

# Considerations for Schools in Supporting Pupils and Staff at times of International Conflict

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THE CHURCH  
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Supporting pupils and staff through devastating international news regarding current events can be a challenging and sensitive task. As part of our core principles that underpin our commitment to education<sup>1</sup>, here are some considerations to help you provide support.

<sup>1</sup> Church of England Vision for Education *Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good* (2016)

### **Collective Worship**

The natural rhythm and use of collective worship can provide opportunities to address big issues and enable quiet reflection and prayer. Collective worship should aim to create inclusive and invitational spaces where the whole school community can reflect on and respond to the human cost of international conflict.

### **Open Communication**

Create safe spaces for open and honest conversations. Encourage pupils to express their thoughts and feelings. Be a good listener and avoid interrupting or passing judgment.

### **Age-Appropriate Information**

Tailor the information to the child's age and maturity level. Younger pupils may need simpler explanations, while older students may be able to handle more complex discussions.

### **Provide Accurate Information**

Ensure that the information you provide is accurate and balanced. Help them understand the historical and geopolitical context of the situation. Use reliable news sources to gather information.

### **Empower Critical Thinking**

Encourage critical thinking and analysis. Help young pupils to question and think critically about the information they encounter. Teach them how to evaluate news sources and recognise bias.

### **Address Emotions**

Acknowledge their emotions, whether it's fear, sadness, anger, or confusion. Offer empathy and understanding, and let them know it's normal to have strong feelings in response to distressing events.

### **Promote Perspective**

Encourage a broader perspective by discussing how conflicts can affect all parties involved, including innocent civilians. This can help foster empathy and reduce the "us vs. them" mentality.

### **Promote Peaceful Solutions**

Discuss the importance of peaceful dialogue and conflict resolution. Emphasise the value of diplomacy and working towards peaceful solutions to international conflicts.

### **Balance Hope and Reality**

While it's essential to acknowledge the gravity of the situation, also highlight positive stories, actions, or ways individuals and communities are coming together to address global challenges.

### **Monitor Exposure**

Be mindful of the amount of news and graphic content pupils are exposed to. Limit exposure to distressing images or constant news updates, as it can be overwhelming.

### **Encourage Courageous Advocacy**

For older pupils, help them channel their emotions into positive actions such as raising awareness, supporting organisations that promote peace, or engaging in peaceful advocacy.

### **Self-Care**

Teach pupils self-care techniques to manage stress and emotions, such as prayer, mindfulness, meditation, and physical activity. Ensure they have access to emotional support from trusted friends, family members, or mental health professionals if needed.

### **Involve Parents**

Communicate with parents about what you're discussing in the classroom. This helps them continue these conversations at home.

### **Stay Informed Together**

Keep yourself informed about the situation so you can have informed discussions. This can also help you answer their questions and address their concerns.

### **Safeguarding Measures**

It's crucial to prioritise the safety and well-being of pupils, both physically and emotionally. Ensure that they know how to seek help if they or someone they know is in immediate danger. Teach them to recognise and report any signs of discrimination, harassment, or bullying related to international events, whether in person or online. Additionally, encourage parents and carers to monitor their online activities to ensure they are not exposed to harmful content or interactions. Provide/revisit lessons about internet safety and responsible social media use.

### **Seek Professional Help**

If a pupil is showing signs of severe distress, anxiety, or depression, consider seeking the help of a mental health professional who specialises in children and adolescents. Remember that every pupil is different, and the level of support they need may vary. Your role is to provide a safe and understanding environment for them to process their emotions and thoughts while also helping them develop a balanced and informed perspective on global events.

### **Important external links**

[Political impartiality in schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Educate Against Hate](#)

[Community Security Trust](#) publish resources that support understanding and identifying antisemitism.

[Tell Mama](#) provides a support service for those affected by anti-Muslim incidents.

For anyone in the UK who feels impacted by international conflict, [Victim Support is available online](#) on 0808 168 9111 (free and available 24/7).

To discuss concerns in your particular context further, please contact your DDE (Diocesan Director of Education).

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