

Merton School Improvement

Excellence Through Partnership

Meeting the needs of Muslim Pupils in Merton Schools

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Acknowledgements

The original (2007) version of this guidance was written by the schools' service, head teachers and Muslim representatives on the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) in Ealing. It was updated in 2014 by Wandsworth. Merton Council is grateful to both Ealing and Wandsworth Council for sharing this document. Merton's version has been modified to reflect the priorities and relevant information for its schools and community and thanks Merton SACRE for their advice and support with this guidance. We have also been grateful for the support and guidance of the local Muslim and Ahmadiyya community.

Introduction

This guidance is neither statutory nor a rigid set of prescriptions and the Council fully recognises the fact that in almost every instance the final decision remains in the hands of individual head teachers or their governing body. This guidance is not exhaustive and may not contain the information required. If a school would like additional support on matters relating to the guidance, they should contact colleagues in other schools who may be able to help or Local Authority (LA) officers for further advice and support. If there is a particular point of contention we would advise schools to consult with religious leaders via SACRE.

Merton schools continually develop their provision and practice to ensure they are meeting current national and local needs. Schools work closely with parents to provide a range of support and advice. As a result of this work, most Merton schools have very strong parental and community links. It is within this context of an effective partnership between schools, parents and the community that this guidance is intended for use.

This document presents information and guidance for schools on a variety of aspects of school life relating to Muslim pupils. It should be noted at the outset that Muslims from different cultural and religious backgrounds will practise their religion in many different ways and those who use this guidance should be careful not to make assumptions and generalisations about how individual Muslim pupils will live their lives, based on the contents of this guidance. Each issue raised in a school will need to be explored on an individual basis, as often issues relate to the child's experience and circumstances and a generalised approach may be counterproductive.

Certain issues will also arise in connection with pupils from other religious backgrounds; for example, the information regarding female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage refers to practices which have cultural rather than religious roots, and are not Islamic practices.

The guidance may also be used to advise parents of curriculum requirements, health and safety issues and other practical matters to which all educational institutions must adhere.

It is important that this guidance is used in conjunction with current school policies and other relevant DfE, Ofsted and legal requirements. In particular, schools will need to consider the implications of the following:

1. The Department for Education's non statutory advice for schools on Promoting fundamental British values as part of Spiritual, Social, Moral and Cultural (SMSC) education. This states that schools have obligations under Section 78 of the Education Act (2002) as part of a broad and balanced curriculum, to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and in society. The DfE guidance can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/380595/SMSC_Guidance_Maintained_Schools.pdf

2. The Ofsted inspection framework (September 2015) states:

Inspectors will make a judgement on the effectiveness of leadership and management by evaluating the extent to which leaders, managers and governors:

- *actively promote British values¹*

Before making the final judgement on the overall effectiveness of a school, inspectors must evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. (see definition of SMSC in school inspection handbook). If this is deemed to require improvement or be inadequate it may impact negatively on the judgements for leadership and management, behaviour and safety and the overall effectiveness of the school's provision:

¹ For a definition of these values, see the *Prevent Strategy*, www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-strategy-2011.

Inspectors will also consider:

- *how well the school prepares pupils positively for life in modern Britain and promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith*
- *how well leaders and governors promote all forms of equality and foster greater understanding of and respect for people of all faiths (and those of no faith), races, genders, ages, disability and sexual orientations (and other groups with protected characteristics), through their words, actions and influence within the school and more widely in the community*
- *the effectiveness of leaders' and governors' work to raise awareness and keep pupils safe from the dangers of abuse, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism and what the staff do when they suspect that pupils are vulnerable to these issues.*

The Ofsted framework can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015>

3. The Equality Act 2010, which requires schools to have due regard for the need to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by the Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The DfE Equality Act guidance for schools can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/315587/Equality_Act_Advice_Final.pdf

4. The teachers' standards provide a clear baseline of expectations for the professional practice and conduct of teachers. The teachers' standards can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/301107/Teachers_Standard_s.pdf check this is most up to date one

Continuing Professional Development

Merton's Continuing Professional Development programme offers a range of training to support schools and governors in areas related to this guidance. The programme includes:

1. Religious Education (RE) primary coordinator meetings (termly);
2. Training on preparing pupils for life in modern Britain: promoting British values and equalities in schools;
3. Support to develop an inclusive and broad and balanced curriculum;
4. Prevent Strategy training; and
5. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) training.

For further details or to book places on any of the above training please go to:

<http://www.samscpdonline.org>

Background information on Islamic diversity

There are more than a thousand million Muslims in the world and each is an individual with their own unique and personal view of the world. Some commonalities may exist on the basis of nationality, age, education and allegiance to specific schools of law or movements within Islam, but one should beware of making generalisations about Islam and Muslims. It may however be worth thinking in terms of some distinctively Islamic world views that may be different from both secular western ways of seeing things and religious world views that are possibly more familiar to some people.

The Muslim community in Merton

The national census data tells us that Muslims are now the third largest religious group in Merton. Christians are the largest religious group at 56.1% followed by No Religion at 20.6% and Muslim at 8.1%. The 2011 census shows the percentage of population that are Muslim in England and Wales is 4.8% and the equivalent population percentage for Muslims in London is 12.4%. (Source: 2001 and 2011 census). Merton has several mosques with many others nearby. The Sunni community have at least 3 mosques. Merton is home to the largest Ahmadiyya mosque in Western Europe, belonging to the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. Teachers need to be aware that some Muslim communities do not consider that Ahmadi's as Muslims. Teachers may encounter this in their schools. Below are very brief descriptions of the main different denominations. (Although it should also be remembered that within any religion there can be very different theological beliefs.)

