

**Report  
on the  
Curriculum Developments for the  
Tareekh/Akhlaq department  
at  
The Al Mahdi Madrasah  
of the  
Wessex Shia Ithna Asheri Jamaat  
12<sup>th</sup> June 2010**

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## ***Objective***

To evaluate the proposed changes to the curriculum at the madrasah of the Wessex Jamaat and their impact on the quality of education offered.

## ***Acknowledgements***

We would like to express sincere thanks to all the Jamaat members, students, teachers and other staff with whom we worked and who extended such a warm welcome to us. Everyone showed great forbearance and extreme patience with all our demands and without this, our task would have been impossible. We would also like to acknowledge the Mrs. Sue Ward assistance in editing this document.

## ***Proviso***

A short visit can only give a limited view of the work being done in the Madrasah and thus this report must be read bearing this point in mind.

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## ***Introduction***

The specific task outlined for this visit was to evaluate the proposal to combine the Tareekh (history) and Akhlaq (ethics) elements of the curriculum used at the Al Mahdi Madrasah in Wickham.

## ***Analysis of the Objectives***

The visit needed to answer some specific questions to achieve the objective

*1 Does the newly combined syllabus address all the elements contained in the old separate syllabuses?*

*2 Are the teachers sufficiently prepared to deliver the syllabus with enough supporting materials available?*

*3 Do the students perceive the combined syllabus as a meaningful entity?*

*4 Are academic standards being maintained?*

*5 Do the proposed changes impact on the rest of the syllabus?*

## ***Rationale***

The reasons for adopting these changes need to be made clear if it is to be successful. Change is invariably resisted and always has to be sold to those affected by it. Consequently the community, teachers and students all have to see clearly why it is being done and support the proposal to ensure its impact is maximised.

It would appear that there are a variety of reasons why the changes are being proposed.

At first glance the proposed merger might be seen as a response to a current staffing challenge and this in itself may not be sufficient reason to merge the two subjects. However, there seem to be more significant reasons for this revision as it can be argued that these two elements of the syllabus Tareekh and Akhlaq are interdependent and need to be taught as one entity for the students to derive a better understanding of the subjects, effectively making the whole greater than the sum of the parts. In making this revision an opportunity arises to make the syllabus more appropriate to the current context where the community has to address issues in the local context that such syllabuses never needed to address before. The work done by the Islam Citizenship Education Project supported by the School Development Support Agency and the Runnymede Trust (the ICE Project) is giving impetus to such enhancements. Selectively used, the ICE resources already produced could be usefully incorporated to augment the new schemes of work. The impact of this additional facet may not be practical if the syllabus taught ethics and history separately.

At the end of the visit we concluded that although the impetus to start this revision came from the practical issue to do with teacher supply, the team has realised the educational value of such an exercise which we recommend continues to fruition and thereafter is

regularly reviewed for improvement. In the appendix we have included a note about schemes of work. It is important to realise that these never reach their final form and ought to be continually reviewed and enhanced.

## ***Executive Summary***

1 We would like to commend the work being done by the Tareekh/Akhlaaq team at the Madrasah on reviewing the schemes of work and their desire to have their efforts independently evaluated for the benefit of the students. It is a valuable exercise and is raising many important issues concerning the education provided at the Madrasah.

2 The evidence was received from three constituents:

- (a) Madrasah teachers
- (b) Madrasah students
- (c) Stakeholders from all parts of the community including parents, a member of the Jamaat Executive Committee and the Resident Alim

From these groups we found the following:

- i) The work being done on revising the schemes of work is still in progress and the team are working towards a September 2010 start date. However, we feel that the combination of the two subjects without fully preparing the Schemes of Work and Lesson Plans, training the teachers and adequately engaging the other stakeholders of the justification for change and what those changes entail has resulted in a level of anxiety amongst both teachers and other stakeholders.
- ii) We believe that the two subjects can be valuably combined as they are interdependent and in teaching them separately there is a great degree of repetition. Teaching them separately also results in the Akhlaq teacher relying on the Tareekh teacher to have covered the historical incident in sufficient detail so that they can adequately derive the example from it. If the order in which the subjects are taught by the teachers changes from the curriculum that can present operational challenges for the Akhlaq teacher.

A good relevant example of this is the combining of the sciences for the National Curriculum where part of the objective was to cope with the lack of physics teachers. Consequently the combined science curriculum was predominately taught by biologists whose physics was weak so that subject element was often taught inadequately.

