British Muslims and Education

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List of Acronyms

BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
DfES	Department for Education and Skill
EAL	English as an Additional Language
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualifications
LEA	Local Education Authority
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
PLASC	Pupil Level Annual School Census
SACRE	Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education
TTA	Teacher Training Agency
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admission Services
VA	Voluntary-Aided (school)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education is crucial to integration and social cohesion in a diverse multicultural and multi-faith society. There are several reasons for this. First, the school system is the earliest mainstream social institution with which young people come into sustained contact, and the extent to which schools respect and accommodate diversity sends out strong signals about the value which society as a whole places on diversity. Second, educational attainment levels are a key determinant of opportunities for finding employment and improving future life chances. Third, schools provide an opportunity to develop bonds and friendships across different ethnic and faith groups, and the education curriculum is itself a mechanism by which pupils are able to develop an understanding of the different groups within their community.

One third of Muslims are under age 16 as compared with one fifth of the population as a whole. There are approximately half a million Muslim children and young people currently receiving education in British schools and colleges. Increasing numbers of Muslims are entering further and higher education. As a result of this younger age profile, Government education policies aimed at children and young people will have a disproportionate impact on Muslim communities. It is vital, therefore, that Government departments and agencies implementing and delivering these policies lead the way in ensuring that policy is sensitive to the needs of Muslims.

There is significant diversity in what Muslim parents want. While some would like to send their children to schools with an Islamic ethos, others merely want single-sex schooling; others again would be happy to send their children to community or church schools so long as these are respectful of their faith and supportive of their distinctive identity. The majority of Muslims in the UK attend community school. However, at present many Muslim parents feel that community schools are not meeting the needs of their children.

The key educational issues concerning Muslim parents are: the continuing poor academic results of Muslim children; the need to eradicate institutional racism and racist and Islamophobic bullying; the lack of recognition or support for their children's faith identity; and the inadequacy of spirituals and moral education that schools provide.

The levels of academic achievement of Muslim students are low, but improving. Explanations for these low levels are usually given in terms of poverty, social deprivation and language difficulties, but there are further obstacles to their full achievement of potential that relate more specifically to their experiences as Muslims. These include the prevalence of religious prejudice and Islamophobia; the lack of Muslim role models in schools; the low expectations that some teachers have of Muslim students; and the lack of recognition of students' Muslim identity. In addition,

Muslim children who attend community or church schools typically also attend mosque schools or other supplementary schools outside normal school hours in order to receive education in Islamic beliefs and practices. This places an additional burden on Muslim children, in terms of both time and intellectual effort.

The school curriculum has an important role to play in encouraging cross-cultural understanding. Two shifts in the curriculum might help to make this happen. The first is a more global focus, whereby European and Christian culture is contextualised in terms of world civilisation. The second is the inclusion of references to the Muslim contribution to European learning and culture, particularly in the fields of art, literature, mathematics, geometry, science, history, philosophy, astronomy and medicine. Schools should also ensure that the curriculum is more responsive to Muslim sensitivities and interests in particular areas. Many Muslim parents would appreciate the option for their children to study Arabic in school, and also for them to receive a form of Religious Education that gave them more opportunities to enrich their understanding of their own faith as well as studying others.

The Government has taken the lead in many issues relating to the needs of children from Muslim and other minority groups. Much good practice in responding to the specific cultural needs of Muslims is also to be found at the level of many local authorities. However, effective mechanisms are needed for sharing and spreading such good practice more widely. At present, education policy views minorities only in terms of race and ethnicity. In particular, although many Muslim children and young people experience Islamophobia both in and out of school, anti-discrimination policy in education tend to focus much more on racial or ethnic discrimination, rather than religious discrimination. Without the collection of data on the basis of religion, education policy will not be able to meet the needs of individuals from different faith communities.

Muslim community organisations and individuals also have a vital role to play. Greater participation by Muslims in all aspects of the education system is central to ensuring that educational policy is sensitive to their needs. The numbers of Muslim teachers and governors in schools are very low, and drop-out rates for Muslims on teacher training courses are higher than average. What is needed are ways to engage Muslims more fully with the education system and also to empower them, by helping them to contribute more effectively to the processes of educational decision-making.

The recommendations with which this chapter concludes (section nine) are wide-ranging. They are based on the premise that a commitment to inclusive education requires both a willingness to listen to the ways that minority communities like Muslims define their own needs, and a determination to respond to those needs. This approach will equally serve the wellbeing of the Muslim community and the interests of the broader, multicultural society.

2. INTRODUCTION

> *"Education represents for British Muslims a major area of struggle for equality of opportunity and assertion of identity. It was over education that Muslims became increasingly vocal in raising their demands in the early 1980s, and it is where they have succeeded best in having many of their needs recognised in the face of controversy and opposition from broad sections of British society"*[1]

Education is crucial to integration and social cohesion. There are several reasons for this: first, the school system is the earliest mainstream social institution with which young people come into sustained contact, and the extent to which schools respect and accommodate diversity sends out strong signals about the value society places on diversity. Second, educational attainment levels are a key determinant of opportunities for finding employment and improving future life chances. Third, schools provide an opportunity to develop bonds and friendships across different ethnic and faith groups, and the education curriculum is itself a mechanism by which pupils are able to develop an understanding of the different groups within their community.

More than half of Britain's Muslims (52 per cent) are under age 25, as compared to only 31 per cent of the population as whole. The average age of Muslims in the UK is 28 years old, 13 years younger than the national average.[2] There are half a million Muslims currently receiving education in British schools. Organisations and individuals delivering and participating in the education system have a critical role in engaging with the new generation of British Muslims.

This chapter highlights some of the anxieties Muslim parents currently have about the British system of educational provision. These anxieties focus on four major inter-linked issues: the continuing poor academic results of Muslim children; the failure of the schools to eradicate institutional racism and racist and Islamophobic bullying; the lack of support for Muslim children's Islamic identity; and the inadequacy of the spiritual and moral education that the schools provide – an inadequacy that is seen as at least partly responsible for the growth of drug addiction, the increasing number of Muslims in custody and the inner-city riots of 2001.[3]

The substantive content of this chapter is contained in sections three to eight.

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[1] H. Ansari, *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain since 1800,* Hurst and Co, London, 2004, p. 298, (hereafter, Ansari, *The Infidel Within*).

[2] A. Scott, D. Pearce, and P. Goldblatt, "The Sizes and Characteristics of Ethnic Populations of Great Britain", in *Population Trends,* vol. 105, 2001, pp. 6–15, (hereafter, Scott et al, *Ethnic Popuations*).

[3] See: C. Allen, *Fair Justice: the Bradford Disturbances, the Sentencing and the Impact,* Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism, London, 2003.

Section three contextualises the position of Muslims and their children within the UK. It sets out the number of Muslims in British schools and their distribution throughout the country. It outlines the diversity of the Muslim community in terms of ethnicity and traditions within Islam and sketches the particular features of home and community life that define the experiences of Muslim children.

Section four examines data collection in the education system – in schools, further education and universities – and notes that most data collected is based on ethnicity rather than religious identity.

Section five examines Muslims' experience of schooling. It outlines the types of schools that are open to Muslim pupils, including community schools, church schools and independent and State-aided Muslim schools, and considers the factors that affect the choice of school made by Muslim parents. In addition to looking at formal or compulsory schooling, the section goes on to explore the role and nature of supplementary schooling. It examines the attainment of Muslim pupils in schools and their subsequent participation and experience of further and higher education. Finally, it looks at the involvement of Muslims as teachers and school governors and at the issue of parent-school relations.

Section six looks at issues of identity and Islamophobia. It examines the implications of the official practice of discussing school achievement in terms of ethnicity but not religion. It also considers the evidence of Islamophobia in schools, including the stereotypes about Muslim girls. It suggests that the school curriculum and teacher training provide important mechanisms for tackling Islamophobia, by ensuring greater understanding of Muslim communities and of Islam.

Section seven examines the ways in which the curriculum can acknowledge and respect Muslim identity and ensure that Muslims are confident to take on all the rights and responsibilities of full British citizenship. It suggests a more global focus within the curriculum, so that European and Christian culture is contextualised in terms of world civilisation, and calls for discussion of currently neglected Muslim contributions to European learning and culture. Such a change would support the identity and self-concept of young Muslims within the context of European citizenship. The section goes on to consider specific issues, as they arise, in relation to the content and delivery of classes in religious education, languages, sex education, music and the performing arts.

Section eight sets out the current policy framework. It highlights the findings in recent policy reports relevant to Muslims, as well as policy initiatives at the national and local level.

Overall, this chapter argues that a commitment to inclusive education must involve a determination to meet the needs of children from diverse community backgrounds. This involves a willingness to listen to the way those communities themselves define

their needs. The recommendations in *section nine* are intended to raise awareness of the implications that an acceptance of a policy of cultural diversity has for the education of Muslims. The recommendations are put forward in acknowledgement that there are important differences between Muslims and other minority groups and that any policies put forward for minority ethnic groups generally may not meet the specific needs of Muslim pupils. Some of the recommendations are particularly appropriate for areas where there are heavy concentrations of Muslims, but others have more general applicability, or may even be relevant in the case of isolated Muslim pupils.

3. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

There are about 500,000 Muslim children currently receiving education in British schools – between five and six per cent of the total school population.[4] The vast majority of these live in England, the combined total of Muslim students for the rest of the UK being about 22,000 children.[5] Because of the differences in the way statistics are gathered, some of the information below refers to the whole of the UK, some to England only and some to England and Wales.

Eighty per cent of the UK's Muslims live in the five major conurbations of Greater London, West Midlands, West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, and East Midlands, while the same areas contain 50 per cent of the general population.[6] Approximately 40 per cent of Muslims live in Greater London.[7] Outside London, the largest numbers of

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[4] The Muslim population of the United Kingdom is variously estimated as being between 1.6 and 1.8 million people, or about 350,000 households. The lower figure comes from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). (See: Office for National Statistics, *UK National Census 2001: Focus on Religion*, available on the ONS website at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/focuson/religion, (accessed 1 November 2004), (hereafter ONS, *Focus on Religion*)). The higher figure comes from M. Anwar, an expert on Muslim ethnography, quoted in *The Financial Times*, 23 January 2002. These figures represent approximately three per cent of the total population – more than the combined total of Hindus, Sikhs, Jews and Buddhists in the UK. (See: ONS, *Ethnicity and Religion)*. Moreover, the age profile of Muslims is much younger than any other religious group: In all, 33.8 per cent of Muslims fall into the 0-15 age bracket, and a further 18.2 per cent are between 16 and 24 years old. (See: Scott et al, *Ethnic Popuations*). Assuming that 75 per cent of children in the 0-15 age bracket attend school, and 80 per cent of young people in the 16-18 age bracket are in school, the number of Muslims attending school in the UK is between 482,477 (if the total Muslim population is 1.6 million) and 542,786 (if the total population is 1.8 million). The ONS gives the figure of 371,000 Muslim children in England of compulsory schooling age, i.e. 5-16 year-olds. (See: ONS, *Focus on Religion,* Education, 11 October 2004, available on the ONS website at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=963 (accessed 1 November 2004)). The higher figure in the present report includes all the children who attend school outside the compulsory period of schooling, especially 4-5 year-olds and 16-18 year-olds, as well as Muslim children in the rest of the UK, and an estimate of the increase between 2001 and 2004.

[5] This figure is calculated on the basis of about 14,000 children in Scotland, about 7,000 in Wales and less than 1,000 in Northern Ireland. See: website of the General Register Office, Scotland at http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk; and website of the Office for National Statistics at http://www.statistics.gov.uk (accessed 5 November 2004).

[6] See Chapter 3 of this report (British Muslims and the Labour Market).

[7] In Greater London, the biggest concentrations of Muslims are in the boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Newham, Waltham Forest, Hackney, Brent, Redbridge, Westminster, Camden, Haringey, Ealing, Enfield and Hounslow.

Muslims are found in Birmingham, Bradford, Blackburn with Darwen, Luton, Oldham, Leicester, Kirklees, Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds.[8]

In some of these districts, Muslim children form a high proportion of the total school population. In Bradford, for example, children from ethnic minorities comprise about 33 per cent of the total school population, and most of these minorities are Muslims of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin. A significant number of inner-city schools in Bradford almost exclusively serve the Muslim population.[9] Research suggests that the level of ethnic segregation is higher in schools than in local neighbourhoods, and that ethnic segregation is particularly high for pupils of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin, both at secondary school and in their neighbourhoods.[10]

Muslim children come from a wide diversity of ethnic backgrounds. Over 40 per cent are of Pakistani origin, and nearly 20 per cent of Bangladeshi origin. Of the remainder, about 15 per cent are of Indian or other Asian origin, up to ten per cent are from Turkish or Turkish Cypriot origin, and the rest are from the Middle East, East Asia, Africa, or the Caribbean, with about four per cent being of mixed ethnic origin.[11] In addition, there is a small group (perhaps less than one per cent) of White converts. Most recent waves of Muslim immigrants and refugees have come from Morocco, Somalia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq.[12] The result of this ethnic diversity is that Muslim children bring to school a wide range of cultural and linguistic experiences, as well as connections of various kinds with a wide range of countries. In the face of this ethnic diversity, religion is a key element that serves to bind them into a unified group

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[8]   Office for National Statistics, "Census 2001: Ranking: Ethnicity and Religion: Muslim", available on the ONS website at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/rank/ewmuslim.asp (accessed 1 November 2004).

[9]   Office for Standards in Education, *Inspection of Bradford Local Education Authority, September 2002,* London, OFSTED, Audit Commission, 2002, (hereafter, OFSTED, *Inspection of Bradford LEA*). See also: D. Phillips, *The Changing Geography of South Asians in Bradford,* 2001, available at http://www.bradford2020.com/pride/docs/section5.doc (accessed 1 November 2004).

[10] S. Burgess and D. Wilson, *Ethnic mix: how segregated are English Schools?,* Bristol, Centre for Market and Public Organisation, 2004.

[11] The 2001 UK National Census lacked separate categories for people of Arab, Persian or Turkish origin, but it is likely that a majority of those Muslims who identified as "White British" or "Other White" (nearly 12 per cent of the total number of British Muslims) were in fact Turkish or Turkish Cypriot in origin. See http://www.salaam.co.uk/themeofthemonth/september03_index.php?l=2 (accessed 18 October 2004).

[12] Scott et al., *Ethnic Populations;* M. Anwar, quoted in *The Financial Times,* 23 January 2002.

with common concerns. Both the diversity and the shared concerns among Muslims are significant factors for policy-makers to take into consideration.

In terms of religious belief, there are important differences in affiliation, the most obvious being that between the Sunnis and the Shi'as. There are many different subgroups within the broader faith community of British Muslims, including (for example) the Barelwi, the Deobandi/Tablighi Jama'at, and the Jama'at-i Islami.[13]

There are also differences between Muslims in terms of religious practice and commitment. One report estimates that there are 760,000 "practising" Muslims in the UK,[14] and another notes that 74 per cent of Muslims say their religion is "very important" to them.[15] However, a division between "practising" and "non-practising" Muslims is problematic, for practice is always a matter of definition and degree, and there are different ways in which the religion can be practised.[16] The Association of Muslim Social Scientists, in its 2004 position paper *Muslims on Education,* adopts an inclusive approach to the term "Muslim", encompassing "not only practising adherents of Islam, but also those who identify themselves as such (without necessarily being practising) or who belong to a household or family that holds Islam as its descendant *[sic]* faith".[17] There are also differences in the extent to which religion is part of the daily life of Muslim children. However, most Muslim children will, through family and community activities and the very language they use, if not through more formal religious observances, come into contact with the religion of Islam on a regular basis.

The family life of Muslim children differs in significant respects from that of broader British society.[18] The statistical evidence on family life is generally presented in official documents with reference to ethnic origin rather than to religion, and so most of the information in the rest of this section relates to British Muslim children of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the experience of other Muslim groups – particularly recent migrants like the Kosovars, Somalis and Afghans –

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[13] See: P. Lewis, *Islamic Britain; Religion, Politics and Identity among British Muslims,* I. B. Tauris, London, 1994.

[14] The Guardian Research Department, "Special Report: Muslim Britain, The Statistics", *The Guardian,* 17 June 2002, available on the Guardian website at http://www.guardian.co.uk/religion/story, (hereafter, *The Guardian, Muslim Britain*).

[15] T. Modood, R. Berthoud, J. Lakey, J. Nazroo, P. Smith, P., S. Virdee and S. Beishon, *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage,* London, Policy Studies Institute, 1997, p. 301, (hereafter, Modood et al, *Ethnic Minorities in Britain*).

[16] IQRA Trust, *Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils: advice for teachers and LEAs,* IQRA Trust, London, 1991, p. 11, (hereafter, IQRA Trust, Needs of Muslim Pupils).

[17] Association of Muslim Social Scientists and other groups, *Muslims on Education: a position paper,* AMSS, Richmond, 2004, p.11 (hereafter, AMSS, *Muslims on Education*).

[18] M. Parker-Jenkins, *Children of Islam,* Stoke-on-Trent, Trentham Books, 1995.

is often not dissimilar, though Muslims of Indian (and East African) origin tend to have a higher socio-economic profile and higher levels of educational achievement.

In terms of family life, the large majority of UK Muslim children of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin (90 per cent) live with both parents, a much higher percentage than for White or Afro-Caribbean children.[19] The average number of persons per household is larger than for any other UK ethnic group, at 4.9 persons. This compares to 2.3 persons for White households.[20] Within the home, most UK Muslim children speak a language other than English, the most common being Punjabi, Bengali, Gujerati, Urdu, Turkish or Arabic.[21]

Muslim children in the UK experience high levels of the risk factors associated with child poverty. Some 42 per cent live in overcrowded accommodation, compared to 12 per cent for the UK population as a whole. Twelve per cent of UK Muslim children live in households without central heating, compared with six per cent for all dependent children. A total of 19 per cent live in lone-parent households; this is close to the 23 per cent for all dependent children. Over one third (35 per cent) of UK Muslim children are growing up in households where there are no adults with employment, compared with 17 per cent for all dependent children. Some 28 per cent of UK Muslim children live in a household without a car or van, compared to 16 per cent for all dependent children.[22] Three-quarters of UK children of Bangladeshi and Pakistani origin live in households earning less than half the average income for the UK.[23] And 54 per cent of Pakistani and Bangladeshi homes receive income support, three times as many as other households in the UK.[24] Some 35 per cent of Pakistani children and 50 per cent of Bangladeshi children in the UK are eligible for free school

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[19] See: *The Guardian,* 21 September 2001.

[20] M. Murphy, "Household and Family Structure among Ethnic Minority Groups", in *Ethnicity in the 1991 Census, Vol. I,* HMSO, London, 1996, Table 8.3. See also R. Penn and P. Lambert, "Attitudes towards Ideal Family Size of Different Ethnic/Nationality Groups in Great Britain, France and Germany", in *Population Trends 108,* Summer 2002, pp. 49–58.

[21] National Literacy Trust, "Languages Spoken by Pupils in London", 21 January 2000, available on the website of the National Literacy Trust at http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Research/lostop3.html#40languages (accessed 1 November 2004); See also: J. M. Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity,* Falmer Press. London, 1988, p. 15, (hereafter, Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*).

[22] Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, *Muslim housing experiences,* London, Housing Corporation, 2004, p. 13, Table 3, (hereafter, OCIS, *Muslim housing experiences*).

[23] Department for Work and Pensions, *Households Below Average Income, 1994/95–2000/01,* London, DWP, esp. ch. 4. Available on the DWP website at http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/hbai/hbai2001/hbai2000_01.asp (accessed 1 November 2004).

[24] *The Guardian, Muslim Britain,* p. 1.

meals.[25] There are higher levels of unemployment among the parents of UK Muslim children, lower average earnings, and a higher proportion of fathers who lack formal educational qualifications and are semi-skilled manual workers.[26] The mothers of UK Muslim children are less likely than any other group to be in paid employment outside the house.[27] Older siblings of UK Muslim children are more likely than other groups to be unemployed.[28]

The effects of high levels of poverty and social deprivation, and of the discrimination encountered by many Muslims, are also important. A rising number of Muslim children are likely to have a family member in prison; the number of Muslim prisoners has grown significantly in recent years to nine per cent of all prisoners.[29] Outside the home, many Muslim children experience the effects both of racism and of social, ethnic and religious prejudice and bullying, even when living in areas their parents consider safe.[30]

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[25] G. Bhattacharyya, L. Ison and M. Blair, *Minority Ethnic Attainment and Participation in Education and Training: the Evidence,* Department for Education and Skills, Nottingham, 2003, p. 9, (hereafter, Bhattacharyya et al, *Minority Ethnic Attainment*).

