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Muslims and the state education system: England c.1965-1997

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PhD Thesis

2018

I declare that this thesis is all my own work

.....

Abstract

This thesis considers Muslim-state relations over education in the mid-to-late twentieth century. It examines the period from the mid-1960s – the point when Muslim children first arrived in English schools in significant numbers – until the fall of the Conservative government in 1997.

Existing accounts of the history of England's Muslims generally agree that education was a crucial area of early interaction between Muslims and the state. They also tend to situate the experiences of Muslims in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s in the context of Britain's developing racial diversity, arguing that the religious identity of Muslims was not acknowledged until the end of the 1980s. The consequent responses of the state to Muslim educational needs have been characterised as ad hoc and disorganised, with the possibility of successful relations undermined by the racial and secular focus of multiculturalism, and a disorganised and disinterested Muslim "community".

This thesis challenges key aspects of this narrative. It offers a new chronology and interpretation which take into account the role and significance of the long history of conservative pluralism in the responses of the British state to diversity, arguing that this can help to explain why some Muslim educational needs were being accommodated from the 1960s onwards. It then demonstrates that the dismantling of the educational framework which underpinned the pluralist approach by the Conservative government of the 1980s adversely affected the ability of Muslims to interact with the state. It argues that the shifting education philosophies of the 1980s, developing conceptions of Britain as a country that was both secular and Judaeo-Christian, and the emergence of Islamophobic attitudes exacerbated the difficulties brought about by the attack on the pluralist framework. It concludes that the effect of this was that the possibilities of a fruitful Muslim-state relationship over education decreased rather than increased towards the end of the twentieth century.

List of abbreviations

AMA – Association of Metropolitan Authorities	LMA – London Metropolitan Archives
APS – Assisted Places Scheme	LMS – Local Management of Schools
BLA – Brent Local Archives	MET – Muslim Educational Trust
BLSL – Bradford Local Studies Library	MPA – Muslim Parents’ Association
CFM – Bradford Council for Mosques	NA – National Archives
CRC – Community Relations Council	RE – Religious Education
CRE – Commission for Racial Equality	RRAG – Race Relations Advisory Group
CTC – City Technology College	SACRE – Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
DES – Department for Education and Science	TES – <i>Times Educational Supplement</i>
DfE – Department for Education	TVEI – Technical and Vocational Education Initiative
ERA – Education Reform Act 1988	UMO – Union of Muslim Organisations of the UK and Eire
ERB – Education Reform Bill	WYAS – West Yorkshire Archive Service
GM – Grant Maintained	YCCR – Yorkshire Committee for Community Relations
ILEA – Inner London Education Authority	
IMF – International Monetary Fund	
IWA – Indian Workers’ Association	
LAM – Local Authority Memorandum	
LEA – Local Education Authority	

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Introduction

The focus of this thesis will be the interaction of Muslims and the state over education in England¹ in the late twentieth century. It takes as its starting point the mid-1960s. This was the time by which Muslim children, many of them the children of immigrants who arrived in the two decades following the end of the Second World War, had begun appearing in schools in England in sufficient numbers to be noticed, and for their expression of needs different to those of the majority to come to the attention of teachers, local authorities, and at times, central government. Their presence in schools raised questions of how Muslim children and parents were expressing their needs, how the various representatives of the state should respond to those needs, and whether there was space within the educational framework for their accommodation. Reflecting on the situation in Bradford, Clement Richardson wrote in his 1976 work *A Geography of Bradford* that for second generation immigrants in the city – of whom the vast majority were Muslim – “education....constitutes the principal ‘leak’ in an otherwise closed system”.² That is to say that education was the area over which Bradford’s immigrants – whose existence was previously quite isolated from the rest of the city’s population – began interacting with the state and wider society. As an early point of contact between Muslims and the state, education is therefore a significant element in the history of England’s Muslim population. It is the ‘leak’ identified by Richardson, and the questions which arise from the period of Muslim-state interactions that it ushered in, that are at the heart of this thesis.

¹ Responsibility for education policy and provision are devolved to the constituent countries of the United Kingdom. This thesis will therefore focus on the educational situation in England. However, other policies and research which affected or related to Muslims in England often treated Britain or the United Kingdom as a whole. Where relevant or necessary, therefore, discussions in the thesis that do not specifically refer to education policy may refer to either Britain or the United Kingdom, rather than England.

² Clement Richardson, *A Geography of Bradford* (Bradford: University of Bradford, 1976), p.176.

1) Britain's Muslims

A useful starting point for a study of Muslims in the education system in England is to address the question of who the Muslim children were, and what brought them to England's schools in significant numbers by the mid-1960s.

Britain's Muslim population grew considerably in the second half of the twentieth century; however for much of that period there was uncertainty over its exact size. The 2001 census, which was the first to include a question on religion since the Muslim population in Britain had grown, indicated that at the beginning of the twenty-first century there were 1.6 million Muslims in the United Kingdom, making up 2.6 per cent of the population. In a 2006 article, Ceri Peach attempted to use this data to back-project the size of the Muslim population. Describing his results as "indicative rather than precise", he suggested that there were 21,000 Muslims in the UK in 1951, 55,000 in 1961, a quarter of a million in 1971, almost 600,000 in 1981, just under a million in 1991 and 1.6 million in 2001.³ It is important to highlight, however, that these figures were only available after the 2001 census. Prior to this, while there was general agreement that the Muslim population of the UK was growing, methods of working out its size were complex and often imprecise, meaning that there were considerable differences of opinion about how fast it was growing, and about its size at various points.

The vast majority of Britain's Muslim population in the second half of the twentieth century arrived as part of a larger process of migration which occurred in the aftermath of the Second World War and the end of empire. The 1948 British Nationality Act enabled British subjects from former colonies to enter Britain without restriction and workers soon began to arrive in their masses from the West Indies and South Asia. Around 500,000 arrived between

³ Ceri Peach, 'Muslims in the 2001 Census of England and Wales: Gender and Economic Disadvantage', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 29.4 (2006), 629–655 (p.637).

