



## Young Muslims in the UK: Education and Integration

A briefing paper for the FES/ippr seminar

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In the last five years, western policy-makers have addressed the question of what to do about young Muslims with a new sense of urgency. **The UK's history of "multicultural" politics and policies has not rendered her immune to emerging concerns about integration.** On the contrary, two particular sets of events have given this issue a political resonance in the UK to match that of any other country.

The first set of events was **rioting in the summer of 2001** across three towns in the north of England. Hundreds of people were injured and over £30 million of damage done in disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham involving young Muslims. Though much of the violence was stirred up by right wing extremists, the resulting inquiries also identified deep-rooted and fundamental fault lines that ran through these deprived communities. They found these were that these were "shockingly" divided communities (Richie, 2001) leading "parallel lives" (Cantle, 2001). They also concluded that the areas were affected by high unemployment, lack of a strong cultural identity and disenfranchisement of young people (Denham, 2001). Immediately, the debate was focused around questions about the integration and education of underprivileged Muslim communities.

The second set of events was the **London bombings of July 2005**. Since 9/11 there had been a heightened vigilance around Muslims who might be deemed to represent a terrorist threat but, this was largely directed at foreign nationals. To the surprise of many, the four perpetrators of the London bombings of 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005 were all British citizens, born and brought up in England. Concerns around the identity and integration of UK Muslims resurfaced. Yet the story of the 7/7 bombers is very different to the story of those who rioted in 2001. Three of the four men were educated to degree level and all were from middle class backgrounds. Consequently, the messages for education policy-makers are distinct from those being asked in 2001. They go beyond underachievement and social exclusion, to raise more profound concerns around cultural disaffection.

Against this context, this briefing paper seeks to set out key issues and facts governing the prospects of young Muslims in the UK. It will begin by outlining the situation of the young Muslim population and go on to map current trends in policy and practice in relation to the education of this group. The aim is to help attendees address the key seminar questions:

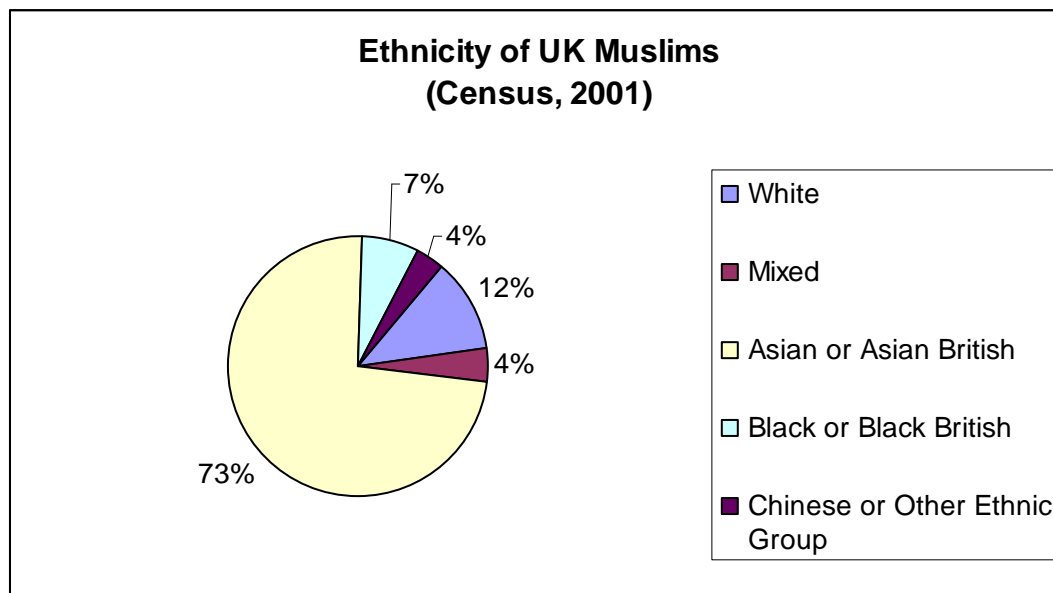
- How are the British and German education systems placed to promote integration of Muslims?
- What more can be done to support cultural integration and improve socio-economic outcomes amongst Muslim communities?
- What lessons might each country learn from the other in this area?

## I. Background

### A. THE MUSLIM POPULATION IN THE UK

There are 1.6 million Muslims in the UK. This represents 3 percent of the UK population and makes **Muslims the largest faith group after Christians**. Some commentators suggest the numbers may be larger due to undocumented immigrants.

The Muslim population in the UK are from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds though, according to the 2001 census, **73 percent self-identified as being of Asian ethnic background**.



Within those who identify themselves as Asian and Muslim, a wide variety of nationalities are represented. In 2001, the breakdown was: 43 percent Pakistani, 16 percent Bangladeshi, 8 percent Indian and 6 percent of other Asian ethnic background. Other groups include those identifying themselves as Arab, Afghan, Iranian, Turkish, Kurdish, Kosovan, North African and Somali Muslims.

Notably, the distribution of ethnic backgrounds amongst Muslims in the UK in 2001 is not clearly correlated by the distribution of birth places. **Nearly half of those identifying themselves as Muslim were born in the UK.** The breakdown of place of birth at this time was: 46 percent born in the UK; 18 percent were born in Pakistan; 9 percent born in Bangladesh, 9 percent born in Africa and 3 percent born in Turkey.

