


Citizenship and Muslim perspectives

~ teachers sharing ideas

Acknowledgements

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This publication shares just a small sample of the issues and debates raised during the process.

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This publication is about responding to the needs of teachers and schools working in a global and interdependent society.

International events, particularly since September 11th, have placed Muslims and Muslim communities under the glare of a media spotlight. We are bombarded with words and images that give powerful messages about Islam and Muslim communities, but that often reinforce difference and divisions.

Young people of all faiths and cultures are growing up in this context. Teachers and schools face a real challenge in enabling students to explore their own values and attitudes and helping them to recognise how these are influenced and shaped by the world around us.

This project responded to an interest expressed by many teachers, particularly those who were themselves not Muslim, in exploring Muslim perspectives. It highlighted the need to reflect on our role as professionals as well as practical classroom approaches. This publication shares some ideas that have come out of this process.

We hope that *Citizenship and Muslim perspectives* will offer a thought-provoking yet supportive stimulus and contribute to the development of an inclusive sense of citizenship for all.

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Foreword



The elimination of poverty from the world is the greatest challenge of this Millennium. But it is a challenge that can be met, if we have the will to do so. That is why the Department for International Development is committed to building public support for development across the UK, by raising awareness of its importance and significance for all of us, and the role that we can each play.

I commend the work that Islamic Relief and Tide~DEC have been doing to this end in Birmingham. I hope that this research project, the first initiative of its kind, serves as an inspiration to us all.

Valerie Amos

Baroness Valerie Amos

Secretary of State for International Development



A true Muslim is a citizen of the world. Not for us is a ghettoised existence, inward looking and oblivious of the outside world. We should remember that our Prophet [peace be upon him] spent 13 of his 23 years ministry living in Makkah among its polytheists, never drawing physical or social borders between his community of believers and their hostile neighbours.

The fundamental message of Islam is one of justice, respect and responsibility. We must be just to all, regardless of race, gender or creed. We must also accord respect to everyone and every legitimate social and political institution.

We must finally take our responsibility for the environment seriously. Allah has entrusted us with this planet; we must discharge our duties as trustees by caring for it and bequeathing it to the next generation in such a condition, which if not improved, is at least not damaged. The Prophet [pbuh] cared so much for the environment that he said, addressing his followers:

"If you stand with a sapling in your hand and hear the bugle heralding the end of the world and you have just enough time to plant the sapling, then do so at once."

He also commended a man who saved the life of a dog from dying of thirst.

As for humankind, the Holy Qur'an declares:

"We have honoured the children of Adam."

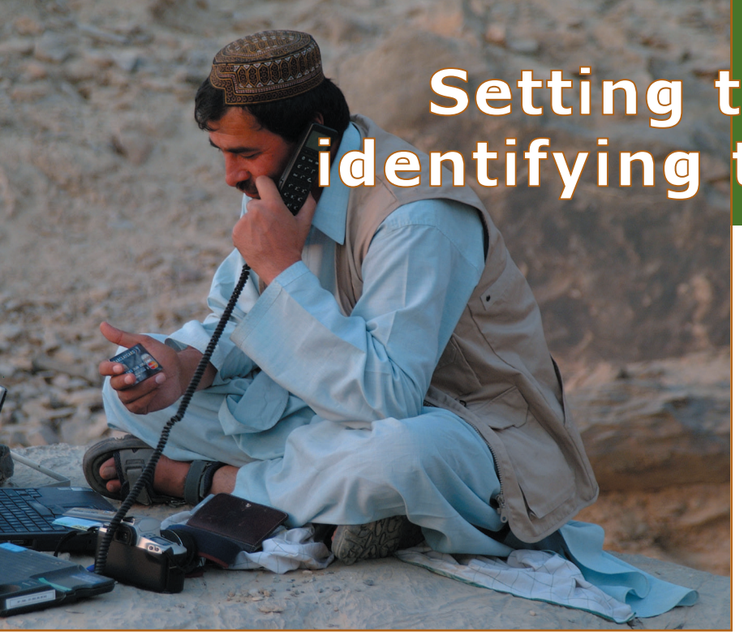
It is therefore incumbent upon us to accord every man, woman and child dignity and respect.

Citizenship is at the heart of Muslim moral teaching. This excellent volume helps the teacher to explore this most noble of Muslim perspectives with their pupils.

M.A. Zaki Badawi

Shaikh Dr. M.A. Zaki Badawi

Director of The Muslim College, London



Setting the scene and identifying the challenge

"Exploring key issues such as globalisation and interdependence through the eyes of ordinary Muslims will hopefully enhance our global outlook ... If we can add something of value to the debate on 'global citizens', we may influence - even in a small way - decisions being made about all our futures."

Imran Madden, Islamic Relief

There are over one billion Muslims – about $^1/_5$ of the world's population. As globalisation continues to bring different cultures and religions closer together, the need for a positive relationship between Muslims and their neighbours is greater than ever before.

The last decade or so, however, has brought tension to this relationship by events such as: the 1990 Gulf War; conflicts in the Balkans and Chechnya; September 11th; the unending Palestine question; and the Afghan and Iraq conflicts. In the UK and the rest of Europe, fears over the numbers of asylum seekers coming from Muslim countries, have also served to exacerbate anti-Muslim feeling or Islamophobia.

Ignorance is, of course, at the heart of the matter. Ignorance of the true nature of people's values and beliefs is distorting the judgement of some and Islamophobia is just one symptom of this. Here in the UK one of the most urgent challenges facing those who champion the ideal of a peaceful, integrated multi-ethnic and multi-faith society, is how to counter this ignorance. Teachers are, undoubtedly, at the forefront in facing this challenge.

There are many in the UK's diverse Muslim communities who are eager to work with others to face this challenge. Many see no contradiction in being a committed Muslim and being an active and positive British citizen. Many have comfortably adjusted to having a complex set of 'multiple identities' based on religion, ethnicity and citizenship in the UK, and are positively participating in all spheres of life.

Many Muslim families, however, continue to experience exclusion, through poor housing, educational underachievement, unemployment and discrimination, leading, in some, to low self-esteem, frustration and disillusion. This inevitably adds to tensions within and between communities.

Sections of the media have not helped matters. By focusing on negative stereotypes they have often highlighted extremist views that only lie at the fringe of the UK's Muslim communities; moderate mainstream Muslim voices are rarely featured. This unbalanced portrayal risks polarising people from all communities.

Polarisation of opinion has to be challenged, not just in the UK but also across the 'global village'. Globalisation and the unprecedented level of global interdependence now herald the urgent need for all human beings to work together in a sustainable way, so that today's generation leaves a positive inheritance for tomorrow.

For successful collaboration between people there needs to be respect and trust, things which can only come from a greater understanding of diverse viewpoints.

As an international charitable aid agency, based in the West, Islamic Relief feels it is in a unique position to play a positive role in teachers' discussions about citizenship by presenting Muslim perspectives.

It has entered into partnership with Tide~* and DFID** to initiate a short research project that has culminated in this report.

At the heart of this process has been a series of

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meetings with a group of West Midland teachers who came together over six months in 2002/3.

In this report we have sought to explore how teachers can be supported as they respond to society's increasing focus on Islam and Muslims. Key stage 3 was our initial starting point, but many of the report's findings are applicable across other key stages.

On page 6 we have examined why teachers feel there is a need for work on Muslim perspectives. To provide some context, we offer a brief profile of the Muslim community. Pages 10-11 provide a concise summary of the key beliefs and practices of Islam, and we have briefly explored the diversity of Muslim perspectives. The next section explores the implications for teachers and schools. It shares thoughts about the role teachers can play, and opportunities offered by citizenship education. Three case studies offer examples of practical approaches. On page 30, we list some useful resource material and point to where teachers might go for further information.

This report represents a simple milestone; clearly much more work needs to be done. The reflections and conclusions here are offered in the hope that they can somehow help to move the debate on.

* Teachers in Development Education [see page 33]

** Department for International Development

What does it mean to be a Muslim in today's society?

"For me it is striking a balance. I am a 25 year old female and have come to realise that as you get older this balance becomes ever more challenging as you are faced with constant 'non-Muslim' enticements. These range from finding an ethical job and not one that fills my capitalist greed to choosing appropriate music to listen to, clothes to wear and methods on how to conduct myself. Whilst I try to achieve this balance, I realise that this is a very personal path, one between myself and God and therefore one that should be a personal decision and not forced.

I strive to use Islam to better myself, to be kind, seek knowledge, help others, give respect and gain it. It teaches me that whilst I make my own mistakes that I should be less judgmental of others and able to do all this and more whilst wearing my trousers or laughing with my non-Muslim friends. You do not have to be a Muslim to possess these features but I know it will certainly assist me in my journey."

Ayshah Nazir, April 2003

Why is there a need for work in schools on Muslim perspectives?



We live in an increasingly diverse society. Teachers and schools are at the forefront of the challenge of enabling all young people to feel valued and included as citizens of this society.

School often represents the earliest opportunity in life for us to develop meaningful relationships with, and positive perceptions of, all sections of society. Ideally, school challenges 'otherness' - a learning opportunity that needs to be seized.

Our group of teachers involved in the project agreed that schools are in real need of support as they seek to help their pupils make sense of the world. It seems that there is a current lack of materials offering Islamic perspectives on contemporary themes.

