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Ghulam Abbas
Community Cohesion Unit
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
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8th July 2010

Dear Mr Abbas,

Thank you for your reply to our letter dated 14th May 2010 on Zionism in the teaching curriculum and school governing ethos of voluntary aided Jewish faith schools.

We are grateful for your elucidating the various statutory and regulatory measures in place to keep political indoctrination out of schools in the maintained sector. I am particularly grateful for your citing the lengths Ofsted goes to in inspecting schools to ascertain their compliance with all necessary legal requirements in the education sector.

Perhaps more importantly, your reply does not, it would seem to us, deal with the substantive question posed. That is, is the teaching of Zionism in state aided Jewish faith schools acceptable given that Zionism is not akin to the religion of Judaism, but is a political ideology driven by an aspiration for a return to Zion?

Your reply states that schools in the maintained sector are protected against the 'promotion of partisan political views' and 'political indoctrination'. We would contend that Zionism is indeed a political view and one that is itself not universally shared by members of the Jewish community.

Our greater concern, which was not addressed in your reply, is whether voluntary aided Jewish schools are to be permitted to promote Zionism alongside their Jewish tradition given the political bias and premise of the ideology?

We are dismayed that while the Education Secretary raised vocal concerns over the potential 'political indoctrination' of Muslim pupils in schools run by the Islamic Shakhshiyah Foundation, citing the 'propagation' in its curriculum of Hizb ut- Tahrir's 'vision of an Islamic state', the active presence of Zionism and the teaching of the establishment of a 'Jewish state' in the ethos and teaching of Jewish faith schools should not be considered on the same terms.

Indeed, the role of Ofsted in clearing the Islamic Shakhshiyah Foundation run schools in Haringey and Slough of any wrongdoing in the teaching of their curriculum and interspersing of the schools' ethos with ideas emanating from Hizb ut-Tahrir seemed insufficiently acceptable to the present Education Secretary when he was shadow Education spokesperson.

We reiterate the question of whether the Department of Education recognises Zionism as a political ideology and, therefore, inappropriate for inclusion in the descriptions offered by Jewish faith schools of their faith based ethos in the Instrument of Government submitted to local authorities?

We welcome and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Mohammed Asif
CEO