Guidance for Wandsworth Primary Schools with Muslim Pupils

Wandsworth Borough Council
May 2015
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Acknowledgements

The original (2007) version of this guidance was written by the schools' service, headteachers and Muslim representatives on the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) in Ealing. It was updated in 2014. Wandsworth Council is grateful to Ealing Council for sharing this document. Wandsworth’s version has been modified to reflect the priorities and relevant information for its schools and 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 headteachers 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.

Wandsworth 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 Wandsworth 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 (January 2015) states:
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. 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:

- schools may develop their own curriculum to respond to the particular needs of their pupils and ensure that they all achieve their potential. Inspectors should verify that good teaching within a broad and balanced curriculum, accompanied by effective SMSC development, is helping to prepare children and young people for life in modern Britain;

- inspectors should consider whether governors ensure that they and the school promote tolerance and respect for people of all faiths (or those of no faith), cultures and lifestyles; and support and help, through their words, actions and influence within the school and more widely in the community, to prepare children and young people positively for life in modern Britain.

The Ofsted framework can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-framework-for-school-inspection

3. The Equality Act 2011, 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.


**Continuing Professional Development**

Wandsworth Council’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://schools.wandsworthtpd.org.uk/
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 distinctively Islamic world views that are very 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 Wandsworth

The national census data tells us that Muslims are now the third largest religious group in Wandsworth. Christians are the largest religious group at 53% followed by No Religion at 27% 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).

Wandsworth has several mosques, most are Sunni and others include Shi’a and Ahmadiyya mosques. Below are very brief descriptions of the main different denominations in Wandsworth.

Sunni The largest denomination of Islam. The word comes from *sunnah*, which means the words and actions or example of the Prophet Muhammad. Sunni Islam is the branch that accepted the caliphate or leadership of Abu Bakr following the death of Muhammad.

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 through his daughter Fatima and his son-in-law Ali were the best source of knowledge of Muhammad’s *sunnah*.

Ahmadiyya, Ahmadies (Urdu, Ahmadiyya) is the collective name given to the two distinct groups - the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement - comprised of followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d.1908), a Muslim from the Punjab who proclaimed himself *Mujaddid* (reformer/renewer), asserting that he fulfilled Christian and Islamic prophecies regarding a promised Messiah (in Islam, the Mahdi). Ahmadies consider themselves Muslims, and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad termed his movement the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat (jamaat, ‘community’). The original Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat split into two separate groups after his death, known respectively as the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement for the propagation of Islam. These groups vary in their interpretations of Ahmad’s teachings and claims; they also differ as regards who should have succeeded Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, and how such a successor should be chosen.
Summary of guidance

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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Summary suggestions</th>
<th>More info</th>
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| Attendance-absence for religious days | ▪ There are two Eid festivals, Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha. For other main festivals see page 21.  
▪ 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 up to the school. | Page 10 |
| Child protection issues | ▪ 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](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://wandsworth.childrensservicedirectory.org.uk/kb5/wandsworth/fsd/family.action?familychannel=5600_6](http://wandsworth.childrensservicedirectory.org.uk/kb5/wandsworth/fsd/family.action?familychannel=5600_6)  
▪ ‘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, nationalistic and animal rights etc. 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).  
▪ 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](http://www.wscb.org.uk/download/123/e-safety_policy) | Page 11 |
| The National 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](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum) | Page 12 |
| Curriculum: 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 figures considered messengers in Islam (e.g. Jesus, Muhammad, Noah), teachers may wish to provide alternatives.  
▪ There is a wealth of Islamic art forms that can be celebrated, e.g. architecture, calligraphy, geometric representations. | Page 13 |
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<tr>
<th>Curriculum: Dance</th>
<th><strong>Dance</strong> 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.</th>
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</table>
| **Curriculum: 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 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** | 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 *haraam* (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’)** | **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). |
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<th>Curriculum: Relationship and sex education (RSE)</th>
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<td>▪ Parents do have the legal right to withdraw their children from RSE; they do not have the right to withdraw their children from those aspects of the biology curriculum that deal with reproduction.</td>
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<td>▪ It is preferable for male staff to teach RSE to boys and for female staff to teach girls.</td>
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<td>▪ If possible, avoid holding RSE classes during Ramadan.</td>
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<th>Dress requirements: School uniform</th>
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<td>▪ 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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ 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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ The wearing of the <em>niqab</em> (full-face veil) should not be allowed on the grounds that it prevents the school from exercising their duty of care.</td>
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<td>▪ Schools are encouraged to allow Muslim children to wear sweatshirts and jogging bottoms for sporting activities if they so desire.</td>
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<th>Swimming</th>
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<td>For some Muslim pupils modesty in public is very important and changing discreetly may be preferable.</td>
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<td>▪ For health and safety reasons, leggings and full leotards are not permitted in any of Wandsworth’s pools. However, specially made full length lycra suits are available from online sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ 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.</td>
</tr>
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<td>▪ To check the availability of individual changing cubicles at Wandsworth pools, please contact the pools on the numbers below or go to the places for people website at <a href="http://www.placesforpeopleleisure.org">www.placesforpeopleleisure.org</a> or contact Wandsworth’s sports services: <a href="mailto:sportsservices@wandsworth.gov.uk">sportsservices@wandsworth.gov.uk</a>, 020 8871 8154.</td>
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**Contact details for Wandsworth pools:**

- Latchmere - 020 72078004
- Balham - 020 87729577
- Putney - 020 87850388
- Tooting - 020 83337555
- Wandlre Recreation Centre - 020 88711149
- Roehampton Recreation Centre - 020 87850535
- Tooting Bec Lido - 020 88717198
| 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. | Page 19 |
| Ramadan and fasting | Fasting is considered obligatory during the month of Ramadan for all in good health once they reach puberty. However, many children will begin to partake in a partial fast before this age. | Page 19 |
| Ramadan and fasting | For health and safety reasons schools might want to obtain parental consent from parents before their child is allowed to fast. | Page 19 |
| 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. | Page 20 |
| School outings | There is no valid religious reason preventing Muslim students from taking part in educational visits to other places of worship. | Page 20 |
**Attendance**

### Summary

- There are two Eid festivals, Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha. For other main festivals see page 22.
- 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 up to the school.

