

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

**REVISED
GUIDELINES ON MEETING
THE RELIGIOUS AND
CULTURAL NEEDS OF
MUSLIM PUPILS**

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**Birmingham City Council
Education Department**

**Guidelines on Meeting the Religious and Cultural Needs of Muslim
Pupils**

I am delighted to know that the Muslim Liaison Committee (MLC) in Birmingham has produced this revised booklet 'Guidelines on Meeting the Religious and Cultural Needs of Muslim Pupils' which they intend to circulate to schools. I believe it will certainly be useful both for general information and help while planning programmes of study.

It was good to see that the revised booklet includes many more suggestions and recommendations. These should help to enhance the status of Muslim pupils through clear and better understanding of their social values both in teaching and learning. It may well help to raise their profile in schools within the realm of Education Reform Acts 1988 and 1991.

I would recommend schools to consider these guidelines for meeting the needs of their Muslim pupils and make good use of them.



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Date; 12th October 1999

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THE MUSLIM LIAISON COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION

Since the establishment of the Muslim Liaison Committee in July 1983, considerable work of immense value has been done, which has undoubtedly made a noticeable impact, in the Muslim community and in the world of education in general. A lot of output in this pioneering field has been made by the Muslim member organizations of the Muslim Liaison Committee, which has been made possible by the understanding and cooperation of the L.E.A.

The emergence of the Muslim Liaison Committee was a direct result of the realization by Muslim parents of their responsibility for providing supplementary education to their children and monitoring their mainstream education. The objective was not only to ensure the continuity of their social and cultural values as a Muslim identity but also to help them interact with the host community positively and creatively.

The Muslim Liaison Committee therefore decided to liaise with the Education Committee of the City of Birmingham, then Department for Education and Science, various educational institutions engaged in similar work and social, cultural and religious bodies at both local and national levels.

It was with this objective in view, that the Muslim Liaison Committee concentrated on its primary purpose and over a period of time and with some perseverant and assiduous effort, successfully negotiated with the City Education Department the "Guidelines on meeting the religious and cultural needs of Muslim pupils".

These Guidelines were originally published in 1988 by the Muslim Liaison Committee and were widely circulated amongst Muslim Organizations and schools. For full comprehension of the Guidelines by parents who could not read English, they were translated in to Urdu, a language spoken and understood by the majority of the Muslim community.

During the past ten years the MLC successfully highlighted the problems confronted by Muslim children in Birmingham schools and fully co-operated with the authorities in finding their solutions. The MLC not only created awareness and better understanding among parents, teachers and school governors, but also liaised closely with the Local Education Authority in finding a durable basis of mutual understanding and respect.

The untiring efforts, made by the selfless members of the MLC in the field of education, have been widely appreciated and well acknowledged by the LEA, the Department of Education and Employment and all other authorities concerned. It

also enjoys the full support of all its member organizations and mosques including the Pakistan and Bangladesh Forums.

As a result of the legislative changes in recent years arising from successive Education Acts, it became necessary to review certain aspects of the 'Guidelines'. This task was undertaken by the MLC and carried through with the co-operation of Birmingham City Education Department in general and with the assistance of the Birmingham Advisory Support Service in particular.

At the time of publication of the previous Guidelines we had expressed our gratitude and indebtedness to the Multi-cultural Inspectorate, Headteachers of various schools and the City Education Department for their valuable contribution and we now wholeheartedly thank the chief Education Officer Professor Tim Brighouse, and Dr. Zahoor Anwar Chaudhary, head of Standards Fund Unit and other officials of the City Education Department who extended their co-operation and enabled us to affect the appropriate changes and amendments to this document. Finally, our thanks are also due to (SACRE) "Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education" for their moral support.

The Muslim Liaison Committee once again has undertaken the publication of these Guidelines in both English and Urdu languages with full realization that Muslim children and their parents will benefit from them and that they will create awareness of the sensitivity of certain delicate issues, the significance of which may not have been known to the indigenous population, including teaching staff and the Education Authority.

