

# Part One:

## Background Information and Starting Points

### What is Islamophobia?

Islamophobia is a term which has been widely contested and controversial since its popularisation in 1997 by the Runnymede Trust's ground-breaking report *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*. Some organisations prefer to use the terms 'anti-Muslim racism' or 'intolerance towards Muslims'. However, we have chosen to use the term Islamophobia in this resource due to its widespread currency.

Islamophobia is literally translated as 'fear of Islam'. There is no universally accepted definition of the term. In 1997, The Runnymede Trust defined Islamophobia as 'a shorthand way of referring to dread or hatred of Islam—and, therefore, to fear or dislike of all or most Muslims' (Conway, 1997). In 2017, in their 20th anniversary report *Islamophobia: Still a Challenge for Us All*, they define it as 'anti-Muslim racism' (Elahi and Khan, 2017).

Islamophobia denies people's dignity, rights and liberties. Manifestations of Islamophobia take many forms, at both an institutional and individual level, including:

1. Writing and speaking about Muslims as though all Muslims are the same, regardless of nationality, social class, political outlook and religious observance; are culturally and morally inferior; sympathetic towards terrorism; and/or have nothing in common with non-Muslims.
2. Physical and verbal attacks and damage to property, ranging from micro-aggressions (everyday verbal, non-verbal, and environmental slights) to hate crimes.
3. Discrimination in terms of employment, housing, medicine, the criminal justice system and in access to social and cultural spaces, goods and services.
4. The absence of Muslim voices in politics, journalism and culture.

Each of these forms are linked, being both a source and a result of the others (Elahi and Khan, 2017; Tell MAMA, 2017; OSCE, 2013; Richardson, 2017).

For further discussion on the term Islamophobia, please see "Islamophobia: The Right Word for a Real Problem" - <http://bridge.georgetown.edu/islamophobia-the-right-word-for-a-real-problem/> and "Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism – or what?" – concepts and terms revisited" - [www.insted.co.uk/anti-muslim-racism.pdf](http://www.insted.co.uk/anti-muslim-racism.pdf)

In their 1997 report on Islamophobia, The Runnymede Trust defined open and closed views of Islam as illustrated in the table below (Conway, 1997).

	<b>Closed View</b>	<b>Open View</b>
<b>1. Monolithic/ Diverse</b>	Islam seen as a single monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to new realities	Islam seen as diverse and progressive, with internal differences, debates and development
<b>2. Separate/ Interacting</b>	Islam seen as separate and other – (a) not having any aims or values in common with other cultures (b) not affected by them (c) not influencing them	Islam seen as interdependent with other faiths and cultures (a) having certain shared values and aims (b) affected by them (c) enriching them
<b>3. Inferior/Different</b>	Islam seen as inferior to the West – barbaric, irrational, primitive, sexist	Islam seen as distinctively different, but not deficient, and as equally worthy of respect
<b>4. Enemy/Partner</b>	Islam seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive, or as terrorism, engaged in 'a clash of civilisations'	Islam seen as an actual or potential partner in joint cooperative enterprises and in the solution of shared problems
<b>5. Manipulative/ Sincere</b>	Islam seen as a political ideology, used for political or military advantage	Islam seen as a genuine religious faith, practised sincerely by its adherents
<b>6. Criticism of West Rejected/ Considered</b>	Criticisms made by Islam of 'the West' rejected out of hand	Criticisms of 'the West' and other cultures are considered and debated
<b>7. Discrimination Defended/Criticised</b>	Hostility towards Islam used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society	Debates and disagreements with Islam do not diminish efforts to combat discrimination and exclusion
<b>8. Islamophobia Seen as Natural/ Problematic</b>	Anti-Muslim hostility accepted as natural and 'normal'	Critical views of Islam are themselves subjected to critique, lest they be inaccurate and unfair

Regardless of our own religious affiliation, it is worth reflecting on these points and seeing where our views sit on this spectrum. There are more questions for self-reflection in Matthew Grindin's article "Are You Contributing to Islamophobia?"