Both Tareekh and Akhlaaq have importance and each needs to be taught with due attention to their value to the Islamic Education programme that the students need to receive. There is a concern that Tareekh is perceived to be boring and less consequential to our daily lives and consequently it might be sidelined and its importance to Islamic Education lost. Teachers commented on lessening the time they devoted to teaching the subject. Many students also felt that lessons were being repeated without value added and a consistent approach to teaching the subject would avoid this.

**1 We therefore recommend** that the schemes of work with associated lesson plans must be constructed so that teachers are in no doubt about what must be taught. This does not imply that teachers will have their expertise and individuality fettered and that their personal teaching methodology should be strait jacketed by this scheme. The rationale for this recommendation is to ensure appropriate weighting is given to all aspects of the syllabus, and consistently apply this over the whole Madrasah.

A scheme of work can never be fully complete and the teaching team should regularly review and revise it as suggested in the guidance included at the end of this document.

**2 We recommend** that due to the relative inexperience of many of the Madrasah teachers training be regularly given on both the content of the syllabus and the methodology for teaching the content. Help to develop skills such as class management, lesson preparation should be regularly available to teachers together with any other areas of weakness they themselves identify. Additionally, certification will be an added incentive giving the teachers recognition in the development of their extracurricular skills.

**3 We recommend** that the revision team creates a map of where ancillary topics are addressed in the education programme offered by the Madrasah. An intention of this revision is to make explicit how the lessons of history should influence our daily decisions and way of life. However, it may be difficult to derive all the aspects of the way life should be lead from history as it is currently taught so the revision team should:

- i) look to introduce elements of example from the daily lives of the Prophets and the Aimma (as) around relevant themes such as food, visiting the sick, relation with neighbours, interfaith dialogue etc. Using resources such as [www.inspiredbymuhammad.com](http://www.inspiredbymuhammad.com) the teachers can enhance the audio visual content in the Lesson Plans.
- ii) identify where the subjects cannot be taught in the Tareekh/Akhlaq syllabus and make a map of where the other lessons are taught in the Madrasah programme. For example where do the students learn about the rules and rituals surrounding the spiritual purity associated with the cooking and eating of food? With many of these topics the initial responsibility must be with the family and the madrasah is just supporting and reinforcing what is done there.
- iii) introduce contemporary issues such as the organic food the types that are recommended to be eaten together or avoided.

Without exception both the students and their teachers supported the combined subject approach. The older students who had experienced both the separate and combined approach suggested that it made the history more relevant. They also said they enjoyed the more interactive teaching approaches used.

The students commented that if homework was set then it needed to be marked and valued and there ought to be more consistency as there was much variability by teachers. One of the older students claimed never to have done any homework during an extensive period at the Madrasah.

**4 We recommend** that where homework is deemed appropriate it should be written into the scheme of work and that heads of department check to see that teachers are setting and marking it.

The students also asked for some incentives to value the efforts they put into their Madrasah studies. We recommend that some certificate for the completion of each section Kawkab, Shams and Najm be presented to those who successfully complete the programme of study.

**5 We recommend** that some prizes for improved attendance be given in anticipation that this might act as an incentive to improve attendance because we were disturbed by the poor attendance statistics.

Our visit identified a real problem with quality assurance of the Madrasah programme. The Executive Committee has no special educational expertise so find it hard to make judgements particularly when faced with differing views from the members of the community. Their dilemma is that they have ultimate responsibility to the community for all aspects of the Madrasah including educational quality. We recommend that a process of peer review be adopted whereby colleagues from another Madrasah come and evaluate the work being done at the Al Mahdi Madrasah and some of the experienced Al Mahdi Madrasah staff do a similar evaluation at a sister Madrasah. In this way Madaris will learn from each other but to do this effectively the evaluators will need training but there is material available for this as a result of the Ofsted experiences.

**6 We recommend** that those involved in the revision do training sessions for the various stakeholders to involve them in the work that is being done and give them a real stake in the work of the Madrasah. In this way the revision could be seen as the efforts of a far sighted Jamaat to foster the future of the community – our children being our future.

