



NEWS

The MPA has a website, which is under construction at the moment but it is hoped to be functioning by the New Year.

mpawycombe.co.uk

“We need to get the message across that education provides opportunities.”

Rafiq Raja

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A Peaceful Christmas & A Happy New Year

As 2009 draws to a close I am pleased to note that the Muslim Parents Association has had a very active and a positive year and we are all reinvigorated to look forward to the future and hope to build on the work in 2009.

The MPA is committed to helping parents from the Muslim community in general and the Pakistani community in particular, in order for the parents to become more effective in assisting their children whilst they are in the process of being educated. We wish each and every child to realize his/her full potential. At the same time the MPA is able to provide help and assistance to schools when they do have a situation where an objective and trusted outsider can act as a go between.

One area of our work is involved with raising levels of educational achievement for all children and we are exploring ways and means of helping the Pakistani heritage pupils, to narrow the chasm which exists, between them and the rest of the community, as far as GCSE results are concerned. In this respect we are actively working with Bucks County Council in devising strategies to offer ideas and options in all spheres, which may be small and un-dramatic but hopefully can lead to the desired results.

The MPA therefore wishes to address all issues which impact upon a child's educational achievement. This includes motivation of parents and children and asking schools to have higher expectations of their children from all backgrounds. One way to get the parents on board is to seek out the ones who can offer themselves as school governors.

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



Imam Sultan addressing one of our events.



A look back at 2009



Governor Recruitment event at Cressex School

At the end of April the MPA held a very successful Governor Recruitment event at Cressex School, in collaboration with the County Council's Governor Recruitment Department and we were pleasantly surprised when over a dozen people applied to become School governors. This may not seem very much but when you consider that whilst the ethnic minority children make up 20% of the school population in Buckinghamshire, but only 4% of the governors are from the Ethnic Minorities, then this does seem a real breakthrough, which is worthy of being celebrated. Some of those people have been appointed as school governors already.

June saw the County Council elections and the MPA organised an 'Education Quiz' at the end of May at the Environment Centre, (Holywell Mead) and invited candidates from all the main parties to take part in a panel discussion. The panel was asked questions from the floor and we were very pleased to have Steve 'Bamber' Cohen, editor of the Bucks Free Press to act as the chairman.

The meeting was well attended and there were some very interesting questions put to the putative County Councillors and everybody enjoyed the interest in education and the experience.



At the end of October the MPA organised a conference when the Schools Minister, Dianna Johnson, MP was the guest of honour, whilst we were also delighted to have the education portfolio holder at Bucks County Council, Cllr Mrs Marion Clayton, Yvette Thomas (Policy and Equalities Manager for Children's Services), Dr Katy Simmons (Chairman of governors of Cressex Community School) and Adnan Khan.

The conference was aimed at not only highlighting the substantial disparity (in Buckinghamshire) which exists in the levels of educational achievement between the Pakistani origin pupils and their mainstream peers, but is also aimed at celebrating the achievement of those of our young people who have done well, given all the obstacles. Through this conference we identified some role models for the current and future school generations, which might help to reduce the achievement gap.



Autumn conference when the Schools Minister, Dianna Johnson, MP was the guest of honour

Please see the Press release on page 3





M.P.A
MUSLIM PARENTS ASSOCIATION
HIGH WYCOMBE

CONFERENCE PRESS RELEASE

Council Pledge to Muslim Parents

At a conference organised by the High Wycombe Muslim Parents Association, held at Green Street Community centre on October 28 and attended by a hundred delegates, Cabinet Member for Schools, Marion Clayton, pledged that Bucks County Council would 'close the gap' in achievement between Muslim children and the county's white children. Cllr Clayton was speaking as part of a programme that featured Schools Minister Diana Johnson MP as keynote speaker. Chairman of the MPA, Rafiq Raja, said 'It is a landmark occasion to get a government Minister to come to a local conference. It shows how important this issue is. Mrs. Clayton's pledge will transform children's lives – we now need to know how it is to be done – and when.'

The conference focus was on tackling underachievement; its aim was not only to draw attention to the gap in attainment levels between white children and those from the Black and Minority Ethnic communities, but also to celebrate the outstanding achievements of local young adults from the Muslim community. Diana Johnson described the substantial investment that the Department for Children, Schools and Families is making in raising the achievement of BME students. She also spoke of the Pupil Guarantee and the one-to-one support that will be given to students who are not reaching high enough standards. She praised the efforts of the MPA and said that the conference showed how much Muslim parents care about their children's education. 'Your passion and your proactive attitude to your children's education is an example that I hope other parents will follow'.