1948 and 1962 to meet the demand for labour created by the expansion of production in the British economy.⁴ Amongst these immigrants were a sizeable number of Muslims who arrived from the Indian subcontinent, many of whom were prompted to migrate by the Partition of India in 1947 and by displacement resulting from the building of the Mangla Dam in 1960.⁵ It was amongst these migrants, their families, and the second and third generations that followed that the majority of Britain's Muslim population in the late twentieth century could be found: until the early 1980s, South Asians made up 80 per cent of Britain's Muslim population,⁶ falling to around two thirds by 2001. The rest of the Muslim population during this period was diverse, including Muslims from Turkish Cyprus,⁷ East Africa and parts of North Africa and the Middle East⁸ who arrived in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as a small but not unimportant group of converts.⁹

These early migrants tended to be men who had travelled alone to Britain to earn money which would be sent back to their families to buy land, build houses and advance their social status.¹⁰ They intended to return to live in their homeland after they had earned enough, as Muhammad Anwar explored in his 1979 *The Myth of Return: Pakistanis in Britain*.¹¹ However, this intention of impermanence did not last for long, and a four-phase pattern of migration developed which was described by Philip Lewis as follows:

⁴ Alison Shaw, *A Pakistani Community in Britain* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p.25; Serena Hussain, *Muslims on the Map: A National Survey of Social Trends in Britain* (London: IB Tauris, 2008), p.24; Randall A. Hansen, 'The Politics of Citizenship in 1940s Britain: The British Nationality Act', *20th Century British History*, 10.1 (1999), 67–95 (p.68); Humayun Ansari, *The Infidel within: Muslims in Britain since 1800* (London: C Hurst, 2004), p.145.

⁵ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.153; Muhammad Anwar, *The Myth of Return: Pakistanis in Britain* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1979), p.24.

⁶ Philip Lewis, *Young, British and Muslim* (London: Continuum, 2007), p.19.

⁷ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.154.

⁸ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.160.

⁹ Adlin Adnan, *New Muslims in Britain* (London: Ta-Ha & Muslim College, 1999).

¹⁰ Anwar, *The Myth of Return*, p.21; Shaw.

¹¹ Anwar, *The Myth of Return*.

first the pioneers, then what is known as ‘chain migration’ of generally unskilled male workers, followed by the migration of wives and children and finally the emergence of a British-born generation.¹²

The “myth of return” was sustained only during the first two phases of migration, and did not survive family reunion. This phase was precipitated by the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, the first legal restriction on immigration in the post-war period, which placed heavy restrictions on primary immigration, but did not restrict the immigration of the dependants of those already in Britain.¹³ An effect of this was to significantly reduce the temporary migration of single male workers, and to encourage family reunion and permanent settlement.¹⁴ Annual primary migration had dropped to the low thousands by the late 1960s, but actual immigration numbers remained high due to the ongoing migration of dependants.¹⁵ Different groups followed the reunion and settlement phases of this pattern at different times: Indians and Pakistanis from 1965-74 and then Bangladeshis at the start of the 1980s.¹⁶ The 1962 Act was followed by further restrictive legislation on those entering Britain from the New Commonwealth in the form of the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act and then the 1971 Immigration Act after which, as Randall Hansen observed, “almost all privileges once enjoyed by Commonwealth citizens” were brought to an end.¹⁷ A

¹² Philip Lewis, *Islamic Britain: Religion, Politics and Identity among British Muslims: Bradford in the 1990s* (London: IB Tauris, 1994), p.17.

¹³ Muhammad Anwar, *Race and Politics: Ethnic Minorities and the British Political System* (London: Tavistock, 1986), p.8.

¹⁴ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.159.

¹⁵ Callum Williams, ‘Patriality, Work Permits and the European Economic Community: The Introduction of the 1971 Immigration Act’, *Contemporary British History*, 29.4 (2015), 508–38 (pp.510–12).

¹⁶ David Owen, ‘Size, Structure and Growth of the Ethnic Minority Populations’, in *Ethnicity in the 1991 Census. Vol. 1, Demographic Characteristics of the Ethnic Minority Populations*, ed. by D. Coleman and J. Salt (London: HMSO, 1996), pp.80–123 (p.110); Lewis, *Young, British and Muslim*, p.18; *Ethnicity in the 1991 Census. Vol.2, The Ethnic Minority Populations of Great Britain*, ed. by Ceri Peach (London: HMSO, 1996), p.9.

¹⁷ Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Postwar Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.16.

decade later came the final Act in the raft of immigration legislation, the 1981 British Nationality Act, which effectively ended Commonwealth migration.¹⁸

The process of arrival and settlement of Britain's Muslim population is pertinent to the issues raised in this thesis. Firstly, a side effect of chain migration and then family reunion was that Muslims tended to settle and become concentrated in the urban areas where work was initially available.¹⁹ Such concentration appears to have persisted: the 2001 census revealed that 70 per cent of British Muslims lived in Greater London, Greater Manchester, the West Midlands and West Yorkshire's metropolitan counties.²⁰ This meant that England's Muslim population was not evenly distributed, and that issues pertaining to Muslim children in schools tended to arise disproportionately in those areas with sizeable Muslim populations. Secondly, as Alison Shaw argued in her study of Oxford's Pakistani community, when the single male migrants first arrived, language and cultural barriers made interaction with state and society very difficult, and the government "made no concessions to accommodating and therefore meeting the needs of the immigrants once they were here", causing them to turn inward to fellow migrants for help.²¹ In the early stages of their arrival and settlement, therefore, there was very limited, if any, interaction between Muslim immigrants and the state.

The process of family reunification and permanent settlement altered this dynamic, bringing interaction with society and the state over needs such as planning permission for the building of mosques, the creation of halal slaughterhouses and the provision of halal meat,

¹⁸ Sonya O. Rose, 'Who Are We Now? Writing the Post-War Nation, 1948-2001', in *Race, Nation and Empire: Making Histories, 1750 to the Present*, ed. by Catherine Hall and Keith McClelland (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), pp. 154–74 (pp.159–60).

¹⁹ Muhammad Mashuq Ally, *The Growth and Organization of the Muslim Community in Britain* (Birmingham: Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Selly Oak Colleges, 1979), p.5; Muhammad Anwar, *Muslims in Britain: 1991 Census and Other Statistical Sources* (Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, 1993), pp.8–9.

