

NEWSLETTER

Eid Ul Adha 2014

Edition



M.P.A
MUSLIM PARENTS ASSOCIATION
HIGH WYCOMBE

Helping to raise standards in education

Narrowing the Attainment Gap

Page 2

Hajj 2014



Page 5



BMEC Conference - 27 September 2014

Page 7

عيد الأضحى المبارك

EID-UL-ADHA-AL-MUBARAK

from The Muslim Parents Association High Wycombe
www.mpawycombe.co.uk



M.P.A
MUSLIM PARENTS ASSOCIATION
HIGH WYCOMBE

Contact the MPA:

Post: 34 Perth Road, High Wycombe, Bucks. HP13 6XX

E-mail: rafigraja@hotmail.co.uk | Tel: 07956 622 469 | visit our website www.mpawycombe.co.uk

Eid –ul- Adha Mubarak

I trust all of us have had a peaceful but enjoyable summer, although the good weather and the World Cup seem to be a dim memory now. The New School term has started and it is hoped that schools and pupils have got into their normal routines and those who have done well in their GCSE and A level exams have moved on to the next rung in their quest for acquiring the necessary qualifications for a successful future life.

As we head out of the Summer with the Muslim community having observed rather lengthy day time abstinence from food and drink as Ramadan fell in July this year, where for some days the fast lasted nearly 18 hours.

The Muslim Community will be observing Eid Ul Adha during the first weekend of October, following Hajj the day before. Please see page 5 for an article on Hajj. Eid Mubarak to all our readers.

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.

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.

We are pleased to have been invited to the meetings of the County's Education and Skills Select Committee at its meetings in May and July. If you are interested in viewing the contribution by the MPA then please see the following link. <http://bit.ly/1IPQBHr>

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 artist 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.

Hot Mid day meals for early year pupils from September 2014!

It is the Coalition government's stated policy to provide free hot lunchtime meals for the Reception, year 1 & year 2 children as from September 2014.

It is not clear what the cost of this exercise will be 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. See Page 6.

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 is providing Halal food to its pupils.

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, normally referred to as "Requires Improvement".

This 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 the importance of such disappointing grades, which some schools have taken as an opportunity to carry out some long outstanding reforms or restructuring of staff rooms and are confident of moving onwards and upwards.

What is your view, as teacher or school governor, of Ofsted inspections? Your views can be put forward anonymously.

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

Rashida Kazi, a member of the MPA Executive Committee and a teacher at Westfield School in Watford, tells us how results have improved there.

Westfield Academy is a multicultural comprehensive school catering for students aged 11-19. There are 1150+ students on roll.

Ever term is very busy with lots of support being put in place to ensure exam and coursework success. A calendar of weekly events including coursework and controlled assessment deadlines, trips, after school and holiday revision sessions is made available to parents and students on school website. An updated version of this calendar is made available throughout the term.

In order to prepare students for their exams, we invested time in after school and half term revision sessions. These sessions were made available during every school break leading up to the summer exams. The next 5 months were really busy and, at times, stressful for both teachers, parents and the students. Parents were asked to talk through the Revision plan – create a revision plan that allocates at least an hour to a variety of subjects per day and do at least 3 hours a day, remembering to give priority to core subjects (English, Maths, and Science) and working in an isolated area without noise and distractions. Parents were also advised to ensure controlled access to web sites during revision times and to encourage use of relaxation techniques and exercise.

Our GCSE examination results show steady improvement and for several years we have been in the top group of Hertfordshire schools for providing Added Value. This means that should a student attend Westfield Academy we will get the best out of them.

In November 2012 we received a “Good” Ofsted rating and following this in September 2013 we converted to Academy status. This transition was only possible because of the Ofsted and Local Authority conviction that we are “a school on the rise”.

This year the school is delighted to record an increased number of students leaving to study at university and to record our first ever successful Oxbridge candidate.

The following tables summarize the results gained by students in their final years of Key Stage 4 (year 11) and Key Stage 5 (Year 13).

Key Stage 4

HEADLINE – KS4	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
% achieving 5 +A*-C GCSEs	97	97	97	84	71
% achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs inc English & Ma	66	69	54	48	27

Read about further progress at Westfield in the next issue of the MPA Newsletter.



SINGLAMARKET

WEB DESIGN • GRAPHIC DESIGN • LEAFLET DESIGN & PRINT

01494 853 899

WWW.SINGLAMARKET.CO.UK

*We won't be beaten
on price!*

Hajj

Hajj is the fifth tenet or pillar of Islam (the others being 'Kalma' proclamation in the belief of ONE GOD and that Mohammed (peace be upon him) is his messenger, 'Nimaz' five daily prayers, fasting in the month of Ramadan and 'Zikat' the giving of 2.5% self assessed tax, levied on people with assets over a threshold) and commemorates the story shared with Christianity and Judaism, of Hazrat Ibrahim's (Abraham) willingness to sacrifice his son Ismaeil in the name of God.

