

**SIR DAVID BELL REVIEW · ANTISEMITISM IN
SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

When Fear Becomes Absence

The Bell Review is not only about prejudice. For school leaders it is also about safeguarding, trust, belonging and attendance. If a pupil is frightened to come to school because of antisemitic, racial or religious abuse, the attendance response must begin with safety.

Attendance at the centre

Safeguarding response

Leader action plan

Print/PDF ready

What school leaders need to hear

The official review hub confirms that the review examines prevention, decision-making, incident handling, accountability and the influence of campaigning organisations. Same-day reporting says the review contains 27 recommendations. Reported recommendations are labelled as such until the final official text is published.

3 in 5

Jewish pupils reportedly said they had experienced antisemitism

1 in 5

students reportedly said they had witnessed antisemitism

< 1 in 2

reportedly felt incidents would be addressed if reported

Name antisemitism 01

Bell is reported to argue that a generic commitment to tackling racism and hate can fail to identify antisemitism as a distinct form of prejudice.

Put it into safeguarding 02

Reported recommendations include explicit recognition of antisemitism within safeguarding and online-safety practice.

Train staff properly 03

Leaders need staff who can recognise overt, subtle and online antisemitism and know what to do next.

Improve reporting confidence 04

Low reporting may reflect low trust rather than low incidence. Pupils must believe adults will act.

Strengthen political impartiality 05

Reported recommendations call for clearer guidance so difficult issues can be debated without pupils feeling that adults impose political views.

Teach contemporary antisemitism 06

Reported recommendations include media literacy, online hatred, conspiracy theories, stronger Holocaust education and better understanding of Jewish life.

Hold institutions accountable

07

The official terms of reference explicitly examine accountability where incidents have not been handled well, including the role of inspectorates.

Listen to lived experience

08

The review's call for evidence deliberately sought evidence from children, young people, parents, staff, trusts and community organisations.

Attendance can be the warning light

09

When a pupil's attendance deteriorates after abuse, leaders must investigate whether fear and loss of trust are now barriers to education.

The absence may be telling you something

A register records whether a child was present. It does not tell you whether they stayed home because they feared being abused, humiliated or targeted. That distinction is fundamental.

If a pupil is absent because school feels unsafe, the first attendance intervention is not a warning letter. It is to make school safer.

That does not mean lowering expectations. It means identifying the barrier to attendance and addressing it with the same seriousness we would apply to any other safeguarding barrier.

1. Incident or fear

Antisemitic, racial or religious abuse occurs or is perceived as a credible threat.

2. Trust falls

The pupil doubts whether adults understand, believe or can protect them.

3. Attendance changes

Lateness, avoidance, selective absence or complete non-attendance may follow.

4. Safety response

School investigates, protects, communicates and adapts the environment.

5. Sustainable return

Attendance improves because trust and access are rebuilt, not because fear was ignored.

What not to do

Do not allow an attendance threshold to trigger a purely procedural response before anyone has asked what has happened. Do not treat the pupil's fear as a refusal to comply. Do not make the victim carry the burden of avoiding those responsible.

What strong practice looks like

Attendance, safeguarding, behaviour, SEND/ pastoral and senior leadership work from one plan. The plan records what happened, what the pupil says they need, what the school has changed, how education is maintained and how return will be reviewed.

What leaders should do now

This is the core implementation section: immediate assurance, pupil-level response, workforce confidence, curriculum and governance.

A. Immediate assurance: this week

- 1** **Audit incident recording.**
Can leaders identify antisemitic incidents separately and analyse patterns by location, year group, repeat perpetrator, online/offline context and response?

- 2** **Review pupils currently absent or deteriorating.**
Ask whether bullying, antisemitism, racism, faith-based hostility or fear on the journey to school is contributing to absence.

- 3** **Check safeguarding policy language.**
Ensure staff can see clearly where antisemitism and identity-based harassment sit within safeguarding, behaviour and online-safety procedures.

- 4** **Identify the senior owner.**
One leader should hold the whole response together so families are not passed between attendance, safeguarding and pastoral teams.

- 5** **Brief governors/trustees.**
Give boards assurance on reporting routes, current incidents, staff confidence and pupil safety, not merely the number of sanctions issued.

B. Pupil-level response: every case

6 Hear the pupil once, properly.

Use a trusted adult, minimise repeated retelling and record the child's account and desired safety measures.

7 Investigate promptly and preserve evidence.

Retain messages, screenshots and witness accounts. Consider safeguarding, harassment, hate-crime or assault thresholds where relevant.

8 Create a written safety and return plan.

Named adult, arrival route, lessons, social times, safe space, perpetrator management, communication and review date should be explicit.

9 Maintain education during absence.

Keep the child connected to learning and relationships while safety work is underway. Absence should not become a second penalty.

10 Measure trust as well as attendance.

At review ask: does the pupil feel safer, know how to report, trust adults to act and engage more fully with school?

C. Workforce and culture: this term

11 Train all staff, not only DSLs.

Reception staff, teachers, tutors, pastoral staff, lunchtime staff and leaders all shape whether pupils feel believed and protected.

12 Review political impartiality.

Help staff facilitate contentious issues with balance, professional restraint and awareness of the impact on pupils who may feel personally targeted.

13 Strengthen online-safety education.

Teach pupils to recognise conspiracy theories, coded hatred, manipulated content and online antisemitism.

14 Review curriculum.

Ensure Holocaust education addresses antisemitism explicitly and that Jewish life is represented beyond persecution and tragedy.

15 Test reporting confidence.

Use pupil voice to ask whether young people know how to report and whether they believe anything will happen if they do.

