



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs

Holocaust

Israel

Foreign Affairs

Relevant Legislation

Consultations

Back issues

Home Affairs

House of Lords

Schools Bill, Committee Stage

col 15 **Baroness Morris of Yardley (Labour):** ... We all would sign up to the idea that partnership between schools and parents is absolutely crucial. ... It is possibly more crucial in some areas of the curriculum than in others: sex education, faith education and some aspects of history. That understanding about what is happening in the school is very important so that the parent can support the teacher and the teacher can support the parent, all in the interests of the child.

If we look at the Government's guidance on relationships and sex education, it says that parents should have visibility of what is being taught to their children. ... I was therefore surprised to see a letter that a parent made available to me after she had gone to her child's school to ask to see some of the curriculum papers that were being used in relationships and sex education. In this case the child was in key stage 2, the latter years of primary education. The head had written to the parent to say that he could not make the curriculum materials available to her because the organisation that was delivering that part of the curriculum said that it was exempt under Section 43(2) and Section 42 of the Freedom of Information Act.

col 16 In many areas of the curriculum, especially the contentious areas, schools look to outside bodies to bring in their expertise. ... This school had asked an organisation to come in and deliver sex and relationships education. But the organisation had said, "This is our intellectual property. It can't be photocopied and shown to a third party." The law allows it to claim that parents are a third party. That cannot be right. It does not matter whether they like the curriculum material or not. This particular bit of curriculum material was, I think, very contestable in terms of appropriateness for age. However, even if I thought it the best bit of teacher material I had ever seen, I would say it could not be right that a parent could not have access to it and see it. ...

It is in the area of contested facts and difficult things to teach that schools are most likely to turn to outside organisations to help. ...

Whether we like it or not, we live at a time when there are lots of curriculum areas in which facts are not facts, and what we all assumed was appropriate to pass on to the next generation is now being contested. ... It is critical that giving ideas and words to the next generation is done with care, openness and the support of all the adults possible. ...

col 17 Lord Sandhurst (Conservative): ... This has arisen because the commercial providers of materials have apparently tried to prevent parents getting access to those materials. They have met requests for information or to see the materials with the assertion that these are protected, and they can rely on an exemption under the Freedom of Information Act. ...

... the effect of the assertion is to put parents off and, as we have heard, it puts the schools in an embarrassing and awkward position. The parents and the schools are on the same side.

The issue is, of course, particularly sensitive where the subject matter is RSE—relationships and sex education—but it is not limited to that nowadays. History, economics and politics—a whole range of subjects—raise awkward and difficult matters in which there are strong differing philosophies and political views. It is very important that parents should know what is being taught and, in particular, whether their children are in fact being indoctrinated; things are not always the facts that they appear to be. The content must be accurate and balanced.

This amendment [171F] will give statutory force to a policy to which, we would argue, there can be no reasonable objection. In the case of RSE material, there is already statutory guidance, provided by the Government in 2019. ...

“When schools choose resources and external provision for Relationships, Sex and Health Education and PSHE, we expect schools to consult with parents on these matters and to make reasonable decisions about the content of their curriculum. Schools should also ensure that when they engage parents, they provide examples of the resources they plan to use (for example, the books they will use in lessons).”

That seems to be the Government’s policy ... If that is the policy, what possible objection could there be to having it reinforced by statute, which would meet the arguments put forward by certain providers? ...

col 18 However, as we have heard, parents are not always getting the access to which they are already entitled and should be getting. ...

col 19 Lord Harries of Pentregarth (Crossbench): My Lords, I shall speak to Amendment 168 on fundamental British values. The law at present requires every school to teach fundamental British values and the purpose of my amendment is simply to build on what we have at the moment to strengthen it ...

