

This review was commissioned by Cabot Learning Federation following discussion with the Department for Education to examine the circumstances around the postponement of a visit by the local MP.

The review was carried out by Dame Joan McVittie, a retired headteacher. Dame Joan was appointed as Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in the 2013 New Year Honours for services to education. Since her retirement from schools she has worked as an independent education consultant.

## Summary

The visit by the MP to Bristol Brunel Academy was planned for Friday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2025. This visit did not take place and was postponed because of a threat of a protest at the school.

Three senior leaders from the Cabot Learning Federation made the decision to postpone the visit. The reviewer did not find evidence of external or internal groups which influenced this decision. The decision was based solely on safeguarding and health and safety grounds for students, staff and the MP. The school leadership had not followed their own procedure for visitors, as the MP had already visited six other schools in the trust without incident and was known to the trust. Checks on social media which form part of the academy's Visitor's Procedure may have alerted Bristol Brunel Academy much earlier to the potential threat. The MP's Bristol office, who communicated with Bristol Brunel Academy prior to the visit, had cooperated with other schools in the trust on six previous visits and so did not anticipate any issues with this seventh visit. Again checks on social media by the MP's office might have led to them alerting the school to potential community tensions.

There were several attempts made to reorganise the visit and a date was agreed for 5<sup>th</sup> December. During the planning session for this visit the MP's Bristol office alerted the education director from Cabot Learning Federation to support which could be provided by the police (Operation Bridger) where MPs are at risk. The education director from Cabot Learning Federation made contact with Operation Bridger the following day and was advised of additional safeguards to put in place for the MP's visit. Following further contact with the MP and his office it was decided that the visit be postponed again to give the school sufficient time for all the additional safeguards recommended and thereby ensure the safety of the MP and a successful visit with the students in BBA.

The Cabot Learning Federation is a trust where their core purpose is built around their 'HEART' values. The E in heart is about Equity and rejecting discrimination. These are strong values embodied by senior leaders and those involved in governance. By demonstrating the HEART values in their behaviours and providing training, leaders work to ensure that the values are embedded across the trust. There has been significant training both over time and more recently on political impartiality, rejection of discrimination and expectations of all staff. There are over 3350 staff in Cabot Learning Federation some of whom have been affected by the Israeli Palestinian conflict. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The review focuses on two key elements:

- The sequence of events that led to the visits at Bristol Brunel Academy (BBA) not going ahead as planned and
- Review of the culture in the Cabot Learning Federation (CLF) where relevant to this issue, namely whether the promotion and rejection of discrimination on the ground of religious and/or political views or beliefs are adequately enshrined in the culture at the CLF.

### **The Lines of Enquiry**

1. The role of decision makers in postponing the MP's visit and the factors that influenced their decision.
2. Role of other decision makers (trustees, CEO) in postponing the MP's visit and the factors that influenced their decision.
3. Were the school and trust policies followed by decision makers and in light of the events are there any revisions they would consider making?
4. Did any other factors internal or external influence the school leaders to postpone the visit:
  - a. school culture
  - b. union activity
  - c. political activity
  - d. antisemitism?
5. Was the communication between the school and trust and the MP and his office effective, and vice versa, and could this be improved?
6. The trust had considerable previous contact and dialogue with the MP himself in the past and a strong relationship. What happened in this instance? Why did it break down at this point in time?
7. Ofsted looks in great detail at the culture of the school; this review does not have time nor resources to re-do these interviews. The review will reflect on what Ofsted said about the culture in the school and the trust in 2026. Did the culture in the trust prompt political impartiality and what were the processes and training in place?
8. Were there added policies and procedures in place for stakeholders to report concerns in political impartiality or other concerns?
9. Lessons learned for the school, the trust, MPs' offices, and the Department for Education.

