

Mosaic's Journey

In 2010 there was already a well-established and successful Jewish nursery in Wimbledon. The concept of starting a primary school in the area aligned with the nursery's experience as its guide was only a dream. At that time there was no available route to establishing a school accessible to all and funded by the government!

However the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition introduced free schools following the 2010 general election as part of the Big Society initiative. Free schools were an extension of the academy programme, and parents, teachers, charities and business could set up their own schools if they navigated the extremely demanding and competitive, application process.

This initiative offered a possible window of opportunity to the Jewish Community to propose a 'faith school for our times' a Jewish school for all Jews irrespective of their level of observance. To be designated as a faith school at least 50% of places needed to be open to all members of the wider community. This was central to the ethos and vision of the founders of Mosaic as was the importance of respecting all Jews and those of all other faiths, beliefs and none.

How did the journey begin?

Autumn 2010 - Larry Kingsley, from Kingston, arranged a meeting of people from across the Jewish community to consider whether this vision could become a reality.

- Surveys were carried out,
- Public meetings were held
- A steering group was formed
- A limited company was set up as a Trust

"A dream doesn't become a reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination and hard work." Colin Powell

Spring 2012

An application to open a maintained primary school - a free school - named South London Jewish Primary School (later changed to Mosaic after an online competition) was prepared and submitted in February 2012. Once this had been accepted, 5 key members of the steering group attended a very structured, challenging interview at the Department for Education (DFE), after which we were successfully granted permission to open Mosaic Jewish Primary School.

2012-13

We soon realised that to open in September 2013 there were mountains to climb! The late James Leek was one of a number of community supporters par excellence. James drove me around many times to look at possible sites. Our project managers from the

Education Funding Agency still recall with joy when it was finally confirmed that the DfE would purchase Hartfield House in Roehampton Lane from Wandsworth.

Whilst we awaited the completion of our permanent site at Hartfield House in Roehampton, Mosaic opened its doors to our first cohort of children in September 2013 at our temporary site, Wimbledon Synagogue. We were there until we moved to Roehampton in September 2015.

Who travelled with us?

The setting up and establishment of Mosaic has always been a community initiative. The target audience was parents /carers of young children.

To make a new school happen there needed to be volunteers with many skills and knowledge. They needed to be driven by a strong belief that Mosaic could have a distinctive identity which would bring together children across south London and from many parts of the world. There are too many people to recall here but let's look at some of those pioneering families and supporters from the pre-opening stages.

Our Founding Families

The early steering group included some of our first parents whose children moved to secondary school in 2020. They came from the Jewish community, from other faiths, and from the wider community. Some have stayed with Mosaic as the school established its path; others had to move away for work or chose to travel afar. So many of those Mosaic pioneers are still supporting the school and contributing in many ways. Yana Bruwer, the Dares, Juan Solari and family, the Kanés, the Kupfers, the Rychins. 'Apples and Honey' Wimbledon's Outstanding Jewish nursery became involved at a very early stage and provided a role model of inclusivity. The director of Apples and Honey at that time was Judith Ish-Horowicz. She contributed to developing the integrated Jewish Learning approach. Representing the more experienced generations with a range of professional and business skills, David Kélin, Judy Thwaites and myself, Shirley Lee. Mosaic could only be born as a team effort with each person using their networks and expertise to help build a school with a mission to inspire children, respect others and produce excellence. Wonderful donors from the wider communities and family trusts have supported the school along the way. Solicitors, educationalists, security experts, people in business and finance, brand consultants, accountants, politicians, local councillors, university staff, headteachers, Jewish organisations, DfE leaders, clergy from all faiths and so many others including our inspired architect Richard Parsons.

Mosaic's first headteacher, Kate Baum (2013-16) shared the vision with the governors, and a very small staff, including *Carina Fernandes, Katie Barton and *Agnieszka Nova. (*Both still teaching at Mosaic)

There have been many ups and downs. We have progressed, had setbacks, dealt with endless challenges, and experienced joy and sorrow. We consulted on and continue to discuss everything from detailed building design, whether to have a meat or milk kitchen, the name for our school, the logo, furniture colours and designs, education

philosophy, ethos and vision, safeguarding, well-being, policies, procedures, security, special needs, curriculum, assessment and progress, staffing structure, preparation for Ofsted and Pikuach. The advice came too from the local rabbis and other faith leaders and *JCDSAB, who advise cross-community Jewish Day schools, CST – The Community Security Trust, Roehampton University, PaJes – Partnership for Jewish and, although free schools are not under Local Authority (LA) control, we have always been able to seek support and guidance from Wandsworth.

We laughed together a lot and believe me in times of sorrow, we have cried together too. We are still on a journey and feel privileged that all of you are travelling with us.

In recent years new people with strengths and professional expertise have joined the staff and Governing Board. The current chair is Diana Muallem, Each member prepares for meetings and asks probing and sometimes challenging questions to ensure we are always, not only innovative but rigorous and constantly evaluative. The Governing Board (GB) comprises well established Trustees and others who have joined the Mosaic board as people have finished their term of office or moved away.

The school has a great teaching and support team who share our aspirations for all the children at MJPS. They are creative, professional, committed and mutually supportive. We have always been a team. We want every child at MJPS to seize the opportunities we offer so they gain confidence and belief that anything is possible.

We are increasingly a local community school, and although we are still a small and developing school, Mosaic offers the children many special opportunities. Some of the numerous examples can be seen on this website so do look through past news and regularly look at the website for our future plans.

When we started on the amazing journey of creating a new and different school, we knew of the challenges. However in life it's the challenges you don't know about that can be the hardest to navigate. Brexit, cost of living crises, population shift out of the area, closure of Hammersmith Bridge, delays to the new houses and redevelopment of Roehampton near the school, Covid and the huge repercussions on children's education, the impact of problems around the world and the many expectations of schools and Headteachers at a time when funding is very tight.

We believe Mosaic is a special family of people from so many different backgrounds. We are told so often how much people like the school and feel its warmth when they visit. It is still a young school and as such needs lots of support to grow, to learn how to do things even better.

Most of all Mosaic wants to give *Every Child, Every Day the opportunity to be themselves in a safe and positive environment, to develop self-confidence and a thirst for learning. These are gifts which can last a lifetime.

Shirley Lee

Founding Chair of Governors

*MJPS is an Associate member of the **ECED Academy Trust**

Can we help you?

If there is anything you cannot find or have a query, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Email: admin@mjps.org.uk

Phone: +44 (0)20 8944 8731