[26] Cabinet Office, *Ethnic Minorities and the Labour Market: final report,* Cabinet Office, Strategy Unit, London, 2003. See also, R. Berthoud, *The Incomes of Ethnic Minorities,* University of Essex, Colchester, 1998.

[27] F. Ahmad, T. Modood and S. Lissenburgh, *South Asian Women and Employment in Britain: the interaction of gender and ethnicity,* London, Policy Studies Institute, 2003.

[28] Office for National Statistics, "Social Focus in Brief: Ethnicity 2002", available at the ONS website at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=9763 (accessed 1 November 2004).

[29] Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia: issues, challenges and action,* Trentham Books, Stoke-on-Trent, 2004, pp. 38–39. See also: M. Elkins and J. Olagundoye, *The Prison Population in 2000: a Statistical Review (Home Office Findings 154),* London, Home Office, 2001.

[30] Office of National Statistics, *Social Focus in Brief: Ethnicity 2002,* ONS, 2002, available on the ONS website at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=9763 (accessed 1 November 2004).

4. DATA COLLECTION IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The primary source of data on Muslim children is the 2001 UK National Census. The first census to include a question on religious affiliation, it has generated much information relevant to education. Information on religion previously had to be inferred from the question on ethnic group. A recent publication by the Office for National Statistics, *Focus on Religion* (October 2004),[31] has drawn on data from the census to provide, for example, information about the age profile of the Muslim community and the number of Muslim children of compulsory school age.

The second major source of data is the Annual School Census,[32] carried out in January each year. Every nursery, primary, middle, secondary and special school is required to give data for this census by submitting an electronic return, the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC), which includes information about each pupil's ethnic group and first language. The source of the ethnic group information has to be indicated; in the case of younger children, it normally comes from the parents, while older children sometimes provide the information themselves, and in some cases, the information may be ascribed to the school. The return also includes information on each school's bilingual assistants, teachers of ethnic minorities and teachers of English as an Additional Language (EAL). The school's return is submitted to the Local Education Authority (LEA), and goes from there to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

This information is seen as central to the task of monitoring policy, raising standards and targeting educational funds. The data allows for factors such as eligibility for free school meals, exclusions, performance and special needs to be analysed in terms of ethnicity. The DfES Research and Statistics Gateway[33] lists many research publications that draw on this source of data. From a Muslim perspective, the major shortcoming of the PLASC data is that Muslims are not identified as a distinct group. The identity of some Muslims, such as Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, can be inferred from their ethnic group, while others – including the 11 per cent of Muslims who are from "White" ethnic groups – cannot. Some schools, especially church schools, request information about pupils' religious affiliation outside of the PLASC returns, but this information does not feed into the official databases of the DfES.

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[31] Office for National Statistics, *Focus on Religion,* October 2004, ONS, available at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci (accessed 25 October 2004).

[32] Department for Education and Skills, "Annual Schools Census", available on the DfES Teachernet website at http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/asc (accessed 26 October 2004).

[33] Department for Education and Skills, Research and Statistics Gateway, available at http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway (consulted 26 October 2004).

Universities and Further Education colleges use a similar system. Ethnic statistics are gathered by the University Central Admissions Service and the Graduate Teacher Training Registry, in order to monitor applications and admissions. University on-line enrolment requires details of ethnic origin. The information that all providers of teacher education are required to submit to the Teacher Training Agency includes ethnic origin. In none of these cases, however, are students required to answer questions about religion. All applications for jobs in universities and colleges of Higher or Further Education include questions on ethnicity. The personal data held on academic and support staff at universities and colleges typically includes questions on both ethnicity and religion, though the latter may be optional.

The ethnic categories used throughout the education system are gradually being standardised in line with the categories used in the 2001 UK National Census,[34] with the addition of the category "Parent/pupil preferred not to say". There is no reason, in theory, why data on religious affiliation could not be collected in the same way as data on ethnic origin throughout the education system. The main argument against this would be that many people consider religion, unlike ethnicity, to be a matter of choice rather than a matter of birth. While young children may be happy to be listed under the religion of their parents, this is less likely to be the case as children get older. In any event, whenever questions about religious affiliation are optional, experience suggests that many people prefer to keep their religion private.[35]

Further data is generated through educational research, funded by research councils or other sources. In such cases, the research may take the education of groups defined by religion, rather than ethnicity, as its central focus. The analysis of such research about the education of Muslim children and young people is at the heart of the present chapter, though there are many topics where the required research has not yet been done, or has not been done with sufficient thoroughness. Such research involves the analysis of national data; the administration of questionnaires and other wide-ranging surveys; observations of teaching and other school activities; scrutiny of policies and other documentation at school, LEA or national level; the study of life histories; group and individual interviews with Muslim children, parents, teachers, community representatives and others; and other methods.

Qualitative research clearly has some advantages over quantitative forms of data collection, in that it is more likely to allow the Muslims being interviewed to define their terms, explain their meaning and identify their own priorities. This is important where there is a danger that the researcher may use categories with which the

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[34] For ethnic categories in the UK 2001 National Census, see Appendix 1: Definitions.

[35] It would of course make the data unreliable if disproportionate numbers of people from minority faiths opted for the category "Prefer not to say".

interviewee is not comfortable. The issue of the primary identity of Muslims may be one such case where questions are regularly shaped in terms of ethnic identity rather than religious affiliation. This issue is discussed more fully in section six below. For many Muslims, it is clear that much of the data currently collected in the British education system is interesting but of limited value, because it uses ethnic categories alone and ignores religious categories, so that it fails to pick out specific Muslim factors and issues.

5. MUSLIM CHILDREN AND BRITISH SCHOOLING

In the UK, children are required to attend school between the ages of 5 and 16. Parents of children of compulsory school age must ensure that their children receive a suitable education through regular attendance at a school, or that the children are taught adequately at home. Under the Human Rights Act (1998), State schools, as public authorities, are required to adhere to the requirements of the European Convention on Human Rights, such as the right to freedom of religion; the right of parents to schooling for their children, in line with their religious and philosophical beliefs; and the protection of pupils from discrimination on the grounds of religion.[36]

This section examines Muslims' experience of schooling. It outlines the types of schools that are open to Muslim pupils, including community schools, church schools and independent and State-aided Muslim schools, and considers the factors that affect the choice of school made by Muslim parents. In addition to formal or compulsory schooling, the section goes on to explore the role and nature of supplementary schooling. It examines the attainment of Muslim pupils in schools and their subsequent participation and experience of further and higher education. Finally, it looks at the involvement of Muslims as teachers and school governors and addresses the issue of parent-school relations.

5.1 Compulsory Schooling

Choice and diversity in schooling

There are approximately 25,000 State-funded schools in Britain.[37] Muslim children are found in every kind of British school, from public schools, to foundation schools, to city technical colleges, city academies and special schools.[38] A small, but growing, number – certainly still under one per cent of all Muslim children – are home-schooled.[39] Some parents send their children abroad for education, often to Pakistan,

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[36] European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), art. 9 and 14, and Additional Protocol no. 1 to the ECHR, art. 2.

[37] P. Wintour, "Religious Schools 'must integrate in the community'", *The Guardian,* 14 November 2001.

[38] The educational systems of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland all have significant differences. Most of the discussion below refers to England, or to England and Wales, since most British Muslim children reside there.

[39] The Islamic Home Schooling Advisory Network (IHSAN) was set up by a group of Muslim women in 2000 to support parents choosing this option. The IHSAN website is available at http://www.islamichomeeducation.co.uk (accessed 2 November 2004).

but no data on this phenomenon is available.[40] However, the vast majority of Muslim pupils are educated in three kinds of schools: community schools, church schools or Muslim schools.[41] Many Muslim parents prefer single-sex schools at the secondary level, especially for their daughters.[42] However, the number of single-sex schools in the UK continues to decline.

Parents' final choice of school depends largely on what is available locally, as well as on their own educational priorities.[43] There are several possible constraints on the choice available. For example: first-choice community schools may be oversubscribed; church schools may give priority to the children of Christian parents; there may be no Muslim schools in the vicinity of the home; parents may not be able to afford the fees for private schooling; and no single-sex schools may be available.

There is significant diversity in what Muslim parents want, and indeed in how Muslims conceive of education. Traditionally, the purpose of Muslim education has been described as the creation of a "good human being".[44] However, many Muslims now prioritise academic success, seeing it as their Muslim duty to provide schooling that offers the best chance of obtaining good examination results.[45]

Those parents for whom the language needs of their children are a top priority may prefer community schools, because these often have facilities for easing the transition from mother tongue to English in the early years of schooling and for providing appropriate English as an Additional Language (EAL) support.[46] However, EAL provision is sometimes criticised for doing no more than helping children to "get by" in English rather than helping them to achieve their full potential. EAL has also been

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[40] J. M. Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity,* p. 34.

[41] See Appendix 1 for definitions of these terms as used here.

[42] K. Hawe, "Muslim Girls' Schools – a conflict of interests?" *Gender and Education,* 6, 1 (1994) (hereafter, Hawe, *Muslim Girls' Schools),* pp. 63–76. See also: J. M. Halstead, "Radical Feminism, Islam and the Single-Sex School Debate", *Gender and Education,* 3, 3 (1991), pp. 263–278, (hereafter, Halstead, *Radical Feminism).*

[43] J. M. Halstead, "Parental Choice: an overview", in J. M. Halstead (ed.), *Parental Choice and Education,* Kogan Page, London, 1994.

[44] See, for example: S. M. N. al-Attas, "Preliminary Thoughts on the Nature of Knowledge and the Definition and Aims of Education", in S. M. N. al-Attas (ed.) *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education,* Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1979.

[45] N. Hashmi, *A Muslim School in Bristol: an Overview of the Current Debate and Muslim School Children's Views,* Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship, University of Bristol, 2003 (hereafter, N. Hashmi, *A Muslim School),* pp. 11–13.

[46] Over 90 per cent of children of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin are registered as EAL. See: Bhattacharyya et al, *Minority Ethnic Attainment,* p. 13.

criticised for using materials that are not built around children's family and cultural experiences.[47]

Other parents prioritise spiritual and moral development or a traditional religious upbringing.[48] For some of these parents, a school with an Islamic ethos is essential,[49] while others are happy with community or church schools, so long as their children can also learn about Islamic beliefs and practices, either at home or at a local mosque school.[50]

The main implication of this diversity of educational priorities is that, as for other ethnic and faith groups in the UK, Muslims will benefit from as wide a range of school choice as possible. However, there is also a need for a better understanding of the factors that influence the choice of school by Muslim parents. One factor may be the impact of different kinds of schooling on the developing identity of Muslim children. (See below, section 6.1.)

This points to the need for more focused research investigating issues that are of real concern to the Muslim community. Possible research topics include: do pupils at single-sex schools achieve more? Do community schools prepare pupils better for citizenship than Muslim schools? Do Muslim values get a fair hearing in community schools? Do Muslim supplementary schools add value to the education of Muslim children? Such research might fit into the Teacher Training Agency's small grants scheme to enable teachers to carry out school-based case-study research, but equally, it might merit more large-scale funding within existing programmes run by the Department for Education and Skills and the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Community schools

The majority of Muslim children in the UK attend community schools. No precise figure is available, but it is almost certain that well in excess of 75 per cent of all Muslim children in the UK go to a community school. Nonetheless, there is no available data to indicate how many Muslim parents make a positive choice to send their children to community schools and how many send them there because they have

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[47] This point was raised at the OSI roundtable meeting, London, 2 December 2003. *Explanatory Note: OSI held a roundtable meeting in London on 2 December 2003, hosted by Lewis Silkin, to invite critique of the present report in draft form. Experts present included representatives of the government, parents, and non-governmental organisations.*

[48] Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee, *Faith in our Schools* (first draft), Oxfordshire County Council, 2004, p. 37.

[49] A *Guardian*/ICM poll of Muslims in March 2004 showed that nearly half of Muslim adults wanted their children to attend Muslim schools (*Guardian Weekly,* 18-24 March 2004, p. 9).

[50] T. Modood, *Ethnic Minorities,* p. 325.

no other option. At the secondary level, most of these are mixed comprehensive schools, though (as indicated below) many Muslim parents opt for single-sex education where this is available, especially for their daughters. Due to residence patterns, Muslim children tend to be concentrated in inner-city community schools in London boroughs and other major conurbations in England. Most Muslim children, therefore, attend schools with significant Muslim representation. Where grammar schools are available, the percentage of Muslim children attending is usually broadly in line with the percentage of Muslims within the local population. Comparatively few Muslim children attend schools where they are completely isolated from other Muslims.

While the Government has taken the lead on many issues relating to the needs of children from Muslim and other minority groups – including language needs, protection from discrimination and the monitoring of achievement levels – the response to specific cultural and religious needs has been largely left to local government. The reason for this is that Local Education Authorities (LEAs) are clearly in a better position to identify the cultural and religious needs of children within their district and to take measures to meet those needs. However, one unfortunate result of this delegation of responsibility has been that provision is uneven across the country. (Local government initiatives are discussed in section eight below).

Where LEAs offer guidance to schools on meeting the needs of Muslim pupils, schools still have considerable discretion on how far and how enthusiastically the guidelines are implemented. Policies and practices adopted by LEAs and individual schools in response to Muslim requests include: the provision of a room for midday prayer and special provision for Friday prayers; the adaptation of school uniform rules and sportswear requirements, and provision of appropriate showering arrangements, to take account of Islamic teaching about modesty and decency; the use of discretionary holidays to allow Muslim children permission to be away from school at the start of Ramadan and at 'Eid al-Fitr and 'Eid al-Adha; the provision of *halal* food for school lunches; single-sex groupings and classes; and sensitivity to Islamic beliefs in assemblies and other school activities.[51] Data is not available on how widespread these policies are or what proportion of the Muslim pupil population attend schools that adopt such policies.

Where Muslim children form a significant percentage of the school population, some schools, in addition to the above policies, try to ensure that there are Muslim teachers, governors and other school officials and employees. They also endeavour to provide a

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[51] IQRA Trust, *Needs of Muslim Pupils.* However, several correspondents noted that such concessions are still unavailable to many Muslim pupils (see, for example, the written responses to this report from teachers and pupils at the Avenue School, London: J. Fernandez *et al.,* 22 January 2004).

school ethos and extra-curricular activities that are respectful to Islamic values.[52] However, such practices are by no means uniform across the country. Furthermore, they are often only granted after a prolonged campaign by Muslim communities.[53]

Many Muslim parents continue to feel that community schools are not meeting the needs of their children,[54] and a growing number of community leaders argue that schools with a large majority of Muslim children should be re-established as Muslim voluntary-aided schools.[55] In part, Muslim parents' dissatisfaction may be the result of a lack of understanding of their faith in the wider educational community and an unwillingness by schools, particularly in the aftermath of September 11, to engage openly in discussions with the Muslim community.[56] It may also be due to their perception of less favourable attitudes towards, and lower expectations of, pupils from minority faith communities.[57] In UK schools, proportionately more pupils of Pakistani

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[52] Interview with head teacher of Belle Vue Girls School, Bradford, 26 March 1999. In a written response to the present report (8 October 2003), E. Renier , a Muslim parent and student at the University of Westminster, comments on the need for school toilets to be adapted to take account of the personal hygiene needs of Muslim students and also on the imbalance between the time spent celebrating Christian festivals and that spent on Muslim ones in multicultural schools. Many Muslims also have reservations about the use of National Lottery funds to support community education projects involving Muslims (see: AMSS, *Muslims on Education,* pp. 20–21).

[53] See: Ansari, *The Infidel Within,* pp. 318–323.

[54] This claim seems to be justified by recent findings reported in T. Cline et al., *Minority Ethnic Pupils in Mainly White Schools,* Department for Education and Skills, Research Brief No 365, 2002 (hereafter, Cline et al., *Minority Ethnic Pupils*). The problems are longstanding. In 1992, for example, a public examination was scheduled for the date of an important Muslim festival and schools were powerless to change it. (See: Hawe, *Muslim Girls' Schools,* p. 67). In a written response to the present report (10 October 2003), E. Izzidien, Executive Member and Campaigns Officer of the Federation of Student Islamic Societies, also noted that university examinations continue to be scheduled on Muslim festivals. The claim was also supported by several responses to this report from correspondents at the Avenue School, London (J. Fernandez *et al.,* 22 January 2004). For examples of teacher insensitivity to Muslim dietary and dress requirements, see: The Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia: a challenge to us all,* Runnymede Trust, London, 1997, p. 43.

[55] This point was raised more than once at the OSI roundtable meeting.

[56] Written response to this report from R. Crawley, European Institute of Human Sciences, 24 March 2004.

[57] Written responses to this report from B. Mustafa, Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, 16 October 2003; and H. Haleem, formerly of the IQRA Trust, 2 October 2003. See also: J. Eade and F. Zaman, *Routes and Beyond: Voices from Educationally Successful Bangladeshis,* Centre for Bangladeshi Studies, London, 1993, pp. 18–20; and T. Basit, *Eastern Values, Western Milieu: Identities and Aspirations of Adolescent British Muslim Girls,* Ashgate, Aldershot, 1997, pp. 114–164.

and Bangladeshi origin are recorded as having special educational needs, compared to White, Indian and Chinese pupils.[58] Other anxieties of Muslim parents include the continuing poor levels of achievement by Muslim children; the failure of schools to eradicate racist and Islamophobic discrimination, prejudice and bullying; the inadequacy of the spiritual and moral guidance which the schools provide; and the lack of support for their children's Islamic identity. All of these issues are discussed more fully later in this chapter.

Church schools

Church schools are the second largest provider of education for Muslim children, though again, precise figures are not available. Where they have the choice, many Muslim parents choose to send their children to Christian or other faith schools, whether voluntary-aided or voluntary controlled,[59] instead of choosing the more secular community schools.[60] In some cases, the reason is simply that there are more single-sex schools available in the church school sector, and many Muslim parents favour such provision. In other cases, it may be because a school with a religious ethos, even a non-Muslim one, is considered preferable, so long as no attempt is made to convert the children. It may also be because Christian schools often have a good academic reputation, and because the moral guidance they provide is rooted in religion.[61]

Catholic schools rarely admit more than ten per cent of Muslim children,[62] but Church of England schools, especially voluntary-controlled schools, which see it as their role to serve the local community, often place no limits on admissions. It is not

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[58] Bhattacharyya et al, *Minority Ethnic Attainment,* pp. 17–18.

[59] For the main differences between these two kinds of State-funded faith school, see Appendix 1.

[60] About one third of all State-funded schools in England are faith schools, the vast majority of them Christian (mainly Church of England and Catholic), and they serve about 22 per cent of the school-age population. Muslims occasionally send their children to non-Christian faith schools; for example, there is one Jewish school in London where 50 per cent of the pupils are Muslim.

[61] Hawe, *Muslim Girls' Schools,* p. 68.

[62] Catholic schools are committed to nurturing the faith of Catholic children, but also, where appropriate, to serving the needs of the local community. Many Catholic schools in England and Wales have an upper limit for admissions of 10 or 15 per cent of non-Catholic children, and often priority within this percentage is given to parents seeking a specifically Christian upbringing for their children. See: Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, *Catholic schools and Other Faiths: a consultation paper,* Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, London, 1997.

unknown for inner-city Church of England schools to be majority Muslim.[63] In recommending an expansion in the numbers of secondary Church of England schools, the *Dearing Report* envisaged that these would be inclusive schools, catering for pupils from all faiths and no faith.[64]

Some Muslim parents may be anxious that, even though no overt attempts are made at proselytising, the hidden assumptions of the truth of Christianity that underpin the school's activities may influence their children.[65] However, there is no available research that explores the experiences of Muslim children in church schools or examines the effects, if any, on their beliefs, values and developing identity.