The law we have at the moment was introduced in 2015 in the wake of the Prevent programme. Almost inevitably, it was orientated in a particular direction; the result is that it is lopsided and strangely missing in certain fundamental matters of our society. That law says that democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs have to be taught. It may be obvious to everybody that there is one fundamental gap in that list: the equal respect to be accorded to every person in our society. ...

The two first values on the list, democracy and the rule of law, remain unchanged but, as we all know, democracy can mean anything or everything. ... so it needs to be spelt out in law what we mean by a liberal democracy. ...

col 20 Freedom ... is actually to be preferred to the present wording of “individual liberty”, because it goes much wider. ...

Although the law states at the moment that these values have to be taught in schools, it does not say who is responsible for teaching them. ...

col 30 Lord Triesman (Labour): ... if you come from a Jewish family and your child is in a faith school, it is not at all unusual to find the unchallenged view about the culpability of

the Jews historically, without anybody making any kind of point about it at all. There are issues of that kind, which in good schools of course would not arise, but they do arise in some schools and that is important. ...

col/ 31 Baroness Stroud (Conservative): ... under Article 13.3 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which the UK has ratified, it is also enshrined that parents have the prior right to choose the kind of education that their child will be given. ...

It follows, therefore, that to make this choice, as we have heard this afternoon, parents must be able to review all teaching materials, in order to make a fully informed decision about the education of their children. This must include third-party curriculum resources. Many schools choose to make use of a wide range of these third-party resources, some of which are extremely useful. However, as noble Lords are aware, there is increasing evidence from parents that schools are using third-party teaching materials which are often ideologically motivated and lack factual basis, particularly in relation to some relationships and sex education materials, as well as other contentious issues. ...

col/ 35 I was struck during the lockdown by the Channel 4 documentary, “The School That Tried to End Racism”, which involved 11 and 12 year-olds at a school in south London. Many parents I knew were horrified at the use of pseudoscientific implicit association testing and the splitting of classrooms into white and non-white affinity groups, all through the prism of critical race theory. The campaign group that I was involved in setting up at the time, Don’t Divide Us, was drowning in concerned parents asking what was going on and whether their kids were being taught that all white people are racist. Parents went into schools to ask whether they could see the materials being used ... and were told that there was nothing to see here, treated as a nuisance and told to go away. ...

When a group of parents led by DDU challenged Brighton & Hove City Council about its Racial Literacy 101 materials for schools, they were constantly rebuffed. Eventually, what was revealed showed some shockers. For example, under the heading “Overt and Covert White Supremacy”, lynching was listed alongside colour blindness. This is a shocking slur against generations of civil rights and anti-racist activists who took Martin Luther King’s mantra that we should judge on the content of character and not skin colour—no longer, it seems.

When you finally do see some of the teaching materials, they show that Martin Luther King’s position is dismissed as “old-fashioned” and that pupils are often being told that parents are the problem—that they are old-fashioned and backward. We must be very wary of this. For example, parents who go along with colour blindness are being described as exhibiting unconscious bias; those parents who believe in the biological facts of sex rather than the fluidity of gender identity are labelled to their own children as bigots and transphobic, guilty of cisnormativity. ...

col/ 47 The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Baroness Barran): ... Of course, we should encourage parents to engage with their child’s curriculum to allow them to support their child’s learning at home. ... We also think it vital that schools and teachers are focused on the activities that add the greatest value to pupil outcomes. It is a priority for the Government to reduce teacher workload. We are concerned that introducing this amendment [171F] could drive teachers to focus on tasks which become very burdensome ... There are already ways for parents to engage with their child’s school curriculum to the extent needed to support learning at home. ...

col/ 48 Specifically on the intellectual property loophole ... it would be helpful to meet and go through some of the examples. We would like to be confident that the law is being interpreted correctly and, without seeing the examples, it is difficult for us to establish that. ...

Baroness Fox of Buckley (Non-affiliated) ... We have only to remember what happened with the RE teacher who was driven into hiding because he offended local activists from

the more extreme Muslim wing—not the majority of Muslim parents, I hasten to add. We get that. ... none of us are trying to give a parent veto to what is taught ...

