



M.P.A
MUSLIM PARENTS ASSOCIATION
HIGH WYCOMBE

Helping to raise standards in education

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2014

**News from Cressex
Community School
By David Hood
on page 3**

MIND THE GAP
*By Dr Katy Simmons
on page 6 and 7*

**The MPA Vice
Chairman visits
Jerusalem**

on page 12

I trust all of us have had a peaceful Easter break and schools and pupils have got into their normal routines. We wish all the pupils the best of luck in their exams this summer.

Narrowing the attainment gap

The Bucks County Council's Select Committee Report about the gap which exists between high and low attainment groups in Buckinghamshire is now available; please follow the link to the Report on the council website:

<http://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/documents/s48156/NtG%20Report%2024032014%20Cabinet.pdf>

Whilst it is true that the LA has grasped the nettle, it is not very clear as to how long it is going to take for the gap to be reduced in a meaningful manner.

(See page 6 for Dr Katy Simmons' assessment).

The MPA is aware that it is not something which can be addressed in a short space of time and yet when you look around the country you find that many schools have been moved from 'special measures' to being considered 'outstanding' by Ofsted and many inner city schools, with substantial numbers of BME children, have not just reached the national average for GCSE success but have done even better. So it is time the usual excuses were not put forward to explain the gap in the levels of achievement of mainstream and BME, especially Pakistani origin pupils.

News in Brief continued on page 2

Do you have something to write about?

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

Contact the MPA:

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News in Brief

We are pleased to be invited to the next meeting of the Select Committee at the end of May and it is hoped that our collaboration will prove fruitful.

Ofsted inspections

Many of the Wycombe Schools, which have had an Ofsted inspection recently, have not enjoyed the experience. Whilst the MPA sympathises with schools if they are awarded a less than fair final grading, which is disappointing in many cases, nevertheless whilst it is understood that schools and teachers are subjected to unnecessary pressure brought about by Ofsted inspections, we should recognise its importance in improving standards and for lowering of teaching standards to be pointed out; however painful for schools. What is your view on Ofsted inspections?

Hot Mid day meals for early year pupils from next year!

It is the Coalition government's stated policy to provide free hot lunchtime meals for the KS2 (Reception, year 1 & year2) children as from September 2014.

It is not clear what the cost of this exercise and whether it is a long term measure and indeed whether all children who are entitled will actually enjoy a hot lunch.

It appears to be a good way of providing help and assistance to children who may come to school with little or no breakfast and those who bring nutritionally challenging lunch boxes to school. It is also to be hoped that children will be given nutritious and appetising meals as well as education about nutrition and the need for well balanced meals, for them to take with them for the future. If this proves to be a success, then would we have all primary school children enjoying a hot mid-day meal at school, in the next few years?

The MPA also feels that where the numbers of Muslim pupils are sufficient then they should be offered a 'Halal' meal. Any school proposing to do this will need to demonstrate to parents that food being offered as Halal does indeed meet the requirement of the Halal criteria, so that parents can have the confidence in that not only are the ingredients Halal, but that the food has been cooked, stored and provided in utensils which conform to Halal standards.

We would love to hear from any school, which already has arrangements in place to provide Halal food to its pupils. In the meantime, please page **8** and **9** for basic information about Halal Food.

News from Cressex Community School

As I write, we are already moving into the last few days before the Easter holidays. Shortly the next exam season will be upon us. Every year seems to be busier than the last, and this one has been no exception. After the "high" of our best ever set of results last summer we had to get down straight away to the hard work of welcoming another full cohort of 150 students into Year 7 and ensuring that all students in all year groups are making the progress they should. As a school, the most important thing we can do is provide the best possible lessons for students all day, every day. We are fortunate at Cressex to have the services of very able, highly skilled teachers who bring the learning in their lessons to life so that students respond with interest and enthusiasm.

Of course, not all students find it easy to make the most of the learning opportunities on offer, and we are equally fortunate to have a very strong, committed support staff, some of whom work directly with young people, helping them to overcome the "barriers to learning" they face. Others are more in the background, but still have essential roles that keep the engine of the school turning over.

We also enjoy, for the most part, very constructive relationships with parents. Parents of Cressex students take an interest in their children's education and work closely with us to solve any problems that arise. I wanted to take the opportunity of this newsletter to ask for parents' additional support in a very important area. And I want to emphasise that I am asking not just from the point of view of our school, but all schools, nursery, primary and secondary alike.

