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Sharing Practice on Holocaust Education

Briefing: Holocaust Education August 2018

Purpose of this briefing

This briefing aims to support EIS members in their provision of Holocaust Education, which the EIS believes should be embedded as a key feature of the Curriculum for Excellence, as one means of delivering the inclusive education system and society we wish to see. We oppose racism and all forms of prejudice; we want educational establishments to be safe, inclusive environments for all children, young people and staff. Holocaust Education can play an important part in bringing that about.

Content of this briefing: The Holocaust and other genocides

The Holocaust was a genocide which took place during the Second World War, in which Nazi Germany, aided by collaborators, systematically murdered approximately 6 million European Jews (around two-thirds of the Jewish population of Europe) between 1941 and 1945. The Nazi regime also persecuted and murdered other groups, including in particular Roma people, disabled people, and LGBT people, as well as political opponents such as trade unionists. It is the most extensively documented genocide in human history, and it reveals the full range of human behaviour, from appalling acts of hatred, to remarkable acts of extraordinary courage.

The Holocaust raises profound questions about the human condition, making Holocaust Education a rich seam of material for independent enquiry, the examination of moral and human rights issues, and exploration of one of the central aspects of Curriculum for Excellence, i.e. what it means to be a responsible citizen. Crucially, Holocaust Education enables learning about racism and fascism and the dangers that each poses to human society. It has the potential to empower young people to use their voice, and have the courage to speak out about prejudice, hate and oppressive behaviour. By learning from the grave wrongs committed against humanity in the past, young people can be equipped to create a more cohesive society in the future.

"Silence helps the oppressors." — Leslie Meisels, Hungarian Holocaust survivor

It is crucially important to educate young people about other genocides, including for example the atrocities in Rwanda, Cambodia and Srebrenica, and explore common themes. An ambassador for the Holocaust Education Trust, giving evidence to a UK Parliament inquiry (reported in September 2016 – see Useful Links section) advocated drawing on the experience of survivors of other genocides, not to replace, but rather to complement the testimony of Holocaust survivors.

Guidance produced by the Education Working Group of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance states that "the Holocaust may constitute a starting point and the foundation for studying genocide [...] to compare the Holocaust to other genocides may be a means to alert young people to the potential danger for other genocides and crimes

against humanity to evolve today. This may strengthen an awareness of their own roles and responsibilities in the global community.”

This briefing however looks at current practice in Scotland as regards teaching about the Holocaust of the Jewish people during World War 2; members were not specifically asked about their practice in teaching other genocides.

Current practice in Scotland: Teaching about the Holocaust

The EIS gathered information from Local Association and Branch secretaries, Deans of Education, and from multi-establishment Learning Reps about approaches to Holocaust Education in their local settings. There is a wide range of good practice taking place in schools across Scotland. Some of the approaches described are set out below.

In Primary schools:

- P7 World War 2 topics often include Holocaust Education
- Literacy work with older pupils often uses texts about the Holocaust such as 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas' or 'I am David'; which then drives a wide range of cross-curricular work on the themes emerging.

In Secondary schools – subject specific approaches:

- In **English**, learners are, for example:
 - o studying various Holocaust related films and texts (e.g. Anne Frank's diary, 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas', 'Schindler's List', 'Nicky's Family', 'Paper Clips')
 - o learning about the Holocaust through the BGE English curriculum
 - o undertaking reflective and functional writing tasks about the Holocaust.
- In **Religious and Moral Education/Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies**, learners are, for example:
 - o engaging in Holocaust studies, one period a week for all S6, delivered through RME (one school's approach)
 - o engaging in a whole term course on the Holocaust as part of RMPS (one school's approach)
 - o learning about Judaism and Anti-Semitism during RME.
- In **Social Subjects** learners are, for example:
 - o spending an entire term learning about the Holocaust during S2 History (one school's approach)
 - o looking in History at how Jewish children were treated at school
 - o learning about the Holocaust as part of Higher History and National 5 curriculum
 - o looking at recent wars and genocides e.g. Darfur, Rwanda, Cambodia, in S4 Modern Studies
 - o in most Secondaries, studying the Holocaust (or related aspects) in S1/S2 History.
- In **Drama**, learners have, for example, been involved in:
 - o creating a pupil-led dramatisation of 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas'.
- In **Art**, learners have, for example, been involved in:
 - o making lanterns as remembrance objects during a themed Holocaust Memorial Week
 - o spending a whole term on art created in the concentration camps, propaganda and Jewish art
 - o looking at the art of Marianne Grant (a Holocaust survivor), during S3.

