



PALESTINE AT SCHOOL – GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS

The atrocities that have recently taken place in the Middle East have been shocking and upsetting to people of all backgrounds. The launching of rocket missiles has killed 248 Palestinians in Gaza including 66 children, and 12 Israelis including 1 child. The scenes of residents being forcibly evicted from East Jerusalem had already raised tensions which reached a peak when the sacred al-Aqsa mosque was stormed in the nights of Ramadan.

The advances of technology globally and the growth of social media has allowed young people to access unedited images, news and content in real-time and therefore our young people require a safe space to be able to process what they have seen and express their feelings. They need the opportunity to react appropriately to what they are consuming, hearing and observing. We encourage all schools to recognise that we are living in extraordinary times and to recognise the feelings of hurt and upset that exist in the community. Students from all backgrounds will want opportunities to process what they have seen reported and will want to express their solidarity with the humanitarian suffering in Palestine.

The Muslim Council of Wales urges all young people in school first and foremost to adhere to the behaviour, uniform and any other associated policies of the school they attend. Schools are a beacon of safety enabling young people to prosper despite the challenges they face outside of school. Teachers and support staff have a duty to safeguard the young people they work with and it is their actions that should foster mutual trust and respect.

Across the country there have been excellent examples of how schools have engaged with young people and encouraged them to show their solidarity with the humanitarian suffering in Palestine in a positive and inclusive manner. There have been isolated examples where a lack of understanding, mistrust and an over-reliance on sanctions has led to young people feeling unfairly targeted and sanctioned.

Should you, as a parent or a young person feel in any way threatened, victimised or made to feel uncomfortable by inappropriate treatment, hostility or comments as a result of showing or vocalising support for Palestine we encourage you to take action using the following steps:

1. Engage with the school and seek clarification, as a parent, of what exactly your child is accused of doing. Open and honest communications are essential to build trust between schools, young people and parents.
2. Keep records of all relevant communication and correspondence including a detailed account of what your child is alleged to have done. Ask for the school to provide an account in writing and if the school is unable to do so then record details of any telephone conversations or face to face meetings and email them back to the Head Teacher asking for confirmation that the account you have recorded is accurate.



3. If a young person is sent home during school hours as a result of their desire to show solidarity with the humanitarian suffering in Palestine, this is considered a major sanction and is recorded as an external exclusion. This will be a permanent record for the child and needs to be challenged.
4. It is essential that no young person is securitised as a result of their desire to show solidarity with the humanitarian suffering in Palestine. The seriousness of such a referral should not be underestimated. Organisations such as CAGE are offering free advice and support to any parent concerned that their child may be referred to PREVENT.

The contact number for the helpline is: 0300 030 2243.

5. Schools have a statutory duty to publish their complaints policy on their websites. Parents do have every right to appeal against the treatment of their child if they believe it has been unfair or disproportionate. The appeals process will include the governors of the school.