## **Main Items of Evidence**

Interviews online, by phone and face to face with

- The decision makers for the postponements
- Trustees of the trust and governors in Bristol Brunel Academy
- Staff in Bristol Brunel Academy and in Cabot Learning Federation
- The MP
- The MP's office in Westminster and his office in Bristol
- The police support for MPs (Operation Bridger)
- Chairman of the Board of Deputies of British Jews
- A retired labour MP previously an education minister
- A member of the House of Lords
- A headteacher from a Jewish School

(The latter four individuals helped to provide context for the reviewer for both parts of the report.)

A visit to Bristol Brunel Academy (9.2.26) to see the school site

Eighty-four pieces of supporting evidence provided by the trust including the Ofsted report 2026

Relevant trust and academy policies and procedures

Records of the contact between the MP's Bristol constituency office, his Westminster office and school personnel provided by the MP's offices and the trust

A copy of a letter from the Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset providing an account of Police Involvement

Documents provided by the Board of Deputies of British Jews

## Part A

### Chronology

The MP was elected as the MP for Bristol North East in 2024. Prior to and following his election he visited six schools within the Cabot Learning Federation. Recently, he has twice given his support to the trust's bid for a new free school in his constituency.

**01.02.24** The first CLF visit was to Hanham Woods Academy during a by-election campaign period where the MP was accompanied the leader of the opposition. The MP was an alumnus of Hanham Woods and the school principal said it was "fantastic to welcome a former student to the academy".

**14.02.25** The sixth visit was to John Cabot Academy and the CLF post 16 provision. All these visits appear to have been highly successful and passed without any untoward events.

**13.03.25** A seventh visit to a CLF academy, Bristol Brunel Academy was planned for 6th June 2025. The details of the visit were organised between the headteacher and the Bristol office for the MP via email.

**21.05.25** The June visit was cancelled when the MP's Westminster office advised the Bristol office that the MP had to be present in parliament for a debate on the 'Assisted Dying Bill' on the same day.

**03.06.25** Alternative dates were sought by both parties and it was agreed that the visit by the MP would take place on 5<sup>th</sup> September.

**03.09.25** As this was the first visit to Bristol Brunel Academy by their MP the school organised meetings with students, a tour of the school and staff were informed of the visit beforehand. This was custom and practice in this school for such an important visit. On previous informal visits by other MPs, for example to discuss a matter about a constituent, in particular a child in the school, staff were not usually informed.

**04.09.25** [REDACTED]

Three senior members of staff from the trust were involved in making the decision to postpone the visit. They had never met the MP and apart from the fact that he was the local MP knew very little about him. The evidence I have gathered leads me to conclude that the decision was based on safeguarding and health and safety issues for students and for the MP. The school believed that the MP's office in Bristol would need to be informed as quickly as possible in case he was

travelling from London. They were unable to make contact by phone with his constituency office and sent an email just before 5pm.

The factors they considered in making the decision to postpone were;

- The exit from the school is directly on to a busy main road with a narrow pavement and congestion caused by a protest there would be dangerous for the MP, staff and students
- The size of the threatened protest was an unknown and there could be a possibility of local activists joining the protest
- Many of the school's vulnerable children use this exit and would be alarmed by a protest. There are 1300 students who use this exit from the school
- Under the circumstances they would not be able to guarantee a safe passage for the MP

The decision makers in the trust were unable to contact the CEO of the trust for his advice. Given the short time frame within which to make the decision the decision makers decided to postpone on the basis of safeguarding and health and safety. They did not consider seeking advice from the local police or the DfE at this time.

**05.09.25** The Westminster office contacted the school for clarification around the reason for the postponement.

**8.09.25** The CEO of the trust and the MP had a phone call where they discussed the postponement

**11.09.25** The MP wrote to the CEO expressing his disappointment and requesting that the visit be reorganised

**17.09.25** The CEO responded to the MP giving his rationale for the postponement and a commitment to reorganise the visit

**17.10.25** The MP's constituency office in Bristol contacted the school by email to reorganise the MP's visit suggesting 21<sup>st</sup> November.