One teacher concluded:

"Post September 11th, negative images and messages about Muslims and Muslim communities have been prevalent. We would welcome opportunities to explore examples of positive case study material that would challenge such stereotypes."

September 11th has prompted many open classroom discussions that have revealed the gap in perceptions between different ethnic and faith groups.

It was acknowledged by some in the group that there have been cases of increasing tension and occasional confrontation about 'Muslim issues'. All this highlights need for greater awareness of different perspectives and for effective teacher support.

Some in the group pointed to the ongoing Middle East Crisis [at the time of writing conflict in Iraq is in full flow], and that this risks further polarising opinion in schools. One teacher commented on the 'drip drip' effect of low-key racism and the subsequent rise in 'cultural insensitivity'. Another teacher said that in his school, where there is a 20% intake of Muslim Asian pupils [the rest being white], he is daily "faced with the challenge of how to integrate these two groups".

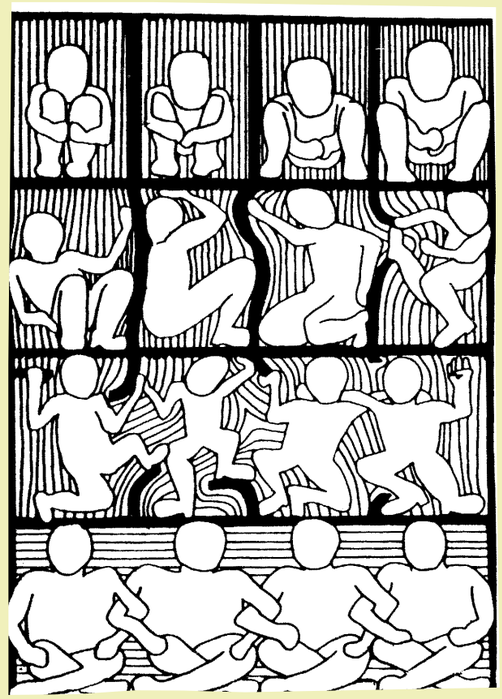
Teachers in schools with a large majority of Muslims faced other issues. They acknowledged the ignorance of many Muslim children of their Islamic heritage, and how this can affect self-esteem. They were also concerned about the 'tunnel vision' and racism of some of their pupils, and wondered how to encourage them to explore other views without entering into confrontation. Tensions between different ethnic Muslim groups were also reported, eg between pupils of Asian origin and newly arrived Somalis.

In the case of predominantly white schools, the group provocatively asked itself: "What's in it for the white kids?" The answer was emphatic: all children have a right to a balanced understanding of the world. This includes learning about a set of beliefs and perceptions which impact upon their lives [eg Middle East politics].

During the course of our discussions a wide spectrum of issues was raised by teachers. The context and priorities varied from school to school, but there was a strong consensus about core issues that they would like to see addressed. The views shown opposite reflect some of the key needs identified.

There is a need for work in schools on Muslim perspectives in order to …

- challenge stereotypes, often coming from a 'loaded media'
- challenge the polarisation of opinion amongst all pupils, whatever their background
- make connections and recognise the commonality between many 'Western' and Islamic viewpoints
- appreciate that divergent views exist about many issues within Muslim communities
- highlight the potential for partnership between all communities in the UK
- raise the self esteem of Muslim children by using positive source material from their faith and culture
- encourage inclusion and pluralism
- counter the growth of Islamophobia
- foster a positive sense of citizenship
- counter cultural disenfranchisement
- be aware of the Abrahamic tradition that underpins Judaism, Christianity and Islam
- come to terms with having 'multiple identities' based on our ethnicity, religion and where we live
- convey the inherent, moderate and tolerant nature of Islam [something that even many Muslim children are ignorant of]



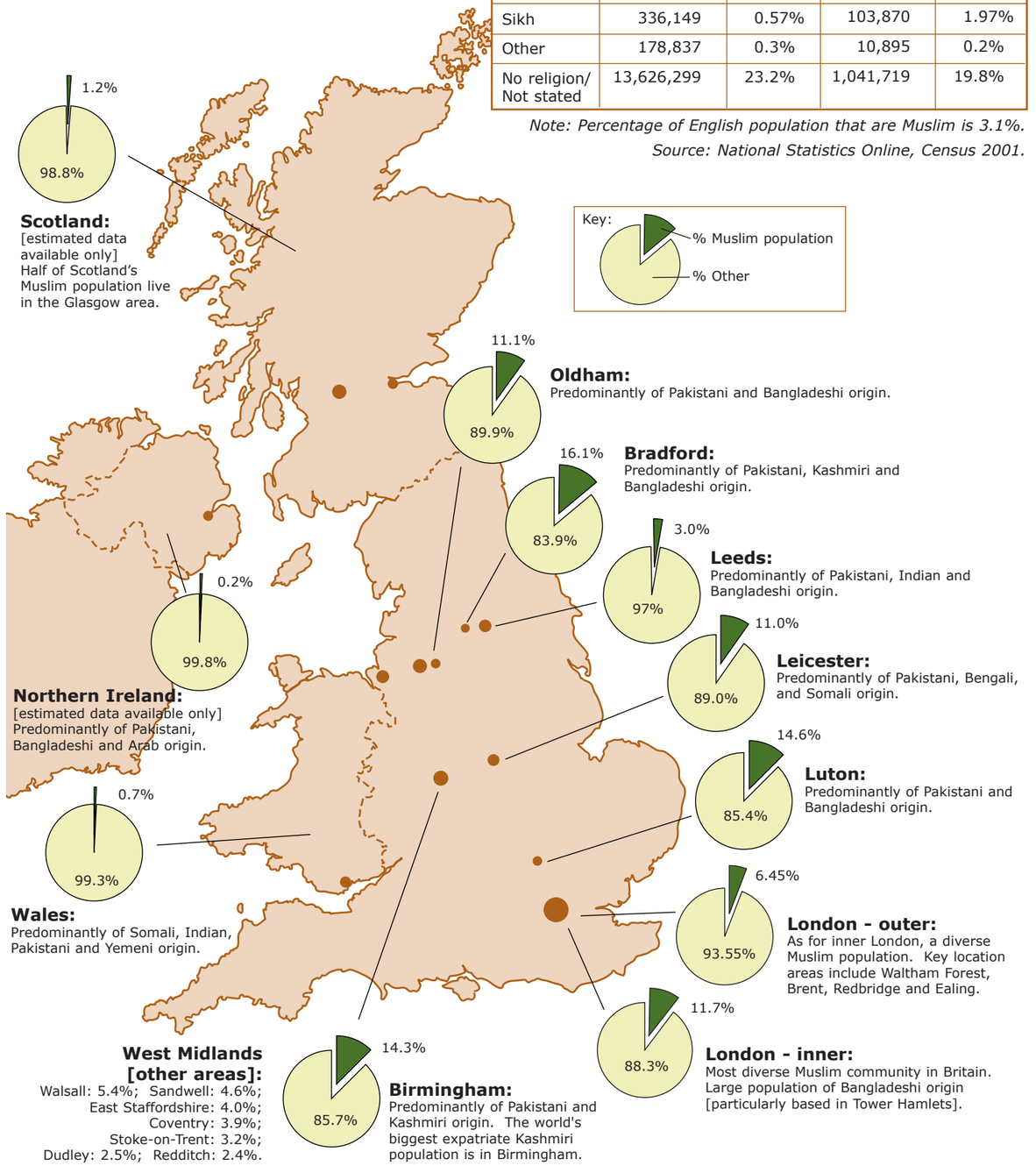
What's your view?

Muslim communities in Britain

The 2001 UK census included an new optional question that asked people to state their religion, [previously figures for Muslim communities have been estimated]. The data shown here gives a summary overview.
See www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001

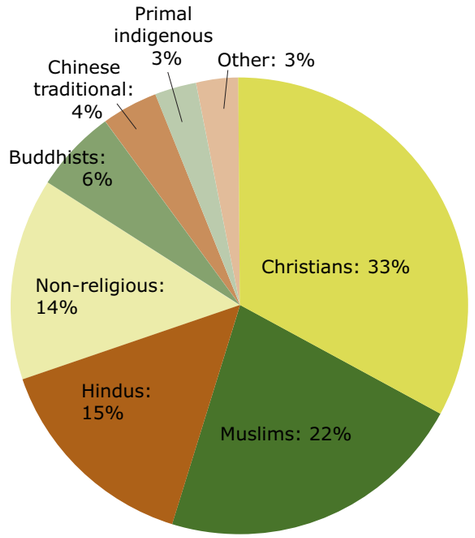
	UK Total UK population 58,789,194		West Midlands Total WM population 5,267,308	
Christian	42,079,417	71.8%	3,823,235	72.6%
Buddhist	151,816	0.25%	9,760	0.18%
Hindu	558,810	0.95%	56,668	1.08%
Jewish	266,740	0.45%	4,977	0.09%
Muslim	1,591,126	2.7%	216,184	4.1%
Sikh	336,149	0.57%	103,870	1.97%
Other	178,837	0.3%	10,895	0.2%
No religion/ Not stated	13,626,299	23.2%	1,041,719	19.8%

Note: Percentage of English population that are Muslim is 3.1%.
Source: National Statistics Online, Census 2001.



Source: Statistics are taken from UK census 2001.
Estimated data and some additional background information drawn from The Guardian newspaper 'Map of Muslim Britain' 17.6.02.