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. (Chapter 56, 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 the school.

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.

### Child protection

### Summary

- 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, 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://wandsworth.childrensservicedirectory.org.uk/kb5/wandsworth/fsd/family.action?familychannel=56006](http://wandsworth.childrensservicedirectory.org.uk/kb5/wandsworth/fsd/family.action?familychannel=56006)
- ‘Prevent’ is part of the national counter-terrorism strategy and aims to stop people being drawn into or supporting terrorism.
- 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.

**Forced marriage**

The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 makes it a criminal offence to force someone to marry. This includes:
Taking someone overseas to force them to marry (whether or not the forced marriage takes place).

Marrying someone who lacks the mental capacity to consent to the marriage (whether they're pressured to or not).

Breaching a Forced Marriage Protection Order is also a criminal offence.

The civil remedy of obtaining a Forced Marriage Protection Order through the family courts will continue to exist alongside the new criminal offence, so victims can choose how they wish to be assisted.

If a student confides in a member of staff that they or a family member are in danger of being forcibly married, the school should follow the guidance detailed in the DfE guidance [https://www.gov.uk/forced-marriage#legislation-on-forced-marriage](https://www.gov.uk/forced-marriage#legislation-on-forced-marriage).

**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.


**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.

**Channel**

The Council works closely with local police and statutory services to deliver a multi-agency response through a national programme known as Channel. The Channel programme in Wandsworth is chaired by Sean Dunkling, Assistant Director (Prevention and Intervention) in the Education and Social Services Department.

Individuals deemed suitable after a needs assessment will be invited to participate in an intervention. The process is voluntary. The intervention is tailored to meet individual needs and will include a range of activities, often including mentoring and other practical assistance.

**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 Wandsworth’s Prevent officer and is also available on Wandsworth’s TPD online [http://schools.wandsworthtpd.org.uk/](http://schools.wandsworthtpd.org.uk/)
**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.wscb.org.uk/download/123/e-safety_policy](http://www.wscb.org.uk/download/123/e-safety_policy)

**Curriculum**

**Summary**

- 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](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**

**Summary**

- 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 figures 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 figures, photography and mosaic art. Muslim pupils may 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 whom Muslims consider to be prophets.

**Dance and school productions**

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<td>- Dance could be an issue if performed in mixed groups after puberty.</td>
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<td>- 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.</td>
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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**

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<td>- 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.</td>
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<td>- Many Muslim pupils may prefer to have a part within the Christmas celebration.</td>
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<td>- 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.</td>
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<td>- Where possible, involving parents in school events and productions will promote inclusivity and an understanding of the school's curriculum.</td>
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Reservations might also arise with performances that involve physical contact between boys and girls, or cross-dressing (i.e. boys performing as girls and vice versa). Again it should be stressed that there will be many Muslim pupils who will not want to be excluded from these activities.
Music and singing religious songs

Summary

- 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 haraam (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.)

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

Summary

- 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.”

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.

**Relationship and sex education (RSE)**

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<tr>
<td>Parents do have the legal right to withdraw their children from RSE; they do not have the right to withdraw their children from those aspects of the biology curriculum that deal with reproduction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is preferable for male staff to teach RSE to boys and for female staff to teach girls.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If possible, avoid holding RSE classes during Ramadan.</td>
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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 RSE 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 Guidance for Wandsworth Primary schools with Muslim pupils
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

Summary

- 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.

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**

**Summary**

- 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**

**Summary**

- For some Muslim pupils modesty in public is very important and changing discreetly may be preferable.
- For health and safety reasons, leggings and full leotards are not permitted in any of Wandsworth’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. However compromises that can be offered include allowing children to shower in their swimming costumes.
- To check the availability of individual changing cubicles at Wandsworth pools, please contact the pools on the numbers below or go to the places for people website at [www.placesforpeopleleisure.org](http://www.placesforpeopleleisure.org) or contact Wandsworth’s sports services: sportsservices@wandsworth.gov.uk 020 8871 8154.

**Contact details for Wandsworth Pools**

- Latchmere – 020 72078004
- Balham – 020 87729577
- Putney – 020 87850388 Tooting – 020 83337555
- Wandle Recreation Centre – 020 88711149
- Roehampton Recreation Centre – 020 87850535
- Tooting Bec Lido – 020 88717198

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)**

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<td>- Although not all Muslim pupils will observe this, the five daily prayers are considered obligatory for all Muslims, who are encouraged to perform <em>salah</em> 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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 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.</td>
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Of the five pillars of the Islamic faith, the most likely to impinge on school life are the obligatory five daily prayers and the dawn to sunset fast during the holy month of Ramadan.

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.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>The five daily prayers</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fajr</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Zuhr</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Asr</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Maghrib</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Eesha</strong></td>
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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)

**Summary**

- Fasting is considered obligatory during the month of Ramadan for all in good health once they reach puberty. However, many children will 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 will 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 fast, 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 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](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/healthy-fasting-during-ramadan)
School meals

Summary

- 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

Summary

- 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. This Eid is known as the ‘small’ festival, *al-Eid al Saghir*, as the entire festival period lasts only three days compared with the four 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 sacrifice.

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.