

Towards Greater Understanding

# Meeting the needs of Muslim pupils in state schools

Information & Guidance for Schools



**M C B**

The Muslim Council of Britain

*This information and guidance document and updated versions can be downloaded from The MCB website:  
[www.mcb.org.uk](http://www.mcb.org.uk)*



**The Muslim Council of Britain**

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Islamic Relief is a British aid agency addressing the needs of the world's poorest people.



Muslim Aid is a well established UK based charity organization that provides aid and relief to poor and needy of the world.

*In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful*

## Foreword

There are approximately 1.6 million Muslims in Britain. They form the country's largest religious minority and come from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Although three quarters of British Muslims are of South Asian origin, there are also significant numbers of Muslims from North Africa and the Middle East, Central and Eastern Africa, Eastern Europe, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan. In addition, there are significant numbers of British White and African-Caribbean converts to Islam.

Islam and Muslims are thus part of the mosaic that comprises modern Britain, with half of the Muslim population being British born. There are over 400,000 Muslim pupils in school education, of whom approximately 96% are in the maintained sector. The faith commitments of Muslim pupils and their families encompass all aspects of everyday life and conduct, including daily life in school. It is important therefore, that educators and schools have good understanding of how they can respond positively to meeting the needs of Muslim pupils.

Many of our schools have a cherished tradition of fostering an inclusive ethos which values and addresses the differences and needs of the communities they serve. We are convinced that with a reasonable degree of mutual understanding and goodwill, even more progress can be made in responding positively to the educational aspirations and concerns of Muslim pupils and their parents. The current climate, in which there is much negative portrayal of Islam and Muslims requires that this be given greater priority and impetus to ensure that Muslim pupils are appropriately accommodated for and become an integral part of mainstream school life and thereby of society as a whole.

Comprehensive information and guidance of this nature is long overdue. Its purpose is to promote greater understanding of the faith, religious and cultural needs of Muslim pupils and how they can be accommodated within schools. It also provides useful information and guidance and features of good practice on meeting these needs.

One of the recommendations made by the Runnymede Trust report (1997) on 'Islamophobia-a challenge for us all' was that Local Authorities should work with schools to develop guidelines on the issues concerning Muslims. Many of the areas highlighted by the report have been addressed within this document.

We trust that this information and guidance will become a useful reference point for local authorities, schools, governors and teachers in recognising, understanding, and endeavouring to respond positively to the needs and concerns of Muslim pupils and parents. It is also recommended to Muslim parents to further their understanding of school practices and what they can reasonably expect from schools.

Finally, we hope that this guidance is helpful in serving the purpose for which it is intended,  
Insha-Allah (God Willing).

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The Muslim Council of Britain

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# About this guide

This information and guidance for schools draws from and builds on guidance documents already in existence. In the development and writing stage headteachers of state schools, local authorities, Muslim organisations as well as various specialists have been consulted for their views and comments.

The purpose of this guide is to provide background information on relevant Islamic beliefs and practices and values and to deal with issues arising within schools that are important to and may be of concern to Muslim pupils and their parents. The information and guidance document is intended to be used, as a source of reference by schools when reviewing their policies and practices in relation to meeting the needs of their Muslim pupils.

This guidance addresses specific curriculum areas and whole school issues, such as uniform and collective worship. Each section explains the rationale for Muslim needs and aspirations and suggests positive ways for schools to establish good practice. We have attempted to cover the issues most commonly raised by pupils, parents, teachers, schools and governors, while taking into account the diversity of belief and practice within the Muslim community.

Whilst the guide has been designed to be used primarily as a reference document, the reader may find it helpful to read through section 1 – ‘A Muslim inclusive approach’ – before referring to any particular section.

Most of this document will be of relevance to all maintained schools across Britain, although the guide focuses primarily on the education system in England. Certain legal aspects, for example in relation to curriculum requirements and collective worship, differ in the education systems operative in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

We hope that the appendices will serve as additional useful references. The information and guidance provided, as well as appendices are not intended to be exhaustive and will be reviewed, updated and developed in future and will be available on The Muslim Council of Britain website ([www.mcb.org.uk](http://www.mcb.org.uk)). Any comments from the users of this document is welcomed.

## Training

In addition to this guidance, training is also available for school teachers and governors on the theme of this guidance ‘Islam and Muslim Cultural Awareness Training’ for schools and for local authority advisors. (*see appendix 1*)

# Islam and Education

Islam attaches great importance to education, knowledge and learning. The very first word of the Qur'an to be revealed to the Prophet Muhammad was 'Iqra', which means 'read' and there are numerous references in the Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet that emphasise the importance of knowledge and learning.

*O' My Lord! Advance me in knowledge. (Qur'an 20:114)*

*Say (Muhammad), "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?, It is those who are endowed with understanding that receive admonition. (Qur'an 39: 9)*

Islam holds knowledge and learning as sacred and, therefore, central to the development of any civilisation. With respect to the Islamic civilisation, Franz Rosenthal in his book 'Knowledge Triumphant' aptly captures the essence and centrality of knowledge and learning in the development of Islamic civilisation in the following words:

*'Ilm' (knowledge) is one of those concepts that have dominated Islam and given Muslim civilisation its distinctive shape and complexion. In fact, there is no other concept that has been operative as a determinant of Muslim civilisation in all its aspects to the same extent as 'ilm' ... There is no branch of Muslim intellectual life, of Muslim religious and political life, and of the daily life of the average Muslim that remained untouched by the all-pervasive attitude towards "knowledge" of something of supreme value for Muslim being. Ilm is Islam, even if the theologians have been hesitant to accept the technical correctness of this equation. The very fact of their passionate discussion of the concept attests to its fundamental importance for Islam.'*

Knowledge and learning has traditionally been divided into two categories - revealed knowledge (Qur'an and Prophetic sayings) and acquired knowledge (natural sciences, physics, astronomy, history, mathematics etc.) and the pursuit of both has historically been a preoccupation of Muslim scholars. Empowered with this open-minded attitude to knowledge and learning, Muslims were able to absorb and assimilate the various contributions of the Greek, Roman, Persian, Indian and Chinese civilisations.

This open minded spirit of enquiry and synthesis of Eastern and Western ideas brought about great advances in medicine, mathematics, physics, astronomy, geography, architecture, art,

literature and history. Many crucial systems such as algebra, Arabic numerals and the concept of zero (vital to the advancement of mathematics) were transmitted to medieval Europe through Muslim scholars. Further, sophisticated instruments like the astrolabe and the quadrant as well as good navigational maps crucial to the European voyages of discovery were developed by the Muslims.

Robert Briffalt in his book 'The Making of Humanity' captures Islam's contribution to civilisation in the following words:

*...There is not a single aspect of European growth in which the decisive influence of Islamic culture is not traceable, nowhere is it so clear and momentous as in the genesis of that power which constitutes the paramount distinctive force of the modern world and the supreme source of its victory – natural science and the scientific spirit... What we call science arose in Europe as a result of a new spirit of enquiry, of new methods of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation, measurement of the development of mathematics in a form unknown to the Greeks. That spirit and those methods were introduced into the European world by the Arabs.*

It is important for educators to appreciate and understand the centrality of knowledge and education in the philosophy of Islam and the substantial Muslim contributions to European and world civilisation. Within the educational context it is important to explore opportunities to emphasise on common and shared aspects of the Islamic and European civilisations in various fields such as religion, culture, linguistic and intellectual exchanges.

## Muslims in Britain

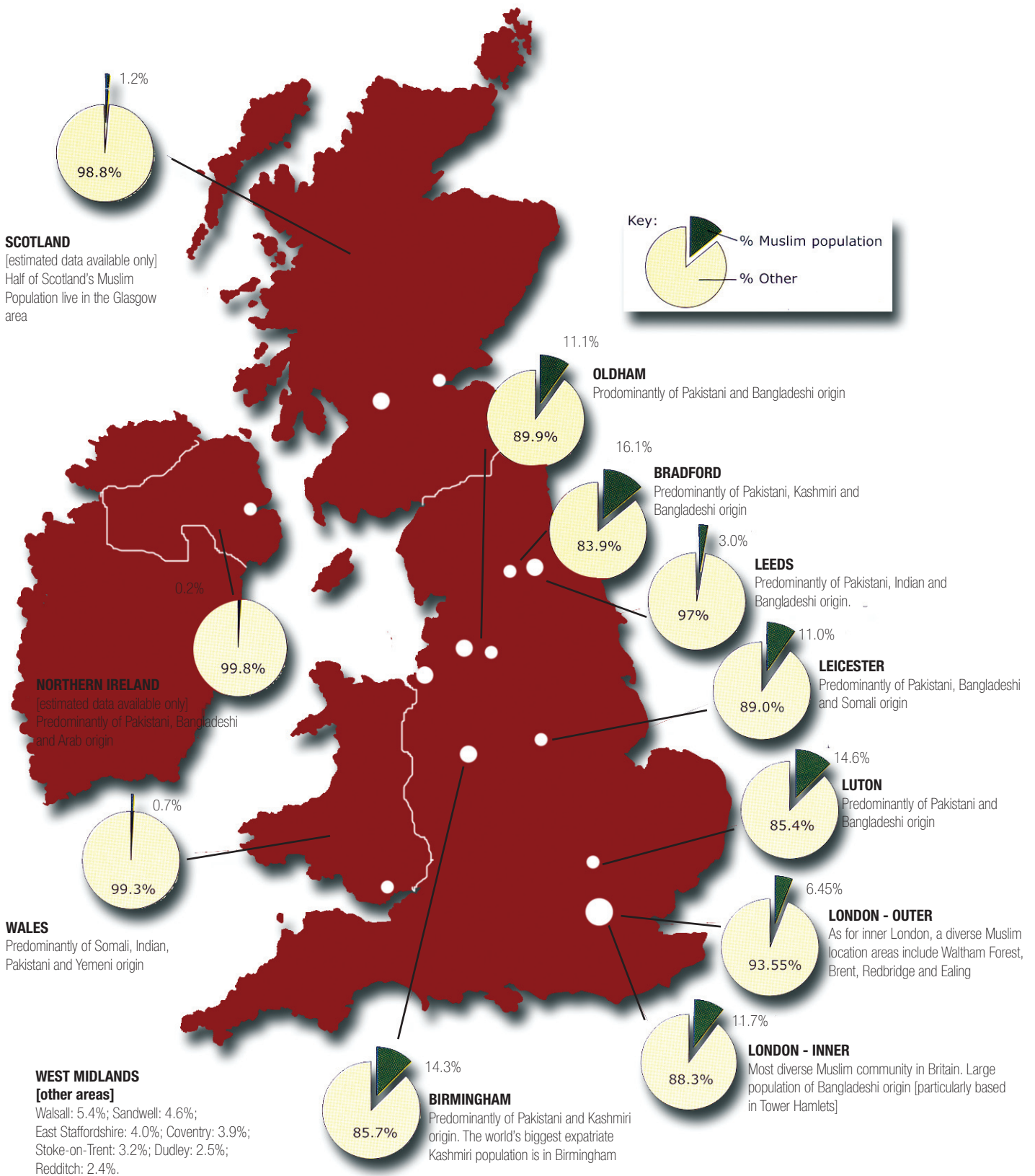
Britain has historic links and relations with peoples and countries from all over the world. Muslims have a relationship with Britain that stretches back more than a thousand years. Today, Muslims form a vibrant community that forms an integral part of British society. Muslims can be found in all spheres of British life making valuable contributions to social, economic and political life as civil servants, doctors, engineers, scientists, teachers, business people, local councillors and members of parliament.