Thanks are also due to the following members of the Muslim Liaison Committee working groups, who composed these revised guidelines,

Dr. Mohammad Yusuf Qamar
Malik Fazal Hussain
Mohammad Saleem Akhtar
Ch. Mohammad Lateef JP
Moulana Khurram Bashir Amin
Miss Qamar Qureshi

May God reward the efforts of all and grant strength to continue with this noble task into the next millennium.

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Secretary'

Muslim Liaison Committee,
Birmingham.

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

POLICY ON MEETING THE RELIGIOUS
AND CULTURAL NEEDS OF MUSLIM PUPILS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In response to many requests, in June 1984 the LEA, after consultation with Headteachers and the Muslim Liaison Committee (MLC), the LEA established a working group to formulate a set of guidelines to assist to Schools in their efforts to meet the needs of Muslim pupils, The working group concluded its work with the formulation of a document entitled 'Guidelines on Meeting the Religious and Cultural Needs of Muslim Pupils',

1.2 Although the document focuses upon the needs of Muslim pupils, it's underlying principles have a much wider application. It should be seen as an instrument which guides our provision and response to the needs of other religious minorities, since the principles enshrined in this document -those of tolerance, respect and recognition of other cultural and religious groups are universally applicable.

1.3 In view of legislative change, in particular the Education Act 1988, it has become necessary to review certain aspects of this document. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to accommodate these key changes and to supersede existing guidelines where necessary.

2.0 THE EDUCATION ACT 1988

2.1 Section I of the Act states that *if shall be the duty of ...every local authority in respect of every school maintained by them., to exercise their functions (with respect to religious education, religious worship and the National Curriculum) with a view to securing that the curriculum for the school satisfies the requirement of this section.*

It states that the curriculum must be such that it *“is balanced and broadly based ...(and) promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils... (and) prepares such pupils for the opportunities and experiences of adult life.*

2.2 The Authority hopes that Headteachers will continue to respect such wishes in order to meet appropriately the needs of all our pupils in a changing multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-faith society.

3.0 SCHOOLS AND MUSLIM PARENTS

3.1 Many schools have taken account of Muslim parents' wishes on the basis of their religious adherence/convictions and have undertaken arrangements to accommodate these wishes through changes in school practices, procedures, rules and regulations.

3.3 Many of these changes have been achieved through co-operation between parents and schools. Indeed, a number of suggestions within the guidelines are already being observed by schools and these positive actions have clearly benefited pupils, parents and schools.

3.4 Despite these developments, a significant number of Muslim and other ethnic minority parents are still expressing concern that the religious and cultural needs of their children have not been properly addressed within the mainstream education system. Concerns have particularly focused upon the dress code for pupil participation in physical education, the involvement of their children in music classes and the lack of suitable prayer facilities.

3.5 In order to systematically and comprehensively address these concerns with a degree of consistency, what is arguably required is a Departmental policy/guidance document which takes into account both the sensitive nature of pupil/parental concerns about religious/cultural issues, whilst addressing the operational issues of school practice. This paper has been written to meet this requirement.

4.0 EDUCATION FOR OUR MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY:
EQUALITY ASSURANCE -THE AUTHORITY'S POLICY

4.1 The deliberations of the working group have been an integral part of the Authority's policy for promoting equality and justice through the establishment of a multi-cultural and anti-racist perspective in City schools.

4.2 The Authority's policy objectives, as reaffirmed and restated in the Chief Education Officer's Report to the Education Committee (January 1995) are:-

a) Preparing all pupils for a life in a multi-cultural society and building upon the strengths of cultural diversity.

b) Providing for the particular needs of children having regard to their ethnic, cultural and historical background.

c) Being aware of and countering racism and the discriminatory practices which give rise to it.

The Report also provides guidance for schools.

4.3 This proposed policy document is offered in order that schools may review their practices and procedures to meet appropriately the religious and cultural needs of Muslim pupils, as an integral part of the implementation of the three objectives of the Authority's policy on 'Education for Our Multicultural Society: Equality Assurance',

5.0 THE RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL NEEDS OF MUSLIM PUPILS

5.1 In meeting the religious and cultural needs of Muslim pupils, schools will recognize that cultural issues based on religion, such as modesty, the wearing of clothing with religious significance and dietary needs will affect some children in school.