... and in the world



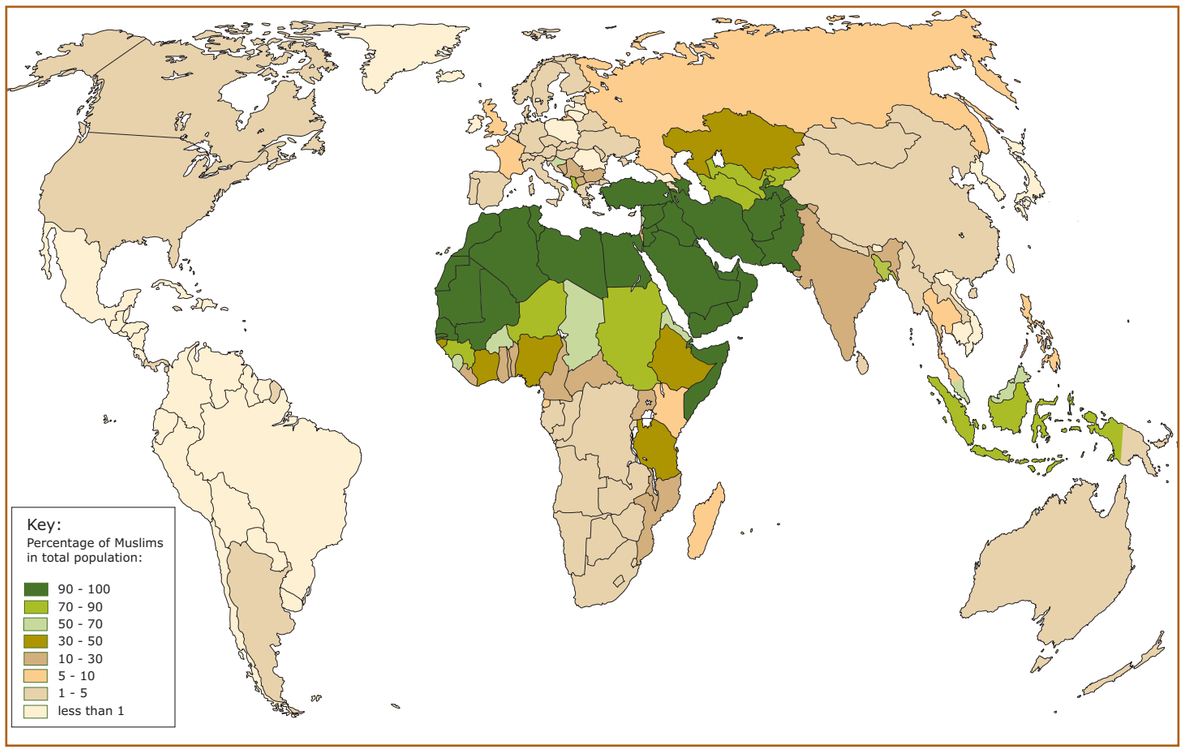
Source: 2002 www.adherents.com [an independent web-site sharing statistics about religions worldwide].

Major world religions

Islam is the second largest religion in the world; it is also considered to be the fastest growing religion. Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India are the countries with the largest Muslim populations, each with over 100 million.

Many countries in the West also have significant Muslim populations. The US has an estimated 5.7 million Muslims [similar to its Jewish population], France approx 4.5 million, Germany approx 2.5 million and the UK approx 1.6 million [see opposite].





Source: 2001 Understanding Global Issues Limited.

Exploring Islam:
the key beliefs and practices

Islam - the foundation

Islamic beliefs and practices are based on:

1. Divine revelation - direct guidance from Almighty Allah [Allah in Arabic means God]
2. The life - example [sunnah] and sayings [hadith] of Prophet Muhammad [peace be upon him*].

** peace be upon him [pbuh] is the prayer that Muslims recite, out of love, every time the name of Muhammad [pbuh] or one of the other Prophets [pbu them] is mentioned.*

Muslims believe that Allah Almighty revealed His Will to Prophet Muhammad [pbuh] over a period of 23 years, with the Holy Qur'an, the Muslims' Holy Book.

The Divine Plan

Muslims believe that Allah Almighty creates everything in the universe.

What can one say of Allah Almighty?

Say: *"He is Allah, Absolute Oneness,*
Allah, the everlasting Sustainer of all
He has not given birth and was not born
And no one is comparable to him."
[The Holy Qur'an, Chapter of Sincerity 112]

Muslims also believe that:

- Allah Almighty has always provided guidance to all people, at all times, in the form of revelation, via angels, to specially chosen Prophets or messengers.
- The essential teaching of all Prophets has been the same:
  - Submission to Allah Almighty brings peace to the human soul, and leads a person into a state of natural harmony with the rest of creation [fitra].
- Unlike minerals, plants and animals, human beings have been given the free will to submit, or to rebel, and this is the test each person has to face.
- All Prophets have been sent as a role model for human beings, inviting people to a way of peace and love, through submitting to and worshipping Allah, thereby preparing for the afterlife – the abode of peace.
- The Prophets taught people how to struggle against the temptations of the Devil and the selfish whisperings of the ego. As well as attracting believers to their message, the Prophets were often violently opposed.
- Human history, the rise and fall of civilisations, is, therefore, the story of how people have been attracted to, or have rejected, the divine call propagated by the Prophets.
- Prophet Muhammad [pbuh] was the last Prophet and the guarantor of all who went before. He was sent for the whole of Humankind.

What are the beliefs and practices that Prophet Muhammad [pbuh] taught?

The seven articles of faith:

1. Belief in Allah Almighty
2. Belief in all Prophets and Messengers sent to Humankind [some are known by name, but not all]
3. Belief in all the books of Allah, such as those sent down to the Prophets Musa [Moses], Dawud [David], and Isa [Jesus] as well as the Holy Qur'an, which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad [peace be upon them all]
4. Belief in angels
5. Belief in pre-ordained destiny [qadar]
6. Belief in the Day of Judgement
7. Belief in the Afterlife

There are five pillars of practice in Islam:

1. **Declaration of faith [Shahada]**
   Belief that Allah Almighty alone is worthy of worship and Muhammad [pbuh] is His Messenger
2. **Prayer [Salat]**
   The five daily prayers [before sunrise, just after mid-day, mid-afternoon, just after sunset & night time]
3. **Fasting [Saum]**
   Fasting in the lunar month of Ramadan
4. **Welfare due [Zakat]**
   Alms-giving [2.5% of surplus wealth amassed over a lunar year]
5. **Pilgrimage [Hajj]**
   Pilgrimage to Makkah in the lunar month of Dhul Hijjah. This should be at least once in a lifetime if somebody has sufficient money and good health to do it.

'Muslim' is an Arabic term for a person who has submitted to the Divine Will, and is living as naturally as a bird or a blade of grass.

'Islam', in Arabic, means the state of peace that has been attained through submission.

A brief history of Islam since the time of Prophet Muhammad [pbuh]

Prophet Muhammad [pbuh] was born in Makkah around the year 570CE* and was descended from the family of Prophet Abraham. Orphaned at a young age, he spent his childhood working as a shepherd and later trained as a merchant. As he grew, he gained a reputation for honesty, trustworthiness, integrity and wisdom. At the age of 25 he accepted the proposal of Khadijah, a wealthy, widowed businesswoman, who had earlier employed him and who had been deeply affected by his character. They were to enjoy a loving marriage for 26 years. After Khadijah passed away, Prophet Muhammad [pbuh] went on to contract other contented marriages.

Contemplative by nature, Muhammad [pbuh] often meditated upon the social ills of his age. At the age of 40, in a mountain cave outside Makkah, Prophet Muhammad [pbuh] received his first divine revelation. Over the next 23 years the revelations continued, and constitute the Holy Qur'an. Prophet Muhammad [pbuh] was at first opposed and then persecuted by those who felt threatened by the monotheistic message and the call for social reform. Eventually he and his early followers emigrated to Madina. Muhammad [pbuh] persevered, however, and, at his death in 632CE, the whole of the Arabian Peninsula had come under the influence of Islam. Within 100 years Islamic influence extended from the north of India in the East to Gibraltar in the West.

The subsequent 1400 years have seen the rise and fall of many Muslim States, from the Moghul Empire in Asia to the Ottomans in the Middle East and Europe. Muslim scholarship, and its immense contribution in all areas of life, enabled much of the world to witness progress and prosperity.

*CE = Common Era

What does it mean to be Muslim today? Why is there such a diversity of views amongst Muslims?

Over a billion Muslims come from all branches of humanity's family tree. The annual Hajj in Makkah, for example, will see indigenous people from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and The Americas all praying side by side.

The vast majority of Muslims around the world hold on to the same core set of beliefs and values, as explored above. Diverse Muslim perspectives also exist. This is partly because:

- people interpret Islamic teachings differently;
- just like people of all religions, Muslims have different levels of knowledge, understanding and commitment, and are influenced by their cultural surroundings, and so may vary in the practice of their faith;
- Prophet Muhammad [pbuh] said, *"All Muslims should be like a body: if one part feels pain, then so should the rest"*... Muslims will always be affected in varying ways by the suffering of other Muslims wherever they may be;
- not all who carry the name Muslim are living by the highest ideals of Islam.