Sunni The largest denomination of Islam. The word comes from *sunnah*, which means the words and actions or example of the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him (*pbuh*) Sunni Islam is the branch that accepted the caliphate or leadership of Abu Bakr following the demise of Muhammad *pbuh*.

Shi'a The second largest denomination of Islam, also known as Shi'ite. The word is a short form of an Arabic phrase that means "followers of Ali." Shi'a Muslims believe that the descendants from Muhammad *pbuh* through his daughter Fatima and his son-in-law Ali were the best source of knowledge of Muhammad's *sunnah*.

Ahmadiyya, Ahmadis refer to members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. They regard themselves as Muslims who accept Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d.1908), a Muslim from the Punjab as the *Mujaddid* (reformer/renewer), as well as the Promised Messiah and Imam Mahdi prophesied in Islam. He asserted that he fulfilled Christian and Islamic prophecies regarding a promised Messiah (in Islam, the Mahdi). Other Muslims reject the claims of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and await another person to fulfil the prophecy. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is established globally and has its national headquarters in Merton.

Topic	Summary suggestions
Attendance-absence for religious days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are two Eid festivals, Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha. ▪ As it is difficult to predict the exact date of Eid in advance, schools should consult with their local Muslim community nearer the time to ascertain which day it will fall on. ▪ Parents are entitled to withdraw their children for religious observance and it can be marked as an authorised absence. In each instance parents should apply for time off for their children for religious observance: the amount authorised is one day for each festival.
Child protection issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Both forced marriage and female genital mutilation are illegal. Neither are Islamic practices and both affect many cultures. However, these are issues that could possibly arise in connection with Muslim pupils, and for this reason they are mentioned in this guidance. ▪ If the school becomes aware of the possibility of a child being forcibly married, the school should follow the guidance detailed in the DfE guidance https://www.gov.uk/forced-marriage#legislation-on-forced-marriage ▪ If the school suspects that a female pupil is at risk of being subjected to any form of female genital mutilation, they should act immediately by contacting the relevant body. http://www.merton.gov.uk/health-social-care/children-family-health-social-care/safeguardingchildren/lscb/lscb-about.htm

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'Prevent' is part of the national counter-terrorism strategy and aims to stop people being drawn into or supporting terrorism. It covers all forms of extremist radicalisation including Islamist, white supremacist, nationalist and animal rights etc. http://www.merton.gov.uk/health-social-care/children-family-health-social-care/safeguardingchildren/lscb/lscbadviceforparents/preventing_radicalisation_and_extremism.htm <p>If there are concerns, schools should follow normal safeguarding procedures and if the case needs further investigation, the school should contact the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). http://www.merton.gov.uk/health-social-care/children-family-health-social-care/safeguardingchildren/multi-agency-safeguarding-hub.htm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ E–safety - Schools should do all they can to promote the responsible use of ICT by using filtering software to block illegal and inappropriate content, reviewing their acceptable use policy and providing up-to-date CPD and training for staff, pupils and parents. For further information go to: http://www.wscb.org.uk/download/123/e-safety_policy
The National Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The National Curriculum in England 2013 states that 'pupils of compulsory school age in community and foundation schools, including community special schools and foundation special schools, and in voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools, must follow the national curriculum'. The National Curriculum can be found at the link below: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum
Curriculum: Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students should be expected to fulfil the brief of the lesson. If a pupil is not feeling comfortable with being asked to draw or produce three-dimensional images of humans or animals, and especially any people considered prophets in Islam (e.g. Jesus, Muhammad, Noah), teachers may wish to provide alternatives. It is important to point out to parents that art is both a statutory curriculum subject and they have no legal right to withdraw their children. ▪ There is a wealth of Islamic art forms that can be celebrated, e.g. architecture, calligraphy, geometric patterns.
Curriculum: Dance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dance could be an issue if performed in mixed groups after puberty. ▪ School leaders and teachers will need to consider how best to differentiate provision whilst ensuring all pupils take part in a broad and balanced curriculum that promotes spiritual, moral social and cultural development.
Curriculum: Drama and school productions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Role-playing and drama as an educational exercise is usually acceptable, although some Muslim parents may not want their children to perform in particular roles involving gods or figures considered as prophets within nativity plays or dramatisations. ▪ Many Muslim pupils may prefer not to have a part within the Christmas celebration. ▪ School leaders and teachers will need to consider how best to differentiate provision whilst ensuring all pupils take part in a broad and balanced curriculum that promotes spiritual, moral social and cultural development. ▪ Where possible, involving parents in school events and productions will promote inclusivity and an understanding of the school's curriculum.