²⁰ Ceri Peach, 'Muslims in the 2001 Census of England and Wales: Gender and Economic Disadvantage', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 29.4 (2006), 629–655 (p.650).

²¹ Shaw, *A Pakistani Community in Britain*, p.138.

burial in accordance with Islamic law, the provision of prayer facilities, and the accommodation of the religious and cultural needs of Muslim children in schools over issues such as religious education, school uniform, diet, prayer and curriculum.²² The desire to have such needs accommodated prompted Muslims to seek contact with, and the assistance of, both state and society. This was very clear in the case of the needs of Muslim school children, which came to the fore shortly after the process of family reunification began to occur *en masse*, as Muslim children began attending state schools in significant numbers. The initial contacts between Muslims, schools and LEAs raised questions of how the educational framework would accommodate the needs of Muslim children. This led to further debates over how state and society would accommodate difference more generally in a population that had recently, and in some places very quickly, diversified.

2) *Questions of Identity: A Note on Sources*

When Muslims first began to arrive in post-war Britain, they were embedded within a large and diverse immigrant population. This has had an impact on how that population as a whole, and Muslims in particular, have been understood and analysed: until at least the early 1980s, there was very little in the way of literature which examined Muslims as a discrete group. Rather, the focus of literature in this period was on what was seen to be the most prominent distinguishing feature of the immigrant population: colour. In 2004 Tariq Modood wrote that “racial equality discourse and politics was dominated by the idea that the prevailing post-war issue was ‘colour-racism’”.²³ Modood’s voice has been important in

²² Jørgen S. Nielsen, *Muslims in Europe: An Overview*. (Birmingham: Selly Oaks College Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, 1981); Muhammad Anwar, *Young Muslims in a Multi-Cultural Society: Their Educational Needs and Policy Implications: The British Case* (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1982); Mustafa Yusuf McDermott and Muhammad Manazir Ahsan, *The Muslim Guide: For Teachers, Employers, Community and Social Administrators in Britain* (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1980).

²³ Tariq Modood, ‘Multiculturalism, Muslims and the British State’, in *Religion: Empirical Studies - A Collection to Mark the 50th Anniversary of the British Association for the Study of Religions*, 2004, pp. 245–58 (p.246).

drawing attention to the ways in which the focus on racial identity and race relations affected Asians and Muslims. He highlighted the tendency to refer to the newly- arrived immigrant population, West Indians and South Asians alike, as “black”.²⁴ In a 1988 article in *New Community*, he criticised the use of the word “black” to “describe all those who because of their race are unfavourably treated in British society”, arguing that this identification was largely imposed upon the Asian community.²⁵ A couple of years later, writing in response to the Rushdie Affair of 1989, he developed this theme, arguing that a failure of understanding arose from the fact that “contemporary anti-racism in Britain defines people in terms of their colour; Muslims –suffering all the problems that anti-racists identify – hardly ever think of themselves in terms of their colour”.²⁶ He returned to this subject in some depth again in a 1994 article ‘Political Blackness and British Asians’ in which he identified the beginnings of a shift away from the tendency to use the word “black” to describe Asians – including the Commission for Racial Equality’s 1988 recommendation that it no longer be used in ethnic monitoring for Asians – but also the persistence of this meaning of the term in academic writing.²⁷ He very clearly stated in this article that “whatever strengths and flaws, good and harm, there may be in the hegemony of the concept of ‘black’, it has at least one critically undesirable aspect: it harms British Asians”.²⁸

In addition to the use of the word “black”, a tendency to focus on race and ethnicity was also noted in a 2000 University of Derby report which observed that “public policy throughout Britain has largely engaged with issues arising from religious plurality in a way

²⁴ Tariq Modood, *Changing ethnic identities*. (Policy Studies Institute, 1994), pp. 7–8; Tariq Modood, ‘Muslim Identity: Social Reality or Political Project?’, in *Muslim Identity: Real or Imagined*, by John Rex and Tariq Modood (Birmingham: Selly Oaks Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, 1994) p.7.

²⁵ Tariq Modood, ‘“Black”, Racial Equality and Asian Identity’, *New Community*, 14.3 (1988), 397–404 (p.397).

²⁶ Tariq Modood, ‘Muslims, Race and Equality in Britain: Some Post-Rushdie Affair Reflections’, *Third Text*, 4.11 (1990), 127–34 (p.128).

²⁷ Tariq Modood, ‘Political Blackness and British Asians’, *Sociology*, 28.4 (1994), 859–876 (p.860).

²⁸ Modood, ‘Political Blackness and British Asians’, p.862.

characterised by responses to “racial” or ethnic diversity” meaning that approaches to plurality have “not always clearly identified or taken account of the issues arising from specifically religious rather than broadly ethnic, and cultural plurality”.²⁹ Writing in 2002, Ansari addressed the impact of this on British Muslims, arguing that they “have not been seen – until recently – by the majority of the population and the institutions of the wider society, primarily as a religious minority, but mainly in terms of their cultural and ethnic background”.³⁰

The racial focus of the response of state and society to the new immigrant population is clear in much of the literature on its arrival. The role of government in defining that population in terms of its colour was set out very clearly in Bob Carter *et al.*'s 1996 article ‘Immigration policy and the racialization of migrant labour: the construction of national identities in the USA and Britain’.³¹ It was also emphasised in Kathleen Paul’s 1997 work *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Post-War Era*, which argued that the government’s “campaign” in the 1950s “revolved around the reconstruction of British subjects as immigrants, the transformation of immigrants into “coloureds,” and the problematization of ‘coloured immigration’.”³² In a 1997 article “‘Dark Strangers’ in Our Midst: Discourses of Race and Nation in Britain 1947-63’, Chris Waters explored the tendency in early responses to the new immigrant population to focus on race. He argued that the arrival of a large immigrant population occurred “against the backdrop of post-war imperial decline”, one effect of which was that “questions of race became central to

²⁹ Paul Weller and others, *Religious Discrimination in England and Wales: Interim Report* (Derby: University of Derby, School of Education and Social Science, Religious Resource and Research Centre, 2000), p.15.