**22.10.25 to 3.11.25** The school was closed for half term.

**29.10.25** As there was no response from the school the constituency office contacted the school again by email.

**3.11.25** On return from half term the headteacher responded by email stating that she would investigate the proposed date and respond by the end of the week.

**7.11.25** An Education Director from the trust responded by email introducing himself as the line manager for the school. The email suggested that they have a phone call that day to discuss details for this visit by the MP. During the phone call they made a provisional arrangement for a visit on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December. The MP's Bristol office agreed that they would check his diary which was held in the Westminster office to see if the date and timings proposed were suitable.

**11.11.25** The constituency office sent an email to both the Education Director and the school confirming that the dates and times were confirmed in the MP's diary and made suggestions for the visit to include a tour of the school and a meeting with students. They did not suggest in the email that the school should avoid informing staff and parents.

**1.12.25** There was a virtual meeting between the MP, his Bristol office and the Education Director. This meeting was to discuss details of the visit on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> of December. During the meeting the

MP advised the Education Director that support and advice was available from the police and that there was a special unit (Operation Bridger) which provides support to ensure the safety of MPs. During the conversation the MP requested that staff should not be informed in advance of the visit. The Education Director said he would follow this up with Operation Bridger to ensure that all involved were safe.

**2.12.25** The Education Director made contact with Operation Bridger and was advised where additional local support could be provided. He was also advised that the school should not share the date or times of the visit beforehand with staff, parents or pupils and that this was standard practice with MPs.

**3.12.25** A decision was made between The MP, his office and the Education Director that in order to safeguard the MP and the students it would be best to postpone the visit again to ensure that appropriate support from the local police and others was in place and that the date of the visit once organised would not be shared with staff and the local community beforehand.

## **Assessment of relevant Policies and Procedures**

The relevant policies are all appropriate and cover all DfE and government law and guidance particularly that on political impartiality and Keeping Children Safe in Education. From the evidence I have gathered and from the recent Ofsted inspection this leads me to conclude that CLF follow their policies

The review looked at a range of CLF policies on; Health and Safety, Safeguarding and Child Protection, Premises Management, Complaints, Whistleblowing and the Code of Conduct for Staff.

The review also looked at the BBA policies on; Safeguarding and Child Protection, Behaviour and Safety, Health and Safety, Communication, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, (known as DEIB), and the Visitor Procedure. With the exception of the Visitor procedure the evidence gathered leads me to conclude that BBA follow their policies

These policies are all available on the CLF and BBA website.

The 5<sup>th</sup> September was the second day of the return to school for all students after the summer break.

In this instance, because the visit was from their local MP, who had previously already visited schools in the trust, school leaders confirmed that the academy's Visitor Procedure was not consulted or followed for the visit on 5<sup>th</sup> September. Nor was a formal risk assessment carried out.

The relevant part of the procedure is outlined below:

### *BBA Visitor checks*

*1. We will do due diligence on them first, which involves identity and background checks;*

*- Name, organisation and role*

*- Verify online presence*

*4. Reputational Assessments, which involves;*

*- Search for news articles on social media*

*- Review social media activity*

*- Looking for affiliations to external groups that conflict with school safeguarding, equality and prevent duties.*

Had the Reputational Assessment been undertaken the school leaders may have been more alert to the risks to the MP and sought external support for the visit from the local police, the local authority and the DfE well in advance of the visit. There were no formal risk assessments undertaken prior to the visit on 5<sup>th</sup> September by the school. The school leaders were unaware of the additional risks around the MP as a result of perceptions and views on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

The Bristol office having experienced six successful and incident free visits to CLF schools did not anticipate any problems with this visit. Consequently there was no prior discussion by either party around additional safeguards that might be put in place or the need to withhold information about the visit from staff and the local community. The decision makers were not aware of the local community tensions associated with their MP until they were informed of the protest.