<https://forward.com/scribe/375400/are-you-contributing-to-islamophobia-a-recipe-for-anti-muslim-hatred/>

**Part Two of this resource (Frequently Raised Topics) explores some common myths and misrepresentations of Muslims, which are worth interrogating prior to undertaking work with young people.**

## What is Islamophobic Hate Crime?

The term 'hate crime' is used to describe a range of criminal behaviour where the perpetrator is motivated by hostility or demonstrates hostility towards the victim's disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or transgender identity (CPS, 2017). In 2016, there was a 47% increase in reports of Islamophobic hate crime, increasing again following the terror attacks in 2017. In Manchester, Islamophobic attacks soared by over 500% in the wake of the bomb at the Manchester Arena, and mosques and Muslim community centres have been attacked at least once a fortnight over the last four years.

The Crown Prosecution Service has produced teaching resources on race and religious hate crime, which are available here: [http://www.report-it.org.uk/files/classroom\\_activities\\_and\\_pupils\\_worksheets.pdf](http://www.report-it.org.uk/files/classroom_activities_and_pupils_worksheets.pdf)

# Why is Educating Young People about Islamophobia Important?

'I hate racism. I don't know how anyone could be racist; racists should be locked up. But, Muslims... they should wear our clothes and eat our food. If they don't like it, they should get out of our country...' Year 9 student, Bexley.

Due to the negative, sensationalist coverage of Islam in the national media, over 30% of young people believe Muslims are 'taking over England' (Taylor, 2015). 11% of Islamophobic incidents happen in educational institutions (Tell Mama, 2017), including name-calling, jibes about so-called Islamic State, violence, and victimisation when wearing a hijab (NSPCC, 2018). Many Muslim young people say abuse is so commonplace it is normalised (British Youth Council, 2016). Childline has recorded a spike in race- and faith-based bullying with victims reporting that they feel isolated, withdrawn and lack self-esteem (NSPCC, 2018).

The impact of this climate of fear and hate towards British Muslims is considerable, both on the individual and on the wider community. Anti-Muslim hate crime attacks the victim's identity itself, and alongside any physical repercussions, the emotional effects include fear, anxiety, isolation and depression. When hate crime and prejudice take place online, the impact on a victim's physical world is also great, with many victims describing living in fear because of the possibility of online threats materialising in the real world (Awan and Zempi, 2015).

In a school setting, instances of Islamophobia or discrimination can include threats, destruction of property, violent attacks or assaults on individuals (Awan and Zempi, 2015). There are also manifestations that may be considered everyday playground or school-yard behaviour, but that can be seriously detrimental. These include acts such as: exclusion, verbal abuse, derogatory comments, name-calling, joking about identity or faith, spreading lies and false rumours, and physical bullying.

There is under-reporting of Islamophobic incidents and hate crime amongst young people. Young people either don't know how to report hate crimes, are fearful of making the situation worse, or believe that nothing will be done. Teachers often dismiss incidents or are unsure how to respond effectively (British Youth Council, 2016). Unfortunately, many teachers feel ill-equipped to tackle issues of Islamophobia in the classroom (ODIHR, 2011).

The prevalence of anti-Muslim hate crime in our society affects young people's sense of national and individual identity along with their sense of belonging, and it continues to divide communities. It means that environments such as their local area and school, which are supposed to be safe spaces, become hostile environments, triggering fear and anxiety. It is vitally important that young people are equipped with a space to talk about their experiences and are given the tools to respond to and report incidents of Islamophobia, so they can feel listened to, safe and protected.

# The Legislative Framework

## The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act places a duty on schools to prevent direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation because of race and ethnicity, religion or belief and other protected characteristics.

**Direct Discrimination:** When a person treats one person less favourably than they would another because they have a protected characteristic.

**Indirect Discrimination:** When a provision, criterion or practice is neutral on the face of it, but its impact particularly disadvantages people with a protected characteristic. For example: banning all headwear would indirectly discriminate against people who wear headwear for religious reasons.

**Harassment:** Unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the complainant, or violating their dignity.

**Victimisation:** Treating someone unfavourably because they have taken (or might be taking) action under the Equality Act or supporting somebody who is doing so. The less favourable treatment does not need to be because of a protected characteristic.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Act) places an extra duty on public bodies, including schools, which are required to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

In order to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, schools must publish equality information, which should be updated annually, and set at least one specific and measurable equality objective every four years.