## ***Methodology of this Visit***

### **Reading**

The following documents were analysed and notes made:

- The proto scheme of work made available at the Madrasah during the visit
- The National Curriculum for Citizenship Education
- The Schools Development Support Agency materials
- The Islam Citizenship Education Project information and materials
- Information on teacher supply, distribution and their qualifications

### **Interviews**

Full frank discussions with a number of people were conducted. These people included:

- Staff of the Madrasah
- Executive Committee members of the Wessex Jamaat, Resident Alim, supporters of the Madrasah and other stakeholders
- Students of the Madrasah

The gathering of intelligence was slow, repetitive and with some contradictions. The messages received were from the individuals' point of view and sometimes had a hidden agenda. It was useful just to listen to everyone, making notes in order to try to make sense of it all later. Using the usual research technique of triangulation enabled confirmation checks to be made and it was therefore important to approach the questioning in a variety of ways to double check the information from other sources.

### **Participatory Activities**

Teaching at the Madrasah was not observed because this visit was not a quality inspection.

Based on the gathered information it was possible to arrive at the conclusions and recommendations in this report.

## ***Conclusion***

The visit achieved the original objectives and a clear picture of the work being done to revise the schemes of work. As a result there are a number of issues for consideration and some policy decisions to be clarified or made.

It was good to be able to see the work that is being done and if nothing else results from this visit it is hoped that the staff will have been encouraged in their tasks.

It is anticipated that this report will provoke a dialogue about a variety of educational issues germane to the Islamic Education provided.

To answer the specific questions initially identified:

1 The newly combined Tareekh/Akhlaaq syllabus can address all the elements contained in the old separate syllabuses, provided the Scheme of Work and the allied lesson plans are tightly structured and there is clear mapping where all topics are dealt with.

2 Some start has been made to prepare the teachers to deliver the syllabus. They will need further training and guidance particularly on how to produce and use support materials.

3 Clearly the students perceive the combined syllabus as a meaningful entity.

4 We were not able to assess whether academic standards are being maintained because the scheme is in its infancy and a quality assurance strategy is not in place.

5 The proposed changes are bound to impact on the rest of the syllabus and give the whole programme greater coherence.

## ***Postscript***

A short visit presents some special challenges mostly centring on the time constraint.

The support of the colleagues with whom one is working is the key to success and this visit would have failed but for their help.

## **Appendix**

### **Itinerary**

12:00	Welcome and refreshments
12:15-12:45	Background and meeting with Head of Tareekh/Akhlaaq and Resident Alim
12:45-13:10	One-to-one meeting with a newly appointed teacher of Tareekh/Akhlaaq
13:10-13:30	Namaaz
13:30-14:00	One-to-one meeting with a parent who used to teach at Madrasah.
14:00-14:30	Meeting with students from Najm who are in Years 9/10/11.
14:30-15:00	One-to-one meeting with Rubaina Nurmohamed who has organised the Schemes of Work and is presently working on the new schemes of work and lesson plans.
15:00-15:20	One-to-one meeting with an experienced teacher of Tareekh/Akhlaaq
15:20-15:45	Meeting with students from Shams who are in Years 7 & 8
15:45-16:10	Meeting with students from Kawkab who are in Years 5 & 6.
16:10-16:30	One-to-one meeting the Executive Committee representative on Madrasah Committee
16:30-16:55	One-to-one meeting with the Resident Alim
16:55-17:30	Reflection by the Evaluation Team.
17:45-18:10	One-to-one meeting with a concerned member of the community.
18:10-18:25	One-to-one meeting with a teacher of Tareekh/Akhlaaq
18:30-19:15	Initial feedback to Head of Akhlaaq, Resident Alim, Member(s) of the Executive Committee on the Madrasah Committee, Tareekh/Akhlaaq teachers and Heads of Departments.
19.15-20:00	Dinner
20:00	Depart

The [Head of the Madrasah/our convenor] for the day was Br Miqdad Alidina with whom we had no interaction.

## ***Bibliography***

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## **Constructing a Scheme of Work**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1**

The purpose of this section is to provide a mechanism that teachers can use to produce a scheme of work that covers the requirements of the curriculum. It emphasises the scope that teachers have in determining the range, style and organisation of the teaching programme. Some teachers will consider that it is beneficial to go beyond the requirements of the curriculum targets. Other teachers will find that some learners are capable of working at higher levels, outside the curriculum for the age group. The record of learners' education will form the basis of decision making on the content, pitch and pace of a scheme of work.