**Potential External Influences**

1. Unions

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] This individual was not in a position to influence the decision makers. Three senior trust leaders alone were involved in the decision to postpone. No members of teaching or support staff either in the trust or in the school were in a position to influence the decision. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

2. Lobbying Groups and external threats

The reviewer can find no evidence of the influence of lobbying groups on the decision makers for the postponement of the visit on 5<sup>th</sup> September.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] The threat of a protest where there were so many unknowns - information about the size, which groups would be involved, and the risk of local activists joining - created a significant risk to students and the MP.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] This email was sent [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] after the decision had been made to postpone, and the MP’s office had already been informed so this email did not influence the trust decision makers.

The Bristol Palestine Solidarity Campaign wrote on Facebook that the visit had been cancelled after concerns were raised and went on to say politicians *who ‘openly support Israel’s genocidal assault on Gaza are not welcome in our schools’*. There was no contact from this group with the school nor were they in a position to influence the trust decision makers or share their views with them on 4<sup>th</sup> September.

3. Staff Groups

The reviewer met with eight members of staff from a range of roles in BBA, none of whom were aware of groups or staff in BBA who planned to be involved in protests either outside the school or during the visit by wearing badges or Palestinian scarves. The general secretary of the NEU stated in a tweet *‘some staff decided they may wear a Palestinian scarf’*. This aspect of staff culture was looked at in detail by the Ofsted team who interviewed 75 members of staff when the school was inspected on 15-16 January and the reviewer is in agreement with their finding that;

*'There is a harmonious and religiously tolerant atmosphere in the school' and that 'No member of staff inspectors spoke with were aware of a proposed staff-led protest against the MP's visit.'* (Ofsted January 2026).

From the evidence I have gathered I conclude that the decision to postpone on the 5<sup>th</sup> September was based solely on safeguarding concerns for students and the MP.

In conversations and letters after the decision had been made further explanations for the postponement, around students' attendance and behaviour, were given by CLF. I could not find evidence that the trust decision makers had considered these aspects at the time.

Keeping Children Safe in Education is statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education which all schools and colleges must have regard to when carrying out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The academy (BBA)'s policy on safeguarding states

*'Contributing to the establishment of a safe, resilient, and robust safeguarding culture in the setting built on shared values; where learners are treated with respect and dignity, taught to treat each other and staff with respect, feel safe, have a voice and are listened to.'*

The CLF policy on premises management states

*'Cabot Learning Federation is committed to ensuring open, safe, secure, and well-maintained learning and working environments for its students, staff, visitors, and stakeholders.'*

The three decision makers did not have sufficient information to gauge the size or potential of the protest so in order to keep students, the MP and staff safe, the decision was made to postpone. As it was likely that the MP was travelling from Westminster to Bristol, they wished to alert his office before 5pm. The call was made just before 5pm but the MP's Bristol office was not available so a voice mail and email were sent. The MP's Westminster office later contacted the school for clarification about the postponement.

The overriding priority for school leaders in any decision must always be safeguarding children and the health and safety of all those on their school site including visitors. The decision was made under pressure of time so the trust decision makers did not reflect on DfE guidance on political impartiality. They focused on Keeping Children Safe in Education. The evidence I have gathered leads me to conclude that all other considerations were secondary to the safeguarding and health and safety concerns for the students and the MP.

## Conclusions

MPs are entitled to visit schools in their constituency to engage with students and to discuss their work. Indeed it is an important aspect of MPs' work. The visit by the MP was planned for the second day of the new school term for all students after the summer break, a very busy time for schools. If the school had followed their own procedure for visitors, they may have been more alert to the potential protests and sought external advice from the police, local authority, DfE and other stakeholders well in advance of the visit. They were looking forward to this first visit from their local MP and wanted to share this with staff and students as other academies in the trust had done previously.