The largest migration of Muslims began in the early 1950s, emanating mainly from rural areas of South Asia. Muslim migrants arrived in Britain primarily to compensate for labour shortages following the Second World War. They settled mainly in the inner-city areas of London, the industrial towns of the Midlands, and the textile towns of Lancashire, Yorkshire and Strathclyde.

In the past 30 years the community has expanded in number and in diversity through an influx both of educated professionals and of people seeking refuge from troubled parts of the world, including East Africa, Central Asia and South East Asia. There are also significant numbers of converts of British and European origin.



# British Muslim Population



Source: Statistics are taken from UK census 2001.

## Muslims in Schools

There is no large-scale monitoring of educational attainment in terms of religious affinity and faith community. However, proxies of faith community are to an extent provided by ethnicity, since pupils of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Somali and Turkish heritage in schools are predominantly Muslims.

The collection and publication of statistical data relating to educational attainment in terms of ethnicity is clearly an important component of highlighting inequality in outcomes. However, the current practice of not collecting and publishing attainment data in relation to religious background means that possible links between faith identities and underachievement are overlooked.

Some sections of the Muslim community do achieve high academic success but a significant number of Muslim pupils' specifically from, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Turkish and Somali backgrounds are among those who experience the highest levels of academic underachievement and consequent lack of qualifications in Britain.<sup>2</sup>

Many evidence-based reasons are cited for underachievement, including socio-economic deprivation, low expectations, Islamophobia or racism and interrupted schooling. Critical factors for the achievement of children broadly reside within three interconnected spheres of influence: home, school and society. It is vital that educational inequality and disadvantage in all spheres are tackled seriously to give all children the best possible opportunities to be successful as individuals and to positively contribute to the wellbeing and success of our society. Raising the achievement of identified underachieving groups can have a positive effect on the achievement of a school as a whole.

The significant levels of underachievement of Muslim pupils, in one sense, is all the more surprising because of the value that Islam places on education. Muslim pupils' faith and cultural heritage should be affirmed and developed positively within schools to contribute to promote the value and importance of education and to overcoming barriers to learning and achievement.

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<sup>2</sup> DfES - 'Ethnicity and Education' 2006 Edition page 56-58

# Tackling Islamophobia

Islamophobia is the term currently being used to denote an extreme and abnormal fear of and/or aversion to Islam in general and Muslims in particular. It is officially acknowledged that Muslims are experiencing Islamophobia both personally and institutionally through forms of marginalisation, discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping. For further details see the 2004 report of the 'Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia'.

The attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001 and in London in July 2005, the war in Iraq and ongoing instability in the Middle-East have already led to increased anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim sentiments in Britain.

Further to this, the Commission for Racial Equality defines 'institutional racism' as 'organisational structures, policies and practices which result in ethnic minorities being treated unfairly and less equally, often without intent or knowledge'.<sup>3</sup> These reports indicate that the areas where the greatest degree of discrimination is likely to be encountered is in education, employment and media. Ethnicity data provides statistical evidence that Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim communities are suffering deprivation in education, employment, housing, healthcare and access to justice. The 2004 report of the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia and, the 2006 report on 'Review of the evidence base on faith communities' by the Department for Communities and Local Government highlight the continuation of these disadvantages.

Within education, many schools in England, Scotland and Wales have responded positively to issues related to cultural diversity and to meeting the needs of Muslim pupils. However, others have not been receptive of legitimate and reasonable requests made by Muslim parents and pupils in relation to their faith-based aspirations and concerns. Many of these issues relate to aspects of schooling such as collective worship, communal changing, swimming, halal meals and sex education.

Schools can play a vital role in facilitating the positive integration of Muslim pupils within the wider community and thereby preventing or at least beginning the process of tackling some of the problems of marginalisation. More closer cooperation and working between Muslim communities and schools can create an environment where Muslim children feel more included and valued. The statutory and moral responsibility to develop cohesive future generations must and can be achieved through commitment to change, mutual respect and to understanding the beliefs, values and cultures of others.

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in 'Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Minority Ethnic Pupils', published by the Department for Education and Skills in 2003.





# 1

## A Muslim inclusive approach

A child's first significant encounter with wider society is often when he or she goes to school. It is vital that initial experiences and relationships are positive and supportive, fulfilling all aspects of an individual's needs. All children, to whatever extent possible, whatever their background, should be educated in the fullness of their being in consistency with their beliefs and the wishes of their parents, in a spirit that values their multiple identities, (faith, cultural and British). This will contribute to nurturing self-esteem and self-confidence, forming the basis for understanding and appreciation for the heritage and beliefs of others.

The Education Act 1944 emphasises the right of parents, subject to reasonable constraints, to have their children educated in accordance with their wishes:

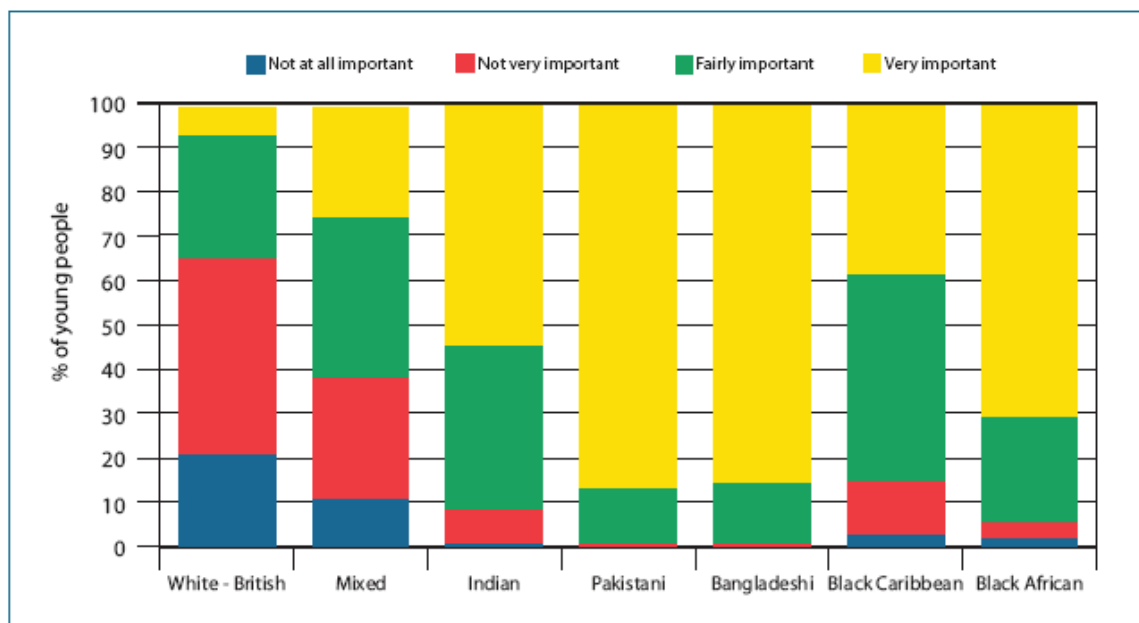
*Local education authorities shall have regard to the general principle that, so far as is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents.<sup>1</sup>*

According to the 'Ethnicity and Education' report in 2006 by the Department for Education and Skills, religion appears to be more important to young people from Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Caribbean and African communities than it is for white British or mixed heritage young people. Nearly all Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils said they were Muslim (99 per cent in each instance) and the vast majority (99%) within these two groups said that religion was fairly or very important to them, compared to 34% pupils of white British background.

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<sup>1</sup> Education Act 1944, Section 76

## Importance of religion to young person's way of life



It is essential that positive account is taken of the faith dimension of Muslim pupils in education and schooling. The faith of Muslim pupils should be seen as an asset to addressing constructively many of the issues that young people face today, including educational failure, disaffection, drugs, crime and sexually-transmitted diseases. Islam is an important reference point for Muslim children and has an extremely relevant message to convey to Muslims in all spheres of life and also to contribute to wider society.

Some community schools adopt a policy where the religion and faith of their pupils is strictly regarded as a matter of private and personal concern for each pupil and is therefore not appropriately addressed within the school. This approach makes it more difficult for schools to appreciate and respond positively to meeting some of the distinctive spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs of Muslim children, particularly if they are inappropriately categorised as 'Asians'. Asian needs and Muslim needs are not necessarily the same.

Recognition and inclusion of the faith identity and religious needs of Muslim pupils can contribute positively to their personal development and school life. Failure to recognise and affirm, or even worse the creation of situations involving conflicts of belief or conscience is likely to have an alienating effect where pupils may feel that they are not valued and may give rise to inappropriate assumptions that in order to progress in society they will have to compromise or give up aspects of who they are, and their religious beliefs and values. Unfortunately Muslim pupils are sometimes placed in situations where they feel pressured into acting contrary to their beliefs and conscience and also experience islamophobic sentiments and comments within schools. This can have a reciprocal effect on the child's considered opinion of the school and, indeed, education itself.

Where participation of Muslim pupils in activities or aspects of the curriculum conflicts with religious beliefs and values, problems can and should be resolved with mutual recognition, understanding and flexibility.

It is important for Muslim pupils' sense of self-esteem and worth that they see themselves reflected positively in the ethos, curriculum and life of their school. It is vital that school curriculum

in particular takes adequate account of pupils backgrounds and builds on the fusion of their faith, cultural and British identity. What the nature of this fusion is and how it is responded to, goes to the very heart of what it means to be a British Muslim in contemporary society. There are ample opportunities to develop inclusive aspects from the Muslim perspective in all subject areas, as appropriately highlighted in the DfES publication 'Aiming High':

*Pupils...may not see their culture, history, or values reflected in their school experience. Teachers need the confidence, competence and materials to use the existing flexibility within the curriculum to make subjects more relevant to pupils' own experiences and reflect their cultural heritage.*

The Every Child Matters agenda applies to all, including meeting the needs of Muslim pupils. They will succeed further if they are also given opportunities to flourish in aspects of the curriculum with which they have greater affinity and association. Some schools do study the contribution of the Islamic civilisation to Europe, for example in history, art, mathematics and science. This approach could inspire and motivate more pupils to feel that they are part of an institution that clearly values their Islamic heritage. As a consequence of this strategy, it is hoped that Muslim pupils will see themselves as an integral part of school life and of wider society and not on the margins of society or separate. It is also important to emphasise on the common aspects of British, European and Islamic heritage and history.

Schools can play a vital role in making children aware of prejudice and in enabling them to contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and just society. They can be at the forefront of leading by example in the promotion of greater understanding and tolerance, respect, equality and social harmony and cohesion in society.

We recognise that local authorities and schools, as part of their general strategies, do attempt to address the diverse religious and cultural needs of their pupils and try to respond to the communities they serve. Although there are many similarities with other faith groups, many of the issues facing Muslim pupils are different in kind and in degree. Schools need to be better informed and have greater and more accurate appreciation of their Muslim pupil's needs.

The following sections address issues which frequently arise as concerns for Muslim pupils and parents within schools. Several curriculum areas are covered as well as more general whole school issues such as uniform, halal meals and collective worship. Each section attempts to explain the reasons behind Muslim needs and suggests ways in which they can be responded to positively through mutual understanding, cooperation and flexibility.

The suggestions and advice outlined in this document captures much of the good practice from various schools around the country and is presented in an easy-to-use format. We hope that the information and guidance provided will make a valuable contribution to the creation of a positive inclusive culture within schools that values all pupils and enables them to become confident and valuable members of society.