Single-sex schooling

According to a report by the IQRA Trust, the majority of Muslim parents support single-sex schooling for their daughters after puberty. There is some evidence that Muslim girls go along with parental support for single-sex schools: They talk of a "sense of sisterhood" and claim there are "fewer distractions".[66] Reports from Muslim head teachers and others also suggest that girls often get a better education in a single-sex context.[67]

Outside the Muslim community, there is growing evidence that mixed schools have not lived up to their promise of equal educational benefits for boys and girls.[68] The boys tend to dominate classroom interaction and compete more successfully for

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[63] Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, *Faith Schools and Cultural Diversity: Consultation Document,* Education and Lifelong Learning Department, Blackburn, 2001, (hereafter, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, *Faith Schools*). See also: R. S. Weston, "Food for Thought: Four Issues Confronting a School Governor in a Multicultural Area", in *Viewpoints,* 8, Spring 2001, (hereafter, Weston, *Food for Thought*).

[64] Church Schools Review Group, *The Way Ahead: Church of England Schools in the New Millennium (The Dearing Report),* Church House Publishing, London, 2001.

[65] J. M. Halstead, "Muslim Perspectives on the Teaching of Christianity in British Schools", in *British Journal of Religious Education,* 15, 1, Autumn 1992, pp. 43–54.

[66] Interview with Muslim pupils C, D and E of Belle Vue Girls School, Bradford, 26 March 1999. Hashmi, on the other hand, found that only a few of the Muslim children she interviewed thought segregating the sexes important. See: N. Hashmi, *A Muslim School,* pp. 30–31. It is likely that the nature of the group consulted (in particular, whether or not they attended single-sex schools themselves) influenced the outcome of the consultations.

[67] R. W. Maqsood, "The Education of Muslim Women", in *Issues in Islamic Education,* Muslim Educational Trust, London, 1996, pp. 79–82; N. Mirza, "Educational Opportunities for Muslim Girls in Britain", in *Issues in Islamic Education,* Muslim Educational Trust, London, 1996, pp. 91–94.

[68] A. Burgess, "Co-education – the Disadvantages for Schoolgirls", in *Gender and Education,* 2, 1, pp. 91–95.

teachers' time and attention, with the result that girls' potential may not be fully developed. There are fewer women in authority to serve as role models for the girls. Boys thrive both academically and socially in a mixed school environment, while girls do not. There are also greater opportunities for boys to harass girls verbally and physically in mixed schools. Muslim parents are increasingly using these arguments to support their preference for single-sex schooling.[69]

State-maintained Muslim schools

Only five Muslim schools are currently in receipt of State funding. This compares to 4,716 State-funded Church of England schools; 2,110 Catholic; 32 Jewish; 28 Methodist; one Seventh Day Adventist; one Sikh; one Greek Orthodox; and a number of joint-faith schools, mainly Anglican-Methodist.[70] Less than half of one per cent of British Muslim children are educated in such schools, but their existence is of great symbolic value in the eyes of many Muslims, as a recognition that the Muslim community has the right in practice as well as in law to establish such schools. Two of these schools are secondary schools (Al-Hijrah VA School, Birmingham, and Feversham College, Bradford), and the other three are primary (Al-Furqan VA School, Birmingham; Islamia VA School in Brent, London;[71] and Gatton VA Primary school in Wandsworth, south-west London, which joined the State sector in September 2004).[72] Plans have recently been approved for a sixth State-funded Muslim school, in Leicester.

State-funded Muslim schools are required to teach the National Curriculum, but they are free to teach their own syllabus for religious education. In addition, they have a Muslim ethos and Muslim assemblies, and their teachers can provide a role model of belief and practice for Muslim pupils. Forty-eight per cent of Muslims support faith

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[69] Halstead, *Radical Feminism.*

[70] J. M. Halstead, "Faith and Diversity in Religious School Provision", in L. Gearon (ed.), *Education in the United Kingdom: Structures and Organisation,* David Fulton, London, 2002, pp. 146–157.

[71] N. Darr (ed.), *Muslim Directory,* London, MDUK Media Ltd, 2003, pp. 144–160, (hereafter, Darr *Muslim Directory*). There have been many more unsuccessful than successful applications for State funding for Muslim schools so far, and both Islamia School and Feversham College tried several times over a period of more than ten years before gaining funding. Islamia School, for example, which was founded in 1983, first applied for funding in 1986, moved to new premises in 1991, applied twice more, was eventually given grant-maintained status in 1998 and became a voluntary-aided school in 1999.

[72] J. Darby, "SW London – Muslim Schools", available on the Families Online website at http://www.familiesonline.co.uk/topics/schooling/schools_sw_muslim.htm (accessed 2 November 2004), (hereafter, Darby, *SW London – Muslim Schools*).

schools within the State sector,[73] and all the Muslim voluntary-aided schools have long waiting lists. There are eight new applications for State funding currently under consideration by LEAs, for existing or new Muslim schools, and more are in the early stages of planning. The preparation of such applications is becoming much more sophisticated, particularly as applicants seek to meet new legal standards.[74] In some cases, sponsors are commissioning detailed research reports, to set out the case for such schools.[75]

In 2001, the Government committed itself in principle, in the White Paper *Schools Achieving Success,* to an expansion of the number of State-funded faith schools.[76] Many Muslims support the idea that independent Muslim schools should be incorporated into the LEA community of schools, either as voluntary-aided schools or as city academies.[77] Increasing the number of Muslim schools within the State sector would increase the choice of options available to Muslim parents, ensure equality of treatment for major religions and raise the quality of provision at the schools. For some, this may be seen as a point of principle and equity, even if they do not choose the option for their own children.[78] However, if Muslim schools are to be integrated as far as possible into the mainstream, some form of second-tier capacity-building funding will clearly be needed, to provide necessary support and expertise, both for staff training and development and for improving provision of resources.[79]

Independent Muslim schools

Currently, there are well over 100 independent Muslim schools in the UK, including one in Scotland and two in Wales, but none so far in Northern Ireland.[80] There is considerable diversity in terms of size, curriculum, teaching staff, educational

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[73] T. Modood, *Ethnic Minorities,* p. 325.

[74] Education Act (2002) s. 157 and The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003, SI 1910.

[75] See, for example, N. Hashmi, *A Muslim School.*

[76] Department for Education and Employment, *Schools Achieving Success (Cm. 5230),* London, HMSO, 2001, para. 5.30. The arguments for and against Muslim schools form part of a wider debate about the purpose and funding of faith schools in the UK and are discussed below.

[77] City academies are technically independent of the Local education Authority (LEA), but they can be developed in partnership with the LEA; play a part in LEA activities; and buy into LEA services and initiatives.

[78] This point was made at the OSI roundtable meeting, London, 2 December 2003.

[79] AMSS, *Muslims on Education,* pp. 9, 20.

[80] The figure of 120 schools is given in Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia: issues, challenges and action,* Trentham Books, Stoke-on-Trent, 2004, p. 49.

philosophy and religious affiliation. For example, about a dozen of the schools are Darul Uloom institutions. These schools combine traditional Islamic religious education, based on models from the Indian sub-continent, with some mainstream English National Curriculum subjects. They are designed primarily to provide formal training for imams and teachers in Islamic institutions. Most of the Muslim schools, however, seek to prepare children for life and work in broader British society, while at the same time nurturing their Islamic faith.

Most independent Muslim schools are quite small, averaging about 150 pupils, which means that only about three per cent of Muslim pupils currently attend Muslim schools.[81] The number of schools is unstable, as there is a steady number of closures, usually because of a lack of financial viability. However, the general trend is upward, and the number has increased three-fold over the last ten years. They are funded privately, through the support of local mosques, other private funding and the fees paid by parents – which may vary from £100 to £4,200 (€143 to €6,000) per year. They are not required to follow the National Curriculum, though they typically do so in some subjects. Other subjects, such as history or art, may be given an Islamic flavour. A significant percentage of time may also be devoted to Islamic Studies and Arabic, and sometimes Urdu, for pupils of Pakistani origin.[82]

In the past, private Muslim schools have received critical reports from the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), particularly because of poor buildings, inadequate resources, the failure to meet good health and safety standards, inexperienced management, unqualified teachers and the low level of general education that they provide.[83] They have also been criticised for a failure to provide opportunities for their

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[81] Iftikhar Ahmad, of the London School of Islamics, suggests that the average enrolment is 100 pupils, which would mean that only two per cent of British Muslim pupils attend Muslim schools. See: "Muslim Community Schools", *Local Government Chronicle,* 13 December 2002, available on the LGC website at http://www.lgcnet.com/pages/discuss/view.asp?ArticleID=273 (accessed on 2 November).

[82] J. M. Halstead, "Educating Muslim Minorities: some Western European Approaches", in W. Tulasiewicz and C-Y. To (eds.) *World Religions and Educational Practice,* Cassell, London, 1993, p. 169, (hereafter, Halstead, *Educating Muslim Minorities*).

[83] One of the most recent to receive a highly critical report from the HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) was Iqra Academy in Glasgow, which was inspected in February 2003 and has since closed. See: HM Inspectorate of Education, *Registration Inspection of IQRA Academy, Glasgow, 26 March 2003,* available on the HMIE website at http://www.hmie.gov.uk/institute.asp?ins=9047&typ=3 (accessed 2 November 2004). An even more recent highly critical report was received by Scotland's last remaining Muslim school, the Imam Mohammad Zakariya school, in Dundee, on April 2004. It was given six months to improve or face closure. See: *The Muslim News,* 17 October 2004. See also I. Hewitt, "Every Cloud Has a Silver Lining", *The Muslim News,* 26 September 1997.

students to mix with students from other faiths and backgrounds, an activity that is considered important for young Muslims to develop cross-cultural understanding and a broader view of British society.[84] However, the academic results of Muslim schools are improving (see section 5.3 below).

In spite of improving standards in Muslim independent schools and the growing support for them, recent legislation has led to fears within the Muslim community that many may be forced to close.[85] Previously, independent Muslim schools were able to obtain "provisional registration", which permitted them to open as educational establishments and gave them time to develop their resources and provision before applying for full registration. However, the new legislation now requires all new independent Muslim schools, like other independent schools, to apply to the Department for Education and Skills for registration, and the category of "provisional registration" is no longer valid. Such schools are required by the Education Act (2002) to meet the standards set out in the regulations[86] before they are allowed to open, and they must be inspected on a regular cycle.[87]

Existing schools have until September 2005 to meet the standards, and failure to do so may result in closure. The standards are very exacting, and in many respects are not different from the conditions that have to be met before voluntary-aided status can be granted. It is therefore likely that few existing schools will be able to meet these standards without considerable expenditure, the provision of additional resources and much expert advice and support.[88] The legislation is likely to have a disproportionately adverse affect on independent Muslim schools compared to other independent schools, perhaps mainly for socio-economic reasons. Opinion is divided within Muslim communities, between those who see the legislation as oppressive of parental freedom to educate their children in line with their own beliefs and values and those who see the

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[84] Written responses to this report from Mrs Abdul Kader and Noshiena Khan of the Avenue School, London, 5 October 2003.

[85] This point was made more than once at the OSI roundtable discussion, London, 2 December 2003.

[86] The Standards for Registration cover: the quality of education provided by the school; the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils; the welfare, health and safety of the pupils; the suitability of proprietor and staff; the school's premises and accommodation; the provision of information; and the procedures for handling complaints. Full details are given in The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations (2003) Statutory Instrument No. 1910.

[87] The detailed regulations for inspection are contained in: OFSTED, *Inspecting Independent Schools: the Framework for Inspecting Independent Schools in England under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002. In use from September 2003,* Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, London, 2003.

[88] This point was made at the OSI roundtable meeting, London, 2 December 2003.

legislation as improving standards in the independent Muslim schools that survive. By March 2004, only two Muslim independent schools in England had been inspected under the new system,[89] and neither fully met the required standards. Several further inspections are planned before the end of 2004.[90]

The debate about Muslim Schools

The growing number of case studies of Muslim schools[91] has helped to dispel some prevalent myths about them. These include the belief that they do not teach girls adequately, that they do not make any attempts to prepare children for citizenship in a multicultural society and that they do not teach children about other cultures or religions. However, the most important issue still remains the question of principle: should Muslims be free to establish their own schools whenever and wherever they choose to do so? Of course, Muslims' legal right to do so, subject to certain conditions, is enshrined in the 1944 Education Act. But unless decision-makers are convinced that such schools serve the interests of Muslim children and do not conflict with the interests of the broader society, they will never be whole-heartedly supported. This is one of the most controversial issues in contemporary educational policy, and it has generated a great deal of debate.

Some of the arguments about Muslim schools are the same as those about faith schools generally,[92] with opposition coming from academics and organisations like the

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[89] These are Al-Hijrah (Primary) School, Birmingham (inspected 19-23 January, 2004) and the School of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Manchester (inspected 15-18 March 2004).

[90] All OFSTED inspection reports are available at the OFSTED website at http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports (accessed 2 November 2004).

[91] See, for example: T. Kücükan, "Community, Identity and Institutionalisation of Islamic Education: the Case of Ikra Primary School in North London," *British Journal of Religious Education,* 2, 1 (Autumn, 1998), pp. 32–43. See also: M. Haque, "Muslim Education in Britain: the King Fahd Academy, London", *Muslim Education Quarterly,* 17, 2, Winter 2000, pp. 69–72; and Y. Sasano, *The Creation of British Muslim Identity in the Islamic Schools of London,* unpublished MPhil thesis, Hitotsubashi University, Japan, 2003.

[92] Commission for Racial Equality, *Schools of Faith,* CRE, London, 1990; J. De Jong and G. Snik, "Why Should States Fund Denominational Schools?", *Journal of Philosophy of Education,* 36, 4, 2002, pp. 573–587; G. Grace, *Catholic Schools: Missions, Markets and Morality,* RoutledgeFalmer, London, 2002; F. Harris, "Do We Really Want More Faith School?", *Education Review,* 15, 1, 2002, pp. 32–36; R. Jackson, "Should the State Fund Faith-Based Schools? A Review of the Arguments", *British Journal of Religious Education,* 25, 2, 2003, pp. 89–102.

National Secular Society;[93] but others refer to specifically Muslim issues.[94] The debate may be approached differently by Muslims and non-Muslims.[95] Some of the arguments apply to all Muslim schools, whether independent or State-funded, while others refer only to the issue of State-funding. The arguments need to be distinguished carefully, since the debate about Muslim schools is characterised currently by much talking at cross purposes.

Leaving aside those who have tried, without justification, to link the issue of British Muslim schools with the events of September 11,[96] there are four main arguments against the establishment of Muslim schools.

First, it is claimed that they are socially and ethnically divisive, because they are not inclusive schools that serve the wider community. Even if they are willing in principle to accept non-Muslim pupils, this does not happen in practice. The effect is to isolate Muslims from the broader society and to hinder attempts at integration.[97] They may also affect the viability of other local schools.[98]

The second argument is that the processes of religious nurture and those of education are conceptually different. On the basis of this argument, some express concerns that efforts to nurture faith may lead, intentionally or otherwise, to indoctrination, with insufficient attention being paid to the development of critical judgement and

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[93] The National Secular Society runs an extensive website on faith schools which, notwithstanding its principled opposition, contains much useful information; see: http://www.secularism.org.uk/ (accessed 2 November 2004). See also: Humanist Philosophers Group, *Religious Schools: the Case Against,* British Humanist Association, London, 2001, (hereafter, Humanist Philosophers Group, *Religious Schools: the Case Against*).

[94] C. Hewer, "Schools for Muslims", *Oxford Review of Education,* 27, 4 (December 2001), pp. 515–527, (hereafter, Hewer, *Schools for Muslims*).

[95] I. Hewitt, "The Case for Muslim Schools", in The Muslim Educational Trust, *Issues in Islamic Education,* MET, London, 1996, pp. 72–78 (hereafter, Hewitt, *Muslim Schools*); J. M. Halstead, *The Case for Muslim Voluntary-Aided Schools: some philosophical reflections,* Islamic Academy, Cambridge, 1986 (hereafter, Halstead, *The Case for Muslim Voluntary-Aided Schools*).

[96] H. Judge, "Faith-based Schools and State Funding: a partial argument", *Oxford Review of Education,* 27, 4 (December 2001), pp. 472–473. See also F. Beckett, "Holier Than Thou", *The Guardian,* 13 November 2001; and K. Sellgren, "Warning about 'Bin Laden Schools'", *BBC News Online,* 26 March 2002, at http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/education/newsid_1893000 (accessed 25 October 2004).

[97] P. Toynbee, "Keep God out of Class", *The Guardian,* 9 November 2001.

[98] Interview with representatives of the Faith Schools Scrutiny Review Panel, Oxfordshire County Council, 22 October 2003.

openness to new ideas.[99] Muslim schools may teach ideas that are controversial or lack scientific credibility, such as creationism, as if they are truths.[100] There is no justification for spending public funds to support the maintenance of religious belief in schools – indeed it is a violation of conscience for those whose taxes fund faith schools against their will.[101] It should not be the role of a State-funded school to nurture any particular religious faith.[102]

The third argument is that Muslim schools may fail to prepare children adequately for democratic citizenship in a multicultural society, or indeed to prepare them at all for British citizenship.[103] They may also pay inadequate attention to the need for pupils to develop tolerance, respect and understanding of other faiths, for the most effective way for children to learn tolerance and cross-cultural understanding is to be educated alongside those of other religious and cultural backgrounds.[104]

Finally, it is claimed that Muslim schools may be inadequate in comparison with community schools, with respect to the development of personal autonomy.[105] They do not respect children's right to an open future, and restrict children's freedom to escape the constraints of their own cultural background.[106]

On the other side, there are four main arguments *in support of* the establishment of Muslim schools.

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[99] Humanist Philosophers Group, *Religious Schools: the Case Against.*

[100] Hewer, *Schools for Muslims,* p. 522. See also: S. A. Mabud, "Aims and Objectives of an Integrated Science Curriculum for a Multi-faith, Multicultural Country", in *Muslim Education Quarterly,* 9, 4 (1992), pp. 14–24.

[101] L.S. Underkuffler, "Public Funding for Religious Schools: difficulties and dangers in a pluralistic society", *Oxford Review of Education,* 27, 4 (December 2001), pp. 577–592.

[102] cf. R. Pring, "Faith Schools: Can They Be Justified?", in J. Cairns and R. Gardner (Eds.) *Faith Schools: Conflict or Consensus?* Kogan Page, London, 2004 (hereafter, R. Pring, "Faith Schools").

[103] W. Kymlicka, "Education for Citizenship", in J. M. Halstead and T. H. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Education in Morality,* Routledge, London, 1999 (hereafter, W. Kymlicka, "Education for Citizenship"), pp. 88–90.

[104] F. Beckett, "We Should Abolish Faith Schools – they breed only intolerance and isolation", *Guardian Education,* 14 October 2003, p. 5; W. Kymlicka, "Education for Citizenship", pp. 88–90.

[105] cf. R. Pring, "Faith Schools".

[106] M. Mason, "Religion and Schools: a Human Rights-based Approach", *British Journal of Religious Education,* 25, 2 (Spring 2003), pp. 117–128.

First, they increase parental choice and enable Muslim parents to choose a school whose values are consistent with the home.[107] They demonstrate equity for Muslims in relation to other faith groups that already have their own State-funded schools.[108] They demonstrate equality of respect and recognition for Islam as a minority faith in the UK, which Muslims see as a prerequisite for greater integration.[109]

Second, from a Muslim perspective, they nurture faith – for example, by teaching religious education and other subjects, including art, sex education and history, from an Islamic point of view and by providing a school ethos that is supportive of faith – and thus provide a bulwark against the growth of secularism, materialism and relativism.[110] They remove barriers to Muslim religious observance that may be found in other schools, including: the lack of prayer facilities; the lack of *halal* food for school meals; problems of clothing and sportswear; inadequate facilities for Muslim requirements on hygiene and cleanliness; and the failure to celebrate Muslim festivals. They provide an appropriate spiritual environment in which clear moral teaching is possible, and thus avoid the problem found in community schools that Muslim children are exposed to moral values that conflict with their own faith.

Third, they provide an education which is in accordance with Muslim beliefs and values, such as providing single-sex schooling after puberty. They are thus a response to the danger of absorption into the dominant culture.[111] Single-faith schools are "a truer reflection of a multi-faith society than multi-faith schools",[112] in that the latter encourage all children to celebrate festivals from different faiths, whereas, in the real world, they will celebrate only those of their own faith.

