

20th May 2021

Dear Parents,

This week, we have been discussing with our pupils, particularly those in Secondary, the conflict between Israel and Palestine. There has been a lot of coverage that pupils have seen outside of school, including videos and accounts of the violence which have been deeply upsetting for many in our community.

Over the week, pupils have expressed their views to their teachers and each other. Many of your children have told us that they would like to engage in discussions about what is going on, make sense of it and try to do something about it to bring about change for the better. This we commend. They have conducted themselves with respect and dignity which makes conversations about difficult, complex and grown-up topics productive.

As a school we try to address serious global issues like this thoughtfully, giving our pupils the facts and also space to think and talk about their views. It can be difficult for pupils to deal with these issues, and also difficult for a school to respond to these events too.

Today, we gave an additional opportunity for pupils in Years 7 to 12 to take part in bubble-based assemblies. We will also speak to year 13, and Year 6 tomorrow. We focused on three key themes:

- learning more about the history and details of Israel and Palestine;
- thinking about positive and negative ways of responding to these events;
- sharing ideas about what we will do next to address take the conversation forward.

This was the start of an ongoing opportunity to help pupils to express their views and have their voice heard in a supportive way. Pupils listened intently and shared their views.

We asked some of our older pupils, to take a lead on both talking to younger pupils and listening to them as part of these assemblies, to empower these leading pupils to take positive action. We will be meeting with these pupils to finalise next steps, but the initial plans proposed today are:

- To schedule an additional drop down half day of lessons in Half Term 6 to better inform pupils about significant global affairs;
- To facilitate the opportunity next week to raise money for people directly affected by the attacks;
- To introduce an open discussion of global affairs in our sixth form, including on Israel and Palestine;
- To provide a suggestion box to further hear pupils' voices.

We will also discuss how else pupils can express their strongly held views. We support our pupils right to safely express their views and are keen to agree appropriate ways of doing this in line with our values.

Before these recent events, there was already an understanding from the school that these issues were important to many in our community. This is why we have previously made a change to our curriculum to ensure all future pupils study the Israel Palestine conflict as part of History GCSE in Year 9, which will be studied by all pupils from next academic year.

Today, we were told that a completely untrue rumour had been circulated that a pupil had been excluded for having a Palestine flag. In fact, there have not been any serious behaviour consequences issued as a result of pupils expressing their support for Palestine, for example by drawing flags. If you as a parent hear of any behaviour consequences (of any type) linked to this topic, I would appreciate you contacting me directly so that I can investigate this.

We are one inclusive school, with pupils from many different faiths and backgrounds, and of course with many different views. We live by our values to celebrate our differences and learn from each other so we will continue to do this as a community.

Thank you for supporting your children, and the school, as we work together to learn about these important matters.

Yours sincerely,

Max Haimendorf

Principal