The Minister pointed out—or somebody made the point—that if they could see the materials, they would be reassured. I think they would be horrified, but that is not the point. The point is that you need to be able to see them so that you are not relying on reading in the newspapers what is in them. ...

col 73 Lord Soley (Labour): ... I would put home educators broadly into three, very rough groups. There are a group who do it extremely well ... Then there are probably the biggest group, who are doing it either because they want to try it out and see if they can do it or—this is very common—because they have special problems of one type or another. ... Then there are this thankfully very small, but profoundly worrying, group who do it for all the wrong reasons. One reason might be radicalisation. I want to emphasise here that it is not just Islam, which people tend to think of; I have been given examples in the Christian and Jewish faiths of unreasonable behaviour or radicalisation. We perhaps need to remember something I have said to people a number of times about religion: God is an idea, and there either is or is not one, but religion is more like an ideology. Of course, with ideology, people have different interpretations. As I say, in Christianity, Judaism and Islam, I have seen examples of abuse and radicalisation. ...

col 77 Lord Storey (Liberal Democrat): ... We have unregistered schools, and over the years we have tried to discourage them and to close them down. We have had some success ... If you hear the stories of some of the pupils in those unregistered schools—a boy who was locked in a cupboard because he admitted that he was gay, for example—you would be absolutely horrified. This has gone on in some radical religious schools, and it is just not acceptable. We have had our hands tied behind our backs and have not been able to do anything about it. ...

col 78 Baroness Fox of Buckley: ... Lord Storey ... described one part of that small group who might not be in schools as being radicalised. We had some images and we all know what we are talking about in terms of madrassas and fundamentalists of Christian, Jewish or Islamic faiths, which is no reflection on those faiths per se. But there is a danger here that this small group is then used to attack the reputations of everybody else.

col 79 Even in relation to those groups, we have to be careful about using the term “religious fundamentalist” as a dismissive and dangerous model as well. As an atheist, I happen to stand for religious freedom. We have to be careful that we do not just dismiss that. It is also the case that “fundamentalism” is used promiscuously these days to describe people with a different set of values or ideology, whether religious, political or philosophical. ...

To read the full transcript see

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-20/debates/EEB5FCC0-5AFB-4C42-B0EE-329DE1E75976/SchoolsBill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-20/debates/EEB5FCC0-5AFB-4C42-B0EE-329DE1E75976/SchoolsBill(HL))

The amendments referred to above can be read at

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/46902/documents/2003>

House of Commons Written Answers

Hate Crime: Prosecutions

Stuart Anderson (Conservative) [18052] To ask the Attorney General, what steps she is taking to ensure that the Crown Prosecution Service is adequately resourced to prosecute hate crime against members of religious minority communities.

Alex Chalk: The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) recognises the serious impact hate crimes have on peoples’ lives and will always seek to prosecute where there is sufficient evidence to do so, regardless of the offence, or how it is committed. In

2021/22, the proportion of successful outcomes in religiously aggravated hate crime with an announced and recorded sentence uplift was 79.8%.

Each CPS Area has a Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor as a strategic hate crime lead and a network of dedicated Hate Crime Coordinators operates across all 14 CPS Areas, providing their expertise on matters relating to hate crime and acting as a local point of contact for all external partner agencies.

In addition, the CPS has created a hate crime External Consultation Group, which is responsible for providing a community perspective on CPS activity, providing an important check and balance in respect of CPS casework quality, and includes representatives from Tell MAMA and the Community Security Trust (CST).

The CPS also sits on the cross-government working groups on anti-Muslim Hatred and on Antisemitism.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-14/18052>

Schools: Racial Discrimination

Fleur Anderson (Labour) [14644] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy to (a) include anti-racism teaching in the national curriculum and (b) introduce anti-racism training for Ofsted school inspectors.