- In **Music**, learners are, for example:
 - o learning about Jewish music and composers.
- In **French**, learners are, for example:
 - o studying 'Au Revoir Les Enfants'.

Other approaches used in schools

There is a rich variety of engagement with Holocaust Education, in many forms, taking place in schools across Scotland.

Visits and Trips

- Some schools organise visits to synagogues on Open Doors Day
- Many schools take part in the 'Lessons from Auschwitz' programme, whereby two S6 pupils visit the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum in Poland and provide various forms of feedback in their community afterwards, e.g. giving talks to the Parent Council, speaking at assemblies, making displays of art and writing, helping with the delivery of History and RME courses; some authorities do this with all secondary schools
- Some schools organise trips to other former concentration camp sites, e.g. Sachsenhausen, with secondary RME pupils
- Some schools arrange visits to museums with relevant exhibitions, e.g. the St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art in Glasgow, or the Imperial War Museum in London.

Exhibitions

Members spoke of, for example,

- engaging with the Anne Frank exhibition - hosted in secondary schools, with pupils trained as tour guides
- hosting a 'Gathering the Voices' exhibition ('Gathering the voices' is a project based at Glasgow Caledonian University, gathering audio testimony of people who sought sanctuary in Scotland from the Nazis, with accompanying educational materials).

Special events

Members spoke of, for example,

- organising events around Holocaust Memorial Day (27 January, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz)
- arranging talks from a Holocaust survivor - in the school, or externally, e.g. at a special event in the Scottish Parliament; some schools hold such talks annually
- holding workshops for P6 pupils, led by Anne Frank ambassadors
- holding themed assemblies on this topic, including assemblies by pupils who have visited concentration camps
- in some authorities, holding annual events, e.g. Glasgow City Council, which has an annual event hosted by young people with survivor speakers
- using workshop sessions to prepare pupils for trips to concentration camps
- organising a cross-curricular week with a Holocaust Education focus, including the creation of a remembrance room in the school (which included pupil poems and reflective writing), holding a remembrance service, and the creation of a Tree of Life.

Dedicated programmes/charter mark schemes/awards

- Some schools participate in the 'Vision Schools' programme (a University of the West of Scotland initiative)
- Others addressing Holocaust Education through participation in the Rights Respecting Schools programme
- Some schools take part in the Anne Frank awards.

Parental engagement

Members spoke of, for example,

- holding parents' meetings in advance of former concentration camp trips
- inviting parents to relevant film screenings.

More ideas

Members spoke of, for example,

- creating a memorial within the school
- creating a mural within the school
- posing a Facebook challenge, where pupils find by research the name of a survivor and light a candle for them and pledge to keep their memory alive by sharing the information on social media
- working with a local cinema to organise film screenings
- engaging with theatre companies, e.g. the Citizens' Theatre Young Company 'Voices from the Holocaust' performance, which toured secondary schools
- engaging in staff development on Holocaust Education, sharing good practice
- making a DVD following a concentration camp visit and developing this as a learning resource, which was shared on GLOW
- building Holocaust Education into the local authority equality policy.

In **Further Education**, various approaches are taken to including Holocaust Education within programmes, for example,

- college students can take part in trips to former concentration camps
- the topic is studied in various subjects including History, English and other social subjects
- some colleges organise annual lectures by Holocaust survivors to cross-college groups, or other special events to mark Holocaust Memorial Day.

In **Higher Education**, various approaches are taken to including Holocaust Education within Initial Teacher Education programmes, for example,

- incorporating Holocaust Education into relevant modules e.g. 'Controversial Issues and Citizenship', Children's Literature, School and Professional Studies
- taking a small group of students to a 7-day seminar for teachers at Yad Vashem each June
- holding events on Holocaust Memorial Day
- arranging a full day conference provided by the Centre for Holocaust Education at UCL for third and fourth years
- holding 2-hour sessions with 'Gathering the Voices' project leaders for students
- including a lecture on Holocaust Education in a PGDE course.

