

One group of parents' campaign and its outcome:

- **An article from the Halifax Courier**, showing the **outcome** of a very successful campaign to challenge a junior school's position on Palestine.
- **A series of letters written by one parent on behalf of a large group of parents**, using the school's hierarchical structure to good effect and clearly voicing Parents' concerns and youngsters' distress at the punitive measures taken against some children on non-uniform day. The parents cited precedents in the school (eg Ukraine) and wider issues of basic rights to support children wanting to share their concerns, voice their views and form opinions in a safe space with supportive staff.
- **The campaign group sought out supportive external agents** (in this case a Councillor) to add leverage.

Together, these illustrate the power and influence parents can exercise to change a school's positions on Palestine.

ARTICLE IN THE LOCAL PRESS AT THE END OF THE CAMPAIGN:

"Mount Pellon Primary Academy: Halifax school apologises after row breaks out over children wearing pro-Palestine clothing on non-uniform day." ([Click here](#) to see original posting)

A Halifax primary school has been at the centre of a row over children wearing clothing in support of Palestine.

By Sarah Fitton Published 8th Dec 2023,

Mount Pellon Primary Academy, on Battinson Road, has come under fire from some parents after asking children to remove T-shirts and hooded tops that showed the Palestinian flag and messages of support for the people there during a non-uniform day.

The non-uniform day was being held in aid of causes helping people in both Palestine and Israel

In a video being shared widely on social media, a young Halifax boy originally from Palestine who attends Mount Pellon says he went into school wearing a top saying "I'm from Palestine and I'm proud of it".

He said he was one of the youngsters asked to remove his top by a teacher.

The school has apologised for the upset caused.

A spokesperson for Northern Education Trust, which Mount Pellon Primary Academy is part of, said: "As a trust, we apologise for the hurt that some parents and children have felt over the last few weeks.

"This never was and never would be our intention.

"We recognise that this is a very upsetting time for many families and our intention throughout this whole period has been to try and maintain a settled environment in school where children can concentrate on their learning.

"We very much want to have positive relationships with parents and have today had a number of discussions with some parents and representatives from the local community to suggest ways in which the school and parents can work together more positively in the future."

Further coverage can be seen [here](#) in "Asian Express Newspaper"

Selected correspondence: Parents to the Exec Principal of the local primary school concerned.

Subject: Urgent - Non uniform day Friday 24th November 2023 Mount Pellon Primary Academy

From: one parent with 20 other co-signatories.

Dear Executive Principal

I write to you to express my deep concerns and utter disappointment which I share with many other parents of children at Mount Pellon Primary about what has occurred today involving our children.

Firstly, we would like to thank you for holding a non-uniform day in aid for fundraising for Gaza and Israel just as you did for Ukraine, except it was only one-sided when you fundraised for just Ukraine alone.

A non-uniform day means students are allowed to wear clothes other than the school uniform. This may include non-uniform days to raise money and awareness for charities, or as a form of reward, or when on school trips. However, today's non-uniform day has caused distress to our children and our parents.

Children have been targeted in school for wearing a shirt/hoody that says "Palestine." There have been no slogans.

The Headteacher at Mount Pellon has threatened to discipline our children if they continue to wear clothing that has anything to do with Palestine.

Wearing a Palestine top is not political any more than wearing a football shirt that says England or Brazil, and there is no mention of this on the Mount Pellon's website under the uniform policy.

This is a right that every adult and child in this country has, a right to the freedom of expression. We are not abusing anything by exercising our rights.

Additionally, we are utterly displeased at the approach of leadership and the message you are sending out to the children and families.

Children are free to hold opinions and ideas, to share them and not be afraid to talk about anything they wish to; in fact, as a school, you should be able to support the student.

As a head teacher and yourself as executive principle, you are in breach of Human Rights Law and the right to Freedom of Expression.

It is important to note that the right to freedom of expression is a fundamental human right, protected by various international conventions and laws [e.g. Article 10 HRA 1998].

This right encompasses the ability to express one's political beliefs. Children, too, have rights. A child under Article 13 has the same rights as an adult under Article 10: the right to have and express their views and ideas in writing or in art form and in every other form of expression.

Schools must uphold these rights. You cannot suppress the expression of political views.

At our school, staff should foster an environment of open dialogue and understanding. This can be achieved through educational initiatives, such as organising discussions or workshops that promote tolerance, empathy, and respectful communication among students and staff.

A school /classroom should be a safe space for children, to make mistakes and to learn from their mistakes, and channel their passions, not to be silenced and most definitely not a place where the rights of children are taken away. To silence children who simply identify that there is a Palestine is absolutely outrageous.

We are prepared to seek legal advice and escalate our concerns to Ofsted and contact Calderdale Council, our local councillors and MP, and the Chair of Governors.

I hope you understand the gravity of this situation and how much emotional distress and offence you have caused us on non-uniform day today by separating certain children from the class and normal school learning. How is this behaviour from the staff acceptable? Did the head teacher not think about the impact on the child's mental health well-being by putting the child to one side and making that child feel "different" to a child that wore other colours or clothing?

The Equality Act 2010 says education providers such as schools, colleges and universities mustn't discriminate against their students and treated unfairly.

In this case children were treated unfairly.

