monday through Friday	9:15 am – noon

First Days of School

We strive to help each child make a gentle transition from home to school. Each child will respond differently to this separation. Some parents and children may say goodbye easily while others will find it difficult. Some children separate quickly and others need more time. All of these scenarios are normal.

A staggered separation schedule is followed for the first weeks in all 2s and Kitah Katan classrooms to allow our first-time students to gradually become accustomed to school. Children will come to school in smaller groups for gradually lengthened periods of time. 2s families will receive this schedule prior to the start of school.

Students in our 3s and 4s classes also need a period of adjustment in separation. Please allow your child's teacher to assist you in this process. Our staff will help you with any separation difficulties during your time at Bet Torah Nursery School.

Communication is Key

Please keep us informed of any changes in your child's life during the school year. A new sibling or caregiver, a death or illness in the family, or a parental trip or move may affect your child's behavior in school. When we know of these events, we are better able to be supportive of your child during these difficult times.

There are two parent conferences each year. In addition, conferences can be scheduled as the need arises with the teacher or director. Informal exchanges during arrival or dismissal are valuable, but it's difficult for staff to give you individual attention as they greet the class or supervise dismissal. If you would like to speak to

your child's teacher at any time during the year, please contact your child's teacher to set up a time.

Look for your teacher's weekly emails home to update you on the exciting activities in each class. Check your child's backpack for upcoming events flyers. *Nursery News*, the school newsletter, is sent home via e-mail along with a monthly e-mail of *News You Can Use*. More and more of our correspondence is being shared by e-mail and on the Bet Torah website. Please be sure that we have your e-mail address.

For nursery school news and updated calendar information, you can also visit the Bet Torah website at www.bettorah.org; click on the Learning/Early Childhood Education link.

Arrival and Dismissal

Classroom doors open at 9:15 am for 3s and 4s classes and at 9:30 am for 2s and Kitah Katan students. Teachers use the time before school begins for meeting and preparing lessons for the day. Please bring your child ON TIME for school. It is difficult for children to enter a room where play is already on-going. Children need time in the morning to adjust to the rhythm of the classroom.

3s and 4s classes dismiss at noon. 2s classes dismiss at 11:45 am. It is equally important that you or your caregiver are ON TIME for dismissal. Even a very short delay can worry a child. Teachers will not dismiss a child to another adult WITHOUT A WRITTEN NOTE FROM YOU IN THE MORNING.

Bet Torah Nursery School Late Pick-up Policy

Children become agitated and concerned when parents are late. Repeated late pick-ups are also problematic for staff members who are scheduled to staff an after-school program. The following Nursery School Board policy was adopted to handle this problem: After the first late pick-up, the teacher will speak to the parent. After the second late pick-up the Nursery School Director will call the parent. After the third late pick-up and thereafter, the family will be charged a late fee of \$10. In circumstances where a synagogue event has precluded parking, the director may excuse a late pick-up. Late fees are deposited in the tzedakah fund.

Playdate/Pick-Up

If your child has a playdate, or if someone other than a parent or primary caregiver is picking your child up, a note must be given to the teacher upon arrival. Alternatively, you may call the nursery school office or send an email to aportnoy@bettorah.org during the school day, indicating who will be taking your child home, **whether after regular school hours or after enrichment**. This is necessary to avoid any confusion for the teachers, **even if you have listed the person taking your child as "authorized" on the back of the registration cards.**

➡ We're Cell Phone Free

For the safety of your children and our families, please refrain from using your cell phone while you're driving or parking in our parking lot or during arrival or dismissal times. Near-miss accidents have occurred in our parking lot as parents or caregivers chat on cell phones and do not pay attention to their children in the parking lot or to driving safely. Your morning goodbyes and your afternoon greetings are important times for your children

Our Curriculum

A copy of the Bet Torah Nursery School curriculum is located in each classroom and is available for parents to peruse overnight.

Dress for Success

Comfort is key when it comes to dressing for preschool. Clothing should be easy for children to get on and off as we encourage independence in dressing and toileting. Zippers, snaps, buttons and bodysuits are difficult for children to manage quickly and easily.

Rubber sole shoes or sneakers are preferable for safety in outdoor play (no clogs, sandals or crocs, please). Please encourage your children to leave their costume clothes (capas, cowboy boots, etc.) at home. Also remember, while our art supplies are washable, it is often difficult to wash away all the exciting and inviting art materials we use each day, so dress your children accordingly.

Please remember to **label** all outerwear (boots, mittens, hats, jackets, etc.) as well as lunch boxes and other school gear. Each child will need a backpack or tote bag each day at school. **By THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL**, please be sure your child's teacher has a complete change of clothing including a sweatshirt or sweater, labeled in a large **ziplock bag** with your child's name. For children who are newly potty trained, please include 3 pairs of underpants.

