

History: all secondary schools to have a Holocaust expert

300 schools to become Holocaust specialists



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£1.5m national programme will train a teacher from every secondary school in England

Hundreds of schools across the country are to become specialist centres of Holocaust education under a national scheme launched today.

The plan, which will be rolled out in 300 schools, forms part of the new £1.5 million Holocaust education programme run by London University's Institute of Education.

As The TES revealed in November, the Holocaust Education Development Programme will provide extensive specialist training for 3,500 teachers - one from every secondary in England.

The first cohort of 150 will attend a one-day workshop in London at the beginning of November and a second workshop three weeks later. This will be followed by similar sessions in Liverpool. The training will then be introduced across the country over the next two years.

From these teachers, 300 will be able to follow up their training with a masters degree module in Holocaust education. Their schools will then become designated beacons of excellence in the subject.

The masters module, which will be delivered online, will be free to participating teachers. The cost will be covered jointly by the Pears Foundation and the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Stuart Foster, director of the programme, said: "Professional development can be quite short-lived. We want it to be a continuous process rather than people going away and forgetting about it."

The specialist teachers will co-ordinate Holocaust education in their schools. Often, the subject is discussed during history, English, RE and citizenship, but with little collaboration between staff.

"Are those teachers working together?" Dr Foster said. "Is there a sense of collaboration in schools? Often, planning is a little bit arbitrary. We want schools to think about how they organise their curriculum."

The Holocaust specialists will also pilot new teaching materials and provide feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Eventually, they will work with local authorities, bringing co-ordinated Holocaust education into all local schools.

They will also liaise with teachers across the country as part of an online network supporting the national training programme.

Paul Salmons, the programme's head of curriculum and development, said: "One of the greatest assets of the programme will be this pool of teachers with classroom expertise, ideas and knowledge. They will really

immerse themselves in cutting-edge research into Holocaust history and education.”

At present the Holocaust forms a compulsory part of the national curriculum, but teachers often find it a difficult subject to teach effectively.

“You’re talking about mass murder - some of the worst atrocities humans are capable of,” Mr Salmons said. “That can be very disorientating and distressing for young people. We’re looking at how to move them, without traumatising them.

“Teachers want to encourage deep reflection about the Holocaust, but not revulsion, horror and disgust. The key is to enhance learning, not to shock.”

Judith Vandervelde, an educator at the Jewish Museum in London, agrees that there is an urgent need for effective methods of teaching about the Holocaust in schools.

“The understanding that pupils get through face-to-face interaction with Holocaust survivors is quite incredible,” she said. “But they’re not going to be here for ever.

“We have to look into how we’re going to continue to have that connection without survivors speaking to pupils. We need to look ahead a few years and make Holocaust education tangible and accessible.”

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