The age profile of Muslims in the UK is significantly younger than the overall population. **One third of Muslims are under age 16** as compared with one fifth of the population as a whole. In addition, there are 281,000 Muslims aged between 16-24. There are approximately half a million Muslim children and young people currently receiving education in the British education system. (Census, 2001)

## **B. SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION**

The scale of poverty and social exclusion in many Muslim communities in the UK is evident on several measures (figures are again drawn from the 2001 Census).

- 28 percent of Muslims live in socially rented housing as opposed to 20 percent for the general population.
- Muslims have the highest rate of ill health comparative to any other faith group once age structure has been accounted for.
- Muslims have the highest rate of disability of all faith groups, controlling for age.
- The unemployment rate for Muslims is 15 percent which is approximately three times higher than Christians and Hindus.
- The unemployment rate for Muslims aged 16-24 is 17.5 percent as oppose to 7.9 percent for Christians and 7.4 percent for Hindus.

**Disentangling the roots of social exclusion of UK Muslims is difficult given the close correlation between faith and social class and ethnic minority factors.** However, some evidence could be interpreted as suggesting that some Muslim-specific factors are at play alongside broader socio-economic causes.

For example, a recent study on the relative importance of family ethnicity and religion for shaping children's social class destinations (Platt, 2005), found that ethnicity was not a factor holding back the majority of ethnic minorities from upward social mobility. However the two predominantly Muslim groups – Pakistanis and Bangladeshis – represented an exception. The role of ethnicity in determining later outcomes far outweighs class for these groups. The report concludes that, unlike for other groups, **“Not even higher levels of qualifications can bring [Pakistanis and Bangladeshis] the same occupational rewards as their white counterparts: whereas for other groups, the route to greater levels of upward mobility is through education”.** The author also breaks down ethnic groups by religion. Whilst not able to glean reliable results across all ethnicities because of sample size, it becomes clear at least in the case of the Indian “success story” that Indians of Muslim faith have a lower probability of doing well than any other Indian group by religion.

There are a number of possible explanations, all of which are likely to play some role.

- **Segregation** - whilst geographical segregation tends not to be on the same scale as in France, UK Muslims are disproportionately represented in deprived inner city areas and so their social exclusion is arguably exacerbated by area affects. The 2001 Census shows that "Around two fifths of Muslims (38 percent) lived in London. After London, the regions with the next biggest share of the Muslim population were the West Midlands (14 percent), the North West (13 percent), and Yorkshire and the Humber (12 percent). Even within these regions, Muslims were highly concentrated spatially. Muslims made up 8 percent of London's population overall but 36 percent of the Tower Hamlets and 24 percent of the Newham populations" (ONS, 2004).
- **Gender roles and family structure** - A second factor relates to family structures and the role of gender in marriage in Muslim communities. Although rates of economic activity are lower for all women with young children, Bangladeshi and Pakistani women's patterns of economic activity reflect a strong gendered division of labour where motherhood is associated with full-time care for children (Dale et al, 2005). Given that UK Muslims have larger families than other religious groups and more children living with them (ONS, 2005) this factor is likely to play out over a long period of time.
- **Discrimination** - racial and faith based discrimination may well be playing an increasing role.

### C. YOUNG MUSLIMS IN THE UK - IDENTITY

The identity of Britain's Muslim population is complex, heterogeneous and frequently characterised by transnational loyalties. However, in contrast to many white Christians in Britain but in common with most other minority faith groups, **religion is a very important part of the identity of many UK Muslims and has played an increasingly influential role in how they define themselves** (O'Beirne, 2004).

There are some notable distinctions in terms of the self-identity of young Muslims, as oppose to the overall Muslim population in the UK.

**For a large number of young Muslims, "Britishness" is an important element of their self-identity.** This is likely to be largely explained by the fact that the majority of the 46 percent of Muslims who were born in the UK are in this age group. None-the-less, this does not always sit easily with their ethnic or faith identity.

- Whilst sharing an aspect of their identity with the majority of the population, a Home Office survey found that **a sizable minority of young Muslims feel that the British government is doing too little to protect their religious**

**rights or respect religious customs.** This view was not held by such large proportions of older Muslims (O’Beirne, 2004).<sup>1</sup>

- A survey of 466 young Muslims by the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (including college pupils, university students and recent graduates) conducted after the 7<sup>th</sup> July attacks concluded that respondents continued to feel proud of being British and Muslim but that many also felt increasingly uncomfortable. “A sense of fear has been created around Muslims, implying that they are “guilty by association”. **Many respondents reported that even simple things such as using the underground now make them feel uneasy. Those that reported feeling either uncomfortable or ashamed rose by over 400% after the attacks.**” (FOSIS, 2005).
- A Mori survey found that a similarly high proportion of Muslims as non-Muslims agreed that immigrants who become British citizens should be made to learn English, pledge their primary loyalty to Britain, accept the authority of British institutions and integrate fully into British society. However, Muslims surveyed were far less likely to agree that schools and employers should have the power to demand that pupils and employees should remove their headscarves (17 and 13 percent compared to 35 and 30 percent), far more likely to think that Muslims should be able to set up their own faith schools (77 percent compared to 55 percent) and, given the threat to Britain from terrorism, more likely to conclude that we should be more concerned with protecting the rights of ethnic minority communities. The survey also found that of 229 Muslim respondents, 18 percent concluded that Islam is incompatible with the values of British democracy (Mori, 2005).