D. Governance and accountability: this year

16 **Track trends, not anecdotes.**
Report incidents, repeat patterns, locations, response times and outcomes to governors/trustees.

17 **Link attendance data to safeguarding intelligence.**
Where attendance drops suddenly, leaders should know whether harassment, bullying or identity-based fear is present.

18 **Check external resources and speakers.**
Leaders should know who is shaping curriculum and campaigning activity and ensure materials remain appropriate and educationally sound.

19 **Audit policy against final Bell recommendations.**
When the final report is officially available, map every recommendation to current practice, evidence and named ownership.

20 **Revisit impact after 6–12 months.**
The test is cultural change: pupils feel safer, staff respond confidently, incidents are identified earlier and fear-related absence reduces.

CASE RESPONSE PATHWAY

From disclosure to safe return

Use this sequence when attendance has deteriorated following antisemitic or other identity-based abuse.

Stage	Leader question	Evidence to retain
Disclosure	What happened, where, who was involved, and what does the pupil fear now?	Pupil voice, chronology, screenshots/ messages, witnesses, parent contact.
Immediate safety	What must change today so the child is not exposed to further harm?	Safety plan, named adult, movement/ social-time arrangements, risk decisions.
Investigation	What does the evidence show and which policies/thresholds apply?	Investigation record, behaviour/ safeguarding decisions, referrals where appropriate.
Education while absent	How will we protect the child's connection to learning and belonging?	Work provided, teacher contact, pastoral check-ins, adjustments.
Return	What will make the first day back feel different from the day they stopped attending?	Return plan, trusted adult, phased steps if appropriate, family agreement.
Review	Has safety and trust improved, not just the percentage?	Attendance trend, pupil/family voice, incidents since return, engagement and wellbeing.

Language that helps rebuild trust

The school must communicate both seriousness and safety. Families need evidence that adults understand the harm and have taken responsibility for changing the environment.

Useful language

"I want to understand what has made school feel unsafe for you."

"You are not responsible for solving this. The adults are responsible for dealing with the behaviour."

"What would need to be different for you to feel able to return?"

"Who would you like to meet you when you arrive?"

"We will review both your safety and your attendance, because one affects the other."

Language that can make things worse

"Your attendance is now the main issue."

"We dealt with the other pupil, so there is nothing to worry about."

"You have to come in or this becomes unauthorised."

"There is no evidence that the school is unsafe."

"You need to move on from what happened."

Could your school evidence this today?

Tick each statement you can evidence. Your progress saves on this device. Use the print button to take the audit to SLT or governors.

☐

We can identify and analyse antisemitic incidents separately within our recording system.

☐

Attendance leaders routinely ask whether bullying, racism, antisemitism or fear is behind deteriorating attendance.

☐

DSL, attendance and pastoral teams can work from one shared pupil plan.

☐

Pupils know how to report antisemitism and believe adults will respond.

☐

Staff know how to recognise contemporary and online antisemitism.

☐

Our safeguarding and online-safety policies explicitly address identity-based harassment.

☐

We have reviewed staff political impartiality and discussion of contentious issues.

☐

Jewish identity is represented in curriculum beyond the Holocaust alone.

☐

Governors/trustees receive meaningful assurance on culture, incidents and pupil confidence.

☐

We can produce a case study showing how safety action led to improved engagement and attendance.

Readiness score: 0 / 10

Official report and statement status

The official GOV.UK review hub is live. At the time of this build, it still states that findings are expected by autumn 2026 and does not yet expose the final report on the page. Parliament's Order Paper confirms a written ministerial statement is scheduled for 21 October 2026.

Official Bell Review hub

This is the authoritative DfE page for the independent review. It sets out the review's aims, scope, terms of reference, timeline and call for evidence.

[Open official review hub](#)

Written ministerial statement

The House of Commons Order Paper lists today's statement. Until the statement page itself appears, use Parliament's written statements search to locate the final text once published.

[Open Parliament statements](#)

Accuracy safeguard: reported recommendations on this page come from reputable same-day reporting and are identified as reported recommendations. They should be replaced or checked against the final official report as soon as it is published.

FULL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sources used

Official sources first, then contemporary reporting used only for recommendations not yet visible on the official review page.

Primary and official

1. **Department for Education (2026)**. *Independent review into antisemitism in schools and colleges*. GOV.UK. Official review hub.
2. **Department for Education (2026)**. *Independent review – tackling antisemitism in schools and colleges in England: terms of reference*. Official PDF.
3. **Department for Education (29 April 2026)**. *Independent review into antisemitism: call for evidence*. Consultation page.
4. **Department for Education (29 April 2026)**. *Call for evidence into antisemitism in schools and colleges*. GOV.UK release.
5. **House of Commons (21 October 2026)**. *Order Paper for 21 October 2026*. Lists the Secretary of State for Education's written statement on the Sir David Bell review. Order Paper.
6. **UK Parliament**. *Written statements search*. Statements database.

Contemporary reporting on the 27 reported recommendations

1. **Sky News (20 October 2026)**. *Report set to reveal vast scale of antisemitism in English schools*. Reports 27 recommendations including teacher training, safeguarding and online safety, media literacy, political impartiality, Holocaust education and inspectorate accountability. Read.
2. **The Guardian (20 October 2026)**. *Schools in England must recognise antisemitism as distinct category of harm, report says*. Reports survey findings and the review's central argument that antisemitism must be explicitly identified. Read.
3. **LBC (21 October 2026)**. Reporting on political impartiality and the anticipated Bell recommendations. Read.

National Attendance Portal · Special Feature for School Leaders

Attendance • safeguarding • belonging • inclusion. This resource is professional guidance, not legal advice, and should be read alongside final DfE publications, statutory safeguarding guidance and local procedures.