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Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref JH/00330/08

Cllr D.M. Gray
Caerphilly County Borough Council
Nelson Road
Tredomen
Ystrad Mynach
Hengoed
CF82 7WF

22nd March 2008

Dear Councillor Gray,

Thank you for your letter of 5 March concerning the Holocaust Memorial Day. I would want to assure you that the aims of the Day: *to ensure that the crimes against humanity committed during the Holocaust are never forgotten, and to promote a democratic and tolerant society that respects and celebrates diversity and is free of the evils of prejudice and racism* are ideals I take very seriously and I regard the day as an important one.

You will recall that in 2006 the First Minister accepted an invitation from the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust for Wales to host the national commemoration event in Cardiff. This event was held in the Millennium Centre and was jointly funded and organised by the Welsh Assembly Government and Cardiff Council in collaboration with the Trust. As part of that event a number of educational activities were developed and made available to the Learning Wales website. The First Minister expressed his support again this year although because the national event was not held in Wales the coverage of his message may not have been so prominent in the press, although local events were held in Wales.

It may be helpful to add information regarding ongoing opportunities presented in the revised school curriculum for pupils in Wales to learn about the Holocaust.

The history curriculum at Key Stage 2, for example, requires pupils to study life in a period of the twentieth century. The choice of period is one for each individual school to make, but many do choose to study aspects of the Second World War, and to refer to the Holocaust in a way appropriate to the age and abilities of their pupils.

At Key Stage 3, schools are required to teach aspects of twentieth-century world history. Again, the choice is one for the school to make, but many do choose to study the Second World War as one of the events which have shaped the modern world. As part of this study, they will have the opportunity to learn about the Holocaust.

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Additionally, the Framework for Personal and Social Education requires that each subject in the curriculum, as appropriate, sets out to develop PSE skills, attitudes and values. One of the main aims is for pupils to become active citizens; this will include fostering community cohesion and challenging discrimination.

These aspects of active citizenship are also taken up within Religious Education where teachers, who are familiar with dealing with challenging and controversial issues on a daily basis, deal with the sensitivities of exploring the religious beliefs, teachings and practice of the principal religions represented in Great Britain, including Judaism and Islam. The new Exemplar Framework for Religious Education is skills based and provides opportunities for pupils to explore fundamental questions raised by the world, human experience and religion. This allows teachers, if they so wish, to explore such fundamental questions as are raised by the Holocaust- questions about the nature of good and evil, hope and suffering, commitment and despair and the theology of the Holocaust.

By using flexible approaches which best meet the needs of individual schools and learners, pupils will have the opportunity to gain an understanding of these events, their causes and consequences, and the lessons we can learn from them.

I hope that this reassures you that our schools do have the opportunities to explore this important topic.

Best wishes,

Jane Hutt