³⁰ Humayun Ansari, *Muslims in Britain* (London: Minority Rights Group International, 2002), p.12.

³¹ Bob Carter, Marci Green, and Rick Halpern, ‘Immigration Policy and Racialization of Migrant Labour: The Construction of National Identities in the USA and Britain’, *Ethnic & Racial Studies*, 19.1 (1996), 135-57.

³² Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Postwar Era*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), p.xiii.

questions of national belonging”.³³ He stated that the “large-scale migration of persons of color to Britain in the 1950s led to the emergence of race relations as a ‘social problem’, now addressed by experts who established the subject as a formal field of academic enquiry”.³⁴ Sonya O. Rose has highlighted the significance of the development of race relations legislation alongside immigration legislation in emphasising race as an identifying feature of the new population.³⁵ Jordanna Bailkin, in her 2012 book *The Afterlife of Empire* has commented on the tendency also to separate the history of post-war Britain from that of the post-imperial world, rather than exploring how they interacted and form part of the same history. Her book seeks to redress this, looking at cultural aspects of decolonization and of immigrant populations in Britain.³⁶ What emerged from these accounts, and even those that diverged from a focus on the role of the government,³⁷ was the fact that responses to the new immigrant population tended to focus on colour and race.

There is evidence of a focus on racial identity and race relations in both policy and literature in the decades following the end of the Second World War. A series of studies focusing on the racial discrimination and disadvantage suffered by Britain’s non-white population emerged from the late 1960s onwards.³⁸ In his work *A Tolerant Country?: Immigrants, refugees and minorities in Britain*, Colin Holmes drew attention to a lack of interest in the lives of immigrants, commenting that “[n]o attempt is made to recover the full range of their

³³ Chris Waters, ““Dark Strangers” in Our Midst: Discourses of Race and Nation in Britain, 1947-1963’, *Journal of British Studies*, 36.2 (1997), 207–38 (p.208).

³⁴ Waters, ““Dark Strangers” in Our Midst”, p.217.

³⁵ Rose, ‘Who are we now’, p.161.

³⁶ Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, (Berkeley: Global, Area and International Archive University of California Press, 2012

³⁷ Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Postwar Britain*, p.11.

³⁸ William Wentworth Daniel, *Racial discrimination in England. Based on the PEP report*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968); David Eversley, *The Dependants of the Coloured Commonwealth Population of England and Wales*. (Institute of Race Relations, 1969); David John Smith, *The Facts of Racial Disadvantage: A National Survey*, (London: PEP, 1976); Colin Brown, *Black and White Britain: The Third PSI Survey* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1984).

recent past: the enquiry concentrates on whether or not they have been tolerated".³⁹ In her 1988 study of Muslims in Birmingham, Danièle Joly made a similar point, suggesting that the focus on skin colour and race, and the associated lack of interest in culture and religion, may have been linked to the "myth of return" – as long as the migrants were not expected to stay for good, the British people were not interested in their religion or culture.⁴⁰ Once family reunion was underway and the Muslim presence in Britain began to seem more permanent, there did seem to be an increase in interest in their background culture. Some ethnographic and anthropological studies began examining particular ethnic or national groups in some detail, investigating the lives and cultures of immigrants and ethnic minorities, often in particular towns or regions in Britain.⁴¹ But these studies still focused on the ethnic and national identity of the groups studied, with little or no acknowledgement of their religious identities. Joly and Jørgen S. Nielsen commented in their 1985 annotated bibliography that "much of what is available has been researched and published in such a way that it is not possible to distinguish Muslims from others in the population described".⁴² Their presence within the immigrant population can be ascertained from some of the race studies, and also from some of the ethnographic ones: both David Smith and Colin Brown included "Muslim" as a category in some of their analytical tables⁴³ and Anwar and Shaw both mentioned religion as a facet of the groups they studied.⁴⁴ But, almost without

³⁹ Colin Holmes, *A Tolerant Country?: Immigrants, Refugees and Minorities* (London: Routledge, 2015), p.2.

⁴⁰ Daniele Joly, 'Making a Place for Islam in British Society Muslims in Birmingham', in *The New Islamic Presence in Western Europe*, ed. by Tomas Gerholm and Yngve Georg Lithman, (London: Mansell, 1988), pp. 32–52 (p.32).

⁴¹ Rashmikanth Harilal Desai, *Indian Immigrants in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963); John Rex and Robert Moore, *Race, community and conflict: a study of Sparkbrook* (London: Institute of Race Relations, 1967); Verity Saifullah Khan, *Pakistanis in Bradford: Migration and Social Stress* (England: n.pub., 1976); Shaw; Pnina Werbner, *The Migration Process: Capital, Gifts, and Offerings among British Pakistanis* (New York: Berg, 1990); John Eade, *The Politics of Community: The Bangladeshi Community in East London* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1989).

⁴² Danièle Joly and Jørgen S. Nielsen, *Muslims in Britain: An Annotated Bibliography 1960-1984* (Coventry: Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, 1985), p.1.

⁴³ Smith, *The Facts of Racial Disadvantage*; Colin Brown, *Black and White Britain*.

⁴⁴ Anwar, *The Myth of Return*; Shaw, *A Pakistani Community in Britain*.

exception, religion was treated as secondary to an overriding racial, ethnic or national identity.

A corollary of the focus on racial identity has been that there was relatively scant information available about Britain's Muslims for much of the late twentieth century. The lack of a census question on religious affiliation until 2001 meant that until this point, those wishing to study British Muslims had to either rely on smaller scale or localised studies, or attempt to extrapolate information on Muslims from data based either on ethnicity from the 1991 census, or country of birth and parents' country of birth from the 1981 census.⁴⁵ By the late 1990s, there was a greater tendency in literature and research to address questions of religious identity. The Policy Studies Institute's 1997 Fourth Survey of Ethnic Minorities in Britain acknowledged the role of religion, as well as race, in prejudice and discrimination, arguing that "[r]eligion is perhaps the key area where the minority groups manifest a cultural dynamic which is at least partly at odds with native British trends..."⁴⁶ Also in 1997, the Runnymede Trust's report *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All* raised serious concerns over Islamophobia and the difficulties faced by Muslims as a religious minority group.⁴⁷ But as late as 2000, the Parekh Report *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* stated that "[t]here is still a dearth of straightforward information", arguing that part of the problem was that "no attempt has been made nationally to go beyond the ethnicity categories used in the 1991 Census".⁴⁸

There were, however, some early studies of Britain's Muslims. Eric Butterworth's 1967 *A Muslim Community in Britain* focused only on Bradford's Muslims, but is significant in that it

⁴⁵ Peach, 'Muslims in the 2001 Census of England and Wales'.