Curriculum: Music and religious songs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Although music is not proscribed in the Qur'an, opinions regarding the place of music vary widely in different Islamic sects and cultures. For some Muslims all music is <i>haram</i> (forbidden). ▪ As music is statutory in Key Stage 1 and 2; parents do not have the legal right to withdraw their children from this subject. ▪ Some Muslim parents may not want their children singing Christmas carols, or songs that contradict their faith (e.g. those that call Jesus 'Lord' or 'son of God'). ▪ School leaders and teachers will need to consider how best to differentiate provision whilst ensuring all pupils take part in a broad and balanced music curriculum that promotes spiritual, moral social and cultural development . This should be delivered in accordance with the requirements of the National Curriculum, the Teachers' Standards and the School's Equality Duty. ▪ It might be helpful to reassure these parents that their children will not be forced to join in with songs that contradict Islamic belief (e.g. Christmas carols or hymns -although there will be many Muslim pupils who will be happy to join in.)
Curriculum: RE and collective worship (‘reflection’)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is acceptable for Muslim pupils to visit all places of worship for educational purposes. ▪ Schools are encouraged to make their assemblies and daily acts of reflection as inclusive as possible. However schools with large percentages of non-Christian pupils can consider applying for a determination that lifts the requirement that the daily act be predominantly Christian. ▪ At present, parents have a legal right to withdraw their children from both RE and reflection. They can do this selectively (i.e. parts of a course or selective acts of reflection) <p>RE in Merton schools should reflect the locally agreed syllabus. This is agreed locally to ensure that local faith and belief groups have input to and agree the syllabus. Local Muslim faiths of all groupings have had input to and agreed the syllabus.</p>
Curriculum: Sex and relationship education (SRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parents do have the legal right to withdraw their children from SRE; they do not have the right to withdraw their children from those aspects of the biology curriculum that deal with reproduction. ▪ It is preferable for male staff to teach SRE to boys and for female staff to teach girls. ▪ If possible, avoid holding SRE classes during Ramadan. The dates of Ramadan vary each year as it is based on the lunar calendar.
Dress requirements: School uniform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adhering to the uniform code should not be problematic as long as girls are allowed to wear the hijab (if they so desire) and to wear long-sleeved shirts and trousers or long skirt versions of the uniform. ▪ Both parents and pupils should understand that the hijab must be of a reasonable length and suitably secured in relevant situations for health and safety reasons. ▪ The wearing of the <i>niqab</i> (full-face veil) should not be allowed on the grounds that it prevents the school from exercising their duty of care. ▪ Further guidance can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269113/school_uniform_guidance_2013.pdf
Sportswear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Schools are encouraged to allow Muslim children to wear sweatshirts and jogging bottoms for sporting activities if they so desire.

Swimming	<p>For some Muslim pupils modesty in public is very important and changing discreetly may be preferable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For health and safety reasons, leggings and full leotards are not permitted in any of Merton's pools. However, specially made full length lycra suits are available from on-line sources. ▪ Segregated swimming is rarely practicable, and parents' expectations should not be raised in this respect. It is important to point out to parents that swimming is both a statutory curriculum subject and an important life skill, and they have no legal right to withdraw their children from swimming lessons. Compromises that can be offered include allowing children to shower in their swimming costumes and to avoid nudity in the presence of others, using individual changing cubicles where practicable. ▪ To check the availability of individual changing cubicles at Merton pools, please contact the pools on the numbers below: <p>Contact details for Merton pools: Morden Park Pool - Phone:020 86406727 Wimbledon Leisure Centre - Phone:020 8542 1330 Canons Leisure Centre -Phone: 020 8640 8543</p>
Prayer (salah)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All Muslims are encouraged to observe the five daily prayers which are obligatory for all Muslims, who are encouraged to perform <i>salah</i> from the age of seven, although they are not required to do so until puberty. Only one or two will fall during the school day depending on season sunrise and sunset variations. ▪ Schools are encouraged to have a designated 'quiet' area for prayer (e.g. space in the library). It is suggested that schools allow pupils access at the beginning or the end of the lunch break.
Ramadan and fasting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fasting is considered obligatory during the month of Ramadan for all in good health once they reach puberty. However, many children may begin to partake in a partial fast before this age. ▪ For health and safety reasons schools might want to obtain parental consent from parents before their child is allowed to fast.
School meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Schools should ensure that there is a choice of healthy options, for example, fish or vegetarian, for Muslim pupils that only eat halal meat.
School outings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is no valid religious reason preventing Muslim students from taking part in educational visits to other places of worship

Attendance

- There are two Eid festivals, Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha.
- **As it is difficult to predict the exact date of Eid in advance, schools should consult with their local** Muslim community nearer the time to ascertain which day it will fall on. This could be different for different communities.
- Parents are entitled to withdraw their children for religious observance and it can be marked as an authorised absence. In each instance parents should apply for time off for their children for religious observance: The amount authorised is up to one day for each festival.

The 1996 Education Act asserts that:

The child shall not be taken to have failed to attend regularly at the school by reason of his absence from the school on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his parent belongs. (Chapter56, 444 subsection 3)

Day absences for religious observation are allowed and are marked as an authorised absence. It is sometimes the case that both Eids will fall within the school term. In each instance parents should

apply for time off for their children for religious observance: the amount given is up to one day per festival.