Possibly the biggest obstacle many of our students from all backgrounds face to achieving the best results in examinations is their ability to use written English fluently for a variety of purposes, for example to describe, express opinions and argue points. Following the latest round of reforms, GCSE and A level exams are returning to a more traditional format. The importance of coursework and spoken assessment is being drastically reduced. Students' grades in all subjects will be largely down to their performance in a final examination in which the quality of their written English will be assessed alongside their subject knowledge.

Clearly, school has a huge responsibility to teach students good English and prepare them for exams. But parents and families can help enormously too. Here are some suggestions:

- 1) Make your home "English rich". Give your children easy access to attractive and interesting reading material such as (depending on the age of the child) books, magazines and newspapers.
- 2) Talk with your children as much as possible, in any language. Read with them. Discuss pictures in books, magazines and newspapers. Ask them for their opinions and share yours. Talk to them about what they are learning at school. Use mealtimes and car journeys as an opportunity for family discussions. Get them to turn off their phones and computers and spend "quality time" with you!
- 3) Share interesting experiences with your children. This could be anything from going for a walk in the woods to a day out at the seaside or a visit to a museum in the big city. Children are much better at using their imaginations and finding words to describe the world when they have real experiences to draw on.

If you would like more advice on this or any other question to do with your children's education, do not hesitate to contact their school. These are the sorts of discussions we really like having with parents!

With all good wishes,

David Hood
Headteacher



Transforming Transition Arrangements at Sir William Ramsay School

At Sir William Ramsay School, we have been reflecting on the critical importance of consolidating our partnership with the parents / carers and families of every single one of our students. In order to strengthen the link, Emma Le Count (Academic Leader for Years 7 and 8) has been transforming our transition arrangements for every student joining us in September 2014 from over thirty different primary schools. This focus fits with our belief that every student deserves to be treated as a valued member of the school community and part of this mission includes a determination to place parents and carers (those who know their children the best) at the heart of these arrangements.

In order to transform the quality of the information we get from primary schools, Emma introduced an afternoon several weeks ago at Sir William Ramsay where we welcomed Year 6 teachers and staff from each of the primary schools. This allowed us to capture better quality information about each child as well as discuss any additional needs or support. The afternoon also allowed primary colleagues to get a greater insight into the school and many of our older students really enjoyed welcoming back teachers from the primary schools that they had attended.

In transforming our relationship with parents and carers, we have added an Open Door session for parents and carers prior to our Induction Evening in June. This is an opportunity for any parent or carer to come and meet with us in a less formal setting to discuss any concerns with regards to specific children, or just to find out more about our school. In terms of the Induction evening, we are reinforcing that we expect all parents and carers to attend on this evening and we are determined to maintain high levels of attendance to all our future partnership evenings, including Parent Consultation Evenings.

There is a huge amount for schools to get right during transition as well as a great deal for children, parents and carers to consider. At Sir William Ramsay, as with every school, I will always tell parents and carers that we do not always get it right and we are always keen to improve. The most useful thing is for parents and carers to be honest about what works best for individual children and we will continue to strive to adapt what we do in our aim to value every single member of the school community and support each in reaching her / his potential.

Mark Mayne,

SWR

School head

Listen to 'The World of Education' - Taleem Ki Dunya Every Sunday, on High Wycombe's Awaaz Radio (107.4FM) between 10AM & 12 NOON.

World of Education tries to inform the members of the Asian community in general and the Pakistani community in particular, about the importance of education with a particular emphasis on informing the 'hard to reach' community.

If you are interested in taking part in a future programme or have some topics or ideas about raising educational achievement levels then get in touch with Rafiq Raja: raja@awaazradio.com



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Where did the hot dog get its name

Perceived wisdom is that the hot dog got its name from a New York sports cartoonist, Tad Dorgan over a century ago. It is said that at a sports event food vendors caught his eye when they shouted out "red hot dachshund sausages". Thus inspired, he drew a cartoon of barking dachshunds nestled in soft buns. However, lacking a spell check, he was not sure how to spell 'dachshund' and simply wrote 'hot dog!'



A common mnemonic, according to my colleague Gemma Tampkins, to remember the order of planets around the Sun is: My Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Noodles!

(We are ignoring the newly discovered dwarf planets). However, I am told that Gemma's daughter (a Michael Jackson fan) prefers the second one.