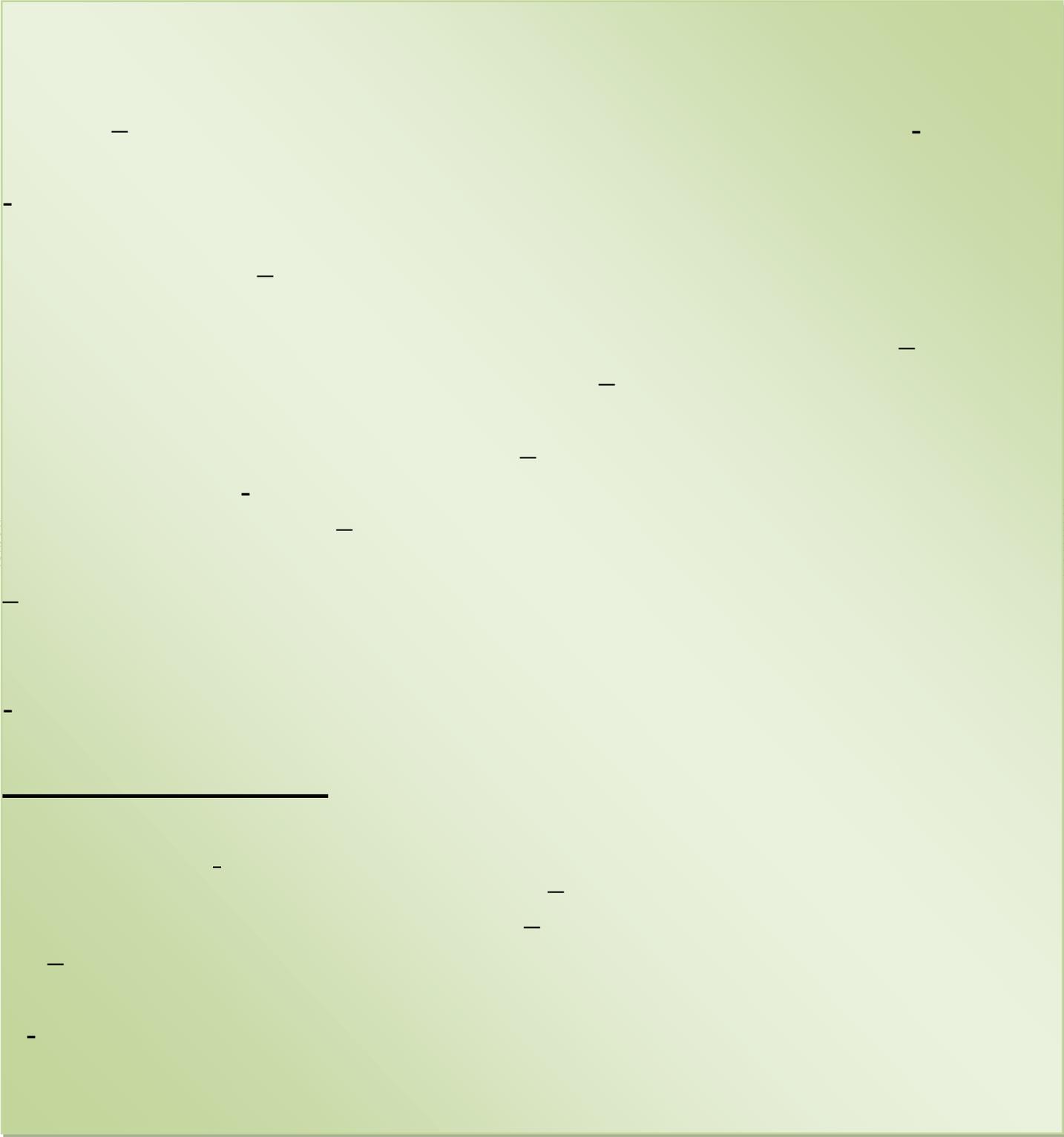
Other speakers focused on how far there was still to go until the achievement gap is closed. Dr Katy Simmons, Chair of Governors at the Cressex School, said that progress on closing the gap had been too slow and needed focused resources, community involvement and continued challenge to elected members. She praised the investment made at national level to raise achievement in youngsters from less well off homes, in particular the Building Schools for the Future programme, which was creating a brand new school for students in High Wycombe. Other speakers included Yvette Thomas, Policy and Equalities Manager at Bucks County Council, who gave details of what the Council was doing to raise achievement among BME students.

