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Peter Shephard
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8th July 2010

Dear Mr Shephard,

Thank you for your reply to my letter concerning King Solomon High School and the place of Zionism in the curriculum teaching and ethos of voluntary aided Jewish faith schools.

I fully appreciate that you should not wish to comment on the views expressed by Mr Spencer Lewis, Headteacher of King Solomon High School, nor would I ask you to do so.

What I would ask you concerns matters that I believe to be properly situated within the jurisdiction of the local education authority, the London Borough of Redbridge. Indeed, according to the letter we received in response to this same inquiry from the Department of Education, “For the maintained sector, schools of religious character are required to provide a description of their faith based ethos in an Instrument of Government which is submitted to and approved by the local authority. The local authority is expected to ensure that the ethos complies with all the statutory requirements and duties placed in schools.”

I am fully cognisant of the centrality of the land of Israel, its symbolism and its geographic location, to the Jewish faith. I am also aware that Jerusalem is frequently cited in Jewish prayer, an indication of a love for the land and of a Jewish connection to the region.

What I would contest is whether schools are the proper places within which these beliefs should find expression and emphasis. I would think it more properly the domain of synagogues to teach young Jews of the importance of Israel to their identity, history and religion.

An overwhelming majority of Muslims, similar to their Jewish brethren, are united in their yearning for a kind of Islamic state modelled on the Prophetic example in Medina. Many Islamic scholars view the legacy of Medina as an enduring example of organising Muslim society and politics, manifesting in its model of governance and pluralism the obligations of peaceful coexistence in Islam. Moreover, Medina is the second of three revered sites in the Islamic tradition.

I wonder, were Muslim faith schools to revive and emphasise an admiration and yearning for the Prophetic state of Medina, the first and archetypal Islamic state, whether education authorities, including Redbridge, would consider this development in much the same manner as Zionism in state funded Jewish faith schools?

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

Mohammed Asif
CEO