Thanks Gemma for sharing this interesting mnemonic.

My (Mercury)



Moonwalking's (Mercury)

Very (Venus)



Very (Venus)

Educated (Earth)



Easy (Earth)

Mother (Mars)



Michael (Mars)

Just (Jupiter)



Jackson (Jupiter)

Served (Saturn)



Said (Saturn)

Us (Uranus)



Until (Uranus)

Noodles (Neptune)



Now (Neptune)

Mind the Gap

A response to Buckinghamshire County Council's 'Narrowing the Gap' report*

By Dr Katy Simmons



In March 2013, David Laws, Schools' Minister, made an important speech. In it, he pointed to the 'achievement gap' between children from poor families and those from more well-off homes. He named 4 areas where the achievement gap was particularly 'unacceptable'. One of them was Buckinghamshire. In Buckinghamshire, he said, there was 40 percentage point 'gap' between the number of good GCSEs, including English and Maths, achieved by disadvantaged pupils and the number achieved by others from more privileged homes. 'It is unacceptable,' he said, 'that in our country, there is such an enormous gap between the life chances of children from poor backgrounds and other children'.

A year later, Buckinghamshire County Council produced its own Report about this 'unacceptable' gap. While this report contains a number of proposals about how the gap might be addressed, what is striking about the Report is not so much what it contains but what it leaves out.

What's missing?

The report fails to acknowledge that the 'gap' in Buckinghamshire has been acknowledged by politicians for many years. Quite simply, senior politicians knew about it well before the most recent report was published. What did they do about it? In Bucks, the 'culture of differential achievement', spoken of by Education Under Secretary Elizabeth Truss on April 2 2014, has been a long-term reality for local children. Why was that reality not acknowledged?

In 2009, the Muslim Parents Association organised a conference addressed by the then Schools Minister, Diana Johnson MP, and by the then Cabinet Member for Schools, Marian Clayton. Mrs Clayton acknowledged then the unacceptable gap between 'Muslim children and the County's white children' and pledged to 'close the gap' - a pledge that appeared as a headline in the *Bucks Free Press*.

At that conference, data were presented showing the gap in results going back a number of years - and projecting forward. But there is no sign of this work in the current report. While the recent report looks more broadly at economic and social disadvantage, the link of disadvantage to ethnicity is strong and should have been explored.

And why were the people who could have contributed most in this area, in particular the Muslim Parents Association, not invited to contribute to the report - though we know they

offered to do so? There are no data from those best placed to give evidence. Why were they left out?

Widening gaps

Not only is there **significant missing data**, in the report, but there are also conspicuous **failures to address issues** that are part of daily life in Bucks schools. Ethnicity is one of them - a search through the document shows that it is mentioned only once, in passing.

The other missing area is selection, the county-wide process that neatly segregates young people on the basis of social class and ethnicity. If it were not so, why would some Upper schools have 70% of pupils entitled to free school meals, while the neighbouring grammar schools have seven percent with this entitlement? The impact of selection on aspiration and children's motivation is unexplored. And the teachers from local schools who have looked at these questions, in small-scale research projects, were never asked for input - did anyone even know such work had been done? Proposals are made in the report to hot-house selected children to ensure they get into grammar schools - but how will this process impact on the 60% who currently are seen as failures at 11?

Missing money

Perhaps more important still, for all schools in Bucks, is the issue of under funding of schools. For many years, the Bucks AWPU, the age-weighted pupil unit of funding, has been significantly less than that in a number of similar local authorities. The impact of this under funding is felt in all schools - but in the more privileged schools, the answer is - ask the parents for money. It is parents' direct debits who are directly funding teachers' salaries. This option isn't available in schools attended by more disadvantaged children. So the gap widens still further. This issue is conspicuously unaddressed in the Report.

So what does the report do?

The Report's Recommendations look in a range of directions for solutions - the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust, the Schools Forum, school governors. In summary, **it looks to others for solutions to problems that are caused by the Council's own policies**, specifically selection and under funding. These two issues remain the elephant in the room - the root causes of the problem of underachievement that the report fails to acknowledge.

So the Report dodges the real issues and fails to engage with the problems that most schools grapple with every day. Only when the Council is honest about the real causes of underachievement can we hope to see any genuine change.

*'Narrowing the Gap': narrowing the attainment gap between economically and socially disadvantaged pupils and their peers in Buckinghamshire,' Buckinghamshire County Council, March 14th, 2014.

