



**Muslim Parents Association
Newspaper Spring 2009**

The Muslim Parents Association of High Wycombe– Rafiq Raja Chairman

As chairman of the Muslim Parents Association in High Wycombe, I make an unashamed appeal to parents from all sections of the community and particularly from the Muslim community to take an active interest in the education of your children. Even if you are not yet a parent or do not have school age children we still need your help; today's children are our doctors, nurses, civil servants, social workers and indeed our future.

Buckinghamshire is rightly proud of its academic achievements as it has some excellent schools, a very passionate and determined army of teachers as well as a dedicated governing body for each school. Some of the recent school results at GCSE and A level have been the best in state schools in the country. However, whilst the majority of children from the mainstream community are achieving very high results, but the Pakistani heritage pupils are no. The gap between the two sets of school children in Buckinghamshire is rather wide. The figures for 2007 show that whilst 62% of the mainstream pupils gained five A*-C grades at GCSE, including English Maths, only 37% of Pakistani heritage pupils attained this passport to future training or further education. The figures for 2008 do not look much different. Unfortunately, this significant gap is not expected to narrow in the foreseeable future.

The Muslim community in High Wycombe is now well established, and numbers range from 15,000 to 20,000. The first new arrivals in High Wycombe are recorded in the mid 1950s.

The early arrivals came from a pre industrial world into a developed industrial society and had to adapt to a different language, culture, food, climate and modes of living. They saw themselves working in England for a few years and then returning to their homeland. This dream has now been replaced by people accepting that their and their families' future lies in this country.

The Pakistani origin parents, due to language difficulties and unfamiliarity with the education system in the country have not always been able to give support to their children as they passed through the school system. This is one of the reasons the Pakistani heritage children, born and bred in this country, are achieving less than their peers in the mainstream group.

The result is that many, without the GCSE passport of 5 or more passes at A* to C, fail to get on to further education or training programmes.

Some young people have drifted into petty crime and are not prepared to accept the low status and low paid jobs, which their limited or inadequate qualifications entitle them to, even if there was no racism in the society.

The MPA has been working with colleagues, head teachers and School governors and indeed with the Local Education Authority to help to remove the disparity which exists in the achievement levels of the Pakistani/Muslim origin children and the rest, so that the obvious areas of disenchantment can be minimised and a cohesive society created.

The MPA is pleased to report that progress is being made in establishing a constructive and positive dialogue with the LEA and it is hoped that we will now move on from identifying the reasons behind the underachievement of Pakistani origin pupils to looking at workable solutions. The future of our Town depends on its entire young people having the necessary skills to participate in education and work.

Any comment or suggestions for reducing the achievement gap between the Pakistani heritage and mainstream pupils would be welcome.

Are there any 'out of the box' ideas which need to be tried?

Help your child do well - Dr Katy Simmons, Chairman of Governors at Cressex School, offers some advice

If you have children who are pupils at a secondary school, you are likely to find life at home a bit stressful over the next few weeks, as your children prepare for exams. The results of those exams, especially for pupils in year 11, who are taking their GCSEs, could have a very big effect on the rest of their lives. How can you help your child do as well as possible?

The government has already told us that by 2010, 80% of jobs will need young people to have at least 5 or more good passes at GCSE. Not having those 5 good passes will mean that young people have fewer opportunities and fewer options. It is already important to have 5 good passes, if young people want to stay into school Sixth Forms, go to college or go into further training. With the credit crunch it is important that your child has the qualifications to secure a training place or a place in a college.

In Buckinghamshire, exam results are very good and schools are rightly proud of their successes. But not all children are scoring as well as they can. Some of us are very concerned that pupils of Asian heritage are not doing as well as they should be doing. White pupils in Buckinghamshire score very well indeed at GCSE - over two thirds of them finish Year 11 with qualifications good enough to take them into sixth forms, further education or professional training. This is not so for Asian pupils. Only one third of them leave with the qualifications they need. So there is a big gap between the two groups of young people.

You may be asking, 'What can I do?' You are interested in your children and go to meetings at school to discuss their work. You need to keep on doing that - ask questions, make sure you understand how much homework they have to do, give young people lots of encouragement. Make sure they know that you understand how important their school work is.

If you can't help them directly yourself, encourage them to go to extra study groups at school - sometimes these are held after school or in the holidays. Make sure that if your child is using the internet, they are not just playing games but looking at the revision sites. Their school probably has its own web site and on that website there are all sorts of helpful sections that will help them revise. Encourage them to contact their teachers for extra help, or go down to the town library with them to use reference books and access the internet.

