



Engagement Policy

- The strategies mentioned in this policy are aimed at ALL the children coming to our Madrasah. The strategies mentioned need to be employed from the first class (Reception), but in a manner that is age appropriate.
- More specifically, this policy applies to children aged 10+, with an even greater focus on children aged 12+.

1. Background

1. The overall aim of our Maktab must be amongst other things:

- a) Provide good Islamic education.
- b) Create an understanding of Deen.
- c) Create a love for Deen.
- d) Our children have an Islamic mindset.

2. Whereas we are succeeding in providing a good level of Islamic education, a greater focus is required to further develop the “Islamic mindset” of our children.

3. Sometimes children have a good grounding in Islamic education, however despite this good education, after leaving the Maktab many of our teenagers within a short time lose all connection with their Deen. This is extremely worrying and requires a strategy where we address this.

4. Parents and parenting has changed dramatically in the last decade. Often “traditional values” have been replaced with more “liberal” attitudes. These “open and free” attitudes often result in “knowledge and acting upon it” (Ilm to Amal) confined to the four walls of the Madrasah. Deen is not practiced at home and neither in other social spheres of life. The result is a child (who despite attending a traditional Madrasah) has no exposure to the practical application of Deen in his/her personal and social life. This creates confusion in a child’s mind, and at the same time it not only deprives the child from practically observing the Sunnah, it also diminishes the importance of the Sunnah and an “Islamic lifestyle”.

Some examples of this are:

- Eating and drinking is not according to Sunnah.
- Dress code is not modest.
- Whilst their daughters observe a modest dress code in Madrasah as a mark of respect for religious teaching, some parents who drop them off are dressed in an inappropriate manner, contrary to their child and Islamic teachings.
- Free mixing and inter mingling of genders in weddings and other functions.

5. Due to all these and other factors, it is essential we as a Madrasah have a “holistic” approach towards every child’s education and Tarbiyah. The focus must not solely be education or Tarbiyah, rather both must be addressed simultaneously.

Parents must be an equal partner of the teacher in developing this Islamic mindset by creating an environment conducive to what their child is learning.

2. Teachers are the role model

We are the role models. Our approach will set the tone. Our speech/communication with pupils and our actions will either develop the love of Deen and the people of Deen or it will have the opposite effect.

1. Teachers possessing a principled, upright and mature “Islamic mindset” is essential for a “holistic approach”. Otherwise, although teachers may fulfil academic responsibilities, they will fail in addressing the spiritual needs of their pupils.
2. The “right mindset” will also have a DIRECT impact on a teacher’s teaching methodology, as such teachers will continuously strive to “link” their teaching to practical implementation, including motivating children and constantly working on their Tarbiyah (without prompts and reminders).

The need for teachers to develop their personal spirituality is thus considered a very important step in the wider context of addressing the needs of the children in our care.

3. Teachers often “complain” about a lack of time. This challenge is very easily overcome where the teacher has a “Deeni mindset”, as this will allow smooth and almost effortless implementation of the points mentioned above. In addition to this, effective time management is essential, as this allows every minute to be utilized effectively.
4. The need to strike a fine balance is essential. The focus must not be entirely academic, and neither should it entirely be on Tarbiyah.

3. Strategies to employ from the beginning

With our focus on good Islamic education there must also be a “soft” approach to Tarbiyah. **This must be from the first day and from the first class.** Some points, ideas and examples are:

- a) It is extremely difficult to have an “exact” definition of this, rather the success of this lies in the experience, mindset and passion of every individual teacher.
- b) On average teachers must spend 10 minutes twice a week on “soft” Tarbiyah.
- c) Again, rather than defining a “list” of topics, teachers must “look for opportunities” from within their daily teaching (book, syllabus, topic). Thus, Tarbiyah must be incorporated into your lessons.