Dr Katy Simmons is an academic at the Open University and a long-serving school governor in Buckinghamshire.



What is Halal?

A LOT SEEMS TO BE WRITTEN ABOUT THE HALAL MEAT, BUT HALAL DOES NOT JUST APPLY TO THE SLAUGHTER OF ANIMALS FOR PURPOSES OF FOOD AS HALAL BUT IT IS A CONCEPT WHICH TOUCHES ALL SPHERES OF A MUSLIM'S WAY OF LIFE.

HALAL MEANS PURE, FIT TO BE EATEN BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN PREPARED IN ACCORDANCE WITH ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES REGARDING HYGIENE AND SELECTION OF INGREDIENTS. MOREOVER, IF THE FOOD IS TO CONTAIN MEAT THEN THE MEAT HAS TO BE HALAL AND OTHER ITEMS TAKEN FROM AN ANIMAL (FAT, GELATINE ETC) HAVE ALSO TO BE OBTAINED FROM AN ANIMAL WHICH HAS BEEN KILLED FOR HALAL FOOD.

EVERY MUSLIM IS AWARE OF WHAT IS HALAL (LAWFUL, CORRECT & RIGHTEOUS) AND WHAT IS "HARAM" (FORBIDDEN, UNSUITABLE OR NON HALAL) BECAUSE MUSLIMS BELIEVE THAT GOD HAS ORDAINED THAT A MUSLIM SHOULD ONLY EAT HALAL, EXCEPT IN VERY EXTREME AND EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

THERE ARE NUMEROUS REFERENCES IN THE KORAN FOR THE MUSLIM TO EAT ONLY HALAL FOOD.

THE CONCEPT OF HALAL ALSO EXTENDS TO HALAL EARNINGS FOR EXAMPLE. THIS MEANS THAT ONE HAS TO BE SATISFIED THAT HE/SHE HAS EARNED THE RESOURCES FOR PURCHASE OF FOOD FOR ONE SELF AND ONE'S FAMILY THROUGH LAWFUL MEANS, (EARNINGS FROM SAY SELLING OF LIQUOR, DRUGS OR MONIES OBTAINED BY DECEIT, CHEATING OR PROCEEDS OF CRIME ARE CONSIDERED HARAM).

FOR FOOD TO BE HALAL (FOR EXAMPLE WATER TO BE HALAL), IT MUST BE DRAWN FROM A PURE SOURCE AND THE UTENSIL USED FOR STORING OR CARRYING IT MUST ALSO BE PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY CLEAN. THE SNIFFING OF THE MOUTH OF A WATER CONTAINER BY A DOG OR ANY OTHER "UNCLEAN" ANIMAL WOULD RENDER THE WATER UNFIT/HARAM FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION. OTHER UTENSILS OR CONTAINERS OF PREPARED FOOD OR SOMETHING WHICH IS NOT CLASSIFIED AS A "DRY" INGREDIENT MUST NOT HAVE BEEN CONTAMINATED BY A HARAM ANIMAL. MOREOVER, THE FOOD/WATER SHOULD BE FREE OF IMPURITIES SUCH AS HUMAN OR ANIMAL URINE OR FAECES.

Halal meat

FOR MEAT OR MEAT BASED PRODUCTS TO BE CONSIDERED HALAL, THEY MUST COME FROM A CATEGORY OF ANIMAL WHICH IS CONSIDERED HALAL (CATTLE, SHEEP, GOATS, CHICKEN, FISH ETC. FALL IN THIS CATEGORY). THE DEFINITELY HARAM CATEGORY INCLUDES ALL CARNIVORES, (DOGS, LIONS, EAGLES, VULTURES ETC), THOSE WHICH DO NOT HAVE SPIRIT HOVES (CLOVEN HOVES) OR ARE REPUSIVE IN APPEARANCE FOR EXAMPLE. BUT ABOVE ALL THE SWINE/PIG IS CONSIDERED A TOTALLY UNCLEAN ANIMAL AND NO MUSLIM WOULD KNOWINGLY EAT ANYTHING WHICH CONTAINS A PIG BASED PRODUCT. INDEED NO MUSLIM WOULD (UNNECESSARILY) TOUCH A PIG/BOAR OR ITS FLESH (BACON/PORK).

