

Yvette Berry MLA

Deputy Chief Minister
Minister for Early Childhood Development
Minister for Education and Youth Affairs
Minister for Housing and Suburban Development
Minister for Women
Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence
Minister for Sport and Recreation

Member for Ginninderra

RESPONSE TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Questions on Notice Paper No 43

7 June 2024

Question No. 1971

MR BRADDOCK MLA: To ask the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs—

- (1) What policies and guidance have been put in place to support teachers and other school staff in their engagement with children when the subject of Israel, Palestine and Gaza arises in the school environment.
- (2) Can the Minister provide any such policies or guidance referred to in part (1).

MS BERRY MLA - The answer to the Member's questions are as follows:

- (1) The *Education Act 2004* provides direction in relation to secular education and religion in government schools. The Education Directorate's Safe and Supportive Schools Policy provides guidance to schools to ensure they have processes and policies in place to value diversity and promote positive social behaviour within their school and wider community, and to build the capabilities of students to engage in respectful relationships. The Working Together With Your School Code of Conduct outlines acceptable behaviour of students, staff, parents and visitors to ACT public schools.

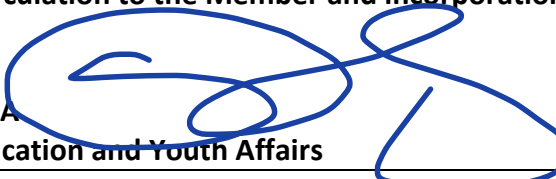
There is no specific policy for teachers or school staff in relation to their engagement with children when the subject of Israel, Palestine and Gaza arises in the school environment. However, the Education Directorate has provided guidance and information to all staff about wellbeing services and resources available for those affected by distressing events such as the effects of the devastating events happening in the Middle East. This advice was provided by the Education Directorate's Deputy Director-General in October 2023, acknowledging the particularly distressing time for staff, students, families, and carers who have extended family and friends in Israel and Gaza, and those with connections to the region, but also for students with a history of trauma, including students from a refugee background.



(2) The Safe and Supportive Schools Policy and [Working Together With Your School Code of Conduct](#) are available on the Education Directorate website.

Additional guidance and information provided from the Directorate to schools includes:

- a. Reaching out to affected students and families – schools are encouraged to be aware of those students and families with connections to the region and ensure they have access to appropriate wellbeing supports, including access to their school wellbeing network. This may include the school psychologist, wellbeing coordinator, or a social/youth worker.
- b. eSafety Commissioner – schools can access the eSafety Commissioner website for a range of materials to help staff and families have conversations about what they are seeing online, including information about how to report graphic and inappropriate material through the esafety online report.
- c. Resources to support young people and their families – this includes information about a range of helpful resources to support schools to respond to students’ trauma disclosures and reactions, and resources for students and families dealing with trauma and responding to tragedy.
- d. Support for staff – schools are encouraged to check in with their staff and encourage conversations with one another. Staff can access support through the Employee Assistance Program, or a range of external supports available for both staff and students such as MindMap, headspace, Kids Helpline, Lifeline, and Beyond Blue. Schools are encouraged to reach out to the Education Directorate Wellbeing team if they require additional advice or support.

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| Approved for circulation to the Member and incorporation into Hansard. | |
|  Yvette Berry MLA Minister for Education and Youth Affairs | Date <u>28/08/24</u> |
| This response required 2hrs 55mins to complete, at an approximate cost of \$276.15 | |