5.2 Schools are urged to bear in mind that Asian parents may have strong reservations about the kind of relationships between boys and girls, particularly at the age of 10 and over, that are customary in our schools. They should also be aware that certain curricular areas of experience, such as health education, drama and physical education (in particular, gymnastics, swimming and dance in mixed classes) and certain fund-raising activities, including lotteries and gambling, may need careful consideration and discussion with parents, if confidence in the school is to be maintained. The issue of changing and Showering for P.E. is likely to raise particularly sensitive concerns and fears for some parents as is the observance of fasting and the two Eid festivals. Schools should be aware of the strength of feeling parents may have on these matters.

5.3 There is nothing inherently unreasonable or exceptional in any of these concerns. The Authority believes that with goodwill and sensitivity it can work with schools to develop a response that ensures pupils will participate wholeheartedly in the curriculum.

5.4 Whenever there are tensions and difficulties between parental demands and school responses, dialogue, discussion and negotiation usually resolve potential conflict. It should be noted, however, that under the National Curriculum, parents/guardians do not have a right to withdraw their children from particular classes. In situations of conflict, Headteachers are strongly advised to consult with officers within the Authority and the Muslim Liaison Committee (MLC).

6.0 BIRMINGHAM LEA POLICY

6.1 Collective Worship

6.1.1 The distinction between an 'assembly' and 'collective worship' is important. 'Assembling' is a traditional part of the life of British schools. It is the coming together of the school or sections of it for activities which have little or no religious significance.

6.1.2 The 1988 Act has outlined 'collective worship' as the '*provision for a single act of worship for all pupils or for separate acts of worship for pupils in different age groups or in different school groups.*'

6.1.3 The Act requires that 'collective worship' for all pupil should be "*wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian characters*" (section 7(1)). However, it does recognize that where there is a sizeable number of children of other faiths, schools can apply to the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) for a determination allowing for 'collective worship' to take a different form for the school, or for groups of pupils in the school. For example, if a significant proportion of a school's pupils belong to the Muslim faith, then that school can apply to SACRE for a determination. If this is successful, the school could pay for the services of a religious instructor (Maulana) to come to the school to conduct appropriate prayers/instruction. Alternatively, if it is practical, a school can arrange for pupils to attend a local mosque. Where such provision is made, it is suggested that arrangements are such that pupils are not denied access to the Curriculum, by for example, arranging lesson times appropriately.

6.1.4 Such instruction has been given in some Birmingham schools where there are sufficient numbers of Muslim pupils to justify the schools making the necessary arrangements. Whilst Headteachers should ensure that adequate accommodation is provided, the instruction must be provided without cost to the Authority and ought to be delivered by a Muslim who has the support and confidence of the Muslim community.

6.1.5 It is also possible for a school to apply for more than one determination in order to meet the religious/cultural needs of pupils from a range of faiths.

6.1.6 It is a legal requirement of schools to support the policy of assemblies for worship. Nevertheless, parents/guardian have the right to withdraw their children from an assembly and headteachers are required to facilitate this when requested.

6.1.7 The Authority's experience is that many schools have been able to work with parents in a relationship of mutual trust and respect to achieve the kind of arrangements described above. This secures the corporate aspect of school life, whilst respecting the different beliefs of pupils and parents in a mutually tolerant atmosphere. Such arrangements are warmly commended.

6.2. Prayer Facilities

6.2.1 Where demand for the provision of school-based prayer facilities exists, the Authority recommends that Headteachers should be sympathetic to such provision for secondary age pupils in schools where there is a significant number of Muslim pupils. It may be appropriate for schools to make such arrangements through the designation of a room for use by pupils, particularly for mid-day Friday prayers for Muslim pupils.

6.2.2 Any practical difficulties may be resolved through negotiation between Headteachers, parents, the MLC and governors.

6.3 Religious Festivals

6.3.1 The 1944 Education Act allows parents to absent their children from school on the occasion of a religious festival.

6.3.2 Muslim pupils may wish to celebrate the two major Muslim religious festivals, Eid ul-Fitr at the end of the fasting month of Ramadhan, and Eid- ul-Adha some ten weeks later, and may wish to have two religious holidays on each occasion.

