

Hundreds of local schoolchildren get a taste of Jewish life

Upwards of 700 people, comprising 600+ local children plus teachers and other non-Jewish adults, were able to increase their knowledge of Judaism in an accessible and friendly environment when Bromley Reform Synagogue (BRS) hosted the Board of Deputies' *Jewish Living Experience Exhibition (JLEE)*, designed to educate non-Jews about the Jewish way of life, in January.

Over the course of two weeks, the interactive exhibition and the synagogue's own sanctuary were visited by groups from both primary and secondary schools. Topics covered included the Jewish calendar and festivals, life cycle events, Shabbat, religious and cultural dress, the Torah, kosher food and the diversity within the community. As well as reading the colourful banners, children were able to handle items such as a yad (pointer used when reading a scroll), dreidels (spinning tops used in a Chanukah game) and shofarot (rams' horns used to produce a loud call), not to mention enacting sabbath and wedding rituals.

The overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic reaction of the visitors brought many moments of delight - much needed in these troubled and troubling times - to the score or so of BRS members who had volunteered to act as guides and to answer pupils' and teachers' questions. Volunteers reported, "Pupils and teachers were all really engaged and interested..." and "Lovely visit; pupils full of questions and curiosity," while thank-you notes included, "I'd worried that children would find it too low-tech and was pleasantly surprised by how they engaged with different [topic] tables," "That was amazing - you made my weekend," and "It's been a great success. A wonderful idea well executed."

The exhibition was launched with an event featuring the community's own klezmer band. Local dignitaries and representatives of interfaith groups were welcomed by BRS's exhibition co-ordinator, Vicki Ashmore, chair, Michelle Brooks Evans, and rabbi, Laura Janner Klausner.

The Board of Deputies' two copies of this travelling exhibition are regularly hosted by organisations all over the UK, including churches, libraries, synagogues, Jewish social care organisations (for staff training), town councils, universities and teacher training centres.

NOTE: Please do not be misled by the name "Bromley Reform Synagogue". **BRS's catchment area includes South-East London and the whole of Kent** - we have members everywhere from Sevenoaks to Canterbury and Greenhithe to Gravesend, many of whom helped with the exhibition, as well as in parts of Lewisham, Greenwich, Southwark and other adjacent boroughs. **INFORMATION:** Judi Sheffrin: judishef@aol.com

Photo: Members of BRS Klezmer Group welcome visitors at the JLEE launch event. (this is also attached to the covering email as a jpg)

