

Centre on Social and Political Risk

Antisemitism in Schools

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Key Finding

There has been a 173.3 per cent rise in antisemitic incidents of pupil misconduct, bullying, or harassment reported in schools over the last five years, with a 29.13 per cent rise in recorded antisemitic incidents in schools between 2021 and 2022.

Context and Need

Antisemitism is on the rise around the globe. Last year, the UK was identified as particularly at risk, with a 78 per cent rise in recorded physical assaults against members of the Jewish community since 2020.¹ A February 2022, Community Security Trust (CST) report showed that anti-Jewish hate crime rose by 34 per cent to 2,255 in 2021, the highest ever recorded in a single calendar year.²

The CST revealed that antisemitic incidents were reported to every single police region bar four.³ Despite this, very few reports of incidents emanating from schools have reached either the CST or the police. In 2014, the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) report on government action on antisemitism was released. It stated that concerns were raised about

1 The Centre for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, Antisemitism Worldwide Report 2021, available at: <https://cst.tau.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Antisemitism-Worldwide-2021.pdf>.

2 CST, Antisemitic Incidents Report, 2021, available at: <https://cst.org.uk/data/file/f/f/Incidents%20Report%202021.1644318940.pdf>.

3 CST, Antisemitic Incidents Report, January–June 2021, available at: <https://cst.org.uk/data/file/f/c/Incidents%20Report%20Jan-Jun%202021.1627901074.pdf>.

antisemitic incidents in schools, and one of the examples cited was children coming to school with 'I hate Jews' written in black ink across their knuckles.⁴ This paper seeks to investigate how many incidents of antisemitic behaviour have been recorded within British schools in the last five years and to propose how we can better safeguard both Jewish students and young people at risk of being drawn into antisemitism.

This study collates the number and nature of reported antisemitic incidences recorded in schools across the UK over the five-year period from 2017 to 2022. It also measures what proportion of schools had targeted policies to respond to antisemitism and whether incident reports were being shared with the CST and/or the police.

Research methodology

To collate this information, Freedom of Information Act (FOI) requests were sent to all secondary schools and further education colleges in England. A total of 3,335 FOI requests were sent to a database of schools obtained from the Department for Education (DfE) in a previous FOI request.

Requests were sent only to schools within England as education is devolved. Requests were sent only to state schools as private schools operated by limited companies or charities are not subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

Responses were received from 1,314 schools – meaning that the exercise had a 39.40 per cent response rate.

Each of the schools were asked the following questions:

- How many incidents involving pupil misconduct, bullying, or harassment, or similar events in which the term 'antisemitism' was recorded have there been on your school campus in each year for the last five years?
- Of these, how many (if any) of the recorded incidents involved reports of a physical assault?
- How many incidents involving pupil misconduct, bullying, or harassment, or similar events in which the term 'antisemitism' was recorded have been reported by the school to:
 - The Community Security Trust?
 - A police force?
- Does your institution have any internal documented processes and procedures that provide guidance to how to respond to antisemitic incidents that explicitly mentions 'antisemitism' or similar terms?

There was variety in the way in which schools opted to respond to the request. Some opted to break down the results by the year in which they occurred, while

⁴ Department for Communities and Local Government, Government Action on Anti-Semitism, December 2014, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/390904/Government_Action_on_Antisemitism_final_24_Dec.pdf.

others opted to provide all incidents in a combined figure for the previous five years.

In a very small number of cases, schools declined to specify the exact number of instances where recordable cases existed but the number of such cases was fewer than five. Where that was the case, a number of one was recorded. While it was not requested, some schools responded with additional qualitative data as some chose to share detailed case notes. Where qualitative data was shared, it was coded into different forms of antisemitic incidences, these being:

- Holocaust and Nazi related
- Israel/Palestine related
- Jewish conspiracy theories
- Not identifiable

Enquiries as to incident reports into other forms of discrimination were not requested. A comparative study that looks at the recording of another form of discrimination within their policy framework would help showcase the comparative levels of understanding and safeguarding from different forms of discrimination.

Results

The study identified a total of 1,077 antisemitic incidents over the five-year period considered of 2017-18 to 2021-2 (Table 1).