#### D. YOUNG MUSLIMS IN THE UK - EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

The attainment of pupils and students in England is not collected systematically on the basis of religious affiliation so **Pakistani and Bangladeshi outcomes are often used to gauge performance of young Muslims.** Whilst over 90 percent of those of Bangladeshi and Pakistani origin count themselves as Muslim (ONS, 2005b) this is a problematic proxy. **One third of Muslims do not fall into either group (as outlined above) and country specific factors potentially obscure broader Muslim issues.**<sup>2</sup>

However, there has been resistance to collating data on the basis of faith. Given that no other information is available, the majority of data referred to below is based on these ethnic groupings.

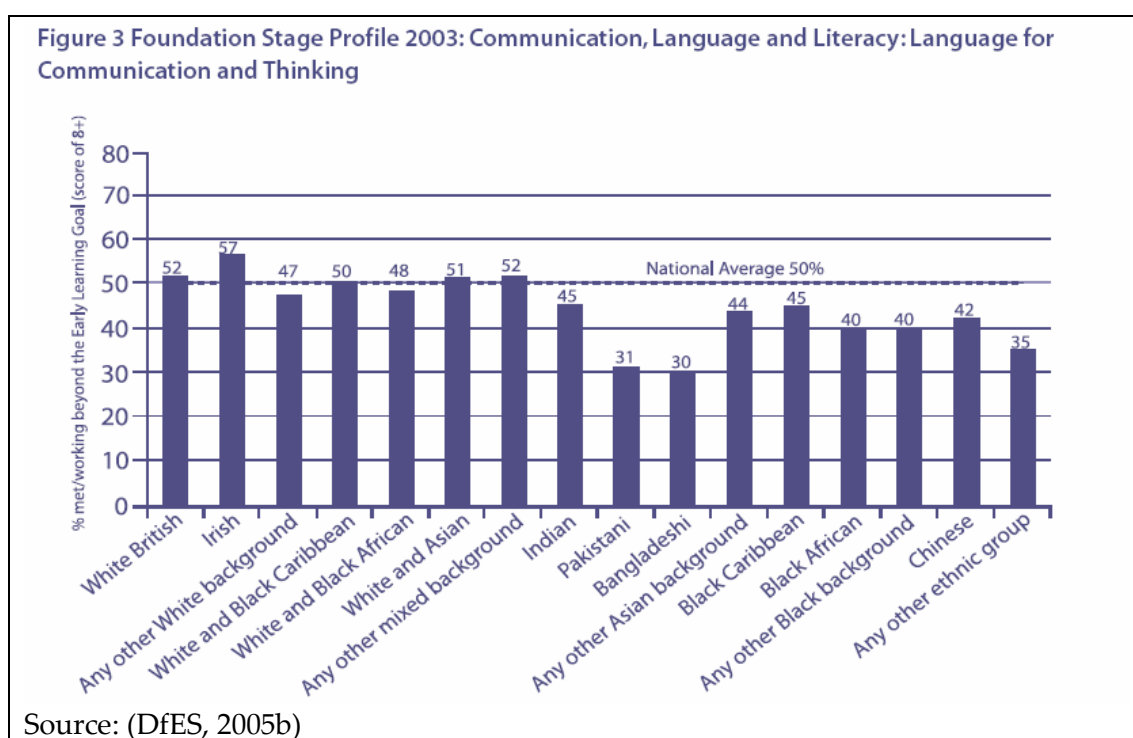
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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly however, in contrast to young people from Sikh, Hindu and Christian backgrounds, young Muslims did not tend to make the same complaint about employers.

<sup>2</sup> In addition, there are concerns that the identification process which informs data collection in schools may not be reliable as it often relies on categorisation by a parent or teacher rather than the pupils themselves.

### School Attainment and Basic Skills

Preliminary data suggests that **many Muslims are at a significant disadvantage even by the time they start primary school**. At Foundation stage, national tests appear to indicate that Pakistanis and Bangladeshis do worse than any other ethnic group on communication, language and literacy (DfES, 2005b). This is reflective of the fact that large proportions of pupils from these groups have English as an additional language. **Amongst students of Pakistani ethnicity, 93 percent do not have English as a mother tongue and amongst students of Bangladeshi ethnicity the figure is 97 percent** (Burgess et al, 2005).