Fourth, they provide an environment secure from Islamophobic bullying and other issues that cause Muslim children stress in community schools. They produce high academic results (see section 5.3 below). They solve the problem found in some community schools of unsympathetic treatment and low aspirations of, and expectations for, Muslim pupils. They help Muslim children to develop and retain

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[107] Halstead, *Muslim Voluntary-Aided Schools.*

[108] S. A. Mabud, "Editorial: Can Muslim Faith Schools Be Divisive? *Muslim Education Quarterly,* 19, 2 (2002), pp. 1–3.

[109] J. M. Halstead and T. H. McLaughlin, "Are Faith Schools Divisive?", in J. Cairns and R. Gardner (Eds.) *Faith Schools: Conflict or Consensus?* Kogan Page, London, 2004, (hereafter, J. M. Halstead and T. H. McLaughlin, "Are Faith Schools Divisive?").

[110] Hawe, *Muslim Girls' Schools,* pp. 66–67; M. Somerville, "Faith Schools", in *Catholic Post,* 77, October 2001, p. 10.

[111] J. M. Halstead, "Towards a Unified View of Islamic Education", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations,* 6, 1 (June 1995), pp. 25–43.

[112] Hewitt, *Muslim Schools,* p. 75.

their Muslim identity, and it is only if Muslim children have a strong self-concept and sense of identity that they will be able to develop respect and tolerance for others and play a worthwhile role in an increasingly multicultural society.[113] They encourage the self-esteem of Muslim pupils by increasing awareness of Muslim contributions to knowledge in fields such as mathematics, medicine, science, geography and astronomy.[114]

It is clear that some of the arguments in support of Muslim schools effectively counter the arguments against – especially, for example, the points about divisiveness and intolerance.[115] Others, however, simply draw attention to the diversity of views about education in British society, including the existence of different views about the relationship between religion and education and about the role of the teacher as moral exemplar. Some of the things that Muslim schools successfully do could certainly be done by non-Muslim schools with appropriate policies. For example, non-Muslim schools could pay more attention to Muslim contributions to knowledge, could counter Islamophobic bullying in school more effectively, could support Muslim pupils' religious observances and could avoid low expectations of Muslim pupils. On the other hand, it would be very hard for non-Muslim schools to present values that are fully consistent with those of a Muslim home or to provide a bulwark against secularism and loss of faith. As noted above, different parents have different priorities, and their needs can only be met through a range of options.

5.2   Supplementary Schools

In addition to compulsory education, parents and community groups are free to provide any other schooling or education they feel is necessary to meet the needs of their children. The organisations or institutions that provide these are generally referred to as "supplementary schools". There are several different kinds of supplementary schooling available to Muslim children,[116] and these are often, but by no means always, provided in local mosques. The main kinds are: classes in the faith and practice of Islam; mother-tongue classes, especially in Urdu or Bengali, which are not necessarily Islamic in character; and classes run by mosques or community groups to help Muslim children with their homework or with basic skills. In addition, some organisations run what is effectively a kind of youth club; in Bristol, for example, the Muslim Cultural Society organises leisure activities on Saturday evenings.

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[113] Hawe, *Muslim Girls' Schools,* p. 67.

[114] Hewer, *Schools for Muslims,* pp. 523–525.

[115] J. M. Halstead and T. H. McLaughlin, "Are Faith Schools Divisive?".

[116] AMSS, *Muslims on Education,* pp. 35–36.

The dominant pattern that has emerged in Britain for many Muslim children is to attend community or church primary schools in the daytime and also attend mosque or other Islamic schools for up to two hours every evening, to learn about their religion. This pattern has come about as a pragmatic response by Muslim parents and community leaders to the perceived gaps in State-funded education. Little research has been carried out into Muslim supplementary schools, and such information as is available draws on local experiences rather than providing a national overview. While many such supplementary schools are held in mosques, others are held in community centres, church halls, school halls hired for use outside of school hours, or private homes. Attendance figures are rarely available, and it is impossible to state with confidence what percentage of Muslim children attend supplementary schools. There appears to be considerable variation between districts and, to some extent, between different ethnic groups.[117] However, it is clear that many mosques and other Muslim organisations are very active in teaching children the principal beliefs and practices of Islam. In Bradford, for example, there are 63 Muslim supplementary schools registered with the LEA,[118] and in Bristol the Taleem-ul-Islam Trust organises religious lessons on Sunday mornings, with an attendance of about 400 boys and girls.[119]

Children typically receive supplementary schooling in Islam, from the age of four or five to the age of 13 or 14, although girls may stop attending earlier. They learn Arabic for the purposes of Qur'anic recitation, and they also study the principal beliefs of Islam and the basic requirements of the *Shari'a*.[120] Those who wish to memorise the whole Qur'an and become a *hafiz* may attend mosque in the morning as well.[121] It is worth noting that children do not learn Arabic as a modern language, although their study in the mosque might be useful preparation for doing so if the subject were to be offered at their regular school.

There are a number of reasons why this dominant pattern of education has, over many years, created problems and challenges for Muslim children in the UK.

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[117] One source claims a 90 per cent attendance, but this is almost certainly an over-estimate; see J. Darby, *SW London – Muslim Schools.*

[118] Bradford District Race Review Team, *Community Pride, not Prejudice,* Bradford Vision, Bradford, 2001 (hereafter, *The Ouseley Report*), p. 44.

[119] N. Hashmi, *A Muslim School,* p. 21.

[120] C. W. North, *Islam in Schools and Madrasahs: a Field Study in Sparkbrook, Sparkhill and Part of Small Heath in Birmingham, 1983-85,* Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1986.

[121] Redbridge Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education, *Briefing Paper 4: Muslim Madrasahs in Redbridge,* London Borough of Redbridge, 2003 (hereafter, Redbridge, *Muslim Madrasahs*).

First, the system continues to expose Muslim children to secular and un-Islamic values for most of their school day,[122] values which may be strongly criticised within the mosque. This exposure to diverse and incompatible values may create tensions in Muslim children, particularly in relation to their civic identity and loyalties.

Second, the additional demands the system places on Muslim children in terms of both time and effort have proven unacceptable to some Muslim parents, and this is another reason why a growing number of parents are coming to support the principle of separate Muslim schooling.[123]

Third, the quality of education provided in mosque or other Islamic schools has often been considered significantly inferior to that of community or church schools. The premises and resources are often inadequate, the teachers often unqualified and the methods, which include rote-learning and strict discipline, are often out of tune with contemporary educational thinking and practice.[124] As awareness of these problems increases, many Muslim groups are trying to improve the quality of provision, sometimes with the support of the LEAs. For example, in Redbridge, Greater London, members of the local Child Protection Scheme have worked with the leaders of the mosque schools, and a joint working group has been set up with the local education authority and mosque schools.[125] Other local authorities, including Birmingham, Manchester, Leicester and Watford, are offering training to teachers from mosque and other Islamic schools and encouraging links between supplementary schools and mainstream schools.[126]

Within mosque schools, teaching is often provided by local imams, who may be unfamiliar with current educational thinking and who may actually have received their training in *madrasahs* on the Indian subcontinent, or in other cultural contexts outside the UK. The need for imams who are trained in the UK, and are able to communicate and interact with young British Muslims, has become a prominent issue.[127] There are institutions in the UK that are seeking to cater for the training of imams, including: the Muslim College in Ealing, which offers a Diploma in Islamic Studies as well as a Masters degree for imams (validated by Birkbeck College, London); and the Markfield Institute of Higher Education in Leicestershire, linked to the Islamic Foundation,

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[122] Halstead, *Muslim Voluntary-Aided Schools,* p. 15.

[123] Halstead, *Educating Muslim Minorities,* p. 171.

[124] Halstead, *Educating Muslim Minorities,* pp. 169–171; M. I. Coles *Education and Islam: a new strategic approach,* School Development Support Agency, Leicester, 2004, pp. 17–18 (hereafter, Coles *Education and Islam*).

[125] Redbridge, *Muslim Madrasahs.*

[126] Coles, *Education and Islam,* p. 18.

[127] J. Klausen, "Is There an Imam Problem?", *Prospect,* May 2004.

which offers MA, MPhil and PhD degrees in Islamic Studies (validated by the University of Loughborough) and the Certificate of Muslim Chaplaincy Training.[128] The Home Office currently has plans to not allow the recruitment of imams outside the UK unless they have a high-level qualification in English. This is likely to reduce recruitment drastically, because English is not part of the *madrasah* curriculum. Therefore, the demand for British diplomas and degrees for imams is likely to increase substantially over the next few years.

5.3   The Academic Achievements of Muslims

Of all ethnic minorities in the UK, people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin are the most likely to have no academic qualifications. Almost half of all Bangladeshi men and women, 27 per cent of Pakistani men and 40 per cent of Pakistani women do not have academic qualifications.[129] Low parental education levels, along with parental occupation, have been identified as key factors related to low achievement levels among Pakistani and Bangladeshi children.[130]

In 2000, only 30 per cent of the children of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin in England and Wales gained five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, compared to 50 per cent in the population as a whole. This made them the lowest achieving of all ethnic groups. The same level was achieved by 37 per cent of African Caribbean children, 62 per cent of Indian children and 70 per cent of "other Asian" (mainly Chinese) children.[131] By 2002, the success rate had risen to 40 per cent for Pakistani children and 45 per cent for Bangladeshi children, compared to about 51 per cent for the general population.[132] Yet these percentages mask a number of important points:

First, as in other communities, there are important and increasing differences in the achievement levels of boys and girls. The figures for Birmingham in 2003 illustrate the national trend: some 37 per cent of Pakistani boys achieved five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C, compared to 50 per cent of Pakistani girls; and 43 per cent of Bangladeshi boys achieved the same level, compared to 58 per cent of Bangladeshi

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[128] M. Haque, "Review of the Progress of Islamic Education", in *Muslim Education Quarterly,* 19, 4 2002, pp. 68–69.

[129] A. White, *Ethnicity 2002,* Office for National Statistics, London, available on the ONS website at http://www.statistics.gov.uk.

[130] M. Anwar, *British Pakistanis: Demographic, Economic and Social Position,* Coventry, CRER, 1996, pp. 47–48.

[131] *The Guardian, Muslim Britain,* p. 2.

[132] Bhattacharyya et al, *Minority Ethnic Attainment,* p. 12.

girls.[133] The Bangladeshi girls actually exceeded the average for White girls in Birmingham. However, what these figures highlight most clearly is the problem of the sense of alienation felt by many young male Muslims at school. Further evidence of this alienation and disaffection is found in a report commissioned by the IQRA Trust in 2000.[134] Evidence is also provided in the Runnymede Trust's *Parekh Report,* which identifies a worrying increase in exclusions of Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Somali boys in some LEAs and schools and recommends urgent steps to reduce such exclusions.[135] Among the report's recommendations are that schools should become more Muslim-friendly, and that the choice of schools available for Muslims should be increased, to better address the needs of this group and thereby improve their academic achievement.

Second, research findings support the view that there is a strong correlation between low academic achievement and the social factors mentioned in section three above, particularly: high levels of poverty, ghettoisation and residence in deprived neighbourhoods, parental unemployment and parental employment in unskilled or semiskilled jobs.[136] However, it has been suggested that, although Bangladeshis and Pakistanis continue to have a low level of achievement compared to national averages, when compared to their non-Muslim counterparts with the same socio-economic background, they are doing better than expected.[137] Free school meals provide a useful register of comparative social disadvantage. Unsurprisingly, pupils eligible for free school meals achieve considerably lower average grades than those who are not eligible, whether Muslim or not. Levels of eligibility for free school meals within Muslim communities are among the highest in the country.[138] It is also worth noting that,

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[133] National Literacy Trust, "Ethnic Minority Achievement", available on the National Literacy Trust website at http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Database/stats (accessed 2 November 2004). See also: W. Berliner, "Gifted but Black", *Education Guardian,* 14 October 2003, p. 2.

[134] D. Pye, B. Lee and S. Bhabra, *Disaffection amongst Muslim Pupils. Exclusion and Truancy,* IQRA Trust, London, 2000.

[135] The Runnymede Trust, *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, under the Chairmanship of Bhikhu Parekh,* Profile Books, London, 2000, p. 152, (hereafter, *The Parekh Report*).

[136] National Literacy Trust, "Poverty Statistics: the link between poverty and literacy", available on the National Literacy Trust website at http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Database/stats (accessed 2 November 2004)

[137] Z. Haque, *British Muslims and Education,* paper presented at a seminar for the British Muslim Centre, September, 2003, p. 2, (hereafter, Haque, *British Muslims and Education*).

[138] Thirty-five per cent of Pakistani children and 50 per cent of Bangladeshi children are eligible for free school meals (See: Bhattacharyya et al, *Minority Ethnic Attainment,* p. 9). Within Muslim voluntary-aided schools, over 30 per cent of the children are eligible for free school meals – a significantly higher proportion than for the voluntary schools of any other faith. See: G. Hinsliff, 'Single Faith Schools Target Well-off', *The Observer,* 18 November 2001).

although children of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin are over-represented among 16-year-olds with the poorest qualifications, they are also well represented proportionately in terms of entry to university.[139] This suggests that, where social and economic factors are not overwhelming, there are high levels of educational ambition among such students.

Third, there is a wide range of other factors that may, either singly or in combination, contribute to low achievement levels. Social class and levels of fluency in English are key issues linked to attainment, as are more nebulous factors, like parents' expectations, peer group pressure, individual motivation and school effectiveness.[140] However, numerous other factors that are more directly linked to religion may also contribute to Muslim children's levels of underachievement. These include: religious discrimination; Islamophobia; the lack of Muslim role models in schools; low expectations on the part of teachers; time spent in mosque schools; the lack of recognition of the British Muslim identity of the students; and the disaffection and disorientation resulting from the incompatibility of the values of the school and the home. These factors have been almost entirely neglected in the literature on achievement levels. OFSTED could play a bigger part in identifying and dealing with specific Muslim issues – which are distinct from more general "Asian" or minority ethnic issues – and thereby help to raise the achievement levels of Muslim pupils, but this may require more training for registered inspectors, especially on Islamophobia and issues of British Muslim identity.

Fourth, there are significant regional differences in the achievement levels of Muslim pupils. Again, this may be linked to the high levels of social deprivation in some regions. High concentrations of Muslims are found in the lowest ranking LEAs, and the poorest performing educational authorities are usually in the most deprived areas. For example, the most recent OFSTED inspection of Bradford LEA, in 2002, found its overall performance to be "currently unsatisfactory".[141] OFSTED is required, among other things, to assess LEA Educational Development Plans, which will include strategies for raising the achievement levels of under-achieving groups, but the current practice of identifying Muslim pupils by ethnic origin rather than by religious affiliation impedes the identification of the specifically religious factors mentioned above that may affect levels of achievement.

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[139] *The Parekh Report,* p. 146; D. Owen, A. Green, J. Pitcher and M. Maguire, *Minority Ethnic Participation and Achievements in Education, Training and the Labour Market,* HMSO, London, 2000.

[140] See: Haque, *British Muslims and Education,* p. 3; and Bhattacharyya et al, *Minority Ethnic Attainment,* pp. 21–22.

[141] OFSTED, *Inspection of Bradford,* p. 5.

The academic achievements of pupils at Muslim schools – as opposed to those in community, foundation or church schools – vary considerably, but the best compare very favourably with non-Muslim schools. For example, in 2001, Islamia Primary School in Brent came third out of 51 schools in the district in Key Stage 2 SATs results, on one measure, and first out of 51, on an adjusted measure.[142] In the 2002 GCSE results, 100 per cent of the pupils entered at al-Furqan Community College in Birmingham, Leicester Islamic Academy, Madani School in Tower Hamlets, Tayyibah School in Hackney and Brondesbury College in Brent achieved 5 or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C, though the numbers entered were in some cases quite small. The rate at Feversham College was 53 per cent, slightly above the national average, and well above the Bradford average of 37 per cent. Other Muslim schools, like Zakaria Muslim Girls' School in Batley, have results only slightly lower, and they generally outperform local authority schools.[143]

No national initiatives for raising attainment levels currently target Muslim pupils as such, though several that are directed at raising the attainment of children living in inner-city areas – including Excellence in Cities, Sure Start, Extended Schools and Study Support – will potentially benefit areas with large Muslim populations.[144] In an attempt to narrow the achievement gap for minority ethnic pupils, the Department for Education and Skills has also launched two pilot schemes involving 15 LEAs. The Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant provides substantial funding to support children with EAL needs, and further funds are provided through the Formula Spending Share. Again, this support is of particular benefit to pupils from Pakistani, Bangladeshi and other Muslim communities. (See also section 8.2 below).[145]

5.4 Muslims in Further and Higher Education

Post-16 education

Statistics on religious affiliation are not kept in this sector, only statistics on ethnic origin. Compared to their White counterparts, a higher proportion of students of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin stay on into the sixth form at school or pursue their

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[142] Key Stage 2 SATs are the national tests taken by children in Year Six (i.e. at the age of eleven). The education league tables for Brent are available on the BBC website at http://news.bbc.co.ukhi/english/statistic/education/school_tables_2001 (accessed 2 November 2004).

[143] The results of Muslim schools are published on the website of the Muslim Parents Association (UK) at http://www.muslimparentsassociation.co.uk (accessed 2 November 2004).

[144] Coles *Education and Islam,* pp. 18–19.

[145] Haque, *British Muslims and Education,* pp. 5–6.

studies at a college of further education.[146] Three broad pathways are open to students in the 16-19 phase: the traditional academic route (leading to AS and A level examinations), the vocational route and the occupational route. Pakistani and Bangladeshi students are well represented on the academic route, and are twice as likely as White students to pursue GNVQ qualifications,[147] but they are less likely to follow the occupational route.

The further education sector includes sixth form colleges, tertiary colleges, colleges of further education, adult education and community education centres, university continuing education departments, and specialist colleges – in other words, all post-compulsory education outside the higher education sector. In 2003, there were 70,200 students of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin (3.2 per cent of the total) enrolled in further education in England, and within this group, there was a significantly higher proportion of females than males. Yet, when it comes to work-based learning, the proportions are different. Only 4,100 students of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin were enrolled in work-based learning (1.5 per cent of the total).[148]

Many of the points made in relation to Muslim student organisations at the end of the next section apply equally to students in further education as well as those in higher education.

Higher education

There are no official statistics on the number of Muslim students in higher education, though reports point out that the number of successful "Asian" applicants increased by more than 50 per cent between 1994 and 1999.[149] Many universities have only recently put in place more sophisticated ethnic monitoring systems, which identify, for example, numbers of students of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin, and full ethnic statistics are not currently publicly available. Even when the figures are available for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, they will not give a good indication of the total number of Muslim university students. However, the Federation of Students Islamic Societies

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[146] Bhattacharyya et al, *Minority Ethnic Attainment,* p. 24.

[147] 28 per cent of Pakistani students and 27 per cent of Bangladeshi students are likely to have GNVQ or BTEC qualifications, compared to 13 per cent of White students. See: H. Connor, C. Tyers, S. Davis and N. Tackey, *Minority Ethnic Students in Higher Education,* DfES, London, 2003.

[148] Learning Skills Council, *Further Education and Work Based Learning for Young People: Learner Numbers in England on 1 November 2003,* LSC, Coventry, 2004.

[149] National Literacy Trust, "Ethnicity and Access to Higher Education", available on the website of the National Literacy Trust at http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Database/stats, (accessed 2 November 2004), (hereafter, NLT, *Higher Education*).

