



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Department for Education

Extra support to safeguard political impartiality in schools

Brings clarity on meeting legal duties when discussing issues such as Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

New guidance to support teachers in tackling sensitive issues in the classroom in a politically impartial way is being published today ...

Teaching about political issues and the differing views on these is an essential part of the curriculum, helping pupils to form their own opinions and prepare them for later life.

The new political impartiality in schools guidance will help teachers and schools navigate issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the legacy of the British Empire or societal responses to racism in accordance with the law, which states that teachers must not promote partisan political views and should offer a balanced overview of opposing views when political issues are taught.

It follows commitments made last year to develop specific guidance on this issue.

Practical examples include ...

- teachers should not present opposing views to the fundamental underpinnings to our society, like freedom of speech and protection from violence and criminal activity;
- when teaching about racism, teachers should be clear that it has no place in our society – but should avoid advocating for specific organisations that have widely contested aims or views;
- when teaching younger students about historical figures with contested legacies, it may be advisable to focus on what these figures are most renowned for and factual information about them ...
- suggested action if it became clear, following a complaint, that during a lesson a teacher suggested to pupils that it is an objective fact that the political system of a certain country is the 'fairest' and 'best' in the world. A proportionate response may be to ask the teacher to clarify during their next lesson that this was their own personal political view.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said: I know one of the reasons many teachers feel

so passionate about the profession is the remarkable role they play in young people's lives, helping them understand more about themselves and their views of the world.

I don't want there to be any barriers – real or perceived – to teachers' vital work in this space, which is why I am reinforcing that no subject is off-limits in the classroom, as long as it is treated in an age-appropriate way, with sensitivity and respect, and without promoting contested theories as fact. ...

In the rare cases where parents or carers have concerns about teaching of politically contentious issues, the guidance will provide a plain English reference point for discussions with headteachers, helping resolve issues more quickly and easily.

The guidance makes clear that in identifying political issues, teachers should be mindful that they sometimes do not relate directly to government policy, for example a campaign for a business to boycott trade with a certain country.

It also clarifies the requirement for teachers to make a 'balanced presentation of opposing views' on political issues does not mean that pupils must be taught about an opposite view to every view which is covered, or that different views must be given equal time in teaching or that those views cannot be critically assessed. ...

The guidance does not seek to limit what schools can and should teach to children but helps them when faced with teaching contested events and navigating 'fake news' and clashing opinions and truths.

The guidance applies to all schools, including academies and independent schools, but not early years settings, 16 to 19 academies, further education colleges or universities. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/extra-support-to-safeguard-political-impartiality-in-schools>

Guidance: Political impartiality in schools

Includes:

Scenario G: A teacher finds a resource online designed to support teaching about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is a political issue. It is hosted by an external organisation which does not seem to have an obvious partisan political affiliation.

The resource appears to be helpful as it provides both factual content, and excerpts from statements by significant political figures from both sides of the conflict. However, on closer inspection, it does not provide a balanced account of the conflict. For instance, the apparently factual content includes partisan political views on both historical events in the region, presented without additional context that would make clear that these are contested views. Several quotes from political figures have been inappropriately abridged to present an inaccurate version of what was really said, and important contextual information about these quotes has been omitted.

Given that it might not be clear to pupils that the resource promotes a contested partisan political view in this way, rather than providing a balanced account of the political issue in question, it may be advisable to avoid its use. ...

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/political-impartiality-in-schools/political-impartiality-in-schools>

What you need to know about political impartiality in schools

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1050134/6.7731_DfE_Political_Impartiality_Guidance_Pamphlet_WEB_004_.pdf

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Israel

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

State of Palestine against Israel: UN Committee sets up ad hoc Conciliation Commission

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has set up an ad hoc Conciliation Commission which will offer its good offices to both the State of Palestine and Israel with a view to resolving the dispute over allegations of racial discrimination amicably. Both Israel and the State of Palestine are parties to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which allows States to complain to the Committee about alleged violations of the treaty by another State party, in accordance with Article 11.

A Conciliation Commission was set up in accordance with article 12(1) b of the Convention, and is composed of five human rights experts from the Committee. They are Verene Shepherd, Gün Kut, Pansy Tlakula, Chinsung Chung and Michał Balcerzak. The appointees are independent of any government or organization and serve in their individual capacities.

The Conciliation Commission held two online preparatory meetings on 19 January and 10 February this year, during which it adopted its Rules of Procedure and elected Gün Kut as its Chair.

The Conciliation Commission will review information and evidence, and prepare a report highlighting its findings and recommendations for the amicable solution of the dispute.

Documents concerning the case of the State of Palestine against Israel are available [online](#).

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=28129&LangID=E>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2867>

Assisted Dying Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2875>

Charities Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2877>

Education (Assemblies) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2878>

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2862>

Israel Arms Trade (Prohibition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3025>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3017>

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2900>

Nationality and Borders Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3023>

Online Safety Bill (Draft)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-online-safety-bill>

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2942>

Northern Ireland Assembly

Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/legislation/2017-2022-mandate/primary-legislation---bills-2017---2022-mandate/organ-and-tissue-donation-deemed-consent-bill/>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes tomorrow**

Marriage Law (Northern Ireland) (closing date 18 February 2022)

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/consultations/public-consultation-marriage-law>

**** closes in 8 days**

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland Draft Corporate Plan 2022-2025

(closing date 25 February 2022)

<https://www.equalityni.org/CorporatePlanConsultation#gsc.tab=0>

Human Rights Act Reform: A Modern Bill of Rights (closing date 8 March 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/human-rights-act-reform-a-modern-bill-of-rights>

Hate Crime Legislation in Northern Ireland (closing date 28 March 2022)

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-hate-crime-legislation-northern-ireland>

Trade with Israel (closing date 30 March 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/trade-with-israel-call-for-input>

CPS: Public interest guidance for suicide pact and ‘mercy killing’ type cases

(closing date 9 April 2022)

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/consultation/consultation-public-interest-guidance-suicide-pact-and-mercy-killing-type-cases-0>

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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438