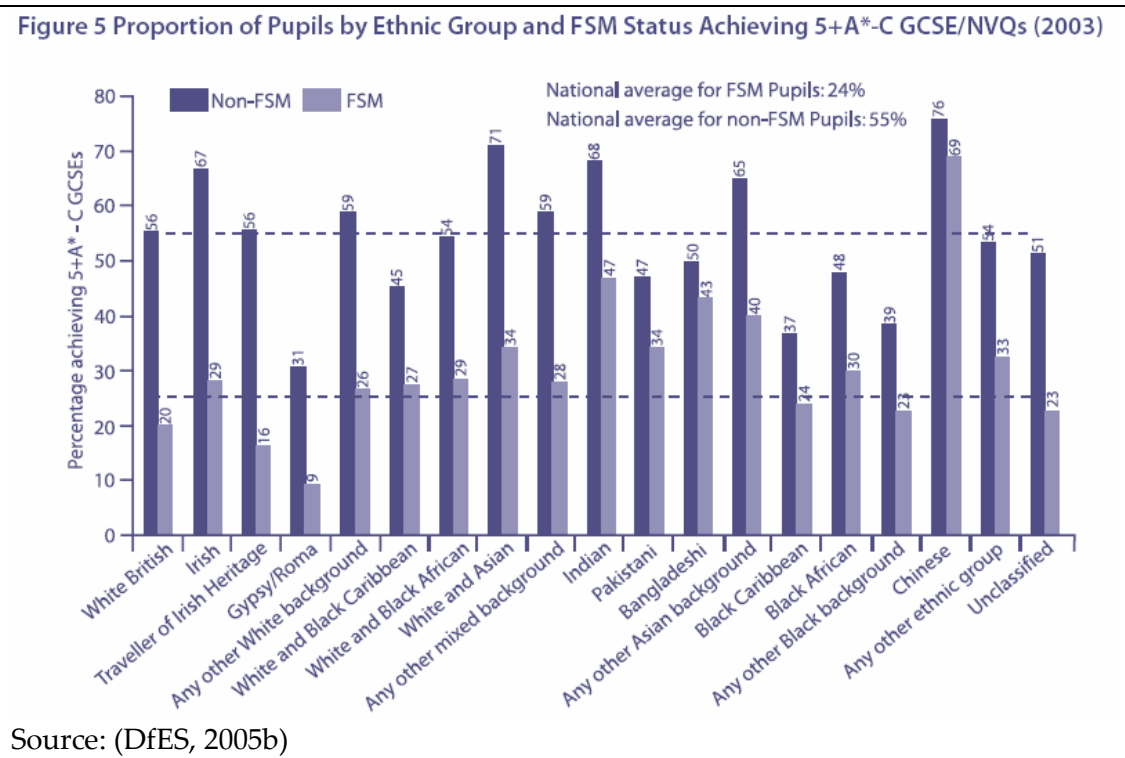


In terms of raw attainment, the disadvantage is persistent. **The academic attainment of Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils falls well below the national average at all Key Stages and at five or more grades A\*-C at GCSE and equivalent<sup>3</sup>**. Within these groups, girls do much better than boys and the gap between boys and girls appears to be increasing. This is similar across the population as a whole.

However, more nuanced data gives a more optimistic picture. DfES data on **average GCSE results differentiating between children on free school meals (FSM) and others shows that Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils actually do significantly better than their white counterparts, and that the gap between the attainment of the most deprived children and others is smaller than for the white population**. Further, Burgess et al use data which measures the progress of individuals over time (value-added) and finds that, controlling for a small number of personal

<sup>3</sup> 5+ GCSEs at grades A\*-C is widely held to be the benchmark for success in exams at the end of compulsory schooling at age 16.

characteristics, **Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils (in common with all ethnic minority pupils) actually over take their white counterparts in terms of rate of progress 11 to 16.** For example, if Bangladeshi students had remained in the same position in the test score distribution as when they entered secondary school at age 11, then as a group only 36 percent would have achieved five “good” GCSEs. The actual figure is a third higher at 48 percent (Burgess et al, 2005).



**Evidence points to a number of explanations for the gap narrowing over the course of schooling, though primarily they are not related to in-school effects.**

Perhaps the most popular explanation in the case of Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils is their increasing fluency in English. Interestingly, Burgess et al also found that for all ethnic minorities there is a particular acceleration in learning outcomes in the run-up to the end of compulsory schooling. This indicates that **parental influence may play a significant role.**

Indeed, Modood contends that the ambition among South Asians to be university educated exists across all social classes, and viewed is integral to social mobility ambitions (Loury et al, 2005). However, it could be inferred that this influence is more likely to come in the form of expectation than direct support and guidance given that language barriers may limit the help that a significant proportion of Muslim parents give.

### *Post-compulsory education*

In 2003-2004, almost a third of Muslims of working age in Great Britain had no qualifications – the highest proportion for any religious group (ONS, 2004).

However, continuing the trend of better progress amongst young people, **Bangladeshi and Pakistanis are more likely to stay on in education after 16 than white pupils with similar exams attainment** (Bhattacharyya et al, 2003). The Federation of Islamic Student Societies (FOSIS) estimates that there are more than 90,000 Muslim students in British universities and further education colleges (FOSIS, 2005), though a significant number in universities may come from abroad. Females are particularly well represented.

There are particular trends in the kinds of routes they take within this. **From 16-18, they are well represented on “academic” A-level courses and vocational courses, but less likely to take occupational qualifications.** Data from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) also suggests that the Pakistani and Bangladeshi population gravitates toward certain subjects. **In 2001, most male Pakistani and Bangladeshi students chose to study mathematical sciences and information technology. The same year women from these groups most often chose social studies and business and administration. Many students of both genders also chose law and subjects related to medicine** (Halstead, 2005).

However, the story of younger cohorts who have often progressed within the UK education system, is not the same as for more recent arrivals. **Among Muslims in the UK under the age of 30, UK-born Muslims were twice as likely to have degrees in 2003-2004 as those born elsewhere** (ONS, 2004).