There is more information about schools' duties under The Equality Act on the EqualiTeach website: [www.equaliteach.co.uk/faith-in-us](http://www.equaliteach.co.uk/faith-in-us)

## Community Cohesion

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 inserted a new section, 21(5), to the Education Act 2002, introducing a duty on the governing bodies of maintained schools to promote community cohesion.

Community cohesion is defined as work that ensures that

“all pupils understand and appreciate others from different backgrounds with a sense of shared values, fulfilling their potential and feeling part of a community, at a local, national and international level.”

Ofsted no longer make a specific inspection judgement on Community Cohesion, but it remains a statutory duty for schools, and is stated as one of the avenues through which schools' can meet their Prevent duty in the Home Office statutory guidance.

The Department of Children, Schools and Families (2007) Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion is still available. Please see the references at the end of the resource.

# The Prevent Duty

Section 26 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 has imposed a duty on schools to demonstrate “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.” This duty is known as the Prevent duty.

The Home Office and Department for Education have both produced guidance for schools as to what this due regard should look like. Within both sets of guidance, the importance of schools creating spaces for young people to explore issues is stressed:

“Schools should be safe spaces in which children and young people can understand and discuss sensitive topics” Home Office, 2015.

“Schools should provide a safe space in which children, young people and staff can develop knowledge and skills to be able to challenge extremist arguments” DfE, 2015.

## Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development (SMSC) and Fundamental British Values

Section 78 of the Education Act 2002 requires maintained schools to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society.

Since 2014, schools have been required to promote Fundamental British Values as part of SMSC.

Fundamental British values are defined as:

- Democracy
- The rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs

The Department for Education has produced guidance for maintained and independent schools; links to these are available in the references section. Please also see EqualiTeach’s resource Universal Values for information as to how to embed Fundamental British Values in a cohesive fashion. The resource is available to download free of charge from [www.equaliteach.co.uk/universal-values](http://www.equaliteach.co.uk/universal-values)

## Ofsted

The Ofsted School Inspection Handbook (Ofsted, 2017) states that in inspecting the effectiveness of leadership and management in a school, inspectors will consider:

How well leaders and governors promote all forms of equality and foster greater understanding of and respect for people of all faiths (and those of no faith), races, genders, ages, disability and sexual orientations (and other groups with protected characteristics), through their words, actions and influence within the school and more widely in the community.

In order to be judged outstanding the following criteria must be met:

Leaders promote equality of opportunity and diversity exceptionally well, for pupils and staff, so that the ethos and culture of the whole school prevents any form of direct or indirect discriminatory behaviour. Leaders, staff and pupils do not tolerate prejudiced behaviour.

In inspecting the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which: Equality of opportunity and recognition of diversity are promoted through teaching and learning.

In order to be judged ‘outstanding’, the following criteria must be met:

Teachers are quick to challenge stereotypes and the use of derogatory language in lessons and around the school. Resources and teaching strategies reflect and value the diversity of pupils’ experiences and provide pupils with a comprehensive understanding of people and communities beyond their immediate experience.

# Preparing to Undertake this Work

## Know your perspective

Everyone brings a set of cultural norms and practices to the classroom, which affect their attitudes and behaviour. Unfortunately, we all also carry prejudices which come from a variety of sources. Many of these prejudices are so deep they are often sub-conscious. We can do something about our own biases by being aware that they might exist, reflecting on our opinions and looking for further information.

Before conducting education on Islamophobia, it is important to consider our own biases and knowledge base. How do I know what I know? What sources have I used? What value judgements am I bringing to the discussion?

## Engage with the local community

Working in partnership with local community and religious groups and organisations in the complementary and supplementary sector can bolster work on Islamophobia by bringing in additional viewpoints and expertise and highlighting issues that the young people are facing which may not have been considered by the school leaders and teachers.

School Linking can also be an excellent way to provide young people with opportunities to learn and socialise with those from different faith and cultural backgrounds. Traditionally, schools have linked up with others from around the world, but it is not necessary to travel that far. The value of connecting a small rural primary school, with a large urban school 20 miles up the road, should not be underestimated. See The Linking Network for more information: [www.thelinkingnetwork.org.uk](http://www.thelinkingnetwork.org.uk).