⁴⁶ Tariq Modood, Richard Berthoud, and Jane Lakey, *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage - The Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities* (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1998), p.356.

⁴⁷ Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all*. (Runnymede Trust, 1997).

⁴⁸ Runnymede Trust, *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain. The Parekh Report* (London: Profile Books Ltd, 2008), pp.143-4.

treated the Muslim population as a discrete group.⁴⁹ Muhammad Mashuq Ally's *The Growth and Organization of the Muslim Community in Britain*, published by the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian Muslim Relations in Birmingham, was perhaps the earliest attempt to provide an overview of Britain's Muslim population, looking at its origins, demography and organisation.⁵⁰ In their 1980 work *The Muslim Guide – For teachers, employers, community workers and social administrators in Britain*, Mustafa Yusuf McDermott and Muhammad Manazir Ahsan offered a brief overview of the history and composition of the Muslim population of Britain.⁵¹ In 1981, Zaki Badawi published *Islam in Britain*, which looked at the demography and organisation of the population, with discussions of education, press and media and the building of mosques.⁵² Anwar's 1982 *Young Muslims in a Multi-Cultural Society: Their Educational Needs and Policy Implications: The British Case* focused on education, but also offered a background and overview of the Muslim population.⁵³ In his 1986 publication *Muslim Minorities in the World Today*, M. Ali Kettani included a three-page overview of Britain's Muslims, which focused largely on the size of the population.⁵⁴ In 1987, Etan Vlessing wrote a short (5 page) article on 'The Muslims in Britain' in *The Contemporary Review*, which offered a snapshot of some of the challenges facing Britain's Muslims in the mid-1980s.⁵⁵ The existence of such articles indicated a growing interest in Britain's Muslim population. However, all were brief, ranging from just a couple of pages up to around 30 pages, meaning that even by the late 1980s there was no detailed, comprehensive study of Britain's Muslim population.

⁴⁹ Eric Butterworth, *A Muslim Community in Britain*. (n.p.: Church Assembly Board for Social Responsibility by the Church Information Office, 1967).

⁵⁰ Muhammad Mashuq Ally, *The Growth and Organisation of the Muslim Community in Britain*, p.7.

⁵¹ McDermott and Ahsan *The Muslim Guide*.

⁵² Muhammad Aboulkhir Badawi, *Islam in Britain* (London: Ta Ha, 1981).

⁵³ Anwar, *Young Muslims in a Multi-Cultural Society*.

⁵⁴ M. Kettani, *Muslim Minorities in the World Today* (London: Mansell, 1986).

⁵⁵ Etan Vlessing, 'The Muslims in Britain', *The Contemporary Review*; 250:1455 (1987), 189–193.

Two key events of the 1980s drew attention to Britain's Muslim population. The first of these was the Honeyford Affair, which began when Ray Honeyford, the headmaster of Drummond Middle School in Bradford where over 80 per cent of the pupils were Asian, published an article in the *Salisbury Review* arguing that the education of white children could suffer if they were in a minority in school, and criticising Pakistani politics and some of the cultural practices of Pakistanis in Britain.⁵⁶ The publication of the article and the backlash against it led to a lengthy and bitter campaign against Honeyford, which ultimately led to his removal as headmaster.⁵⁷ The Honeyford Affair received significant local and national press coverage, drawing attention to Bradford's – and Britain's – Muslim population. A handful of academic works also appeared in response to the affair, for example Mark Halstead's *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity: An examination of the Honeyford Affair, 1984-5*⁵⁸ and Olivia Foster-Carter's 1987 article 'The Honeyford Affair: Political and Policy Implications'.⁵⁹

The second event, the Rushdie Affair of 1989, is often understood as a turning point in terms of interest in Britain's Muslims and an understanding of them as a distinct population or community. In 2010, Sophie Gilliat-Ray referred to the Affair as "a key turning point" and a "major shift in British Muslim political consciousness and engagement".⁶⁰ It has also been argued that this was the point when the government began listening to Muslims. Nielsen wrote that "[o]n the background of growing Muslim self-confidence and the political reverberations of the Rushdie affair, Muslim organisations have come to be taken more seriously by central government".⁶¹ In 2000, Nielsen wrote that "[i]t was at the end of the

⁵⁶ *The Times*, 12/06/84

⁵⁷ *The Sunday Times*, 15/12/85

⁵⁸ Mark Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity: An Examination of the Honeyford Affair, 1984-85* (London: Falmer, 1988).

⁵⁹ Olivia Foster-Carter, 'The Honeyford Affair: Political and Policy Implications', in *Racial Inequality in Education*, by Barry Troyna (London: Tavistock, 1987), pp. 44–58 (p.44).

⁶⁰ Sophie Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.252.

⁶¹ Jørgen S. Nielsen, 'Muslims in Britain', p.118.