## **II. Policy and Practice**

This section of the paper maps some existing education policy and practice with regard to young Muslims in England. Relevant national and local innovations and systems are described.

Whilst some of these developments can clearly be described as “good” or “bad” practice, much of this is subjective. In light of this, positive and negative implications are briefly considered and, where possible, reference is made to the potential impact on academic success and on integration more broadly. However, this paper is not intended to be a full-scale evaluation but rather a starting point for further discussion.



## A. EARLY YEARS

### *Childcare*

The government has been highly exercised by evidence that high quality early years provision from the ages of 3-5 improves children's life chances through benefiting their behavioural and cognitive outcomes and that this is especially true with children from deprived households. The new 10-year childcare strategy has been billed by Tony Blair as "the new frontier of the welfare state", guaranteeing minimum access to free childcare for all. But **to what extent is the childcare agenda benefiting Muslim pupils?**

There is concern that where state-funded provision exists, there has been low take-up from ethnic minority families, and in particular amongst Asian parents. **In 2002 approximately 70 percent of Asian parents with pre-school aged children reported having accessed some kind of childcare during the previous year, in contrast with 87 percent of white parents** (DfES, 2002). This may partially be associated to circumstantial factors such as low employment and the fact that Pakistani and Bangladeshi families (alongside African families) are most likely to have other adults living in the household who can take on childcare responsibilities. Yet, surveys have also indicated that Asian families feel information about local childcare is unavailable or unsatisfactory suggesting wider cultural issues at play (Bell, 2005). Whichever way, **the childcare strategy does not directly address this issue of how new services will successfully overcome barriers in reaching out to minority groups.**

**At the local level, models of good practice are beginning to emerge** which could help to overcome these cultural barriers to engaging in childcare. **These are primarily funded through the voluntary sector but some government agencies are also beginning to support new initiatives.**

#### **London Muslim Centre SureStart**

The London Muslim Centre is attached to East London Mosque in Tower Hamlets, home to one of the UK's largest Muslim communities. The Centre which opened in 2004 is one of the largest Muslim centres in Western Europe and has been built and run on a combination of donations from the local community and various government agencies. The Centre provides services run for, and run by, women including a women's advice and enterprise centre, a gym and a spa. The government's SureStart family centre scheme have come forward with £300,000 which enabled the Centre to expand their plans for a small crèche into a state-of-the-art childcare facility which caters for 35 children. The crèche is staffed by Muslims from a voluntary sector organisation called the Rainbow House Nursery and receives ongoing financial support through the SureStart programme.

## B. SCHOOL AGE

### *School Staff and Training*

#### **Do school staff have the qualities and skills to respond effectively to the social and learning needs of Muslim pupils?**

Some commentators argue that a lack of representation amongst school staff will have a detrimental impact on Muslim learners, depriving them of relevant role models. **While there are no statistics available on the proportion of school staff or teachers by faith, ethnicity figures indicate that the proportion of Muslims working in schools does not match the proportion of Muslim pupils.** In 2003, 9 percent of teachers were from ethnic minorities but only 0.7 percent of teachers were of Pakistani or Bangladeshi background (DfES, 2005b).

**In some areas, Muslim community groups and schools are working together to provide Muslim mentors to young people,** thereby off-setting concern about lack of role models. In addition, **many schemes have been set up by universities aimed at attracting ethnic minorities into teaching and a small number of these are specifically targeted at Muslims.** These included courses run by the Universities of Birmingham, Gloucester and Plymouth.

Perhaps more pertinently, there is an indication that the majority of teachers may not feel properly equipped to tailor their responses to children from different cultural backgrounds accordingly. **The annual survey of graduates from teacher training college has revealed that in 2005 only 35 percent of newly qualified teachers felt that the training they had received in this area was good or very good in terms of preparing them to teach pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds (TDA, 2005). Preparedness to teach pupils with English as an additional language was even lower at 27 percent.** This was the aspect of their training they rated as weakest overall though both figures do show a small improvement on previous years.

This lack of confidence amongst young teachers may be partially offset by experience and the **wealth of support and guidelines on relating to pupils from various ethnic groups offered by the DfES and government bodies.** Examples include the governments website [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities) which contains details on good practice, relevant DfES research and how to use ethnicity data and Ofsted's publication *Race Equality in Schools: Good Practice in Schools and Local Education Authorities* (2005). This promotes effective incorporation of race and diversity issues into the curriculum, effective guidance and strong leadership on handling race-related incidents in schools and intelligent use of attainment data on ethnic groups.

However, **very little material exists designed to provide support to education professionals in relating to children of particular faith groups.**

## *The National Curriculum and Religious Education*

### **Does the National Curriculum help nurture a positive identity for young Muslims in the UK or help foster mutual understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims?<sup>4</sup>**

While the curriculum contains a generic “inclusion statement” which explains schools’ responsibility to provide a curriculum that meets the specific needs of individuals and groups of pupils, **critics point out that it contains little specific on the contribution that Islam and Muslims have made to the development of European society or the historical connections between Britain and Islam** (eg. Islam et al, 2005).