6.3.3 The Authority is examining its allocation of occasional days and schools are recommended to give serious consideration to making use of these days to cover such festivals. Moreover, schools should consider these festivals when deciding upon dates for school closure, for example, for Teacher Days.

6.3.4 The Muslim Liaison Committee will provide the Authority with the approximate dates on which these festivals fall (since the exact dates are determined by the sighting of the moon) at least 2 years in advance, in order to assist the Authority and its schools in planning their allocation of occasional days holidays.

7.0 School Meals

7.1 It is important that schools respect dietary regulations based on religious conscientious objections to certain foods, for example, pig-meat or meat not ritually slaughtered.

7.2 Whether based on religion or otherwise, a child's dietary requirements should be ascertained by the headteacher on the child being admitted to the school and the child should be excused from eating inappropriate foods.

7.3 The Authority has a policy on 'Halal' meat in schools entitled 'Halal Meat -Notes for Guidance: Catering Supervisors' (attached as Appendix B). Due to the extremely sensitive nature of the manner in which Halal food needs to be delivered, stored, cooked and served, where provision for Halal food is made, it is recommended that the policy is strictly adhered to.

7.4 The Muslim Liaison Committee and the Authority strongly recommend that schools consult closely with the providers of school meals (currently Citiserve). In addition, the Halal Food Board can be contacted by schools for advice concerning all aspects of the provision of Halal food in City schools.

7.5 Citiserve also provide suitable non-meat meals of acceptable nutritional value irrespective of the number of children involved. Headteachers should continue to inform Citiserve of the number of children requiring this provision.

8.0 Sex Education

8.1 It is a requirement of law that the Governors of each LEA school formulate a sex education policy.

8.2 Sex education should be taught in schools as part of the biological sciences or as a programme of personal, social and moral education, or a cross- curricular issue.

8.3 Great care and sensitivity should be exercised in the teaching of this issue so that the religious or social beliefs of neither pupils nor parents/guardians are offended

9.0 Dress and Uniform

9.1 The Authority recommends that schools should be sensitive to the basic principle of modesty, which informs the dress worn by Muslim girls, in particular.

9.2 Schools should continue to allow Muslim girls to wear shalwar-kameez (loose trousers/tunic) and a small headscarf. In schools which have a particular uniform, parents should be asked to provide this in school colours.

9.3 Dress for PE and games should similarly be guided by respect for the adherence to the principle of modesty. The wearing of loose fitting tracksuits (for girls and boys) should be permitted since there are no religious objections to pupil participation in PE or games.

10.0 Religious Symbols

10.1 The wearing of religious symbols by Muslim pupils should not be equated with the wearing of jewellery.

10.2 For many pupils, the wearing of a religious symbol is a matter of personal religious conviction. This may take the form of a simple combination of letters or numbers (for example, 786), or a small amulet. These are usually worn on a delicate chain around the neck underneath the pupil's clothing. For some pupils this may be a matter of conscience, or loyalty to parents, or both. Subject to their duty to ensure the health and safety of pupils, headteachers are recommended to allow this observance.

10.3 In cases of difficulty about clarification of what constitutes a religious symbol, as distinct from jewellery, Head teachers are advised to seek guidance from the Muslim Liaison Committee.

11.0 Showering and Changing

11.1 As previously mentioned the principle of modesty should be respected.

11.2 From the age of puberty, schools should seek the provision of individual cubicles for showering and changing facilities.

11.3 In situations where pupils are required to shower communally, they should be allowed to cover themselves appropriately to retain modesty.

12.0 Swimming

12.1 Adherence to the principle of modesty should guide the type of provision that is made for swimming.

12.2 In schools where there is a demand for single-sex swimming for pupils above age 10, the Authority recommends that schools should strive towards making such provision.

12.3 As swimming is a National Curriculum subject, where such arrangements are not possible, schools should bear this in mind when considering the wishes of parents to withdraw their children from such activities.

13.0 Music/Dance/Drama

13.1 Music

Certain types of music may be offensive to some Muslim parents. In such instances, great care and sensitivity should be exercised before pupils are asked to participate in such musical forms.