Conversations with leaders of different nationality groups within the Muslim community seem to indicate that issues of cultural significance as well as religious obligation determine how much time is requested taken off from school for religious observance. Attainment at school is very strongly correlated with the level of attendance and absence should be kept to an absolute minimum. <http://www.merton.gov.uk/health-social-care/children-family-health-social-care/safeguardingchildren/lscb/e-safety.htm>

Child protection

- Both forced marriage and female genital mutilation are illegal. Neither are Islamic practices and they affect many cultures. However, they are issues that could possibly arise in connection with Muslim pupils as well, and for that reason they are mentioned in this guidance.
- If the school suspects that a female pupil is at risk of being subjected to any form of female genital mutilation, they should act immediately by contacting the relevant body. http://www.merton.gov.uk/health-social-care/children-family-health-social-care/safeguardingchildren/lscb/lscbprof/female_genital_mutilation_-_fgm.htm
- 'Prevent' is part of the national counter-terrorism strategy and aims to stop people being drawn into or supporting terrorism. http://www.merton.gov.uk/health-social-care/children-family-health-social-care/safeguardingchildren/lscb/lscbadviceforparents/preventing_radicalisation_and_extremism.htm
- E-safety - Schools should do all that they can to promote effective and responsible use of ICT and to prevent staff or pupils from accessing illegal or inappropriate material through school ICT systems <http://www.merton.gov.uk/health-social-care/children-family-health-social-care/safeguardingchildren/lscb/e-safety.htm>

Female Genital Mutilation

- Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a criminal offence in the UK. It is also illegal to take a child abroad for such a procedure. It causes both short- and long-term health problems. Further information on FGM can be found at: http://www.merton.gov.uk/health-social-care/children-family-health-social-care/safeguardingchildren/lscb/lscbprof/female_genital_mutilation_-_fgm.htm

Prevent

The Prevent strategy is part of the national counter-terrorism strategy and aims to stop people being drawn into or supporting terrorism. It covers all forms of extremist radicalisation including Islamist, white supremacist, nationalist and animal rights etc. The strategy focuses on three key areas which are:

- responding to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat from those who promote it;
- preventing people from being drawn into terrorism and ensuring that they are given appropriate advice and support; and
- working with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation.

If there are concerns, schools should follow normal safeguarding procedures and if the case needs further investigation the school should contact the MASH. Islam is a religion of peace. Terrorism or killing innocent people is not allowed at all in Islam.

Channel

Work is coordinated by the Prevent Multi-Agency Partnership Board, and the 'Channel' process is established which consists of a panel referral process and processes for responding to identified risk and need, and the provision of appropriate support. The Crime and Disorder Partnership (Safer Merton) chaired by the Chief Executive and Borough Police Commander take overall responsibility at partnership level to deliver an appropriate response to support Prevent. Within the council, the Director of Environment and Regeneration leads at Director level for the council and our approach to Prevent is delivered through all departments.

The Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services have a range of statutory duties in relation to children's safeguarding which extend across the Prevent agenda.

The MSCB takes the lead in relation to the safeguarding and well-being of children and young people with regard to the Prevent and Channel strategy.

www.merton.gov.uk/mscb_prevent_guidance_final.pdf

Training: Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP)

The Home Office have developed a DVD-based training product which features case-studies, interviews with experts and information on the Channel referral process. Training can be arranged through: tracy.clarke@merton.gov.uk (inclusion of WRAP training in a guidance document regarding Muslim pupils does not assume that radicalisation is confined to people of this faith.)

E-safety

Safe and responsible use of technology:

Schools should do all they can to promote the responsible use of ICT by using filtering software to block illegal and inappropriate content, reviewing their acceptable use policy and providing up-to-date CPD and training for staff, pupils and parents. This includes having appropriate monitoring systems in place with recourse to police and other partners as necessary. For further details go to:

<http://www.merton.gov.uk/health-social-care/children-family-health-social-care/safeguardingchildren/lscb/e-safety.htm>

Curriculum

- The National Curriculum in England 2013 states that 'pupils of compulsory school age in community and foundation schools, including community special schools and foundation special schools, and in voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools, must follow the national curriculum'. The National Curriculum can be found at the link below:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum>

The National Curriculum in England 2013 is organised on the basis of four key stages and twelve subjects, classified in legal terms as 'core' and 'other foundation' subjects'.

Sensitivities regarding the teaching of certain subjects will differ from family to family. The concerns of Muslim parents are most likely to arise in connection with art, dance, drama, music, religious education (RE), and relationship and sex education (RSE). *It should be stressed that parents only have the legal right to withdraw their children from RE and RSE.* However, even with respect to these subjects schools might wish to engage parents in dialogue, pointing out the benefits to their children of full participation, as well as reassuring them with regard to specific concerns.

A lack of familiarity with the British education system and/or the English language can cause some parents/carers to feel isolated from the education process, a situation that can also arise with parents from other communities, e.g. Travellers. In this case it might be useful for the school to encourage parents to come in and view the class in question. Although negotiation about specifics is possible, limits with respect to the statutory National Curriculum should be clearly established.

The following are issues which may arise with regards to specific curriculum subjects. Again it should be stressed that, apart from religious education and sex and relationship education, parents *do not* have a right to withdraw their children from these classes.

Art

- Students should be expected to fulfil the brief of the lesson. If a pupil is not feeling comfortable with being asked to draw or produce three-dimensional images of humans or animals, and especially any people considered messengers in Islam (e.g. Jesus, Muhammad, Noah), teachers might provide acceptable alternatives.
- There is a wealth of Islamic art forms that can be celebrated, e.g. architecture, calligraphy, geometric representations.

Within the Muslim community there is considerable difference of opinion regarding acceptable forms of art. The ban against the creation of figurative images arose from the stance taken against any form of idolatry. Nonetheless Muslim art in Persia, India, Turkey and Egypt has a tradition of figurative miniature paintings.