Some examples are:

Lesson / Topic	Tarbiyah focus
Salaah	<p>Talk about “why” we pray and not simply focus on the method and Fiqh.</p> <p>Talk about the greatness of Allah. If the love, respect and status of Allah is understood, Salaah will automatically be a priority.</p> <p>Encourage concentration and devotion.</p>
Zakaat	<p>Talk about the importance of charity, compassion, and helping others. Islam is a religion of compassion and mercy.</p> <p>Discussions on how to help those who are needy, especially in our own communities.</p> <p>Discuss the different charities out there and the type of work they do.</p> <p>Carry out fundraising for both a local and international project.</p>
Duas	<p>With memorization the focus must be the overall purpose of these Duas (that upon every step we thank Allah and show our gratitude).</p> <p>If it is raining, remind your pupils to recite the Dua. Go over the meaning as well.</p> <p>When there are occasions pupils eat in Madrasah (party etc), go over the relevant Duas.</p>

Lesson / Topic	Tarbiyah focus
Aqaid	Why Allah is important in our lives and that our entire existence must be in total submission to him. Older pupils: Talk about issues that affect them. Teach and promote tolerance and respect. Differences must not lead to enmity.
Mannerisms & character	Every one of us is an ambassador of their Deen. Our actions will either promote our Deen or bring about negative publicity. Non-Muslims will never see our worship, charity and other good deeds, but they will see our manners, dealings and character.
Hifz class	What is the Qur'an, its status and virtues of recitation, specific chapters etc. Creating love and respect for the Qur'an. Stories about our pious predecessors and the love and devotion they had for the Qur'an.
Akhirah	Constantly emphasise this abode is temporary and the fact that our good deeds is the only thing that will follow us into the afterlife.

4. Tarbiyah will make your teaching easier

- a) If your pupils understand their Deen, rights and responsibilities, they will be positive learners.
- b) This will make your teaching and delivery easier, especially with older pupils.
- c) Pupils will be more receptive.

Thus, do not treat Tarbiyah as something “separate” or “seasonal”. It must always be part of your daily teaching strategy.

5. Seasonal opportunities

Teachers must also be aware and prepared for “seasonal” opportunities. These are occasions when our focus must be on the “seasonal” issue. Examples are:

- Ramadhan and Eid-ul-Fitr.
- Dhul Hijjah and Eid-ul Adha.
- New Islamic year.
- Ashoora.
- Christmas and Easter.
- Bonfire night.
- Halloween.

6. Strategies we are currently employing that can be enhanced further

We already have many things in place that simply need to be “enhanced” so that there is wider benefit and we meet the objectives set out in this policy. Teachers thus do **not** need to take out special time / preparation, rather you simply need to **build upon and extend** the many things we already have in place.

Some of these are:

1. Assemblies.
2. Ilm2Amal activities.
3. Yearly enrichment activities.
4. Reminders from management to cover various topics.
5. Seasonal issues (refer to the earlier section on this).
6. Tarbiyah Circles (from March 2019). These have been specifically introduced to discuss, debate and cover important issues but in an informal non-classroom based environment. We expect all our teachers to support these Tarbiyah Circles. Refer to the next section on this.

7. Tarbiyah Circles

From March 2019 we have started our first “Tarbiyah Session” for boys and girls aged 10+. The aim is “soft Tarbiyah”, with a session every 8-10 weeks (or at least 3 times a year). We have received very positive feedback from pupils, who have clearly enjoyed these sessions.

Our teachers will lead on this, and as this develops, we also hope to invite external speakers and extend the content.

8. Emotional well-being of our children

Just as we want our children to love their Deen, we must also be conscious of their emotional well-being. As children get older, there will inevitably be various rivalries and clashes, sometimes leading to conflict. It is important we as teachers recognize these challenges and follow the relevant policies that are in place.

