



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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House of Commons Written Answers

Religion: Education

Andrew Lewer (Conservative) [9999] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential impact of the withdrawal element of the Education Act 1944 on (a) a child's education in religious education lessons and (b) the expectation that schools promote mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs; and if he will make a statement.

Robin Walker: While the department considers religious education (RE) to be an important subject, we respect parental rights and have no plans to change the right of withdrawal. Legislation gives parents the right to request withdrawing their child from all or part of a school's RE. Parents are not required to give a reason for their requests, which must be complied with. The right of withdrawal from RE does not extend to other areas of the curriculum where religious matters are spontaneously raised by pupils or arise in other subjects such as history or citizenship.

The department believes that the current position is correct, as it balances the rights of parents and of children.

It is, of course, important that schools promote mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. The Education Act 2002 requires schools to ensure the Spiritual, Moral, Social, and Cultural (SMSC) development of all their pupils. There are many opportunities within the curriculum for schools to promote SMSC, including through RE, history, and citizenship. State-funded schools are also required to actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-26/9999>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Teachers: Recruitment

Preet Kaur Gill (Labour Co-op) [9094] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate his Department has made of the percentage shortfall in the cumulative targets for

recruitment of trainee secondary teachers of (a) religious education and (b) modern foreign languages for the recruitment period 2017-18 to 2021-22, excluding the 2020-21 recruitment year.

Preet Kaur Gill (Labour Co-op) [9095] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether adjustments have been made to the target number of trainee secondary teachers being recruited for (a) modern foreign languages and (b) religious education in 2022-23 on the basis of historical recruitment levels.

Robin Walker: The attached table shows the new entrants to postgraduate Initial Teacher Training for modern foreign languages and religious education for the recruitment years from 2017/18 to 2021/22. These figures have been taken from the ITT Census publication which can be found here:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/initial-teacher-training-census/2021-22#releaseHeadlines-tables>

The table also presents the postgraduate ITT recruitment targets for those subjects as well as the percentage of the target reached in each of the recruitment years. It is not recommended to add up shortfalls to targets over several years to obtain a 'cumulative shortfall'. This would likely over-state the true recruitment shortfall over the period - a consequence of the methodology used to set the targets each year. The 2022/23 recruitment year Postgraduate Initial Teacher Training (PGITT) targets include an adjustment to build in impacts of recruitment being below targets for the two PGITT rounds prior to 2022/23 (the 2020/21 and 2021/22 recruitment year rounds).

The 2022/23 recruitment year Modern Foreign Languages (including Classics) PGITT target of 2,170 trainees includes such an adjustment due to missed targets in the two previous ITT cycles.

For Religious Education, the 2022/23 recruitment year PGITT target of 450 trainees does not include any adjustments for under-recruitment in the two previous ITT cycles. Whilst the 2021/22 recruitment year target for Religious Education was slightly below target (99% of target), this under-recruitment was offset by increases in supply from other routes such as returners to teaching.

For more information on the 2022/23 recruitment year PGITT targets and the underlying methodology, please see the following link:

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/postgraduate-initial-teacher-training-targets/2022-23#releaseHeadlines-summary>
[9094 9095 table](#)

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-25/9094>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-25/9095>

The following three questions all received the same answer

National Union of Students: Elections

Matt Western (Labour) [9101] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, under what provision the Minister of State for Universities contacted Civica Election Services to challenge the election of the incoming president of the National Union of Students.

National Union of Students: Finance

Matt Western (Labour) [9102] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he has made a recent assessment of the financial implications for the National Union of Students of his decision to freeze funding until the conclusion of the independent investigations into anti-Semitism.

National Union of Students

Matt Western (Labour) [9103] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help ensure that students are represented within Government in the context of his Department's decision to disassociate with the National Union of Students.

Michelle Donelan: I have been deeply concerned to hear the allegations of antisemitism linked to the National Union of Students (NUS) and believe that strong action is needed, especially as NUS has been the subject of similar allegations on at least another two occasions in recent years. This is why I announced on 13 May 2022 that the government would be disengaging with them, until we are satisfied that they have taken effective steps to address the allegations.

The financial impact of this decision is a matter for the NUS, not for the government. But we are working to ensure that students are not disadvantaged by our disengagement with the NUS. We will continue to talk with students' groups such as the Office for Students' panel and directly with students' unions throughout the period of disengagement.

I have also contacted Civica Election Services to ask whether they are satisfied with the integrity of the elections for the incoming NUS president, given the publicity around antisemitic statements she is alleged to have made.

Jewish students need to have confidence that the NUS is a body that represents them, as well as other students. The government will re-engage with them once we and the Union of Jewish Students and Community Security Trust (in relation to the broader Jewish community) are satisfied that it does so.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-25/9101>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-25/9102>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-25/9103>

The announcement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-suspends-engagement-with-the-nus-over-antisemitism>

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

The Lady of Heaven Protests: Letter from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to Imam Qari Asim

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1081996/DLUHC_to_Imam_Qari_Asim_-_11062022.pdf

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Israel

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

United Nations Human Rights Report 2021

https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/OHCHR_Report_2021.pdf

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

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

Online Safety Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3137>

Schools Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3156>

Scottish Parliament

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill>

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Consultations ** new or updated today

Independent Review of Social Cohesion and Resilience (closing date 23 June 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/independent-review-of-social-cohesion-and-resilience-call-for-evidence/independent-review-of-social-cohesion-and-resilience-call-for-evidence>

Public Participation at the Scottish Parliament (closing date 30 June 2022)

<https://yourviews.parliament.scot/cppp/participation-2022/>

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