Suggested texts

Texts that may be useful in teaching Holocaust Education include:

- "How Was it Humanly Possible?" by Irena Steinfeld
- "Holocaust Education: Challenges for the Future" by R.S.M. Carol Rittner
- "Through Our Eyes" by Itzhak B Tatelbaum
- "The Whispering Town" by Jennifer Elvgren
- "A Family Secret" by Eric Heuvel
- "Sophie Scholl and the White Rose" by Annette Dumbach
- "We Will Not Be Silent" by Russell Freedman
- "The Reader" by Bernhard Schlink
- "The Diary of a Young Girl", by Anne Frank
- "Anne's World" by the Anne Frank House
- "My Secret Camera: Life in Lodz Ghetto" by Frank Dabba Smith
- "Au Revoir Les Enfants" by Louis Malle
- "I am David" by Anne Holme
- "Understanding and Teaching Holocaust Education" by Dr Paula Cowan
- "When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit" by Judith Kerr
- "Return to Auschwitz" by Kitty Hart-Moxon.

The EIS would suggest to members that they exercise caution when undertaking Holocaust Education, given the sensitive nature of the subject, and the potential distress that can be caused by images of people who were killed in concentration camps, for example, or graphic descriptions of the camps. Teachers should use their professional judgment when planning age-appropriate Holocaust Education. Members are also encouraged to use a wide range of texts, and to avoid over-reliance on certain texts. (For example, 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas', which is widely used, has been criticised by some Holocaust Education experts for containing historical inaccuracies ('Understanding and Teaching Holocaust Education', Cowan and Maitles, 2016); they urge that fiction is considered alongside informational texts and historical enquiry.

Teachers should also be sensitive to the fact that some pupils and students may have relatives who experienced the Holocaust, and for them it is part of their family history. Similarly, teachers will want to be mindful that some pupils may have escaped more recent genocides or have lost family members to them.

It is the view of the EIS that in order to be equipped to offer high quality Holocaust Education teachers and lecturers should be supported with appropriate professional learning, as well as coverage of the Holocaust during Initial Teacher Education. Members who judge that it would inform and support their practice should seek out professional learning in this area as part of their 35-hour annual entitlement.

Establishment ethos: the backdrop to Holocaust Education

Holocaust Education should be part of a whole-establishment approach to promoting equality and inclusion and challenging discrimination and prejudice. Alongside discussing race, religion, sexual orientation and disability equality matters across the curriculum, establishments should also make concerted efforts to challenge prejudice on a range of other fronts, e.g. through robust systems for handling incidents of prejudicial behaviour.

Some schools may focus on Holocaust Education around Holocaust Memorial Day (27 January), but others choose to discuss it throughout the year. Schools should choose the approach that best suits their context, and which fits with existing improvement plans.

Policy and legal context

Holocaust Education is supported by the Scottish policy context within education and by equality legislation. Challenging Anti-Semitism and other forms of prejudice such as disability discrimination and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender reassignment can form part of an educational establishment's approach to meeting the terms of the Equality Act 2010. This law includes religion and belief among nine protected characteristics. It offers a wide range of protections from discrimination. This important legislation includes a Public Sector Equality Duty, which obliges local authorities and public bodies to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The promotion of equality is also supported by Curriculum for Excellence, the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000, and Getting it Right for Every Child (an aspect of the Children and Young People Act 2014). An equality lens can be applied to the SHANARRI indicators. Children who are educated in an environment that is inclusive and cohesive, where prejudicial attitudes are prevented and challenged are more likely to feel safe, healthy, respected, etc.

More information

For more information, please contact Jenny Kemp, National Officer (Education and Equality), email jkemp@eis.org.uk /Tel. (0131) 225 6244.

