

RESOURCE FOR JEWISH TEACHERS AND PUPILS

JUNE 2021

Introduction

The Board of Deputies has sadly received reports of a surge of antisemitic abuse aimed at Jewish teachers and pupils, triggered by the escalation of violence in the Middle East. This understandably is of great concern to the Jewish community. No Jewish person should feel unsafe in the UK, especially in a school environment.

On 28 May 2021, Education Secretary Gavin Williamson [wrote](#) to school leaders, highlighting the concerns of the government about antisemitism in schools. This document is intended as a resource to support those who have experienced such incidents in the education sector.

What to look out for

If any members of the Jewish community has experienced a potentially antisemitic incident, the headteacher or principal may not be sure what to do next. We suggest the following things to look out for and to act upon:

- Antisemitism can be context-specific. ‘Free Palestine’ may not be an antisemitic slogan, in and of itself, however chanting it, or directing phrases such as ‘child-murderers’, at a Jewish teacher or pupil may well be, as it is identifying the teacher or pupil as Jewish and as an object of protest because of their Jewishness.
- Given that antisemitism can be context-specific, any communications regarding incidents must be treated with care. On one occasion when a pupil was disciplined for saying ‘Free Palestine’ at a school, the news was shared on social media without the context that this was directed at a Jewish member of the school community in the middle of a lesson. The result was multiple accusations on social media that free speech was being hindered, which was false and unhelpful.
- Online student communication channels set up for one purpose – for example a WhatsApp channel to discuss university applications – becoming dominated by vitriolic rhetoric concerning the conflict can be intimidating to Jewish students who may withdraw from online school forums as a result.

The Community Security Trust (CST) is a charity that protects British Jews from antisemitism and related threats. CST received charitable status in 1994 and is recognised by police and Government as a unique model of best practice. CST provides security advice and training for Jewish communal organisations, schools and synagogues. A blog published on their website gives a wider context to the situation which can be read [here](#).

Local Education Authorities, Academy Trusts, schools, teachers and parents should know that antisemitic incidents should be reported to the CST, the police, their institution or a combination of the three. CST's website is [here](#), and it contains a range of resources that will be helpful to those who have experienced antisemitism. To report an incident to the CST, follow this [link](#).

Advice for teachers and parents

For those teachers or parents of pupils who have experienced an incident that they believe to be antisemitic in nature, in addition to reporting it to the relevant bodies, we suggest:

- Contacting the head teacher and explaining what has happened. Schools should be safe places, where young people and teachers feel able to learn and teach in a welcoming environment. It is our hope that school leaders will be eager to resolve any issues as quickly as possible, taking appropriate action where necessary.
- If any issues remain outstanding, school governors or trustees could be approached to ensure the issue is dealt with appropriately.
- For teachers, the Board of Deputies' [Employer's Guide to Judaism](#) can be a useful point of guidance for issues in the workplace.

Helpful resources for schools

We are aware that addressing issues around Israel and the Palestinians can be difficult for schools to navigate. Resources which may be of use to school leaders include:

- The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism, now adopted by most local authorities, which can be found [here](#).
- The TUC guide on antisemitism with its specific section on Israel and the Palestinians, which can be found [here](#).
- Stand Up! Education Against Discrimination is a joint initiative of the CST and [Maccabi GB](#), which offers anti-discrimination education focusing on anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim hate. It is supported by [Tell MAMA](#), an organisation that measures anti-Muslim attacks and provides support to those who have experienced such discrimination. More information can be found [here](#).

- Solutions Not Sides is an organisation that aims to tackle anti-Jewish hate, anti-Muslim hate and polarisation around the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the UK. They visit schools to explore how the conflict can be discussed in a constructive way, rather than importing tensions from the Middle East into local communities. More information about their work can be found on their website [here](#).

For any further information about the Board of Deputies and for contact details should you wish to get in touch, please visit our website at www.bod.org.uk.