

21.05.21

Dear Parents,

Yesterday I wrote to parents about the school's response to the conflict in Israel and Palestine. I wanted to update all parents on today's developments about this important topic.

We were able to complete information and listening assemblies with Year 5, 6 and 13, so that all of our older pupils have now heard the same shared message. These pupils listened and engaged really well with the issues raised.

We were also able to meet with a group of Year 12 and Year 13 pupils to agree the next steps for the school in supporting pupils to understand the subject and get the chance to express their views. In reflecting on what pupils have now told us over the last few days, we have agreed that we will do the following as a school:

**1. Introduce a 6<sup>th</sup> form global affairs discussion group, potentially based around the work of Amnesty international.**

**2. Give pupils the opportunity to make suggestions on this topic through electronic or written submission.**

**3. Demonstration of support through silence**

On Monday 24<sup>th</sup> May at 2.15pm, pupils in Years 5-13 will have the chance to show their respect and support for all those who have died in the recent conflict. There will be 3 minutes of silence.

**4. Dress down and fundraising**

On Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> May, Years 5-13 will raise money for people affected in Palestine. Pupils on the Older Years Site can wear their own clothes and donate £1 (or more) to the charity Islamic Relief.

**5. Drop down learning about human rights around the world, including Israel and Palestine**

On Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> June, Secondary pupils will have a half day drop down about key world events, which will be co-planned with 6<sup>th</sup> formers. This will become part of our ongoing curriculum in Secondary.

We feel like the issues of Israel and Palestine are complex issues. Given it is hard to understand the topic without referring to the history of the region, our younger pupils will learn about this in the future when they are in Year 5 and above.

It was great to agree these plans in collaboration with students. Many students and parents have shared feedback that they are pleased to see and feel that the school is listening and taking action.

At lunchtime in Year 12, a group of students held a demonstration in their playground which involved chanting messages in support of Palestine. This was not an event which had been agreed with the school in advance. To their credit, the students involved chose an area which

did not impact learning in other year groups and most (but not all) students spoke respectfully to staff and each other. Most (but not all) students went to lessons when they started. Aside from a vocal minority, most students conducted themselves as role models. We applaud students for wanting to take action to support their strongly held political and personal views and we validate their right to share these views. We have reminded students that there is a national demonstration tomorrow and shared the experience of those in the community who attended last Saturday's protest. Sadly, today's event also involved aspects of behaviour from a small minority which did not reflect well on those individuals. We look forward to moving forwards with the actions we have agreed to take as a community of people - both pupils and staff - and we continue to expect everyone to remember to express their views thoughtfully and respectfully at all times.

Overall, I am pleased that we have been able to facilitate meaningful ways of supporting our pupils at this sensitive time. We have learnt a lot from our pupils this week, and we want to keep these discussions moving forward, we know there is more to do. We hope that you can support the school and your pupils to ensure that this is a positive process.

Yours sincerely,

Max Haimendorf

Principal