In the time the decision makers in the trust perceived they had to notify the MP's office, approximately 30 minutes, they made the most sensible decision to keep all parties safe which was to postpone. As the MP's Bristol office had postponed a previous visit planned for June, the trust decision makers assumed this would not be considered unreasonable. They did not contact the local police or the DfE for advice during the 30-minute window. In this short time frame, even if they had managed to contact others and received responses, I do not think that the decision would have been different.

The visit in December involved more consultation and planning with the MP and his Bristol office. It was during the planning meeting that the education director became aware of additional support from the National Policing Operation, (Operation Bridger) which was available for MPs at risk. Operation Bridger was set up in the wake of the murder of Jo Cox MP. The education director followed up the contact provided for this advice and support the next day; after receiving advice from Operation Bridger the education director contacted the MP and his office. During this discussion it was agreed by the MP, his office and the education director to postpone the visit for a second time to ensure the MP's safety. This delay was to give the school additional time to consult with other stakeholders such as the local police and put in place the recommendations from Operation Bridger which included advice on the management of protests and keeping the date and time of the visit confidential. Operation Bridger confirmed to the reviewer in a phone call that they had given this advice. The advice given was also confirmed by the Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset Police in a letter to the Home Office.

The CEO apologised to the MP for '*the short notice*' of the postponement. For the MP there were wider implications. The postponement, the subsequent phone conversations, letters and the ensuing furore five months later all contributed to damaging the previous positive working relationship between CLF and the MP.

## **Recommendations**

### **for CLF**

- Where possible avoid high profile visitors at the start of term. There is a great deal to focus on with new staff and students and as a consequence some preparations might be overlooked.
- Follow the academy and trust policies and procedures for all visitors including MPs.
- Add a section to the Visitors Procedure which involves checking all media including social media for any references to the visitor-In other words practise greater due diligence.
- Where appropriate draw on advice from external stakeholders such as the DfE, the police, the local authority in addition to the expertise in the trust and the MP's office when making critical decisions.
- The parliamentary security protocols recommend that the (school) community are not given advance warning of visits by MPs. In the current climate of social media and potential involvement of activists this should be followed in every instance.
- Based on advice from all stakeholders draw up a risk assessment which as far as possible all parties agree with.
- The evidence I have gathered leads me to conclude that neither CLF or BBA are antisemitic.  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] CLF to consider additional training on antisemitism and seek advice on appropriate resources and training from the Board of Deputies of British Jews.
- Members of staff who contravene the Code of Conduct should undergo further training. Where there are serious breaches of the Code the trust should follow due process with the staff members according to their school policies.
- CLF should continue to seek ways to repair the relationship with the MP.

### **for the Parliamentary authority DfE Operation Bridger and MPs**

- Parliamentary security advises MPs' offices that schools are safe place. Not all schools have considerable security around their perimeters, school gates and doors. In many instances the exit from school is directly on to public footpaths and highways. Such exits can pose a risk particularly where there is only one exit. These factors should be taken into consideration when giving advice for MPs' visits.
- The DfE or parliamentary authority could provide more detailed guidance to schools and MPs on how to manage visits from MPs.
- Many MPs have affiliations to groups such as 'Friends of Israel'. The DfE or parliamentary authority could provide guidance for schools on how to manage situations that arise as a consequence of objections to such affiliations. The appropriate authorities could provide a contact (phone or email) where immediate advice and guidance could be provided.
- In recent times where some protests against government policies have become violent and MPs are at greater risk MPs' offices should consider alerting schools to the possibility of protests thus giving ample time to ensure all safeguards are in place.

- The DfE should inform schools of the guidance and support available from Operation Bridger for visits from MPs who are at greater risk.
- Operation Bridger could provide more detailed written guidance for schools on steps to take to safeguard MPs in addition to the advice on not informing staff beforehand.
- MPs' constituency offices should carry out deeper checks on social media prior to visits by MPs and where necessary alert stakeholders such as school leaders to community tensions.
- The MPs' teams have received training on mitigating risks for their MPs. This training could be shared with school leaders.

