

Chomesh L'Chinuch and Achisomoch Distribute £360,000 to 31 NW London Schools

At its annual distribution event last Sunday, the North-West London Chomesh L'Chinuch community initiative distributed £255,000 to 31 local Jewish schools representing over 8,086 pupils. This brings the total amount collected and distributed to local schools by Chomesh L'Chinuch to over £1,500,000.

This year's event was special, as for the first time Chomesh L'Chinuch partnered with Achisomoch, which likewise supports *chinuch* organisations. As one of its bi-annual distributions, Achisomoch distributed £105,000 at this event, bringing the total amount distributed at this event to £360,000.

The packed event was held at the Miriam Rachel Wohl Hall at Golders Green Beis Hamedrash and was attended by the Rabbanim and representatives of the *kehillos* which have adopted Chomesh L'Chinuch: Golders Green Beth Hamedrash, Hendon Adass, Beis Yisroel, Beis Shmuel, Edgware Adath and Beis Yissochor Dov. Also present were the governors, *menahalim* and delegates of the local Jewish schools.

Mosdos hachinuch continuously struggle to cover their significant annual budgets, and especially now, they find themselves facing overwhelming challenges. Significant rises in inflation and energy have impacted schools in two ways. First, by increasing school costs, both for staff and expenses, and second, making it more difficult to collect fees from parents whose disposable income has significantly diminished. Schools are anticipating their shortfall to increase over the coming year by several million pounds. Our schools need our help more than ever.

Chomesh L'Chinuch was set up as an innovative shul-based solution to this communal problem. Shul members are encouraged to prioritise and allocate one-fifth (a 'chomesh') of their *tzedakah* distributions to the local schools attended by the children of their shul. Members are not expected to increase their already generous *tzedakah* distributions, rather to allocate an appropriate percentage to local *chinuch*.

Dayan Dovid Dunner, Rav of Beis Hamedrash Beis Yisroel opened the event with a clear and powerful message to governors and school *askanim*, offering warm words of praise and encouragement for their significant contribution of their personal time for our communal institutions. Illustrating his message with a couple of pertinent anecdotes, and based on halachic sources, he pointed out that the time they spend on facilitating *limud haTorah* is considered as if it was spent immersed in Torah study itself.

Mr Eli Katz, joint founder of Chomesh L'Chinuch, explained the background of the initiative and praised the unstinting dedication of the school chairs and governors. He provided detailed statistics regarding the financial challenges faced by the local Jewish schools, highlighting the substantial shortfalls, with a current annual shortfall of over £9.8 Million.

"Based on our research, 60% of NW London donors give much less than 10% of their overall *tzedakah* to our local schools; this demonstrates that the *kehillah* can fully fund the financial shortfall in our schools, but only if it correctly prioritises the *chinuch* of our children, the foundation of our *kehillah*," highlighted Mr Katz.

To help the schools with fee collections, especially for state-aided voluntary contributions, he described several recent initiatives undertaken by local schools, which have seen significant improvements in parents' contributions, while compliant with relevant charity guidelines. "Sharing best practices and smart initiatives between our schools is a worthwhile endeavour as it helps improve the financial position of our schools," said Mr Katz.

He reiterated the rallying cry to other shuls, urging school governors and shul committee members to engage with their local shul Rav, *gabba'im* and *askanim* to encourage their shul to join the Chomesh L'Chinuch initiative to help it reach the initial goal of raising £1,000,000 per annum.

This year, Chomesh L'Chinuch were privileged to be joined by Achisomoch who likewise distributed their grants to the local schools. Achisomoch Aid Company (AAC) gives all its 'profits' back into the community and much of it is donated to schools in NW London. This year these schools received from AAC £233K with £105K distributed at this event. Across the year, AAC has supported educational organisations across the U.K. with £850K, and in total over the past five years AAC has distributed nearly £4 Million.

Yitzchok Katz, co-founder and chairman of Achisomoch and guest speaker at the event, said, "We are delighted that millions of pounds have been donated by AAC to local schools over the last years. Our partnership with Chomesh L'Chinuch helps in a major way to reduce the critical shortfall in the funding of Jewish education. We also derive much satisfaction to hear from our clients the way in which AAC makes it so easy and efficient to donate to charity."

He then announced an initiative especially for schools that will enable them to substantially increase the amount of Achisomoch grant money they receive. He added, "The recently enhanced AAC referral program (also known as split commission) has resulted in some charities earning over £10,000/year from the initiative. This programme is now available to all NW London schools."

Mr Emanuel Meyer, joint founder of Chomesh L'Chinuch, then oversaw the distribution of the grant cheques to each school. The Rabbanim of the CLC shuls were honoured with presenting the cheques to the school delegates, on behalf of their shul members.

The school governors attending the event were full of praise and gratitude for Chomesh L'Chinuch's initiative. They also pointed out how nearly every Jewish school in NW London and beyond, with its substantial *Kodesh* pro-

gramme, has a significant financial shortfall. A first-class and successful *Kodesh* curriculum for the *chinuch* of our children, necessitates fundraising from voluntary donations and the general community. In many schools these fund-raising efforts are very challenging, and significant gaps remain.

Boruch Chaim Joseph, governor, Pardes House Grammar School said, "Chomesh L'Chinuch has focused the wider *kehillah* on supporting our *mosdos hachinuch*. At Pardes House Grammar School we are extremely grateful for the funds raised through the CLC initiative."

Mr Gary Swabel, chairman of Trustees, Hasmonean High School commented, "On behalf of the pupils of Hasmonean, its staff team and the board of governors, I would like to thank Chomesh L'Chinuch for the tremendous work that it does in raising much-needed funds for our schools. They are essential in enabling Hasmonean to continue its work building the bedrock of Anglo-Jewry, ensuring the community's continuity for future generations."

Moishe Frenkel, governor, Beis Yaakov Primary School said, "BYPS would like to thank Chomesh L'Chinuch for the awareness it has raised for the importance of supporting our educational institutions. We are extremely grateful for the sizeable donation received through this initiative and we encourage the wider *kehillah* to sign up to CLC to ensure that our *mosdos* can continue to grow and flourish."

Nosson Spitzer, finance governor, Menorah Grammar School, wrote, "Chomesh L'Chinuch is an initiative that the NW London *kehillah* can be extremely proud of. The financial difficulties our schools face daily are only increasing. Chomesh L'Chinuch helps alleviate those challenges, both with their financial aid and practical guidance and advice. We encourage the Northwest London communities who have not yet joined Chomesh L'Chinuch, to do so for the sake of our children's present and future."

Mr Moshe Reifer, governor, Torah Vodaas Primary School observed, "We remain most proud to belong to a *kehillah* that recognises its communal responsibility to its schools. The founders of Chomesh L'Chinuch deserve the highest praise for their vision in establishing an initiative which has significantly benefited Torah Vodaas, among other schools. We are extremely grateful to all the donors in the respective Chomesh L'Chinuch shuls."

Mr Benzi Adler, governor, Menorah High School for Girls said, "Particularly in these trying times, the focus by Chomesh L'Chinuch on helping our local *mosdos* is particularly valued and appreciated. We therefore are grateful to the Chomesh L'Chinuch donors for a welcome financial boost in helping us to bridge our deficit and enabling us to continue to provide vital support for our students and staff."

Any local *kehillah* looking to launch the Chomesh L'Chinuch initiative is encouraged to contact Chomesh L'Chinuch at info@chinuch20.org.