Most Muslims will consider the following to be acceptable art forms: calligraphy, textile arts, ceramic glass, metal/wood work, landscape drawings and paintings, architectural representations, geometric patterns, photography and mosaic art. Muslim pupils might not wish to produce three-dimensional images of humans or animals, and whereas it would be hard to avoid figurative representations in religious education and other lessons, pupils may not wish to reproduce images of Jesus, Muhammad or any of the other figures in Jewish and Christian literature (or any other religious scripture) whom Muslims consider to be prophets.

Dance and school productions

- Dance could be an issue if performed in mixed groups after puberty.
- School leaders and teachers will need to consider how best to differentiate provision whilst ensuring all pupils take part in a broad and balanced curriculum that promotes spiritual, moral social and cultural development.

There will usually be no problem when dancing is performed in a single-sex environment as a form of exercise; however, this is rarely practical in primary schools. As a general rule, after puberty forms of dance such as folk ballet, jazz, tango and disco dancing might be considered unacceptable if performed in mixed pairs. However, this issue is most unlikely to affect pupils in primary schools.

Drama and school productions

- Role-playing and drama as an educational exercise is usually acceptable, although some Muslim parents may not want their children to perform in particular roles involving gods or figures considered as prophets within nativity plays or dramatisations.
- Many Muslim pupils may prefer not to have a part within the Christmas celebration.
- School leaders and teachers will need to consider how best to differentiate provision whilst ensuring all pupils take part in a broad and balanced curriculum that promotes spiritual, moral social and cultural development.
- Where possible, involving parents in school events and productions will promote inclusivity and an understanding of the schools' curriculum.

- Although music is not proscribed in the Qur'an, opinions regarding the place of music vary widely in different Islamic sects and cultures. For some Muslims all music is *haram* (forbidden).
- As music is a statutory in Key Stage 1 and 2, parents do not have the legal right to withdraw their children from this subject.
- Some Muslim parents may not want their children singing Christmas carols, or songs that contradict their faith (e.g. those that call Jesus 'Lord' or 'son of God').
- School leaders and teachers will need to consider how best to differentiate provision whilst ensuring all pupils take part in a broad and balanced music curriculum that promotes spiritual, moral social and cultural development. This should be delivered in accordance with the requirements of the national curriculum, the Teachers Standards and the School's Equality Duty. Teachers standards
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/301107/Teachers_Standards.pdf
- It might be helpful to reassure these parents that their children will not be forced to join in with songs that contradict Islamic belief (e.g. Christmas carols or hymns—although there will be many Muslim pupils who will be happy to join in depending on the content)

Opinion regarding the place of music varies among different Muslim cultures. Traditionally, Islamic music has been limited to percussion instruments (i.e. drums) and the human voice. Some groups of contemporary Muslim musicians perform devotional songs they call *nasheed*. Most groups perform using only voice and percussion instruments, a type of music considered to be *halal* - i.e. permissible - by many strict Muslims. However, some modern *nasheed* groups add other instruments.

Some Muslims are very reserved in their attitude towards music and may not wish for their children to participate in any kind of music lesson. The school needs to deal sensitively with their concerns, at the same time as reinforcing the fact that music lessons are a required part of the national curriculum.

Religious education and reflection

- It is acceptable for Muslim pupils to visit all places of worship for educational purposes.
- Schools are encouraged to make their assemblies and daily acts of reflection as inclusive as possible. However schools with large percentages of non-Christian pupils can consider applying for a determination that lifts the requirement that the daily act be predominantly Christian.
- At present, parents have a legal right to withdraw their children from both RE and reflection. They can do this selectively (i.e. parts of a course or selective acts of reflection).

The Education Reform Act of 1988 stipulates that each state school should provide a daily act of 'collective worship'. Since September 2007, schools have been under a duty to promote community cohesion, with a particular focus on achieving cohesion "across different cultures, ethnic, religious or non-religious and socio-economic groups."^{8F}

If a parent does ask for their child to be wholly or partly excused from attending any RE or reflection at the school, the school must comply unless the request is withdrawn. Good practice is to use gentle persuasion to point out the benefits of religious education/communal reflection, which exposes children to a variety of viewpoints, thus preparing them for life in our modern society.

A school remains responsible for the supervision of any child withdrawn from RE or reflection, unless the child is lawfully receiving RE or taking part in worship elsewhere. Parents do not need to explain their reasons for seeking withdrawal. The DfE recommends that to avoid misunderstanding, a Headteacher may wish to clarify with any parent wanting to withdraw:

- the religious issues about which the parent would object their child being taught;

- the practical implications of withdrawal;
- the circumstances in which it would be reasonable to accommodate parents' wishes;
- if a parent will require any advanced notice of such issue in the future and if so, how much.

The right of withdrawal was established in the Education Act 1944, re-enacted in the Education Reform Act 1988 s9 (3). There is no reason a Muslim child need be absent from class for Islamic instruction during normal school hours.

Sex and relationship education (SRE)

- Parents do have the legal right to withdraw their children from SRE; they do not have the right to withdraw their children from those aspects of the biology curriculum that deal with reproduction.
- It is preferable for male staff to teach SRE to boys and for female staff to teach girls.
- If possible, avoid holding SRE classes during Ramadan. The dates of Ramadan vary each year as it is based on the lunar calendar.

In general, the concern of Muslim parents is not whether there should be sex education but rather how it is taught and the resources used. Although the subject is approached in a non-religious context, it is useful for teachers to know that Islam prohibits pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex and same sex relationships. Sex education in general is acceptable, as are the following topics: abstinence until marriage, teenage pregnancy and the repercussions of such, and the dangers of STDs, HIV, etc. Most Muslim parents would prefer that, whenever possible, a male member of staff teach SRE to boys and a female staff member present the subject to girls.