Glimpses of how the broad principles of Islam provide guidance for all aspects of life

The broad principles of Islam are derived from the Holy Qur'an and the sunnah of Prophet Muhammad [pbuh]. Both were meticulously recorded. A Muslim believes they offer guidance, from the cradle to the grave, for all time and for all dimensions of life.

Indeed, the Islamic World has contributed much to the present Western civilisation in the fields of: literature; philosophy and history; architecture and art; medicine; the sciences; technology and trade and commerce.

In short, the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom has always been afforded the highest priority by Muslims.

Education:

"Search for knowledge, from the cradle to the grave."
[Prophet Muhammad]

Citizenship:

"He who sleeps on a full stomach whilst his neighbour goes hungry is not one of us."
[Prophet Muhammad]

Politics:

"Verily God will not change the condition of men, till they change what is in themselves."
[The Holy Qur'an - 13:12]

Human rights & Accountability:

"Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you. Remember that you will indeed meet your LORD, and that HE will indeed reckon your deeds."
[Last sermon of the Prophet Muhammad]

Socio-economic justice:

"Surely Allah enjoins justice and kindness, and giving to kindred and forbids shameful and indecent deeds and rebellion. He exhorts you in order that you take heed."
[The Holy Qur'an - 16:90]

Stewardship of the Environment:

"He it is that has made you representatives on earth. Whosoever subverts this trust he does it to the harm of his own soul."
[The Holy Qur'an - 35:39]

Spiritual struggle [or Jihad fi al Nafs] - the struggle against the 'lower self':

"Truly he succeeds that purifies it [the soul]."
[The Holy Qur'an - 91:9]

Prophet Muhammad [pbuh] said:

"My way is the middle way."

A role for teachers and schools?



The previous pages have outlined something of the context in which schools and teachers are currently working. This has been an important starting point for our project. The fact that we live in an increasingly global, diverse and interdependent society raises many issues for our future development [and sustainability]. The teacher group have identified a number of key questions as part of their discussions:

"What kind of society do we wish to live in?"

"What values and principles would we like to see at the core of this?"

"How do we as teachers and schools contribute to the positive development of our multi-ethnic and multi-faith society and help to build a new sense of citizenship?"

From these discussions a strong sense of consensus began to emerge. That the education system as a whole and schools in particular, have a vital role to play in the 'building of any new sense of citizenship'. That others [in the public, private and voluntary sectors] also have their part to play, but that we as teachers need to be raising levels of consciousness about this bigger picture and our essential part in it.

An important stimulus to our discussions has been the findings of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, chaired by Bhikhu Parekh. These findings endorse the important role of schools and the curriculum.

Bhikhu Parekh went further at the Tide~ Conference, June 2001 and shared his thinking about 'the capacities' that he would like to see a curriculum cultivate.

What should education be enabling ...?

Bhikhu Parekh [Chair of the Commission on the Future of Multi-ethnic Britain] stresses the need for education to cultivate:

- a capacity to live with difference
- a capacity to delight in diversity and difference
- a profound sense of justice
- a common sense of humanity
- a capacity for critical thinking - and for independent thinking
- a capacity to live with our own multiple identities

What's your view?

As a group we felt that these 'capacities' expressed very powerfully and succinctly our own priorities and feelings about the educational needs of our students. On the page opposite we have developed some of our own views and ideas in further detail.

What do we want young people to gain from activity that explores Muslim perspectives?

A richer viewpoint of the world

An openness to new ideas and perspectives

An acceptance of different lifestyles, cultures and faiths

A willingness to question assumptions

Confidence and skills to be able to express opinions

Skills of enquiry



An ability to detect bias

An ability to be able to make connections and see what is in common

An appreciation of the rich contribution that Muslims have made to our society.

A sense that our own and other people's opinions are valued [even if they are different]

An awareness of the diversity that exists within any faith or community group



Citizenship – an opportunity?

Since September 2002 Secondary schools have been responding to the introduction of a new Citizenship curriculum. Given existing pressures and priorities this has presented a significant challenge, but has been welcomed by many teachers as a positive opportunity.

In this project we were keen to debate the particular potential for activity through the Citizenship curriculum and what this might mean in practical terms. We discussed, in some detail, ways that Muslim perspectives might contribute to Citizenship and other curriculum areas also [see some ideas shown opposite]. We felt that the most useful approach had to be one that made the most of opportunities as they arose throughout the curriculum. For example an exploration of the role of the media in society [Citizenship KS3] would provide an ideal chance to explore coverage of recent issues from a variety of different perspectives.

Teachers in the group expressed quite strong views about the dangers of isolating work on Muslim perspectives. We felt that treating this area as a separate strand of work [or indeed only dealing with it through Citizenship] would give unhelpful messages, ie emphasising difference and marginalisation. We did feel however that there was a need for different perspectives to be planned for more explicitly, that these learning opportunities shouldn't just be left to chance or the particular interests of an individual teacher. We also felt strongly that there is a need for teachers to be given more support in enabling different perspectives to be explored.

"Yes, Citizenship presents an excellent opportunity for me to explore Muslim perspectives with my students ... but I'm not confident about how to go about this. As a non-Muslim I worry that I might say or do the wrong thing ... or mis-represent views ... this makes me very cautious."

A teacher involved in the working group.

Citizenship: Programme of study, Key stage 3

1.b the diversity of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding

1.c the importance of resolving conflict fairly

1.h the significance of the media in society

1.i the world as a global community, and the political, economic, environmental and social implications of this

2.a to think about topical political, spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, problems and events by analysing information and its sources, including ICT based sources

3.a to use their imagination to consider other people's experiences and be able to think about, express and explain views that are not their own

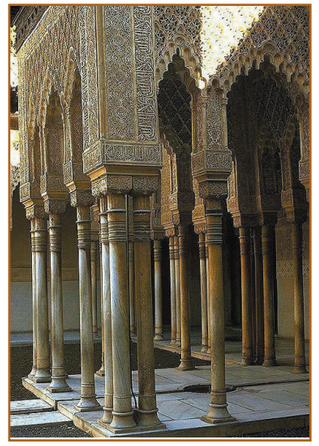
Work on Muslim perspectives will make a vital contribution to these and other aspects of the Citizenship curriculum.

From the experience of this project we feel strongly that teachers need further support in their professional development, to build their skills and confidence for enabling discussions about different perspectives and controversial issues. As a group we discussed what kind of support would be most useful; on page 16 we share some ideas.

Islam offers many starting points:

- the ecological and ethical value systems, present in Islam, have underpinned traditional and sustainable livelihoods in some of the world's harshest environments
- the Muslim world has often coped well with multi-culturalism and religious pluralism
- traditional Muslim societies have adopted technology, education and political systems to improve lives and address development challenges
- the Western world and the Muslim world is highly interdependent in terms of resources and trade
- Muslims in the UK are making significant contributions to the rich fabric of British life
- Muslims throughout history have contributed to all manner of technological, scientific and artistic developments

See the case studies from page 18 for some illustrated examples.



Example of Islamic architecture at the Alhambra Palace in Spain.

The Muslim News Awards for Excellence

Navid Akhtar and Reem Shafiq



Navid Akhtar is an independent television producer whose work projects a positive image of Islam.



Reem Shafiq spearheaded the continuing education aspect of the BBC season on Islam last year.

See www.muslimnews.co.uk for further details of Awards for Excellence and Muslim perspectives about current issues.

... across the curriculum

There is great potential for work in different subject areas. Here are just a few ideas that came out of our discussions:

Collective assemblies
Different faith perspectives, universal morals

Geography
Development issues and perspectives in predominantly Muslim countries - exploring these in a global context

History
The rise and fall of Muslim empires

Learning from experiences of colonialism and racism in the past

Art and craft
the Islamic traditions of calligraphy, pottery, jewellery making and carpet weaving

RE
The teachings of Islam. Connections with the teaching of other faiths

Mathematics
The Islamic contribution to many aspects of algebra, trigonometry, and geometry [including expressions of this in Islamic art & architecture]

PSHE
Islamic teaching on cleanliness, and personal responsibility

Human rights and Muslim perspectives

. . .



Getting started

'Inclusion', 'Race Equality', 'Equal Opportunities' - these are all priorities that have been high on the education agenda in recent years. Teachers are more aware than ever of the need for classroom approaches which meet the needs of all students. Most schools therefore will have developed a wealth of experience and good practice that will support teachers seeking to introduce different perspectives through their teaching.

Teachers in our group came from a variety of different schools with student populations ranging from entirely Muslim to entirely non-Muslim. We recognised that the starting point and priorities for work on Muslim perspectives would vary according to these differing contexts [but be equally important], and that teachers continually need to use their professional judgement as to the suitability of particular approaches.

On these pages we share some key principles for schools and for individual teachers who are keen to support work on Muslim perspectives. In approaching this we recognise that we are not simply dealing with a contained and defined body of knowledge. Muslim perspectives, like any perspectives, may change and develop, are diverse and need to be explored in the context of current issues. With this in mind we identify the importance of curriculum planning as a creative process which benefits from teacher collaboration and reflection.

Pages 18-29 share three contrasting examples of classroom approaches in some further depth. We share these as illustrations of what is possible, not as prescriptive blue-prints. We hope that you will find the ideas a useful stimulus to your own planning.