1980s that young people of Muslim background ceased being a collection of individuals but also developed a demographic character”.⁶² Also in 2000, Zafar Khan wrote that “[u]ntil fairly recently the British state was not really sensitive to its Muslim citizens, other than recognising their place within a broad multicultural paradigm”.⁶³ Modood has also spoken of “Muslim assertiveness” that arrived with the advent of the 21st century, with Muslims saying “talk to us as Muslims, treat us as Muslims, not just people who are not white”.⁶⁴

Stephen Vertovec’s 1993 – and therefore post-Rushdie – annotated bibliography commented that since Joly and Nielsen’s 1985 bibliography “the number of writings on the topic [of Britain’s Muslims] have increased almost exponentially”.⁶⁵ While there were certainly more publications, such a statement needs qualification. In 1989, Iqbal Wahhab’s *Muslims in Britain: Profile of a Community* again sought to provide an overview of the Muslim population.⁶⁶ In 1990, Ceri Peach wrote a short article on ‘The Muslim population of Great Britain’ in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, which sought primarily to offer an accurate figure for the size of that population.⁶⁷ Though both mentioned the Rushdie Affair, both were also brief and not markedly different in approach or depth to the studies outlined above which preceded Rushdie. The same is also true of Peach and Günther Glebe’s 1995 ‘Muslim Minorities in Western Europe’ which included a brief section on British Muslims.⁶⁸

⁶² Jørgen S. Nielsen, ‘Muslims in Britain Ethnic Minorities, Community or Ummah?’, in *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada and the United States*, ed. by Harold Coward, John R Hinnells, and Raymond Brady Williams (New York: SUNY Press, 2000), pp. 109-126 (p.117).

⁶³ Zafar Khan, ‘Muslim Presence in Europe: The British Dimension-Identity, Integration and Community Activism’, *Current Sociology*, 48.4 (2000), 29–43 (p.31).

⁶⁴ Tariq Modood, ‘Moderate Secularism, Religion as Identity and Respect for Religion’, *The Political Quarterly*, 81 (2010), 4–14 (p.34).

⁶⁵ Steven Vertovec, *Annotated bibliography of academic publications regarding Islam and Muslims in the United Kingdom, 1985-1992*. (University of Warwick, Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, 1993), p.1.

⁶⁶ Iqbal Wahhab, *Muslims in Britain: profile of a community*. (Runnymede Trust, 1989).

⁶⁷ Ceri Peach, ‘The Muslim Population of Great Britain’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 13.3 (1990), 414–419.

⁶⁸ Ceri Peach and Günther Glebe, ‘Muslim Minorities in Western Europe’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 18.1 (1995), 26–45.

Some longer studies also began to appear at this point, for example Mohammad S. Raza's 1991 *Islam in Britain: Past, Present and Future*⁶⁹, Philip Lewis's 1994 *Islamic Britain: religion, politics and identity among British Muslims: Bradford in the 1990s*⁷⁰ and Joly's *Britannia's Crescent: Making a Place for Muslims in British Society*⁷¹, which built upon her 1988 study of Muslims in Birmingham.⁷² The latter two books followed a format whereby they offered an overview of Britain's Muslim population, and then presented an in-depth study of Muslims in a particular city or area. The same format can be found in Jessica Jacobson's 1998 *Islam in Transition: Religion and Identity among British Pakistani Youth* which looked at Muslims in Waltham Forest.⁷³

It was not until Humayun Ansari published *The Infidel Within: Muslims in Britain since 1800* in 2004 that a comprehensive historical study of Britain's Muslims appeared. Though Ansari did not draw on data from the 2001 census for this work its publication coincided with and ushered in a series of other works which did. In 2004, Seddon, Hussain and Malik published *British Muslims Between Assimilation and Segregation: Historical, Legal and Social Realities*.⁷⁴ In 2006, Peach published two articles profiling British Muslims based on census data, one which focused on gender and economic disadvantage⁷⁵ and one which looked specifically at London.⁷⁶ Lewis's 2007 *Young British and Muslim*⁷⁷, Serena Hussain's 2008

⁶⁹ Mohammad S. Raza, *Islam in Britain: Past, Present and the Future* (Leicester: Volcano, 1991).

⁷⁰ Lewis, *Islamic Britain*.

⁷¹ Danièle Joly, *Britannia's Crescent: Making a Place for Muslims in British Society* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995).

⁷² Danièle Joly, *Britannia's Crescent*

⁷³ Jessica Jacobson, *Islam in Transition: Religion and Identity among British Pakistani Youth* (London: Routledge, 1998).

⁷⁴ Mohammed Sidiq Seddon, Dilwar Hussain, and Nadeem Malik, *British Muslims between Assimilation and Segregation: Historical, Legal and Social Realities* (Markfield: Islamic Foundation, 2004).

⁷⁵ Peach, 'Muslims in the 2001 Census of England and Wales'.

⁷⁶ Ceri Peach, 'Islam, Ethnicity and South Asian Religions in the London 2001 Census', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 31.3 (2006), 353–370.

⁷⁷ Lewis, *Young, British and Muslim*.

*Muslims on the Map*⁷⁸ and Gilliat-Ray's 2010 *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction*⁷⁹ were all substantive works which have contributed to understanding of the Muslim population of Britain. The most recent detailed study of England's Muslims is Jed Fazakarley's 2017 *Muslim Communities in England, 1962-90: Multiculturalism and Political Identity*.⁸⁰

The outcome of this historiography is that, whilst there have been some detailed studies of Britain's Muslims published in the last couple of decades, such works are still relatively scarce, and therefore knowledge and understanding of British Muslims is at times lacking in both depth and breadth. This is particularly true in the area of education: whilst there has been some research conducted into Muslims in the British education system, there is still much that has not been covered and much work to be done in this field.

3) Education: history and historiography

The arrival of significant numbers of Muslims in schools in England brought with it a range of needs, and questions over how far they could and would be accommodated in the education system. These needs fell into different categories. Some were clearly religious, such as the provision of prayer facilities, withdrawal of pupils from Christian acts of worship and religious education, and time off for religious festivals. These were understood as religious needs both by Muslims and by the state and society. Other needs, whilst viewed as religious by Muslims, were viewed more ambiguously by others, at times being understood as "cultural" needs. This was true of requests relating to the provision of halal meals in schools, concerns over the curriculum clashing with Muslim views in areas such as sex education, music and drama, the separation of boys and girls for swimming lessons, the availability of single sex schooling, and permission for girls to wear suitable clothing for both school

⁷⁸ Hussain, *Muslims on the Map*.

⁷⁹ Gilliat-Ray *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction*.

⁸⁰ Jed Fazakarley, *Muslim Communities in England 1962-90: Multiculturalism and Political Identity* (n.p: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

uniform and PE lessons. There were also concerns over issues such as language, curriculum, racism and underachievement of ethnic minority children.