Highlight of the day was a short film made by local film maker John Barlow, featuring local young adults from the Muslim community speaking about their education and how they had succeeded.

Rafiq Raja commented, 'We need to get the message across that education gives opportunities. The MPA plans to continue to work as hard as we can so that all children have those opportunities. We want as many people as possible to join us in our work. And we intend to hold Mrs Clayton to her pledge.'

-END-

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Neighbourhood Watch

Have you ever felt unsafe in your neighbourhood?

Do you feel safe in your own home?

Do you know what Neighbourhood Watch is?



With Christmas and New Year being a rather dead time for those not celebrating, perhaps you may be going away to see friends or relatives or leaving the country. A burglar would see this as a perfect opportunity to enter your property and take your personal belongings. Before leaving the house do you leave a light on a timer to show that someone is there? It is the simplest piece of crime prevention advice and it costs so little.

If you leave your home empty for a period of time you may ask a neighbour or a friend informally to keep an eye on your home. Instead of just one person making sure your house is secure you could be part of a community of people who have a shared interest in protecting your home whilst you are away and also your own personal safety on a day to day basis.

Neighbourhood Watch in the High Wycombe area currently consists of 625 Watch Schemes and has an estimated 20,000 households involved. Your street could be newest scheme to be part of the watch and could potentially enable crime to reduce in your area.

Take for example your own street; it may have 50 homes on it, with a mixture of different types of residential properties. You could be the person how leads a majority of people who take the first steps to have a scheme of your own on your own road. Each new scheme normally has a Co-ordinator for every 10 to 15 houses and they will discuss local issues that will affect your own road such as security and anti-social behaviour. In a matter of a few weeks you could have your own road operating with a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme.

So what are the benefits for me?

- The results of Neighbourhood Watch Schemes already established show that they can help to reduce local crime such as burglary, vandalism, car theft and theft from cars.
- A better community spirit can be created by the scheme operating.
- The opportunity to volunteer and meet new people that you may have lived next to for a long time but have never had a conversation with.
- The ability to feel confident about reporting crime to the police and a shared feeling about reducing crime throughout your neighbourhood.

If you are interested in setting up a scheme as a volunteer or being part of a current scheme already operating in the High Wycombe Area then please contact **Wycombe District Neighbourhood Watch Association on 01296.396091** (the Watch Office).

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.



Chesham Youth Centre needs your help

Rachael Tomkins (Chesham Area Youth Worker) runs the Chesham Youth Centre where they currently have an Asian Girls Group... but currently have nobody helping out of Asian decent, which is badly needed. Rachael has had a few people help out with the group over the last two years who have been from the local community, but nothing permanent.

Is there anyone who can suggest somebody? They would need to be at least 25 years old and be aware of issues that young Asian girls face in today's society! Also they need to go through the necessary checks to protect the group. Rachael can be contacted at:

Chesham Youth Centre

**Bellingdon Road
Chesham HP5 2HA
Mobile: 077205 44157**

Education and Business partnership By Mohammed Hanif (MPA Exec Committee)

Young people leaving school, college or university are faced with challenges and choices that are, in many ways, very different from those faced by previous generations. More than ever, learners need to be fully equipped with the skills, understanding, confidence and creativity needed for their future working lives. Flexibility, information-handling skills, knowing where work is available and a commitment to lifelong learning are now essential requirements for all entering the world of work in the 21st century.

Education Business Partnership - EBP - develops links between local schools and employers and organises a host of innovative and interesting activities. All activities help to raise the achievement and participation of young people in learning and work.

People from business community visit schools and talk about the role of science and chemistry in industry. There are also 'lunch and learn' sessions in which students visit companies and they talk to professionals about the qualifications and skills needed for various roles.

In support of EBP work I had the opportunity to visit many schools in High Wycombe and Oxford areas. I would like to request Muslim children to play an active role when educational and business enterprise projects are set up in their schools.

With the help of Wycombe Muslim Parents Association we aim to set up a careers day for Muslim children during the summer holidays. Professionals from the Muslim community will be invited to provide information and answer student's questions. We want to make the students aware about how things they learn in the classroom prepare them for careers and jobs later in life.

Peaceful Xmas & a Happy New Year From THARA

Thara Stores would like to thank all their customers for their support during the credit crunch, especially during Ramadan and Eid Ul Adha.