Useful links

Holocaust Education Resources

Holocaust Educational Trust
<https://www.het.org.uk/>

Holocaust Educational Trust film channel
<https://vimeo.com/user4861321>

UCL Centre for Holocaust Education
<https://www.holocausteducation.org.uk/>

Centre for Holocaust Education Teacher resources
<https://www.holocausteducation.org.uk/teacher-resources/>

Holocaust Memorial Day Trust
<http://www.hmd.org.uk/>

Open University - The Holocaust (Free 12-hour course)

<http://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/history/world-history/the-holocaust/content-section-0?active-tab=description-tab>

Anne Frank Trust: UK anti-prejudice education charity

<https://annefrank.org.uk/>

Imperial War Museum, London (has a very good permanent Holocaust Exhibition, 14+)

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/events/the-holocaust-exhibition>

National Holocaust Centre and Museum, Nottinghamshire (new centres in other locations under development).

<https://www.nationalholocaustcentre.net/>

Yad Vashem (the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre)

<http://www.yadvashem.org/>

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/>

'Gathering the Voices' – oral testimony from people who sought refuge in Scotland

<https://www.gatheringthevoices.com/>

Paperclips Project

<http://www.oneclipatatime.org/paper-clips-project/>

Vision Schools Programme

<https://www.uws.ac.uk/research/research-impact-influence/holocaust-education-vision-schools-scotland/>

Toolkit on the Holocaust and Human Rights Education in the EU

<http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/toolkit-holocaust-education/index.htm>

House of Commons Education Committee report on Holocaust Education (HC 480)

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmeduc/480/480.pdf>

Resources for teaching other genocides:

Short film, 'We Remember Rwanda', and Beacon School case study/lesson ideas

<https://www.holocausteducation.org.uk/beacon-school/st-johns-school-leatherhead/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kMHU9ItSlk>

International genocide prediction and prevention alliance

<http://genocidewatch.net>

UN report on teaching the Holocaust and other genocides (includes suggested sources):

http://www.un.org/en/holocaustremembrance/EM/partners%20materials/EWG_Holocaust_and_Other_Genocides.pdf

Case study

Many schools are engaged in good practice in Holocaust Education, and all schools should develop their own ideas about what is right for their pupils, taking into account the local context. It can be useful for schools in developing their ideas to learn about practice elsewhere: the case study below illustrates one approach to Holocaust Education.

Holocaust Education case study: Dyce Academy, Aberdeen

Dyce Academy's Holocaust Education Course won the 'Promoting Inclusion' award at the Children and Young People's Services Awards in September 2017. The course was recognised as a programme of excellence, with the awards committee stating, '*Dyce Academy's 'Holocaust Education' programme enables our young people to become leaders in using their voice to fight inequality, stand up to hatred and change the world in which they live*'.

The overall approach taken at Dyce is, S1/S2 focus on developing skills; S3/S4 on applying skills; and S5/S6 on leading learning.

S1 and S2: developing skills

In S1, pupils look at how the Holocaust happened. The content includes the spiral of discrimination – stages from 1-10; Anne Frank's diary; a book called 'Kitty's Return to Auschwitz'; learning about the SS St Louis and the Channel Islands occupation. In S2, pupils take part in an Oracy Project, undertaking research then doing a 5-minute TED talk. They learn about the paperclips project, in which a Tennessee school attempted to collect six million paper clips to try to give pupils a sense of the scale of the Holocaust. Dyce Academy asks students to think about how they could create a monument in their school that is about effecting change/tackling discrimination.

S3 and S4: applying skills

In S3 and S4, pupils begin applying skills. They put on a Holocaust Memorial Day event; take the message out to the community; and engage in drama projects using a play about the Lodz ghetto. One resource used is a supply of identity cards which tell people's stories. Children get information about their person weekly. Crucially, they don't find out until after several weeks of the programme if their person lived or not. The school holds two BGE trips, to Amsterdam and Berlin, visiting sites such as the Anne Frank House, a former concentration camp, the Wannsee conference site, and the 'Typography of Terror' SS Headquarters.

S5 and S6: leading learning

In S5 and S6, two pupils go to the Auschwitz Memorial and then become leaders of learning in this topic. They deliver an assembly about their trip and produce content for a local newspaper item; they also help to teach it in PSE.

More information: Mr John Naples-Campbell, Faculty Head (Expressive Arts), Dyce Academy (<https://dyceacademy.aberdeen.sch.uk/wp/>)

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