Our planning checklist for schools wishing to support teachers in this work

Does our school:

1. raise awareness amongst staff about the need and importance for different perspectives [including Muslim perspectives]?
2. offer practical support and encouragement that aims to build [and not undermine] teacher skills and confidence?
3. encourage a regular sharing of ideas and good practice amongst staff that includes opportunities for reflection? [One-off sessions that share input from a perceived 'expert' may be less helpful]
4. enable some central co-ordination of information about useful resource material, web-sites etc for access by all staff? One department might take a lead in setting this up. See pages 30-32 for some ideas
5. work to create a whole school climate that values and shares different perspectives as an integral part of school life, eg through display material, assemblies etc?

Some useful tips ...

As a classroom teacher wishing to enable work on Muslim perspectives, what should I bear in mind?

Do ...

- create a climate which values all views and opinions. It can be useful to negotiate some ground rules
- encourage a questioning approach
- enable students to share their views with each other in groups
- encourage student groups to share and justify their views and findings with a different audience
- introduce perspectives through a variety of stimulus, eg quotes from individuals and organisations, newspaper articles, cartoons etc
- represent and explore a diversity of Muslim viewpoints
- explore Muslim perspectives alongside other perspectives
- enable students to identify commonality as well as difference, ie what do Muslim perspectives have in common with other perspectives
- share some of your own thinking ... particularly your uncertainties, as a contribution to group discussion
- support students to explore issues in their wider, global context

Try not to ...

- worry about being 'an expert'; it is all right to admit sometimes that you 'don't know'
- make discussion too teacher-centred
- manipulate discussion in order to get to 'the right answer'
- simply dismiss racist or provocative views, but ensure that other points of view are also heard; allow time for a positive de-construction
- be afraid sensitively to challenge, or to enable others to challenge, to ensure that different sides of an argument are heard
- reinforce stereotypes but rather to think about using stimuli that will challenge stereotypes
- alienate by using 'them and us' language. Be inclusive
- put Muslim students [in a diverse class group] 'on the spot', but do ensure that their voices are heard in the discussions
- be too rigid in your planning - sometimes the best discussions are spontaneous, so allow for this!



Case study 1:
Muslim contributions to the modern world

In Islam, seeking knowledge is a form of worship:

"Whoever seeks a way for pursuing knowledge, Allah will facilitate his admission to Paradise."

[Prophet Muhammad]

From the dawn of Islam, Muslim scholars have made significant contributions to the world of learning. Indeed, from the 7th Century until the 15th Century, Muslims were the torchbearers of human civilisation. After the fall of the Roman Empire, Europe fell into the Dark Ages but Muslim scholars succeeded in preserving the classical wisdom of Ancient Greece and Rome. Due to their thirst for knowledge Muslims then went on to make spectacular advances in a wide spectrum of subjects, including mathematics, astronomy, geography, medicine, physics, chemistry, biology, botany, and veterinary science. Believing in the unity behind creation many Muslim scholars recognised the close affinity between academic disciplines, and it was not unusual for a physician to also be an accomplished mathematician, philosopher or astronomer. Scholarship at the height of Muslim civilisation succeeded in combining the energies and genius of people from all over the known-world. In many Muslim cities there was truly an international citizenry. The interaction between so many people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds was facilitated by Muslims' sense of hospitality and tolerance of other ways of life.

After nearly 900 years of intellectual leadership, however, internal bickering and complacency saw the influence of Muslims stagnate and then decline.

It would, nevertheless, be true to say that advances made by Muslim scholars from such seats of learning as Baghdad, Muslim Spain and Cairo, laid the foundations for Europe's 'Renaissance' [intellectual re-awakening] in the Middle Ages. This, in turn, fuelled the Industrial Revolution that has eventually given rise to the scientific and technical achievements of today.

Aims

For students to be able to:

- ❑ be aware that Islamic civilisation has had a tradition of pluralism
- ❑ understand that Muslim scientific and technical advances had a significant impact on the modern world
- ❑ reflect on how such advances have an impact on their own lives
- ❑ see today's society more clearly by holding it against a rich historical backcloth

Activities

1. Exploring Human Rights, Citizenship and Islam

Arrange the class into groups and ask each group to read one of the charters shown opposite. Invite them to discuss it and extract some key principles that underpin a peaceful, pluralistic society. Each group to then report back to the class about their charter stating the principles they have identified. At the end, combine and refine the principles from all the groups to arrive at an overall class list of key points, in ranking order, which are vital if different communities are to live peacefully together.

Examine life in Britain today. Explore, first through discussion and then in writing, "Is the UK a successful multi-racial and multi-faith society?" Can we learn any lessons from any of the Islamic charters?

2. Did You Know? Examples of Muslim contributions to the modern world:

Students in pairs read through pages 20 and 21. Ask them to choose three facts that particularly interest them and ask them to reflect on how important these advances are to life today. Encourage them to imagine how life today might have been different if those advances had not been made. Each pair could report back to the class with their thoughts and reflections.

Ask the pupils to assemble a collage which summarises the impact Islamic civilisation has had upon life today.

Human Rights, Citizenship and Islam

Islam has always championed the cause of responsible citizenship, and fosters tolerance and cooperation. It teaches that the human rights of all, regardless of religion, race and gender, are to be respected.

Below are some examples of how these rights and duties have been enshrined in the Islamic tradition.

Final Sermon of Prophet Muhammad [pbuh]

Prophet Muhammad [pbuh], in his Final Sermon, asserts the inherent dignity of all human beings. An extract states:

"Allah says, 'O People We have created you from one male and one female and made you into tribes and nations, so as to be known to one another. Verily, in the sight of Allah, the most honoured amongst you is the one who is most God-fearing. There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab and for non-Arab over an Arab, nor for the white over the black, nor for the black over the white, except in God-consciousness."

Umar's Charter of Rights in Jerusalem

When Jerusalem came under the rule of the Muslims, after the defeat of Byzantium, Caliph Umar went to accept the surrender, whereupon he immediately granted to the people what was known as the Charter of Rights, in the year 638CE. This charter emphasises the basic principles of liberty, security, and freedom of faith which are central to Islam:

"In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. This is the security which Umar, the Servant of God, the Commander of the Faithful, grants to the people of Aylia [Jerusalem]. He grants to all, whether sick or sound, security for their lives, their possessions, their churches, and their crosses, and for all that concerns their religion. Their churches shall neither be changed into dwelling places nor destroyed, neither shall they, nor their appurtenances, nor any of their possessions, be in any way diminished; nor shall any constraint be put on them in the matter of their faith; nor shall any one of them be harmed."

The Covenant of Madina

When Prophet Muhammad [pbuh] established his government in Madina, it was at a time of inter-tribal and inter-religious tension. To encourage peace, reconciliation and security, the Prophet [pbuh] declared 'the Covenant of Madina' which laid down broad principles on which cordial relations could be established between Muslims and non-Muslims. Protection of life and property, and freedom of faith and of worship were guaranteed. The Covenant stated that:

"The Jews shall bear their public expenses and so will the Muslims. Each shall assist the other against any violator of this covenant. Their relationship shall be one of mutual advice and consultation, and mutual assistance and charity rather than harm and aggression...

...Charity and goodness are clearly distinguishable from crime and injury, and there is no responsibility except for one's own deeds. God is the guarantor of the truth and good will of this covenant. This covenant shall constitute no protection for the unjust or criminal."

Examples of Muslim contributions to the modern world

Progress in many branches of knowledge often builds upon the discoveries of earlier generations and civilisations.

All dates shown are CE, Common Era

Did you know that …?

The longest running university in the world is Al Azhar University in Cairo. The mosque was built in 972 during the reign of the Caliph Al-mu'izz. By 975 it had become established as a major centre of learning.



In mathematics …

The numbers we use today [1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9 and 0] are called Arabic numbers. Learned from the Indians, Muslim mathematicians brought them to Europe around the 12th Century which revolutionised the study of mathematics and science. This much easier system replaced the cumbersome Roman numerals which did not have a symbol for zero.

'Algebra' was invented by the Muslim mathematician Muhammad Abu Musa Al-Khwarizmi [780-850]. His book entitled 'Hisabal-jabr wa'l-Muqabala' was translated into Latin in the 12th Century and was the most important mathematical text in Europe for the next 400 years.

The well-known formula of trigonometry was laid down by Abu'l-Wafa Buzjani [died 940].

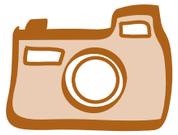
$$\sin(A + B) = \sin A \cos B + \cos A \sin B$$

$$\sin(A - B) = \sin A \cos B - \cos A \sin B$$

… and problem solving

After famine struck Arabia around 640, **Caliph Umar ordered a canal to be dug which connected the Nile to the Red Sea** to allow grain to be quickly sent from Egypt. The 69 mile long canal was completed in only 6 months.

Scientific invention …



The foundations of the device that today we call the camera were laid down by Ibn al-Haytham of Cairo [Egypt] [965-1039]. Known in the West as Alhazen, and also referred to as the "father of optics", he was a leading authority on optics and made great advances in the scientific understanding of how the eye functions and of the behaviour of light.

Binoculars were also invented by Ibn al-Haytham.



Many scientific and medical expressions find their roots in Arabic eg alcohol [from al-kuhul]; chemistry [from al-kimiya]; arsenic [from al-zirnikh]; alkali [from al-qali]; camphor [from kafur] and so on.