However, there are several voluntary sector organisations who produce curriculum material that would be suitable for all schools and which reflects the Muslim contribution. **These locally produced materials tend to be used by a minority of schools and local authorities in areas with particularly large Muslim populations.**

#### **Lancashire: Understanding Islam Project**

Understanding Islam is a project, part-funded by Lancashire local authority and managed by the Lancashire council of mosques. A qualified Muslim teacher takes lessons in schools to help pupils gain familiarity with Islam, dispel misconceptions, and answer any questions pupils choose to ask. Schools are given further resources to follow up with their classes later. The teacher asks pupils questions which prompt them to think and reflect. Ofsted found pupils were delighted to try on Muslim headwear and examine prayer beads. Pupils in both classes of a primary school with very few pupils from minority ethnic groups had sufficient acquaintance with the concepts of Islam to answer with good sense and ask serious questions. The Lancashire council of mosques evaluates the project by questionnaires left with the schools and follows this up, when invited, with further visits. Inspectors judged this to be a valuable experience for pupils, although it is difficult to assess its long term effects. **Source: (Ofsted, 2005)**

Whilst teaching on Islam is not system-wide, education on “citizenship” has been since 2002. The absence of citizenship teaching previous to this was noted in several of the reports that looked into the problems behind the 2001 riots. The requirement is that all schools should follow a specific programme designed to teach knowledge and understanding; enquiry and communication; and participation and responsible action. However, **the schools inspectorate Ofsted conclude that the provision of citizenship education is unsatisfactory in the curriculum of one fifth of schools and that in many others although there are elements in place, a full programme is not available to all pupils.** They find that citizenship is less well established, less well taught and that both reluctance and lack of capacity to make appropriate provision act as obstacles (Bell, 2005)

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<sup>4</sup> The National Curriculum is compulsory for nearly all state-maintained schools in England.

## Is religious education (RE) utilised well as an opportunity for progressing understanding of Islam amongst non-Muslims and education Muslim young people about other faiths?

Outside the National Curriculum, **all state-maintained schools are required to provide RE for all their pupils – though parents may choose to withdraw pupils from these lessons.** For community-controlled and foundation schools without a religious character, a local agreed RE syllabus is written by a committee of teachers, councillors and representatives of local faith communities. There are 150 such committees and legally, **all 150 agreed syllabuses in England are required to reflect the fact that the religious traditions of Britain are in the main Christian; they must also take into account the teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in Britain.** The government's Qualification and Curriculum Authority has produced non-statutory framework on RE that schools and teachers can adopt if they so choose. The framework advises that pupils should study Islam, along with the five other main religions, at each stage. In contrast to Christianity however, it does not recommend teaching Islam "throughout" each phase of education (QCA, 2004).

**In voluntary-aided and foundation schools with a religious character, RE is taught according to guidelines of that faith community.** While these schools may, if they so choose, adopt the QCA's RE framework, they are not required to do so, nor to have recourse to any particular guidelines.

Given the variety of practice, it is difficult to gauge the overall role of RE in furthering mutual understanding and dialogue between young people of faith groups. And it is probable that some of the children who know least about other cultures and religions attend schools where only one view is taught. However, it is worth noting that RE is fast growing in popularity as an exam option. In 2004 a quarter of a million pupils took the half-GCSE in religious studies, and a further 141,000 took the full GCSE (Baker, 2004).

### *Faith Schools*

## Does the high proportion of faith based schools in the UK bode well for integration?

This question is currently at the forefront of public debate in England. In January 2003 there were almost **7,000 state-maintained faith schools in England**, making up 35 percent of primary and 17 percent of secondary schools. Ninety-nine percent of these were Christian. Christian schools had places for 1.7 million children and, in 2001, catering to nearly one third of school-aged children described as Christian. In contrast, there were **four Muslim state-maintained schools** potentially catering for 0.003 percent of school-aged children described as Muslim (ONS, 2004). There are also a number of independent Muslim schools, bringing the total proportion of Muslim children educated at Muslim schools to an estimated 3 percent (Halstead,

2005). However, **the government is currently making provisions to bring more Islamic schools into the state education system** including in the October 2005 White Paper, *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All* (DfES, 2005c). It also paves the way for Muslim groups, and other faith groups, to set up Trusts which could run whole groups of schools. This is part of a broader shift to increase diversity of schooling.

However, **numerous critics continue to raise concerns about the social and psychological impact of separate education.** The reports looking into the causes of the 2001 riots concluded that giving parents more choice about their children's school had led to the development of racially segregated schools in some cities. They argue that the growth of faith schools could worsen the divide between racial groups. **Public anxiety about faith schools seems to be particularly focused around Muslim faith schools.** A recent survey of a cross section of 1000 people found 67% in favour of faith schools for Christians but only 57% in favour of faith schools for Muslims (Mori, 2005). Controversially, concerns here were also reflected by **the national schools inspectorate, Ofsted, which concluded that too many private Islamic schools do not meet minimum requirements for "the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development" of pupils as defined in the curriculum.** The Chief Inspector expressed a view that many new faith schools are being opened by a younger generation of British Muslims who recognised that traditional Islamic education did not entirely fit pupils for life in modern Britain, but approximately fifty independent Muslim schools had been told that they must improve their curriculum to qualify or continue to qualify for registration (BBC, 2005).