(FOSIS) estimates that there are over 35,000 Muslim students attending universities, with significant numbers also coming from abroad.[150]

This figure may mask the under-representation of particular groups, such as Bangladeshi women, as well as the fact that Muslim students are particularly concentrated in a few universities.[151] While Muslim parents prefer single-sex schools during their compulsory schooling, many take a more pragmatic line by the time students reach university age, in the belief that young Muslims should be mature enough by that stage to study in a mixed-sex environment.[152] A few girls report being offered a university place but not being allowed by their parents to take it up; in some cases being able to continue living at home while studying makes a difference.[153] Some Muslim young women report that it is difficult for them to leave their home city to attend higher education courses elsewhere because of "parental concerns about distance and personal safety".[154]

Students from wealthier groups in society are generally much more likely to be accepted on degree courses than children from lower social classes, from poor areas and from families whose parents are unemployed or unskilled. To some extent, Muslim children are beginning to buck this trend. Bangladeshi and Pakistani children with unemployed parents are more likely to enter higher education than their White counterparts.[155] However, Pakistani and Bangladeshi undergraduates are less likely than their White counterparts to get a first or upper-second classification for their degree.[156]

In 2001, the most popular subject groups for male students of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin were mathematical sciences and information technology. For female students from the same group, social studies and business and administration were most popular.[157] Medicine, law and medicine-related subjects are also popular.[158] One of the recommendations of the *Parekh Report* is that universities should seek ways to

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[150] Federation of Student Islamic Societies, *Islamophobia on Campuses and the Lack of Provision for Muslim Students,* FOSIS, London, 2003, (hereafter, FOSIS, *Islamophobia*), p. 5.

[151] NLT, *Higher Education.*

[152] IQRA Trust, *Needs of Muslim Pupils,* p. 18.

[153] Interview with Muslim pupil B of Belle Vue Girls School, Bradford, 26 March 1999.

[154] Oldham Independent Review Panel, *Oldham Independent Review Panel Report: One Oldham, One Future, under the chairmanship of David Ritchie,* Oldham Borough Council, 2001, (hereafter, *The Ritchie Report*), p. 29.

[155] *The Guardian, Muslim Britain,* p. 2.

[156] Bhattacharyya et al, *Minority Ethnic Attainment,* p. 30.

[157] The Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) annual data set for 2001.

[158] Bhattacharyya et al, *Minority Ethnic Attainment,* p. 29.

ensure that potential students from Asian communities "apply for a wide range of courses".[159] This might involve making courses "culturally more inclusive" wherever possible.

According to estimates by FOSIS, at least 85 per cent of higher educational institutions in the UK have a sizeable number of Muslim students.[160] However, there are significantly higher proportions of Muslim, and other minority ethnic, students at the "new" (post-1992) universities in London and, to a lesser extent, other big cities.[161] According to a recent survey investigating the experiences of 1,000 candidates from each of the main ethnic groups in the UK, there is evidence of possible bias against Muslim candidates within the "old" universities. The probability of a candidate of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin receiving an initial offer from an "old" university was 0.57, while that of a White candidate with equivalent qualifications was 0.75. No evidence of such bias was found in the "new" universities, where 60 per cent of Asian students pursue their degree courses – compared to only 35 per cent of White students.[162] Further research is needed to investigate the reasons for these differences.

FOSIS estimates that over 65 per cent of higher educational institutions in the UK have Islamic Societies. These societies organise social and religious activities; represent students' interests to the authorities, for example, by requesting that prayer facilities be made available to students; support student welfare; and encourage links with the local Muslim community outside the university.[163] Some Islamic Societies also organise Arabic classes; invite prominent Muslim speakers to address open meetings; hold classes for students who want to develop a deeper understanding of their faith; and have additional activities for female Muslim students.[164]

Current concerns that have been expressed by Muslim student organisations include: the need for a more systematic provision of prayer facilities for Muslims; the need for Muslim chaplains or counselling services; the need for student refectories to provide food that conforms to Islamic dietary requirements; the need to respect Islamic festivals and prayer times in planning events that require student attendance, such as examinations; the need to respect Islamic beliefs and practices, for example respecting

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[159] *The Parekh Report,* p. 148.

[160] FOSIS, *Islamophobia,* p. 5.

[161] Bhattacharyya et al, *Minority Ethnic Attainment,* p. 28.

[162] M. Shiner and T. Modood, "Help or Hindrance? Higher Education and the Route to Ethnic Equality", *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 23, 2, June, 2002, pp. 209–232.

[163] FOSIS, *Islamophobia,* p. 5.

[164] A. Sahin, "Studying Islamic Education at the School of Education of the University of Birmingham", available at http://www.studyoverseas.com/re/abdullah.htm (accessed 2 November 2004) (hereafter, Sahin, *Studying Islamic Education*).

rules about the consumption of alcohol by organising some induction events and Student Union activities that do not involve "pub crawls"; the need for official policies on Islamophobia and sensitive procedures for reporting incidents of religious harassment and discrimination; and the need for a system of student loans or grants that does not put Muslim students in a position where they are required to act against Islamic rules on paying and receiving interest.[165]

5.5   Muslims Working in the Educational System

School teachers

No accurate figures are available for the number of trained Muslim teachers in the UK, though one source estimates that there are fewer than 1,000.[166] There are also no accurate statistics on the number of Muslim students currently undertaking teacher training, whether through the undergraduate or Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) routes, though, again, it is likely that the numbers are very low. The percentage of school teachers in England from ethnic minorities is variously reported at between two and five per cent.[167] Teachers from ethnic minorities drop out from teacher training at a higher rate than their White counterparts, are seriously under-represented in senior posts and often feel isolated in the profession.[168]

The reasons for the low numbers of Muslim teachers and trainees may include the following: teaching is not a popular career for many young educated Muslims;[169] teacher training rarely contains any significant Muslim components; faculties of education rarely target recruitment at the Muslim population; and Muslim teachers regularly experience Islamophobia while they are training, and also when they are teaching in schools (see section 6.2 below).

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[165] FOSIS, Islamophobia, pp.6, 8; Federation of Student Islamic Societies, *The Future of Higher Education Funding and its Implications for Muslim Students,* FOSIS, London, 2003.

[166] G. N. Saqeb, "Teacher Training in Islam: its importance and practicalities", in *Issues in Islamic Education,* The Muslim Educational Trust, London, 1996, p. 34, (hereafter, Saqeb, *Teacher Training*).

[167] For the lower figure, see: A. Ross *Ethnic Minority Teachers in the Teaching Workforce,* IPSE Occasional Paper, London, 2001. For the higher figure, see The Runnymede Trust, *Briefing Paper for GTC Teacher Meeting on Black and Minority Ethnic Issues in Teaching and Learning,* The Runnymede Trust, London, 2003.

[168] General Teaching Council for England, *Response to DfES Consultation "Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Ethnic Minority Pupils",* GTC, London, 2003, pp. 8–9, (hereafter, GTC, *Response*).

[169] Saqeb, *Teacher Training,* pp. 34–35; GTC, *Response,* pp. 8–9.

The Faculty of Education at the University of Plymouth is one of a number of faculties currently carrying out research into the reasons for the very low numbers of ethnic minorities, especially Muslims, applying for their initial teacher training programmes.[170] Several universities, including the University of Birmingham, have recently introduced initial teacher-training courses specifically for Muslim teachers, as well as offering MA degrees in Islamic education, and other opportunities for research into the subject.[171]

School governors

All schools are required to include both parents and community representatives on their governing bodies. However, Muslim parents and community leaders currently play a disproportionately small part in school governance and in educational decision-making generally. For example, in Birmingham, 25 per cent of all pupils in the maintained sector are Muslim, but only six per cent of school governors are Muslim.[172]

The reasons why Muslims are poorly represented on governing bodies are partly that positive steps have not been taken by schools and LEAs to recruit Muslim governors, and partly that Muslims have often failed to put themselves forward for election, perhaps because of a lack of understanding of educational structures and procedures. A report on Bradford, for example, suggests that Asian and other ethnic minority communities find it difficult to contribute to the education agenda because of lack of knowledge of the system.[173] LEAs have an important contribution to make here, for example by publicising the fact that parent governors can be reimbursed, not only for travel and subsistence expenses, but also for other expenses, including childcare or babysitting, and by making it clear that support is available for governors whose first language is not English.

Muslims are often "consulted" by the decision-makers, but they need to be in a position where they join the body of decision-makers, so that they can influence the decisions that are made about Muslim school children directly.[174] Such empowerment will only be achieved if Muslim parents and community representatives receive training in the rights and responsibilities of school governors. This will enable them to work

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[170] University of Plymouth, *Widening Participation Initiative in Initial Teacher Education,* Faculty of Education, University of Plymouth, 2003.

[171] Sahin, *Studying Islamic Education,* pp. 1–2. A few years ago, the Association of Muslim Schools of UK and Eire also set up its own PGCE courses in conjunction with Cheltenham and Gloucester College. This has now been replaced by a Graduate Teacher Programme course with the University of Gloucester.

[172] Information provided by Tahir Alam, Muslim Council of Great Britain.

[173] *The Ouseley Report,* p. 30 ff.

[174] AMSS, *Muslims on Education,* p. 16.

with the school in the education of their children, to campaign more effectively for change and to play a full part in the decision making process.[175]

Home-school links

Many schools in multicultural districts have developed effective policies for using community languages in notices around the school and in letters to parents. However, there is scope for both schools and LEAs to develop more appropriate strategies for consultation with Muslim parents – and indeed, Muslim young people – on matters of educational policy and practice. Muslim parents should be consulted about issues such as preferences for different kinds of schooling, ways of respecting Islamic culture, and meeting the needs of Muslim pupils. The consultation document issued by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council provides a good example of the use of an independent market research company to survey the opinions of Muslim and Asian parents about schooling options prior to setting out recommendations.[176] At the school level, closer home-school links will enable schools to involve Muslim parents more fully in the activities of the school and to take fuller account of parents' views and wishes.

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[175] Weston, *Food for Thought.*

[176] Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, *Faith Schools.*

6. Issues of Identity and Islamophobia

6.1   Religious and Ethnic Identity

The failure to acknowledge and recognise the faith identity of Muslim children may have particularly unfortunate consequences in schools. For example, in terms of educational planning, some community schools attempt to keep religion and faith out of school altogether, and this makes it more difficult for them to meet the distinctive spiritual, moral and cultural needs of Muslim children. The result is that Muslim children's unique religious identity may not be celebrated in schools, leading to a feeling that this identity is also not valued in broader society. Acknowledgement of the importance of faith identities can lead to the development of creative and effective solutions to issues concerning schools. For example, in East London, attendance rates at primary schools have increased since the Local Education Authority enlisted the assistance of the local mosque in emphasising the importance of children's education to parents at Friday prayers.[177] More research is needed on the ways in which different kinds of schooling impact on the developing identity of Muslim children, so that Muslim parents can make more informed choices.

The official practice of discussing school achievement only in terms of ethnicity and gender, but not in terms of religion, is not only potentially damaging to the developing self-concept of Muslim children, but it also means that possible links between faith identities and underachievement are ignored. For example, it has already been suggested that there may be a link between underachievement and the fact that Muslim students are exposed to divergent values at school and at mosque school. It may also be significant that Muslim students are liable to be bullied, teased and attacked, because of their religious and cultural background (see below, Section 6.2), and that Muslim students carry the additional burden of working an extra two hours or more at mosque school in the evenings, in order to preserve their religious identity (see above, Section 5.2). Further research is needed on these issues. The emphasis on ethnicity also reinforces the false idea that Muslims are a mono-ethnic group and that Muslim schools are mono-ethnic institutions.

The prominence of religion in the identity of young British Muslims is of enormous importance in schools, but it involves complex questions of intercultural relations in a multicultural society.[178] Ansari is right to suggest that a range of distinct identities is emerging among Muslims in Britain in the 21st century,[179] but most of these identities

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[177] L. Ward, "Mosque improves pupils' attendance", *The Guardian*, 5 July 2004, p. 8.

[178] Ansari, *The Infidel Within*, pp. 17–22 .

[179] Ansari, *The Infidel Within*, p. 406.

have a strong religious dimension.[180] For all children, not just Muslims, a positive recognition of their self-defined sense of personal identity may be a prerequisite for their educational success, achievement of potential and full participation in society.

This issue can only be fully resolved by an acceptance of faith identities in official documentation, surveys and research. The implication is that attainment figures in the case of Muslims should be collected on the basis of religious as well as ethnic identity. A commitment to do this at all levels, from the DfES and OFSTED, to LEAs and individual schools, would be a major undertaking. Without it, however, it seems likely that the needs of Muslim children will never be fully identified, let alone met. OFSTED inspectors, for example, are required to assess "the extent to which the school actively enables pupils to develop self-knowledge and spiritual awareness […] and appreciate their own and others' cultural traditions",[181] but the failure to mention religious identity makes it less likely that issues relating specifically to Muslim children will be raised.

6.2   Islamophobia in Schools and Universities

The concept of Islamophobia

Islamophobia has been defined as irrational hostility towards Islam and, therefore, fear or dislike of Muslims. The term also refers to the discrimination and social exclusion arising from this fear and hostility. The term was brought to public consciousness through the establishment of the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, by the Runnymede Trust, and through the publication of the Commission's report in 1997.[182] Typical instances of Islamophobia include attacks on mosques and Muslim cemeteries, threatening phone calls to Muslim organisations and physical attacks and verbal abuse against individuals identified as Muslims by their dress or in other ways. Clearly, Islamophobia has much in common with racism, though it is targeted against

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[180] J. Eade, "Identity, Nation and Religion: educated young Bangladeshi Muslims in London's East End", in *International Sociology,* 9, 3, 1994, p. 386; N. Hashmi, *From Ethnicity to Religion: the Shifting Identities of Young Muslims in Britain and France,* PhD Thesis, European University Institute, Florence, 2003.

[181] Office for Standards in Education, *Handbook for Inspecting Secondary Schools,* OFSTED, London, 2003, p. 54.

[182] Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia: a Challenge for us all,* Runnymede Trust, London, 1997, (hereafter, Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia*). See also: Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Addressing the Challenge of Islamophobia,* Uniting Britain Trust and Runnymede Trust, London, 2001.

people because of their religious affiliation rather than because of their membership of a racial or ethnic group.[183]

However, the term "Islamophobia" has not as yet been generally incorporated into official educational policies at either the national or local level. Since the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report, LEAs have been required to collect information from schools about racist incidents, but there is no guidance about the inclusion of religious anti-Muslim hostility in such reports. As a result, Islamophobic incidents within schools are often not monitored or addressed – though valuable guidance has been given by some LEAs (including Ealing)[184] and by teachers' unions.[185]

Islamophobia in schools

Islamophobic attitudes may underpin much of the teasing and bullying that Muslim children experience at school. However, it is currently impossible to gain accurate statistics on Islamophobia in schools because, when schools log "racist" incidents, they make no distinction between racism, such as calling someone "Paki", and Islamophobia, such as making fun of someone because of their Islamic beliefs and practices – even assuming the latter kind of incident is logged at all. Statistics are not yet available that compare the levels of bullying experienced by pupils of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin to the levels experienced by children from other minority ethnic groups.

Two important points are, however, clear from research evidence. First, it is not only other pupils who may display Islamophobic attitudes. Teachers may, for example, mock Islamic rules on dress.[186] Other adults may also be involved: in one incident, a schoolgirl had her headscarf pulled off by a woman at her school gates.[187] Second, the incidents that are reported – and there was a welter of reports in the aftermath of

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[183] A report published by the University of Derby in conjunction with the Home Office in 2000 drew attention to the high levels of religious discrimination experienced by Muslims, see: K. Purdam and P.G. Weller (eds.), *Religious Discrimination in England and Wales: an interim report,* University of Derby/Home Office, 2000.

[184] Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia,* p. 54.

[185] See, for example: National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, *Islamophobia: advice for schools and colleges,* NAS/UWT, London, 2003. See also: National Union of Teachers, *The War in Iraq: the impact on Schools,* NUT, London, 2003.

[186] G. Bhatti, *Asian Children at Home and at School,* Routledge, London, 1999, p. 186 f.; Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia: its Features and Dangers,* Runnymede Trust, London, 1997, p. 18.

[187] Islamic Human Rights Commission, *UK Today: the anti-Muslim backlash in the wake of 11th September 2001,* IHRC, Wembley, 2001, p. 3, (hereafter, IHRC, *UK Today*).

September 11[188] – may only be the tip of the iceberg, as students may not wish to make a fuss, draw attention to themselves or escalate the situation. Furthermore, students may have little faith in the school's response. The media must also carry some of the responsibility for the development of negative attitudes towards Muslims.[189] Schools need to counter this influence by helping all children to think critically about the media and to understand the ways in which the media influence and help to form public opinion.

In the same way that racism may be individual or institutional, so Islamophobia is not just a matter of individual discrimination, but can be found deeply embedded in institutional practices.[190] Muslim groups sometimes feel that their legitimate requests are met with a sophisticated web of excuses from schools and that schools sometimes obstruct normal scrutiny and discussion of their policies and procedures.[191]

The Federation of Students Islamic Societies (FOSIS) has highlighted the phenomenon of Islamophobia on university campuses. It finds expression in a number of ways, including: physical violence, such as perpetrators ripping off headscarves; verbal abuse; threats, like the bomb threat to the Muslim prayer hall at Manchester University; negative or patronising images in student newspapers; and a general sense that Muslim students are alienated and excluded.[192]

Many Muslim organisations have sought to combat Islamophobia in education. For example, the Islamic Human Rights Commission has produced many reports documenting the problems faced by Muslims, including problems encountered within schools.[193] The Commission has also produced an information pack containing several specimen letters, including letters challenging disrespectful remarks or urging the

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[188] J. Henry, "Why Do Arabs Hate Americans, Miss?", in *Times Educational Supplement,* 28 September 2001. See also: Runnymede Trust, *Addressing Prejudice and Islamophobia,* Runnymede Trust, London, 2001; IHRC, *UK Today;* L. Sheridan, "Religious Discrimination: the New Racism", in *The Quest for Sanity: Reflections on September 11 and the Aftermath,* Muslim Council of Britain, Wembley, 2002; and C. Allen and J. Nielsen, *Summary Report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001,* EUMC, Vienna, 2002.

[189] Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia,* ch. 10. See also: E. Poole, *Reporting Islam: Media Representations of British Muslims,* London, I.B. Tauris, 2002.

[190] Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia,* pp. 13–14.

[191] Written response to this report from T. Alam, Education Committee of the Muslim Council of Britain, 2 December 2003.

[192] FOSIS*, Islamophobia.*

[193] See, for example: IHRC, *UK Today;* and Islamic Human Rights Commission, *The Hidden Victims of September 11: the Backlash against Muslims in the UK,* IHRC, Wembley, 2002.

balanced representation of Islamic issues, for Muslim parents and community leaders to send to schools.[194]

Stereotypes of Muslim girls

Muslim girls have often been stereotyped as trapped in a patriarchal, oppressive system that allows them no freedom to express themselves or develop their full potential.[195] The *Swann Report* (1985) reinforced these stereotypes when it maintained that Muslims were advocating schools for their daughters that had

> a far more central focus in the curriculum on education for marriage and motherhood in a particular Islamic sense, with other subjects receiving less attention and with the notion of careers education being seen as irrelevant to the pattern of adult life which the girls were likely to pursue.[196]

If teachers were to approach the education of Muslim girls with such stereotypical views of what their parents wanted, it would be no surprise if the girls felt their needs were not being met.[197] However, the statistics on educational attainment mentioned above have already challenged some of these myths and prejudiced views, and perhaps they also indicate that many teachers have already rejected the stereotypes. Muslim girls are out-performing Muslim boys in school examinations at all levels, and are catching up quickly with, and even sometimes overtaking, their White counterparts. Increasing numbers of Muslim girls are being supported by their parents to continue their studies at university.[198] As one 16-year-old Muslim girl said, "education gives status and respect, as well as helping your employment prospects."[199]

A key issue is parental trust. The head teacher of one girls' school with a majority of Muslim pupils reported that most Muslim parents would allow their girls to engage in

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[194] Information pack available on the website of the Islamic Human Rights Commission at http://www.ihrc.org (accessed 2 November).

[195] See: S. Khanum, "Education and the Muslim Girl", in G. Sahgal and N. Yuval-Davis (eds.) *Refusing Holy Orders: Women and Fundamentalism in Britain,* Virago, London, 1992, pp. 124–140; Hawe, *Muslim Girls' Schools,* pp. 69–72; S. Shaikh and A. Kelly, "To Mix or Not to Mix: Pakistani Girls in British Schools", in *Educational Research,* 31, 1, 1989.

[196] Department of Education and Science, *Education for All: Final Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups, under the chairmanship of Lord Swann. Cmnd 827,* DES, London, HMSO, 1985, p. 505, (hereafter, *The Swann Report*). This was preceded by an interim report produced in 1981 under the chairmanship of Lord Rampton.

