



Arabic students in English schools

Information for Schools

Children & Young People's Services



What's the difference between a refugee and an asylum seeker?

A refugee is a person who:

- owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.'

Article 1, 1951 Convention relating to the status of Refugees

- A refugee has the same rights as a British citizen.
- The majority of refugees assisted under the Humanitarian scheme have been forced to leave Syria.
- A small number of families are being supported under the Vulnerable Children's Scheme, which aims to support children and their families forced to flee their homes from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).
- Refugees are taken from border camps and nations neighbouring Syria, including Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey, to avoid refugees being encouraged to make the dangerous journey to Europe by sea.

An asylum seeker is:

- someone who has applied for asylum and is waiting for a decision as to whether or not they are a refugee. In other words, in the UK an asylum seeker is someone who has asked the Government for refugee status and is waiting to hear the outcome of their application.

Many refugees arriving in County Durham are of Syrian descent. Syria is bordered by Turkey, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea. Languages spoken in Syria include: Arabic, Aramaic, Armenian, Kurdish and Turkman.



Education

In Syria primary education is mandatory until year 9. Secondary school begins at year nine (age thirteen) and concludes with the Baccalaureate certificate. Most schools are run by the state, which is mostly based on the French educational system, which was brought about during the French Mandate in Syria in the first half of the 19th century. All pre-university education is free.



Higher education in Syria depends on the marks achieved in the Baccalaureate.

Prior to the recent conflict, Syria had a highly developed tertiary and secondary education system.

Prominent Universities in Syria include Damascus University, Aleppo University, Baa'th University in Homs and Hama, Tishreen University in Latakia.



There is significant social pressure on children to excel in their education so they can work in respected, well-paid positions and provide for their family.

Social life in Syria

- In social interactions, people speak loudly (Raising one's voice is not immediately interpreted as aggressive in Syria. Speaking loudly and with passion shows one's seriousness and investment in a matter).
- Greetings hold great social significance. Hand shaking is the commonest greeting. In some conservative communities in Syria, shaking hands with the other sex is considered inappropriate. In these communities, the men greet women by placing their hand on their chest and saying hello.
- Informal greetings between people of the same gender may involve a hug, or two kisses on each cheek between males or females.
- The centre of commercial activity in each town or city is the "souk". Souks are not just commercial centres but gathering places as well, and haggling is a necessary part of social interactions. Shopping centres and supermarkets exist in the capital and in big cities.



Pork and pork by-products

- Pork and pork by-products (fat, gelatine and stock) are prohibited in Islam. Teachers should be careful not to give Muslim children sweets that consists of pork gelatine like Haribo or Marshmallow products. There are alternatives available (vegetarian) which do not contain pork gelatine.



Halal Food

- Halal food is food that is allowed to be consumed under Islamic dietary guidelines.
- Some school catering companies may offer halal products, however, if unavailable, Muslim children would usually be permitted to eat vegetarian or fish options.



Vaccinations

Some vaccines contain porcine gelatine. Muslim parents should be aware of this to enable them to make an informed choice when giving permission for vaccinations.

- In the UK routine immunisation programme, there are three vaccines that contain porcine gelatine:
 - Fluenz Tetra®- the nasal spray vaccine that protects children against flu.
 - MMR VaxPro®- a vaccine that protects against measles, mumps and rubella.
 - Zostavax®- the vaccine that protects older adults against shingles.

Are there any suitable alternatives to these vaccines?

- MMR- in the UK we have two types of MMR vaccine – MMR VaxPro® and Priorix®. Priorix® does not contain gelatine and is as safe and effective as MMR VaxPro®.
- Shingles- Zostavax® is the only shingles vaccine currently available worldwide.
- Fluenz Tetra® - There are injectable flu vaccines that do not contain pork gelatine, but these are expected to be less effective than Fluenz Tetra in children. They may also do less to reduce the spread of flu in the community. These vaccines are only recommended as part of the programme for children and adults who are at high risk of the complications of flu.

Using toilets in school

Primary children might need help when they start using toilets in school due to the absence of a fresh water source in the toilet seat or next to it e.g. bidet. Parents are advised to teach their children how to use toilet paper before their child starts school.



PE and changing clothes

Some students, especially girls, might feel uncomfortable changing clothes in the same room as other pupils for PE.

Hijab and modesty

Some Muslim girls in secondary school wear the Hijab. In Islam, girls may start to wear the Hijab when they reach puberty. Parents may encourage their daughters to wear it, although this is personal choice.

Muslim girls might choose to wear a more modest kind of uniform and PE kit e.g. trousers and long sleeve tops and leggings instead of shorts for PE.