There is a limited body of literature available that examines how the state education system dealt with Muslims and their needs. As with the literature on Muslims more generally, there are relatively few historical studies which have explored the subject in detail. Again, perhaps the only comprehensive work on the subject is a chapter in Ansari's *The Infidel Within*.

Fazakarley's book also has a chapter on education.⁸¹ There are also a number of sociological and educational works which are of some use in a study of this topic. An examination of this literature reveals a loose consensus on the history of Muslims in English schools in the second half of the twentieth century. At the heart of this consensus is the view that the arrival of Muslims in state schools was understood on the same terms as the arrival of a large immigrant population in Britain more generally: through the lens of race and ethnicity.

There is general agreement that, in the early stages at least, the concern of the state was not the arrival of specifically Muslim children in schools, but rather the arrival of a large number of children of immigrants, some of whom happened to be Muslim. It is often accepted that it was their identification as non-white immigrants which primarily determined the state's response to them. Fazakarley is a dissenting voice in this consensus, arguing that religion was an important element of Muslim "social and political identity" from the point that they arrived in Britain, and that this was "recognized and often given great attention by local and national governments, community relations organisations, trade unions, employers etc".⁸² However, though his work is ostensibly about Muslims in England, his analysis often conflates religious identity, and the needs that have arisen from it, with

⁸¹ Fazakarley, *Muslim Communities in England 1962-90*, pp.39–94.

⁸² Fazakarley, *Muslim Communities in England, 1962-90*, p.7.

national, ethnic and other identities, making it difficult to ascertain answers to questions relating specifically to religious needs from his work.

The state's response during this early phase is usually understood to have been based on assimilationist thinking, with the expectation of considerable adaptation on the part of immigrant children in order to fit in with the majority.⁸³ In his 1987 article 'Understanding Multicultural/Anti-Racist Education for Practice', Carlton Duncan argued that the state was initially slow to respond to the presence of "black" children, and that "[w]hen, at last, any official recognition of the need for some educational response to the black presence in the school eventually came, it took on board an assimilationist philosophy".⁸⁴ In his 1999 work *Immigration and the Nation-State: The United States, Germany and Great Britain*, Christian Joppke stated that "in the early 1960s education had aimed at the cultural assimilation of immigrants", citing a 1963 report of the Commonwealth Immigrant Advisory Council which said that "a national system cannot be expected to perpetuate the different values of immigrant groups".⁸⁵ This view is also evident in some works pertaining specifically to Muslims. Ansari argued that the state was unprepared for the "rapid influx" of Muslims into British schools, and that at least until the early 1960s, the education system was monocultural, ethnocentric, and often unwilling to make room for the needs of minority groups such as Muslims.⁸⁶ In her 1995 *Children of Islam: A Teacher's Guide to Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils*, Marie Parker-Jenkins argued that the approach of the state to Muslim children in this early period was an assimilationist one, requiring conformity rather

⁸³ David Mason, *Race and Ethnicity in Modern Britain*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.68–69.

⁸⁴ Carlton Duncan, 'Understanding Multicultural/Anti-Racist Education for Practice', in *Race and Culture in Education: Issues Arising from the Swann Committee Report* ed. by T.S. Chivers (Windsor: NFER-Nelson, 1987) pp. 78-95 (p.79).

⁸⁵ Christian Joppke, *Immigration and the Nation-State: The United States, Germany, and Great Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.235–36.

⁸⁶ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.299.

than encouraging difference.⁸⁷ Joly, also looking at Muslims specifically, argued that in the initial stages after the arrival of immigrants in UK schools, “official reactions were prompted by an ‘assimilationist’ point of view”.⁸⁸

There is also some consensus in this literature that the assimilationist phase was not sustainable, or sustained, in the long term, and that, as T.S. Chivers argued in his introduction to *Race and Culture in Education: Issues Arising from the Swann Committee Report*, “a phase of integration followed, in which the minorities were to retain their distinctive ethnicities”, leading ultimately to “the birth of multicultural education”.⁸⁹ This is another common theme in works which look specifically at Muslims. Both Ansari and Parker-Jenkins, for example, identified a speech made by Home Secretary Roy Jenkins in 1966 as a pivotal point in the shift in the state’s response from assimilation to multiculturalism. Jenkins defined integration as “equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance”. Ansari argued that this was accompanied by a shift “from suppression of cultural differences to their recognition and celebration”.⁹⁰ Parker-Jenkins defined Jenkins’ speech as the beginning of a multicultural approach in Britain, which “denotes an important stage in the ideological shift away from the cultural imperatives of assimilation and integration to one of cultural pluralism”. She described multiculturalism in terms of “creating tolerance for minority children, dispelling ignorance, and reducing prejudice to create a harmonious society”.⁹¹ Joly wrote that, by the end of the 1960s, the “failure of this ‘assimilationist’ approach became rapidly apparent and gave way to a policy of integration which acknowledged the separate identity of ethnic minority children”.⁹²

⁸⁷ Marie Parker-Jenkins, *Children of Islam: A Teacher’s Guide to Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils* (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham, 1995), pp.15–16.

⁸⁸ Danièle Joly, *Britannia’s Crescent*, p.139.

⁸⁹ *Race and Culture in Education: Issues Arising from the Swann Committee Report*, ed. by T. S. Chivers (Windsor: NFER-Nelson, 1987), pp.ix–x.

⁹⁰ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.316.

⁹¹ Parker-Jenkins, *Children of Islam*, p.17.

⁹² Joly, *Britannia’s Crescent*, p.140.

