



Solutions Not Sides



WORKING

with Partisan Groups



TEACHER RESOURCE



A guide to working with partisan groups in schools

www.solutionsnotsides.co.uk ——— team@solutionsnotsides.co.uk

INTRODUCTION



This document has been created to help schools and other educational bodies who wish to maintain their impartiality on the subject of Israel-Palestine.

As educators, we will uphold the right of young people to learn about political issues in an impartial space. We will keep that space free from hate, inequality and violence. We will teach skills of critical thinking, communication, active listening and conflict resolution so they can learn to navigate these issues for themselves.

GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE



The Department for Education in the UK has issued some guidance for schools on impartiality regarding bi-partisan political issues such as party politics and geo-political conflicts between national groups.

It is for schools to decide which organisations they work with, and schools are responsible for what pupils are taught and for ensuring they meet their political impartiality duties. Teaching about political issues, including those which may be particularly controversial, is an essential part of a broad and balanced curriculum. However, statutory requirements on political impartiality for schools means that they must prohibit the promotion of partisan political views and they should take steps to ensure the balanced presentation of opposing views on political issues when they are brought to the attention of pupils.

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for external agencies to express partisan political views to pupils, but pupils must understand that these are contested views and still receive a balanced account of the political issue in question. Where different external agencies are frequently invited to speak to pupils, schools may wish to consider whether the organisations presented to pupils represent a fair cross-section of different political views. This does not necessarily mean that the school needs to invite a range of organisations with different views to speak to pupils, but it would require additional teaching to ensure a balanced presentation, ideally in advance of engagement with the external agency.

A link to the non-statutory guidance published by the Department in 2022, can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/political-impartiality-in-schools>

UNDERSTANDING



SOLIDARITY & ADVOCACY GROUPS

There are political organisations in the UK that operate to promote support for one side of the conflict, or the other. In other words, they are politically partisan. Members of these groups often have little exposure to, or understanding of, the other side's perspective.

They will also often see the situation as zero-sum, and believe that even listening to other perspectives or having a discussion that results in respectful disagreement is somehow legitimising something that is fundamentally wrong.

We have seen this phenomenon emerging across many different political issues since the rise of social media, and we must ensure that it does not result in the shutting down of spaces reserved for education and free expression of opinion. The diagram below helps to map out these types of organisation, and the kind of narratives they may be promoting.

THE SPECTURUM OF ISRAEL-PALESTINE ORGANISATIONS IN THE UK

Want some guidance to help make sure you are adhering to DfE guidelines on impartiality when it comes to education on Palestine and Israel?

“The two-sides narrative legitimises colonialism, genocide, and apartheid. Only one perspective should be taught in schools.”

If I listen to another perspective, am I normalising oppression?



PALESTINE SOLIDARITY ORGANISATIONS
MAINSTREAM PERSPECTIVE



COMMUNICATION SKILLS



ACTIVE-LISTENING SKILLS

CRITICAL-THINKING SKILLS

CONFLICT-RESOLUTION SKILLS

“This is a conflict between two national movements, with complex international power dynamics that needs a just and peaceful solution. British students have the right to analyse and think for themselves.”

IMPARTIAL EDUCATION ORGANISATIONS

If I listen to another perspective, am I normalising terrorism?



“The two-sides narrative legitimises a genocidal terrorist organisation. Only one perspective should be taught in schools.”

ISRAEL ADVOCACY ORGANISATIONS
MAINSTREAM PERSPECTIVE

Watch out you don't bring in an organisation that delegitimises Israel and/or endorses violence from this end of the spectrum!

Certain words/terms may be banned and discussion shut down and silenced.

VALUES:

- NON-VIOLENCE
- EQUALITY FOR ALL
- REJECTION OF HATRED

In education, we listen to understand and explain, not to excuse or justify.

Discussing language, terms, and phrases without shame or judgement.

Watch out you don't bring in an organisation that delegitimises Palestine and/or endorses violence from this end of the spectrum!

Certain words/terms may be banned and discussion shut down and silenced.



HOW TO NAVIGATE THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE



It is not wrong to bring in an organisation that is expressing a one-sided view, but in order to be impartial, the school also has to bring in at least one other organisation or source that is giving a perspective from the other side. In order to avoid an atmosphere of conflict (or sides not solutions!) within the school body around these two (or more) positions, the following is advised:

- Do careful due diligence to ensure you do not end up with speakers who promote something counter to British law.
- Review the organisations' proposed content to ensure it is age-appropriate and pedagogically appropriate.
- Design a framework within which to host visiting organisations from opposing perspectives. Helpful frameworks can be ones that encourage students to think critically about both perspectives, find points they can sympathise with on both sides, or use conflict resolution tools to seek potential solutions.
- Provide a language guide for students to help them understand which terms will accurately express their views without being hurtful to others.
- Provide a definitions sheet for terms to help facilitate good discussion.
- Ensure that pupils understand there is no pressure to change already-held views, in fact they should feel comfortable to express their existing views within the language guidelines without judgement.
- Where existing views oppose one another, ensure that both views are heard, but also that there is no pressure on the rest of the group to take one side or the other.
- Ensure that students are aware of ways in which they can take action on this issue in a variety of ways within UK democratic channels.
- Consider choosing an apolitical education organisation such as SNS or Parallel Histories rather than bringing in polarised groups.



Thank You

Contact Us



- +44 (0)20 7074 4357
- team@solutionsnotsides.co.uk
- www.solutionsnotsides.co.uk
- West Hampstead, London.