# 2

## Dress codes in schools

### Modesty

The concept of ‘haya’ which is defined as ‘to encompass notions of modesty, humility, decency and dignity’, is a central value in Islam, as in many other faith traditions, and applies to all aspects of human behaviour and conduct. Schools should therefore have the expectation that Muslim pupils will endeavour to observe the principles of haya in all aspects of their conduct. It is important to recognise and appreciate that different faiths and cultures may and often do differ in their demarcation between modesty and immodesty.

One important aspect of modesty in Islam relates to the covering of the body. In principle the dress for both boys and girls should be modest and neither tight-fitting nor transparent and not accentuate the body shape. In practice this means a wide variety of styles are acceptable. In public boys should always be covered between the navel and knee and girls should be covered except for their hands and faces, a concept known as ‘hijab’.<sup>4</sup>

### School uniform

Issues and policies regarding school dress, including school uniform, are determined by the governing body and implemented by the headteacher. In drafting and renewing policies, it is reasonable to expect that the views of all stakeholders, including parent governors, other parents and pupils, are given due consideration.

Governors are also required to have regard to their responsibilities under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 which requires them to assess the impact of all policies, including uniform or dress codes, upon all pupils.

The DfES guidance on school uniform requires schools to be sensitive and considerate towards the culture, race and religion of all their pupils and :

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<sup>4</sup> Linguistically hijab means ‘to cover’. This takes the form of a headscarf and covering of the rest of the body with exception of the face and hands. For some Muslims fulfilling this requirement may mean the wearing of the jilbab (a long outer garment down to the ankles).

*'expects schools to accommodate these needs within a general uniform policy, for example, allowing Muslim girls to wear appropriate dress and Sikh boys to wear traditional head dress. The DfES does not consider it appropriate that any pupil should be disciplined for non-compliance with a school uniform policy, which results from them having to adhere to a particular cultural, race or religious dress code'.<sup>5</sup>*

Schools should accommodate Muslim girls so that they are allowed to wear a full-length loose school skirt or loose trousers, a long-sleeved shirt and a head scarf to cover their hair. Schools may wish to specify the colour, styling and size of scarf for reasons of uniformity.

Schools have a right to expect that Muslim parents will provide their children with suitable clothing for the climate and ensure that any headscarves worn can be safely tied for work in potentially hazardous places such as science laboratories, food technology areas, design and technology workshops and physical education areas.

## **Sportswear**

The most suitable sportswear for boys and girls that respects the requirements of Islamic modesty is a tracksuit and in addition for girls a headscarf tied in a safe and secure manner.

*(See also the section 7 physical education)*

## **Beards**

Following the example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) many Muslim males choose to keep a beard, which is considered to be an adornment of a man's face. Any decision by Muslim pupils to manifest their religion by growing a beard should be respected by their school.

## **Religious Amulets**

Some Muslim children may wear amulets containing Qur'anic verses that are wrapped or sewn in cloth, or contained in lockets worn usually around the neck. These have religious significance for those who wear them and should not be considered as jewellery. Schools should be sensitive and allow such amulets to be worn discretely.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/atoz/u/uniform](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/atoz/u/uniform).

## DRESS CODES IN SCHOOLS

### Features of good practice

- ✓ School uniform policy includes the particular dress requirements of Muslim pupils.
- ✓ School allows their Muslim girls to adhere to the Islamic requirements for dress, for example full-length skirts.
- ✓ Muslim girls who choose to wear the headscarf during all school lessons and activities are permitted to do so, including during physical education.
- ✓ Boys and girls are allowed to wear tracksuits during physical education activities.
- ✓ School respects the decision of Muslim boys to grow a beard.
- ✓ School allows religious amulets to be worn discretely, for example Qur'anic verses in lockets worn around the neck.



# 3

## Halal Meals

In common with some other religions, Islam has clear rules concerning the consumption of food and these are governed by two principles: food should be 'halal' (permissible) and 'tayyib' (good, healthy, natural and wholesome). Consumption of wholesome food and leading a healthy lifestyle are seen as religious obligations.

Halal refers to meat from animals<sup>6</sup> that has been slaughtered in accordance with the prescribed Islamic manner, similar to kosher meat in Judaism. For meat to be halal it must be slaughtered by a Muslim and God's name must be pronounced at the beginning of the slaughtering process. Although the stunning of animals is a legal requirement in the UK, Muslims and Jews are exempt from this, as animals that are stunned are not considered permissible for consumption.

In Islam the flesh of swine is not permissible for consumption. Food containing ingredients derived from pig, non-herbivores and animals that are not slaughtered in the prescribed Islamic manner is also forbidden. By the same token, food cooked in any fat or lard from these animals is forbidden.

Care needs to be exercised by supervisory staff at celebrations and parties where it is difficult to ensure the same degree of differentiation. During such events in school, sweets and cakes are normally shared amongst children. It is important to be aware that sweets, chocolates and cakes that contain alcohol or meat derivatives (for example, animal gelatine) are not permissible for consumption by Muslims. In all cases it is important that schools ensure that all served items are clearly labelled as to whether they are 'halal' and 'vegetarian'.

### Etiquettes of eating

Muslims normally begin eating by reciting a small prayer, as this was the practice of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Muslims always prefer to eat with their right hand, regardless of whether they are using cutlery or not.

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<sup>6</sup> For example, cows, goats, chickens, sheep and turkey.

## HALAL MEALS

### Features of good practice

- ✓ School meals policies incorporate the requirements for the provision of halal meals.
- ✓ All kitchen staff receive guidance and training in the handling, preparation and serving of halal food.
- ✓ School ensures that the meat supplied is from a reputable halal supplier.
- ✓ Storage, preparation and serving of halal food is done separately from non-halal meat or meat products to avoid cross contamination, for example, utensils used in the preparation and serving of halal food are not mixed with those used for non-halal food.
- ✓ Food is clearly labelled as halal or vegetarian at the point of serving.



# 4

## Provisions for prayers

### Five daily prayers

The observance of five obligatory daily prayers is one of the five 'pillars' of Islam. Children from the age of seven are to be encouraged to pray regularly and prayer becomes obligatory upon all males and females at the age of puberty. Performing the five daily prayers involves adopting body postures consisting of standing, bowing, prostrating and sitting whilst facing Makkah in modern Saudi Arabia

### Prayer (Salah) times

Prayer Name	Time	During School Hours ?
Fajr	Between dawn and sunrise	NEVER
Zuhr	Between midday and afternoon	ALWAYS
Asr	Between mid-afternoon and sunset	SOMETIMES
Maghrib	Immediately after sunset	NEVER <sup>7</sup>
Isha	Between nightfall and dawn	NEVER

### Prayers at school

Only two of the prescribed prayers (Zuhr and Asr) need to be accommodated by schools. Zuhr prayer will normally fall within the lunch hour or afternoon break during the school day. During summer times 'Asr prayer does not coincide with the school day. However, Asr prayer during winter times may fall within school hours and can be accommodated during afternoon break or just after school. The obligatory portion of each prayer, including the ritual wash, will usually take about twenty minutes.

Although it is preferable to perform prayers in a mosque and in congregation, a Muslim may pray individually and almost anywhere. The only condition is that the place of prayer should be clean and pure. It is for this reason that prayer mats are normally used.

<sup>7</sup> Schools need to be aware that in cases of after school activities such as extra lessons, clubs and detentions, the Maghrib prayer in winter times may fall during school hours and this needs to be considered. The same is true for schools in the north of the UK, where sunset is very early during the winter.

In accommodating prayer requirements, schools need to allow pupils to use an appropriate classroom or area for the purpose of prayer. Care should be taken to avoid allocating rooms that may have displays with distracting imagery, such as posters of the human body in a science laboratory. Schools should be aware that some pupils may request separate prayer facilities for boys and girls, as they may feel more comfortable praying in a single-gender group.

### **Cleanliness before praying (Wudu)**

Cleanliness and ritual washing (Wudu) is an essential prerequisite for all daily prayers and takes a few minutes to complete. Muslim pupils who wish to pray will need access to washing facilities to perform Wudu, which includes the washing of their hands, mouth, face, arms to the elbow, and feet. This state of purification becomes nullified when one goes to the toilet or breaks wind.

After visiting the toilet, Muslims are required to wash their private parts with water to meet cleanliness requirements, hence pupils will need to use water cans or bottles that are easily accessible from a storage space in or near the washing area.

### **Friday prayer (Jumu'ah)**

The Friday prayer has a special significance and importance. It has to be performed in congregation and replaces the Zuhr prayer. It is obligatory for males and optional or recommended for females. It is different from the normal prayer in that it is shortened and has to be preceded by a sermon (Khutbah). The Friday prayer can be led by a suitable external visitor, a teacher or an older pupil. In its entirety the Friday prayer (ablution, sermon and prayer) should take between 20 to 30 minutes to complete depending on, pupil numbers and availability of washing facilities.

Schools need to be aware that it is likely that a greater number of pupils will participate in the observance of Friday prayer than the daily prayers. Facilities for the Friday prayer remain the same as those required for other prayers.

It is worth mentioning here that under the terms of the 1988 Education Reform Act, children are allowed to leave school premises to receive religious education. Parents may make such requests in writing to take their children to the mosque eg. for obligatory Friday congregational prayers. However, arrangements made within school would satisfy pupils and parents and make such requests unnecessary.

## PROVISIONS FOR PRAYER

### Features of good practice

- ✓ School makes arrangements for their Muslim pupils who wish to perform daily prayers in school.
- ✓ School makes arrangements to allow Muslim children who wish to perform their Friday congregational prayer on school site, led by an older pupil, teacher or external visitor.
- ✓ School allocates a regular place for the daily prayers that fall within school time.
- ✓ School ensures washing facilities are available, preferably in close proximity to the prayer area.
- ✓ School builds or adapts a washing facility in the toilet areas where pupils can conveniently make ablution which includes washing of the feet.



# 5

## Ramadan - The Month of Fasting

### **The importance of fasting**

Fasting during the month of Ramadan is the fourth 'pillar' of Islam, an act of worship of great spiritual, moral and social significance for Muslims. It is obligatory for all males and females to fast once they attain the age of puberty (for some children this can be as young as age nine). The physical dimension of fasting involves completely abstaining from all forms of nourishment, food, liquids (including water) and smoking from dawn to sunset for the whole month. Younger children may fast for all or part of the month but this is entirely optional. The spiritual and moral dimension of fasting is considered to be of far greater importance than the physical dimension. In general, Muslims are encouraged not to use Ramadan as an opportunity to avoid aspects of normal life but rather to cope with normal life under a different set of guidelines and conditions. However, schools need to be aware of some important considerations in relation to fasting pupils. Fasting pupils will normally get up before dawn to have their breakfast, which does interrupt their sleeping pattern.

During Ramadan, Muslims should focus on additional worship and God-consciousness, in order to improve themselves in all aspects of their lives and dealings with others, including their character, respect for others, kindness, forgiveness and avoidance of bad language and poor behaviour. In addition, having empathy with the poor, donating generously for charitable causes, the sharing of food and inviting others to one's home to open the fast are important features of Ramadan. Muslims also focus on reading more of the Qur'an and performing additional prayers in the mosque every evening.

Schools can develop the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of their children and school life by recognising and building upon the essence and spirit of Ramadan. Whilst the discipline and the challenge of fasting is to continue with the normality of everyday life, staff should exercise a degree of understanding, by encouraging pupils to avoid excessive exertion in physical education to prevent dehydration. By the same token they may praise pupils who are clearly making a special effort regarding their attitudes and behaviour.

Teachers can take this opportunity to be more inclusive and teach pupils about Ramadan in religious education and to invite guests from the Muslim community to take collective worship

or assemblies. Some schools offer their staff awareness training about factors affecting their pupils during Ramadan.