Christmas, Easter, religious festivals

The EAL team discuss the National Curriculum with parents during the initial parental interview. Parents are asked to consent to their children participating in religious festivals / celebrations which take place in school. Often parents are happy for their children to take part in festivities, although they may well request children do not participate in any forms of worship. The EAL Team will ensure school staff are aware of parental preferences regarding possible withdrawal from festivities.

RE (Religious Education)

Families might ask that their child is withdrawn from RE lessons. They might have concerns about content of the RE provided. The Education Act 1996 states that an Agreed Syllabus must reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. It must be non-denominational and must not be designed to convert pupils or to urge a particular religion or religious belief on pupils. Teaching about denominations is not prohibited.

Parents have the right to choose whether or not to withdraw their child from RE without influence from the school, although a school should ensure parents or carers are informed of this right and are aware of the educational objectives and content of the RE syllabus. In this way, parents can make an informed decision. [http://](http://www.muslimparents.org.uk/religious-education-re/)

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See: Education Acts of 1996 and School Standards and Framework Act 1998.



Sex and Relationship Education (SRE)

- Some parents might ask that their child is withdrawn from SRE lessons. Schools should work in partnership with parents, consulting them regularly on the content of sex and relationship education programmes.
- Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of the sex and relationship education provided at school except for those parts included in the statutory National Curriculum. Schools should make alternative arrangements in such cases. The DfE will offer schools a standard pack of information for parents who withdraw their children from sex and relationship education.
- All schools must have an up-to-date Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) policy. The policy must include information about parents' right to withdraw their child from Sex and Relationship Education (SRE).
- SRE is usually delivered through Personal, Social and Health Education (PHSE).



- The Department for Education recommends that it is essential that governing bodies involve parents in developing and reviewing their policies. This will ensure that they reflect parents' wishes and the culture of the community the school serves.

Praying

Muslims pray 5 times a day

- Fajr - Before sunrise
- Duhr - After midday
- Asr - Mid-afternoon
- Maghrib - Just after sunset
- Isha-night

Pupils who have reached puberty (usually secondary school) may wish to pray the second prayer in school, during the lunch break. The prayer usually takes about 3 minutes.

The students will need a quiet and clean place to pray.



Ramadan and Fasting

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar (the date changes each year). During Ramadan, strict fasting is observed from dawn to sunset.

Muslim children start to fast when they reach puberty, although they might start earlier by fasting for a few hours each day. It is not likely that primary school children will fast, however some young children wish to join in.

Fasting children will not eat lunch during the month of Ramadan.

Millions of Muslims around the world celebrate Ramadan by performing a night prayer, gathering to break the fast at sunset (Iftar) and give to charities.



Feasts and celebrations in the Arab world

Muslims from around the world celebrate Eid al Fitr (feast of breaking the fast) It is an important religious holiday celebrated by Muslims worldwide that marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting.

Eid starts with a small snack followed by Eid prayers in congregation attended by men, women, and children in which the sermon reminds Muslims of the virtues and good deeds they should do unto others, even strangers, during Eid and throughout the year. Afterwards, neighbours, friends, and relatives start greeting one another. The most common greeting is "Eid Mubarak" (Blessed Eid).



Eid al Fitr

Family visits are considered a must on the first day of Eid, followed by two days to enjoy going to parks, cinemas, theatres or the beach.

Children are normally given new clothes to wear throughout Eid. Also, women (particularly mothers, wives, sisters and daughters) are commonly given special gifts by their loved ones. It is customary for children to also receive an *Eid-ey-yah* from their adult relatives. This is a small sum of money which is spent on all their activities throughout Eid.

Family gatherings involve cooking and eating all kinds of traditional food. One food item especially associated with Eid al-Fitr are Ma-a-moul, which are cookies filled with nuts and covered with powdered sugar.



Eid al Adha

Eid al Adha is a public holiday in Muslim countries. It occurs 2 months and 10 days after Eid al-Fitr which commemorates the end of 'Hajj' (Pilgrimage to Mecca – in Saudi Arabia)

During Eid al Adha, Muslims all over the world who can afford it, sacrifice a sheep (sometimes a goat or even a cow) as a reminder of Ibrahim's obedience to Allah. In Britain, the animal must be killed at a slaughterhouse.

The meat is shared amongst family, friends and the poor, who each get a third share.

Eid al Adha usually starts with Muslims going to the Mosque dressed in their best clothes for prayers, thanking Allah for all the blessings they have received. It is also a time to visit family and friends as well as offering presents.

At Eid, it is obligatory to give a set amount of money to charity to be used to help poor people buy new clothes and food so they can celebrate too.



Hajj

Hajj refers to a Muslim's pilgrimage to Mecca and is one of the five pillars of Islam. Muslims are expected to undertake this pilgrimage to the sacred city of Islam at least once in his or her lifetime if possible.



For further information contact:

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