For children in diapers, please keep a weekly supply of diapers in this bag and check the supply frequently. We provide wipes for changing, but we do not supply diapers. When dirty or wet clothes are sent home, please send back replacements the next day.

Toilet Training

Children do not have to be toilet trained to attend our school. Diapers are changed as needed throughout the morning. Please keep a supply of diapers in your child's

change of clothes ziplock bag or backpack if your child is not yet trained. Children visit the bathroom as part of their morning routine. Peer pressure often encourages the most resistant child to join the “parade to the potty”. We need your help in checking to make sure your child’s diaper does not need changing before you say goodbye each morning. As you can imagine, changing diapers for more than one child upon arrival is very time consuming.

Children who are potty-trained must be capable of toileting self-care.

Emergency Procedures

Two registration cards sent to all families before the start of school must be returned to school by the first day of class. Please include your cell phone numbers as well as your caregiver’s number. Please notify us if any information changes during the year. In an emergency we will contact you immediately. If we cannot reach a parent or caregiver, we will use the emergency phone numbers listed on the cards to contact the other people you have specified. Please alert these contacts so they know you have designated them to make decisions regarding your child in cases of emergency. If an emergency involves an illness or injury that requires immediate attention, we will contact your pediatrician if we cannot reach you.

Emergency Relocation Sites

In the unlikely event of an emergency where we would not be able to return to our building following an evacuation, we have arrangements with three neighboring sites to take our children there on foot until parents can pick them up. You would be notified by phone or text of our relocation site.

Health

PLEASE MAKE SURE WE HAVE INFORMATION REGARDING ANY CHILDHOOD ALLERGIES or food issues. Your child’s teacher and the director need a written explanation of all allergies. All students with allergies who require an epi pen or other medication **must have Individual Healthcare Plan and Medication Consent forms on file by the first day of school.** Please contact Amy Portnoy, Assistant Director, (aportnoy@bettorah.org) to obtain the necessary forms.

The New York State Department of Health requires that each child have a current and complete age appropriate medical examination and record of immunizations on file in our nursery school office. **Please return this form by the first day of school.**

When your child is absent due to a communicable disease (for example: chicken pox, strep, impetigo, conjunctivitis), please call us to let us know so that parents of exposed children can be notified.

It is not uncommon for children in their first years of nursery school to have frequent colds. An ill child is usually unhappy and uncomfortable at school and is contagious to others. If children are brought to school ill or become ill in school, teachers will call parents to take them home. Please keep your child home if he or she has:

- ❑ A fever or has had a fever in the previous 36 hour period
- ❑ A heavy nasal discharge from a cold
- ❑ A persistent cough
- ❑ Fussy, cranky or atypical behavior
- ❑ A bout of diarrhea or vomiting
- ❑ Reddened eyes with a discharge and/or crusty lashes

Children returning to school after an illness must be well enough to participate in all activities. We go outside to play each day except when it is raining or extremely cold. Children too sick to go outside should not be in school. Please remember to dress your child with clothing appropriate for the day's weather.

If you, your caregiver or your other child(ren) is (are) ill but your nursery school child is healthy to attend school, please be sure that your ill family members remain in the car at drop-off or pick-up. If another nursery family can bring/pick-up your healthy child to meet you or your caregiver in the parking lot, that is ideal. If that is not possible, please park in the handicap spot in the Moore Avenue lot outside the Nursery School Office and put on your car flashers. That will alert our security guard and director that you need assistance.

Call the office at 666-7595 ext. 110 so the director or a school staffer can come out to accompany your child. If you need help at pick-up, park in the Moore Avenue lot, call the office and ask if the director or school staff can walk your child to the car. Do not leave a message. Be sure you reach a Nursery School or office staff member to request assistance.

Prescription medications are not administered at school. We also do not apply topical over-the-counter diaper ointment, creams, or sunscreens.

Please use the forms at the end of this handbook or a handwritten note to inform your child's teacher when prescription medication or over-the-counter medication or lotions have been administered to your child at home. We are required by the Office of Children and Family Services to monitor children at school who have received home treatment for any reactions to medications. Help us keep your child safe.

Reminder: If your child requires any emergency medication, such as an epi pen or auto inhaler, please contact Amy Portnoy for the Individual Health Care Plan and Medication Consent forms for you and your family physician to fill out.

