

An introduction to Saturday Islamic School



Founded in April 1996, Saturday Islamic School (SIS) aims to educate Muslim girls and boys about Islam. This initiative to educate children about their culture and belief is very distinct and differs greatly from many of the commonly found traditional approaches. The model pioneered by SIS, for children to learn about their religion with understanding, is now being replicated.

BACKGROUND

Parents want their children to be successful. Muslim parents want to see their children succeed with good morals and ethical behaviour. Children want to learn about their religion in a safe and inspiring environment. The majority of the children in Muslim populated areas such as Tower Hamlets attend classes, mainly after school hours, at local Mosques, Centres or other venues.

Children often attend an evening class after a full day at school. Their overall achievement is not as progressive and many take a long time to grasp the basics that are taught. The quality of learning provided varies greatly as many of these provisions are deprived of the required educational resources. In general the outcomes do not match the parental expectation. Parents who want their children to learn about their faith and values with understanding are dissatisfied with a rote learning approach which is commonly used in most of these classes.

THE CONTEXT

Some of the main contributing factors for which these classes are not as effective may include one or more of the following:

- children attend classes when they are exhausted and tired. Some also miss the enrichment activities offered in mainstream schools;
- the quality of teaching & learning provided is not as good;
- the pedagogy does not cater well for different learning styles;
- lack of resources and suitable accommodation as most classes do not have chairs and tables - children are expected to sit on carpets, and;
- communication gap - as a large proportion of the teachers do not have any formal UK teaching qualifications.

A SOLUTION

SIS is an initiative which has been developed after careful consideration of all the issues involved. Children attend mainstream schools from Monday to Friday and then spend Saturday in a secure and safe environment to learn about the various aspects the Islamic faith. Sunday is spared for recreation and rest. Learning with understanding is at the core of the provision offered by SIS. Children have opportunities to discuss and share their ideas. Parents work alongside SIS as active partners in their children's education and learning.

THE BEDROCK

SIS attempts to equip girls and boys aged 6½ – 15 years with the essential knowledge and understanding of Islam so that they are able to make choices and play an active and positive role in all aspects of their lives as British Muslims.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

SIS aims to provide children with a secure, safe and inspiring learning environment which promotes and fosters self-discipline, good manners, respect and consideration for each other. It also aims to provide children with:

- good quality resources and teaching that support learning about their faith;
- opportunities to raise issues and discuss & share their ideas;
- skills to be more confident/independent - both in thinking & decision making, and;
- opportunities to learn through play.

APPROACHES TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

The pedagogy used at SIS is based on the teachings of the Qur'an and the Islamic traditions. The styles, the methods and the approaches are such that they encourage children to be self-disciplined, self-motivated, and be active and independent in their thinking. There is no punishment to degrade the child, or hinder self-esteem. SIS has a strict behaviour policy, and works in partnership with the parents and guardians.

THE CURRICULUM

Children are taught three subjects: Arabic language to GCSE level, learning the Qur'an (reading & memorisation), and Islamic Studies. 35 to 40 % of the time at SIS is spent on social education with an emphasis on Islamic etiquette and manners.

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The school's only source of income is contributions from parents. It is heavily dependent on the 'goodwill' of mainstream schools and other partner institutions who make a small charge towards the cost incurred for the generous use of their premises. Some do not charge anything and view the work of SIS as part of their broader contribution to their local community.

OTHER FEATURES OF THE SCHOOL

- SIS operates during term time with the exception of half-terms.
- Most children have 100% attendance and good punctuality.
- Current workforce is made up of 40% with UK qualified teacher status, and 20% ex-students of SIS with sufficient training within the school.
- It has a governing body of 11 people (5 of whom are parents of current pupils).
- Currently SIS runs classes at
 - ◆ Stepney Green Maths, Computing & Science College
 - ◆ St Paul's Way Trust School
 - ◆ London Muslim Centre
 - ◆ Bethnal Green Academy

For more information visit www.saturdayislamicsschool.co.uk

SIS ~ Education & Fun in the Islamic Way