Relevant legislation and guidance states:

"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"

(DfE 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)

Dress requirements

Islamic dress code

Uniform should accommodate garments that allow pupils to dress modestly covering arms and legs. For some Muslims it is expected from the time they reach puberty that they dress modestly in accordance with religious or cultural practices.

Religious symbols and jewellery

Health and safety concerns regarding religious jewellery are similar to those related to the *hijab*, although, as evidenced by the case of a Roman Catholic girl forbidden to wear the crucifix, these are not restricted to Muslim pupils. Some Muslim children wear Qur'anic verses around the neck, upper arm or pinned inside clothes, either wrapped in cloth or contained in lockets worn on a chain. As with the Christian cross or crucifix, the Hindu Aum symbol, or the symbolic kirpan worn by some Sikh pupils, safety issues can be

addressed and accidents avoided by removing any items of jewellery during PE or activities where they will pose a health and safety risk.

School Uniform

- Adhering to the uniform code should not be problematic as long as girls are allowed to wear the hijab (if they so desire) and to wear long-sleeved shirts and trousers or long skirt versions of the uniform.
- Both parents and pupils should understand that the hijab must be of a reasonable length and suitably secured in relevant situations for health and safety reasons.
- The wearing of the *niqab* (full-face veil) should not be allowed on the grounds that it prevents the school from exercising their duty of care.
- Further guidance can be found at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269113/school_uniform_guidance_2013.pdf

As long as Muslim girls are allowed to cover their hair (e.g. with a *hijab* or headscarf) and to wear a long-sleeved shirt and trousers or, alternatively, a long, loose version of the school skirt there should be no problem complying with school uniform requirements. It is recognised that, to ensure that their safety is not endangered, girls wearing the *hijab* are required to have it suitably secured for work in laboratories, domestic science classes or other relevant situations. In practice, this would involve tucking such items inside lab coats or aprons, or, in the case of PE, tucking loose ends inside tops to ensure there is no risk of them getting caught inside sports equipment or accidentally pulled in any way. For the same reason, pupils should be discouraged from wearing the type of hijab that reaches the waist; staff should point out that they are already ensuring their arms are covered by wearing long-sleeved shirts, and that the long hijabs are too much of a safety risk.

Current government guidance on school uniforms explains that:

It is for the governing body of a school to decide whether there should be a school uniform policy and if so what that should be. This flows from the duties placed upon all governing bodies by statute to ensure that school policies promote good behaviour and discipline amongst the pupil body.

It goes on to state that:

Where a school has good reason for restricting an individual's freedoms, for example, the promotion of cohesion and good order in the school, or genuine health and safety or security considerations, the restriction of an individual's rights to manifest their religion or belief may be justified. The school must balance the rights of individual pupils against the best interests of the school community as a whole. Nevertheless, it should be possible for most religious requirements to be met within a school uniform policy and a governing body should act reasonably through consultation and dialogue in accommodating these.

Sportswear

- Schools are encouraged to allow Muslim children to wear sweatshirts and jogging bottoms for sporting activities if they so desire.

Although many schools also have a uniform for sporting activities, Muslim parents might consider the most suitable sportswear for their children to be a tracksuit. Muslim girls should not be required to wear short tennis or netball style skirts without being given alternatives.

Swimming

- For some Muslim pupils modesty in public is very important and changing discreetly may be preferable.
- For health and safety reasons only specially made full length lycra suits are available from on-line sources and allowed in Merton pools. For health and safety reasons, other leggings and full leotards are not permitted in any of Merton's pools.
- Segregated swimming is rarely practicable, and parents' expectations should not be raised in this respect. It is important to point out to parents that swimming is both a statutory curriculum subject and an important life skill, and they have no legal right to withdraw their children from swimming lessons. However compromises that can be offered include allowing children to shower in their swimming costumes and to avoid nudity in the presence of others, using individual cubicles.
- To check the availability of individual changing cubicles at Merton pools, please contact the pools on the numbers below:

Contact details for Merton pools:

Morden Park Pool - Phone: 020 86406727

Wimbledon Leisure Centre - Phone: 020 8542 1330

Canons Leisure Centre -Phone: 020 8640 8543

In the absence of individual shower cubicles, pupils using communal showers should be allowed to keep their swimming costume on or bathe when they go home.

Swimming facilities in the borough do not allow girls to wear full leotards and leggings in the pool for health and safety reasons. Swimming costumes with legs and sleeves made of lycra (the '*burqini*') are allowed.

Segregated swimming is not practicable, nor is it always possible to ensure a female attendant during swim classes, and parents should not have their expectations raised in this regard.

Prayer (salah)

- Although not all Muslim pupils will observe this, the five daily prayers are considered obligatory for all Muslims, who are encouraged to perform *salah* from the age of seven, although they are not required to do so until puberty. Only one or two will fall during the school day depending on season sunrise and sunset variations.
- Schools are encouraged to have a designated 'quiet' area for prayer (e.g. space in the library). It is suggested that schools allow pupils access at the beginning or the end of the lunch break.
- Where possible schools arranging an area to wash (*wadu*) prior to prayer would be helpful.