The Islamic calendar is based on a lunar cycle, therefore, the month of Ramadan begins 10 or 11 days earlier each year on the Gregorian calendar; hence it takes Ramadan about 33 years to move through the seasons from January to December.

## **Primary school pupils**

Although fasting for the entire month does not become obligatory until the age of puberty, it is common practice for Muslim children to begin to fast before this age, in order to become progressively accustomed to the obligation. Most children aged 10 and 11 (years 5 & 6) are likely to fast all 30 days. Children are enthusiastic and get a great sense of achievement joining their families in taking part in the spirit of Ramadan and often begin at a younger age.

The younger the child, the more difficult it tends to be for children to fast without their physical stamina and concentration levels being affected. This can be problematic for very young children and we would advise that schools liaise with parents to encourage very young children to fast half days or to avoid fasting during school days as this can have a significant effect on their concentration levels and degree of alertness while at school. It is important to be aware that young children are more likely to fast when Ramadan falls in the winter months, when the days are shorter and the climate is cooler.

Whether a pupil decides to fast or not is a matter to be decided between the parent and child. Breaking the fast before the correct time may be regarded as being worse than not fasting at all by some pupils and parents. Schools should not encourage children to break their fast early unless it is for health and safety reasons. The overriding consideration should be that the children do not feel disadvantaged in school activities because of their religious observance.

## **Prayers during Ramadan**

The same daily prayers are offered in school time as at other times of the year, but in Ramadan it is usual for more students to offer their prayers in school. Schools should recognise this by putting in place acceptable arrangements for prayer, including reasonable extra space ready for the first day of fasting, these arrangements should be shared with pupils, parents and staff so that everyone is clear of the facilities offered.

## **Celebrating Ramadan**

Muslims approach Ramadan with enthusiasm and it is customary for Muslims to congratulate one another on its arrival. The school can value and build on this spirit by having themes based on Ramadan at collective worship or assemblies, and by organising communal 'Iftar' (breaking the fast) when pupils, parents, community members and teachers – both Muslims and non-Muslims – can all join in the ending of the fast and eating together. Some schools enter into the charitable spirit of Ramadan by raising funds for the poor and the needy in the world.

## Physical Education

The majority of pupils who are fasting are able to take part in most physical activities during Ramadan without putting themselves at risk or in danger. Fasting may make some children feel tired or drowsy, or even develop headaches due to dehydration. This may necessitate some Muslim pupils having to reduce their physical exercise. Schools may wish to consider and plan less strenuous activities in physical education lessons during Ramadan.

## Examinations during Ramadan

It is inevitable that certain statutory and internal school examinations may fall during Ramadan. Schools should give appropriate consideration when scheduling internal examinations, since the combination of preparing for exams and fasting may prove challenging for some pupils.

## Parents' evenings and after school functions

During Ramadan, the evenings can be a very busy period for Muslim families, particularly if the breaking of the fast (Iftar) falls in the early evening. Furthermore, some adults will spend their time observing additional religious activities, like the special evening prayers (*Taraweeh*) at the mosque. This may make it difficult for parents to attend meetings or other functions in the evening during the month of Ramadan. The scheduling of parent evenings before or after the month of Ramadan would be appreciated by parents and is likely to ensure better attendance.

## Exemption from fasting

There are certain circumstances and conditions in which Muslims are exempt from fasting. These include menstruating women, those for whom fasting is likely to have a seriously detrimental effect on health and physical well-being and those who cannot survive without taking medication or nourishment, for example diabetics. Those travelling on long and difficult journeys may not fast if it is likely to cause serious hardship. Any missed fasting days have to be made up at a later date or in some circumstances compensated for, by feeding the poor.

## Medication

No oral medication can be taken by a person who is fasting. Anyone needing regular medication during fasting hours is normally exempt from fasting in any case. Medication can be taken once the fast has ended. Medical injections can be taken by a person who is fasting, although not those injections that influence body nutrition. Guidance should be sought from local Muslim organisations on specific issues if necessary. During emergencies, where a child's wellbeing is at risk, medicine should be administered. Routine vaccinations should be scheduled for other times of the year.

## **Detentions and after school activities**

When Ramadan falls during the winter months, after-school detention or activities for a pupil who is fasting could mean that the pupil is not able to reach home in time to break their fast. Whilst accepting full responsibility for breaching school rules, schools should be aware that pupils are able to carry out their religious duty of breaking the fast on time. A drink or anything to eat is sufficient and many schools do make this provision available when required. Some parents may request that their children break the fast at home with their family.

## **Swimming during Ramadan**

In general, participation in swimming is an acceptable activity whilst fasting. However, for many pupils this activity may prove to be an issue, as the potential for swallowing water is very high. Some pupils or parents consider the risk too great and may wish to avoid swimming whilst fasting. Others may take the view that as swallowing is unintentional it does not break the fast.

Schools with a significant number of Muslim pupils should try to avoid scheduling swimming lessons during Ramadan to remove unnecessary barriers to full participation.

## **Sex and relationship education**

Whilst fasting, Muslims are not permitted to engage in any sexual relations and are expected to take measures to avoid sexual thoughts and discourse. Schools are therefore advised to avoid scheduling the teaching of sex and relationship education, including aspects that are part of the science curriculum, during Ramadan.

## **Special Ramadan evening prayers (Taraweeh)**

During Ramadan many pupils may observe special additional prayers called Taraweeh. These usually take place at the mosque every evening and last approximately an hour. These prayers are optional and may be observed individually or with one's family at home.

## RAMADAN - THE MONTH OF FASTING

### Features of good practice

- ✓ School has a written policy for the requirements and implications of Ramadan for their Muslim pupils.
- ✓ School offers its staff Ramadan awareness training about factors affecting pupils during Ramadan.
- ✓ School recognises and celebrates the spirit and values of Ramadan through collective worship or assembly themes and communal Iftar (collective breaking of the fast).
- ✓ School is aware of the likely increase in the number of pupils offering prayer during the month of Ramadan and facilities are provided accordingly, for example a larger area for daily prayers.
- ✓ Adequate arrangements are in place to supervise fasting children, during the lunch hour. These arrangements are well publicised amongst pupils and parents.
- ✓ School takes account of Ramadan when planning internal examinations and tries to avoid scheduling them during the month of Ramadan.
- ✓ School avoids scheduling sex and relationship education and swimming during Ramadan.
- ✓ School teachers are considerate and mindful that fasting children avoid engaging in over-demanding exercises during physical education lessons that may result in dehydration.
- ✓ If possible, school avoids holding parents' meetings and other school social events in the evening during the month of Ramadan.
- ✓ School gives the option for those Muslim pupils who are entitled to free school meals to take packed lunches home, should they wish to do so.





# 6

## Islamic Festivals

Like all other religions, Islam has a number of special celebrations. The two main annual celebrations are Eid ul-Fitr (festival of charity) and Eid ul-Adha (festival of sacrifice).

### **Festival of charity (Eid ul-Fitr)**

Eid ul-Fitr celebrates the successful completion of the month of Ramadan and every Muslim is required to give charity on this occasion. The day starts with a light meal followed by special congregational prayers often attended by the whole family. Muslims usually spend the rest of the day visiting relatives or friends, and eating special food. It is customary to wear one's finest or new clothes and also to exchange gifts and money.

### **Festival of sacrifice (Eid ul-Adha)**

Eid ul-Adha celebrates the completion of the Hajj (the annual pilgrimage to Makkah). In many countries after the public prayers, those who can afford to, sacrifice a lamb or a goat to signify the Prophet Ibrahim's (Abraham's) obedience to God, shown by his readiness to sacrifice his son Ismail (Ishmael). Eid ul Adha is celebrated by Muslims all over the world, not only those performing the Hajj. Many Muslims arrange for their sacrifice to be made overseas so that the meat of the sacrificed animal reaches those they consider to be in most need of it. The day of Eid-ul-Adha itself is similar in nature to the day of Eid-ul-Fitr.

### **Celebrating Islamic festivals**

Schools can recognise and celebrate the Eid festivals by highlighting the importance of the message of Eid through collective worship and assemblies. Schools may want to share sweets amongst all children to mark this event. In addition, schools may make the normal school meals a special Eid meal for all the children and invite some parents and special guests. Holding balls and discos to celebrate Islamic festivals would be considered inappropriate by Muslim parents.

As Eid days are based on the lunar calendar, there can be some uncertainty in determining the exact dates of the two Eids in advance. This makes planning for Eid holidays difficult. Schools are advised to liaise with their local mosque or other Muslim organisations for more information. Schools should allow at least one day off for each of the Eid celebrations as obligatory religious observance. Eid holidays should be marked as authorised absences.<sup>8</sup> In addition, schools with a high proportion of Muslim pupils can alter school holidays to have time off at Eid without prejudice to their pupils and the schools' attendance record.

## Other celebrations

There are a number of other important occasions in the Islamic calendar which schools can recognise through assembly themes. They include the Islamic New Year (Hijrah), Night of Power (Lailatul Qadr), Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the day of Ashurah.<sup>9</sup>

## Social events and celebrations

When organising either celebration or social events it is important for schools to consider the appropriateness of certain events, such as school balls/discos, fashion shows that might inadvertently exclude pupils and parents from the Islamic faith background. Alcohol is prohibited within Islam, and its presence at a function may make it uncomfortable for some pupils and their parents to attend.

## ISLAMIC FESTIVALS

### Features of good practice

- ✓ The school includes possible dates for the two Eid festivals in their yearly calendar.
- ✓ The school grants Eid holidays as authorised absences for the observance of the special Eid prayers and celebrations for the two Eid festivals.
- ✓ The school recognises and celebrates the two Eids and other Islamic festivals in collective worship or assembly themes.
- ✓ The school celebrates Eid by sharing sweets amongst their children to mark the event. In addition, the school may make the normal school meal a special Eid meal for their pupils.

<sup>8</sup> For further information see Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act

<sup>9</sup> Children who belong to the Shi'a Muslim community may take this day off as a religious holiday.

# 7

## Physical Education

Physical education is a very important part of school life and full participation is to be encouraged, in order to develop a healthier lifestyle. Physical education is a compulsory part of the national curriculum at all key stages and covers six areas of activity: athletics, dance, games, gymnastics, outdoor and adventurous activities, and swimming. At Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils must experience all six areas of activity. At Key Stage 3, pupils pursue at least four areas of activity, whilst at Key Stage 4 pupils are required to pursue at least two.

There are some basic Islamic requirements for modesty which need to be considered in order to remove any unnecessary barriers for Muslim pupils to participate fully in physical education and swimming in particular.

### **Dress for physical education**

The most suitable sportswear for boys and girls that respects the requirements of Islamic modesty is a tracksuit. In addition, for girls, the headscarf can be tied in a safe and secure manner, or special sports hijabs can be used.<sup>10</sup>

### **Changing (primary schools)**

In the vast majority of primary schools, when changing for PE, both boys and girls have no choice but to change in mixed group environments for sports activities. Muslim children are likely to exhibit resistance to this sort of compromising and immodest exposure, but are often pressurised to conform to institutional norms which do not take account of their own or their parents' beliefs and values.

Schools need to take account of, and be more responsive and sensitive to, the moral values of the children and communities they serve. In primary schools where there are no separate changing facilities, schools can use portable partitions to allow girls and boys to change in

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<sup>10</sup>Please also see section 2. School Uniform

single-gender groups within the classrooms. Teachers also need to be sensitive to gender separation in this context.

As a permanent solution, schools could consider providing separate changing facilities that include individual changing cubicles, particularly in schools that have significant or large Muslim pupil populations.

