



PARENT CHARTER

Introduction

The Phyllis Jowell Jewish Day School (PJJDs) is named to memorialize Phyllis Jowell, a very special *Aishet Chayil*, generous of spirit and giving in all ways. Phyllis was truly a woman of valour, who strongly supported Torah learning and Jewish continuity during her lifetime. She lived her life by the motto of *Veahavta Leraicha Kamocha*: 'love your fellow as yourself'. The essence of her life was what she selflessly did for others. Her inspiration continues to ensure young children being educated in a Torah-inspired environment.

Our Logo

Our logo is a picture of a Torah, open for all to see.

This reflects our goal of educating our children to access and apply the fundamental, timeless laws, lessons and values of our Torah to their lives in a dynamic and modern world.

Our Motto

"Torah Im Derech Eretz".

This statement is based on the teaching of Rabban Gamliel in Pirkei Avot who taught that: ***"Torah together with proper conduct."***

Our Mission

At PJJDs, we want to foster accomplishment and instil a sense of self confidence and feelings of success in each student. We believe in stimulating young minds in a way that is rewarding for the student. We believe that a student's potential is always more than appears on the surface. We strive to develop this potential through creative teaching methods, sensitivity to individual needs, and supportive relationships between teachers, students and parents. We want to ensure that students are inspired by a nurturing environment, and supported in creative learning situations by both caring teachers and parents. PJJDs works towards the development of the whole child in a warm and caring environment. Our dual curriculum, where Kodesh studies and the general curriculum combine, provide a well rounded and integrated educational offering.

Our Vision

To be an exemplary Jewish school which strives to create a deep sense of love for Torah, the Jewish people, Israel and the wider South African community, through the highest standards of integrated Torah and academic education.

Our Purpose

The purpose of PJJDs is to provide the Cape Town Jewish community with a unique education, which will:

- Promote a meaningful appreciation of Judaism;
- Cultivate a commitment to Jewish lifestyle and practice;
- Prepare students for success in the dynamic and modern world; and
- Develop our students by fostering a positive self-esteem, independence and responsibility.

To reach our vision and purpose requires commitment from parents, students and teachers and relationship that is an uninterrupted flow along the three arms of the triangular shape it assumes. This Parent Charter describes how parents contribute to the success of this relationship.

The Relationship between Parents and PJJDS

The formal relationship between parents and the staff is governed by the school's written Enrolment Agreement. In addition, PJJDS Policies and Procedures and Codes of Conduct, including this Parent Charter, also serve to regulate expectations within the parent-school relationship. When parents choose to enrol their child at PJJDS, they agree to subscribe to the ethos of PJJDS as described above, and to follow its rules and abide by its decisions. However, spontaneous trust and mutual respect are essential ingredients that underpin an effective working relationship between parents and the school.

The Role of Parents at PJJDS

Parents play an essential and positive role in the life of PJJDS. Not only are parents advocates for their children, they also support the staff and executive through extensive volunteer activities and events.

The manner in which parents conduct themselves with staff has an enormous influence on children in modelling adult working relationships and these should always be based on civility, honesty and respect.

The commitment of Parents at PJJDS

PJJDS parents commit to:

1. Promoting and supporting PJJDS's foundational value of *Torah Im Derech Eretz*.
2. Reading and supporting the PJJDS Student Code of Conduct, the Parent Charter and other relevant policies and procedures.
3. Upholding the good name of the school in all forums
4. Encouraging their children to develop strong spiritual and moral values.
5. Actively taking an interest in their children's work and progress, and this includes attending parent meetings and signing off on homework.
6. Working productively with teachers by staying informed about their child and important events in the life of PJJDS. In the same manner, they should timeously inform the teachers of any information relevant to the well-being of the child
7. Supporting a school climate of trust and respect by communicating concerns timeously, openly, appropriately and constructively to the teacher closest to the problem.
8. Listening to teachers and when necessary, holding discussions with teachers at a time and place that permit full and confidential exploration of the issues.
9. Affording teachers the opportunity to work towards a solution, which may require giving the teacher time and space to do so.
10. Recognising that teachers are trained professionals, and that a teacher's perspective may differ from those of the parents.
11. Acknowledging that teachers have multiple time commitments.
12. Being respectful of PJJDS and its management even in instances where parents may not agree with a decision made by PJJDS. Parents that lobby other parents are viewed as taking counterproductive measures and failing to act in the best interests of the school.
13. Addressing concerns or grievances, whether of an individual or collective nature, must be through direct communication with PJJDS by: - email, letter or phone call to the teacher; the relevant Head of Department; or the Principal – whichever is appropriate. Addressing such concerns or grievances to the administration office is inappropriate. Concerns or grievances with regard to financial matters must be communicated to the Principal.

Addressing Concerns or Grievances of Parents

When parent/s and teachers work together, the combination can be hugely beneficial as the parent/s have intimate knowledge of his/her/their child and, the teacher has training and experience as well as day-to-day interactions with the child.

PJJDS views any concerns or grievance that the parent/s may have as matter of significance. As such, when the parent/s have concerns or grievances, the parent/s are responsible for behaving in a fair, reasonable and considered manner in all situations related to PJJDS.