You might also want to talk about education with your local County and District Councillors and your local MP, Paul Goodman. Tell them that you are concerned about the gap in achievement between white and Asian pupils. Why does that gap exist? How can they help? What plans do they have to support Asian children in doing as well as other children? Ask them to ask questions at County Hall in Aylesbury. Follow up their answers.

You might also want to become a school governor - every school must have parent governors. Being a governor is quite a bit of work but you don't need special qualifications. You just need to have some time, be interested in children and keen to help schools. Contact your child's school to ask if they have any vacancies for governors. If you don't want to be a governor yourself, find out who the governors are at your child's school, especially the parent governors. Ask about the school's future plans, ask how you can help, maybe with fundraising or parent groups. You might want to find out more about the work of the Muslim Parents Association - what issues are they discussing? Join in - your voice is important.

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Here is a translation of some wise words passed on by Imam Abu Hanifa, who was an Islamic scholar and jurist in the golden period of Islam and is credited with having consolidated Islamic thought and principals and his followers are known as Hanfis, as they refer to his school of thought.

These are the pearls of wisdom given to his pupil Yousaf Bin Khalid when he was sent to Basra in present day Iraq.

Remember, the Imam is reported to have told his pupil, if you behave in an uncivilised manner to people, they will become your enemies, even if they happen to be your parents. He is not a wise person who does not use good manners when dealing with people.

Give proper respect to all in accordance with their status, respect those with education, be gentle with the youth, mix and stay with the ordinary people, keep the company of pious (God Fearing) people, do not feel anyone is less worthy than yourself, do not hesitate to do a good deed, do not let others know of your secrets/plans and do not trust anyone until you have fully dealt with them. Do not keep friendships with people, who bitch behind the back of others, do not let go of patience,

Continued on page 6.....

The Environment Centre

Have you visited The Environment Centre on Holywell Mead? Beside the Rye car park, there it is! The former café to the swimming pool was opened 6 years ago as an Environment Centre.

Everyone is welcome! We aim to create a happy place where everyone of every age will find something interesting.

Children – and adults - enjoy watching the honeybees in our live beehive; the exhibitions are thought provoking, aiming to provide information about our natural world – fascinating at every level of understanding. In April, an exhibition about Meadow Life, May and June - Birds and Birdsong, and July, an exhibition about trees, to launch our Trees Trail around the Rye. This adds to our Water trail and History Trail. There is a library of books to read and piles of leaflets to take away. Mothers and small children are especially welcome on Monday mornings, when there are things to do and a nursery rhyme. There are talks and walks, films and pond-dipping, as well as the exhibitions and the activities.

There is information about - insulating your home, composting, local walks, saving water, real nappies, sustainability, bees, birds, ecobuilding, recycling, biodiversity, green energy, vegetable growing, pond-dipping and volunteering.

Everyone is welcome – just to have a look, or to ask questions, or to volunteer to help us spread the important message about the need to fight Global Warming – the cause of so much devastating climate change in the world.

Email: www.ecobuzz.org.uk telephone: 01494 511585

Open Saturday & Monday 11am – 4pm, Sunday 2.30 – 4.30. Every day during school holidays – provided there are sufficient volunteers.

The meeting room is available for hire or use by schools or organisation on Tuesday to Friday and evenings.

News from Cressex School

Why not take a walk past the Cressex School – look for the big crane! You'll see that building work on the **new school** is taking shape very quickly – every day you can see the new school growing. It is an exciting time for students and teachers. We plan to move into the new school in September 2010 – we will be Buckinghamshire's only brand new

secondary school and we are proud that it will be in our community.

In January, we heard that we had won **specialist status** as a Business and Enterprise school. This success will give us extra money and make us able to provide new opportunities for our students.

Our students have been very active. Cressex students organised a **talent show** "Battle of the Schools". The idea for this came from two of our students who between them produced high quality publicity materials and brought John Hampden Grammar School and Wycombe High School into their project. They also raised money for prizes and successfully recruited an "A list" panel of judges, including Wycombe MP, Paul Goodman. The evening was a great team effort involving staff and students from the school and a great success all round. Wycombe Abbey School kindly gave their support with the sound and lighting.

