



## Nonpartisan Policy

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| <b>Reviewed by:</b>        | Henrietta Jordan, Regional Schools Director |
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| <b>Approved by:</b>        | Tracey Storey, CEO                          |

Melrose Education (and its subsidiaries) is a nonpartisan organisation and takes its statutory duties in relation to political impartiality seriously. As such our schools do not support or oppose any political party and we expect all staff to adhere to this policy.

Our legal duties in this regard are set out in Part 2 of the [Schedule to the Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

Our legal duties on political impartiality do not supersede other statutory requirements, and we, therefore, take a reasonable and proportionate approach to ensuring political impartiality, alongside our other responsibilities.

This includes legal requirements under the:

- Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty for state-funded schools)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Prevent Duty (The Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015)

We also actively promote the fundamental British values of:

- democracy
- the rule of law
- individual liberty
- mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs

Further details about how we promote these British Values can be found in our policy. The guidance on political impartiality does not seek to limit the range of political issues and viewpoints schools can and do teach about. Therefore, teaching about political issues, the different views people have, and the ways learners can engage in our democratic society is an essential part of our broad and balanced curriculum. It is an important way in which we can support learners to become active citizens who can form their own views, whilst having an understanding and respect for legitimate differences of opinion.

As per the [teachers' standards](#), our staff ensure that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit learner's vulnerability or might lead them to break the law. Our teachers are aware they can also be subject to a prohibition order if their actions or behaviours undermine fundamental British Values.

As such, staff will not promote any partisan views about political or controversial topics. Our nonpartisanship seeks to maintain the integrity of the company while encouraging involvement of young people, as individuals, in local and national government and the political process. We encourage young people and learners to participate in the political process by offering choice, looking at issues and comparing parties.

### **Terminology**

*The legislation surrounding political impartiality "...forbid[s] the promotion of partisan political views."*

Case law on the subject suggests that the best synonym for the term 'partisan' is 'one-sided' and suggested that 'political views' are those expressed with a political purpose, such as to further the interests of a particular partisan group, change the law or change government policy. This could be on a wide range of matters such as economic and social issues at a local, national, or international level.

Staff are aware 'partisan political views' are not limited to just political parties. They may also be held by campaign groups, lobbyists, and charitable organisations.

Where partisan political views – or material which promote these – are covered as part of teaching a broad and balanced curriculum, we ensure that these are presented with the appropriate context, which supports a balanced presentation of opposing views. This allows us to teach about partisan political views effectively, without breaching our legal duties on political impartiality.

What is prohibited in the legal duties is promoting partisan political views to learners. This means encouraging their support for, or the adoption of, these views.

Staff must therefore:

*"...take such steps as are **reasonably practicable** to secure that, where **political issues** are brought to the attention of learners, they are offered a **balanced presentation of opposing views**".*

Some topics may not directly require the presentation of a political issue, but teaching may lead to presenting political issues that relate indirectly to the curriculum content.

**For example** - teaching about climate change and the scientific facts and evidence behind this, would not constitute teaching about a political issue. Schools do not need to present misinformation, such as unsubstantiated claims that anthropogenic climate change is not occurring, to provide balance here.

However, where teaching covers the potential solutions for tackling climate change, this may constitute a political issue. Different groups, including political parties and campaign groups, may have partisan political views on the best way to address climate change.

This part of the topic should be taught in a balanced manner, with teachers not promoting any of the partisan political views covered to learners.

**Age-appropriate teaching** - decisions about how to teach about a political issue in line with legal duties on political impartiality will consider the age, developmental stage, and existing knowledge of learners.

It may not be possible to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views or avoid inadvertently promoting partisan political views, where learners are not old enough to understand the distinction between relevant contested views and facts.

In these instances, we will use our reasonable judgement as to whether teaching would be age appropriate.

Where political issues are covered with younger learners, staff will consider how they might be taught differently compared to older age groups. This could include teaching younger learners about more general factual content, whilst older learners could be presented with a more comprehensive overview, including contested partisan political views and claims – with both being taught in a balanced manner.

**Expressing personal opinions** - teachers and other staff have a responsibility to ensure that they act appropriately particularly in the political views they express.

Teachers and staff are not prohibited from expressing their own views on political issues that are being taught to learners. However, staff must be mindful there is a risk that doing so could sometimes amount to promoting a partisan political view or compromise the balanced presentation of opposing views. Teachers and staff are in a position of authority and will typically be respected and trusted by the learners they teach, giving their personal opinions greater weight and credibility.

As a general principle, staff should avoid expressing their own personal political views to learners unless they are confident this will not amount to promoting that view to learners.

Where staff do share their personal political views, they must ensure that this is not presented as fact and note that there are opposing views which learners may wish to consider.

**Using external agencies** - external agencies, including charitable organisations, can help to enhance and supplement both the delivery of the curriculum and wider school activity.

Extreme care will be taken to ensure that any external agencies used, as well as any materials and communication with learners, are appropriate and in line with our legal duties on political impartiality. Ultimately, our schools remain responsible for what is said to their learners.

**During political events** - during periods of heightened political activity and sensitivity, including around elections or in the aftermath of significant political events, staff must be mindful to avoid activity within the school that could be construed as promoting a particular partisan view.

Teachers and staff can continue to discuss political issues, including political parties, movements, and protests, that may be relevant to learners. However, this must be done in a balanced manner and not involve promoting partisan political views on the issue.

**Public displays and communications** – we are mindful of our requirements on political impartiality in public displays, such as banners and posters in public view and other communications. This includes electronic communications such as school-branded social media and as such no political statements should be made by staff through this medium.

Public displays and communications, to mark significant awareness-raising or community events or for other reasons, may still be permitted, provided they do not

promote partisan political views. Authorisation for displays of this type must be sought from the principal.

**Concerns about political impartiality** - any concerns about political impartiality at our school, should be raised through the usual concerns and complaints process.