It is worth noting that the MP visited the academy on 5<sup>th</sup> February. The planning meeting organised by the trust for this visit involved 12 participants. There was a detailed risk assessment. The visit went ahead as planned and was successful with all parties safe.

## **Part B Review of the Culture in CLF a) Compliance with Duties**

In order to comply with their funding agreement with the DfE the trust has the following duties:

2.26 The Academy Trust must ensure the Academy actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

2.26A The Academy Trust must ensure the Academy promotes principles that support equality of opportunity for all.

Policies are developed centrally and through the schemes of delegation the academies, in appropriate instances, have the delegated authority to make these bespoke to their own establishment. The policies are reviewed in a regular cycle and approved at CLF Board of Director meetings and the schools' governors' meetings. The CLF board meets monthly and minutes of the meeting are published on the CLF website. Schools' governing bodies meet termly and also publish their minutes on the schools' websites. There is evidence in minutes of challenge by board members and school governors and of interrogation of policy and practice around Equalities issues and EDI training. There is a clear line of accountability from the Members of the trust through to trustees and then governors of the individual establishments who in turn hold school leadership to account. There is also evidence in minutes of meetings and annual reports of schools being held to account by governors. EDI is a standing item at governors' meetings. Governors check that all statutory training requirements are met in each school. From the evidence I collected and from the recent Ofsted inspection trust leaders follow their policies and procedures on British Values and Equality of Opportunity. Where students or staff breach these policies *'action is taken'* Ofsted January 2026. The evidence gathered by the review supports the Ofsted conclusion.

The governors and trustees that I met have a wide range of experience, coming from varied disciplines and bring a wealth of wisdom and challenge to the schools and the trust. There is regular training on EDI at both trust and school level. There is specific training for school leaders including those involved in governance on EDI.

The trust collects and analyses data on Safeguarding and Equalities Impact Assessment and this is shared with trustees.

### **b) Relevant Policies and Processes**

The trust uses a training package called NIMBLE. This training package is comprised of many units which contains the law, guidance, policies, and procedures in the trust. On completion of each unit there are tests to ensure that staff have assimilated and understood the information. There are units on political impartiality, anti-racism, equalities etc with tests on understanding the content which staff must pass to be accredited with that unit. Progress of staff through these units is monitored by senior leaders and trust executives and reports are provided to trustees through the People and Wellbeing sub-committee.

The following units are mandatory; Social Media, Code of Conduct, Political Impartiality, Harassment and Bullying, Safeguarding, Workplace Safety and Security, Whistle blowing, Equality Diversity and Inclusion. There are also units on Safer Recruitment where only staff involved in recruitment would need to participate.

Political impartiality relies on staff using their judgement and expertise effectively. The government recommends that staff are best supported in developing judgement through training. There has been considerable training for staff in this trust on political impartiality outlining the law in this area and offering guidance on how to teach opposing views. The most recent face to face training in BBA was on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2025 during the staff inset days at the start of the new academic year. The reviewer has looked at the presentations used with staff and their guidance is very clear. Staff in this trust must not promote partisan political views. Staff were provided with links to the DfE guidance on political impartiality in which there is a specific example on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict stressing the importance of providing a balanced account of the conflict and avoiding presenting a partisan political view. The executive team have equalities training embedded in their leadership curriculum and this is cascaded down through the trust to all staff through networks that run horizontally.

There is a Code of Conduct in place for all staff in the trust. There was relevant training for all staff during a face-to-face training session in at the start of the academic year on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> September. The relevant sections of this code are outlined below in sections 9 and 11:

#### Code of Conduct

*9. All staff must maintain public trust and confidence in the federation and their profession by:*

*9.1 demonstrating honesty and integrity.*

*9.2 understanding and upholding their duty to safeguard the welfare of children and young people. 9.3 understanding and demonstrating fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of difference faiths and beliefs.*