Table 1: Antisemitic incidents over the period 2017-22

Year	Number of antisemitic incidents	Year-on-year change %
2017-18	60	
2018-19	79	+31.67
2019-20	59	-25.32
2020-1	127	+115.25
2021-2	164	+29.13
Year not provided	588	
Total	1,077	173.33

A 173.33 per cent rise in antisemitic incidences over the five-year period was observed. With a 29.23 per cent rise in recorded antisemitic incidents in schools between 2020-1 and 2021-2. Over the five-year period, 13 incidents (1.2 %) involved reports of physical assault.

A total of 291 schools reported at least one instance of antisemitism, amounting to 22.1 per cent of reporting schools.

Over the five-year period, 79 incidents (7.42 %) were reported to the police.

Only one school reports having referred a case to the CST. Perhaps of note, is that this school had previously seen a student convicted of a terrorist offence for plotting to attack a synagogue and had worked at length with Prevent and Counter Terrorism Police in its response to that incident.

Of the schools that responded, 47 (3.40 %) stated that they did have a policy that specifically refers to antisemitism.

Some schools voluntarily shared case details. These case descriptions were then categorized into incidents that referred to Nazism and/or the Holocaust, Israel and Palestine, Jewish conspiracy theories, and not identifiable, an overwhelming 58 per cent were Holocaust or Nazi related; 1.5 per cent were Israel/Palestine Related; and 1.5 per cent referred to Jewish conspiracy theories.

The spike in incidences reported in 2020-2021 is similar to the spike seen in the CST national report into antisemitic hate incidences in the UK, which saw a 34 per cent increase in the number of antisemitic hate incidences recorded between 2020 and 2021, which it attributed to escalations in the conflict between Israel and Palestine.⁵

There is a significant variance in the number of cases reported. While the modal response was 1 incident over the five-year period, one school reported as many as 25 cases (Table 2).

Table 2: Top 10 schools by overall number of antisemitic incidents

Schools (identified as county/city)	Number of incidents from 2017-2022	Included a physical assault	Reported to the police
North London	29	1	0
Hampshire	25	0	0
Essex	21	0	0
Bristol (Somerset)	18	0	5
West Sussex	17	0	0
Bristol (Somerset)	17	0	0
Kent	17	0	0
Norfolk	15	0	0
Cornwall	14	0	2
Manchester	14	0	0

The marked rise in incidences is juxtaposed against the distinct lack of a specific policy being in place, setting out what antisemitism is. The high number of incidents reported at certain schools compared to zero incidents reported at others also points to a lack of a standardized approach of reporting across schools. A standardized approach is likely to see a much greater number of

⁵ CST, Antisemitic Incidents Report, 2021, available at: <https://cst.org.uk/data/file/f/f/Incidents%20Report%202021.1644318940.pdf>.

incidences reported. Adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism: “A certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”⁶ Embedding it into relevant Prevent and/or equality policy will help improve awareness of the issue. As would embedding an understanding of antisemitism into Prevent training for local authorities considered at risk from antisemitism.

When the national rise in antisemitic cases has been linked to escalating conflict between Israel and Palestine, the majority of detailed cases being Holocaust or Nazi related suggests a potential lack of accurate recording, possibly owing to a lack of a clear understanding amongst teachers as to how antisemitism can manifest itself. This requires further research. Embedding the IHRA definition of antisemitism within school policy and improving awareness training and awareness assessment of schools deemed at high risk will help improve the accuracy of incident reporting.

Current UK Approach to Teaching about and Safeguarding from Antisemitism

Safeguarding

Schools have a duty of care to protect all their pupils and provide a safe, healthy environment, and these obligations are highlighted in law. The Education Act 2002 Section 175 placed a legal duty on maintained schools and Local Authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Anti-Bullying Policy

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced guidance for all schools, including academies and free schools, which outlines its duties towards preventing and tackling bullying in schools.⁷

Section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 states that maintained schools must have measures to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst pupils. Some schools choose to include this information in an anti-bullying policy, whilst others include it in their behaviour policy.

Incidences of hateful behaviour towards pupils related to the nine protected characteristics⁸ listed within the Equalities Act 2010 are likely to fall within this

⁶ IHRA definition of Anti-Semitism, available at: <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>

⁸ Age; being or becoming a transsexual person; being married or in a civil partnership; being pregnant or having a child; disability; race including colour, nationality, ethnic or

remit. Where there is a threat of a particular hateful ideology being adopted the concern would fall within the remit of Prevent.