In addition to behaviour management / anti-bullying policies, the following also needs to be taken into consideration:

1. As part of our “holistic” approach, teachers must be vigilant at all times and “identify” any signs of bullying and harassment.
2. Periodically give messages of reassurance to your pupils and strongly emphasise the concept of “Ummah” and “brotherhood”.
3. Explain that bullying and harassment is something that we will not tolerate.
4. Explain the consequences of bullying and harassment and how it affects the lives of the victims.
5. Our children must be confident in reporting any bullying / abuse that happens outside Madrasah. They must regard their teachers as compassionate individuals, who genuinely care

about the welfare of every child. On the other hand, teachers must be “friendly but not a friend”.

9. Current Affairs

Creating an awareness and understanding of issues relating to Islam and Muslims is a core objective of this policy. It is thus very important we discuss current affairs with our older pupils, and even with those who are younger as well (keeping in mind age-related issues and other related sensitivities).

Issues that affect Islam and Muslims must be discussed, debated and solutions, guidance and advice provided to our children. Only then will they be confident members of society who will stand up to and challenge racism, bigotry, discrimination, Islamophobia etc.

There are several reasons for this, including:

- a) We have a world-wide “hostile” media that is constantly broadcasting negative messages about Islam and Muslims.
- b) We also have mainstream politicians who are making extremely irresponsible and inflammatory comments about Islam and Muslims.
- c) We also have “fringe” organisations who claim to represent Muslims, and whose views and principles differ wildly from mainstream Muslims.
- d) There is also the rise of right-wing extremism.

Refer to the appendix for a sample case study on Current Affairs.

10. Conclusions

- a) The aim of this policy is to help our children via our Maktab. The Maktab is a very important institute and has the potential to play a very important role in the lives of our children. It must not be simply regarded as “Qur’an and Islamic Knowledge Classes”.
- b) Our children need to genuinely understand, appreciate and love their Deen.
- c) This policy is there to help facilitate this and provide some broad guidelines.

We pray to Allah that he guides us in our actions and safeguards our Iman and the Iman of our children and future generations. Ameen.

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Note: Feel free to use this to shape and formulate your own policy for your Maktab. However, it is important to appreciate that simply “rolling out” a similar policy will not achieve the desired results, rather there needs to be an induction, introduction and a “buy in” from teachers via meetings, insets, informal conversations etc. There also needs to be support and guidance from the “top”.

Appendix

Case study

The unfortunate and deadly terror attack that unfolded on Friday 15th March 2019 in Christchurch, New Zealand is something that has affected Muslims worldwide. It has shocked our innocent children, many who are waking up to the hostility out there against Islam and Muslims.

As an example, I was surprised at the “ignorance” of several of our pupils aged 13-16. They knew “something had happened” to Muslims and many had been killed, but that was about it. This also highlighted the serious flaw on the side of parents, who must have discussions relating to such a tragedy that affects us in the UK as well.

I personally discussed the Christchurch (New Zealand) tragedy with our older pupils. Some of the issues we discussed are:

1. Understanding the term Islamophobia.
2. Appreciating the key factors that promote Islamophobia.
3. Understanding how politicians, senior figures, important personalities can spread hatred of Islam and Muslims through their irresponsible comments.
4. The role of the Media.
5. The term “tabloid” and “right wing press” with examples.
6. How media fuels anti-Islamic sentiments (with examples from the last 24 months).
7. What Muslims can do to combat Islamophobia.
8. The importance of civic engagement.
9. Writing to your local MP / lobbying politicians and decision makers.
10. Making complaints about unfair and biased media coverage.
11. 30 minutes of “armchair activism” makes a huge difference.
12. Always challenge Islamophobia.
13. Educating yourself and keeping up to date with current affairs. Do not waste time on electronic games and Social Media chit chat.
14. Using Social Media effectively to combat Islamophobia.

The above takes time and was discussed over 3 half hour sessions (so mainstream education is not disrupted). The appreciation shown by pupils, and the high level of interest, interaction, debates and engagement clearly demonstrated the need for this.