## Be open and transparent with parents and carers

Being open and transparent with parents and carers can increase engagement and reduce misunderstandings and confrontations after the work has taken place. Share information about the work that is planned and allow the opportunity for parents and carers to come and speak to you about questions and concerns that they have about the materials that will be used. Provide young people with resources to take home so that they can continue conversations outside school.

If parents and carers object to planned programmes of work:

- Repeat the fact that you are an inclusive school and that you embrace and celebrate equality and diversity at every opportunity
- Listen to concerns, be respectful and professional but firm
- Be clear about what the law says and have it on hand
- Refer to the home/school agreement that they signed when their child joined the school (a model home/school agreement can be found here: [www.equaliteach.co.uk/our-work/#Resources](http://www.equaliteach.co.uk/our-work/#Resources))

## Provide young people with a platform

Schools have a statutory duty to promote pupil voice and to listen to and involve young people in matters which affect them and in decision-making in the school (DfE, 2013). To know where to pitch a programme of work, it is important to find out what young people already believe, what misinformation they may be carrying, and their questions and concerns about issues. There are many ways in which to do this. For example: utilising online questionnaires; providing a box into which young people can post questions; or post-it notes completed anonymously at the start of a lesson.

Collecting young people's thoughts and questions in this way affords young people the opportunity to have their voices heard, allows schools to develop a body of work which is pitched at the right level, and helps young people to feel engaged in the programme of work from the beginning. This information can also provide a baseline assessment and young people can be consulted again after the work has taken place in order to measure the impact of interventions.

For pupil voice to be truly effective, young people must be able to see that they have influence and can effect change. Inform the young people of how their questions and concerns will be used to inform your work and involve pupils more widely in strategies throughout the school. As part of EqualiTeach's Agents for Change programme, young people surveyed their peers as to the reasons why people didn't report incidents of Islamophobia in the school and then worked with the SLT to create new avenues for young people to report Islamophobia and for both perpetrators and targets to be supported. For more information, see [www.equaliteach.co.uk/faith-in-us](http://www.equaliteach.co.uk/faith-in-us).



# Creating the Right Classroom Environment for Discussion

To undertake this work effectively, it is important to create a safe space within which conversations can take place. If openness is to be encouraged, it is important that young people are not worried that they will be laughed at or penalised for expressing their opinions on an issue. In addition, if young people feel attacked or shouted down, they may feel unable to contribute; this could lead to a breakdown in relationships within the classroom.

However, it is also vital to be sensitive to the needs of young people who may have had direct experience of Islamophobia, and it is important that they are not put on the spot or upset by the way in which issues are dealt with.

It is therefore vital to create a safe space at the start of the session within which all young people feel respected, able to take part, and able to disagree with each other and the facilitator without creating anger and upset. This can be done through the collaborative creation of ground rules.

**Some suggested rules are included below:**

**Be open and honest:** We don't want anyone to feel that they can't ask their question or express their opinion. Therefore, we will not laugh at others' opinions or shout each other down.

**Respect the feelings of others:** We will think about the impact of our words and body language on others and try to express our opinions in a respectful fashion. We will listen to the opinions of others, even if they are different to our own.

**Direct challenges to the front of the room, not at each other:** It is fine to disagree and challenge each other's ideas. However, if we do disagree with something that someone else says we will direct our challenge to the front of the room, so that that person does not feel attacked and the whole class remains involved in the conversation.

**Depersonalise comments:** It is fine to talk about your experiences with other people but ensure that you do not name those involved or disclose details that could identify those involved.

## A, B, C Framework

Young people also need to be equipped with the tools to be able to listen to other people's opinions and challenge each other respectfully. It is important that the educator is not the focal point of the discussion and that it is not dominated by one or two young people. Providing opportunity for small group discussions as well as whole class conversations provides young people with the opportunity to raise issues in a smaller group.

In a whole class discussion there should be simultaneous active participants. The discussion should be carried and developed by the young people, with the facilitator just providing facts and reasoning and enquiry questions to help guide the discussion and help young people think critically about their ideas. This provides young people with ownership of the discussion and tests their knowledge as they respond to new ideas quickly.