Prevent

In 2015, British schools were placed under a legal duty to work towards preventing young people from being drawn into terrorism, and to challenge extremist ideas that support, or are shared by, terrorist groups.⁹ As part of the legal duty, schools are asked to actively promote British values these are:

- Democracy
- The rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual respect
- Tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs¹⁰

Teaching on topics such as mutual respect and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs naturally should encompass challenging manifestations of intolerance such as antisemitism, anti-Muslim hate and racism for example.

In complying with the Prevent duty, all specified authorities, as a starting point, should:

- Demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the risk of radicalization in their area, institution, or body.
- With the support of Prevent co-ordinators and others as necessary, any local authority that assesses that there is a risk should develop a Prevent action plan.
- These local action plans will identify, prioritize, and facilitate delivery of projects, activities, or specific interventions to reduce the risk of people being drawn into terrorism in each local authority. Many of these projects and activities will be community based.¹¹

Prevent holds data on cases of individuals reported to them who are deemed vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. It does not specifically monitor instances of racism or intolerance, nor is that its purpose. Schools will have anti-bullying policies and an obligation to uphold protection of the nine protected characteristics listed within the Equalities Act 2010.

Where a concern falls within the remit of Prevent, Channel – the multi-agency

national origin; religion, belief or lack of religion/belief; sex; sexual orientation

9 Prevent Duty Guidance, 2021, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/revised-prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales>.

10 Promoting Fundamental British Values as Part of SMSC in Schools, November 2014, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/380595/SMSC_Guidance_Maintained_Schools.pdf.

11 Prevent Duty Guidance, 2021, section E, para. 42, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/revised-prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales>.

safeguarding panel – is set up to provide bespoke ideological intervention and support to draw the person away from extremism. Not all incidences of antisemitism will fall into Prevent’s bailiwick. For example, a student calling another student a ‘dirty Jew’ will fall within the school’s racism/anti-bullying policy; if the student also started drawing swastikas and making suggestions that Nazi ideology has merit then it would be a Prevent concern.

There is no current mechanism within the Department for Education for holding school incident reports on different forms of discrimination, however it could be a more appropriate place to hold this information. The DfE could then collate and analyse the data so that it could measure risk and streamline support.

Counter-Extremism

All publicly funded schools in England are required by law to teach a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, social, cultural (SMSC), mental, and physical development of pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of life. They must also promote community cohesion.¹²

Launched in 2015, the counter-extremism strategy set out to tackle extremism and build cohesion within communities, and was underpinned by a large fund intended for community organizations called the Building a Stronger Britain Together fund (BSBT). With the wrapping-up of the BSBT fund in 2020,¹³ Counter Extremism Coordinators within local authorities, tasked with helping find organizations tackling extremism and building cohesion, have mostly been removed. In March 2021, since the apparent wrapping-up of the counter-extremism practitioners within local authorities, Dame Sara Khan was appointed by Prime Minister Boris Johnson as the Independent Adviser for Social Cohesion and Resilience at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Dame Sara is working to understand the harm that extremism is causing to local communities, build resilience against it and provide better support for victims, local authorities, and civil society who are working to counter harmful extremist activity which is undermining social cohesion and our democratic freedoms.

Work around instilling British values to tackle extremism and build cohesion will naturally fall within this remit. It would appear the UK is at somewhat of an interlude and awaits further strategy to tackle non-violent extremism that could materially support tackling antisemitism in schools.

12 Department for Education, The National Curriculum in England, Framework Document, December 2014, section 2, para. 2.1, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/381344/Master_final_national_curriculum_28_Nov.pdf.

13 Home Office, Evaluation of the Building a Stronger Britain Together (BSBT) Programme: Understanding What Works in Countering Extremism, 2021, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1006832/Research_Report_125__BSBT_Programme_Report_2020__web.pdf.

Education

Teaching about the Holocaust is a compulsory part of the history curriculum in England at Key Stage 3 (KS3).¹⁴ Beyond teaching antisemitism within the framework of the Holocaust there is very little support specifically around antisemitism given to schools or requirements made of them.