In January a team of three year 11 students took part in the Wycombe Rotary Club's annual "Youth Speaks" **tournament** and gave an excellent presentation about the image of young people today. While they did not come away with any prizes, the students agreed that it had been a great experience and are looking forward to having another go next year.

The school has had some **visitors** to the school. Early in the Spring Term, Cllr Paul Lambourne, the Mayor of High Wycombe came to talk to students. Just before the half term break, we were lucky enough to be visited by a team made up of two disabled artists and a former Paralympic gold medallist, who are working with young people on projects related to the 2012 **Paralympic Games**. A group of our Year 7 students spent a wonderful day working with John Harris, the athlete, and the two artists, Rachel Cadson and Caroline Cardis, interviewing them and creating artworks on the theme of disability and sport.

There's a lot going on at Cressex. If you'd like to look round the school, do contact our Head Teacher, **David Hood**. He'll be happy to talk to you.

Katy Simmons

Chair of Governors, Cressex School

Why not use this space to tell us what is going on in your school?

Governor Recruitment Event Sunday, 26 April 2009, at Cressex School

A letter to the young professionals

Over the last few years the MPA has been involved in a dialogue with the LEA (Local Education Authority) about the gap which exists between the mainstream and Pakistani origin pupils as far as GCSE results are concerned.

We are now working with the LEA to formulate strategies to reduce this gap, but there are problems of Linguistic, cultural or religious nature as to why Pakistani heritage parents are not as active as other parents. The causal link between economic deprivation and underachievement is evident as well, all of which combine to ensure that the gap is unlikely to reduce in the very near future, unless we can help to change some factors.

Some of the workable solutions involve motivation of parents and to broaden the horizon of our children by offering them 'role models'. The MPA wishes parents to take a more active interest in their children's education and in the running of schools, by becoming school governors.

In this respect the MPA, in conjunction with the LEA, has organised a governor recruitment event after Easter (**Sunday, 26 April, at Cressex School, 10.30–1.30PM**) and it is hoped that parents, school governors and others interested in serving as school governors will be in touch with us by Friday 17 April 2009 to book a place. There is no charge.

The role of a school governor is very important these days; the right person can help other governors to understand issues relating to Finance, Personnel matters and communication with parents. Essentially, the governing body works out the policies to be followed by the school and then allows the headteacher to carry out their wishes.

The school governor is best described as a 'critical friend' of a school and, as a member of the policy making body, can be very influential in giving direction to a school's approach to teaching. The basic requirement is that you attend a termly meeting of the Full Governing Body and possibly one other meeting of a committee, which you may need to serve on. Anything more you want to do would be welcome and up to you. It is not a paid appointment but is very rewarding nonetheless.

Unfortunately, whilst the Pakistan heritage pupils account for 18% of Bucks school children, only about 4% of the school governors in Bucks are of Pakistani origin. If we are to motivate our parents then

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we have to have young and professional people like you to come forward and play a leading role.

The programme includes a local Head Teacher talking about the 'Role of a School Governor', another Head and a young Pakistani origin teacher will give advice to parents about the ways to help your child at home, there will be discussion, a Q & A session and experienced school governors will join the discussions. A short DVD will be used to show some of the work school governors do.

We need our younger professional and articulate members of the community to play a part in community affairs and at the same time help to make education fruitful for the children. So please consider giving up a Sunday morning for a worthy cause. Please confirm your attendance by (by 17 April) by e-mail for catering purposes. The event will end with Lunch at 1PM. ***See page 7 for the Programme.***

The MPA wishes to fight for the right of all children to be properly educated so that each child can realize his or her full potential. Education should be a right and not a privilege, as it is in danger of becoming for some pupils. We desperately need your help; its time you joined us.

Contact me: rafiqraja@hotmail.co.uk

ChauhdryShafique(Vice Chairman):

shafique2008@hotmail.co.uk

Rashida Kazi (Secretary):

Rashida_kazi@hotmail.com

Associate Membership of MPA

High Wycombe is a thriving town with good race relations and the MPA is keen to improve the level of understanding between the largest ethnic minority of the town, (The Muslim Community) and the rest of the people of High Wycombe.

One way to remove misunderstandings is to increase the level of contact among our diverse communities.

It also requires that certain areas of inequality and disparity are eradicated or at least minimised.

The MPA has identified that in the field of education, due to various reasons (culture, language, religion and economic wellbeing) there is a large gap in the level of achievement between the mainstream pupils and those of Pakistani origin, as far as passes (at grades A to C in 5 subjects) at GCSE are concerned.

