



Islam and Education

Islam Today

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Sources

Sophie Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain*, chapter in
[Cesari, Jocelyne. The Oxford Handbook of European Islam. 2015. Oxford Handbooks in Religion and Theology. The Oxford Handbook of European Islam.](#)

[Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck. "The Globalization of Islam: Islamic Education." In The Oxford History of Islam, edited by John L. Esposito. Oxford Islamic Studies Online.](#)

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2011: 140 Muslim schools in UK [[Guardian](#)]*

Popularity:

20 in 1990

46 in 1996

80 in 2002

115 in 2008

184 in 2020 (estimate)

[+ fee paying schools]

*Guardian - Islamic schools flourish to meet demand, 28 November 2011

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Faith schools

Faith schools have to follow the [national curriculum](#), but they can choose what they teach in religious studies.

Faith schools may have different [admissions criteria](#) and staffing policies to state schools, although anyone can apply for a place.

Faith academies

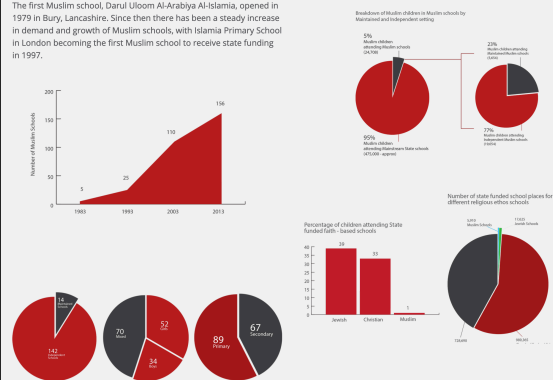
Faith [academies](#) do not have to teach the national curriculum and have their own admissions processes.

Source: [gov.uk](#) - 'Types of school'

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Overview of Muslim schools in the UK (2013)

The first Muslim school, Darul Uloom Al-Arabiya Al-Islamia, opened in 1979 in Bury, Lancashire. Since then there has been a steady increase in demand and growth of Muslim schools, with Islamia Primary School in London becoming the first Muslim school to receive state funding in 1997.



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The **1944 Education Act** required that the school day should begin with a Christian-inspired assembly or collective prayer, while allowing parents with alternative religious beliefs to withdraw their children from participating in Christian activities.

A **1988 law** made religious instruction obligatory. Muslim requests for parity with other religious groups in Britain, such as Jews and Catholics, who receive state funding to support the operation of their religious schools, were denied. Instead they have been offered a compromise that allows Muslim students to go to single-sex schools.

In several inner-city schools in Britain 80 to 90 per cent of the student body is Muslim. Several confrontations occurred in the 1970s over school uniforms that required girls to wear short skirts.

Girls who did not comply with the regulations were expelled from school, and in some cases parents took their daughters out of school over the issue.

Haddad

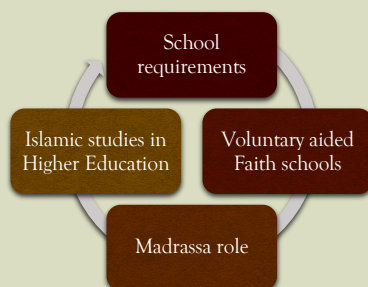
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A **Muslim liaison committee** was formed in Bradford to negotiate with the educational authorities about issues important to Muslims. Compromises were eventually worked out, allowing Muslim girls to wear trousers as long as the trousers match the colours of the school uniform. Girls are generally allowed to put on headscarves and they can wear tracksuits for physical education classes.

Several schools have tried to organize separate swimming classes for boys and girls and allow Muslim students to wear swimming suits in the shower.

The first state Muslim school in Britain opened in early 1998 in London.

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A number of key issues need to be addressed when exploring the subject of Islam and Education, especially in UK contexts. These include:

the roles of mosque 'schools' (at various levels)

Islam and religious education in the state sector

the teaching of Islam at university level

resources and the representation of Islam

gender issues and education.

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Religious issues in education

- Uniform
- School meals
- Curriculum
- Holidays (i.e. Eids)
- Prayer spaces
- Single-sex education/gender-mixing in classroom
- Religious education
- Orientalist textbooks
- Governors
- 'Radicalisation'
- Standards

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Religious Studies

Religions taught from a secular viewpoint = problematic

Religious education

What allowances were made for Islam (and other religions) especially in faith based schools (Church of England, Church of Wales) which might have a Muslim studentship too.

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Responses

Local authorities not able/prepared/informed enough to act

Issues of discrimination/racism

Growing place of Muslim children in schools

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Key issues

Position of children in state sector

Position of children in faith school, voluntary sector

Role of supplementary schools

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Issues of parental input and Islamic organisational input

Can be a preference for the state sector, where standards are perceived by parents as higher

Qualification gap - lower percentages of educational performance in Muslim sector

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Curriculum

Sex education issues

How sciences are taught?

Creation teaching.

'Euro-centric' teaching

Issues of communication between home and school

Non-Muslim Teacher perceptions of Muslim students can be problematic

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The madrasa, or mosque school (as frequently defined in the UK context), may provide facilities for children and youth to learn about Islam out of school hours.

The term 'school' should be used with caution, because whilst there are many formally organised institutions with purpose built areas in mosque complexes, tuition can take place in public amenity space or individual homes.

Concern has been expressed in Muslim communities regarding the perceived 'low quality' of education provided in some mosques and madrasas, although some people believed that 'something is better than nothing'.

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It was identified that there is a need to move away from 'ad-hoc-ism', towards recognisable standards of achievement for students in the madrasas.

It was also suggested by some that 'understanding Islam' meant more than mastering recitation of the Qur'an, and should incorporate actual understanding of the meaning of texts.

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The provision of 'Islamic education' features strongly in demands for Muslim schools, where it can be incorporated into the school curriculum.

There are a number of examples of Muslim schools in Britain, and the demands of the Islamia Trust for state-funded Muslim schools by Yusuf Islam placed the issue prominently upon the national education agenda.

Several educational platforms exist, within the Association of Muslim Schools, Muslim Educational Trust, Iqra Trust, Islamia Schools Trust, Union of Muslim Organisations, Islamic Foundation, UK Education Waqf, Muslim Parliament, and Islamic Academy.

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Schools Issues

Ofsted

- East London Islamic Schools under criticism for curriculum
- Sir John Cass school under special measures re. radicalisation and Facebook

Trojan Horse

- Five Birmingham schools condemned for governors' approach
- Criticised by inspectors - ongoing issues

Radicalisation

- General concerns re standards in schools
- Some school initiatives against radicalisation

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