None-the-less, **faith schools are popular amongst many Muslim families.** Many feel that pupils at Muslim schools benefit from a better balance between home and school environment and that such schools diffuse the sense of isolation and alienation experienced by many young people and that this in turn will curb resentment. Advocates point out that **neither the perpetrators of disturbances in the north of England in 2001, nor the London terrorist attack in 2005 had attended faith schools.** Further, the academic achievements of pupils in Muslim schools vary but many perform much better than similar neighbouring schools. Most recently Feversham College in Bradford, **the first Muslim state school, topped the government's national value-added performance tables.** Further, in defence of the expansion of Muslim state schools, there is also an "equality of choice" argument that is made based on the fact that nearly 30 percent of English schools are church schools and there are no plans to reduce this.

Finally, **some have argued that faith schools could help build stronger bonds between different faith groups within the UK if they are forced to admit all pupils and teach a wide ranging religious education curriculum** (Carey, 2001). Many, but by no means all, Christian church schools choose to admit a wide range of pupils and take a lead in promoting community cohesion across faith and ethnic groups. However, others fear that opening the doors of Muslim schools to all pupils would not be enough to attract a cross-section in. Evidence suggests that even without a

strong presence of Muslim schools, there are slightly higher school-based indices of ethnic segregation compared to neighbourhood-based indices (Burgess et al, 2004).

### **Holy Cross College**

Holy Cross College is a Roman Catholic sixth form college in a predominantly white area (Bury), in which the proportion of black and minority ethnic (BME) learners is double the proportion of BME people in the local population. The college attracts in particular learners of Pakistani heritage and a significant minority of learners are Muslims. The college's mission statement makes specific reference to the inclusivity of the college, and the prospectus includes welcoming statements in community languages. The religious education programme and assemblies are inclusive of all faiths. A curriculum audit was carried out and all staff are made aware of the standards expected with regard for respect for race and culture. The tutorial system includes specific sessions on asylum seekers, racism and the college's equality and diversity policies. Staff training has taken place on the race equality policy and the legislation, and on cultural awareness; new staff receive equality and diversity training as part of their induction. The chaplaincy organises a weekly faith sharing group which is attended by learners of both the Christian and Muslim faiths. The equality assurance manager meets with BME learners as part of a biannual focus group to assess needs. There is a teaching and learning group which looks at ways of spreading good practice in integrating equality and diversity into the curriculum. The college supports a charity in Pakistan, and has actively supported the families of learners who are asylum seekers and are facing deportation. There is a successful programme of evening courses which are providing opportunities for adults, particularly Asian women. **Source: Ofsted, 2005**

### *Supplementary or "Complementary" Schools*

#### **What is the impact of education outside mainstream schooling?**

In addition to compulsory education, many mosques and community groups provide supplementary lessons to children from Muslim families. These range from classes aimed at helping children with their homework and basic skills to lessons specifically aimed at nurturing spiritual awareness and knowledge about Islam.

No data are available on the number of young Muslims attending supplementary schools but they are thought to have very high attendance, especially amongst younger children. Halstead concludes that **"the dominant pattern that has emerged in Britain for many children is to attend community or church primary schools in the daytime and also attend mosque or other Islamic schools for up to two hours every evening, to learn about their religion"** (Halstead, 2005: 133). He also reports that in Bradford, where there is a particularly large Muslim population, 63 Muslim supplementary schools are registered with the local education authority.

There are mixed views on the impacts of supplementary schools. In instances where the supplementary provision is wholly focused on teaching about Islam, and where the hours are long, the time and effort may detract from school performance and English language development. **Some commentators have also expressed concern that exposure to two such different cultures, may lead pupils to struggle with apparently incompatible guidance, without the opportunity to discuss and reconcile the two.** Indeed, a study of supplementary schools in Leicester found that the schools had little external contact with state schools, colleges and universities and this separation could in theory force pupils to make difficult choices.

However, the Leicester study also concluded that the schools “widened the participants’ choices and uptake of identities” and that **“The students’ self-descriptions were not essentialised into fixed and static ethnic categories. Instead, they projected an ambiguity about ‘cultures’ and ‘ethnicities’. The students appeared to value the flexibility required of moving between languages and cultures. They expressed the importance of being multicultural and bilingual...”** (Martin et al, 2003: 2).

## C. POST-16 PROVISION

### *Facilities and procedures*

**Do universities and providers of further education have the facilities and procedures necessary to make Muslim learners feel encouraged and supported?**

Though Muslim students tend to progress well through post-16 learning, **a wide range of concerns about the appropriateness of facilities and procedures are reflected by Muslim student organisations.** These are summarised by Halstead:

- The need for more Muslim chaplains or counselling services;
- The need for student refectories to provide food that conforms to Islamic dietary requirements;
- The need to respect Islamic festivals and prayer times in planning events such as examinations;
- The need to respect Islamic beliefs and practices, such as around alcohol;
- The need for official policies on Islamophobia and sensitive policies on reporting racial harassment and discrimination;
- The need for a system of student loans or grants that does not put Muslim students in a position where they are required to act against Islamic rules on paying and receiving interest (Halstead, 2005: 141).