THUS IN GENERAL TERMS FOOD WHICH CONTAINS MEAT OR ANIMAL FAT FROM AN ANIMAL WHICH FALLS INTO THE HARAM CATEGORY WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTABLE FOOD FOR A MUSLIM. NOR WOULD FOOD CONTAINING MEAT OR MEAT BASED PRODUCTS WHICH COME FROM THE HALAL ANIMAL CATEGORY BUT THAT ANIMAL HAS NOT BEEN KILLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE HALAL PRINCIPLES.

FOR MEAT TO BE CONSIDERED HALAL, IT HAS TO COME FROM AN ANIMAL WHICH IS IN THE HALAL CATEGORY AND THE ANIMAL HAS TO BE FIT AND HEALTHY AND KILLED FOR THE PURPOSES OF FOOD; IT CANNOT FOR EXAMPLE FALL OFF A CLIFF AND DIE AND BE CONSIDERED HALAL.

HALAL MEAT THEREFORE COMES FROM A HALAL ANIMAL WHICH THEN HAS TO BE KILLED FOR FOOD IN THE NAME OF GOD ALMIGHTY. THE ANIMAL IS SLAUGHTERED (HUMANELY WITHOUT CAUSING DISTRESS TO THE ANIMAL IN THE NAME OF GOD) BY SPLITTING ITS THROAT AND THEN LETTING THE BLOOD DRAIN OUT. FOR THIS REASON A CHICKEN IS HALAL BUT IF IT IS KILLED BY WRINGING ITS NECK THEN IT IS NOT HALAL.

Other requirements for Halal food

IT IS SIMPLY NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO OBTAIN THE FOOD FROM A HALAL SOURCE AND THEN "CONTAMINATE" IT BY STORING OR PREPARING IT IN UTENSILS WHICH ARE USED FOR STORING OR COOKING OF NON HALAL FOOD. A PAN, SPOON OR SPATULA USED FOR FRYING BACON OR SAUSAGES FOR EXAMPLE COULD NOT BE USED TO COOK HALAL FOOD, AS THE FOOD WOULD BECOME HARAM.

FOR MUSLIMS TO HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE SCHOOL FOR PREPARING HALAL FOOD IN A HALAL ENVIRONMENT, IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO HAVE SEPARATE UTENSILS, SEPARATE COOKING TIMES IF NOT SEPARATE KITCHENS. MOREOVER, THE PREPARATION OF FOOD IN ACCORDANCE WITH MUSLIM PRINCIPLES WILL NEED TO HAVE THE APPROVAL OF THE LOCAL IMAM OR OTHER MUSLIM RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY AND THE PROCESS SHOULD BE OPEN TO INSPECTION BY SUCH AUTHORITY TO ENSURE THAT THE PARENTS AND CHILDREN ARE CONFIDENT OF THE "HALALNESS" OF THE FOOD BEING SERVED TO CHILDREN.

Awaaz Radio

Awaaz, High Wycombe's local community Radio, completed its three year of 24/7 broadcasting in Urdu, Punjabi and English and the landmark was celebrated with a show at the Wycombe Swan at the end of March, when a number of artists performed to the delight of the local people of Asian origin in general and those of Pakistani origin in particular.

Awaaz is certainly serving an important role in keeping the community informed about a myriad of issues and it has practically all been achieved by a team of dedicated volunteers from the community, who have taken to broadcasting like ducks to water.



Staying In Learning Longer

Do you have a son/daughter who was born on or after 1st September 1996?

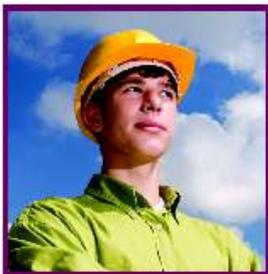
The law has changed so that all young people are required to stay in learning longer. **The compulsory school leaving age has not changed.**

Here's what's changed . . .

After you sit your final exams in Year 11 you will be required to continue your learning until you are aged 18. You can stay in learning longer.

Learning—your choices:

- **Apprenticeship** – where you can earn and learn at the same time.
- **College** – where a wide range of courses are offered, related to career aims.
- **School Sixth Form** – either at your current school or move to another school.
- **Training** – Providers run a range of programmes at all levels.



To find out more about your options ask your school about speaking to an independent Careers Adviser or visit www.connexionsbucks.org.uk/stayinlearning

Connexions

As well as helping you with your learning options, Connexions can help you when you are making choices about your career; finding your ideal job and helping you write a CV. There is also help with bullying, exam stress, money and health and things to do in your free time that will develop your skills, giving you a better chance to get a job.