[197] Basit, *Eastern Values, Western Milieu.*

[198] F. Ahmad, "Modern Traditions? British Muslim Women and Academic Achievement", *Gender and Education,* 13, 2, 2001, pp. 137–152.

[199] Interview with Muslim pupil A of Belle Vue Girls School, Bradford, 26 March 1999.

inter-school sports; undertake work experience, including a police training course and work in a local newspaper office; and go on residential trips, including a trip to France, because they trusted the school and trusted their daughters.[200]

Official school policy regarding permitted dress codes has become more Muslim-friendly in recent years, as LEAs show more understanding of the Muslim requirements of modesty and decency.[201] The *hijab* is normally considered acceptable nowadays in State-funded schools, following a number of high profile cases where girls were suspended for wearing it. Other aspects of school uniform policy, however, continue to cause problems in some schools, where girls may not be allowed to wear trousers instead of skirts, or tracksuits on the sports field. These problems, of course, are not merely Muslim issues, but affect many non-Muslim girls as well.

In spite of the liberalisation of official policies, however, there are many reports that Muslim girls and university students, and sometimes teachers, continue to experience Islamophobic abuse, and sometimes sexual harassment, when they choose to wear the *hijab*.[202] In addition, young women who wear the *hijab* sometimes find this a barrier to employment, and they may feel obliged to remove it for university or job interviews.

There is clearly no room for complacency. There is little evidence that schools and universities are paying adequate attention to the particular needs of Muslim young women with regard to health education, sex education, sports and physical education, or, more generally, ways of preparing them for life as Muslim women in a western society.[203] In particular, female staff is needed for girls' physical education and

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[200] Interview with head teacher of Belle Vue Girls School, Bradford, 26 March 1999; IQRA Trust, *Needs of Muslim Pupils,* IQRA Trust, p. 15.

[201] A recent case that received much media attention has helped to clarify the boundaries of what schools currently find acceptable in terms of Islamic dress. A girl in Luton was refused permission to wear the *jilbab* (ankle length dress) to school and in June 2004 the High Court ruled in favour of the school. The case caused considerable debate within the Muslim community. See: E. A. Buaras, "Muslim Pupil Fights Religious Dress Ban", *The Muslim News,* 27 February 2004; C. Milmo, "School ban on Islamic gown upheld by the High Court", *The Independent,* 16 June 2004, p. 14 (see also editorial on p. 30).

[202] FOSIS, *Islamophobia.*

[203] IQRA Trust, *Needs of Muslim Pupils,* pp. 16–18. A Muslim perspective on girls' development is contained in: A. Ghadiwala and A. Lasania, *Muslim Girl's Manual of Selfwatching,* Bolton Muslim Welfare Trust, Bolton, 1994.

games.[204] Specialist training is needed for those involved in pastoral care, to enable them to take a more pro-active role in respecting Islamic beliefs and values.[205]

6.3   Knowledge of Islam among Non-Muslims

The school curriculum has an important contribution to make in helping pupils to develop an understanding of the different groups within their community. Knowledge and understanding of Muslim communities and their faith helps to break down prejudice and counter Islamophobia. The main subject where such teaching takes place is religious education. In community schools, this is taught in accordance with either the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority syllabus or one of the locally agreed syllabuses. There are well over 100 of these syllabuses, and each includes the study of Islam.[206]

Therefore, at least in theory, every child in the country leaves school with some knowledge of Islam. But, of course, the quality of teaching and the quality of pupils' learning varies from school to school and from individual to individual. Indeed, it is not unknown for pupils to confuse elements of the six different world faiths they study at some stage in their school career,[207] and to retain very little long-term knowledge of Islam, unless they have studied it as a specialisation for GCSE or "A" level examinations. All the Examination Boards currently offer pupils the opportunity to take GCSE religious education in Islamic studies alone, though informal reports from schools suggest that this option is rarely taken by non-Muslim pupils.[208] At "A" level, Islam must generally be studied alongside other faiths or religious topics.[209] No statistics are currently available to show how widely these options are taken up by non-Muslims.

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[204] Written response to this report from Mrs J. Fernandez, Principal of the Avenue School, London, 22 January 2004.

[205] Written response to this report from F. Amer, Head of Education and Inter-faith Relations at London Central Mosque Trust and Islamic Cultural Centre, 16 October 2003.

[206] Sahin, *Studying Islamic Education,* p. 1.

[207] R. Homan and L. King, "Mishmash and its Effects upon Learning in the Primary School", in *British Journal of Religious Education,* 15, 3, Summer, 1993, pp. 8–13; J. Hull, "Mishmash, Religious Education and Pluralism", in *British Journal of Religious Education*, 12, 3, Summer, 1990, pp. 121–125.

[208] Reports from individual schools suggest that options that combine the study of Islam with one or more other religious education topics are much more popular with non-Muslim students at GCSE.

[209] An argument for the establishment of an "A" level in Islamic Studies is included in AMSS, *Muslims on Education*, p. 18.

The Islamic component of religious education is usually taught by non-Muslims, and often by non-specialists, who have had little training in Islamic beliefs and values. There is, therefore, a danger of misrepresentation of the religion. This danger is compounded when classes employ books and resources that contain factual inaccuracies and misunderstandings.[210] For example, some books that are still in use contain pictures of the Prophet Muhammad. Schools have a responsibility to check the factual accuracy of representations of Islam in the textbooks and library books they use, especially, but not exclusively, in religious education. Where schools are unable to carry out such checks themselves, they can consult lists of approved books produced by the Muslim Council of Britain or other suppliers. In October 2004, the Muslim Council of Britain launched a scheme to provide a resource pack about Islam, for schools to use as a teaching aid.[211] Muslims do not necessarily object in principle to the idea that information about Islam can be taught by non-Muslims, so long as the information is accurate and it is taught respectfully. But they often feel that the limited understanding of Muslim issues on the part of many non-Muslim teachers makes it hard for them to teach Islam effectively. As one correspondent pointed out, their "lack of awareness of the immense diversity of views and culture within the Islamic paradigm has created crude stereotyping and a wrongly assumed cultural conformity".[212]

While it is possible within the framework of the National Curriculum to study aspects of Islamic art, history and literature, and the Islamic contribution to mathematics and science, this is the exception rather than the rule in most community schools. The new National Curriculum subject of "citizenship", made compulsory in secondary schools in 2002, has the potential to contribute to cross-cultural understanding, including Islamic issues. The National Curriculum programme of study requires pupils to be taught about "the origins and implications of the diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom, and the need for mutual respect and understanding".[213] However, despite some good practice and new ideas,[214] many schools have found it difficult to make space for this new subject. Instead, they have chosen to deliver the subject of citizenship largely through existing subjects. As a result,

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[210] Written response to this report from H. Halim, formerly of the IQRA Trust, 2 October 2003.

[211] BBC News, "Muslims Launch School Books Drive", 12 October 2004, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/3736428.stm (accessed 1 November 2004).

[212] Written response to this report from D. A. Syed of the Avenue School, London, 3 October 2003.

[213] Department for Education and Employment, *Citizenship: the National Curriculum for England,* London, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, DfES, 1999.

[214] M. Imran and E. Miskell, *Citizenship and Muslim Perspectives: Teachers Sharing Ideas,* Development Education Centre, Birmingham, 2003.

the opportunity to develop new and interesting approaches to cross-cultural understanding has been lost.

It is rare for non-religious education specialists on primary teacher training programmes to spend more than one day out of a four-year undergraduate education degree on the study of Islam and the needs of Muslim pupils, though they may spend more time studying related issues of racism, inclusion, multicultural education and equal opportunities.[215] For PGCE students, the period of study is likely to be much shorter than this, if they receive any at all. A study of teachers in mainly White schools in 2002 found that issues relating to meeting the needs of ethnic minority pupils simply had not been covered in most cases, either in initial training or in any recent in-service training.[216] Similarly, university teachers may receive no training at all on the subject.

School governors, OFSTED inspectors and other education specialists are unlikely to receive specific training in Muslim needs and Muslim issues in schools, except perhaps indirectly, through a course on racism or on raising ethnic minority achievement. There is clearly a need for both universities and LEAs to review their provision of in-service training for teachers, as well as training for school governors, in issues of policy and practice that affect Muslim pupils.

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[215] See, for example, the BEd course documentation for the University of Plymouth primary teacher training programmes. Informal conversations suggest that this is not very different in other HE colleges and departments of education.

[216] Cline *et al, Minority Ethnic Pupils.*

7. CURRICULUM ISSUES

7.1   The Cultural Dimension of the Curriculum

It is undeniable that the cultural heritage that underpins the curriculum of British schools is European and Christian, and that, for many Muslim pupils whose families originate from other parts of the world and have a different cultural heritage, this leaves them disadvantaged in British schools.[217]

One response is to require Muslim students to cast off their own cultural heritage and aim for "cultural literacy"[218] in British traditions, language and way of life as quickly as possible. As one correspondent suggested, some teachers "see it as their mission to teach the pupils to look beyond their community and so deliberately exclude all Muslim-friendly options or make only token reference to them".[219] This approach is, in any case, made explicit by those liberal philosophers of education who see it as the role of the school to "liberate" children from the constraints of their present and particular circumstances.[220]

Another response is for Muslims to retreat into a few inner-city enclaves, where they can preserve their cultural heritage virtually untouched by the way of life in the broader society around them.

Most Muslims, however, would prefer a response in which they are both free to develop their distinctive Muslim identity and confident to take on all the rights and responsibilities of full British citizenship. Two shifts in the curriculum might help to make this happen. The first is a more global focus, where European and Christian culture is contextualised in terms of world civilisation. The second involves the inclusion of currently neglected Muslim contributions to European learning and culture, particularly in the fields of art, literature, mathematics, geometry, science, history, philosophy, astronomy and medicine. The effect of this would be both to enrich the curriculum for all students, by helping them to understand the interdependence of cultures and civilisations, and to support the identity and self-concept of young Muslims within the context of European citizenship.[221]

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[217] Hewer, *Schools for Muslims,* p. 523.

[218] E. D. Hirsch, Jr, *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know,* Vintage Books, New York, 1988.

[219] Written response to this report by Tahir Alam, Education Committee of the Muslim Council of Britain, 2 December 2003.

[220] C. Bailey, *Beyond the Present and the Particular: a Theory of Liberal Education,* Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1984.

[221] Hewer, *Schools for Muslims*, pp. 523–524.

Islamic literature, history and art

A recent survey found that comparatively little is done across the curriculum to support, or even recognise, the identity of young Muslims, or to increase knowledge generally of Muslim issues.[222] Much more could be done in literature classes to include Islamic authors and poets[223] and texts that call cultural stereotypes into question. In history classes at the secondary school level, there is the possibility to study the Crusades and the Muslim contribution to mathematics, science, medicine and architecture, within an optional Key Stage 3 study of "Islamic History and Civilisation 700–1250 AD". However, there is no research evidence available about how widely this option is adopted in schools, and anecdotal evidence suggests that take-up is minimal.

At primary school level, there are even fewer opportunities to study Islam. For example, there is currently no option to study classical Muslim civilisations instead of, or in addition to, the Greeks, the Egyptians or the Vikings. In any case, teachers generally have a very limited understanding of Islamic history. One correspondent pointed out that their "lack of awareness of the immense diversity of views and culture within the Islamic paradigm has created crude stereotyping and a wrongly assumed cultural conformity".[224] More could also be done in art to focus on Islamic forms, including calligraphy, architecture, geometrical designs and practical crafts.[225]

Arabic as a modern foreign language

Arabic could be offered as an optional modern foreign language, alongside the more usual French, German and Spanish. Since Arabic is the holy language of Islam, this would doubtless prove a popular option for Muslims, many of whom will have learned the rudiments of Arabic, or at least Arabic recitation, in Mosque schools. The economic benefits to the country from such a move could also be substantial.[226]

Such a change, however, would require considerable commitment on the part of Government departments, teacher training institutions, LEAs and schools. In order to introduce Arabic as a modern foreign language, universities would have to produce a

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[222] L. Kaul-Seidman, J. S. Nielsen and M. Vinzent, *European Identity and Cultural Pluralism: Judaism, Christianity and Islam in European Curricula. Supplement: Country Reports,* Herbert-Quandt-Stiftung, Bad Homburg, Germany, 2003, especially pp. 14–89. This point was also repeatedly made by correspondents, including ,for example, the written response to the present report from J. Fernandez *et al.,* Avenue School, London, 22 January 2004.

[223] Written response to this report from Noshiena Khan, Avenue School, London, 3 October 2003.

[224] Written response to this report from D. A. Syed, Avenue School, London, 3 October 2003.

[225] IQRA Trust, *Needs of Muslim Pupils,* p.13; S. H. Nasr, "The Teaching of Art in the Islamic World", in *Muslim Education Quarterly,* 6, 2, 1989, pp. 4–10.

[226] G. Sarwar, *British Muslims and Schools,* Muslim Educational Trust, London, 1991, pp. 26–27.

sufficient supply of graduates in Arabic; the Teacher Training Agency would have to make places available on appropriate PGCE courses; the providers of PGCE courses would have to find school placements; OFSTED would have to appoint inspectors; LEAs would have to provide advisory and other support; schools would have to adjust their existing modern language provision, juggling with human and other resources; and examination boards may have to provide new GCSE and "A" level syllabuses.

English as an additional language

It has already been noted that many Muslim pupils speak a language other than English at home. Over 90 per cent of pupils of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin are registered as having English as an Additional Language (EAL), and, of course, many other Muslim children fall into this category as well. Children studying EAL are more likely to come from low-income families, and their attainment levels, particularly in English, are lower than those of non-EAL pupils.[227] The needs of bilingual pupils feature highly in government plans to raise achievement levels,[228] and the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant provides substantial funds to support these needs.[229] Undoubtedly, such support is part of what is required to help Muslim children achieve their full potential, but at the same time, their religious needs must not be forgotten. This implies not only that value be given to Muslim pupils' other language skills, whether Arabic or community languages, but also that EAL materials used in the classroom should respect Islamic values.

Sex education

The teaching of sex education in schools can be a continuing problem, not so much because it is thought to be a topic better taught at home than at school, but more because the values on which current sex education programmes are based often seem to contravene Islamic teaching. In particular, some of the materials and teaching approaches used in sex education are offensive to the Islamic principles of modesty and decency. Muslims may also be concerned that sex education can tend to undermine Islamic teaching about family life.

In view of these problems, some Muslim parents are likely to choose to exercise their right to withdraw their children from sex education in school, unless the programmes can be changed in order to demonstrate greater respect for Muslim beliefs. Many

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[227] Bhattacharyya et al, *Minority Ethnic Attainment*, pp. 13–15.

[228] Department for Education and Skills, *Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Ethnic Minority Pupils*, Ref DfES/0183/2003, Nottingham, DfES Publications, 2003, pp. 28–31.

[229] National Literacy Trust, "Overview of Ethnic Minority Achievement and Literacy", available on the NLT website at http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Database/EALindex.html#Overview (accessed 2 November 2004).

Muslim parents would be reassured if single-sex classes were the norm for sex education and if Muslim perspectives on marriage, family life, premarital and extra-marital sexual relations, and other key issues, were given equal respect and prominence alongside other perspectives.[230]

Music and the performing arts

Many Muslims enjoy music in a variety of forms, but others think it is an inappropriate subject for the school curriculum. Some Muslims are involved in the performing arts and the entertainment industry, with rap groups like *Fundamental* and hip-hop bands like *Outlandish* achieving a high degree of popularity. Others prefer devotional music, like Quwalis and Berber music. Those who oppose music on the curriculum believe that it is, at best, a waste of time, a diversion from more important things in life, and, at worst, a dangerous enticement to believers to engage in forbidden activities. The belief has its foundations in a *hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad and in all four schools of Islamic law. Of course not all Muslims share these views, but schools must avoid putting those who do into a position where they are required to act against their deep convictions.

It would be helpful if there were an option to withdraw from music lessons, but in the absence of this, it would be prudent for schools to avoid making Muslim children study music with an erotic content or an overtly Christian message.[231] It would also be helpful if the music curriculum were adapted, to make it more inclusive of Muslims. Similar points apply to dance and other areas of the performing arts, and also to some aspects of the art curriculum.[232] In all these areas, the keynote is sensitivity to Muslim beliefs and a determination not to force Muslim pupils to undertake activities against their beliefs in the name of broadening their experience. The provision that allows schools to release pupils from some subjects, so that they can focus on others where they could achieve better, may be the way forward when Muslims feel their beliefs are

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[230] J. M. Halstead, "Muslims and Sex Education", in *Journal of Moral Education,* 26, 3, September 1997, pp. 317–330; F. M. D'Oyen, *The Miracle of Life: a Guide on Islamic Family Life and Sex Education for Young People,* Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 1996; G. Sarwar, *Sex Education: the Muslim Perspective,* Muslim Educational Trust, London, 1992.

[231] J. M. Halstead, "Muslim Attitudes to Music in Schools", in *British Journal of Music Education,* 11, 2 July 1994, pp. 143–156.

[232] IQRA Trust, *Needs of Muslim Pupils,* p. 13–14.

being compromised.[233] In-service training would help teachers to respond appropriately to Muslim beliefs in these areas.[234]

Religious education

Schools must provide religious education for all registered pupils, though there is a legal right for parents to withdraw their children.[235] In England and Wales, schools other than voluntary aided schools or those of a religious character must teach religious education according to either the locally Agreed Syllabus or the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority Syllabus. Each Agreed Syllabus must reflect the fact that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking into account the teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in the country.[236] The development of the Agreed Syllabus within each LEA is delegated to the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE), made up of representatives from the Church of England, other religious denominations, the local Council and teachers' unions. Muslims are increasingly being appointed to local SACREs as representatives of "other religious denominations".

Most Muslims are usually happy for their children to learn about other faiths within a course on world religions, but some see such teaching as irrelevant to Muslim children and argue that the time would be better spent learning computing or mathematics.[237] Furthermore, Muslims do not want their children to be targeted for proselytisation by Christians or members of other faiths. Where Muslims perceive this as a danger, they can exercise their legal right of withdrawal from religious education and collective worship.[238] Some Muslims are concerned that, when Islam is taught to Muslim children by non-Muslim teachers as part of a world religions course, the children might end up confused or misinformed. As one correspondent put it, they "are frequently confronted with a basic misconception and flawed understanding of the Islamic faith.

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[233] Written response to this report from T. Alam, a member of the Education Committee of the Muslim Council of Britain, 2 December 2003.

[234] Written response to this report from D. Harris, independent researcher on Muslims and music, 6 October 2003.

[235] For England and Wales, Education Act (1996), s. 386; for Northern Ireland, see Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order (1989) SI 2406 (NI 20) and Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order (1986) (NI 3); for Scotland, see Education (Scotland) Act (1980) and the Scottish Office Education Department Circular 6/91.

[236] Education Act (1996), s. 375. Similar guidance is given in the Scottish Office Education Department Circular 6/91.

[237] Ansari, *The Infidel Within,* pp. 330–331.

[238] IQRA Trust, *Needs of Muslim Pupils,* p. 24–25.

This can take the form of a trivialisation of the most important aspects of the religion and an exaggeration of the importance of its cultural manifestations."[239]

For many Muslims, however, the most important kind of religious education is that which nurtures children in their own faith.[240] In community schools, children are taught religious knowledge and respect for others, but the intention of such religious education is not to provide detailed understanding of, or to reinforce, their own faith. For this type of education, Muslim parents rely on supplementary schools. As indicated earlier, the system of supplementary schools has developed in an *ad hoc* manner, in response to the needs of Muslim communities. With the emergence of second- and third-generation British Muslims, there is now a need for a more coherent approach to the religious education of minority faith communities. This includes consideration of the respective roles of State schools and supplementary schools.

Many parents would like their children to have the opportunity to receive lessons about Islam within community schools, as part of the normal school day, preferably taught by an imam or qualified Muslim teacher.[241] Experiments with this approach have been tried in Bradford and elsewhere, but so far no LEA has adopted the German model, in which the children from individual faith groups are taught religious education classes separately for 70 per cent of the time – in the Muslim case, by a local imam who has responsibility for several schools – and then together for the remaining 30 per cent.