#### **1.2**

The procedures described below are appropriate for further development of existing schemes or for starting afresh. Most teachers will wish to use a combination of the approaches suggested below, adapting their existing practice to match the Curriculum and creating some new work.

#### **1.3**

Programmes of study in the textbooks form the basis for developing a scheme of work. The paragraphs of the programmes of study should correspond with particular examinable targets. Statements of these targets can be used to sharpen the focus of the scheme. They will help to ensure that learners are offered opportunities to attain a high level of achievement.

### **The Need for a Scheme of Work**

#### **2.1**

In order to provide a coherent structure for the curriculum in a school, it is essential that teachers have a shared vision of the purposes of their teaching. The development of the scheme of work, by teachers working together, is a mechanism whereby a coordinated approach can be achieved. The scheme of work is an important part of the school's curriculum policy.

#### **2.2**

A scheme of work will ensure that all learners have access to the curriculum and are given support to achieve their maximum potential. It is particularly important that teachers discuss in detail how their teaching relates to other teachers work. They need to:

- share their schemes of work and how they interact:
- have common or compatible systems of record keeping.

#### **2.3**

Information about the scheme of work ought to be made available to the learner's parents. Parents need to know what teaching and learning is experienced by their child. This will enable parents to help their children. Schools can only work successfully when parents are a part of the education equation.

### **What is a Scheme of Work?**

#### **3.1**

A scheme of work is a written statement that describes the work planned for learners within a class or group over a specific period. The scheme of work is an essential element of the school's documentation and policy, and as such should reflect whole school approaches to teaching and learning. It should be written so that all teachers in the school can use it as a practical guide to teaching within the school's curricular programme. Each scheme of work is part of the curriculum continuum and, taken with preceding and subsequent schemes, will describe the detailed curriculum structure of the subject for learners of that age.

#### **3.2**

The textbook and examination questions can be viewed as a checklist. The scheme of work must ensure that all items on the checklist are experienced, sometimes more than once, within the year.

This is necessary to broaden experience, and to ensure reinforcement of learning and progression to a higher level of achievement.

### 3.3

The place of a particular subject within the curriculum takes many forms, ranging from subject-based organisation, to being part of an integrated curriculum. Whatever kind of organisation is adopted, it must be possible to account for all the subject content. A scheme of work is an essential part of this accountability and as such describes the entitlement for learners. Teachers often organise work in topics or themes. These are frequently broad and are referred to here as 'areas of study'. An area of study can be taught through a variety of organisational approaches, for example:

- topics
- themes
- subject content
- projects
- modules
- process approaches

Areas of study are often usefully sub-divided into smaller units.

In writing a scheme of work it will be necessary to address the following issues:

#### **General**

- the school's policy,
- the national aims,
- the place of the scheme in the whole curriculum;
- principles and approaches to education addressed,
- the balance between ideas that are new to learners and those they will experience again at a higher level of conceptual demand or procedural complexity;
- identifying aspects of the work that are difficult and those which are central to the teaching scheme;

#### **Organisation**

- how the areas of study are broken down and sequenced;
- the contexts for the ideas and processes, and how they match the curriculum
- how particular aspects might be taught, e.g. group work, discussion, circus, demonstration, drama, project, problem solving, integrated day; appropriate time allocation;
- projects/further work that might arise;
- homework that might be done, if appropriate;
- how work might link to other parts of the curriculum;
- the resource requirements and system of resourcing of the various planned activities;
- who has responsibility for reviewing and monitoring each part of the scheme.

#### **Assessment and Record Keeping**

The scheme of work will need to address the following:

- strategies which will be used for assessment;
- how assessments might be related to levels of achievement;
- tasks or questions which have proved to be formative indicators (to both- teacher and learner) that aims have been met and levels of attainment achieved;
- what records and evidence should be kept for moderation, both internal and external;
- arrangements for the sharing of judgements about learners' performances between teachers;
- how to act on the information that has been collected;

#### **Particular Issues**

The following need to be taken into account:

- continuity of experience across the age range;
- progression in ideas and in the skills and strategies of investigation and communication;
- differentiation (matching tasks to all learners, including those with special educational needs,
- balancing challenge with likelihood of success over the whole ability range);
- providing maximum access for learners with special needs;
- gender and minority considerations;
- safety issues;
- procedures for review and evaluation.