13.2 Dance

The participation of their children in dance activities may be offensive to Muslim parents. Mixed classes for dance, particularly if they infringe the principle of modesty, are not, therefore, recommended.

Headteachers are advised that provision for such activities should be single- sex and that pupils should be permitted to wear appropriate loose clothing when participating in this activity.

13.3 Drama

The teaching of drama should be informed by the principle of modesty. The same principle applies in equal degree to theatrical performances. At secondary age, in particular, many Muslim parents may not give their daughters permission to appear in a public stage performance. Schools are recommended, therefore, to respect such wishes.

14.0 Further Information

If schools require guidance on any matter contained in this document, they are asked to contact the Authority's Officers or the Muslim Liaison Committee Members of the MLC can be contacted at the following address:-

Muslim Liaison Committee
c/o Birmingham Central Mosque
180 Belgrave Road
Birmingham
B12 OXS
Tel: 0121-440 5355

Appendix B

HALAL MEAT

NOTES FOR GUIDANCE: CATERING SUPERVISION

Halal meat products are now available fresh and frozen.

The following points are intended as a guide to help with the delivery, storage cooking and serving of Halal meat and the resultant washing-up-procedures.

ORDERING

Ordering for delivery of Halal meat needs to be controlled where Possible to one order per week (or a maximum of two).

DELIVERY

1. Check quality and quantity against the Delivery Note.
2. Remove fresh meat from plastic bag and store on butcher's tray.
3. Check temperature of frozen meat delivery. This should be -18°C or below.

STORAGE

1. Place fresh meat on butcher's tray and cover with grease-proof paper. NB: NEVER MIX HALAL WITH NON-HALAL MEAT.
2. Place on a separate shelf in the refrigerator, away from non-Halal, stored on shelf above non-Halal.

NB: Meat must be used on the day of delivery or the day after.

3. Frozen Halal meat products must stored in the freezer, away from non Halal meat, on a shelf above non-Halal. These products are to be cooked from frozen.

PREPARATION

1. Identify work surface which is to be used for the preparation of HALAL MEAT ONLY
2. A separate chopping board and knife should be identified and retained for HALAL MEAT PREPARATION ONLY
3. Where dishes produced using Halal meat are similar in appearance to dishes using non-Halal meat, IT IS VITALLY IMPORTANT THAT THEY ARE FINISHED OFF IN DIFFERENT WAYS, TO ENSURE THAT THEY CANNOT BE CONFUSED;
e.g. use of a different garnish, special mark on pastry or potato topping.

COOKING

1. Halal and non-Halal meat should never be cooked in the same container.
2. If possible, cook Halal in a separate oven to non-Halal.
3. If separate ovens are not available, Halal meat should be cooked in a separate tin on the upper shelves, with non-Halal meat in a separate tin on the lower shelves.

SERVICE

1. Once cooked, Halal dishes should be retained on a separate shelf in the hot cupboard, away from non-Halal dishes and identified.
2. Layout on the counter should ensure that Halal dishes are completely separate from non-Halal dishes.
3. Halal dishes MUST BE CLEARLY IDENTIFIED to prevent confusion with non-Halal dishes.
4. Separate serving utensils should be used and retained for Halal meat only.
5. Kitchen staff should ensure that Halal dishes are only served to those pupils who choose them.

CLEANING

1. Rinse, wash and sterilize all equipment in the usual way. Equipment and utensils used for Halal meat must be the first items into the washing-up water.
2. Preparation equipment should be rinsed and washed to the prescribed method and then sterilized in an oven at "a temperature at or above 85°C for two minutes".
3. Halal equipment should then be stored separately in the designated area.

USAGE

1. The provision of Halal meat-based dishes should correspond to the existing menu plan and recipes with regard to frequency and day of provision. Delivery patterns must also be considered.
2. Any difficulties experienced in meeting the menu requirements need to be discussed with your Area Catering Manager and any agreements or changes approved by Client Services and Head Teachers.

MONITORING

Cooks will be asked to monitor the Halal meat on the following points:-

1. Pupil acceptance.
2. Level of plate waste.
3. General comments.