Pupils in State schools are required to take part in daily collective worship, which shall be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character".[242] Parents have the right to withdraw their children from attending collective acts of worship. It is not unknown for schools to use the presence of Muslim students as a reason to not provide a daily act of collective worship. However, this is not in accordance with the wishes of most Muslim parents, because it removes a potentially important contribution to children's spiritual, moral and religious development. Comparatively few schools have opted for a "determination", which would free them from the legal requirement that collective worship should be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character" and allow them to offer worship with an Islamic character. In Birmingham, for example, only 25 schools offer such provision.

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[239] Written response to this report from D. A. Syed, Avenue School, London, 3 October 2003.

[240] M. A. Khan-Cheema *et al., The Muslims and 'Swann',* The Council of Mosques (UK and Eire), London, 1986.

[241] Written response to this report from B. Mustafa, Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, 16 October 2003.

[242] Education Act (1996), s. 386; School Standards and Framework Act (1998), s. 70; The Scottish Office, Education Department Circular 6/91.

Extra-curricular activities

Lunch-time and extra-curricular activities enrich the school experience of all pupils, but when these are provided for Muslim pupils, care must be taken to avoid putting them in a position where they are expected to act against their beliefs and values. Where Muslims are members of school sports teams, issues may arise about sportswear and facilities for showers. Teachers and supervisors need to ensure that Muslim students feel comfortable with the arrangements and that their need for modesty and decency is respected. Sensitivity may also be needed when taking Muslim pupils on trips outside the school. Teachers should be sensitive about respecting prayer times, Muslim festivals and the Ramadan fast – as well as avoiding embarrassing Muslim pupils by asking them to take part in activities that they perceive as un-Islamic. Schools with large numbers of Muslim pupils may wish to be pro-active in their support of specifically Islamic activities and clubs. For example, they may choose to organise Islamic clubs like Young Muslims UK.[243]

7.2 Teacher Training

Many of the points made in this and the previous section have implications for teacher training. Teachers should be trained to meet the needs of Muslim pupils and to respond sensitively to Muslim beliefs and values in, and beyond, the classroom. This implies that they should have an adequate knowledge of Islamic beliefs and values, as well as contemporary religious and cultural practices, and they should be willing to incorporate such knowledge, where relevant, across the curriculum and in any extra-curricular activities they lead. It is important that teachers respect children's Muslim identity, avoid negative perceptions and less favourable expectations of Muslim pupils, and avoid stereotypical thinking about Islam and Muslims. Teachers should also be trained to offer support to Muslim pupils who are victims of Islamophobic behaviour and to deal appropriately with offending pupils. They should be encouraged to adopt assessment practices that respect cultural diversity. Examination questions should not assume a non-Muslim framework of values, and a non-standard response to questions about history, literature or other arts and humanities subjects that is written from a Muslim perspective should be respected as valid, in the same way that feminist, Marxist or post-modern responses are accepted.

Teacher training institutions should ensure that their widening participation initiatives encourage the pro-active recruitment of Muslim trainee teachers, as well as those from other ethnic minorities. Teacher training should be made more Muslim-friendly, and more support should be provided for Muslims training to be teachers, in order to

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[243] Interview with deputy head teacher of Belle Vue Girls School, Bradford, 26 March 1999.

encourage long-term commitment to the profession. Only Muslim teachers can provide Muslim role models for Muslim students in schools, so there is a need for more Muslim teachers in positions of authority. Increasing the number of minority ethnic teachers does not in itself meet this need.

8. THE POLICY FRAMEWORK

There have been no official reports focusing exclusively on the educational needs of Muslim children and young people. Nevertheless, through their discussion of racism, ethnicity, community cohesion, educational disadvantage and faith schools, some reports and initiatives have addressed issues that are relevant to the needs of Muslim pupils and students. The policy responses for meeting the needs of Muslim pupils may be categorised under two headings: (1) equalising opportunities; and (2) supporting religious and cultural identity.

It is possible to identify four elements involved in equalising opportunities for Muslim pupils:

- ensuring that Muslim students have access to the opportunities offered by a general education;

- preparing them to live as full British citizens without fear of racism or other forms of prejudice and discrimination;

- helping them to compete in the employment market on an equal footing with other British citizens; and

- enabling them to generally enjoy the economic and technological benefits of modern life.

Supporting religious and cultural identity involves: recognising and respecting Islamic beliefs, values and ways of life; ensuring that Muslim children are never put in a position in school where they are expected to act in a way that is contrary to their deeply held beliefs; and celebrating and supporting their distinctive cultural identities and experiences.[244]

National policy tends to focus on the first category, equalising opportunity, which is uncontroversial and lies at the heart of race relations legislation, equal opportunities policies and community relations. Policy to equalise opportunity attempts to counter ethnic minority disadvantage and underachievement.

Local policy, while still primarily concerned with equalising opportunities, also sometimes extends to support for cultural identity. Some forms of such support, such as supporting community languages, are relatively uncontroversial, but supporting children's religious beliefs and cultural practices is much more controversial, and indeed there are many who question whether it can ever be the role of the school to do

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[244] Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity,* p. 203 ff.

so.[245] Nevertheless, most educators agree that cultural values and assumptions are embedded in education, and that cultural domination by the majority can only be avoided by specific measures to support minority cultures.[246] On this basis, many LEAs have introduced multicultural initiatives that seek to respond positively to the needs and wishes of minority groups, including Muslims, so long as these are not perceived to be in conflict with the needs of broader society.

8.1   Policy Reports

The first significant national report to discuss the education of children from ethnic minority groups was the Department of Education and Science report, *Education For All*, (known as the *Swann Report*).[247] This report provides an extensive list of recommendations on racism, underachievement, multicultural education, the need to support children's linguistic and cultural identities and the employment of ethnic minority teachers, all of which have a bearing on the education of Muslims in Britain. However, it does not support bilingual education or separate faith schools, preferring rather to emphasise the need for all children, irrespective of their personal background, to be educated together, as a way of preparing them for life in a multicultural society. There is a degree of inconsistency, therefore, in its acceptance of single-sex education.

In line with its underlying liberal values, the *Swann Report* argues that "ethnic minority communities cannot in practice preserve all elements of their cultures and lifestyles unchanged",[248] because "education has to be something more than the reinforcement of the beliefs, values and identity which each child brings to school".[249] However, the report states that minorities must be free to maintain those elements of their culture that they consider most essential to their ethnic identity, so long as individual freedom of choice is preserved.[250] Some Muslims have argued that these underlying values are flawed, since they imply that Islamic culture can be broken down into its component parts, some of which can readily be discarded. The UK Council of Mosques, in its response to the *Swann Report*, argued that it was hard for Muslims to accept the values

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[245]   See, for example: W. Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture,* Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989, pp. 167–168.

[246]   J. M. Halstead, "Schooling and Cultural Maintenance for Religious Minorities in the Liberal State", in K. McDonough and W. Feinberg (eds.), *Citizenship and Education in Liberal-Democratic Societies,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, pp. 273–295.

[247]   *The Swann Report.*

[248]   *The Swann Report,* p. 5.

[249]   *The Swann Report,* p. 364.

[250]   *The Swann Report,* p. 6.

on which the recommendations are based. The Muslim members of the committee that produced the report, along with most of its other ethnic minority members, wrote a note of dissent on the key issue of separate faith schools.[251]

The Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia report, *Islamophobia: a Challenge for Us All*, contains a number of detailed recommendations on education.[252] Some of these have already been implemented, such as the review of Section 11 funding, and the review of the criteria for funding faith schools, but others await implementation. In particular, the report recommends that government departments and agencies should:

- collect data on the religious affiliations of pupils in all schools;
- issue a set of principles for teaching about religion and citizenship in a multi-faith society;
- provide similar guidance on the inclusion of Islamic issues in the teaching of history;
- give guidance to registered inspectors on what to look for in reporting on the extent to which schools meet the needs of Muslim pupils; and
- encourage more Muslims to train as teachers.

The report also recommends that LEAs and schools should:

- encourage Muslim representation on schools' governing bodies;
- develop mentoring schemes that will provide role models for Muslim pupils;
- ensure that there is an explicit reference to religion in all policies on racism; and
- produce written guidelines on meeting the pastoral, religious and cultural needs of Muslim pupils.

The report further highlights the need for coherent policies on religious education, school dress code, school meals, collective acts of worship, fasting periods, religious holidays, Friday prayers, single-sex groupings and classes, contacts with parents, contacts with mosques and mosque schools, physical education dress and showering arrangements.[253]

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[251] *The Swann Report,* p. 515. See also: M. A. Khan-Cheema *et al., The Muslims and "Swann",* The Council of Mosques (UK and Eire), London, 1986.

[252] The Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia was set up by the Runnymede Trust in 1996, under the chairmanship of Professor Gordon Conway, and published a major report, *Islamophobia: a Challenge for Us All,* the following year (Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia*).

[253] Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia*, p. 46.

The Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain published its report *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (known as the *Parekh Report*) in 2000.[254] Although it deals with many other matters besides education, the report highlights the inadequacy of the lead set by government on issues of equality and diversity in schooling, a problem that is only partly offset by the activities of unions, independent bodies and LEAs. It also draws attention to the inadequacy of current ethnic monitoring procedures, which are criticised because the categories used blur significant differences between groups; the failure of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant to have an impact on current patterns of underachievement; and the poor record of OFSTED on race issues.

Of particular interest to Muslims are some of the *Parekh Report's* recommendations and comments on matters of religion and education. The report says that a statement of general principles should be drawn up on reasonable accommodation in relation to religious and cultural diversity in schools and that schools with a religious ethos should be encouraged. It also suggests the establishment of a commission on the role of religion in the public life of a multi-faith society, to make recommendations on legal and constitutional matters.[255]

A number of reports issued in response to the 2001 disturbances in Bradford, Oldham and Burnley make substantial comments on education in the context of a multicultural society. The Bradford Vision Report, *Community Pride, Not Prejudice* (known as the *Ouseley Report*) comments on the lack of consultation with ethnic minority communities over education, as well as the marginalisation of ethnic minority governors and teachers in schools.[256] This report also comments on the prevalence of Islamophobia in schools and the failure of "all-white and/or all-Muslim schools" to contribute to social and racial integration.[257] The report recommends a number of initiatives to promote social harmony, emphasise social inclusion, eliminate institutional discrimination, celebrate success and promote diversity. Citizenship education in schools is seen as a major way to carry forward this agenda, particularly by

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[254] *The Parekh Report.*

[255] *The Parekh Report,* pp. 241–243.

[256] Bradford District Race Review Team, *Community Pride, not Prejudice,* Bradford Vision, Bradford, 2001, (hereafter, *The Ouseley Report*). One of the strengths of the report is that it incorporated the views of young people. Muslim pupils from Belle Vue Girls School made up a quarter of the Review Team that produced the report, and the report devotes significant space to young people's views about education and a description of successful community projects involving young people. Although the report is centrally about the growing ethnic divisions in Bradford and the "worrying drift to self-segregation", it has a lot to say about education.

[257] *The Ouseley Report,* p. 1.

teaching pupils about diversity and the need for mutual respect and understanding.[258] Bradford Council's action plan in response to the report was published in mid-2002. It included an enhanced curriculum for citizenship in Bradford, the establishment of a Youth Parliament with elections in September 2002, and the requirement that faith schools should produce a statement on their contribution to community cohesion.[259]

A report entitled *Community Cohesion* (widely known as the *Cantle Report*)[260] was one of two reports published by the Home Office that were concerned with issues of community cohesion.[261] It identified separate educational arrangements[262] as one of the main factors contributing to the "parallel lives" of different ethnic communities, and it argued that cross-cultural understanding would develop more easily if schools had a better mix of faiths and cultures.[263] The *Cantle Report* therefore recommended that all schools, whether faith schools or not, should limit their intake from one culture or ethnicity and should offer at least 25 per cent of their places to members of other cultures or ethnicities within the local area.[264] However, the difficulties of implementing this recommendation are acknowledged,[265] and the top priority set out is to promote contact with other cultures by any possible means.

The *Cantle Report* also recommends that, in teaching programmes and daily activities, schools should respect the needs of different faiths and cultures; that their activities should be inspected to this effect; that more ethnic minority teachers and governors should be recruited, especially males, because "Pakistani Muslim youths" need more

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[258] *The Ouseley Report,* pp. 25–28.

[259] Audit Commission, *Bradford Metropolitan District Council: Corporate Assessment, December 2002,* London, Audit Commission, Comprehensive Performance Assessment Project Team, 2002, pp. 15–16.

[260] Home Office, *Community Cohesion: Report of the Independent Review Team Chaired by Ted Cantle,* London, Home Office, Community Cohesion Review Team 2001, (hereafter, *The Cantle Report*).

[261] The other was the Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion, *Building Cohesive Communities, a Report of the Ministerial Group Chaired by John Denham,* Home Office, London, 2001. A further report on community cohesion was issued by the Local Government Association in 2002.

[262] There is an ambiguity in the terminology used that led people to believe that the problem being identified was Muslim schools rather than segregation in State schools resulting from admissions policies and parental choices. For a further critique of the *Cantle Report,* see: Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia,* pp. 50–53 and Ch. 9.

[263] Shain and others have strongly criticised the report for "blaming the victim" by implying that "racism is *caused by* segregation rather than *causing* it". See: F. Shain, *The Schooling and Identity of Asian Girls,* Stoke-on-Trent, Trentham Books, 2003, pp. vii–viii.

[264] *The Cantle Report,* p. 33.

[265] *The Cantle Report,* p. 34.

role models in schools;[266] and that staff and governors need more "diversity training". The report states that Islamophobia was often identified as a problem, adding that some young people felt they were "being socially excluded because of their faith" and that "this was not being recognised or dealt with".[267] However, no suggestions are made in the report as to how such issues should be addressed.

The *Oldham Independent Review* (known as the *Ritchie Report*)[268] provides useful statistics on the ethnic dimensions of the borough's schools and levels of achievement, but appears to ignore the distinctive needs of Muslim children. Parents are blamed for most of the educational problems in the borough, including extended holidays to Pakistan and Bangladesh[269] and "misconceptions concerning the education of other ethnic groups".[270] No attempt is made to explore the reasons for parental actions or the potential educational value of the trips to countries of origin. The final recommendation for pre-16 education is "that all parents are mindful of their responsibility to equip their children in the most positive ways to develop the skills and attitudes needed to live in a multicultural society".[271]

A further report, *Burnley Speaks, Who Listens* (known as the *Clark Report*), contains only a small section on education, though there is a discussion of educational policies in an appendix, together with a comprehensive report from the Lancashire Education Authority.[272]

The year 2004 has seen a proliferation of reports on issues relating to the education of Muslim children in the UK. January 2004 saw the publication of a report by M. I. Coles, a senior adviser in Birmingham LEA, entitled *Education and Islam: a new strategic approach.* This report combines a valuable discussion of policy issues, particularly relating to LEA initiatives, with a statement of the principles that underpin a Muslim approach to education and an examination of current issues of concern. It presents 15 reasons why a new strategy is needed for dealing with Muslims in

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[266] *The Cantle Report,* p. 36.

[267] *The Cantle Report,* p. 40.

[268] Oldham Independent Review Panel, *Oldham Independent Review Panel Report: One Oldham, One Future, under the chairmanship of David Ritchie,* Oldham Borough Council, 2001, (hereafter, *The Ritchie Report*).

[269] *The Ritchie Report,* p. 25.

[270] *The Ritchie Report,* p. 26.

[271] *The Ritchie Report,* p. 29.

[272] Burnley Task Force, *Burnley Speaks, Who Listens,* Burnley Borough Council, 2001. The Council's response to the report is contained in: Burnley Task Force, *A Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy for Burnley,* Burnley Borough Council, 2003.

education, and concludes with a further list of 15 components of the proposed new strategy. Perhaps the most important of these is the first:

> All those involved with education should seek and empathise with a greater understanding that goes beyond the daily practices and rules of Islam to an awareness of the centrality of the love and remembrance of God in Islam, and of the major issues faced by British Muslim pupils, their parents and their communities.[273]

The latest report from the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia contains a detailed review of progress over the last seven years. Its chapter on education includes a section setting out an agenda for further educational research,[274] based on the RAISE Project discussed below, and a discussion of issues affecting Muslim children arising from the recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.[275]

In Summer 2004, the RAISE Project[276] published a handbook for schools entitled *The Achievement of British Pakistani Learners: work in progress.*[277] This publication addresses the low attainment levels of pupils of Pakistani and Kashmiri heritage. It is based on a number of case studies carried out in Bradford, Derby, Kirklees, Leeds, Leicester, Manchester, Nottingham, Redbridge, Rotherham, Sheffield and Slough. The handbook deals with issues of identity, citizenship, parental involvement in schools, girls' progress, underachievement, and links between mainstream schools and mosque schools.

In June 2004, a consortium of Muslim organisations published a position paper, *Muslims on Education,* which aimed to open up dialogue between British Muslims and the Department for Education and Skills.[278] The paper has a chapter on general concerns, such as Islamophobia, parental choice and educational achievement. Further chapters in the paper cover issues arising in non-Muslim schools, in Muslim schools and in supplementary education. Some of the recommendations are familiar, such as halting the decline in single-sex provision, while others are innovatory, including tax incentives for Muslim children receiving home schooling, compulsory religious

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[273] Coles, *Education and Islam,* p. 20.

[274] Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia,* p. 51.

[275] Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, *Islamophobia,* pp. 54–56.

[276] A project set up in 2002 by the Uniting Britain Trust in conjunction with the Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber, and funded by Yorkshire Forward.

[277] RAISE Project, *The Achievement of British Pakistani Learners: work in progress,* Trentham Books, Stoke-on-Trent, 2004.

[278] AMSS, *Muslim on Education.* This report was prepared by the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS UK), the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism (FAIR), For Education and Development (FED 2000) and the Muslim College UK.

education at Key Stage 4 and the appointment of Muslim observers to LEA meetings. This paper also places significant emphasis on the spiritual dimension of education:

> Qualitative aspects such as spirituality and independence of thought are as important as quantitative aspects such as key stage assessments and examination grades in setting a vision for education.[279]

8.2   Central Government Initiatives

Central Government initiatives are generally based on the identification of minority pupils in terms of racial group, ethnicity and mother tongue, rather than in terms of religious faith. Recent amendments to the 1976 Race Relations Act seek to "eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good relations between people of different racial groups". According to these requirements, which became law in December 2001, schools must: draft a written policy explaining how they are promoting racial equality; monitor the ethnic balance of staff and pupils; monitor the achievements of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds; and develop policies to tackle the under-achievement of particular groups, where such under-achievement is identified.[280]

A number of recent Government initiatives, including the National Literacy Strategy, the National Numeracy Strategy, Beacon Schools, Specialist Schools and City Academies, have been introduced as a way of tackling low attainment. There have also been initiatives directed specifically at ethnic minorities. The Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant is intended to address any educational or other disadvantages experienced by ethnic minorities. As already noted, it is used, in particular, to support the language needs of refugee children and other pupils with a mother tongue other than English.[281] However, Zubaida Haque has reported that funding from this grant has "not been terribly effective so far in narrowing achievement gaps among minority ethnic groups".[282]

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[279]   AMSS, *Muslims on Education,* p. 9.

[280]   The requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2001 are set out in: Commission for Racial Equality, *Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality*, CRE, December 2001. Non-statutory guidance is provided in: Commission for Racial Equality, *A Guide for Schools* and *A Guide for Institutions of Further and Higher Education,* CRE. Both documents are available on the CRE website at www.cre.gov.uk.

[281]   National Literacy Trust, *Overview of Ethnic Minority Achievement and Literacy.*

[282]   Haque, *British Muslims,* p. 7.

