



MTEC

Empowering Parents in Education



Muslim Teachers and Educators Committee (MTEC)

Our vision is to empower the Muslim community to excel and achieve in all fields of education.

MTEC works to encourage and co-ordinate the efforts of governors, teachers, parents and all other stakeholders involved in education in maintaining and developing the values of the community.

We work to promote positive contributions to wider society and thus build and enhance community cohesion.

Empowering Parents in Education

Introduction

Parents have the overall responsibility to ensure that the education and development of the child takes place in the most wholesome manner such that the personality of the child is nurtured from its natural state of innocence and purity to one that can distinguish between right and wrong, and understands ones purpose in life.

Education should not be viewed as simply the acquiring of knowledge, for the most intelligent of people can be the most corrupt of persons. Rather parents must recognise how their intervention in the educational process of the child to support the development of moral and spiritual values as well as the academic and scientific knowledge will lead to a happy and content personality for a child.

Parents need to be fully engaged in working with schools to ensure that the child's needs are met. This booklet seeks to empower the parent to become engaged in the education of the child by giving practical advice on supporting the moral, spiritual and academic development.





The following sections highlight important areas for parents to ensure that their children's needs are being met at school.

Ensuring basic Muslim practices at school

Modesty: The concept of modesty or 'haya' which is defined as 'to encompass notions of modesty, humility, decency and dignity', is a value in Islam, as it is in other faiths. It is necessary to ensure that the school understands the importance of the child in wearing appropriate clothing for both boys and girls in developing the value of modesty.

In relation to school uniforms, the governing bodies determine the uniform of their respective schools, however it is reasonable and a right of parents to express their views in regards to uniform, when that uniform is deemed inappropriate for Muslim children.

Schools should allow Muslim boys and girls to have their body covered and not to wear tight clothes which may show the body shape of a person. In addition for a girl the school should allow a Jilbab (long tunic outer garment that covers the body and clothes) and a head scarf to cover their hair. The school could tailor the garments to their school by incorporating their school colours and emblems.

When girls take part in sporting activities, the most suitable clothing for them would be tracksuits and a head scarf worn in a safe manner, under all female supervision.

Halal food

Parents should request that Halal food products be made available to Muslim children, and if non-Halal products are provided that these are clearly labeled, to ensure that the child can make informed decisions about what they choose to eat.

Prayer facility

Parents should ensure that some facility for Muslim prayers are made available at school, as it is compulsory for Muslims to pray five times a day, and at least one of those times will fall during the normal school day. The nature of that facility would depend on the specifics of the school, such as number of Muslim children. The prayer that normally falls during the school day is the mid-day (Zuhur) prayer and during winter the afternoon (Asr) prayer may also fall in the school day due to the shorter days.

The school should provide adequate washing (pre-requisite for prayer) and prayer facilities for a Muslim child to be able to pray on time. Parents should work with the school to ensure such facilities exist.

Fasting in the month of Ramadan

Parents should ensure that the school is aware when students are fasting such that the teachers of the student are supportive of the child's observation of fast and understand if the child may be more tired than usual. Parents should request that the school should give the students a choice if they want to do P.E in Ramadan.

Celebrating Eid

Parents should ensure that the School is aware of when Eid is likely to fall, bearing in mind the dates for the sighting of the new moon, and should ensure that their child can celebrate the days of Eid with their family and by visiting the mosque without any difficulties encountered from the school. Schools should recognise the two Eids as a religious celebration for Muslims all over.

Hygiene and clean toilet facility

It is very important in Islamic faith to ensure the child can clean themselves adequately after going to the toilet. Parents should ensure that toilet facilities are clean and suitable for the Muslim child. It can lead to a child's great anxiety and discomfort when having to use facilities that are not clean or well looked after.



Ensuring success in the curriculum

Knowing what your child is taught

Parents have a responsibility to know what is being taught by the school. When that which is taught by the school conflicts with the values and beliefs of the parent and child these concerns must be raised with the school.

All state-maintained schools must teach the national curriculum. However, a school can disapply (not teach) some or all of the national curriculum for a short time if it thinks this is best for your child. You have a right to ask the head teacher to remove your child from certain lessons for a strong educational reason. You can appeal to the school's governing body if:

- ▶ Your school decides not to don't agree with the school's decision to disapply some part of the curriculum; or
- ▶ The head teacher won't remove your child when you ask for this.
- ▶ You have the right to stop your child taking part in:
 - ▶ all or part of any sex education that is not part of the national curriculum; and
 - ▶ religious education and worship. (You can also take your child out of classes or out of the school at the start or end of a school morning or afternoon session for religious education or worship).

You can also complain about the curriculum to the governing body and to the LA.

It is important for the parent to be aware of what is being taught at school so as not to conflict with the values and beliefs being taught at home. Often a child will be uncomfortable with conflicting ideas being taught to them, however they will feel powerless to speak up by themselves against the authority of the school and this can lead to great anxiety and distress for the child.

