

RELIGIOUS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

43 Hilltop Road,
Liverpool 16.

9th November, 1964.

Councillor Norton,
Chairman of Governors,
King David School,
5 Oxford Street,
Liverpool 7.

Dear Councillor Norton,

We have received a letter from Mr. Fisher, and as it is confined to conveying your views, we prefer to take up the points raised in the letter directly with you.

Mr. Fisher conveys your concern at seeing the religious education still further reduced. You are, of course, aware that every since the opening of the King David School, our deep and abiding interest has been to increase, rather than decrease, the time allotted for religious education. If there has been any diminution of it, it has been under the strongest protest from us.

If, therefore, we make this suggestion regarding an early closure of the School on Friday afternoons, it is evidently because we regard the practical observance of Judaism, in this instance, the Sabbath, of greater importance than theoretical instruction in its tenets. In any case, only five or six Fridays in the year are involved, and we consider the sacrifice of any Religious Education involved well worth the gain in the religious outlook of the School. We should, in fact, be obliged if the Headmaster used the fact as a demonstration of the earnestness in which the School and the religious authorities view the observance of the Sabbath and the importance of children using the time to prepare for, and to attend the Sabbath Eve Services.

Moreover, according to the suggestion we made to the Headmaster, of curtailing the Friday morning assembly, it should be possible to close the School at 2.40 without loss of Religious Education time.

We have raised the matter again this year because the experience of last year was not satisfactory. We also note the eagerness with which our suggestion is seized as a justification, in advance, for any weakness in the School's Religious Education. As already mentioned, the five or six periods that might be involved in a school year should not make all that difference. If there is a weakness in the religious effectiveness of the School, it is rather due to the lack of positive Jewish attitude that we should expect from the School, and this is but one example of it. Moreover, we strongly

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resent the tone and character of this letter and its contents. It shows a complete lack of appreciation of the aim we are all working to achieve, viz. effectiveness of the School as a religious factor in the education of our children.

This is an important point over which we should have expected instant and unqualified co-operation, instead of long protracted negotiation, the throwing up of obstacles and veiled intimidation

Yours sincerely,

Copy to Mr. Fisher.

Letter from 1964 (*well before I joined the school!!*) from the Religious Advisory Committee to the Chairman of the Governors regarding the early closing of the school on winter Fridays.

This question led the managers in September 1904 to commit their gravest error, when they ordered the school to remain open on the seventh day of Tabernacles, indisputably a holy day. Very few children came to school, and those that did had been forbidden to engage in secular work. After hasty consultation with the President, the headmaster decided to close the school and cancel the attendance:

"As this is the first time in the history of the Schools that they have been open in the Intermediate days of the Festival, the Managers were unable to gauge the degree of objection that would be raised by the parents of the children in expecting their attendance on this day." (49)

Astonishingly, the managers were ill-advised enough to repeat the experiment two years later, with the same results: 275 children absented themselves. (49) Log Book, 30th September, 1904.

Extract from thesis of Dr. Cyril Hershon which included Jewish Education in Liverpool.

FROM THE PAGES OF HISTORY
NO SCHOOL ON CHOL HAMOED

As you know from the Annual Founders' Day Ceremony held by the High School every year, the Jewish School in Liverpool has a long history going back to 1840. During this period a number of interesting incidents have occurred and we shall bring you some of these events.

The first one concerns school on Chol Hamoed.

Up to 1904, the school had always been closed on Chol Hamoed. That year, however, the Governing body ordered the school to be open on the last day of Chol Hamoed Sukkot, (on the other days of Chol Hamoed, it was as usual closed). The result was that very few pupils came to school and those who did come had been forbidden to engage in secular work. After a hasty consultation between the President and the Headmaster, the school was closed.

In 1906, the governing body tried to do the same thing but once again there was a non-attendance of pupils.....



Page from Jewish Studies Magazine,
dated Tishri 5737/1976.

2. The Association was very concerned that in the school calendar for 1975, the Festival of Sukkot would be effectively neglected yet time could be found for an entire week's holiday in October. It was reported that pupils had asked during Chol Hamoed why we had school whereas a number of their relatives and friends in London Jewish schools had no school for the whole of Chol Hamoed.

The Association reiterated the Principle that a Jewish school should build its School Calendar around the Jewish Festivals, and added that there should be a definite pattern for Jewish Schools.

It was therefore proposed and agreed that the Chief Rabbi's Office and the N.U.H.T. be asked to set up a Committee to recommend holiday dates for Jewish schools in this country. The Secretary was instructed to write to these organisations with this suggestion.

Minutes of Jewish Studies Staff Association. 18 October 1974

Paragraph 6

Following the decision of the Jewish Studies sub-committee regarding the arranging of special activities on Chol Hamoed Sukkot, etc. a very instructive and successful Chol Hamoed trip was arranged last year with the Lubavitch. It was hoped to repeat the same thing this year on the Tuesday of Chol Hamoed. This is an educational trip and not an outing and should, therefore, be arranged on a school day. Surely this can be the only *raison d'être* for school on Chol Hamoed. This activity was not permitted to take place on the Tuesday. Instead it was suggested that the pupils should give up a day of their holidays for it. This would not have been acceptable to the majority of the pupils concerned, thus making such a trip non-viable. It is significant to note that on the same day (Tuesday), a geography trip took place. No suggestion was made that this should take place on a day when the children were on holiday. Do we therefore take it that Geography is regarded as more important than Religious Instruction in the school?

Minutes of Religious Advisory Committee. 25 October 1976

3. The Association deplored the Governors' recommendation to hold School on 20th October 1978, a Jewish Festive day, when this date was not even in dispute. Furthermore, at the Staff Association Meeting on 12th July 1977 the motion was unanimously carried that "the Jewish Studies Staff's knowledge of the days required off for Jewish Festivals be accepted and that Rabbi Simon's allocation of holiday dates for this purpose should not be questioned". The Jewish Studies Staff Association is very surprised that Jewish Governors of a Jewish School can take such a negative attitude towards Chol Hamoed.

Minutes of Jewish Studies Staff Association. 10 October 1977

Extracts from Minutes of various committees regarding school on Chol Hamoed.