### **3.5**

A scheme of work should be viewed as a working document. It affects thinking about the delivery of the curriculum but will be frequently amended to take into account more effective teaching methods and also contemporary issues and events which might bring greater relevance to the work.

## **Creating a new Scheme of Work**

### **4.1**

Before undertaking the task of producing a new scheme of work, staff need to be fully conversant with the curriculum. It is also important that teachers have some knowledge of the major reports on education and national projects, as well as policy statements and other publications.

### **4.2**

The first step is to consider ways of dividing subject provision into themes. These broad themes can then be further divided into smaller units (referred to here as areas of study) which are coherent in themselves and which will be both easier to handle in planning and more manageable to deliver.

### **4.3**

The areas of study should be compared with the curriculum in order to ascertain coverage is appropriate for the year group. It may be necessary to develop areas of study to ensure adequate coverage. It may be helpful to consider blocks of years as this will facilitate revisiting areas to reinforce and develop ideas and the skills and strategies of investigation. The period over which the areas of study are distributed should be long enough to accommodate a range of coverage and short enough to ensure a balance in experiences.

### **4.4**

The activities that are to be used within the areas of study should now be identified. There should be a range of opportunities to develop the ideas in the attainment targets. Activities must have potential for developing the skills as well as content.

## **Revising a Scheme of Work**

### **5.1**

It is important to pace the work of curriculum revision or development so that sufficient time is available to enable everyone who will be involved in the teaching to contribute to the planning. On the other hand, extended times scales can lead to problems of poor continuity of development and a waning of interest and commitment to the changes.

### **5.2**

The introduction of a scheme of work is an opportunity for a broad review of the curriculum. The teaching team should begin by examining the current provision, including year group or class organisation. As plans are formulated they should be circulated for reflection and comment to facilitate coherence and to ensure that they match school and government policy. This will entail consultation with those responsible for development of other subjects so there is a coordinated approach. Cross-curricular issues will require carefully planned coordination.

### **5.3**

The process of development should be both gradual and cyclic. It is not desirable to attempt to reach a final product rapidly. The aim should be to set up a process of consultation so as to evaluate and modify the plans regularly in the light of experience.

## **A Step by Step Approach to Making a Scheme of Work**

### **Step 1**

Look at the appropriate programme(s) of study and become familiar with the main ideas.

### **Step 2**

Match the areas of study in the current scheme of work to the curriculum for the appropriate year group. Note any mismatch additional areas of study may need to be prepared. Where the current scheme takes a strongly 'process' approach, particular attention will need to be given to determining areas of knowledge and understanding which will need to be covered.

### **Step 3**

Consider each area of study in detail and determine which learning targets the activities match. Identify which statements of attainment are covered by the area of study. At this stage, tracing links between curriculum would be helpful, as they indicate the sequences in which they might be taught.

### **Step 4**

Has a sufficiently varied range of activities been identified in each area of study, to satisfy the need for differentiation within a class? Cross-curricular links should be identified at this stage.

### **Step 5**

Consider the whole scheme of work in terms of statements of attainment by drawing up a matching table.

### **Step 6**

Use the information in the match to consider how continuity and progression are built into the scheme of work from year to year.

the order of the areas of study may need to be reconsidered.

the sequence of activities within an area of study may need to be re-ordered.

new activities may need to be incorporated into an area of study.

The spiral approach, through which ideas are revisited and skills and strategies extended, should be evident in the revised scheme. Consideration needs to be given to situations where teachers have mixed age classes.

### **Step 7**

Consider the sections of the scheme that are concerned with teaching strategies. Are the strategies identified at each stage appropriate to the curriculum and is there sufficient variety?

### **Step 8**

Identify opportunities for assessment, bearing in mind that assessment should be part of the normal teaching and learning process.

### **Step 9**

Devise a record of the objectives of each area of study. Such a record will need to indicate:

the activities planned, in sequence if appropriate;

the statements of attainment which pertain to the activities;

how the activities are matched to the maturity, interests and abilities of the learners;

how this work builds on previous work;

the learning and teaching strategies to be used, for example, investigation, reading for information, role play; the opportunities to incorporate assessment;

the resources needed, for example, materials including equipment, books, artefacts.

### **Step 10**

In the light of experience, establish a procedure for the review of the scheme of work.

Source: The Non Statutory Guidance to the 1989 English National Curriculum