The Hajj takes place in Makkah in Saudi Arabia on when over 2 million Muslims from all over the world perform Hajj on the 9th day of the Islamic Month of Zil-Hajj, with Eid Ul Adha the following day.

This year Eid Ul adha is likely to fall on the weekend of 4-5th October 2014.

Muslims, who can financially support themselves during Hajj and also have sufficient resources for their family members left behind are obliged to undertake Hajj, at least once in a life time.

The Annual Hajj attracts a uniquely multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi lingual gathering of the faithful who have an opportunity to visit and pray in the holiest Islamic cities of Makkah, which houses the 'Kaaba' (Arabic for cube and reportedly the oldest and continuously in use religious building dating back to the time even before Hazrat Ibrahim) towards which all Muslims face when offering formal prayers.

The Hajj has its own obligations, rituals and timetable which the future 'Hajjies' have to observe in detail. For about three days, from the 8th Zil-Hajj, the pilgrims leave Makkah for the Tent City in the plains of Arafat where they have to visit certain sites, symbolically stone the 'satan' and then return to the Kaaba for a final 'tauaaf' or to complete 7 circles of the Kaaba before they can discard 'aharam' the special dress, which for men consists of couple of plain white sheets, whatever your status or nationality, whilst the ladies can wear their ordinary cloths as long as their hair and their bodies are modestly covered. Incidentally, the covering of the face by a veil is not permitted during the performance of the Hajj.

Once Eid-Ul Adha is celebrated on 10th of Zil Hajj, most Hajjies then make their way to Medina for the final few days of their stay in Saudi Arabia, unless they have been there before Hajj.

Medina is also of significance to the Muslim world as the holy prophet is buried under the Green dome of the magnificent 'Masjid-E- Nabvi' or the Mosque of the Prophet and all Hajies spend some time in contemplation in Madina during their pilgrimage.

We wish all the Hajjies a safe and joyous experience of a life time.

The Meaning of 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 is a concept which plays a part in every sphere of a Muslim's 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 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 s/he 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 split hooves (cloven hooves) or are repulsive in appearance. 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 or simple road kill cannot 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) by slitting 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 schools 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 Halal 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.

BMEC Conference -27 September 2014

The 4th Annual conference organised by the Bucks Minority Education Concern was held at Cressex Community School in High Wycombe on a nice bright Saturday, with the (Educational attainment) GAP as the theme.

The conference proved to be a huge success with the hall being filled with parents, governors, head teachers and officers from Bucks LA. According John Bajina (a long time Bucks school governor) and founding chairman of BMEC, 'This year the BMEC has come of age. We addressed a new and very difficult subject, openly, honesty, knowledgeably, politely and with plenty of conviction'. He went on to say that the conference also generated the circumstances that captured the attention of the audience. We facilitated a robust but civilised debate.

The speakers included BMEC members Sanam Ullah, Rafiq Raja, Lucy Goodyer of Connexions, Gordon Stewart the Akacia Supplementary School Co-ordinator and Riaz Ahmed of TIMES. The key note address was given by David Williams QC, who emphasised the inequality of the selective system in Bucks, which was a contributing factor towards widening the gap. Other speakers included Atifa Sayani, the new Children's champion at Bucks Learning Trust and Yvette Thomas, the Equalities Manager at Bucks LA.

The organisers were pleased with the day and felt proud of what they have achieved. All the hard work has paid off and Chairman has been commended for his tireless enthusiasm.

The last segment of the conference was given over to giving trophies to a number of school children, who were nominated by their schools for their desire for learning or service to their fellow pupils. Each of the 16 award winners was presented a shiny trophy by the Mayor High Wycombe, Cllr Khalil Ahmed, who appears with the award winners on the back page.

The conference was aware that the BCC's **Education, Skills & Children's Services Select Committee** is still deliberating the aspects of the gap and hopefully will bring its debate to fruition with ways and means of reducing the gap.

Would you like to get involved with the MPA?

Do you have an article you would like to submit?

Then please get in touch via our website mpawycombe.co.uk

Thara Stores offer a wide selection of Asian foods, spices, fresh fruit & veg plus everyday food items at the lowest prices around.

We have departments for fresh Halal meat and poultry and a department for ready made fashion ware and colourful fabrics of all kinds.

We offer great reductions on bulk purchases for restaurants, takeaways, parties or weddings.

Visit us to see the many offers we have in store.

**2 Whitelands Road, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 3EQ
Tel: 01494 445653**



The Mayor of High Wycombe, Cllr Khalil Ahmed with the award winners at the BMEC Conference. See page 7