In Medicine …

The first scientist to identify measles was Al-Razi of Persia [Iran] [824-932]. Known to the West as Rhazes, he was also the first to divide chemical substances into groups, termed mineral, vegetable and animal. He wrote extensively about philosophical and medical matters. His works were translated into Latin, influencing European physicians and scholars throughout the Middle Ages.

The standard book of medicine in Europe for 500 years was written by Ibn Sina [980-1037]. Born in Bukhara in Turkestan in Central Asia, Ibn Sina became known in Europe as Avicenna and also as the 'Prince of Physicians', and is remembered as the greatest Muslim physician. His comprehensive book 'the Canon of Medicine' [which contained over a million words] was translated into Latin and used in European universities until the 17th Century as a standard medical text.

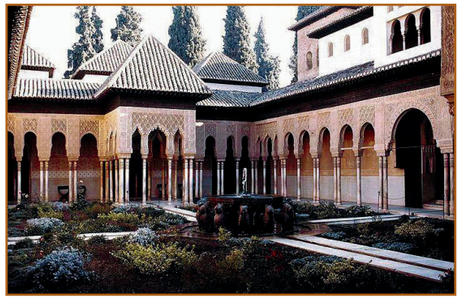
The pulmonary circulation system [the minor circulation of blood] **was first discovered by Ibn an-Nafis** of Damascus and Cairo [1210-1298]. He explained how blood is pumped from the heart to the lungs, where it absorbs oxygen, and then travels back to the heart and thereafter releases the oxygen in the upper part of the body.

The first hospital in the world for people suffering from mental illness was established in Baghdad in 765.

In Spain …

Muslims ruled most of Spain [al Andalus] for nearly 800 years [from 711 to 1492] during which time great scientific and technical advances were made.

Whilst London was largely a settlement of ramshackle buildings, the city of Cordoba [the capital of Muslim Spain] had street lighting, pavements, public baths and public libraries. This was a time in which Muslim, Jew and Christian lived and worked side by side; scholars from all over Europe and beyond travelled to study at the universities of Cordoba, Seville, Malaga and Granada. Architecture in Spain at this time flourished, with notable examples being the mosque of Cordoba, and the Alhambra Palace in Granada [pictured below].



In history and geography

The first work on world history, written in 30 volumes, was produced by Al-Mas'udi [died 965].

The first map of the earth was commissioned by Caliph Mamun al-Rashid in 831. Muslims had a religious motivation in studying geography because of their duty to perform hajj, which often involved travelling long distances.

In astronomy …

Muslim astronomers established sophisticated observatories, discovering many new stars and making careful studies of planetary motion.

Al-Biruni of Afghanistan [973-1048] **measured the distances of many stars and planets from earth**. He also discovered the magnitude of the earth's circumference.

In travel …

Muslims became expert navigators. An advanced understanding of astronomy helped Muslims to develop the astrolabe, a precision-made instrument used in navigation, which measured the altitude of stars.

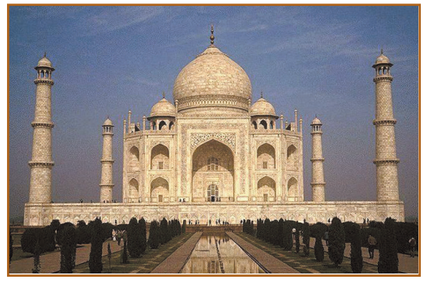


An astrolabe containing geared calendar work.

Muslims were great explorers, travellers and merchants. Helped by navigational instruments such as the astrolabe, men such as Ibn Battuta travelled across the known world, making extensive journeys to Africa, India, China and beyond. Not only did Muslims bring back valuable silks and spices and other precious goods, they also acquired scientific and technical knowledge which they later made accessible to Europe.

The first authentic work on the northern pole of the earth was authored by Ibn Fadlun [died 921] who travelled north to Russia.

In architecture …



The Taj Mahal was completed in 1648 by the Muslim Moghul ruler of India, Shah Jehan, in memory of his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal. It is widely acknowledged to be one of the architectural wonders of the world.



Case study 2:
Muslim perspectives and the environment

International and local concern for the environment has gathered momentum in recent decades, with Muslims contributing strongly to this debate. There is now a growing sense of urgency about global issues such as climate change, and the depletion of our natural resources. The key debate for many is about how we best enable sustainable development - a process which is about balancing needs against resources so that we are planning for the future. International summits at Rio and Johannesburg have helped to raise awareness and enable political action; the implication for us as global citizens is that we each have our part to play.

This case study aims to enable students to explore Muslim perspectives in relation to the environment and sustainable development. A chicken farm in Oxfordshire provides an example of a farm that is run according to Islamic environmental principles. The activities have been designed to support students in investigating key ideas and principles and to relate these to issues in their own locality.

Activities

1. Exploring the teachings of Islam

Give groups of students one or two quotations from The Holy Qur'an/Prophet Muhammad [see those in green on page 23]. Their task is to brainstorm their ideas about what they mean in a modern context.

Take feedback from the groups and use this as a starting point for further discussion. What might these teachings mean in relation to a local issue? Students might then be asked to identify how Islam encourages human beings to interact with their environment; eg by minimising waste, reducing pollution, caring for animals, using resources sustainably and so on.

2. Investigating actions at Willowbrook Farm

Students will need copies of page 24, 'Willowbrook Farm'. In groups they need to identify as many positive actions as possible that the farmer is taking in support of the environment. Ask groups to choose the three actions that they find the most interesting and that they wish to explore further. Students could then use a template such as the one shown to discuss their ideas and generate further questions. Key ideas could then be presented to other groups.

Aims

For students to be able to ...

- ❑ identify key Islamic environmental perspectives
- ❑ make connections between Islamic and other perspectives on a variety of environmental issues
- ❑ make deductions based upon a variety of evidence
- ❑ present and justify their own opinions

What action is the farmer taking to benefit the environment?	*What might be gained from this?*
What difficulties might there be?	*What questions would you like to ask to find out more?*

The environmental teachings of Islam

From verses of the Holy Qur'an and the sayings of Prophet Muhammad [pbuh], Muslims are given very clear guidance as to how to interact with the environment. This guidance is based upon two fundamental principles:

everything in the universe is a creation of Allah and belongs to Him

humans are Allah's 'stewards' of the environment

"Be quite sure that to Allah does belong whatever is in the heavens and on earth."
The Holy Qur'an 24:64

"It is He [Allah] that has appointed you as viceroys in the earth."
[The Holy Qur'an 6:165]

"The earth is green and sweet and verily Allah has installed you as trustees in it to see how you act."
[Prophet Muhammad]

"All creatures are God's dependents and the most beloved to God among them is he who does good to God's dependents."

Prophet Muhammad

"Do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order ..."

The Holy Qur'an 7:85

"O children of Adam: Eat and drink but do not waste by excess, for Allah does not love the wasters."

The Holy Qur'an 7:31

"He [Allah] has set up the balance in order that you may not transgress [from this] balance ... It is He who has spread out the earth for His creatures."

The Holy Qur'an 67:3-4

How does Islam encourage us to interact with our environment?

- ❑
- ❑
- ❑
- ❑
- ❑
- ❑

"The creation of the heavens and earth is far greater than the creation of Mankind, But most of Mankind do not know it."

The Holy Qur'an 40:57

"Live in this world as if you were going to live forever; prepare for the next world as if you were going to die tomorrow."

Prophet Muhammad



Willowbrook Farm

Willowbrook Farm is a small organic poultry farm in Oxfordshire, England. It is run according to the ecological principles found in Islam, that remind humans that we are God's stewards [or vice-regents] on earth, that we are His 'environmental managers'.



The farmer and his farm [the logs are used to grow mushrooms].

The farmer tries to manage the woodlands and fields, and produce food without causing any damage to the environment or any suffering to animals. No chemicals and as little machinery as possible are used, to avoid adding to air, soil and water pollution.

Willowbrook Farm produces 2,500 free range eggs each day from its flock of 3,000 hens. The hens are allowed to roam free outside in a fenced-off field, and are watered and fed to their fill. A spacious, well-lit chicken coop offers the hens shelter and a safe, warm place to roost and lay eggs.



Collecting eggs from the chicken coop.

The farm is managed to be self–sufficient and as little is wasted as possible. Chicken droppings are mixed with straw and turned into compost that makes high quality fertiliser for the soil. This promotes the growth of crops which then provide food for the chicken and fodder for other livestock, eg sheep. Nitrates from the chicken waste provide nourishment to the plants … and so the natural balance is supported and the farm's eco system is preserved.



Free range hens can roam free.

Management of the farm involves much more than just looking after chickens. Edible and medicinal herbs and plants are also grown. Hedgerows, which provide havens for wildlife and wild plants, are being laid. The woodland is carefully managed, baby trees are planted whilst older trees are carefully cut back. Newly planted shrubs and trees also help to protect the river banks from soil erosion by knitting together the soil.

The logs from the woodland are used to grow mushrooms [holes are drilled into the logs into which mushroom fungus is injected; within weeks the logs are sprouting mushrooms]. Spare logs are also ideal for the farm's wood-burning stove.

Because the farm is organic no pesticides are used, so jobs such as weeding are constant and ongoing. This is why some call the farm the "green gym".

Willowbrook Farm is trying to make its footprint on the land as light as possible. As "stewards of the environment", they are doing what they can to leave a healthy world for the people of tomorrow.

Making connections

How do Muslim perspectives on environmental issues contribute to debates in a current, international context?