Behavior Management Plan

Our school strives to apply all rules consistently and appropriately to the ages of our children and their development level and abilities with any discipline used relating to the child's actions handled without prolonged delay. A child may only be disciplined by the director, teacher, substitute and/or assistant. Corporal punishment and physical restraint are prohibited and no child will be isolated in any room, space or play area where a child cannot be seen or supervised. Withholding food as punishment is prohibited and methods of interactions that punish demean or humiliate a child are also prohibited.

- Any abuse or maltreatment of a child is absolutely prohibited. We will not tolerate or condone an act of abuse or neglect by any employee or person under the program's control.
- A child may be separated briefly from a group but only long enough to gain self-control. He/she must be in view of and supervised and supported by a director, teacher substitute or assistant.
- The following acceptable guidelines will be used in our behavior management plan:
 - Children will be redirected in a conflict and given an alternate toy or activity
 - Teacher focus will be on "do" and not "don't" ex: "we walk inside" instead of "Stop running"
 - Teachers will offer choices: you can sit on the rug or take your place at the table for story time.
 - Children will be encouraged to use friendly words rather than physical acts (ex: grabbing)
 - Staff will praise positive behavior: thank you for using your words.
 - Staff will model desired behaviors for children to learn by example.
 - Program spaces will be arranged to positively impact children's behavior
 - Teachers will listen to the children, respond to their needs and keep children engaged to help prevent conflict
 - Children may also be involved in developing class rules.

Parking

The safety of your children is our primary concern. Please do not leave your car in fire lanes, in front of the doors, or in the handicapped spaces.

Shabbat and Special Celebrations

Each year we plan special Jewish holiday celebrations for our children as well as for all our families. All our classes celebrate Shabbat on Friday (or Thursday, for our T/Th 2s and Kitah Katan classes).

On Fridays, as part of our Shabbat celebration, children bring in “tzedakah” money for charity collected in a tzedakah box. Throughout the year, various charities and special projects receive our “mitzvah” (good deed) money. We help plant trees in Israel, fund and feed the Emergency Partnership Shelter for the homeless during the holidays, send Passover care packages to soldiers around the world and participate in other projects.

➡ Please note that Halloween and Valentine’s Day are not celebrated at our school. Thank you for leaving candy and costumes, as well as Valentine’s cards and gifts, at home.

Kashrut

Our Nursery School follows strict Kashrut guidelines established by the synagogue. All snacks provided by the school are kosher and nut-free.

We do not provide meals at Bet Torah Nursery School. We provide an adequate nutritious snack for children between 10:30 and 11:30 am in each classroom. A sample snack menu is posted in the Nursery School kitchen although teaching teams choose snacks and menus daily from our pantry of healthy snacks.

Snack items include: fresh fruit, raisins, applesauce, vegetable sticks such as celery and carrots and other items grown in our garden, as well as yogurt, cheese, whole wheat pita and cream cheese, bagels and spreads, saltine and whole grain crackers, graham crackers, and whole grain cereals like cheerios. Water is our primary beverage although 1% milk and apple juice are also available.

On Fridays, all classes share challah and grape juice and Shabbat families may send in a special snack for the class. All items must be nut-free and marked OU kosher. Families are encouraged to send healthy snacks.

All food products that you send to your child’s classroom must be nut-free and clearly marked with a kosher (OU) symbol or purchased from synagogue-approved establishments, such as The Pastry Corner in Mt. Kisco (**no home baked treats please.**) All fruit must be cut in our dairy kosher kitchen. All enrichment lunches must be “dairy” (no meat) and may not contain any peanut or nut products. Please leave any candy out of your child’s lunch.

➡ School Food Allergy Policy

When sending in a special snack for Shabbat or a treat for a special birthday, please check the packages to be sure **no peanut or nut products or derivatives** are used in the manufacturing process, and that the product is not manufactured in a facility that also produces products with nuts. We maintain this policy for the health and safety of our children who have nut allergies. Most supermarkets now carry nut-free mini-cupcakes marketed as “school safe”. Please check the packaging to be sure that they are marked kosher.

➡ **Dunkin’ Donuts is not an accepted birthday snack due to the presence of nuts in their baking pans and prep kitchens. Some Entenmann’s cakes and donuts, however, are nut free.**

Enrichment for 3s and 4s

The enrichment program for 2020-2021 has not been finalized, as of July 2020.

Enrichment classes from noon to 1:30 or 2:30 pm are offered for three and four year olds and begin after the start of the school year. Children must be potty-trained and capable of self-care in toileting in order to participate in the enrichment program. Children participating in this program bring a dairy, nut-free lunch.

If your child has a food allergy, please affix a permanent note to his/her lunchbox indicating the allergen.

Amy Portnoy, our Assistant Director, coordinates our after-school program.