In terms of further education colleges, **practice varies widely.** Ofsted find that “in the best examples, the needs of particular faith groups were met. For example, in some colleges there were good washroom facilities for Muslim learners and well publicised prayer rooms. In other colleges, while there might be a prayer room, some learners and staff were unaware of its existence and washing facilities were

inadequate. In a minority of colleges, the prayer room was not a dedicated space. It was also used, for instance, as a quiet room, and/or for individual tutorials and counselling. The most responsive colleges also took care to support learners during Ramadan, for example by setting rooms aside for learners to rest and making sure there are adequate facilities for the purchasing and eating of food after 16.00 hours” (Ofsted, 2005b). It seems likely that similar variation exists across universities.

#### D. NEW ARRIVALS AND NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

##### **How well are new Muslim arrivals and non-English speakers integrated?**

Given that the majority of young Muslims in the UK were born in this country, **provision for new arrivals is not a dominant theme in discussion about Muslim integration in the UK.** However, the growing numbers of immigrants from countries including Somalia and Bosnia make this group a sizable minority.

**All young people arriving in the UK have the same entitlements to early years provision and compulsory schooling as UK citizens.** Beyond this, the DfES have issued guidance on Managing Pupil Mobility which aims to help integrate new arrivals. **There is some additional financial support to schools based on the number of pupils with English as an additional language** and this is awarded to schools as part of a broader Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) which also covers underachieving minorities with English as their mother-tongue. Total EMAG funding for 2005-06 is £168 million; half of this comes directly from the Department for Education and Skills and the rest is provided by local authorities, which must match the amount they receive from central government. Both EMAG and the sum for EAL apportioned within it have been criticised for inadequately capturing the hugely varied levels of language attainment and significant variation between the performance of different ethnic groups in different locations (Kyambi, 2005 and Lupton, 2004).

Those **local authorities with large number of pupils with English as an additional language are able to use funding to provide services across schools.** There are some particularly good examples of practice in these areas.

##### **Hounslow Language Service**

Hounslow local education authority (LEA), which is situated by Heathrow airport – the port of entry for many asylum seekers - runs a dedicated Language Service. The service provides specialist staff who work alongside school staff to help bilingual pupils develop their English. They make teaching materials in different subjects in English and Mother-tongue and run a Mother-tongue section which helps pupils maintain and develop their first language skills. They provide specially devised materials to help bilingual children understand school curriculum subjects and training to teachers. This kind of provision is the exception rather than the rule however.



For young people who are 16 or older, there is an entitlement for all those with residency to gain a Level 2 qualification in English<sup>5</sup>. This is taught through English as a Second Language programmes (ESOL) which are available at the majority of further education colleges. They are designed to meet the language development needs of adult learners living and working in England, including settled communities, refugees and asylum seekers, or migrant workers resident in England.

### III. Final Remarks and Implications for Policy

“Muslim assertiveness became a feature of majority-minority relations only from around the 1990s; and indeed, prior to this, racial equality discourse and politics were dominated by the idea that the dominant post-immigration issue was ‘colour-racism’. One consequence of this is that the legal and policy framework still reflects the conceptualisation and priorities of racial dualism” (Modood, 2003)

In the UK, policies that affect the education of Muslims are still largely situated within the context of race politics. The highly sophisticated data now collated on school pupils does not include information on faith. And, as illustrated above, this is reflected by the picture on the ground which is one of ethnically adjusted policy across the board, interspersed with pockets of good practice targeted specifically at young Muslims. Even these “pockets” are almost always spearheaded by Muslim voluntary sector organisations who often succeed in courting the support of local government and schools in areas with large Muslim populations. Is this a barrier to integration in the UK?

#### *Equality*

If reducing socio-economic exclusion and hence advancing the educational attainment of young Muslims is seen as the key to better integration, the answer to this question is probably “no”. In summary:

- Given their socio-economic position, young Muslims are doing well in the English education system.
- Ethnically sensitive schools policies are likely to be contributing to this outcome given that young Muslims are predominantly from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- And further, given that learning outcomes are mainly determined by “out of school factors” such as parenting for all groups, it could be argued that these groups are likely to do well in the long-term anyway.

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<sup>5</sup> A Level 2 qualification is defined by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority as a qualification which recognises the ability to gain a good knowledge and understanding of a subject area of work or study, and to perform varied tasks with some guidance or supervision. It is notionally the equivalent of a GCSE grade A\*-C.

- Therefore, it is not clear that a specific focus on the outcomes of Muslim pupils would bring particular advantages given the current ethnic composition of the young Muslim population.

### *Identity*

But, if the key priority for integration is nurturing and developing British Muslim identity, thereby publicly differentiating it from the extremist Muslim identity and facilitating better dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims on faith issues, a “faith-blind” approach raises more questions. These include:

- Will the growth of supplementary schools and expected increase in the number of Muslim faith schools assist the development of a “multicultural” identity or foster confusion and disaffection?
- Should the growing activity of the Muslim voluntary sector in the education system be viewed as a sign that Muslims are increasingly dissatisfied with mainstream education system, or that they are keen to lead the delivery of Muslim-specific education in collaboration with the state?
- Is there scope to increase collaboration between voluntary sector and state provision further to provide a more coherent experience for young Muslims and is this desirable?
- Is the absence of Muslim specific data in education a means of preventing tenuous conclusions being drawn about an essentially heterogeneous group, or does it lead to an unhelpful relegation of faith issues more broadly?

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