We understand the challenges the school faces with limited resources and appreciate your efforts in managing these constraints.

We hope you can understand we are not causing any racial hate, disruption to learning, or malicious communication; instead, we are exercising our legitimate right which exists in accordance to the law in this country.

I would appreciate your immediate attention to this matter and hope to resolve our concerns and expect a response via email as soon as possible.

Same parents to the next level in the hierarchy of the school: CEO and Deputy CEO of the Academy Trust

I hope this email reaches you well.

I am writing on behalf of concerned parents, many of whom are unsure as to what the school is doing to help provide assistance to the victims of the atrocities currently taking place in Gaza as I write this very email.

We, the parents, have always appreciated the efforts made by Mount Pellon to foster a sense of empathy and community engagement among the children, especially most recently when we raised funds for Ukraine. I personally believe this was a great gesture as it taught children about the importance of compassion and empathy for other children suffering around the world through no fault of their own.

However, let's be clear on how the trust made the decision to fund raise for Ukraine and hold a non-uniform day. During our last conversation & email regarding fund raising for Syria, you told me that the CEO had visited a number of academies and had a discussion with students who shared their concerns on the situation in Ukraine and from there the decision was made to hold a non-uniform day in aid of and to support the victims. You also told me that, as a trust you are supportive of ANY appropriate charities and regularly raise money for a variety of causes. In this instance you have failed, as a trust, to recognise other communities and the feelings and emotions of these communities.

Unfortunately, given recent developments in Palestine, many of the parents feel that the school has not employed the same strategies to raise awareness and funds for those suffering there, which is deeply upsetting.

We believe that the school, as a pillar of the community, has a vital role to play in providing assistance and raising awareness about this crisis. The Prime minister has also confirmed that the United Kingdom will be providing aid to the people in Gaza, so the fact that we as a school have not already implemented any measures to do the same is astounding and fails to acknowledge the suffering of these innocent victims.

In light of our concerns, we kindly request information the school may have for all parents/ families and to support our children in school. I hope you can understand that many parents, families and children share these feelings and want to discuss them. All children should have a voice and feel confident in sharing their concerns and difficult issues with staff members and should be listened to and respected.

We believe that our school can make a significant impact by organizing fundraising events, and non-uniform days. I can personally vouch for One Nation Charity based in Batley; going forward, if you would like more information I'm more than happy to help.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Same parents to local Councillor:

Subject: "Urgent - Primary School discrimination over Palestine"

I am a constituent of your ward. I am writing to you today in my capacity as a parent of children at Mount Pellon Primary Academy and on behalf of many parents who share the same concerns as myself.

We want to make you aware of serious concerns regarding basic Human Rights of adults and children being violated by the leadership at this school relating to the ongoing war taking place in Gaza. We believe that the school, as a pillar of the community, has a vital role to play in providing assistance and raising awareness about this crisis but the reality is children and parents have been threatened to be sanctioned if there is any mention of "Palestine".

Emails have been sent to [Headteacher] and [Executive Principle for the Trust] from many parents who feel that the school has not employed strategies to raise awareness and funds for those suffering which is deeply upsetting and rather silencing our children.

Furthermore, the school held a non-uniform day yesterday [Friday 24th November] and children have been targeted in school for wearing a shirt/hoody that says "Palestine." There have been no slogans.

The headteacher threatened to discipline our children if they continue to wear clothing that has anything to do with Palestine. Wearing a Palestine top is not political any more than wearing a football shirt that says England or Brazil, and there is no mention of this on the Mount Pellon's Website under the uniform policy.

These particular families were contacted and told children would be excluded or would be in isolated during learning, lunch and break. This is disgraceful: the school also highlights the importance of ensuring that our children are always safe and happy every day, in their place of learning, and to respect the rights of individuals. However, I feel in our case our children have been treated unfairly and disrespected. We feel this is institutional abuse from the headteacher and a breach of Human Rights Act 1998.

As parents, we want our children to be supported in a school that upholds strong and ethical beliefs that align with exhibiting compassion and empathy.

We would very much like to meet you to discuss this matter further and hope you are able to help us as concerned parents & residents and to resolve this matter promptly.

Councillor to Head teacher cc CEO of the Trust

I am an elected councillor, and also Cabinet Member on Calderdale Council. Many years ago, I had some involvement with your school, when I was asked to encourage the development of positive engagement

between parents and the school, because at the time it was felt that this would be critical to the future success of the school.

So, I was saddened to learn over the weekend that some parents at the school were very unhappy at what they felt was the unfair treatment of their children on non-uniform day last Friday.

I met with some parents last night, who explained to me that they had written to you setting out their concerns and are still awaiting a response.

I explained the necessity for all schools and local authorities to abide by legally enforceable government guidance on political impartiality. However, I was disturbed to learn of the impact on their children of their treatment on Friday. I fear that this may well have the opposite effect of what may have been intended, stoking resentment rather than diminishing it.

So, I am writing to encourage the school to respond positively to the request from these parents that you meet with them as soon as possible, to develop a positive and constructive way forward.

I can confirm that (lead parent) and the other parents whom I met last night had a good and respectful discussion with me about their concerns.

I do hope that it will be possible to develop some positive engagement with these parents, who like you, just want what is best for their children in these difficult times.

Kind regards,