Extra- curricula activities

Parents also need to be aware of the extra-curricula activities (discos, plays, male and female mixed parties) that the school may organise, and whether these would be suitable for the child to participate in. Again, if the parent is not aware and supportive of the child's needs, both pressure from the school and peers may result in a child feeling as though they have to compromise in their values and beliefs.



Supporting the academic study

Parents can help the child to be enthusiastic about what is being learnt by taking keen interest in what the child is studying, for example parents can ask questions about the subjects they are taught at the end of the school day.

Practical measures a parent can take at home:

- ▶ Dedicate couple of hours when children come home to do the homework and coursework (Try to limit time spent on watching TV and playing video & computer games).
- ▶ Allocate a study room or study desk for studying at home
- ▶ Maintain a positive attitude (Offer them rewards for good exam grades.)
- ▶ Motivate the child by doing activities with the child
- ▶ Parents can help the child to draw up a revision and study timetable
- ▶ Reward the effort made to study
- ▶ Read, monitor and sign the homework diary (Don't let them sign their own diary!)
- ▶ Provide healthy food and breakfast

Practical measures a parent can take to help successful study at school:

- ▶ Make sure the child goes to school everyday, and on time
- ▶ Ensure the child gets a good night sleep (at least 8 hours)
- ▶ Provide necessities to the child for example, pens, pencils, paper etc
- ▶ Find out about the child's progress from the teachers (call them after school or email them)
- ▶ Volunteer to become a school governor if there is a vacancy (you don't need any qualifications to be a school governor)
- ▶ Attend ALL parents evenings!
- ▶ Treat all correspondence from the school about your child seriously.



Preparation for school assessments and exams

Work with your child to ensure all notes and books required for revision are to hand. Help them prepare a revision timetable including the date, time and location of exams. Also, add important dates where coursework or final assignments have to be submitted.

Use the revision timetable to plan sessions, ensuring that they are evenly spread out over the time available for each exam.

Displaying the timetable in the study area will help keep track of progress.

Make progress checks regularly. Get them to explain what they are revising. A good explanation shows that they understand the topic well enough to answer exam questions covering that topic or area.

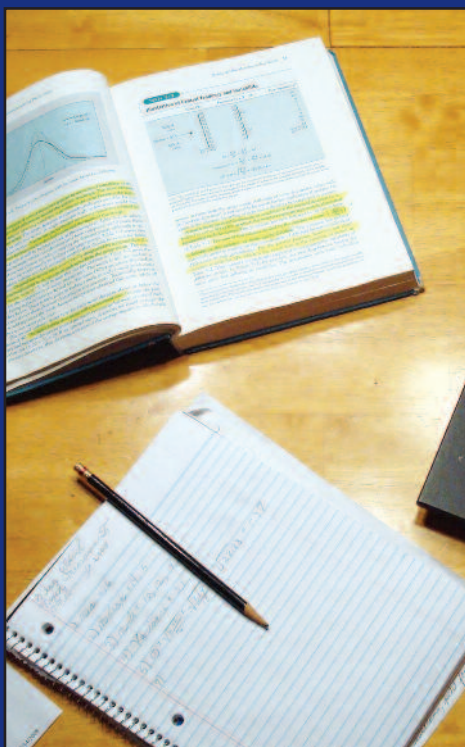
Your child should not be shy about asking for help from their teachers relating to topics they do not fully understand.

Encouragement from you will help your child to continue working hard over the exam period.

Hire a home tutor if the child is falling behind. Search for tutors on www.HomeTutors.org.uk for free. If you can't afford to hire a tutor ask a relative (senior student, graduate etc) to help out.

Revision tips for your child

- ▶ One-hour revision sessions with a short break in between provide the optimum amount of time to keep up concentration.
- ▶ Plan to revise a few topics properly at a time for each subject and then revisit before the exam.
- ▶ Remove background noise from the TV (Don't revise with the TV on!).
- ▶ Scan read each topic and then make notes summarising the main points.
- ▶ Relax for a while each day after school and then start revision. Try to relax for at least one hour after finishing school.
- ▶ Make notes of any areas not fully understood and then get more information from the teacher or your tutor.
- ▶ Do not work in groups as it is easy to get distracted, although revising with a friend can be beneficial especially if you test each other.



Before the Exam

As a parent, you can help your child prepare the night before an exam by making sure that:

- ▶ Your child gets a good night's sleep before the exam.
- ▶ They have all the equipment they need:
 - a few pens, pencils and rubber;
 - a watch.
- ▶ Some exams may require special equipment:
 - Maths equipment - calculator, compass, protractor, ruler ...
 - Art equipment - paintbrushes, paint, pencils ...
 - Technical drawing - compass, rulers, pencils, protractors ...
- ▶ They know the location and start time of the exams.
- ▶ You wish them well and pray together.
- ▶ And when they come back from their exams you ask them how the exams were that day and get them to then concentrate on next one.



This booklet is by no means exhaustive of all the different issues that a parent may encounter in educating the child. MTEC will be happy to offer further support in your child's education and provide advice on resolving issues of concern that you may face.

For more information about MTEC, to register your interest in joining and contributing to this work, or how we can deliver seminars in your area please visit: www.mtecuk.org.

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