Following the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, it was recognised that considerable action at a local level was needed to ensure a more sustainable future. Localities around the world were encouraged to support Local Agenda 21, ie 'to think globally and act locally'. One framework for this in the UK was provided by the thirteen themes for sustainable communities, shown in the diagram below.

Sustainable communities ...



- ❑ What connections do you see between these themes and the teachings of Islam?
- ❑ What Local Agenda 21 actions and policies are taking place in your local area [eg supported by the local Council, schools or voluntary organisations]?
- ❑ How sustainable would you rate your local town to be? How might it score against these themes? What evidence would you use, and why?

Useful web-sites:

Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences: www.ifees.org

Local Agenda 21: www.la21-uk.org.uk

A portal site sharing teaching ideas linked to the Johannesburg summit: www.wssd-education.org.uk

RSPCA: www.rspca.org.uk

Friends of the Earth: www.foe.co.uk

Greenpeace: www.greenpeace.org



Case study 3:
Investigating the role of the media

We are all bombarded on a daily basis with images, headlines and stories that claim to be the 'most important news of the day'. How we respond to this information depends upon our personal interests and experiences, and also our skills to detect bias and to gauge reliability.

Given this context, we felt that activities to enable students to investigate the role of the media would help support a better understanding of Muslim perspectives. These activities aim to explore the idea that news is selected, that it often reflects the opinion of the writer or reporter, and that it can be biased.

Aims

For students to be able to:

- ❑ recognise bias
- ❑ develop skills of enquiry
- ❑ respect views and opinions that are different to their own

Introductory activities

1. Selection activity

Students are organised into different media groups, eg editorial boards of The Sun, The Times, 6 o'clock news etc.

They are presented with approximately six contrasting 'stories' ranging from local to international and linked to issues from the previous day. They have to discuss how they would prioritise these issues for the running order of their programme or paper for the next day. Which would be their headline issue, and why?

2. Opinion collage

Students are asked to create a collage of headlines, images or cartoons from a range of newspapers related to a particular theme or issue. These collages could then be shared as a starting point for discussion with other groups.

3. The alternative news

Students choose four stories of interest from a particular newspaper. Their task is to re-write the headline and opening paragraph from a different point of view and in keeping with the language and design style of the newspaper.

Enquiry activity: Identifying and analysing bias in media coverage

This activity uses the stimulus of two contrasting articles covering the 'raid' of the Finsbury Park mosque - one by the Muslim News and the other by the BBC [see pages 28 and 29]. Students are offered a questioning structure with which to question and think about the articles and how they compare.

Students are asked to:

- ❑ compare how one event is reported by two agencies
- ❑ identify how and why the reports vary
- ❑ reflect upon the process and what this means for our own reading of media issues and stories

This approach could be applied to a variety of stimuli drawn from newspapers, including photographs and cartoons. Choose your source material to suit students' abilities and interests.

Taking a closer look ...

1. With a partner read through your newspaper report of the mosque incident [this was accessed from the Internet]. For your report identify:

a. which organisation produced the report;

b. the people who are quoted in the report;

c. whether the report is in favour of the police action, against the police action, or neutral.

2. Team up with two others who have read a different report and compare how the two newspapers reported the police action. The tasks below may help you.

a. Compare how the reports describe the way the police entered the mosque. What are the words or phrases that help you imagine the police action?

b. How is the reaction of the local Muslims described? Are they for or against the police action, or is their reaction mixed?

c. Did the police enter the prayer area? If so, did they defile the prayer area?

d. Do either of the reports present a balanced argument? In other words, is more than one viewpoint presented?

e. What is the target audience? Who were the reports written for?

3. In analysing a report of any issue or event, such as the police action at the mosque, it is useful to use key questions. The following key questions may help you get a better understanding of the event.

- ❑ **What is fact and what is fiction?** Identify what is really a fact [it did happen, it is true] and what is someone's opinion or interpretation of the truth.
- ❑ **What language is used?** For example, was the police action an 'operation' [as in the BBC's report] or a 'raid' or an 'attack' [Muslim News]? Emotive words and phrases influence our interpretation of a text and therefore our understanding of an event.
- ❑ **Is there an attempt to present a balanced argument?** You need to know how the different individuals and groups involved in the event feel. The report should give more than one viewpoint.
- ❑ **Are ideas presented in a 'clear cut manner', or can you see that even the people involved directly are uncertain?** Not all issues are clear cut, with one definite answer - few people are 100% right or wrong in what they believe or think. People often see 'both sides of the argument'.
- ❑ **Whose voice do you hear through the report?** Think about whose ideas and opinions are quoted or referred to - is it an 'expert', a 'professional' or a 'representative', or are the people most involved most directly quoted?
- ❑ **Does the report tell you what to think, or are you presented with evidence so that you can make up your own mind?** All reporters have their own ideas and their own values. A good reporter will, as far as possible, try to put these to one side and allow you to think for yourself.
- ❑ **Who is the target audience?** Every report is written with the reader in mind. It is important to ask if the report is simply telling the reader what the reporter thinks the reader wants or expects to hear.

Veness refuses to rule out future raids on mosques

Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, David Veness, says that he understands the reaction by the Muslim community to last week's raid on Finsbury Park mosque, but refuses to rule out the possibility of future attacks being staged.

"I hope very much exceptions will be made for religious values, but public safety is our priority. One can't exclude what is going to happen in the future," Veness said in an interview with The Muslim News.

"We meticulously examine what is necessary and proportionate, and balancing these with public safety has got to be the priority," he insisted. "I can understand the reaction but everything was considered before," the Assistant Commissioner said. He also clarified that the police did not enter the prayer area of the mosque at the time of raid "but later went in, in the course of investigation."

Local Muslim leaders, in the Finsbury Park area, and national leaders held an emergency meeting last Friday to decide an action plan following the outrage and concern expressed over the raid carried out by over 150 police officers in dozens of vehicles and with the support of helicopters. Those present accused the Government of "wilfully misusing their power to turn the spotlight on the Muslim community once again, for their own perverse political agenda." One spoke of the hypocrisy, saying that the police "never raided one church" in 30 years of violence in Northern Ireland.

Despite the assurance of Home Office Minister Beverley Hughes regarding consultations about future incidents, it was revealed at the meeting that the consultation had been by way of a phone call 15 minutes before the raid. It was also suggested that the police could have easily detained any suspects when they were outside the mosque instead of "choosing to embark on a charade played out for the media." Some expressed concern about the link with the Government's agenda on Iraq.

All the Muslim leaders at the meeting said that the attack was a "dangerous precedent." Not only was the North London Muslim community under siege but the operation was seen as opening the floodgates for even more Islamophobic backlashes. A vociferous condemnation was made of the 'witch hunt' that has been going on to further the Government's support for a war on Iraq. The aim was seen to be to increase the fears of the general public at the same time as silencing Muslim dissension.

See www.muslimnews.co.uk for further news stories

Muslims concerned about mosque raid

Muslims have given a mixed reaction to news of the anti-terrorist raid on the Finsbury Park mosque in north London. Seven people were arrested as part of the operation, which police said was linked to the discovery of the poison ricin in nearby Wood Green earlier this month.

The mosque has frequently been in the news because of its connections to the radical Muslim cleric Sheikh Abu Hamza.

Ghayasuddin Siddiqui, leader of the Muslim Parliament of Great Britain, said he was "appalled" by the raid but he also spoke out against Sheikh Abu Hamza. He said: "During a long campaign against the IRA we never had any churches being raided."

Mr Siddiqui said the police should have quietly approached the mosque's trustees "without all this need for drama to take place, with 150 police officers, helicopters, battering rams".

"It will increase Islamophobia and it will fuel racism"

- Ghayasuddin Siddiqui

He said of the raid: "It will increase Islamophobia and it will fuel racism."

Iqbal Sacranie, secretary general of the Muslim Council of Britain, told BBC Radio 4's Today programme he was saddened by the raid. He said details remained sketchy but he hoped police officers had not entered the main place of worship, especially with shoes on. That would be considered highly sacrilegious. "One needs to be reassured as to what sort of clothing and footwear were used."

The Metropolitan Police have stressed that "the operation was not against the mosque itself or the many people who go there on a regular basis to pray". They said: "It was aimed specifically at individuals who have been supporting or engaging in suspected terrorist activity from within the building."

"A mosque is not a place for criminals to carry out illegal activities"

- Iqbal Sacranie

"We have taken every step possible to show our respect for the Muslim faith and to minimise the impact to those who use the mosque and the wider Muslim community," said the police.

They said they had not entered parts of the mosque used for prayer and had targeted offices and living rooms instead.

Mr Sacranie said: "We have very little detail but if the main prayer place was not interfered with then it's just like [raiding] any other house."

`Poor police support'

He said: "One cannot condone any form of illegal criminal activity being carried out anywhere. A mosque is not a place for criminals to carry out illegal activities."

But Mr Sacranie said local Muslims had been raising concerns about the mosque with the police for several years and had not had much support from the police.

"What is worrying is that the people who have gone out fighting around the world have been arrested but the very perpetrators, the people who encouraged and incited them, no action has been taken against them."

"David Blunkett is right. I want to fight against terrorism but there are other ways of tackling it."

- Nadeem Chaudry-Ahmed

Nadeem Chaudry-Ahmed, 24, who lives near the mosque and occasionally worships there, said he was not happy about people worshipping in the mosque being treated like suspects. "David Blunkett is right. I want to fight against terrorism but there are other ways of tackling it."