### **Changing (secondary schools)**

In secondary schools, changing facilities are always gender specific but almost always communal. Communal changing compromises the Islamic modesty requirements and having to change down to their undergarments in the presence of their peers and teachers can be a source of embarrassment or even be undignifying for many pupils. Pupils who may have problems with weight or physique can be subjected to unnecessary embarrassment in situations where there is no choice but to change communally.

Secondary schools can provide a choice for their pupils to change in greater privacy, for example, by including individual changing cubicles within changing facilities.

### **Mixed gender sports activities**

Some sports involve physical contact with other team players, for example basketball and football. Most Muslim parents would find it objectionable for boys and girls to play such sports in mixed-gender groups. Schools can respond positively to this concern by making sure that contact sports are always in single-gender groups.

### **Showering after physical education**

Some schools may have policies for children to shower at school after sports activities. These arrangements sometimes take the form of naked communal showering, which involves profound indignity. The practice of allowing Muslim children to shower in bathing costumes or shorts does not solve the problem if other pupils are naked in the same communal shower area. Islam forbids nakedness in front of others or being among others who are naked.

Muslim children should not be expected to participate in communal showering. Sensitivity and understanding by school and staff in these matters will be much appreciated both by Muslim pupils and by their parents. One practical solution in a school environment would be the installation of individual shower cubicles. In the absence of separate cubicles for changing and showering, Muslim children should be allowed to delay showering until they reach home.

## Swimming

Swimming is a requirement of the national curriculum at Key Stage 2 and becomes optional at Key Stage 3. It is a beneficial and enjoyable activity that develops a valuable skill for life.

Many schools, both primary and secondary, hold mixed swimming lessons but the changing arrangements, although single gender, are often communal. Some schools have taken the initiative of offering single-sex swimming lessons and ensure that their pupils change in individual cubicles. However, they do not always ensure that the accompanying teacher and pool attendants are of the same gender as the children. Adjoining changing and showering areas of the pool are sometimes used by members of the public at the same time as the children. This raises serious concern in that some members of the public may sometimes become totally naked in the presence of these children.

The practice of boys and girls swimming in mixed-group sessions or being exposed to complete nakedness of others, when changing, is unacceptable for reasons of modesty and decency to Muslim parents, as well as to many non-Muslim parents. Given the choice between mixed or single-sex swimming, Muslim parents would always opt for a wholly single-sex environment for swimming.

The Swimming Charter published by the DfES in December 2003 under the heading 'Ethnic Minority Groups' states:

*The Swimming Advisory Group's report highlighted the fact that many children from ethnic communities were failing to reach the minimum Key Stage 2 target. This is particularly true for children of Islamic faith background whose parents may object on grounds of modesty and decency. Muslim girls in particular may exhibit reluctance to swimming in mixed classes with boys. Making alternative arrangements such as all male and all female classes can often solve these issues. Schools, local authorities ... and pool managers should work together to remove unnecessary barriers to learning. They should consider block booking separate classes for girls and boys (either from a number of schools or with different age groups from the same school), using same sex teachers for classes, if appropriate, and adopt flexible clothing codes.*

Schools should make every effort to provide a single-sex environment for swimming and allow Muslim children to wear swimwear that complies with the requirements of modesty and decency according to the teachings of Islam. Some schools have been able to meet these requirements in providing an appropriate single-gender environment and also allowing girls to wear full leotards and leggings in the pool. Provided these guidelines are adhered to, there should be no reason why Muslim children should be withdrawn from swimming lessons.

If schools are unable to make arrangements for a single-sex environment for swimming, then Muslim pupils should have the option to be excused from swimming on religious grounds. Parents should be encouraged to take advantage of single-sex arrangements that some swimming pools offer outside school hours, where their children can go and learn to swim.

## Dance

Dance is one of the activity areas of the national curriculum for physical education. Muslims consider that most dance activities, as practised in the curriculum, are not consistent with the Islamic requirements for modesty as they may involve sexual connotations and messages when performed within mixed-gender groups or if performed in front of mixed audiences. Most primary and secondary schools hold dance in mixed-gender classes and may include popular dance styles, in which movements of the body are seen as sexually expressive and seductive in nature.

At Key Stage 1 and the early phase of Key Stage 2 dance is equated with expressive and creative movements connected with emotions or forces of nature. In this form it would be acceptable to most Muslim pupils and parents.

However, most Muslim parents will find little or no educational merit or value in dance or dancing after early childhood and may even find it objectionable on moral and religious grounds once children have become sexually mature (puberty). Some parents may consider it to be acceptable within a single-sex context provided the dance movements have no sexual connotations. As dancing is not a normal activity for most Muslim families, Muslim pupils are likely to exhibit reluctance to taking part in it, particularly in mixed-gender sessions. By the same token, dance performances before a mixed gender audience may also be objectionable.

Schools are asked to respect these views and principles, which are held sincerely on the grounds of conscience, and to honour parents' wishes by not placing pupils in situations of religious and moral compromise.

Whilst Muslims have no wish to constrain the freedom of others, they would urge schools to organise and manage physical education so that pupils can choose other acceptable forms of activity, for example, athletics, games, gymnastics, outdoor and adventurous activities and swimming within the curriculum.

If the above is not possible, parental requests for children to be excused from dance should be treated as an issue of religious conscience and respected accordingly.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

### Features of good practice

- ✓ School has a policy for physical education that includes Islamic requirements for modesty in dress / sportswear and changing arrangements for P.E.
- ✓ Primary schools arrange separate changing areas for physical education for boys and girls or use portable or curtain screens within classrooms where separate changing areas are not available. Teachers are sensitive to gender separation in this context.
- ✓ At primary level, schools build separate changing facilities for boys and girls with individual changing cubicles, particularly for older children.
- ✓ At secondary level, schools incorporate individual changing and shower cubicles.
- ✓ The needs of Muslim girls who choose to wear the head scarf are accommodated during PE lessons.
- ✓ Boys and girls are allowed to wear tracksuits during PE activities.
- ✓ School makes provision to allow boys and girls to swim in single gender classes and ensures that teachers and attendants are of the same gender as the pupils.
- ✓ In cases where adequately sensitive provision for Muslim pupils cannot be made, schools are flexible in allowing parents to excuse their children from swimming and encourages them to explore other options and opportunities available at the local community swimming pools, (where there may be acceptable forms of provision).
- ✓ School allows Muslim pupils who wish not to participate in dance the flexibility to participate in an alternative curriculum activity.
- ✓ School ensures contact-sports activities are conducted in single gender groups.



# 8

## Religious Education (RE)

Every pupil in a maintained school has a statutory entitlement to RE, which provides an important opportunity to develop their own faith and to learn about the faiths of others, particularly the Christian faith which has historically moulded life and culture in Britain. Having a positive approach and an accurate and greater understanding of faiths other than one's own is essential to a healthy multicultural and multi-faith society.

In all maintained schools without a specific faith ethos, RE is taught according to a locally agreed syllabus, drawn up by an appointed and representative conference initiated by the local Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education (SACRE). The agreed syllabus takes account of the Department for Education and Skills non-statutory framework for religious education. In local authorities with significant or high numbers of pupils from a particular faith or faiths, the locally agreed syllabus needs to take account of this and allow adequate flexibility for schools to reflect their pupils' religious backgrounds when apportioning syllabus time.

There are many schools with a significant or a high composition of Muslim pupils, in which the syllabus time allocation does not take adequate account of or reflect their religious background, resulting in a relatively small proportion of study time in RE being devoted to the study of Islam. Although learning about other religions is important, a broadly proportionate recognition of the pupils' religious background would clearly be more engaging and relevant.

Religious education at Key Stage 4, particularly where focused on Islam, can be one of the most fulfilling, rewarding and high-achieving subjects for Muslim pupils. Muslim parents and the wider Muslim community would very much regard it as the essential core of any Muslim child's education. RE teachers usually find that giving Muslim pupils the opportunity to take the double Islam option in GCSE Religious Studies generates higher interest and motivation levels in other subjects as well, with an increased likelihood of better examination results.

Most Muslims have no objection to learning about other religions and their beliefs and practices. A serious study of the Qur'an, for example, leads naturally to a study of the 'People of the Book' (Jews and Christians). A balance needs to be kept between giving Muslims a good grounding in and detailed study of their own faith and learning about other major faiths practised within

society. It is also important, in schools where there are no Muslims, for all pupils to learn about Islam. This is particularly important given the need to develop an accurate understanding of Islam and Muslims in Britain in a climate of fear and suspicion brought about by negative and inaccurate portrayal of Islam and Muslims.

## **Images of Prophets and the Divine**

Muslims believe that God should not and cannot be represented in any form, whether two-dimensional or three-dimensional. It would therefore be inappropriate to ask Muslim pupils to draw pictures or make models of God in any incarnate form of the Divine, from any religious traditions. Similarly, all of the prophets (peace be upon them) are afforded great reverence and respect and therefore drawing pictures or role-playing them is considered equally inappropriate.

## **Visiting places of worship**

Muslim pupils are allowed to take part in educational visits to all places of worship, including churches, synagogues and temples. Some parents may object to this, but if they are made aware of the objectives and the purpose of the trip, namely that it is for educational purposes and not for worship, this should usually be sufficient to allay their concerns.

## **Statutory right to withdraw**

The Education Act 1944 gives parents the right to withdraw their children from Religious Education and remains unchanged in the subsequent Acts of 1988 and 1996. The right of parents to withdraw from RE applies also to faith schools. Where parents are dissatisfied with the provision of RE content, they may choose to exercise their right to withdraw their children by writing to the school. Schools should comply and respect this right and make alternative supervisory arrangements for withdrawn pupils.

If Muslim parents withdraw their children from Religious Education there are two options to be considered:

1. The Muslim children withdrawn from Religious Education may be given alternative work to do, supervised by a member of staff.
2. If a suitably qualified Muslim teacher is available (even from outside the school), the 1996 Education Act allows children who have been withdrawn from Religious Education to receive religious studies lessons in their own faith within the school, as long as this is at no extra cost to the school. If arranged in an atmosphere of mutual respect, such arrangements can help to cement a relationship of understanding and co-operation between the school and Muslim parents.

The introduction of such a course of study, and of similar initiatives which cater for the needs of Muslim pupils, can make a significant contribution towards the establishment of sound understanding and positive relations between school, home and community.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE)

### Features of good practice

- ✓ When drawing up the RE policy the school takes account of the religious background of its pupil population when allocating syllabus time in the teaching of religious education.
- ✓ The school ensures that adequate religious education resources are available, including materials about Islam, and that these are accurate and authentic.
- ✓ At Key Stage 4, all Muslim pupils are given the opportunity to study the Islam options (Islamic Studies) as part of GCSE Religious Studies.
- ✓ The school respects and honours the rights of parents to withdraw their children from RE lessons if requested in writing.



# 9

## Collective Worship

One of the aims of the national curriculum and therefore of the education system is to cater for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The provision of collective worship is one of the key mechanisms for promoting the spiritual and moral dimension of a child's education in school.

The Education Act 1996 (Section 386 & 387) makes it clear that schools must arrange for all pupils to attend a daily act of collective worship, which normally takes place during the morning assembly. The same legislation states that the majority of such acts in any term should be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' and the act of collective worship must also be appropriate to the 'family background of the pupils'. This does not preclude the school from providing acts of worship of a non-Christian character (for example Islamic or Jewish), provided the majority of the acts of worship over a term are of broadly Christian character. The implications of such arrangements are that all pupils would be present in the same hall, some observing and others actively participating in the act of collective worship when it is appropriate to their faith background.