In addition to our professional staff, we are fortunate to welcome Rabbi Aaron Brusso and Cantor Randy Herman into our classes, and to our weekly Shabbat Sing school-wide assembly, to enhance our Shabbat and holiday celebrations, as well as provide a preschool perspective on Jewish culture, prayer, and observance. Children also enjoy movement and music and other visits from specialists bringing special programs to our school.

Napping Policy

As per our school license, we are required to offer all children appropriate rest and quiet periods that are responsive to individual and group needs. While we do not hold a formal nap time daily, when appropriate, children will be offered the opportunity to sit quietly or lie down to rest on individual mats. Mats are provided by the school and sanitized. Staff provide supervision that is in licensing compliance for teacher to child ratios. Supervised quiet activities are made available to children who require some quiet time but not necessarily a rest time.

Concierge Service (we don't provide any 😊)

Please do not bring your child early and ask your child's teacher to "watch" them until class begins. Teacher preparation time is short each morning. It's not possible for staff to prepare for the day while they are "watching" your children.

Please do not ask teachers to deliver birthday presents, Bar/Bat Mitzvah invitations, birthday party invitations and other items to children's backpacks or to other parents. Your children cannot carry packages from class to after school classes, and staff cannot assume this responsibility.

Toys From Home

Please leave your child's toys or precious items - which may cause sharing difficulties or a crisis if lost - at home. TOY GUNS, WEAPONS, MONEY, ACTION FIGURES, and JEWELRY are never appropriate in school. Please leave these items at home (or in the car). A transitional object, something from home which eases separation in the early days of school is fine, as long as it can fit in a child's backpack.

Bet Torah Nursery School Parents Association

The Bet Torah Nursery School Parents Association is comprised of parent representatives from each of the Nursery School's classes. The goal of this parent group is to provide a sense of community within our School, further enriching the entire family's nursery school experience. This is achieved by:

- Encouraging parents to get to know each other in informal settings, such as class teas, family events, and our annual fall party.
- Encouraging and providing different avenues for parental involvement in various holiday and seasonal projects and events.
- Supporting and assisting teachers with special school-wide programs and various "Teacher Appreciation" projects.
- Encouraging families to celebrate Shabbat at home and in school by coordinating a weekly challah delivery, Gan Shabbat and Shabbatini Young Family services and a Havdalah in Pajamas pizza party.

Lost and Found Items

Any items found at school are turned into the Nursery School or Synagogue main office. Please label everything from gloves to hats, boots, coats and sweaters. We will make every effort possible to reunite owners with lost items of clothing.

School Closing

The Bet Torah Nursery School often follows the Bedford School district closings and delays with regard to inclement weather. When these schools are closed due to weather conditions, we are usually closed. "Like" us on Facebook to get the earliest announcement regarding school closings or delays. If your e-mail is on file on our parent listserv, you will receive an e-mail by 7:30 am announcing school closings due to weather conditions. On bad weather days, you may also call the school voice mail number at 666-7595, extension 110, to hear a recorded announcement if school is closed.

Child Abuse and Maltreatment Safety Plan

All staff are fingerprinted and screened by the Statewide Central Registry to help assure the safety of our children. Staff also receive training every two years in Prevention of Child Abuse and Maltreatment and a second training in the Prevention and Identification of Brain Injuries, including Abusive Head Trauma. All staff are Mandated Reporters, obligated to report suspected cases of child abuse or maltreatment.

When a child is reported to the Statewide Central Registry, the following actions are taken in regards to any staff or volunteer who might be the subject of a child abuse or maltreatment report involving a child in attendance in our program:

- Steps are taken to keep the child and all children in the program from further harm
- Medical attention is obtained if appropriate
- Any staff or volunteer or other person who is the subject of a child abuse or maltreatment will be dismissed or suspended.
- Any person who is the subject of a report will be under increased supervision
- Instruction and/or remedial counseling will be provided to a person who is the subject of a report
- Appropriate disciplinary action, provision of appropriate training and/or increased supervision of staff and/or volunteers will be provided pertinent to the prevention and remediation of child abuse and maltreatment.

Medication at Home

Child's Name: _____

Date: _____

My child has been given the following medicine(s) prior to school today:

Medicine

Reason

Parent Signature: _____

Topical Ointments, Creams, and Lotions Applied at Home

***Note that we do not apply sunscreen ointment, creams or lotions to children at school.**

Child's Name: _____

Date: _____

My child has been given the following topical ointment(s), cream(s), and/or lotion(s) prior to school today:

<u>Topical Ointment/Cream/Lotion</u>	<u>Reason</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Parent Signature: _____