

Note of key points:

Consultation Meeting with Scottish Friends of Israel, 19th November 2015

Present:

██████████ (Chairperson, Scottish Friends of Israel)
██████████ (Treasurer, Scottish Friends of Israel)
██████████ (Chairperson, Scottish Association of Jewish Teachers)
██████████ (Scottish Friends of Israel)
Paul McWatt (Education Scotland)

Context of meeting:

Education Scotland initially met with ██████████ and ██████████ on 8th September 2015 to discuss concerns that had ██████████ had communicated to Dr Allan (MSP). At this meeting it was agreed that a consultation meeting with the Scottish Friends of Israel (SFI) should be arranged; ██████████ (Education Scotland) would liaise with ██████████ and his associates, and relay any feedback to the cross-authority working group which was developing the resource.

Purpose of meeting:

To discuss with ██████████ and associates with regard in regards to the proposed teaching and learning resource on Israel and Palestine under development by local authority representatives; specifically, to seek the Scottish Friends of Israel's view of the stated aims and progression framework that the cross-authority working group has developed.

General feedback:

- To what extent has the Scottish Israeli community, been consulted in the development of this resource? (Who?)
- Is the group producing materials for any other topic linked to possible areas of conflict?
- Is there a need for this particular resource? Are there significant numbers of schools learning about this topic?
- Concern expressed by SFI that the production of this material for use in schools is inappropriate and divisive:
 - o It is a very complex subject that doesn't lend itself to learning in upper primary or secondary schools.
 - o It is dangerous to bring this into school as it will bring anti-Semitism into the classroom
 - o It is shocking to use this topic as a 'human rights problem'
 - o Staff knowledge and understanding of this topic would need to be strong; how can this be assured?
 - o Jewish and Muslim children could be upset as a result of the learning experiences.
 - o It would be impossible to achieve a balanced exploration of this topic
- Concern about personal bias of a key member of the development group

Note of key points:

Overview/Aims (page 1 of document):

- If this overview were the delivered outcome, it could be 'okay'; it was expressed at the meeting it would be impossible to deliver this as a real outcome.
- 'General Aims' section:
'Pupils will explore the *background* to the Israeli-Palestinian situation' – 'background' should be changed to '*history*'

Progression framework:

- Materials quoted from Sadaka.ie: website content would indicate that this organisation is anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic; how could material from this organisation be used in a resource which seeks to be unbiased and balanced? Concern that all Sadaka material is inherently biased.
- No awareness of any available materials which teach the history of Israel that would be appropriate for this context or age group; only very academic resources available.
- Hand-in-hand (www.handinhandk12.org) may be a useful source of information.
- 'Focus areas', 'Significant Aspects of Learning' and 'Themes' all look okay; again, it is the outcome that would be concerning (and the idea of teaching this at all)
- Some specific points around concepts and language were identified from each level

Next steps:

It was agreed that, if this topic were to be explored in a school, there would need to be some key points highlighted to the teacher to ensure that appropriate learning and teaching was taking place.

It was suggested that a further meeting would take early in 2016 to identify what these key points might be.