

# Acorn, Research & Publishing



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## Prophet Eesa (A.S.) in the Maktab curriculum

### Explanatory Notes & Guidelines

#### 1. Introduction

Living in the West, the present and coming generation of Muslim children face challenges on beliefs and ideologies (Aqaid) that were probably never faced by their Muslim predecessors. Our predecessors were generally brought up and educated in environments that could be described as “mild” in comparison to what we experience today, thus there was minimal exposure to ‘other’ beliefs, resulting in the Islamic viewpoint being embedded in their hearts and minds.

For the majority of Muslim children today, this is not the case anymore. They are the offspring of parents who migrated to Western countries, where not only Islam and Muslims are a minority; our children are living in an environment that is full of information and where they have access to a wealth of information<sup>1</sup>. In addition to this, the Religious Education taught in schools is not always the correct opinion and neither is it always presented in an unbiased manner<sup>2</sup>.

As this exposure to information many a times contradicts our Aqaid and teachings, countering this and highlighting our correct beliefs becomes an essential responsibility.

An example of this exposure of incorrect / distorted beliefs is the issue of prophet Eesa<sup>3</sup> (A.S.).

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<sup>1</sup> This information is not always authentic or in line with the Quran and Sunnah.

<sup>2</sup> And even if it was presented impartially, young children would not necessarily be able to distinguish between correct and incorrect.

<sup>3</sup> Our children are exposed to beliefs such as Trinity, Eesa being the son of God and his father was Joseph.

It is essential that our children are educated about the Islamic viewpoint<sup>4</sup> regarding this (and all such issues) in a manner that they are:

- a) Confident about the Islamic viewpoint(s).
- b) They can confidently relay their belief to others.
- c) There is no confusion with other beliefs they are exposed to.
- d) They have sufficient knowledge to protect them from external influences.
- e) This information and knowledge must also reflect understanding of other faiths, their beliefs and being tolerant and respectful to such other beliefs.

## **2. Why is educating our children about Eesa (A.S.) important?**

There are many reasons for this. Some have already been highlighted in the above introduction. Some other reasons are:

1. Eesa (A.S.) is a Prophet of Allah. A fact verified in the Quran and Hadith. Hence, to believe in Eesa (A.S.) *as a Prophet* is a necessary element of Iman for all Muslims.
2. Similarly, to believe in all other details mentioned in the Quran and Hadith regarding Eesa (A.S.) is also necessary<sup>5</sup>. As an example, the concept of Eesa (A.S) being born without a father is clearly mentioned in the Quran and this should be emphasised.
3. Jesus is the name given to Eesa (A.S.) by the Christians. ***Jesus and Eesa is the same person.*** Many Muslim children in their ignorance or confusion disrespect Jesus (making jokes etc), not understanding that they are in essence showing great disrespect to a great Prophet of Allah, constituting a major sin. Thus this point must be highlighted when educating our children<sup>6</sup>.
4. Holding the correct belief regarding Eesa (A.S) is part of our Aqaaid, which is the foundation of Iman. Incorrect Aqaaid (beliefs) can remove a person from the fold of Islam. To safeguard the Iman of our children, it is our obligation to pass on the correct beliefs to our offspring.
5. Exposure of our children to other sources of information which are often distorted / incorrect makes it incumbent that the correct Islamic viewpoint is embedded in the hearts of our children. This will eradicate any confusion created from other sources and also answer any questions they have.

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<sup>4</sup> These other beliefs could also be within the “Muslim” community, such as the views of Shias on the companions (Sahaba).

<sup>5</sup> Verses such as: V171 C:4 and V:73 C:5.

<sup>6</sup> At the same time issues in respect to tolerance of other beliefs must also be addressed.

6. There is a huge focus on Jesus in schools at Christmas and Easter. Unfortunately, not much focus is given in our Maktabas to such an important issue.

### **3. What is the role of the Maktab in educating our children?**

1. The Maktab is the only source of Islamic information for many Muslim children as they have very limited or even at times zero exposure to Islamic education from anywhere else. Hence the importance of the Maktab in teaching and preaching must never be underestimated.
2. The Maktab is not just there for Quran, Kalimahs and Duas (although sadly this is a reality for the many Maktabas that have failed to progress beyond this). Subjects such as Aqaaid are equally as important, if not more important.
3. Just as there needs to be Tajweed, Fiqh, Seerah, Adaab and Aqaid in the Maktab syllabus, our beliefs regarding Eesa (A.S) must also be in the syllabus (whether formally<sup>7</sup> or informally<sup>8</sup>).
4. The responsibility of the Maktab is to cover all issues<sup>9</sup> regarding Eesa (A.S.) in a fun, interactive and stimulating manner.

