

March 2009 – Adar 5769

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THE BOARD OF DEPUTIES
OF BRITISH JEWS
Established 1760

Board of Deputies of British Jews
Bulletin Board

This is *your* community . . . March 2009 - Adar 5769

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Board's 'Shared Futures' in Action



Representatives from the Board of Deputies, the Church of England's Education Department, the Pears Foundation and the Tony Blair Faith Foundation have visited a Jewish Primary School this week to see the Board's **'Shared Futures'** schools linking programme in action.

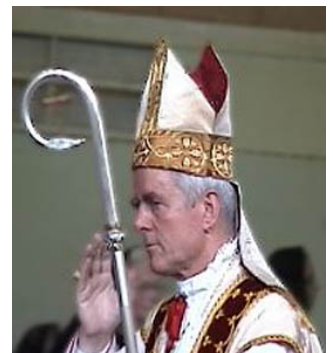
Shared Futures was established to encourage Jewish schools to develop links with other schools in their areas, to build respect and understanding between young people of different faiths. As such, Shared Futures' programmes – made possible with the generous support of the Pears Foundation – have received praise from Ofsted, in helping schools deliver these aspects of the school curriculum. North West London Jewish Day School hosted pupils from the nearby Christchurch CofE Primary School for a day of activities in which Jewish pupils taught their guests about the story of Purim, played games of football and rounders and decorated masks in keeping with the themes of Purim.

A total of 12 Jewish schools have so far been involved in the project, with an equivalent number of partner schools. "Through Shared Futures," commented Board Chief Executive Jon Benjamin, "we can find ways in which our schools are comfortable to engage on their terms, whilst at the same time demonstrating that faith schools are not insular and inward looking, but in fact promote values that are important to society as a whole."

Board Expresses 'Outrage' over Williamson

At February's Board Meeting on the 15th February, a motion was passed regarding the comments of Richard Williamson (pictured) who has questioned the number of Jews that died in the Holocaust and the existence of gas chambers in concentration camps.

The motion states that the Board, "*while understanding the efforts of the Church to heal internal divisions, expresses its outrage at the decision of the Vatican to lift the excommunication of the so-called Bishop Richard Williamson, a known and unrepentant exponent of Holocaust Denial.*" It also calls upon the Vatican to act quickly to heal any damage to Catholic-Jewish Relations.



Board Looks Toward Better Muslim Jewish Relations

At a meeting convened by Board President Henry Grunwald QC (pictured), Jewish groups acknowledged the importance of re-building and further developing ties with Muslim communities, notwithstanding tensions caused by the recent conflict in Gaza.



Whilst the Gaza conflict had posed a serious challenge to relations and that some interfaith activity had been affected, a number of fruitful dialogues were continuing, and that many British Muslims were still receptive to engagement. In some cases Muslim groups had been even more eager to engage in dialogue since the conflict began. This included the proposed visit of the Board's Jewish way of life exhibition to an Muslim community centre in Bradford. Participants shared ideas about potential and current initiatives and agreed on the need for better information sharing in the months ahead. In particular, the Board plans to consider with synagogal organisations the possibility of a synagogue/mosque twinning project.

Other issues we've been working on this month...

- **Letters to Major Supermarket Chains** – The Board's President has written to all of the major supermarket chains to determine their position on sourcing produce from Israel, in the face of calls for boycotts from anti-Israel protesters. So far we have received encouraging replies from several chains including Sainsburys, Waitrose, Aldi, the Co-op and Marks & Spencer.
- **Alan Sennit Community Leadership Programme** – This new project, facilitated by the Board, brings together Immanuel College, Guru Nanak Sikh Secondary School, Watford Boys Grammar and Nower Hill High School and aims to train selected students in leadership activities and social action projects.
- **Letter for the Iranian Baha'i Community** – The President has written to the Foreign Secretary, David Miliband to call for the UK Government to take action to protect the Seven Baha'i leaders who have been detained by Iran.
- **Durban Review Conference** – As the conference approaches, the Board has been working tirelessly as part of the JHRC-UK to ensure that it is not dangerously politicised. The final declaration of the conference still contains text which is unacceptable regarding the conflict in the Middle East and freedom of speech. Following Canada and Israel's withdrawal, the United States has now announced a qualified withdrawal from the process and we are seeking clarification on the position of the British government who have been very supportive of our position so far.

The logo of The Board of Deputies of British Jews, featuring a seven-pointed star with a menorah inside, surrounded by the text 'THE BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF BRITISH JEWS' and 'Established 1760'. To the right of the logo is a list of topics: education • defence • shechita • government consultations • co-existence international affairs • regions • employment • advocacy heritage • interfaith campaigns • community issues • charity law • antisemitism • representation outreach • medical ethics • research • family law • Israel • disability rights media • schools • advocacy • diaspora • campus • marriages • brit milah. Below the list is the tagline '...working for your community.' The background is blue with a pattern of small white stars.