Spirituality for a Muslim is necessarily Islamic in its nature, character and expression. As with other faiths, Islamic spirituality is rooted within its own beliefs, values and traditions. It is important that Muslim pupils are enabled to give expression to their own sense of spirituality in the form of collective worship.

The vast majority of Muslim pupils in the maintained sector do not receive any act of collective worship appropriate to their family and faith background. Unfortunately this is often the case even in schools with significant or even very high numbers of Muslim pupils, where the collective worship that is arranged is of Christian, 'multicultural' or of 'non-faith' character. The non-religious or 'multicultural' approach not only fails to meet legal requirements but can make worship meaningless and inappropriate for pupils, as distinct references to their faith and spirituality are removed. The law does not allow schools to obtain a determination to replace the basic statutorily defined 'acts of worship' with non-religious assemblies. A form of collective worship that is appropriate to pupils' faith backgrounds should be provided. A school can have a determination so that collective worship does not have to be wholly or mainly broadly Christian character. It can also arrange for separate worship for different groups of pupils.

It is not permissible for Muslims to actively participate in non-Islamic acts of worship. Within the

context of collective worship in schools, this would include the saying of non-Islamic prayers or the singing of hymns or religious songs from other faith traditions or bowing their heads. In situations where Muslim pupils are merely observing non-Islamic acts of worship, it should be made clear that they are not to participate in the act of worship. Muslim pupils should also not be expected to play roles which involve the enactment of the Divine or Prophets.

The collective worship theme or message content as well as the supplications or prayers should be drawn from the Islamic tradition for Islamic collective worship for Muslim pupils. For an act of collective worship to be fully appropriate and meaningful, it should be conducted or led by a person who is of the same faith background as that of the pupils. Collective worship, whether it is Islamic, Christian or of any other character should contribute positively to a school's values and ethos.

Collective worship of an Islamic character has great potential to motivate and inspire Muslim pupils. There are many examples of schools with pupils from diverse faith backgrounds celebrating and valuing the faiths and spirituality of all their pupils. By ignoring issues of faith or failing to meet religious needs, schools may be missing an important opportunity for the spiritual and moral development of all their pupils in a manner that recognises and values them uniquely and equally.

## Determinations

A determination is a legal decision made by the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) to lift the statutory requirement of worship to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'. A school cannot determine not to have an act of collective worship or replace it with non-religious assemblies. Determinations are usually sought for schools where a significant number of pupils or the majority of pupils are affiliated to faiths other than Christianity.

For schools with pupils from different faiths, e.g. Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Jews, a part-school determination could be made in accordance with the requirements of the relevant legislation. The broadly Christian character aspect may then continue to operate for those pupils for whom it is appropriate.

In schools, for instance, where the majority of the pupils are of the Islamic faith background, collective worship which is wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character would be inappropriate. In such a situation, the headteacher, in consultation with parents and the governing body, should apply for a determination which releases the school from the basic statutory requirements (wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character) and empowers the school to implement arrangements more appropriate to the faith background(s) of their pupils, e.g. Islamic collective worship for Muslim pupils. A determination can be made in whole or in part. Part determinations allow for Muslim, Christian and Sikh pupils, for example, to have separate acts of collective worship. In the case of a whole school determination that is Islamic, parents retain the right to withdraw their children from such worship.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Para 79, Circular 1/94 on Religious Education and Collective Worship

## Statutory right to withdraw

The Education Act 1944 gave parents the right to withdraw their children from collective worship and this remained unchanged in the subsequent 1988 and 1996 Acts. Where parents are dissatisfied with the provision that a school makes, they may choose to exercise their right to withdraw their child by writing to the school. Schools should respect this right and make alternative supervisory arrangements for the withdrawn pupils. In schools with a faith character parents also have the statutory right to withdraw their children from acts of collective worship.

## COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

### Features of good practice

- ✓ Schools with a significant number of Muslim pupils apply for part-determination and offer daily Islamic collective worship for their Muslim pupils' spiritual and moral development. In coherence with the values and ethos of the school.
- ✓ Schools with very high Muslim pupil populations have a whole school determination and offer daily Islamic collective worship for their Muslim pupils' spiritual and moral development.
- ✓ Often Schools with significant or large numbers of Muslim pupils that have not applied for part-determination or whole-school determination do collective acts of worship according to a particular faith (eg Christian) where there are pupils of Muslim and other faiths present.

In such cases we would advise that the school ensures that the character of their daily act of collective worship takes appropriate account of and reflects the faith of their Muslim pupils over the course of a term. In a whole school setting, for instance, Muslim pupils could be observers of Christian collective worship and, similarly, non-Muslims could be observers of Islamic collective worship. Neither should be active participants in the collective worship of other faiths but could benefit from the general message and universal values shared by all faiths. The principle of being 'observers' and 'active participants' should be made clear to the pupils.

- ✓ School ensures that Islamic collective worship is meaningful and appropriate and is delivered by a person of the same faith background as the pupils eg. Muslim teachers or external visitors.
- ✓ School ensures that Muslim pupils do not actively participate in any acts of collective worship that are not Islamic in character.
- ✓ Schools respect and honour the right of parents to withdraw their children from collective worship if requested in writing.

# 10

## Sex and Relationship Education (SRE)

### **Relevant legislation and guidance:**

*“The local education authority...and the governing body and head teacher of the school, shall take such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure that where sex education is given to any registered pupils at the school it is given in such a manner as to encourage those pupils to have due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life.” (Section 46 of the Education Act 1986)*

*“The teaching of some aspects of sex and relationship education might be of concern to teachers and parents. Sensitive issues should be covered by the school’s policy and in consultation with parents. Schools of a particular religious ethos may choose to reflect that in their sex and education policy...” (DfEE circular 0116/2000)*

*“If the parent of any pupil in attendance at a maintained school requests that [they] may be wholly or partly excused from receiving sex education at the school, the pupil shall, except so far as such education is compromised in the National Curriculum, be so excused accordingly until the request is withdrawn.” (Section 405 of the Education Act 1996)*

Sex and relationship education (SRE) is a compulsory requirement of the national curriculum in secondary schools and optional in primary schools with the exception of those aspects which are part of the science curriculum, such as human anatomy. SRE is concerned with learning about sex, sexuality, feelings, relationships, sexually transmitted diseases, abortion and contraception, and the physical aspects of reproduction.

Islam provides a great deal of guidance about sexual behaviour and the way in which men and women should relate to each other, both within and outside of marriage. As with some other faiths, Islam considers marriage as the only channel for experiencing a sexual relationship, with family life being the foundation of a stable society. Pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations are considered unacceptable contexts for fulfilling ones natural sexual desires. Therefore, girlfriend/boyfriend as well as homosexual relationships are not acceptable practices according to Islamic teachings.

From an Islamic perspective, the aim of sex and relationship education should be to prepare Muslim pupils to lead their personal and public lives in a manner consistent with their Islamic moral principles and values. It is also important to understand the different sexual values and behaviours that they will observe within a pluralist society.

SRE is optional in primary schools and it is for the governors to decide whether it should be taught or not, what age groups it should be taught to, by whom it is taught and the resource materials used. For those primary schools that teach SRE, the materials and resources used are normally less explicit in its nature than in secondary schools. The concern most Muslim parents have in this area is not whether sex education is taught or not, but rather they are wary of the moral framework or context in terms of methodology and content, and the implicit and explicit messages and assumptions that underpin the teaching of it.

Schools may teach SRE without any clear references to a moral framework appropriate for Muslim pupils and make assumptions about the sexual behaviour of all their pupils. Some schools may use material in the form of images and videos which would be considered sexually explicit and inappropriate by many Muslim and non-Muslim parents alike. Schools normally do, and indeed are required to, inform parents when SRE is to be taught and to provide an opportunity for parents to view all the resources to be used. Some schools may also use objects or graphic diagrams depicting private organs in order to teach pupils about contraception such as condoms. Muslim parents would consider such demonstrations as well as distribution of contraceptive pills and condoms to young people in schools to be completely inappropriate and encouraging morally unacceptable behaviour.

Another objective of sex education is to encourage discourse and debate and to provide an opportunity for children to ask open questions about sexual matters. This type of explicit discussion, when done in mixed gender group sessions, can be very embarrassing for many children and compromises their sense of modesty and decency.

Often schools will invite external agencies, nurses or health professionals to teach aspects of SRE to their pupils. In such cases schools should ensure the material is acceptable, and gives appropriate consideration and reflection of Islamic perspectives, moral values and conduct with regard to Muslim pupils.

SRE should provide factual information objectively and educate young people to look forward to adult life with a sense of responsibility, accountability and happiness and be ready to build a strong, stable family life. When devising sex education policies, schools need to take account of the aspirations and concerns that are important to Muslim parents in relation to the education of their children. Sex education should be taught in such a way that it, 'reflects the parents' wishes and the community they serve.'<sup>12</sup>

In addressing issues such as sexual conduct and behaviour, abortion, contraception, sexual orientation, hygiene, forced marriages, drugs, child abuse and relationships between males and females, Islamic moral perspectives should be included and explored when teaching Muslim pupils. Such inclusion would make the subject more meaningful and relevant to

<sup>12</sup> DfES Circular 0116/2000, paragraph 8, page 4]

<sup>13</sup> See Ramadan section for further information



preparing Muslim pupils for the responsibilities, moral challenges and risks that they may face in relationships during their life.

We would advise that schools should avoid the teaching of sex and relationship education during the month of Ramadan, as sexual thoughts and feelings are to be particularly avoided, whilst one is fasting.<sup>13</sup>

## Statutory right to withdraw

As with religious education and collective worship, parents also have a statutory right to withdraw their children from sex and relationship education lessons, with the exception of aspects that are part of the science national curriculum.

If parents are dissatisfied with the content of a sex and relationship education programme, they may write to the headteacher to have their children withdrawn from such provision. Schools should respect this right and make alternative supervision arrangements for their pupils to be supervised.

## SEX AND RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION (SRE)

### Features of good practice

- ✓ Sex and relationship education (SRE) is taught in single-sex groups, by a teacher of the same gender.
- ✓ School provides an opportunity for parents and community groups to view all schemes of work and resources used for teaching SRE. Where there is a need, letters informing parents about SRE teaching are translated.
- ✓ The use of sexually explicit videos, pictures and objects are avoided as aids for the teaching of SRE.
- ✓ School takes account of Muslim sensitivities and sensibilities with respect to sexual morality and includes Islamic moral perspectives when teaching SRE to Muslim pupils.
- ✓ School has a clear policy drawn up in consultation with Muslim teachers, parents and religious organisations on SRE which informs parents of the right to withdraw their children. The school respects and honours this right if exercised in writing.
- ✓ School is considerate towards parents who may prefer to view SRE material in a single gender environment.

# 11

## Modern foreign languages

The National Curriculum requires all children at Key Stage 3 (aged 11 – 14) to study a modern foreign language such as French, German, Arabic, Spanish, Turkish and Bengali, Chinese and Urdu. At Key Stage 4 (aged 14-16) it is expected that at least 50 per cent of the pupils will study a modern foreign language. Languages are also being introduced into primary schools (Key Stage 2) and by 2010 all primary schools will be required to offer a modern foreign language to their pupils. Schools should consider giving Muslim pupils the opportunity to study Arabic and/or other languages relevant to their family background.

All secondary schools offer children the opportunity to study European languages and some schools with a significant or high proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities already offer the opportunity to study modern foreign languages such as Urdu, Turkish, Bengali which they may also speak or study outside the school. Where there is a demand, schools should consider offering these languages to their pupils.

Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, holds an important status for all Muslims regardless of their linguistic backgrounds. All Muslim children learn to read and recite the Qur'an in Arabic, and are required to perform their prayers and supplications in this language. Offering Arabic as an option in both primary and secondary schools would provide Muslim children with wider linguistic skills and offers greater access to their religious and cultural heritage, thus giving them a stronger sense of self-esteem and achievement.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

### Features of good practice

- ✓ The school provides opportunities for Muslim pupils to study Arabic and/or other languages relevant to their background at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
- ✓ Where a modern foreign language is being introduced into primary schools, Muslim pupils are given the opportunity to study Arabic and/or other languages relevant to their family background.



# 12

## Expressive Arts

### Music

Music is part of the national curriculum and is required to be taught at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. There is a great diversity of opinion regarding music amongst Muslims. These are often influenced by local cultures and varying religious interpretations. Traditionally, music is limited to the human voice and non-tuneable percussion instruments such as drums. Within these constraints, Muslim artists have been very creative. Relying on the beauty and harmony of their voices, Muslims use music to remember God, nature, justice, morality and history.

Traditionally these types of musical renderings are called 'Nasheeds' and Muslims have been singing these for centuries, especially during wedding celebrations and festivals. Nasheeds have been significantly developed by Muslim artists as an alternative to potentially harmful forms of music, and have since grown in popularity amongst Muslims living in Britain.

All forms of music that may include the use of obscene and blasphemous language, encourage or promote immoral behaviour, arouse lustful feelings, encourage the consumption of intoxicants and drugs or contain unethical and un-Islamic lyrics would be considered objectionable. For this reason some Muslim parents may express concerns in the way music is taught in school and the extent to which their children may participate in it. Some Muslims may hold a very conservative attitude towards music and may seek to avoid it altogether, not wishing their children to participate in school music lessons. In such cases the school can show great understanding by providing alternative musical learning opportunities.

In the national curriculum there is no parental right to withdraw from music. However, parents may ask to see the syllabus and schemes of work. If they have consequent moral or religious concerns these can be raised with the headteacher who may be able to resolve them. Failing this the matter can also be taken up with the governors, who must have in place a formal arrangement for dealing with complaints relating to the curriculum. Where there is goodwill and understanding on all sides such issues are almost always resolved.

## Drama

Dramas, plays and artistic works for Muslim pupils are encouraged for educational purposes. However, parents may have reservations regarding participation in theatrical plays or acting that involves physical contact between males and females, the encouragement of gender role-reversal (girls dressing as boys and vice-versa) or performing in a manner that may encourage sexual feelings. Physical contact with someone of the opposite sex, to whom one could be legally married, is to be avoided as this is not considered acceptable according to Islamic social norms. Schools should avoid placing Muslim pupils in situations where they may feel uncomfortable and believe they are having to compromise their religious moral norms.

Muslim pupils should not be expected to participate in drama or musical presentations associated with celebrating aspects of other religions, such as nativity plays or Diwali, as some of these are likely to involve playing roles which are considered to be inconsistent with Islamic beliefs and teachings.

## Art

In Islam the creation of three dimensional figurative imagery of humans is generally regarded as unacceptable because of the risk of idolatress practices and some pupils and parents may raise objections to this. The school should avoid encouraging Muslim pupils from producing three dimensional imagery of humans and focus on other forms of art, calligraphy, textile art, ceramic glass, metal/woodwork, landscape drawing, paintings, architectural representations, geometric figures, photography and mosaic art.

## EXPRESSIVE ARTS

### Features of good practice



The school avoids studying forms of music and drama that may raise religious or moral concerns for Muslim pupils and parents.



Particularly in schools with a large number of Muslim pupils, the music curriculum provides opportunities for cultural inclusion. For example, there are opportunities to explore or study the art of Qur'anic recitation and composing and singing of nasheeds.



# 13

## Islamic resources in the school library

A library is an important resource for learning whilst at school. A culturally inclusive library gives children the opportunity to read about their own faith and cultural heritage and the culture and heritage of others.

Many schools with large proportions of Muslim pupils often have very few books which reflect their faith and cultural heritage. Often teachers may unwittingly buy Islamic books for the school that are written by non-specialist or unfriendly authors and that may have factual inaccuracies and may even misrepresent Islam. Schools should endeavour to buy relevant and authentic books on the Islamic heritage and civilisation for the school library and for class use. This could be done in consultation with Muslim teachers, Muslim parents and local Islamic centres.

Other resources such as Islamic lifestyle magazines, Muslim newspapers and Islamic web sites, can be valuable tools for inspiring children to learn.<sup>14</sup> Again, care should be taken to ensure that the content is appropriate and authentic.

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<sup>14</sup> See appendix 5 for Muslim news and media magazines.

## ISLAMIC RESOURCES IN THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

### Features of good practice



Schools, particularly those with a significant population of Muslim pupils, ensure that their library resources are inclusive of the Islamic faith, culture and civilisation.



The school ensures that all library resources on Islam and Muslims are accurate and authentic.



# 14

## Educational Visits

Class outings for educational purposes should not generally pose any problems for Muslim pupils and their parents. Parents should be made aware of the objectives and purpose of the trip. Care should be taken when planning the event to ensure that Muslim pupils' needs, especially dietary and prayer requirements, are taken into account.

### **Residential trips**

When organising overnight trips involving Muslim pupils, mixed-gender groups should be avoided. This will encourage greater participation, particularly from Muslim girls, as Muslim parents will be more willing to send their children if they are assured that the Islamic requirements of modesty and morality will not be compromised.

### **Farm visits**

On organised farm visits, for Muslim pupils to look at or to learn about pigs and explore the views of those who eat meat from pigs should not be an issue. However, it would be inappropriate to encourage Muslim pupils to touch, stroke or feed pigs when on farm visits.



## EDUCATIONAL VISITS

### Features of good practice

- ✓ The school gives consideration to and accommodates the dietary and prayer requirements for Muslims pupils when organising educational visits.
- ✓ The school organises overnight residential trips in single-gender groups to encourage greater participation from Muslim pupils.
- ✓ The school ensures that any activities outside the school do not compromise the pupils' religious beliefs.



# 15

## Further Issues

### Muslim Names

Some non-Muslim teachers may find certain Muslim names difficult to pronounce. Nevertheless, care should be taken to pronounce names as accurately as possible. In some cases shortening the name can change the meaning and can cause offence. For example, the name Abdullah means 'servant of Allah', whereas if shortened to 'Abdul' it means 'servant' or 'slave'.

### Shaking Hands

It is part of Muslim etiquette for people of the same gender to shake hands and greet each other with the words 'assalaam-u-alaikum' (peace be upon you). This is considered to be a religious obligation. Muslim pupils may greet Muslim adults and others with a handshake even within the school environment, and this should not be interpreted as children being over-friendly with teachers.

As most Muslims do not usually shake hands with a member of the opposite sex, staff need to be aware that some pupils and parents may exhibit reluctance or even refuse to do this, for example, at prize-giving ceremonies. This should not be interpreted as offensive, as it is not intended to be so.

### Raffle Tickets

Many schools hold fundraising events in the form of raffles for school funds or for worthy charitable causes. Muslims regard raffles as a form of gambling, which is prohibited according to the teachings of Islam. Schools should not encourage Muslim pupils to buy or sell raffle tickets. Muslim pupils and parents should of course be encouraged to contribute generously to charitable and other worthy causes.

### Cases of Domestic Conflict

In cases where the school believes that domestic conflict is causing problems for a Muslim pupil, the involvement of a suitably qualified and experienced Muslim member of staff may often enhance the possibility and process of finding a satisfactory solution. Essentially, however, issues of child protection should be dealt with in accordance with school policy and statutory requirements.

# 16

## Engaging with the Muslim Community

### **Muslim participation in school governance.**

Governing bodies play a key role in the strategic management of their school and are responsible for deciding the framework within which the school is to be run. The governing body has responsibility for the following areas:

- Standards – ensuring a strategic and systematic approach to promoting high standards of educational achievement.
- Targets – setting appropriate targets for pupil achievement at Key Stages 1,2,3 and 4
- Curriculum – ensuring the national curriculum and religious education are taught and the curriculum is balanced and broadly based.
- Policies – deciding how, in broad strategic terms, the school should be run.
- Finance – determining how to spend the budget allocated to the school.
- Staffing – deciding the number of staff and the pay policy.
- Appointment – appointing the head, deputy head and other staff.
- Discipline – agreeing to procedures concerning staff conduct and discipline.

Members are elected or appointed from the four main groups of 'stakeholders' – parents, the local authority, staff and the local community.

Many schools, even those with a significant or high Muslim pupil population, have difficulty in recruiting governors from the Muslim community. Consequently, there is inadequate input from Muslim parents and the Muslim community. This can sometimes weaken or undermine the process of tackling and overcoming barriers which prevent children from achieving their full potential academically and in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In addition to contributing to policies regarding all aspects of school life, the involvement of Muslim governors fulfils a key role in advising and contributing to issues which are of importance to Muslim pupils. Muslim governors can communicate the views and aspirations of Muslim parents and the local community in relation to the education of their children.

Through positive interaction and relationship building with parents, local mosques and community organisations, schools can begin to address the issue of under-representation of Muslims on their governing bodies and can positively encourage parents to support their children in school education.

## Staff

Teachers play a critical role in educating children in terms of their academic success and in their development as responsible and valuable members of the society. Equally teachers make important and valuable contributions to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The role of Muslim teachers and support staff in schools with a significant or high numbers of Muslim pupil composition is of increasing importance in the drive to respond positively to the needs of Muslim pupils. As well as being role models for all children, Muslim teachers and support staff can bridge the gap between schools and parents, advising and leading on the development and implementation of strategies to meet the needs of Muslim pupils.

Schools should therefore endeavour to ensure that their teaching and support staff have an appropriate representation from the Muslim community and should seek their involvement and participation in decision-making at a management and leadership level.

## Mosque education

The mosque occupies a central place in the Muslim community and plays an important role in providing essential Islamic education for Muslim children. For most children this takes place in the evenings or at weekends. It is valuable for mainstream schools to develop a good understanding and working relationship with their local mosques. This partnership and mutual support are for the development of the child as a whole in raising educational achievement and promoting spiritual and moral development in a cohesive manner.

## ENGAGING WITH THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

### Features of good practice

- ✓ The school ensures that it has appropriate representation of Muslims on its governing body, broadly reflecting the diversity of its pupil composition.
- ✓ The school ensures that its teaching and non-teaching staff receive appropriate training in Islam and Muslim cultural awareness.
- ✓ The school seeks to have appropriate representation from the Muslim community amongst teaching staff in management and leadership.
- ✓ The school encourages Muslim teachers to play an appropriate and supportive role in meeting the particular needs of their Muslim pupils.

## APPENDIX 1:

### Islam and Muslim Cultural Awareness training for schools & local authority advisors.

The training (INSET) that we offer is based on the theme of this guidance document. It is aimed at teachers, teaching assistants and learning mentors or others who work with children within a school setting. It is designed for state schools and seeks to explore two aspects-

- (i) **Islam and Muslim Cultural Awareness** – Covers basic beliefs and values but focuses more on those that have implications for educators and educational institutions.
- (ii) **Meeting the needs of Muslim pupils** – Covers what the particular needs of Muslim pupils are and how they can be positively responded to and accommodated by teachers and institutions based on best practice.

The training session also provide an excellent opportunity for teachers to raise any questions on Muslim beliefs, heritage and practices as well as on issues that they may have come across in schools in relation to their Muslim pupils.

The training session duration is **three hours** and includes a presentation, workshop and discussions.