You are welcome to drop into one of our centres at any time – we are open five days a week, 1pm to 5pm. Alternatively if you would prefer, you can chat online with a Connexions Personal Adviser at www.connexionsbucks.org.uk or call 0845 313 3413.



Connexions centres

Aylesbury Connexions, 14-16 Temple Street, Aylesbury, HP20 2RQ. Tel: 0845 217 1366

Buckingham Connexions, Buckingham Youth Centre, London Road, Buckingham, MK18 1AT (part-time).

Tel: 0845 217 1366

Chesham Connexions, c/o Way In Centre, Sills Yard, Chesham, HP5 1EP (part-time). Tel: 0845 217 1368

High Wycombe Connexions, Castle Street, High Wycombe, HP13 6RZ. Tel: 0845 217 1368

Working in partnership with



Bradley Taylor updates us about Spring Term at Chiltern Gate School

Despite quite a wet and dreary start to the calendar year in terms of weather, the outlook has been decidedly warm and cheery at Chiltern Gate School. We have had a term with a real focus on developing parental links, with some very positive results. Leading up to the holidays we held four coffee mornings for parents, starting off with a very well attended Professionals' Fair.

Parents of children with special needs are often in the dark about the range of services and support that is 'out there' and often feel they have to fight to access special clubs for the children, short breaks or allowances that they are entitled to. Sanam Ullah from the Buckinghamshire Family Information Service has been instrumental in supporting the events we have held at school, and has attended every coffee morning. It has been especially gratifying to have significant numbers of parents from the Asian community come along, supported also by Sanam where there has been a language barrier.

Aside from the Professionals' Fair we have had representation from a reflexologist, from a company that runs tuition and from a maths problem solving puzzle organization. We have also run workshops on managing challenging behaviour, recognizing good progress in pupils with special needs, developing good communication skills and supporting social skills. We have an excellent knowledge and skill base for these areas within the school, and we are very happy to hear from parents beyond those of the pupils at our school if we can help.

The children, of course, have been very busy too! This term has seen a number of special curriculum days, including a Homes and Castle day where class groups built their own castles, a day of maths problem solving with the Happy Puzzle Company, and numerous special sporting events, including running a Sports Relief mile, starting cricket coaching, involvement with Halton tennis club, and a particular favourite – Skip Hop.

Many of the groups have also gone on trips out of school, including visiting the Ski centre at Hemel Hempstead, going bowling and visiting Wycombe Museum. We are especially proud of a group of our pupils who performed at Energize at the Wycombe Swan just before the holidays – we were the only special school represented and they performed brilliantly.

Three dates for the diary – on Saturday April 26th (11 am – 2 pm) we are holding a Spring Fun Day which will incorporate a car boot sale (only £8 a pitch in advance, £10 on the day) and fun activities for the children including access to our soft play area, adventure playground and bouncy castle. Everyone from the community is welcome, either as a seller or buyer – please call the school on **01494 532621** if you would like to book a pitch, or else just turn up on the day. On Saturday 10th May we will be planting more than 30 trees in our school field, and again welcome the whole community to become involved (further details will be on our website soon). Finally on Saturday 19th July we will be having our second ever summer fete, following our success from last year – all welcome!

Bradley Taylor, Headteacher

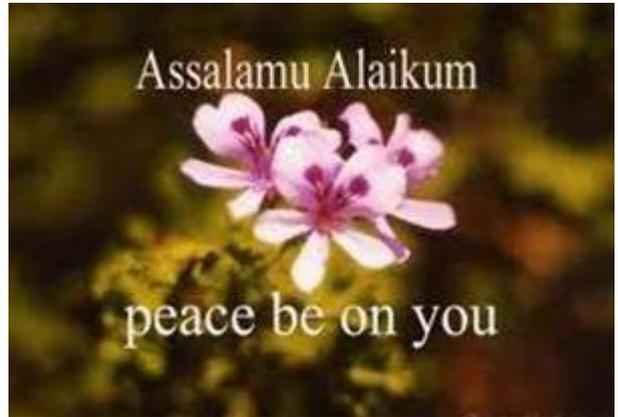
Muslims customarily use the greeting, 'Asalaam alai Kum' as advised by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace & blessings upon Him, His family & companions) which literally means 'Peace be with you.' He (pbuH,Hf&c) advised that this holy greeting is what the inhabitants of Paradise and angels use to greet one another, and is recommended to use between us here on Earth. (al-Baihaqi)