A consultation document entitled *Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Minority Ethnic Pupils* was issued by the DfES in March 2003.[283] The overall aim was to equalise educational opportunities, particularly by paying attention to the needs of bilingual pupils, Afro-Caribbean pupils and "highly mobile" pupils. Detailed responses to this document have been published by the General Teaching Council for England,[284] the National Union of Teachers (NUT)[285] and other groups. Underpinning the *Aiming High* project, which was finally announced in October 2003,[286] is the fear that continuing underachievement may endanger social cohesion, as well as leaving personal and economic potential unrealised.[287]

From a Muslim perspective, what is particularly noticeable about this document, and the responses to it, is the failure to include a religious dimension. The shortage of "ethnic minority" teachers is discussed, and targets are set. However, unless the numbers of Muslim teachers are increased, Muslim pupils will continue to be without role models in schools. Although Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils are identified as underachieving groups at all stages of education, no attempt is made to examine possible reasons for this underachievement, except for bilingualism. Only African-Caribbean pupils and mobile pupils are targeted for special attention. *Aming High* simply ignores key reasons for the underachievement of Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils that relate to their religious affiliation, including religious prejudice, Islamophobia, the failure of schools to support their religious identity, the impact of supplementary schooling and their daily exposure to values different from those of the home. Instead, the answer to raising achievement is sought in strong leadership, effective teaching and learning, high expectations, an ethos of respect, including a clear approach to racism and bad behaviour, and parental involvement.[288]

8.3   Local Government Initiatives

Over the years, LEAs have devised a number of policies designed to respond to the need both to equalise opportunities and to preserve religious and cultural identity. For

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[283] Department for Education and Skills, *Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Ethnic Minority Pupils, Ref DfES/0183/2003,* DfES Publications, Nottingham, 2003, (hereafter, DfES, *Aiming High*).

[284] GTC, *Response.*

[285] National Union of Teachers, *Response to DfES Consultation "Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Ethnic Minority Pupils",* NUT, London, 2003 (hereafter NUT, *Response*).

[286] H. Muir, "Ethnic Minority Pupils Get More Help", *The Guardian,* 23 October 2003, p. 8.

[287] DfES, *Aiming High,* p. 4.

[288] DfES, *Aiming High,* p. 13.

example, Bradford Council produced a policy document in 1982 on educational provision for ethnic minorities, particularly Muslims, in Bradford.[289] The main issues covered were separate physical education lessons for girls; permission for Friday prayers for Muslims, led by imams, to be held in schools; permission for Muslim pupils to be absent on religious festivals and to wear traditional dress that met Muslim requirements for modesty and decency; permission for parents to withdraw their children from religious education and collective worship; and the provision of *halal* meat in schools. Most of these issues were not, however, implemented in practice, and the policy of merging single-sex schools and providing only co-education was also halted. Further guidance was issued by the same LEA the following year on how to recognise, challenge and correct racist behaviour in schools.[290] However, relations between Muslims and the broader community in Bradford were later damaged by a series of incidents, including the Honeyford affair[291] and the aftermath of Muslim protests against the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses.*

These early ground-breaking initiatives at local-authority level were followed by similar initiatives in Birmingham and elsewhere.[292] Over the last 20 years, these initiatives have been added to, and made more sophisticated, elsewhere in the country. However, the impact of such policies has been mixed, partly because of limited commitment to the policies within the LEA, with the result that implementation has been uneven and many schools have felt free to ignore them.

In December 2001, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council produced an important consultation document concerning provision for the educational needs of multicultural and multi-faith communities in the borough.[293] The document provides interesting statistics on the relationship between religion and education in the borough: 26 per cent of pupils in LEA schools are from ethnic minorities (mainly Muslim); 48 per cent

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[289] City of Bradford Metropolitan Council, *Education for a Multicultural Society: Provision for Pupils of Ethnic Minority Communities (LAM 2/82),* Bradford, City of Bradford Metropolitan Council, 1982.

[290] City of Bradford Metropolitan Council, *Racist Behaviour in Schools (LAM 6/83),* Bradford, City of Bradford Metropolitan Council, 1983. See also: Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity.*

[291] See: Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity.*

[292] City of Birmingham District Council, *Guidelines on Meeting the Religious and Cultural Needs of Muslim Pupils,* Birmingham Council, 1986 (revised in 1999). For a discussion of this document, see: D. Joly, *Britannia's Crescent: making a place for Muslims in British Society,* Avebury, Aldershot, 1995, especially Ch. 7.

[293] Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, *Faith Schools and Cultural Diversity: Consultation Document,* Education and Lifelong Learning Department, Blackburn, 2001 (hereafter, Blackburn, *Faith Schools).*

of the schools in the State sector are Christian schools (Catholic or Church of England), including eight Church of England primary schools with a majority of Muslim pupils; there are no Muslim schools in the State sector, but seven independent Muslim faith schools (with over 800 Muslim pupils between them). As part of the consultation, an independent market research company was commissioned to carry out small-scale research among parents in the borough. Some 176 families were interviewed, of which two-thirds were Asian.

From the main findings of the consultation listed below, it is clear that the parents consulted hold a wide range of views on the best form of education for their children:

- A number of "Asian heritage parents" expressed some dissatisfaction with LEA schools that were not meeting their religious, moral and cultural needs. Some wanted single-sex schooling at secondary level within the State system.

- There was support from a number of "Asian heritage parents" for Church of England schools, because these schools recognised the importance of faith. However, there was frustration at the lack of places available in such schools at the secondary level.

- There was a growing trend towards the use of independent Muslim faith schools. Various reasons were given for this, including academic standards, moral and spiritual ethos, single-sex schooling and the Muslim faith basis of the curriculum and policies of the schools.

- Some parents found the curriculum and opportunities in some independent Muslim schools to be narrow and oppressive, and they positively supported multicultural, multi-faith schools.

- Some groups and individuals wanted Muslim faith education to be provided within the State system.

- There was some evidence that young people felt less strongly about religious and cultural issues than their parents.[294]

In view of these findings, the document recommends that at least one of the existing independent Muslim faith schools should become a voluntary-aided school or a City Academy and that the possibility should be explored of changing the status of one Church of England or community primary school to a Muslim voluntary-aided primary school. The document also proposes exploring the possibility of transferring an existing high school into either a Church of England high school, welcoming pupils from all faiths, or a multi-faith City Academy. In addition, the report recommends that the LEA should continue to develop best practices in meeting the needs of all communities. These include: bilingual support for pupils; guidelines on school

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[294] Blackburn, *Faith Schools,* p. 3.

uniform and sportswear; guidance on monitoring racist incidents; guidance on meeting the needs of Muslim pupils during Ramadan and extended leave from school; support for underachieving pupils; experimenting with single-sex teaching at Key Stage 3; employing more ethnic minority teachers; and providing professional development for teachers on the needs of minority pupils.

These recommendations are broadly in line with Government policy to diversify educational provision, increase parental choice and encourage the development of more faith schools.[295] Other local authorities are following suit and engaging in sometimes lengthy consultation exercises about the justifiability and practicability of granting voluntary-aided status to Muslim schools.[296]

[295] The outcome of the consultation, *Report into findings of the consultation on faith schools and cultural diversity,* is available on the website of the Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council at http://council.blackburnworld.com/council/executive_board/executive_board_documents/0 30116/pdf/faith_schools_brief.pdf (accessed 1 October 2004).

[296] See, for example: Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee, *Faith in our Schools* (first draft), Oxfordshire County Council, 2004. This is a review of Council policy in the light of a recent application by a Muslim organisation to set up a faith school.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Muslim Children and British Schooling

9.1.1 Compulsory education

Choice and Diversity in Schooling

1. The Department for Education and Skills and Local Education Authorities should develop improved structures for consultation with Muslims, at both the national and local levels, on matters of educational policy and practice.

2. The Department for Education and Skills, the Teacher Training Agency and research councils should provide funds for focused research investigating issues that influence Muslim parents' choice of schools and are of real concern to the Muslim community. This should include such topics as the relationship between single-sex schooling and achievement levels; the compatibility of community schools with Islamic values; and the extent to which Muslim schools prepare students for British citizenship.

Community Schools

3. Local Education Authorities and schools should ensure that Muslim values are respected in schools, so that Muslim children are not put in a position where they are expected to act in a way that conflicts with their fundamental beliefs and values. Schools with Muslim pupils should carry out an audit of school policies, procedures and curriculum, to ensure that they are "Muslim-friendly".

4. The Department for Education and Skills should establish national guidelines on ways to meet the distinctive needs of Muslim pupils, incorporating best practice at the level of the Local Education Authorities. These should include issues of clothing; school meals; school attendance during, and acknowledgement of, Islamic festivals; Muslim needs during Ramadan; meeting Muslim hygiene and cleanliness requirements; providing prayer facilities for Muslim students for the midday prayer; and permission for attendance of a mosque for the Friday midday prayer.

5. Local Education Authorities should explore the possibility, wherever Muslims make up a large majority of the population of a particular community school, of re-establishing that school as a Muslim voluntary-aided school. Parental opinion should be investigated, along with the willingness of the local council

for mosques or other Muslim community organisations to manage the school, and the ability of such organisations to perform this role.

6. Local Education Authorities should establish procedures for disseminating good practice in meeting the needs of Muslim pupils. An advisory teacher in each Local Education Authority could be given special responsibility for this.

Church Schools

7. Where a church school plans to admit up to 15 per cent of pupils who do not belong to the same denomination, those places should be open to all faiths, not just to Christians. This would improve choice for Muslim parents and also enrich the cross-cultural and inter-faith understanding of the church school.

8. Where Muslims make up a large majority of the population of a particular Church of England or other voluntary school, the Diocesan board of education should explore the possibility of re-establishing that school either as a Muslim voluntary-aided school or as a multi-faith school.

9. Local Education Authorities should explore with Diocesan Boards and other religious groups the potential of establishing multi-faith schools, as a way of meeting the needs of those parents who want a multicultural but faith-based education.

Single-Sex Schooling

10. Local Education Authorities should explore the possibility of providing single-sex education as an option available to parents in regions where there are significant numbers of Muslim pupils.

State-Maintained and Independent Muslim Schools

11. Stronger links should be developed between Muslim and non-Muslim schools, whether the former are independent, State-funded or simply community schools with a large preponderance of Muslim pupils. At the pupil level, such links might take the form of school visits; pen-pal or email exchanges; joint sporting, debating or extra-curricular activities; and other twinning activities. However, there are also benefits in making links at the teaching and

administrative levels.[297] Personal advice services, such as Connections, that are currently enjoyed by the maintained sector should be extended to pupils in non-maintained Muslim schools.

12. Local Education Authorities should seek to create a more inclusive school system by bringing independent Muslim schools wherever possible into the LEA community of schools.

9.1.2   Supplementary Schools

13. Where Muslim pupils attend mosque schools or other supplementary schools on a regular basis, Local Education Authorities and community schools should initiate contacts with these schools in order to increase mutual understanding of educational goals and methods and to encourage closer working relationships. Bradford's practice of encouraging links between mainstream schools and supplementary mosque schools is an example of good practice worth emulating elsewhere.

9.1.3   The Academic Achievements of Muslims

14. The Department for Education and Skills and Local Education Authorities should ensure that factors relating to faith or religion that may affect pupils' achievement levels are taken into account in future planning. The Government should require Local Education Authorities to show in their Educational Development Plans how they intend to raise the achievement levels of minority faith groups, as well as minority ethnic groups.

15. The Department for Education and Skills should commission research on the causes of disaffection among certain groups of Muslim pupils and young people, especially boys, in order to develop strategies (in conjunction with parents and community leaders) to support Muslim pupils at risk of exclusion from community schools.

16. The current effectiveness of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) in dealing with specifically Muslim issues (as opposed to 'Asian' or minority ethnic issues) and helping to raise the achievement levels of Muslim pupils should be examined. More training for registered inspectors should be

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[297] *The Cantle Report* makes further helpful suggestions about ways to address what it calls "the problem of mono-cultural schools". *The Cantle Report,* p. 35.

provided where necessary, especially on Islamophobia and issues of British Muslim identity.

9.1.4   Muslims in Further and Higher Education

17. The Government should establish a system of student loans that does not involve Muslim students in Higher Education being required to act against Islamic rules on paying and receiving interest.

18. Universities and other institutions of Further and Higher Education should ensure that prayer facilities (including the necessary washing facilities) are provided for Muslims on all campuses; that food in conformity with Islamic dietary requirements is available in student refectories; and that no Muslim students are required on any courses to wear clothing that contravenes Muslim rules regarding modesty and decency. They should also respect Islamic festivals and prayer times in planning events that require student attendance, in particular examinations, and should be aware of the special needs of Muslim students who fast during the month of Ramadan.

19. Universities and other institutions of Further and Higher Education with significant numbers of Muslim students should ensure that students are provided with pastoral support through a Muslim chaplaincy or counselling services. Universities with smaller numbers of Muslim students should ensure that chaplains and counselling services are trained to meet the needs of Muslim students.

20. Universities and other institutions of Further and Higher Education should develop official policies on Islamophobia within their equal opportunities and race relations policies, and should develop sensitive procedures for reporting incidents of religious harassment and discrimination both on and off campus.

21. Universities and other institutions of Further and Higher Education should ensure that there are no obstacles that discourage the recruitment of Muslim students across the full range of courses, or the recruitment and promotion of Muslim academic and support staff.

9.1.5   Muslims Working in the Education System

School Teachers

22. Teacher trainers should investigate the reasons why Muslims, especially Muslim men, are avoiding the teaching profession, so that steps can be taken to improve the desirability of the profession for Muslims.

23. The Department for Education and Skills, Local Education Authorities, schools and Teacher Trainers should establish targets for the recruitment specifically of Muslim teachers, not just teachers from ethnic minorities.

24. Local Education Authorities should carry out ethnic and religious monitoring of promotions to ensure that Muslim teachers and administrative staff are being treated fairly and equally.

School Governors

25. Local Education Authorities and schools should take positive steps to recruit Muslim governors both as parent governors and as community representatives.

Home-School Links

26. Local Education Authorities should survey the opinions of Muslim parents about their children's education and about the preferences they have for different kinds of schooling, whether single-sex, faith-based, multicultural or other. They should also arrange consultation meetings with Muslim parents' groups, mosques, community organisations and young people, to discuss ways to respect Islamic culture and meet the needs of Muslim pupils. They should then develop practices and strategies to support Muslim pupils and should be responsible for providing extra support where necessary.

27. Local Education Authorities and schools should actively encourage home-school links for Muslim families, so that schools can involve parents more fully in the activities of the school and so that the school can take account of parents' wishes.

9.2   Issues of Identity and Islamophobia

9.2.1   Religious and Ethnic Identity

28. The Department for Education and Skills and Local Education Authorities should ensure that all educational statistics are collected on the basis of religion or faith, as well as ethnic background.

29. OFSTED inspectors should be required to report in every school inspection on the way in which maintained schools are supporting the identity of Muslim pupils and meeting their spiritual, moral and other needs. Good practice should be acknowledged and shared.

9.2.2   Islamophobia in Schools and Universities

30. Schools, Local Education Authorities and national bodies should ensure that Islamophobia in all its forms is specifically included in all policies on racism, and that it is incorporated into existing initial and in-service training programmes on bullying and racism. Teachers should be trained to offer support to Muslim pupils who are victims of Islamophobic behaviour and to deal appropriately with the offending pupils.

9.2.3   Knowledge of Islam among Non-Muslims

31. Schools should take all possible steps to check the factual accuracy of representations of Islam in the textbooks and library books they use, and to check that they include pictures of Muslim pupils in a non-tokenistic way in textbooks for all subjects.

32. Local Education Authorities and schools should ensure that where citizenship is taught as a school subject, it is taught in a way which is sensitive to the particular issues that face Muslims as British citizens. This may require the development of specific materials relating to Muslims and Citizenship that schools can use both with Muslim pupils and in the context of developing inter-cultural understanding and respect.

33. Local Education Authorities should ensure that training and support for school governors includes developing sensitivity to, and an understanding of, issues of policy and practice that affect Muslim pupils, especially in such areas as exclusions, equal opportunities, admissions, appeals, and the community use of school premises.

9.3   Curriculum Issues

9.3.1   The Cultural Dimension of the Curriculum

Islamic Literature, History and Art

34. Schools should provide a culturally inclusive curriculum that integrates Muslim contributions into all aspects of the curriculum, especially literature, history and art, so that Muslim pupils can "recognise their identities in the curriculum".[298]

Arabic as a Modern Foreign Language

35. Arabic and community languages should be given full status as modern foreign languages in the National Curriculum, so that schools can meet the expected high take-up of these options among Muslim and other pupils. Taking this request seriously will require that both funds and places on PGCE courses are made available to train teachers of Arabic, and that graduates with qualifications in Arabic are recruited to such courses.

English as an Additional Language

36. Local Education Authorities and schools should ensure that bilingual pupils and those learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) receive appropriate support for their language skills and needs, to help them to achieve their full potential.

37. Local Education Authorities and schools should ensure that EAL material respect Muslim values.

Sex Education, Music and the Performing Arts

38. Teacher training institutions and Local Education Authorities should ensure that teachers working in areas of the curriculum that raise particular issues for Muslims are given specific training to help them to be sensitive to Muslim beliefs and values. This applies specially to the teaching of music, art, dance and sex education to Muslim children.

Religious Education

39. Schools with a significant number of Muslim students should offer Islam as an option for Muslim children studying Religious Education for GCSE.

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[298] NUT, *Response,* p. 7, para. 42.

40. Where Muslim children attend community schools or church schools, suitable provision should be made for qualified Muslim teachers to provide separate Religious Education lessons, wherever possible.

41. Local Education Authorities should ensure that there is adequate Muslim representation on their Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE).

9.3.2   Teacher Training

42. All institutions responsible for initial teacher training should ensure that students are adequately prepared to meet the needs of Muslim pupils and to understand and respond appropriately to issues of cultural diversity in and beyond the classroom. Teachers training should encourage positive perceptions and expectations of Muslim pupils.

43. Local Education Authorities should ensure that teachers, including head teachers, are supported through induction and continuing professional development to develop further skills and increased confidence in meeting the needs of Muslim students. Such training should be an obligatory element, for example, in the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH).

44. The Department for Education and Skills, Local Education Authorities, schools and teacher trainers should ensure that assessment practices respect cultural diversity. Examination questions should not assume a non-Muslim framework of values. A non-standard response to questions about history, literature or other arts and humanities subjects that is written from a Muslim perspective should be respected as valid, in the same way that feminist, Marxist or postmodern responses are accepted.

45. Teacher trainers should seek ways to make training more Muslim-friendly, in order to attract more Muslim teachers. More support should be provided for Muslims training to be teachers in order to encourage long-term commitment to the profession.

Appendix 1: Definitions

"Community schools" are State schools under the control of the Local Education Authority (LEA); the vast majority are co-educational.

"Church schools" are State-funded schools under the control of a church, a diocesan board of education or other religious authority; a higher proportion than for community schools (though still a minority) are single-sex. Church schools may be voluntary aided, voluntary controlled, special agreement or foundation schools. In *voluntary aided* schools, school governors carry responsibility for admissions and the appointment of staff, the cost of building maintenance and improvement is shared between governors and the LEA, and Religious Education follows the Church syllabus. In *voluntary controlled* schools and *foundation* schools, the cost of building maintenance and improvement is met by the LEA, and Religious Education follows the local Agreed Syllabus. However, in voluntary controlled schools, admissions and the employment of staff are managed by the LEA, whereas in foundation schools they are managed by the governors. *Special agreement* schools are very similar to voluntary aided schools; the term refers to a small group of mainly Catholic schools set up by agreement with LEAs before the 1944 Education Act.

"Muslim schools" are mainly independent (i.e. fee-paying) schools, but five now have State funding as voluntary aided schools; at secondary level, virtually all are single-sex.

Religious categories in the UK 2001 National Census: the 2001 census asked an optional question on religious affiliation. The data is disaggregated into the following nine categories: Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, any other religion, no religion and religion not stated.

Ethnic categories in the UK 2001 National Census: the 2001 census contained a 16-point structure: White (British, Irish or Any Other White Background); Mixed (White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian or any other Mixed Background); Asian or Asian British (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Any Other Asian Background); Black and Black British (Caribbean, African, any other Black background); Chinese or other ethnic group (Chinese, any other).

"Ethnic minorities": in this report, the use of the term "ethnic minority" as a broad "umbrella" label, is deliberate, to signify reference to a wide variety of ethnic minority groups. Where greater precision is required, reference to specific component groups within the ethnic minority population is made in the text. There is, inevitably, considerable debate and disagreement on the question of race, ethnicity and nomenclature. No specific political or sociological inference should be drawn from the use of related terminology in this report.

"White": as with the term "ethnic minority", the generic label "White" should be used with some caution. The existence of distinctive ethnic groups within the "White" category is gradually being acknowledged. Notably, in the UK 2001 National Census, people of Irish descent are recognised as a separate ethnic group.

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