**For further information and to book an INSET session please contact:**  
**[education@mcb.org.uk](mailto:education@mcb.org.uk)**

## APPENDIX 2: MCB Books for Primary Schools



### What is the 'Books for Schools' project?

The Books For Schools project aims to provide mainstream primary schools with high-quality Islamic resources (including books, custom made teacher notes, pupil activities, worksheets, CDs, DVDs, videos and accompanying teaching aids) in order to promote harmony and respect amongst Britain's diverse communities. Our resources are designed to facilitate the teaching of Islam within the Schools Curriculum as outlined by QCA guidelines.

### How can this resource facilitate the teaching of Islam in RE

Our resource has been designed by educationalists and teachers with reference to the RE Non Statutory Framework (QCA). It covers both Key Stages 1 and 2 and aims to enhance children's experience of diversity in all areas of the curriculum, including the hidden, through enjoyable, cross-curricular based work. This self-contained resource pack provides teachers with all the materials needed to teach about basic Muslim beliefs, pillars and practices through four original, engaging and interactive class/small group projects.

### How much does a pack cost and from where can I order it?

Materials have been designed to be reusable / photocopiable. We recommend one resource pack per primary school; these are priced at only £250/pack can be ordered from MCBDirect, The Muslim Council of Britain, P O BOX 57330, LONDON E1 2WJ. To order a pack or for further details please email [booksforschools@mcb.org.uk](mailto:booksforschools@mcb.org.uk).

### What does a resource pack contain?

*A resource pack consists of:*

- *Four user friendly, child orientated projects*
- *Six objects/artefacts in common use by Muslim children in various parts of the world*
- *Two audio visual items (CD and a Video)*
- *Seventeen children's books and booklets*
- *Two card model kits*
- *Four posters*

*The projects are:*

- *Folder 1: Introducing the Qur'an*
- *Folder 2: Eid-ul-Adha and the Hajj*
- *Folder 3: Prayer, Fasting and Id-ul-Fitr*
- *Folder 4: Islam Through the Arts*

*The objects/artefacts are:*

- *Compass (used to locate the direction of Makkah for Prayers)*
- *Hijab (head scarf worn by girls and women)*
- *Ihram (two pieces of white cloth worn by men during the Hajj pilgrimage)*
- *Prayer cap (often worn by boys and men when offering Prayers)*
- *Prayer mat (often used when offering daily prayers)*
- *Rehal (wooden Qur'an stand)*

*The audio visual items are:*

- *Expressions of Faith (CD)*
- *Wafa's Eid (video with accompanying booklet and poster)*

*The books and booklets are:*

- *A Caring Neighbour*
- *A Gift of Friendship*
- *Colouring Book 2: The Arts of the Muslim World*
- *Dawud Wharmsby Ali*
- *Dear Diary*
- *English Translation of Holy Quran*
- *Islam: Beliefs and Teachings*
- *Muslim Child*
- *My Eid-ul-Fitr*
- *Ramadan*
- *Seeing Things More Clearly*
- *Stories from the Muslim World*
- *Tell Me About Hajj*
- *Tell Me About Muhammad*
- *The Colour of Home*
- *The Greatest Stories from the Quran*
- *The Meat Eating Vegetarian*

*The card model kits are:*

- *The Holy Ka'bah*
- *Mosque*

*The posters are:*

- *5 Basic Duties of Islam*
- *Sacred Places*
- *Prophets of Allah*
- *How to make Wudu and Salah*

*These resource materials open up a range of possibilities including use of stories, songs, games, role play and art to facilitate a rich and varied learning experience.*

## APPENDIX 3: Useful websites

### [www.myh.org.uk](http://www.myh.org.uk)

The Muslim Youth Helpline is a confidential and reputable helpline for young Muslims. All their helpline workers are young people trained to help in whatever problems or difficulties young Muslims face.

### [www.ams-uk.org](http://www.ams-uk.org)

The Association of Muslim Schools (AMS) is an umbrella organisation representing the interests of independent Muslim faith schools and those within the state sector.

### [www.muslim-ed-trust.org.uk](http://www.muslim-ed-trust.org.uk)

The Muslim Educational Trust has published a number of useful books and articles, including Sex Education, a Muslim perspective and 'British Muslims and Schools'.

### [www.islamic-foundation.com](http://www.islamic-foundation.com)

The Islamic Foundation is a centre for education, training, research and publication. It has an on-line Islamic bookshop.

### [www.salaam.co.uk](http://www.salaam.co.uk)

A comprehensive portal for the British Muslim community with mosques database, archives and courses.

### [www.muslimheritage.com](http://www.muslimheritage.com)

A specialist and comprehensive web site focusing on the Muslim contribution to world civilisation in the fields of science, mathematics, technology and the arts. An excellent resource to access material on the cultural achievements of Islamic civilisation.

### [www.harunyahya.com](http://www.harunyahya.com)

A useful web site for exploring Islamic perspectives on aspects of science and intellectual enquiry, for example in relation to theories of evolution.



## APPENDIX 4: Useful Links & Resources

### Useful publications

#### ISB – Virtual classroom

This Virtual Classroom site aims to help pupils learn about Islam and Muslim contribution to world heritage in a fun and exciting way.

[www.isb.org.uk/virtual/newsite](http://www.isb.org.uk/virtual/newsite)

#### Sex Education:

The Muslim Perspective  
Ghulam Sarwar

[www.muslim-ed-trust.org.uk](http://www.muslim-ed-trust.org.uk)

#### What does Islam say?

Ibrahim Hewitt

[www.muslim-ed-trust.org.uk](http://www.muslim-ed-trust.org.uk)

#### The Miracle of Life

Fatima D'Oyen.

#### A guide to Islamic family life and sexual health for young people.

[www.islamic-foundation.com](http://www.islamic-foundation.com)

The 1001 Inventions is an excellent pack (posters and book) to support teachers and the classroom environment. Includes science activities for 11-16 year olds for the Science National Curriculum.

[www.1001inventions.com](http://www.1001inventions.com)

#### Relationship and Sexual Health Education from an Islamic Perspective

Supporting information & Lesson Ideas for teachers & other professionals.

**Kirklees Metropolitan Council**

[www.kirkleesmc.gov.uk](http://www.kirkleesmc.gov.uk)

#### Islamic Relief

Since the launch of the highly successful schools publication, *Reacting to Poverty*, a resource for Key Stage 4+, Islamic Relief has been doing assemblies in schools across the UK, engaging with teachers and pupils during its campaigns, organising teachers' workshops and has also produced another booklet, *Citizenship and Muslim Perspectives ~ teachers sharing ideas*. Islamic Relief hopes to continue and extend its range of activities. If you are interested in the 'Reacting to poverty' resource pack, or would like a visitor from Islamic Relief to do an assembly please contact Islamic Relief.

[www.islamic-relief.com](http://www.islamic-relief.com)

## **APPENDIX 5:**

### Muslim news media and magazines

#### **EMEL magazine**

A monthly lifestyle magazine for British Muslims. A useful resource for school libraries.

[www.emelmagazine.com](http://www.emelmagazine.com)

#### **Muslim Weekly Newspaper**

[www.themuslimweekly.com](http://www.themuslimweekly.com)

#### **Muslim News**

[www.muslimnews.co.uk](http://www.muslimnews.co.uk)

#### **Islamic Times**

[www.islamictimes.co.uk](http://www.islamictimes.co.uk)

## GLOSSARY

<b>Allah</b>	Arabic name for God. Allah is the Maker of all creatures. He is not just the God of Muslims, but of all humankind.
<b>Assalaam-u-alaikum'</b>	Meaning 'peace be upon you', is the traditional Islamic greeting.
<b>'Asr</b>	Name of the prayer after mid-afternoon.
<b>Ashurah</b>	The Day of Ashurah commemorates the martyrdom of Husayn, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and is a day of mourning for Shi'a Muslims.
<b>Eid ul Fitr</b>	The annual festival which marks the end of Ramadan.
<b>Eid ul Adha</b>	The annual festival of sacrifice between 10-13 of the Islamic month Dhul Hijjah. It commemorates the Muslim belief, found also in Judaism and Christianity, that Prophet Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son Ishmael.
<b>Fajr</b>	Name of the prayer at dawn.
<b>Fard</b>	Compulsory duty prescribed by Allah.
<b>Halal</b>	That which is lawful (permitted) in Islam.
<b>Haram</b>	That which is unlawful (forbidden) in Islam.
<b>Haya</b>	Meaning 'modesty', 'self-respect', 'bashfulness', etc. Refers to the feeling of shame when a bad act is done or something indecent happens
<b>Hijab</b>	A veil or head-covering that a Muslim woman would wear when meeting strangers or going out.
<b>Hadith</b>	A report of a saying, deed or action approved by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

<b>Iftar</b>	The breaking of the fast
<b>Iqra'</b>	Meaning 'read', the first word of the Qur'an revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
<b>'Isha</b>	Name of the prayer at night
<b>Islam</b>	This is the name given by Allah to the religion for humankind. The word means submission and obedience for Allah's commands to attain peace in this life
<b>Jumu'ah</b>	The special congregational prayer said at midday every Friday.
<b>Khutbah</b>	The religious sermon given before Jumm'ah.
<b>Lailat ul Qadr</b>	'The Night of Power,' the night in which the Qur'an was first revealed.
<b>Maghrib</b>	Name of the prayer just after sunset.
<b>Masjid</b>	Literally 'a place of prostration'. commonly known as a mosque.
<b>Muhammad (pbuh)</b>	The final Messenger of Allah to mankind. He was Muhammad bin 'Abdullah (pbuh).
<b>Muslim</b>	A person who believes in the Oneness of God, the Qur'an as the revealed word of God and Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the final messenger of God.
<b>Nasheed</b>	Music limited to the human voice and percussion instruments. The themes focus on God, the Prophets and spiritual issues.
<b>Qur'an</b>	The book of Muslims, the final book of guidance from Allah, sent down to Muhammad (pbuh) through the angel Jibra'il (Gabriel) over a period of 23 years.

<b>Ramadan</b>	The month of fasting, the ninth and holiest month of the Islamic calendar
<b>Salah</b>	The compulsory prayer, offered at five set times every day.
<b>Shari'ah</b>	Way, path, law, or code of conduct.
<b>Taraweeh</b>	The special prayer said after Isha during the month of Ramadan.
<b>Tayyib</b>	Food that is good, healthy, natural and wholesome.
<b>Wudu</b>	Ritual wash for prayer in a prescribed way.
<b>Zuhr</b>	Name of the prayer just after midday.

## **The Muslim Council of Britain**

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), founded in 1997, is an inclusive umbrella body that actively supports and conscientiously represents the interests of Muslims in Britain and is pledged to working for the common good of British society as a whole.

The MCB has over 400 affiliates, including major national, regional and local organisations, specialist institutions and professional bodies. Its members include mosques, educational institutions, charities, cultural and welfare organisations, relief agencies, women's associations and youth organisations.

The MCB seeks to meet the growing needs and expectations of the Muslim community in areas such as policy research, strategic planning for the community, encouraging participation in local and national affairs, the media and outreach to the wider society.

## **The MCB aims are to:**

To promote cooperation, consensus and unity on Muslim affairs in Britain.

To encourage and strengthen all existing efforts being made for the benefit of the Muslim community.

To work for a more enlightened appreciation of Islam and Muslims in the wider society.

To establish a position for the Muslim community within British society that is fair and based on the true nature of our rights and responsibilities.

To work for the eradication of disadvantage and forms of discrimination faced by Muslims.

To foster better community relations and work for the good of society as a whole.



**The Muslim Council of Britain**



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