Interestingly, in the Bible (Gospel of Luke, Chapter 24, verse 36) it states that the actual greeting used by Jesus / Isa (pbuH&HM) was: "**Peace be with you.**" In fact in the Hebrew text of the Bible, it is written "**Shalom olai kum.**" The similarity to the Islamic greeting is undeniable. Both Arabic and Hebrew are derived from Aramaic, the language of Prophet Jesus/Isa (pbuH&HM) And it's not the only time either! In fact throughout the Bible we find the use of this specific greeting:

- "So Jesus said to them again, "**Peace to you!**" (John 20:21 NKJV) In the Hebrew version of the Bible it clearly states "**Shalom alei khem!**" Jesus (pbuH) again uses this greeting in same chapter verse 26 towards other disciples.

In fact the Prophet Jesus/Isa (pbuH) actually instructed his chosen disciples to use this greeting:

- "When you enter someone's household, say, 'Shalom alei khem!' " (Matthew 10:12 CJB)



- "Jesus came, stood in the middle and said, "**Shalom aleikhem!**" (John 20:19 CJB)

Followers of Prophet Jesus/Isa (pbuH) in the Bible also used this greeting too:

"Shalom aleikhem! to all who belong to the Messiah." (Peter 5:14 CJB)

The Bible confirms, this greeting was used centuries prior to even the arrival of Prophet Jesus/Isa (pbuH)

- In the old testament it states that God Himself says to Gideon "**Peace be unto thee!**" (Judges 6:22-24 KJV). In the original Hebrew text, it actually states the words "**Shalom olai kum!**"
- And again in Samuel, "**Peace to you**" (version: Common English Bible, Samuel, chapter 25, verse 6) And in the Hebrew version, says "**Shalom alai khem**". In Daniel, "**Peace to you**" (NKJV, Daniel, Chapter 10, verse 19), which the Hebrew bible states as "**Shalom alei Khem**".

There are many more examples, but the above should suffice that the Islamic greeting of 'As-Salaam alai kum./Peace be with you' was indeed also used by the Biblical Jesus (pbuH&HM). This is a tradition of Jesus (pbuH) and even the Lord God Himself, which Muslims dedicatedly uphold to this day.

This work is to help better educate and bring together 2 prominent communities of Faith who actually have more in common than many phobes and extremists would have us believe. Our aim as an organisation is to help build bridges of good will and understanding in society for the betterment of our Ummah.

May Allah (most Beneficent, most Merciful) give us all the understanding to learn to recognise the common points He has sent between our faiths in recognising His commandments, His superiority & boundless favours on us all, Ameen.

Raja Yousaf

Thames Valley Muslim Police Association

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email: raja.yousaf@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk

The MPA Vice Chairman visits Jerusalem



The MPA Vice Chairman, Cllr Chauhdry Shafique, joined a delegation, in his capacity as chairman of the High Wycombe based Council for Christian and Muslim Relations (CCMR), to the Holy Land in March. The trip to Jerusalem was organised by the Bishop of Kingston in conjunction with the St Georges College in East Jerusalem under a programme called 'Sharing Perspectives: Christian and Muslim Relations in the Holy Land'.

Imam Sultan and Cllr Shafique in Jerusalem.

The delegation was made up of Six Muslims and eight Christians from around the country and included Imam Sultan Mahmood of Totteridge Road Mosque, in High Wycombe. The members of the delegation were selected based upon their interest, experience and contribution to promoting interfaith understanding and community cohesion in this country; CCMR was selected as one of the few organisations for this purpose.

Cllr Shafique was delighted to be part of the delegation and found the visit “an enormous privilege” as it allowed him to visit “a very special place of religious significance and veneration for the three Abrahamic faiths”. For Muslims the opportunity to visit Masjid-e Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock, the third holiest place after Makah and Medina in Saudi Arabia, and “to take part in the Friday congregational prayers was a lifetime privilege which I shall relish with great satisfaction”.

He feels that “Jerusalem is a place to be experienced in order to get its full flavour of rich religious and spiritual history and the entire Judaic, Christian and Islamic heritage that it has to offer from over three thousand years of changing empires the world has known”.

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