A speaking prop can be used to encourage only one person to speak at a time and to bring in quieter members of the group. However, young people should also have the right to 'pass' or remain silent. Young people's right to privacy should be respected as well as their right to speak out.

**Avoid singling out young people and putting them on the spot to talk about personal beliefs, cultural practices or experiences.**



Providing sentence starters such as the A, B, C framework below can help the young people to structure their responses. The first pupil provides a new opinion and then the conversation can bounce around the classroom with other young people having the opportunity to either agree or disagree with the original point or build upon it with their own ideas.

<p><b>Giving a new opinion</b></p> <p>I think that...</p> <p>My opinion is...</p> <p>I believe that...</p> <p>In my view...</p>	<p><b>Agreeing</b></p> <p>I agree with ... because...</p> <p>I would argue the same thing because...</p> <p>The reason I agree with ... is...</p> <p>That is an interesting point because...</p>
<p><b>Building</b></p> <p>I would like to build on ...'s point because...</p> <p>I agree with ... but I need to add...</p> <p>In addition to ....'s point...</p> <p>Building on what ... said...</p> <p>That is a good argument however it needs...</p>	<p><b>Challenging</b></p> <p>I don't think ... is right because...</p> <p>I would like to challenge this because...</p> <p>I disagree with ... because...</p> <p>My own view is different because...</p>

It can take time for young people to develop these skills and implement them consistently. Many schools have successfully fostered young people's abilities by using form periods as a time to discuss topical issues, with the ground rules and discussion framework always displayed.

Teachers can begin with non-contentious topics while the skills are being developed and develop topics as the work progresses. By the end of the year young people are often bringing in their own newspaper articles and social media posts to dissect!



# Facilitating Effective Conversations

When facilitating activities and discussions on Islamophobia, there is a possibility that some young people may express stereotypes, prejudice and other damaging opinions. It is important that these are challenged effectively, so that the young person who has expressed the opinion and the other students in the room can reflect upon what has been said. Challenges should not be confrontational but encourage young people to question their opinions. Some guiding principles are outlined below:



Empathise with how the young person is feeling: It is important to understand and engage with the underlying anxieties that the young person may have which are being expressed through a prejudicial or damaging opinion. They may have picked up fears from the media, or from family and peers. Let the pupil know that you understand why they might be feeling this way and try to address the underlying issues. Just dismissing their concerns, instead of understanding why a person may feel concerned, has the potential to create bitterness and a feeling that they have not been listened to, and may reinforce their prejudice and fear.



Where possible, it is important that negative opinions expressed in a whole class discussion are challenged in front of the whole class: It can sometimes be tempting to take the young person to one side to talk to them, so as not to cause a scene. However, an opinion voiced by a young person should be a learning opportunity for all young people, so that everyone understands that there is an alternative perspective that needs considering. The safe space has enabled that young person to voice their opinion, so taking them to one side to talk to them about it may feel like a punishment for the young person and close down any further contributions from them. The discussion should not centre around the young person who expressed the opinion, but on the opinion itself.



Challenge the view, rather than the person: Labelling someone as, for example, 'a racist', has the potential to inflame the situation and is not a helpful approach. It is important that the focus is on the view that has been voiced, and that the young person is encouraged to question their opinion.



Use reasoning and enquiry questions, to help the pupil question their viewpoint: Asking questions enables the young person to question the basis of their own points of view, rather than have you question it for them. Questions such as 'what are your reasons for saying that?', 'how do you know?', 'have you considered what affect your opinions might have on the targets of your comment?' and 'if someone were to disagree with your point of view, what would they say to counter your argument?' can be effective.



Provide an alternative viewpoint: Providing an alternative viewpoint gives the young person an opportunity to think about their point of view from a different perspective, which may weaken their attachment to their previous point of view and alter their perspective.



Provide young people with an opportunity to research the facts behind their viewpoint: Supporting someone to research the facts behind their viewpoint helps them to understand the importance of making sure that our opinions are underpinned by facts and how research can play an important role in this.



Some teachers are concerned that it is not acceptable to express their thoughts on issues as they need to demonstrate impartiality. The Education Act 1996 prohibits teachers from promoting partisan political views, however it is perfectly acceptable for teachers to stress the values outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or the Equality Act and to provide young people with support and guidance to reject misinformation and stereotypes.