Robin Walker: The department condemns and strives to tackle all forms of racial discrimination, prejudice, and harassment. Under the Equality Act 2010, schools have a duty to take steps to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations across all protected characteristics, including between people of different ethnic backgrounds.

As part of a broad and balanced curriculum, pupils should be taught about different societies. This includes learning how different groups have contributed to the development of Britain, and can include experiences and voices of people from all backgrounds. The curriculum offers many opportunities for schools to do this, notably through citizenship education and relationships education. The history curriculum also gives teachers the flexibility to include the contribution of black and minority ethnic history into lessons. This aligns with the school's duty to promote and foster good relations across all characteristics, including race.

Relationships education is now compulsory in all schools. The relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) curriculum has a strong focus on equality, respect, the harmful impact of stereotyping, as well as on the importance of valuing difference. Guidance on the implementation and teaching of RSHE curriculum can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-relationships-sex-and-health>

The national curriculum content for citizenship can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-citizenship-programmes-of-study> ...

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-08/14644>

House of Lords Written Answer

Schools: Racial Discrimination

Lord Taylor of Warwick (Non-affiliated) [HL685] To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to require schools to implement anti-racist policies.

Baroness Barran: There is no place for racism in our education system and schools have an important role in preparing pupils for life in modern Britain, by supporting them to understand the society in which they grow up in and teaching about respect for other people and difference.

The department has no plans to place specific requirements on schools, but we

expect them to take steps to tackle racist and discriminatory attitudes or incidents and condemn racism within the school and wider society. Challenging intolerant, racist or discriminatory views, where these are shared at school, should be seen as part of schools' wider anti-bullying and safeguarding duties.

Further to this, relationships education is now compulsory in all schools and the relationships, sex and health education curriculum has a strong focus on equality, respect, the harmful impact of stereotyping, as well as the importance of valuing difference.

Under the Equality Act 2010, schools must not discriminate against a pupil in a number of respects because of a characteristic protected by the act. State-funded schools are also subject to the public sector equality duty. The department has published guidance for schools to help them comply with their duties, which is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-06/hl685>

Scottish Government

Antisemitism within higher education: roundtable discussion – Summary of the meeting with stakeholders on 23 February 2022

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/antisemitism-within-higher-education-roundtable-discussion/>

TOP

Holocaust

House of Commons Written Answer

London County Council (Improvements) Act 1990

Peter Bottomley (Conservative) [17857] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when (a) the holder of his office and (b) the Government Legal Service considered the London County Council (Improvements) Act 1990 in each of the last 8 years.

Kemi Badenoch: The London County Council (Improvements) Act 1900 was considered ahead of the planning application for the Holocaust Memorial, submitted in December 2018, and has been considered subsequently in the context of a statutory review of the decision to grant planning consent.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-14/17857>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Written Answer

Palestinians: Textbooks

Caroline Ansell (Conservative) [15315] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 31 May 2022 to Question 8084, what the Government's position is on the findings of the EU review into

Palestinian textbooks that the Palestinian Authority school curriculum features anti-Israel, antisemitic content; and if she will make a statement on her Department's aid strategy to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

Amanda Milling: We have been clear that incitement to hatred or violence is unacceptable and has no place in education. The report commissioned by the EU into Palestinian textbooks highlights meaningful progress but also indicates that problematic content remains. We continue to raise our concerns to the highest level of the Palestinian Authority and urge removal of the content. The UK is a longstanding supporter of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). We accompany our support for the UNRWA with stringent attention to implementation of their neutrality policy, including how they apply this to textbooks and other learning material to ensure they reflect UN values.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-09/15315>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-24/8084>