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By Durdana Ansari – Ethnic Minority Foundation, Project Director

EMF established its first Muslim Women's Project in 2006. The project was established in response to European Social Fund's programme called Equal. The Equal Programme required to prove the hypothesis that a community organisation was much better placed to deliver services cost effectively to, 'hard to reach groups' like Muslim Women instead of the statutory bodies.

The project required 100 Muslim Women to be recruited as beneficiaries and to be trained by 12 Muslim Women volunteers in ESOL, IT and other cultural activities like broadcasting, cookery, beauty therapy, henna painting, dress making, jewellery making etc. Provision was made for a full time Project Director and three co-ordinators were to be located in London, Bristol and Bolton. Laptops were also provided.

At the end of the project in 2008, because of the demand throughout Britain, EMF ended up establishing four centres in London and one each in Leicester, Bradford, Manchester and Bolton. 250 volunteers were recruited to train about 2,000 Muslim women at these centres. Women of 18 to 80 years of age joined the programme and 20% of these women progressed further with jobs, self employment, higher education and becoming leaders of their communities.

Additional activities such as driving, citizenship and health and fitness classes were added. An evaluation was carried out in 2008 which showed that the project's success was due to EMF's understanding of the faith and culture of the Muslim Women. Their families felt that it was their own centre where, they felt at home.

The Muslim women who participated as beneficiaries became volunteers to train others at the centre. Women who started to earn through jobs and self employment spent their earnings on their children's education to ensure that their children had better education which in turn would stop the possibility of them being radicalised by any extremist elements.

Above all, the Muslim Women became more confident of themselves and were able to go shopping, to visit their doctors on their own and their children's schools to talk to the teachers about the progress of their children and even begin to help them in their homework etc. EMF has been spending its own resources to continue with the project since 2008. Additional funding has come from local communities, the participants, colleges, churches and mosques.

EMF's Plan for High Wycombe

EMF and its Project Director with her core staff are, on an ongoing basis, looking at cities and towns of Britain where there are Muslim families in larger numbers. High Wycombe has been one of such towns where about 20,000 Muslims live. After consultations with the various groups since January 2009, it is obvious that there is a demand, a desire and full support for an EMF project to be established in High Wycombe. Muslim Parents Association has also been very supportive of EMF's proposed projects for High Wycombe.

The project will require a full time coordinator to be recruited in High Wycombe and supplemented by the Project Director and her team to manage and to work with the coordinator. EMF will also provide the teaching material, laptops and office furniture.

A local management committee comprising of community leaders, beneficiaries and volunteers will ensure that the community benefits from this project and expands by setting up smaller satellite projects in the town.

Through the project, it is hoped that a strong leadership will emerge which will have the ability to bring the Muslim Community from the "Margins To The Main Stream" and be fully integrated into the wider community as British citizens.

I am very excited at the prospect of joining forces with the MPA, community groups and local schools in reaching a neglected section of our society.

Some sage advice for parents



As part of MPA's drive to involve more and more parents, a Governor Recruitment Event was organised at the end of April 2009, at Cressex Community School. David Hood, Headteacher of Cressex spoke at the meeting about how important it is for parents to invest time and effort to help their children achieve well at school. Here is part of what he said:

Children of parents who take an active interest in school perform, on average, significantly better at school than their peers whose parents show little or no interest. Overall, between the ages of 0 and 16, children spend much more time under the direct influence of family and friends than they do at school, so it is essential that this influence is positive and promotes good learning and achievement. In order to help their children, parents should:

- spend "quality time" with them, speaking to them, listening to their points of view and showing that they value their opinions;
- read with their children, and, when the children become independent readers, discuss with them what they have read;
- set clear boundaries for their children and equip them to make choices that will keep them safe;
- open up the world for their child by taking them out to the local library and exploring interesting places close to home and further afield;
- take an active interest in what is going on in their child's life; and
- get involved with their child's school, maybe even by becoming a school governor.



Above all, parents need to be there for their child. Sometimes, especially in the teenage years, children do not make it easy for their parents. But in their heart of hearts they want to be cared for and they want to know that there's someone who cares about what they do. The reward for any hard times will be the child's achievements in life and maybe a few words of gratitude and recognition when they start to bring up their own children!



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

How can I become more involved?

Contact MPA at: rafiqaraja@hotmail.co.uk

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.

Why not tell us what is going on in your school?

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