



16th April 2007

Dear Friend,

Over the past weeks there have been a number of rumours circulating via email regarding Holocaust education here in the UK. The emails suggest that the UK Government are removing Holocaust education from the National Curriculum and that in general British schools steer away from teaching what they might consider a 'controversial' subject. We want to make it clear that our understanding is the Holocaust is and will continue to be on the National Curriculum and therefore continue to be taught in all UK schools.

Background

These rumours stemmed from a piece that featured in a number of newspapers including the Daily Mail, the Guardian and Telegraph at the beginning of April. See the following links:
http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=445979&in_page_id=1770&ito=newsnow;
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/04/02/nschools02.xml>;
<http://education.guardian.co.uk/schools/story/0,,2048161,00.html>

The news stories came about as a result of a report commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and undertaken by the Historical Association. The report, 'Challenges and Opportunities for Teaching Emotive and Controversial History 13-19 (TEACH)', addresses both the challenges teachers face, as well as the good practise that is occurring when teaching all emotive and controversial historical issues such as slavery, the Crusades and the Holocaust. The full TEACH report is available on the Historical Association website:
<http://www.haevents.org.uk/PastEvents/Others/Teach%20report.pdf>

In light of this story the Holocaust Educational Trust would like to clarify what to our knowledge is the situation in the UK.

Holocaust Education in the UK:

- The Holocaust became part of the National Curriculum for History in 1991. It is statutory for all students in England and Wales to learn about the Holocaust at Key Stage 3 usually in Year 9 History (aged 13-14).
- Many students will study the Holocaust in Religious Studies, English and Citizenship lessons.
- The UK holds a national Holocaust Memorial Day on January 27th (marking the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau), and this is marked widely in primary and secondary schools across the country.
- The UK has a permanent Holocaust exhibition at the Imperial War Museum in London, visited by thousands of people each year.
- The British Government sponsors two students (16–18 year olds) per secondary school/ further education college to visit Auschwitz-Birkenau through the Holocaust Educational Trusts *Lessons from Auschwitz Project* (This is due to a £1.5 million grant from the Government every year from 2006-2008)
- School groups and private individuals visit the permanent Holocaust exhibition at the Imperial War Museum, the Jewish Museum, London, and The Holocaust Centre, Beth Shalom in

Newark, and educational establishments work with resources and educational programmes provided by other important organisations such as the Anne Frank Trust (UK), London Jewish Cultural Centre, and the Wiener Library.

- Teacher training ensures that hundreds of newly qualified teachers are provided with skills and materials to ensure effective Holocaust education for their students.
- Existing teachers participate in training around the UK, and specialist programmes run by Holocaust education organisations including the Holocaust Educational Trust, Imperial War Museum and Beth Shalom.

Within the TEACH report from the Historical Association, there is one particular line relating to Holocaust education which has been the focus of the press and various alarmed emails. It features in the section addressing why teachers avoid teaching certain subjects and states: '*... a history department in a northern city recently avoided selecting the Holocaust as a topic for GCSE coursework for fear of confronting anti-Semitic (sic) sentiment and Holocaust denial among some Muslim pupils*'. (p15)

The key points regarding this statement are:

- This does not refer to Holocaust education on the National Curriculum-it is a post-14 History GCSE course (publicly examined course)
- History at GCSE is not compulsory (only one third of pupils opt for history post-14)
- This is an anecdotal response from one teacher in one school out of four thousand five hundred secondary schools in the UK. While we cannot say what happens in every single school, our understanding is that this is highly unusual and not general practise of teachers around the country.
- All schools can choose which history topics they wish to study for coursework at GCSE level.
- There is no suggestion that this or any other school is failing to cover the National Curriculum in teaching about the Holocaust at Key Stage 3, Year 9 (age 13–14).

At no point does the report from the Historical Association suggest that the Holocaust be removed from the National Curriculum for England and Wales.

Obviously we and all Holocaust related organisations in the UK take this very seriously, however on this occasion we want to allay all fears and impress upon everyone that the Holocaust is not being removed from the National Curriculum. This particular incident does of course merit further investigation but in no way represents all the good work in our schools across the country.

Please do circulate this far and wide to all who have shown an interest in this particular issue and Holocaust education in general here in the UK.

Should you require further information please do contact us at the Holocaust Educational Trust by emailing info@het.org.uk

With best wishes

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