### **4. How to cover this issue?**

Every Maktab is different, thus every Maktab's needs will also be different. Below are some guidelines that can be adapted / modified etc.

1. Devote a few days twice in the year:
  - a) Early December – well before Christmas.
  - b) 3 weeks before Easter.

As Christmas mainly deals with the birth of Jesus, this can be the focus in December. The Islamic perspective on the crucifixion etc can then be covered before the Easter holiday period.

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<sup>7</sup> Formally: By having a book in the syllabus which the teacher will cover in the class.

<sup>8</sup> Informally: Via assemblies, awareness week etc.

<sup>9</sup> All items must be covered bearing in mind the ages of children. Thus, it is very advisable children are split into age groups, so that only relevant topics are covered with each respective age group.

2. Covering this issue at the “relevant” times is important for maximum benefit and “impact”, in addition to this there is a huge awareness on Christmas in schools through activities, plays, parties etc week. Hence, the Islamic perspective needs to be highlighted at the same time to eliminate any confusion and doubts that may arise. Children will also have more awareness to this issue due to the exposure at school.
3. Maktab’s can create awareness through:
  - ✓ Assemblies.
  - ✓ Class interactive discussions – pupils must be involved.
  - ✓ Creative work.
  - ✓ Work sheets.
  - ✓ Different books.
  - ✓ Get parents on board<sup>10</sup>.
4. Out of the above list of teaching methods, discussions will form the main part of all learning. The teacher must encourage lots of *interactive* discussions, where pupils are involved and are not merely lectured at. Interactive discussions are the backbone to creating good understanding. Where pupils are not “responding”, then this is most probably due to a lack of confidence. On such occasions the discussions<sup>11</sup> will have to be “teacher-led”.
5. Younger children can be taught the very basic<sup>12</sup> beliefs regarding Eesa (A.S). Start at the children’s level and ability. How can we go into complex details if the basic belief (Aqeedah) is not there?
6. Older children *must* be taught in a little more detail once the basic Aqaid are understood well. Give simple examples / proofs etc to counter Trinity etc.
7. Have a competition according to age groups to create interest and motivation.
8. Maktabs must support each other by sharing ideas and resources. Even sending teachers to those Maktabs who lack expertise or relevant experience can help immensely. However, what works well for one

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<sup>10</sup> Parental involvement and awareness is very important.

<sup>11</sup> This brief article does not have the scope to go into a detailed discussion about “teacher-led” teaching methods.

<sup>12</sup> Examples: a) He is a prophet of Allah. b) He was born without a father. c) He is not the son of Allah.

Maktab, may require modifying for others. Do not simply replicate from others, assess your needs and requirements and then structure accordingly<sup>13</sup>.

9. Never underestimate the contribution we can make. Simple steps can make a huge difference. Once you have started, you can build upon this each year<sup>14</sup>.
10. Teachers must always explain hard words / terminology etc, never take for granted that children understand.
11. All this can be duplicated for occasions such as Eid ul Adha, Ramadhan<sup>15</sup> etc.
12. All good teachers will always teach tolerance and respect of other faiths. We must never belittle any other faith group<sup>16</sup>.

### 5. Resource list

- ❑ *ISA (A.S) – A Prophet of Islam.* By Shaykh Saleem Dhorat<sup>17</sup>
- ❑ *Prophet Jesus.* By Shaykh Ahmed Ali<sup>18</sup>
- ❑ *Islamic Tahdheeb and Akhlaaq.* By Aisha Lemu (IQRA)
- ❑ *Stories of the Prophets.* By Shaykh Sayyed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi
- ❑ *What Islam is All About.* By Yahya Emerick
- ❑ [www.soundvision.com/Info/Jesus/inIslam.asp](http://www.soundvision.com/Info/Jesus/inIslam.asp)

Updated: March 2010

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<sup>13</sup> It is extremely unfortunate and poor practice that some Maktab simply replicate what they see elsewhere without second thought as to what can be best suited for their Maktab. Such practice in the long term is not productive or beneficial.

<sup>14</sup> In this manner, you can modify resources and learning material etc each year. in a short while you will build up a variety of resources. Save all templates, handouts etc in one file / folder.

<sup>15</sup> We spend so little or no time at all covering these important festivals / occasions. Our children must have a “buzz” about their Eid just as there is a “buzz” in schools at Christmas time.

<sup>16</sup> Challenging other beliefs is a separate issue and a must.

<sup>17</sup> Available free from <http://liwajhillah.co.uk>.

<sup>18</sup> Some parts of this book may be too complex for children, thus such parts can be omitted. Each resource / book needs to be used in accordance to the ability and ages of your pupils.