#### *11. Diversity, equality, and inclusion*

*All staff must demonstrate respect for diversity and take steps to promote equality by: 11.1 acting appropriately and in accordance with this code and other relevant policies including the federation's equal opportunities policy and harassment and bullying policy.*

*11.2 addressing issues of discrimination and bullying whenever they arise.*

*11.3 helping to create a fair and inclusive environment.*

There is also a section on the consequences of breaches of this Code of Conduct

*17. Consequences of breach: The federation will take appropriate action in accordance with its policies and procedures in the event of a breach of this code.*

The reviewer is aware of actions taken by senior executives against staff who breached this code in the past. Breaches by staff are followed up by the line manager in the first instance although this can be escalated to the CEO. Appropriate action is taken and in cases of gross misconduct, following due process, could lead to dismissal.

Section 149 of the Public Sector Equality Act requires public authorities to have due regard to three key aims: eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations for people with protected characteristics. In the decision-making process to postpone the MP's visit the decision makers were concerned for the MP's safety. They were originally not aware that he was Jewish and had been told of his religion and alleged links to Israel [REDACTED] on the 4<sup>th</sup> September. The evidence I have gathered leads me to conclude that the decision to postpone was based not on the MP's religious beliefs or links to Israel but on a desire to protect him from potential abuse and harm as a consequence of this.

CLF is a very large trust with 18000 children and young people and more than 3350 employees.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has affected families in Britain particularly those with relatives and friends in Israel or Palestine. In some instances, people have expressed partisan views from either sides about the conflict and about public figures they believe may be supporting one side or the other in this conflict.

Nevertheless, those working in education must follow the guidance on political impartiality and their trust's Code of Conduct as they have a duty as educators and members of the trust.

In addition to sharing relevant policies staff are given annual face to face safeguarding training. On the NIMBLE website there is a unit specifically for new staff and a refresher course for all other staff. I have reviewed this training package and it is detailed and comprehensive and again tests knowledge and understanding before they can pass the unit. Progress of all staff on this unit is monitored by the trust.

The process for recruiting staff in CLF is stated clearly in the Safeguarding policy where there is a section on safer recruitment which is appropriate and the procedure is listed in Section 11.1 of the safeguarding policy. This policy is reviewed by the CLF Board of Directors. Again, there is a unit in NIMBLE which addresses safer recruitment.

Safer recruitment in CLF pays full regard to the safer recruitment practices detailed in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (Part 3)

- *This includes scrutinising applicants, verifying identity and academic or vocational qualifications, obtaining professional and character references, checking previous employment history, and ensuring that a candidate has the health and physical capacity for the job. References are always obtained, scrutinised and concerns resolved satisfactorily before appointment is confirmed.*

- *Also includes undertaking online safety checks on shortlisted candidates. Undertaking appropriate checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), the barred list checks and prohibition checks (and overseas checks if appropriate), dependent on the role and duties performed, including regulated and non-regulated activity.*
- *All recruitment materials will include reference to the Academy's commitment to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of learners.*

### **c) Complaints and Whistleblowing Policy**

There is a very detailed Complaints Policy for parents with named personnel to contact and clear time limits for the trust to respond to the complaint. There is also detailed information as to how to escalate the complaint. There is a very helpful Complaints Form at the end of the policy so that parents/carers are supported in providing all the appropriate information in order for the school or trust to deal effectively and promptly with the complaint.

The trust also has a whistleblowing policy which explains circumstances where whistleblowing on the actions of other staff would be appropriate

*4. Whistleblowing: Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include:*

- *criminal activity;*
- *safeguarding concerns (see paragraph 9 below);*
- *failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements;*
- *miscarriages of justice;*
- *danger to health and safety;*
- *damage to the environment;*
- *bribery;*
- *financial fraud or mismanagement;*
- *other unlawful or unethical conduct in the workplace; and*
- *the deliberate concealment of any of the above matters.*

The third bullet point relates to political impartiality [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] There is also information in the policy about how to whistle blow and the protections in place for whistleblowers.