We are in the process of discussing this with the LEA and we are making progress in not only identifying the relevant factors but possible solutions.

We are also interested in increasing the interest of the Pakistani origin parents in the education of their children and are trying to push recruitment of school governors as a first step.

We have regular meetings and we are pleased to say that we have some none Muslim colleagues (Associate members) who attend our meetings regularly. We are proud to believe that the level of our debates is very high indeed.

We have had positive response from a number of people and it is hoped that through the MPA Newsletter we may get interest from some other quarters. Therefore, if you would like to become an associate member (No membership fee is involved) and come to our meetings if you can, then please come and join us so that we can all learn from each other. Our meetings are normally held at Bucks New University during a weekday evening (7 – 9 PM).

Friends, unless we find ways of coming together, the different communities are likely to live the proverbial parallel lives.

Why not share your experiences?

Have you any experiences of the education system you would like to share with the MPA? Do you wish to write on a topic of your choice around the subject of education, in a future issue of the MPA Newsletter?

If so then please get in touch today and see if your experiences can help others.

Please ensure your articles have a maximum of 500 words. Please e-mail unless absolutely impossible.

Have a go; you may have a hidden talent, which can benefit all of us.

Attention all Year 11 pupils sitting GCSE exams this Year!

It is pleasing to note that the County council is proposing to run two Supplementary schools in High Wycombe from September 2009. However, this may be a little too late for GCSE students sitting exams in the coming weeks.

Many schools have organised after school revision or homework clubs but there is a belief that some borderline pupils or those who need to improve their grades need help. It is unlikely that all the parents are in a position to help their children in any meaningful way.

The MPA has recognized this and has been able to find places in 'Weekend Booster Classes' for pupils to get some help with revision for less than the price of a school trip to a theme park.

If you are sitting GCSEs this year or a child of yours is in need of sharpening his/her exam skills then please contact the MPA. Places have been found in a supplementary school in High Wycombe, all we need now is for pupils to come forward. In a genuine case of hardship the MPA will pay the modest fee to join the supplementary school for the few weeks before the exams.

Boys and girls will be taught in separate classes and by male and female staff respectively.

However, this intervention, at this late stage is only possible if we have the students predicted grades for GCSE, KS3 grades and exam boards for which they are being entered and the exam modules the students are following. The mock exam grades for Year 11 will also be useful. So please have this information ready if you are interested in improving your predicted GCSE grade. ***Maximum effort now will hopefully put you in a position where your options for the future are maximised.***

Details of the tuition centre will be given upon request: However, please note that only pupils enrolling through MPA will be offered the heavily discounted /nominal charge rates.

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Adverts are carried at a very reasonable rate and for very deserving causes we can donate the space free of charge.

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***Imam Abu Hanifa's wise words
continued from page 2***

steadfastness, good manners and open mindedness. Always wear good and clean cloths and use 'attar' scent. A two faced person cannot be a leader and your close friends should be those who are aware of the needs and concerns of the ordinary people. If you see a conflict try to resolve it, whether people come to you or not, you should continue to meet the public. Whether someone does a good turn for you or not, you should be kind to all. Acquire the habit of not being upset and do not look into things which are no concern to you and if something gives you pain, let it go. But make sure you deliver the rights of people, visit the sick and even go and see people who do not come to see you, stay in touch with the ordinary people and if you pass a non believer or ignorant person offer greetings and give educational materials (books) to people who come to see you so that they can attain knowledge. Do not break a promise with anyone, whether they have let you down. Even if they steal from you or take more than their fair share you keep AMANAT, and stay loyal.



Has anything changed in two years?

Ethnic minorities suffer from economic "apartheid" in Britain, race watchdogs have claimed after a study found that two-thirds of Pakistani and Bangladeshi children are living in poverty. The study, by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, reveals that ethnic minorities suffer twice the level of poverty of white Britons, as discrimination and disadvantage blight their life chances.

Analysing official figures, the foundation found vast differences in child poverty among different groups. One in four white children live in poverty, compared with 74% of Bangladeshi children, 60% of Pakistani children, and 56% of black African children. Even for children of Indian parents, a group thought to be doing well economically, the rate was higher than for whites, with one in three growing up in households with incomes below the government's definition of poverty.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation report appeared in April 2007.let us not perpetuate this any longer and arm our younger generations with proper (Educational) Tools for the 21st Century.

