

Information Guide
for
Jewish & non-Jewish
Visitors

Whitefield Hebrew Congregation





Visitor Information

We extend a warm welcome to all those visiting our synagogue.

Its most likely you will be visiting for a Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah, Wedding or other celebration (simcha).

This guide can be applied to other occasions as well.

Information Tours

Weekday Guided Tours for pre-arranged formal groups and schools can be organised, when a volunteer from the community will explain the different aspects of the synagogue.

Each request is considered individually. Please contact the Shul Office with your request.

Since the synagogue is considered a house of G-d, it is appropriate for both adults and children to wear nice clothes.

Covering your head

All men and boys must wear a Kippah (skull cap) when in the synagogue building.

Your host may have provided you with one. But if not just ask at the door; there are usually a number of spare ones available to borrow.

If you are on a Guided Tour, a Kippah will be provided.

Security

This is a necessary consideration these days, so please don't be offended if you are asked your details and the purpose of your visit when entering at the shul gates.

Arriving on Shabbat or Festivals

- Jewish people do not drive on Shabbat or most festivals
- If you are not Jewish this restriction does not apply. But please park sensitively, we'd suggest a block away from the synagogue - also be careful not to obstruct residents access.
- Similarly we do not carry... so Ladies please do not bring a Handbag, even if you're not Jewish.
- Mobile phones, Pagers and Cameras are not allowed.

When to Arrive

On Shabbat the service itself begins at 9.15am, though you will find that people do arrive progressively during the morning.

- ▷ On a regular Shabbat arriving by 10.30am should be fine.
- ▷ For a Bar Mitzvah you really want to see the Bar Mitzvah boy do his stuff, so aim to arrive and be in your seat by 10am.
- ▷ For weddings you will want to arrive well before the invitation time.

Where to Sit

Men and women occupy separate areas of the synagogue. The men's section is downstairs, the ladies section is the upstairs balcony.

A small downstairs section, with its own internal entrance, is available for ladies who cannot use the stairs.

NB at weddings Women will sit downstairs to one side, whilst the men sit opposite.

At a Simcha (eg. bar mitzvah) there will be a sign indicating which side the family will be sitting on.

Children in the Synagogue

Non-Jewish parents of children invited to the service are welcome to come into the synagogue and stay with them. Remember that men and women sit separately. You are also welcome to attend the Kiddush after the service.

It is quite acceptable to drop your child a short distance from the entrance, and to pick him or her up after service in the same place.

If the child brings a mobile phone this should be switched off during the service and used discreetly afterwards to call for a pick up.

Decorum

Discreetly finding your seat and quietly following the service is the normal requirement.

Please refrain from applauding.

At a Bar Mitzvah, when the boy has completed his readings, you will hear the congregation say "Shekai'ach" (congratulations) and sweets* may be thrown down from the Ladies Gallery.

(* Sweets must be KOSHER and SOFT. Guests should use only those provided by the host.)

Mobile Phones, Cameras, Recording & other devices

On Shabbat (including Bar Mitzvahs) and Festivals these are strictly prohibited.

If you are a non-Jewish guest please turn off your phone whilst in the synagogue.



Weddings

Weddings are held on weekdays and Sundays, so restrictions on Driving and Carrying do not apply.

- Please be sensitive in your use of Cameras
- Make sure your phone is on Silent

Dress Code – Men

- Smartly dressed, usually in a suit / jacket, a tie is normal but not obligatory. Boys of 13 years and up will normally dress similarly.
- All males, including young children, will wear a Kippah (skull cap).
- Jewish men will wear a Tallit (prayer shawl). A number of spare ones are available by the central Bimah (platform).

Dress Code – Ladies

- A dress or blouse & skirt are required. Sleeves should be 3/4 length and so should the length of the skirt. The neckline should be modest and near the neck. Trousers/Coulottes are not acceptable.
- Married Jewish women should wear a hat or head scarf (optional if not Jewish).
- The same dress code applies to girls.

A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner features several thick, wavy lines in pink, yellow, blue, orange, and green. To the right of these lines, the letters "WHC" are printed in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font.

WHC

The Order of Service

If you are a guest at a Wedding or Barmitzvah your host may have already provided you with a short guide indicating the order of the service. But if not, don't be afraid to ask someone for a prayer book. Most have an English translation.

The Sabbath service is made up of four parts:

- Morning Service (Shacharit)
- Reading of the Law (The Torah and Haftarah)
- Rabbi's Sermon
- Additional Service (Musaph)

Standing

There are a number of times when the congregation is required to stand. Stand if the Ark is opened, and at other times follow the rest of the congregation.

When the Service Ends

The service finishes by approximately 12.00 noon on Shabbat.

It is nearly always followed by a short Kiddush in the shul hall... a small glass of wine/whisky with a few sweet or savoury tid-bits...

...please wait until the Rabbi has said the blessing before tucking in.

Simcha / Celebration Lunch

If you have been invited to a private luncheon in the shul hall after the service, please continue to observe synagogue etiquette.

Thank you for reading this Guide

If you have any further questions, please contact the Synagogue Office

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office@thewhc.co.uk