Some adults have the capacity to mask and hide their personal views and behaviours to access proximity to young people or to obtain posts of responsibility. In such instances the institution is reliant on complaints, whistleblowers or the young people themselves reporting these inappropriate views and behaviours to alert them.

From the evidence I have gathered this leads me to conclude that leaders in the trust follow their policies. Leaders provide training, support and guidance for all staff in understanding policies and hold staff to account where there are concerns or breaches.

#### **d) Engagement of CLF with MPs**

The CLF had always engaged effectively with elected MPs and while campaigning during the last election the leader of the Labour Party visited a CLF academy. The MP made six visits to CLF schools prior to his visit to BBA. The trust shared information about these visits and they were noted with pride in academy and trust newsletters and the local press. Another local MP is a regular visitor to CLF schools and BBA. Prior to the visit on 5<sup>th</sup> September the communication, and hence preparation, between the school, the trust and the MP's office was not as effective as in the MP's previous visits.

Culture in any institution is set by senior leaders. The CLF has a core purpose built around their Heart Values. The E in Heart is about Equity.

*' Creating Equity of opportunity, promoting inclusion, removing disadvantage and rejecting discrimination'.*

The evidence I found during my visit and in the contact, I have had with senior leaders in the trust leads me to conclude that for them these are 'lived' values. They are role models for staff in the trust. In addition to their behaviours which embody the core values they also provide guidance and training for staff to help them understand and implement the law and guidance around their duties as educators and carers for young people.

#### **e) Reflection and Learning**

The CLF has reflected and learned from this experience. They will ensure that the Visitor Procedures are followed for all visitors. This will improve the robustness around planning for MPs' visits and ensure safety for all involved. They have reflected on the need to consult external stakeholders in preparation for visitors. They involved 12 external stakeholders in drawing up the risk assessment for the MP's visit in February. The risk assessment was very detailed and appeared to consider every possible risk. They were very well prepared this time and in view of the risks to the safety of their MP leaders did not inform staff and pupils beforehand.

[REDACTED]

The trust has also learned a great deal about the law of unintended consequences in view of the media and social media outcry that developed 5 months after the visit was postponed.

According to the Office of National Statistics in Bristol 0.3% of the population is Jewish. Staff in CLF schools are given time for religious observances and for Jewish staff that includes time off for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Jewish members of staff in CLF schools who I met said they were treated with respect and understanding by the trust leaders and colleagues in the workplace. However, they did reflect that views in their local community can be polarised making life at times, outside their work environment, challenging to negotiate. Sadly, it has been reported by the Board of Deputies of British Jews that many Jewish teachers in secular schools are not receiving the support that was evident in BBA.

There are currently no students in BBA who identify as being Jewish. According to research by the Board of Deputies of British Jews many Jewish schoolchildren are frightened to identify as being

Jewish particularly in areas where there are strong feelings and protests about the Israeli Palestinian conflict. Since October 7<sup>th</sup> there has been a huge rise in antisemitic incidents - 3528 incidents in 2024. There may be children in schools in parts of Bristol who are frightened to identify as being Jewish because of tensions in the local community.

In view of these external challenges there are steps schools can take such as specific education on antisemitism as part of anti-racist training. Also using trusted providers with specific expertise such as The Anne Frank Trust, Stand up, Letting go of Hate and Solutions not Sides. CLF already use some of these providers.

I would like to thank the CEO and his staff in CLF for the transparency and the professional manner in which all my many requests have been responded to. I would also like to thank the MP and his team for their openness and support in gathering information for this review.

Thank you also to all the individuals who agreed to meet with me or talk to me to support my understanding of the context both in Bristol and nationally and to all my personal contacts who facilitated these meetings.

I am delighted to say that CLF the MP and his team worked together to ensure that a successful visit did take place early in February 2026, three days after this review commenced, thus, indicating that the will, commitment and learning to ensure a successful visit from the local MP was already in place.