In 2014, the DCLG's report on government action on antisemitism was released. It stated that concerns were raised about antisemitic incidents in schools, one of the examples cited was children coming to school with 'I hate Jews' written in black ink across their knuckles. It also detailed that the School Linking Network had been approached by a number of teachers asking for advice on how they can engage young people on this issue.¹⁵

International Practices Guides and Case Studies for Teaching on Antisemitism

UNESCO AND OSCE: 'Addressing Antisemitism through Education'

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) jointly developed a policy guide, entitled [Addressing Antisemitism through Education: Guidelines for Policymakers](#),¹⁶ which was first [presented](#) to the 28 Ministers of Education meeting at the Council of the European Union on 22 May 2018 and was [launched](#) on 4 June 2018 at UNESCO Headquarters. The policy guide suggests concrete ways to address antisemitism through education within a human rights framework rather than within history. It provides policymakers with tools and guidance to ensure that education systems build the resilience of young people to antisemitic ideas and ideologies.

The guide asserts that the role of governments is 'twofold', wherein they must ensure that education systems address antisemitism adequately and build students' 'resilience' to the issue. They should pay consideration to responding effectively to antisemitism in school and learning settings. Guidelines range from: specialized in pre- service to service training to teachers to integrating antisemitism as a human rights topic through a pedagogical approach.

The authors suggest that education to address antisemitism specifically should appear 'in official state or education ministry policy as a required or

14 Department for Education, History Programmes of Study: Key Stage 3 National Curriculum in England, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239075/SECONDARY_national_curriculum_-_History.pdf.

15 Department for Communities and Local Government, Government Action on Antisemitism, December 2014, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/390904/Government_Action_on_Antisemitism_final_24_Dec.pdf.

16 See: <https://en.unesco.org/news/addressing-anti-semitism-schools-unesco-and-osce-launch-frame-work-curricula-teacher-trainers>; and <https://www.osce.org/odihr/383089>.

encouraged topic that clearly supports [global citizenship education] GCED and human rights education'. Furthermore, they encourage the development of a rationale to teaching such concepts by aligning them with learning outcomes within the discipline they are taught, for example history and civic education.

Similarly, the European Parliament's Resolution on Combating Antisemitism encouraged Member States to review school textbooks to 'ensure Jewish history and contemporary Jewish life are presented in a comprehensive and balanced way and that all forms of antisemitism are avoided'.

The UNESCO/OSCE policy recommendation is of note in that it suggests teaching on antisemitism is not a topic exclusively to be taught within 'history' lessons but one that fits more readily within broader civic society or global citizenship education.

Recommendations

There has been a marked rise in antisemitism across the globe, and in the UK in particular. This report has shown an unprecedented rise in antisemitism in secondary schools and further education colleges in England. Educational institutions are identified as best placed to tackle discrimination; however, this report has shown that incidences of antisemitism have been on an unchecked, steep upward gradient. In the majority of cases, incidences have never been shared with a public body for monitoring purposes, and there was no knowledge therefore of where to direct support into raising awareness of the issue and tackling its manifestation. These recommendations address the clearly identified need to better monitor and tackle antisemitism within education.

The Secretary of State for Education

Should encourage schools to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism (including its examples)¹⁷ and embed this in their anti-bullying behaviour policy and their Prevent safeguarding policy.

Consider instructing Ofsted to factor into their school assessments a bespoke element that reflects the risks of antisemitism. Ofsted should consider requiring education staff working in areas where a higher risk for antisemitic incidents exists to show an understanding of what antisemitism is and how it may manifest itself.

Require all schools to report the number of incidences of antisemitism (as outlined in the IHRA definition) to the Department of Education annually. The Secretary of State should consider publishing these statistics annually as well

¹⁷ Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

as using them to devote resources to tackle antisemitism.

Establish a funding programme to provide specialist training to staff at schools with high numbers of antisemitic incidents.

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities

Local authority Prevent teams responsible for areas considered to be at high risk of antisemitic incidences need to ensure their Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP) includes specific reference to antisemitism as a form of discrimination frequently emanating from far right, far left and radical Islamist ideologies and what antisemitism may look like. As per part 'C' of the Prevent duty guidance.

Independent Advisor for Social Cohesion and Resilience

The Independent Advisor for Social Cohesion and Resilience should ensure her work involves understanding the harm antisemitism is causing local communities, build resilience against it, and provide better support for victims, local authorities, and civil society to counter antisemitism. This will include supporting local authorities and their employees in their understanding of antisemitism where it does not fall within the remit of Prevent and help foster good relationships between schools, antisemitism specialist civils society organizations, and the CST.

Educational Institutions

Raising awareness of antisemitism in schools should move from being under the current requirement within KS3 history to also be included within the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE)/citizenship classes.

Schools should draw from the UNESCO and OSCE best practice guide for teaching on antisemitism.