Each of the five daily prayers (apart from the Friday congregational prayer) can be completed within a space of ten minutes. During summer periods, the only prayer likely to fall during school hours is Zuhr, whereas during the winter months Zuhr, Asr and Maghrib are all likely to occur during school hours. If it is not possible to perform the prayers at the appointed time schools could make other periods available, e.g. 10 minutes either at the beginning or the end of the lunch break. Muslim children are asked to perform *salah* from the age of seven, although they are not required to do so before puberty.

<i>The five daily prayers</i>	
<i>Fajr</i>	<i>Before sunrise</i>
<i>Zuhr</i>	<i>Between sun reaching its full height and mid afternoon</i>
<i>Asr</i>	<i>Between mid-afternoon and sunset</i>
<i>Maghrib</i>	<i>Just after sunset</i>
<i>Eesha</i>	<i>Late evening</i>

Schools with significant numbers of Muslim pupils may wish to designate a clean room or quiet area (e.g. part of the school library) as a reflection room, where Muslim students could perform their prayers, but which could also be available for other students who wished to use it for prayer or reflection. It would also be helpful if individual schools knew the direction of the *qiblah*, i.e. the direction of prayer. When praying in England, Makkah is found in a south-easterly direction, which can easily be determined using a simple compass.

Ablution (wudu)

Muslims are required to wash their face, arms, forehead and feet before praying: a washbasin connected to running water will suffice for this purpose.

Ramadan and fasting (sawm)

- Fasting is considered obligatory during the month of Ramadan for all in good health once they reach puberty. However, many children may begin to partake in a partial fast before this age.
- For health and safety reasons schools might want to obtain parental consent from parents before their child is allowed to fast.

Fasting during the month of Ramadan is one of the five pillars of the faith, considered obligatory for all Muslims, male and female, once they attain the age of puberty. However, many children may begin to fast before this age to progressively get accustomed to the practice. Concerns relating to younger children fasting are most likely to arise in schools. It is impossible to predict the actual moment of the sighting of the new moon that initiates the month of fasting, but the approximate start date can be determined in plenty of time to make appropriate arrangements.

The Arabic word *sawm* means 'to abstain', and during Ramadan most Muslims are expected to abstain completely from both food and liquid, including water, from dawn until sunset. As the Islamic calendar is based on the lunar cycle, the month of Ramadan begins 10 or 11 days earlier each year; in Britain this means that the hours of fasting vary from year to year. The intention behind the fast is not that Muslims are meant to avoid aspects of everyday life, but rather that they learn to cope under a set of conditions that increase the importance of the spiritual dimension.

As mentioned previously, although fasting for the entire month does not become obligatory until a child has reached the age of puberty, it is common for children to begin to fast before this; this may be a partial fast. This may prove of concern for primary schools, for health and safety reasons. Schools should consider obtaining signed parental consent for all pupils who intend to fast.

Children are required to fast from the age of puberty. Fasting prior to this age is not obligatory and tolerated differently depending on the children's general health, nutrition and attitude. Fasting prior to the age of 7 or 8 years is not advisable, although young children will be made aware of the practice of fasting in the community around them. For primary age pupils it may be that parents would like to give them an introduction to fasting, e.g. for a few hours at a time

In the event of dehydration occurring as a result of fasting, quantities of water, ideally with sugar and salt, such as Dioralyte or Lucozade should be given to the child. If a pupil faints due to dehydration, their legs should be raised above the head by others, and when awake, urgently re-hydrated as outlined above.

It should not be forgotten that it is part of the religious discipline of Ramadan that fasting takes place in the presence of 'business as usual': that it is not intended to take Muslims out of the everyday world, but rather to bring a heightened spiritual awareness into their world. Although it is helpful for schools to make certain allowances and special arrangements (e.g. for prayer) during Ramadan, it is also an opportunity for the whole school to learn about the spiritual discipline and consider similar examples from other traditions.

For further details go to: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/healthy-fasting-during-ramadan>

School meals

Schools should ensure that there is a choice of healthy options, for example, fish or vegetarian, for pupils that only eat halal meat.

Muslims are allowed to eat meat as long as it is halal, i.e. slaughtered in a specific way. They are prohibited from eating pork (i.e. sausages, bacon, pork, ham or food containing gelatine derived from pigs) or food prepared with alcohol. Halal food will need to be prepared and served using separate utensils to non – halal food.

Acceptable meals for Muslim pupils include: vegetarian options, seafood and those prepared with halal red meat and chicken. As providing halal options can be problematic (e.g. Sikh pupils will not eat halal meat), it is perhaps a better compromise for schools with a significant population of Muslim pupils to provide options that are *not* haram ('forbidden'), e.g. fish and vegetarian items.

It is also worth mentioning here that schools and parent/ teachers associations might want to consider the appropriateness of certain social events, such as wine and cheese evenings or fashion shows that might inadvertently exclude parents/carers from some faith or cultural groups. Alcohol is prohibited within Islam, and its presence at a function may lead to some parents not attending.

School outings

- There is no valid religious reason preventing Muslim students from taking part in educational visits to other places of worship

There is no valid religious reason preventing Muslim students from taking part in educational visits to other places of worship such as churches, synagogues, temples or gurdwaras. Parents of pupils from any background, religious or non-religious, might object to such visits. However, this is part of the school's broad and balanced curriculum and provision of social, moral, cultural and spiritual education which will prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.