How can I become more involved?

Contact MPA at: rafiqraja@hotmail.co.uk

Get in touch; don't wait to be asked to play your part in the uplift of our future generations.

If you wish to write about something then please e-mail your contribution as soon as possible. Articles should be or about 500 words; however, if there is something of a more serious nature then please still limit it to one page of this Newsletter and e-mail it as soon as possible.

A few words from the Chairman

As chairman of the MPA I am indebted to my colleagues who have attended our regular meetings and offered words of advice and encouragement and often taken the lead when action is required. I am also humbled by the energy and commitment (to the cause of improving standards and raising the levels of educational achievement for all pupils), shown by Dr Katy Simmons (Chairman of Governors at Cressex School) and John Bajina (Governor at Sir William Ramsay School). Despite their other committments they have been unswerving in their support for the work of the MPA.

My special thanks also go to my late friend Cllr Glyn Galbraith, (Leader f the Labour Group on Wycombe District Council) who tragically died of a suspected heart attack in February. He was always willing to help and often attended our meetings as an associate member. We miss him terribly and offer our sincere condolences to his family for their sad loss.

I should also like to thank Louise Goll, (Divisional Director for Achievement & Learning) and Yvette Thomas and their other colleagues at BCC for seriously engaging with us to not only identify the causes of underachievement among some sections of our school population, but for constructively searching for workable solutions.

Special thanks to those who have contributed articles for this issue or who have helped with the printing of this Newsletter and those who will help to distribute it in the next few weeks. The parents of children sitting GCSE exams this year are asked to read Dr Katy Simmons' words of advice on page 2 and also about Saturday Booster classes on page 5

Finally, I should like to express our deep sense of appreciation and special thanks to Dr Ruth Farwell at Bucks New University for allowing us to hold our meetings in the University. RR



**SCHOOL GOVERNOR RECRUITMENT EVENT
PROGRAMME**

Sunday 26 April 2009
The Cressex School

Please confirm your place by e-mailing: rafiqraja@hotmail.co.uk by 17 April 2009

10.30	Arrival and Refreshments	
11.00	Welcome and Introduction	Rafiq Raja Chairman of the Muslim Parent Association
11.10	What does it mean to be a School Governor?	Graeme Kilner Headteacher Highworth CC School
11.30	Group Discussion/Video	
11.50	Coffee Break	
12.00	How can one you help your child to realise his/her potential?	David Hood Head of Cressex School Teacher
12.30	Munira Raja John Bajina	Governor Sir William Ramsay school
12.40	Help from LEA	Nicola Cook Governor Services Manager
12.50	Closing Remarks & Issues for the future	
13.00	Lunch	

MUSLIM PARENTS ASSOCIATION - HIGH WYCOMBE – An excerpt from the constitution

Aims & Objectives

- (a) to work for a system of state education in the High Wycombe area of the highest quality for all children.

- (b) to unite Muslim parents of the Wycombe area on one platform in the education field.

- (c) to collect and disseminate information about the local and national system of education, to Muslim parents in the Wycombe area in particular, and to facilitate discussion aimed at its improvement.

- (d) to promote better communication between Muslim parents and elected representatives, education officials, teachers, parents, governors and others interested in education.

- (e) to make representations to the local education authority, national government and other bodies.

- (f) to support Muslim parents administratively and morally in their correspondence with education institutions and authorities or at times of appeals of any nature, in the field of education.

- (g) to raise parents' awareness of their rights and obligations as far as the education of their children is concerned.

- (h) to fight against racism, and discrimination on other grounds, and to co-operate with other organisations with similar objectives.

- (i) to ensure all children, young people and adults have equal access to education opportunity, regardless of family income, race, sex or religion.

- (j) to do all things necessary within the law of the land.

The excerpt from the constitution, about the aims & objectives, gives you some idea of what the MPA stands for and what we are trying to achieve for all the children. Of necessity we are concentrating on the Muslim Children at the moment, but we wish to support the raising of standards for all children. If you are a parent, teacher, school governor (or none of these) please contact us, using this slip:

Name.....e-mail address.....

Address.....

Tel.....Profession.....

Parent/Teacher/Governor (please circle). School(s) attended by children.....

Send it to: Rafiq Raja, 34 Perth Road, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP13 6XX Or e-mail: rafiqraja@hotmail.co.uk Tel : 079 5662 2469 (List of officers and core members is available upon request)