See http://news.bbc.co.uk for further news stories

Useful Resources

Supporting children at KS1 and KS2

Picture books and stories:

Celebration stories: A present for Salima
Kerena Marchant, Hodder Wayland, 2002.
Set in Morocco, this is the story of Ibrahim who, on a trip to the mountains with his father, is shocked to find how hard it is for the villagers to get water. What can he do to help?

The day of Ahmed's secret Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland, Puffin Books, 1990.
Ahmed must wait all day before he can tell his family his secret. Set in Cairo, this picture book illustrates the bustling life and striking Islamic architecture to be found in an African city.

Samira's Eid Nasreen Aktar and Enebor Attard, Mantra, 1999. [Available in 10 languages]
The story of Samira and her family as they celebrate the end of Ramadan and the festival of Eid, a time for prayers, presents and surprises!

The swirling hijaab Na'ima Bint Robert and Nilesh Mistry, Mantra, 2002. [Available in 20 languages]
A picture book with simple text, illustrating the imaginary world of a young girl as she plays with her mother's headscarf.

Non-fiction books

Boushra's Day ~ From dawn to dusk in an Egyptian city Khaled Eldash and Dalia Khattab, Frances Lincoln, 2002.
A day in the life of a young Egyptian girl, told through stunning photographs.

The History of the Asian Community in Britain Rozina Visram, Wayland Publishers, 1995.
Offers a good historical introduction, with accessible text and a visual format.

My life, my religion: Muslim Imam
Akbar Dad Khan, Franklin Watts, 2001.
One of a series of books which looks at the role of religious leaders within their communities.

World Religions: Islam Richard Tames, Franklin Watts, 1999.
Explains the main beliefs of the religion and shows how these affect the lives of the people who follow them.

Activity books and photopacks [KS2 - KS3]

Beliefs and cultures: Muslim Richard Tames, Franklin Watts, 1996.
An information and activity book providing basic background to the religion and its festivals.

Cairo ~ four children and their city
Dylan Theodore, Oxfam, 1994.
A video and photo pack, for use with 8-12 year olds, which explores Cairo through the eyes and lives of four children from very different backgrounds.

Gariyan ~ an activity pack for 8-13 year olds about transport in Pakistan
Maureen O'Flynn, Oxfam, 1992.
Explores transport issues in Pakistan and gives background information to the country and its people.

Homing in ~ a practical resource for religious education Angela Wood, Trentham Books, 1998.
A resource for primary teachers designed to enrich children's experience in 'home corners' and give them opportunities to explore ways that families express their religious faith.

The Islamic Year Noorah Al Gailani and Chris Smith, Hawthorn Press, 2002.
A collection of stories, folk tales, songs, games, recipes, craft and art activities.

The Thread of the Nile ~ development issues in Egypt for history and geography at KS2 Tide~ DEC, 1996.
A photopack which offers activities and materials to show children who are learning about Ancient Egypt, what life is like there today. The materials encourage children to explore what has changed and what hasn't, gives a village locality study, and raises some of the issues facing the people of Egypt today.

Where camels are better than cars ~ a locality study in Mali, West Africa for KS2
Tide~ DEC and Save the Children, 1992.
Offers a unique insight into the lives of four people from different communities in Mali, West Africa.
Contains two handbooks, a map and a set of photographs.

Writing our past ~ celebrating and researching the achievements of people in the past who came to live in Britain
Tide~ DEC, 1999.
A teacher handbook offering activities and resources that support children in exploring the contributions of people from different parts of the world to British history.

Supporting students at KS 3 and 4

Mali ~ A prospect of Peace? Rheal Drisdelle, Oxfam, 1997.
Albania Neil Olsen, Oxfam, 2000.
Two books from the Oxfam Country Profile series. These profiles describe the social, economic and environmental issues affecting the country, and focus on the lives of ordinary people.

Mangla ~ A study of change and development in Mirpur, 'Azad' Jammu Kashmir and Pakistan
Development Education Centre, South Yorks, 1996.
A photopack which explores the themes of change and development in both Mirpur District of Pakistan and localities in Britain. Suitable for KS3.

Islamic Relief ~ Reacting to poverty, Key Stage 4+ Muhammad Ibrahim, Islamic Relief, 2001.
A visual and accessible resource sharing information about the work of Islamic Relief and highlighting Muslim perspectives in relation to development issues and the role of an aid agency.

Whose citizenship? A teacher's toolkit ~ Experiences from the West Midlands supporting citizenship education at KS3
Tide~ DEC, 2002.
Offers practical ideas and starting points for enabling a global approach to 'local' citizenship investigations.
The book is organised around three areas, 'identities', 'who decides?' and 'our involvement'.



Supporting teachers

Addressing prejudice and Islamophobia ~ resources, references and guidance on the internet Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia, Autumn 2001.
A useful booklet giving guidance to teachers and others on where to go for information concerning Islam and Islamophobia. The material in the booklet is updated at www.runnymedetrust.org/meb.

The future of multi-ethnic Britain ~ The Parekh report The Runnymede Trust, Commission on the future of multi-ethnic Britain, 2000.
This report describes and analyses the current state of multi-ethnic Britain and proposes ways of countering racial discrimination and disadvantage.

Inclusive schools, inclusive society Robin Richardson and Angela Wood, Trentham Books, 1999.
Sets out practical steps schools can take to make themselves more inclusive and help build a more inclusive society.

Islam ~ Beliefs and teachings Ghulam Sarwar, The Muslim Educational Trust, 1980 [6th edition 2000].
An accessible resource which provides a good introduction to the basic beliefs, duties and teachings of Islam.

Islam ~ the Natural Way
Abdul Wahid Hamid, MELS Publishing, 1989.
This book sets out to explain what Islam is and what it means for every person. It offers an effective and in-depth overview which explores Islam's teaching in the context of our daily lives and inter-actions. A usable resource for teachers.

Whose Citizenship? Report from West Midlands Commission on Global Citizenship ~ exploring identity, democracy and participation in a global context
Tide~ DEC, 2002.
Sharing key debates and findings from the Commission, this report explores the issues for schools in enabling Citizenship Education in a global context.

Useful web-sites:

Education, advice and support for teachers:

www.runnymedetrust.org/meb
Highly recommended. This site shares material from the Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia. It contains a wealth of material for teacher use, including 'Islam in Britain', 'Talking and Teaching', 'Addressing the challenge of Islamophobia' and links to other web-sites.

www.iqratrust.org - IQRA Trust
IQRA works with Local Education Authorities, schools and teachers to provide information on Islam in many ways. These include a wide range of publications, an interactive Islamic Experience Exhibition, INSETs, and an enquiry service that can answer promptly and on-line all enquiries from Local Education Authorities, schools, teachers and pupils on almost all aspects of Islam.

www.globaldimension.org
This site has been set up by DFID [Department for International Development]. It offers a comprehensive database of educational resources supporting a global dimension in the curriculum [searchable according to key stage, curriculum area or theme]. It also has curricular guidance, useful web-sites and links to other organisations. A very useful and accessible site.

www.islamic-foundation.com - Islamic Foundation.
Shares information about the work of the Foundation, research projects, publications etc. Has an on-line book shop.

www.nut.org.uk
National Union of Teachers site. Includes advice for teachers and schools on 'the War in Iraq'.

For useful source material and reference:

www.guardian.co.uk/muslimvoices
Shares in depth views of a wide range of British Muslims - very accessible.

www.islamicity.com/education
This extensive site contains information about Islam, historical background, Islamic contributions to maths and science plus a wide range of other material.

www.bbc.co.uk/religion
Click on Islam for a wealth of material, including an Islamic art and architecture section and resources, eg Hajj diary which uses audio and movie footage.

www.channel4.com/history
Go to Black and Asian history map. This interactive site will direct you to links for material and information relevant to your area.

Activities focussed ...

www.britkid.org
Interactive web-site for young people based around nine characters, [choose the character Taz for insights into Muslim family life in the UK]. Also includes some useful support material for teachers about young people and racism.

Organisation sites offering Muslim perspectives:

www.muslimdirectory.co.uk
This site is a directory of UK Muslim organisations. It also has links to many other sites. A useful starting point for identifying local organisations.

www.caabu.org - Council for the Advancement of Arab - British Relations. Set up in 1967 this organisation is the oldest of its kind in Europe. The site includes a very useful education section with details of a school pack, education briefings and articles such as 'How Islam kick-started science ...'

www.cair-net.org - Council on American Islamic Relations. This site includes a searchable news archive and downloadable reports.

www.fairuk.org - Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism. An extremely useful site, well laid out and accessible. Includes a wealth of reports and resources and links to many other useful sites.

www.ihrc.org - Islamic Human Rights Foundation. Includes access to useful articles focussing on human rights issues [some including audio pieces]. Also information about current campaigns.

www.islamic-relief.com - Islamic Relief
[See opposite for further details]

www.mcb.org.uk - The Muslim Council of Britain. A useful site for getting a UK overview. Offers a wide range of statistics about the UK Muslim population and downloadable newsletters.

www.mosaicinternational.org.uk - Mosaic International. Site of a not-for-profit organisation set up in the aftermath of September 11th, aiming to 'break down cultural barriers'. The site shares information about Muslim contributions to Western society and details of a travelling exhibition.