The report referred to above can be read at

<https://owncloud.gei.de/index.php/s/FwkMw8NZqCAJgPW>

House of Lords Written Answers

Odeh Mohammad Odeh Sadaqa

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL681] To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had with the government of Israel, if any, about the reported fatal shooting of Odeh Mohammad Odeh Sadaqa by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: We regularly raise the issue of the high numbers of Palestinians killed and injured by Israeli Defense Forces in the West Bank and Gaza with the Israeli authorities, encouraging them to carry out swift, transparent and thorough investigations. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, particularly the need to protect children, and urge restraint in the use of live fire.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-06/hl681>

West Bank: Palestinians

Baroness Sheehan (Liberal Democrat) [HL682] To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they plan to take to protect access to water for Palestinians in the West Bank.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK has raised the issue of access to water in the Occupied Palestinian Territories with the Israeli authorities, including stressing the urgent need for Israel to take immediate and practical measures to improve the current situation and ensure fair distribution of water in the West Bank.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-06/hl682>

Israel: Palestinians

The Lord Bishop of Southwark [HL683] To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 30 May (HL275), whether they have had discussions with the government of Israel regarding the international law implications of evictions of Palestinian residents from Masafer Yatta; and if they have not, whether they will now do so.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As previously stated, the UK is clear that in all but the most exceptional of circumstances, demolitions and evictions are contrary to International Humanitarian Law. We repeatedly call on Israel to abide by its

obligations under international law and have a regular dialogue with Israel on legal issues relating to the occupation.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-06/hl683>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-05-16/hl275>

TOP

Foreign Affairs

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Prime Minister's Special Envoy: importance of the international Freedom of Religion or Belief conference in London

Fiona Bruce MP outlines plans for the UK-hosted 2-day ministerial conference and explains the role of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance. ...

Why is this conference so important? Well, it's important because all around the world today, even in the 21st century, millions of people are being deprived an education or a job or a home or access to justice or liberty, even to life itself, simply on account of what they believe. ...

And so what will the conference involve? Well, we've got sessions across the 2 days looking at, for example, freedom of religion and belief and education. How can we introduce it into education syllabi? So that young people can begin to understand what freedom of religion or belief is and how important it is? We've seen how, for example, they've got hold of the importance of climate change and addressing that. Can we do that in the same way for freedom of religion or belief to help the millions of people around the world who are suffering. Can we see young ambassadors develop so that young people will use social media to champion freedom of religion or belief? ...

And then we're going to look at early warning signs. There are early warning signs that happen often when that's the beginning of tension in communities because of differences in views and beliefs, which can then lead to friction, violence, even at worst case. Well, how can countries how can communities start to recognise these early warning signs and address them? ...

Only by working together, by collaborating will we be able to begin to start to solve this this growing issue. ...

And to the ministerial conference itself will be livestreamed so that anyone from anywhere in the world will be able to join in and watch and will actually be able to interact, because that will be an opportunity not just for delegates in the conference centre to interact with the sessions and make their contributions and their suggestions known, but also for people to comment virtually from right around the world. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-special-envoy-importance-of-the-international-freedom-of-religion-or-belief-conference-in-london>

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Education (Non-religious Philosophical Convictions) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3186>

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill

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

**** Online Safety Bill**

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

Notice of amendments

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0004/amend/online_day_pbc_0621.pdf

Private Burial Grounds and Cemeteries Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3188>

**** Schools Bill**

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

Committee Stage, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-20/debates/EEB5FCC0-5AFB-4C42-B0EE-329DE1E75976/SchoolsBill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-20/debates/EEB5FCC0-5AFB-4C42-B0EE-329DE1E75976/SchoolsBill(HL))

and

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-20/debates/76534AA3-AEB0-498B-9BAC-9B25CE0EB3B3/SchoolsBill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-06-20/debates/76534AA3-AEB0-498B-9BAC-9B25CE0EB3B3/SchoolsBill(HL))

Notice of amendments

<https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/46902/documents/2003>

Scottish Parliament

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

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

TOP

Consultations ** new or updated today

**** closes in 2 days**

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/>

TOP