While the parent/s may not agree with every decision made by PJJDS, in most cases, the parent and PJJDS will find enough common ground to continue a mutually respectful relationship. Where the parent/s have communicated with the class teacher or subject teacher in relation to his/her/their concern or grievance about his/her/their child and feels that it should be escalated to a grievance process, the parent/s should start by initiating an informal grievance process for minor issues or miscommunications. For more serious cases, a formal grievance procedure should be initiated. The same is also applicable where the parent/s have concerns or grievances that do not specifically relate to his/her/their child. The parent/s should start with a discussion of the matter with the person closest to the cause of the concern or grievance. Only if that discussion does not resolve the matter, should the Grievance Process be initiated.

In certain circumstances it may be the Principal that initiates the Grievance Process.

THE GRIEVANCE PROCESS

Informal Grievance Process:

This process should be used by either the parent or PJJDS where there is a need for parties to discuss the issue/s at hand, with the objective of finding a mutually acceptable and amicable way forward. The issue may relate to the student and his/her actions or to the parent and his/her actions or to a member of staff and his/her actions. It is a process best suited for less serious issues. What constitutes seriousness will be determined on a case by case by the Principal.

STEP 1:

1. The aggrieved party must ask for a meeting with the other party and the Principal to discuss the issue causing concern or the grievance. It will be at the Principal's discretion whether the Campus Rabbi also attends the meeting.
2. The aggrieved party must define the problem rationally, while acknowledging the emotional dimension.
3. The parties may recommend solutions.
4. The focus of the meeting must be solution-centred, building for a maximum win-win situation.
5. The Principal will record the interview in writing and follow up with a letter to the parent summarising the key aspects of the interview and how it was agreed between the parties that the grievance or concern is to be resolved.

STEP 2:

Should the issue remain unresolved, notwithstanding the interventions suggested in Step 1, the parent/s may inform the Principal thereof or the Principal may notify the parent/s that the matter is unresolved. Where the Principal does so, she/he will write a formal letter to the parent/s. The Principal's letter should that includes the following:

1. A description of the behaviour causing unresolved issue.
2. A summary of previous conversations/meetings and the school's attempts to resolve the issue.
3. The reasons that having the issue unresolved is unacceptable from PJJDS's point.
4. The Principal shall request that the parent/s acknowledge receipt of the letter within 7 days and make an appointment with the Principal should s/he/they wish to discuss the matter further.
5. At the meeting the Principal and the parent/s may agree that the matter will not be resolved but that the concern or grievance is not sufficiently significant to end the relationship between the parties. In such cases, the parties accept this and continue the relationship notwithstanding the difference of opinion on the matter. In such cases, the matter is at an end and will not be revisited by the parties.
6. Where the Principal and parent/s meet and cannot agree on a resolution, then the parent/s may initiate a Formal Grievance Procedure.
7. In addition, should the parent/s be unresponsive or fail attend the meeting, the Principal may then inform the parent that further action against the parent/s might be taken should the issue not be resolved immediately. This action would trigger of Formal Grievance Procedure.

Formal Grievance Procedure

The Formal Grievance Procedure applies where the concern or grievance:

1. Is considered sufficiently serious that the informal grievance process is not a mechanism for resolution of the concern or grievance: or
2. Remains unresolved, or the parent is unresponsive, notwithstanding the informal grievance process;

The Principal will then initiate a Formal Hearing to address the issue. The conditions for conducting this Formal Hearing need to be strictly adhered to and are as follows:

1. The parent/s must be given reasonable notice (7-14 days) of the formal hearing.
2. The parent/s must be notified of the time and venue for the hearing in writing.
3. The parent/s must be informed of the details as to why the hearing is considered necessary, including details of the issue/s in question.
4. The parent/s must be informed that the purpose of the hearing, which is:
 - 4.1 To hear all relevant evidence concerning the matter.
 - 4.2 To reach a just and balanced conclusion.
5. The parent/s must be made aware of the fact that the outcome of the hearing may result in further action being taken against him/her/them, and that it may have consequences for the student.
6. At the conclusion of the Hearing, the Principal shall make a determination on what course of action PJJDS will take.

The decision of the Principal shall be the final decision on the matter, save where the concern or grievance arises from the actions of the Principal. In such circumstances, the Formal Hearing shall take place under the auspices of the Board of Governors. The parent/s may inform the Board of Governors of his/her/their concern or grievance and the Board of Governors shall convene the Formal Hearing. The Formal Hearing shall adhere to the conditions of conduct as detailed above, save that the Designated Board members will initiate the Hearing and make a final decision on how the matter is to be resolved in the best interests of PJJDS.

Notes about the Hearing:

The Hearing is considered to be an internal school matter. As such legal representatives will not be admitted to such hearings.

The parties understand that:

1. The purpose of the Hearing is to attempt to resolve the issue.
2. The Hearing protects the integrity of PJJDS and its operations and is not, in any way, a personal matter.
3. The Hearing shall be fair. This means that:
 - 3.1. This entitles the parent/s called to the Hearing, to question the parties involved and the statements that have been made in relation to the matter at hand. In addition, the parent/s called to the Hearing must be given a fair chance to speak and present his/her/their point of view.
 - 3.2. Similarly the teacher must be afforded the same opportunities as the parent/s with regard to presenting his/her point of view and to question statements that are made by the parent/s in respect of the matter at hand.

In most cases, the Hearing will put an end to the matter. However, in an extreme case, where an impasse may be so severe that the parent cannot remain a constructive member of the school community, both the Principal and/or parent should consider whether another school would be a better match for the family. In such cases where the breakdown in the relationship between the PJJDS and parents (or the student) is considered to be irreparable, or should PJJDS and the parents be unable to agree on a positive way forward to resolve the impasse, the Principal, at his/her sole discretion may decide that terminating the Enrolment Agreement is the only solution.