For trips that involve overnight stays:

- Parents should be provided with a detailed explanation of the objectives behind the trip and the format it will take, recognising that Muslims might find some venues unacceptable (e.g. brewery).
- There should be segregated washing and sleeping facilities for boys and girls.
- Non-haram food, e.g. vegetarian or seafood alternatives should be available.
- Inform parent of the facilities for prayer should they be requested.

- There should be adequate adult supervision.
- Teachers should be aware that some Muslim parents may prefer other activities to mixed disco dancing.

Significant Muslim religious observances

The following are days on which Muslim pupils are likely to request permission to be absent from school in part or entirely.

Eid-ul-Fitr

Eid is an Arabic word meaning a recurring event, and in Islam it denotes the religious festivals. *Fitr* means “to break” and this particular festival signals the breaking of the fasting period of Ramadan. The entire festival period lasts only one day compared with the three days of *Eid-ul-Adha*, the festival of sacrifice. For a Muslim, it is a day of thanksgiving. Fasting is forbidden and in the morning, Muslims are encouraged to enjoy a sweet snack such as dates. Other practices include bathing and wearing one’s best or new clothes. Thanks to Allah are expressed by distributing alms among the poor and needy and offering special prayers. On this day, gifts are also given to children and loved ones, but it is also a time of forgiveness, and for making amends.

Eid-ul-Adha

The festival of Eid-ul-Adha, also known as the Festival of Sacrifice, is observed at the end of the *hajj* or yearly pilgrimage to Makkah, approximately two months and ten days after the end of Ramadan. The village of Mina, a few miles from Makkah, is the site of three pillars that are stoned in a symbolic rejection of the devil, one of the rituals of the *hajj*. This village also plays host to scores of butchers who arrange for the halal slaughter of the sacrificial animals on the pilgrims’ behalf. It is celebrated by all Muslims, not only those performing the *hajj*, and each Muslim uses the occasion to remind themselves of their own submission to Allah, and their willingness to make sacrifices.

On both of the above Eids, Muslims are expected to attend the mosque in the morning for the Eid prayer, and the days are meant to be times of relaxation, celebration and for visiting friends and relations.

Ashura

The festival of Ashura, which takes place during the month of Muharram, is observed by both Sunni and Shi’a Muslims, but in different contexts. The Sunni community fast on this day, seeing it as an occasion to remember several events: e.g. Nuh (Noah) leaving the Ark and Allah saving Musa (Moses) from the Egyptians. For the Shi’a community, Ashura is held to be the most significant day of the forty-day mourning period for Husayn during the month of Muharram. The battle of Karbala is re-enacted and believers hold processions as a communal expression of grief.

Eid al-Ghadeer

Eid al-Ghadeer is the day when Shi'a Muslims celebrate the appointment of Imam Ali as the first leader and spiritual guide of the Shi'a branch of Islam. It occurs each year eight days after Eid al-Adha. Shi'a students would not expect to be absent from school to attend the mosque, but schools might like to take the opportunity on this day to allow them to speak about their faith.

Appendix A

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is the largest organised international Muslim community that is led by a single spiritual leader. Ahmadi Muslims accept their founder, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) as the Promised Messiah and Imam Mahdi, who was prophesied to appear in the latter days according to Islam and other religions.

Founded in 1889 in Qadian, India, the community is now established globally in more than 200 countries with membership in the tens of millions. Its UK headquarters are located at the Baitul Futuh Mosque, London Road Morden.

After the demise of their founder in 1908, the community has been led by a system of Khilafat (Caliphate) or Spiritual Leadership and the current Caliph is Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, who is the Fifth Caliph of the community. He is based in London and under his leadership, the community has now built over 16,000 mosques, 500 schools and opened numerous hospitals and clinics worldwide. The community has translated the Holy Quran into more than 70 languages including Braille and established the world's first 24 hour satellite television channel, Muslim Television Ahmadiyya International that broadcast from London. In 2016 it also launched London's newest Muslim radio station, the Voice of Islam, that broadcasts on DAB digital.

The community is highly organised and in the UK alone has more than 130 branches from Scotland to Cornwall. It has a strong focus on education for girls and boys. One of its members was the Pakistan's first Noble Laureate (Professor Abdus Salam) and another served as President of the UN General Assembly and President of the International Court of Justice.

The community actively engages its members in serving humanity and working on charitable and social projects. In the UK it raises more than half a million pounds each year for British charities including the Poppy Appeal, Save the Children and many local charities. It also has its own humanitarian charity called Humanity First that provides disaster relief, solar energy, water and training to people across the world, regardless of their belief.

The community has been in the UK since 1913. In 1926 it built the Fazl Mosque, London's first mosque (in Southfields) that is also known as The London Mosque. In 2003 it built the Baitul Futuh Mosque in Morden, which is the largest mosque in western Europe. The community has a very strong focus on peace and lives by its motto of Love For All hatred For None and its mosques also play a valuable role for the wider community.

The community runs an international peace campaign to promote awareness of Islam's message of peace. The community categorically reject extremism and terrorism in any form and more than a century ago its founder emphatically declared that an aggressive "jihad by the sword" has no place in Islam. It promotes interfaith dialogue, respect for all faiths, and the separation of mosque and state. It has no political or worldly ambition and seeks bring people closer to God and to inspire people to serve humanity.

Further details about the community can be found online at www.LoveForAllHatredForNone.org, www.alislam.org, www.mta.tv and can be contacted by email at ExternalAffairs@ahmadiyya.org.uk