Yet much of the literature suggests that the shift to integration and a multicultural approach was limited in its ability to help Muslim children, and that despite the development of a framework that sought to acknowledge and make room for the needs of ethnic and cultural minorities, Muslim needs were still not being adequately accommodated. In 1982, Anwar noted that the “lack of facilities to practise Islam in Britain have been pointed out in relation to school uniforms, diet, and single-sex state schools”, arguing that there was a need for changes to government policy to accommodate Muslims in Britain⁹³ – the implication being that they were not already being accommodated. Robert Jeffcoate argued in 1984 that “positive action to try and ensure that the special cultural needs of ethnic minorities are met in schools” had taken place only recently, highlighting “ethnocentrism” and a failure to accommodate cultural needs, parental wishes and religious sensibilities in the 1970s.⁹⁴ Joly stated in 1995 that the majority of teachers “are ignorant about the particular customs and habits of Muslim children”, suggesting conflict between headteachers and parents as a result, particularly over issues of school uniform.⁹⁵

The suggestion that Muslims were not being accommodated was often accompanied by a tendency to characterise the state’s response to their requests as ad hoc, piecemeal and inconsistent. Ansari argued that early responses to Muslim needs involved a lack of consultation with parents, and a tendency in schools to “generate educational provision ‘on the hoof’”, with regional variations in provision due to the “discretion and autonomy over curriculum and organisation” given to local education authorities, schools and teachers. He described the provision as “ad hoc”, “*laissez-faire*” and “uncoordinated”.⁹⁶ This was supported by Gilliat-Ray whose 2010 book included a short section on ‘British Muslims in

⁹³ Muhammad Anwar, *Young Muslims in a Multi-Cultural Society: Their Educational Needs and Policy Implications: The British Case* (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1982), p.9.

⁹⁴ Robert Jeffcoate, *Ethnic Minorities and Education*, Harper Education Series (London: Harper & Row, 1984), p.124.

⁹⁵ Joly, *Britannia's Crescent*, p.147.

⁹⁶ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.300.

state schools' which argued that early local education authority responses were "regionally variable, confused and often ad hoc".⁹⁷ Monica Taylor and Seamus Hegarty, writing in 1985, argued that "there has been no systematic nation-wide educational policy on the education of minority children as such", and that for "over 20 years there have been a number of *ad hoc*, short-term, often localised educational measures whose objectives have ranged from 'assimilation' to 'integration' to 'accommodation' (broadly and variously defined) and recently to the positive promotion of cultural and ethnic diversity".⁹⁸ In his 1989 article 'Muslims in English Schools', Nielsen wrote that "[d]uring the initial phase of the 1960s especially reactions were confused and measures were taken on an *ad hoc* basis".⁹⁹

One explanation for the lack of systematic accommodation of Muslim needs at this time is that the shift from assimilation to multiculturalism occurred in the context of the developing race relations framework, which categorised Muslims as members of a racial or ethnic, rather than a religious, minority. This can be seen in the development of a series of inquiries and reports into children of racial and ethnic minority backgrounds in the 1970s, including government publications such as the 1970 report *The Problem of Coloured School Leavers*¹⁰⁰ and the 1974 *Educational Disadvantage and the Needs of Immigrants*.¹⁰¹ Sally Tomlinson has drawn attention to a series of reports by the Commission for Racial Equality, and a 1977 Green Paper which raised issues about racial disadvantage in schools.¹⁰² A line is often drawn between these developments and the development of multiculturalism in education,

⁹⁷ Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction*, p.149.

⁹⁸ Monica J. Taylor and Seamus Hegarty, *The best of both worlds...?: a review of research into the education of pupils of South Asian origin*. (Windsor: NFER-Nelson, 1985), p.4.

⁹⁹ Jørgen S. Nielsen, 'Muslims in English Schools', *Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs. Journal*, 10.1 (1989), 223–245 (p.225).

¹⁰⁰ Home Office, *The Problem of Coloured School Leavers. Observations on the Report of the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration.*, (Parliamentary Papers. Cmnd. 4268.) (London, 1970).

¹⁰¹ Department of Education and Science, *Educational disadvantage and the educational needs of immigrants. Observations on the Report on Education of the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration*, (Parliamentary papers. Cmnd. 5720.) (London, 1974).

¹⁰² Sally Tomlinson, 'Some Success, Could Do Better: Education and Race 1976-2000', in *Education, Reform and the State: Twenty-Five Years of Politics, Policy and Practice*, ed. by Robert Phillips and John Falmer (London: Routledge Falmer, 2001) pp. 192–206 (p.194).

in particular the 1985 Swann Report *Education for All*, which is often mooted as a high point of multicultural education. Joppke, for example, wrote that the “main site of official multiculturalism is education, its main document being the government-commissioned report *Education for All...*”.¹⁰³

However, though the Swann Report was an important document in the history of multicultural education, it had its origins in concerns over issues of race and ethnicity. Gajendra K. Verma, in his 1989 book chapter ‘Education for All: A Landmark in Pluralism’, argued that the “[o]rigins of the Swann Report lie in the concern expressed since the 1960s by ethnic minority communities in Britain...about the poor performance of their children within the education system.”¹⁰⁴ The Swann Report emerged from the Rampton Enquiry, which in turn emerged from the 1977 Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration’s report on ‘The West Indian Community’ which “highlighted the widespread concern about the poor performance of West Indian children in schools”, and recommended an inquiry into this “as a matter of urgency”.¹⁰⁵ Duncan has highlighted how this emerged from concerns about racial disadvantage and discrimination.¹⁰⁶

The focus on racial disadvantage and discrimination in the educational context can be linked to the more general diversion of the government’s focus to issues relating to race relations in this period. In 1979, Anwar wrote of the British reaction to the growing non-white population that:

¹⁰³ Joppke, *Immigration and the Nation-State*, p.235.

¹⁰⁴ Gajendra K. Verma, ‘Education for All: A Landmark in Pluralism’, in *Education for All: A Landmark in Pluralism* ed. by Gajendra K. Verma (London: Falmer, 1989), pp. 1–10 (p.1).

¹⁰⁵ Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Minority Groups, *The Rampton Report, West Indian Children in Our Schools* (London: HM Stationery Office, 1981), p.1 <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/rampton/rampton1981.html> [Accessed 14 April 2017].

¹⁰⁶ Duncan, pp.84–85.

signs such as 'All blacks go home' and 'Send them back' were quite common. 'Paki bashing' and other anti-immigrant demonstrations and movements are still taking place. The British Campaign to Stop Immigration and the activities of the National Front are prime examples.¹⁰⁷

It was often as victims of "Paki-bashing" and discrimination that Muslims came to the attention of the state and society, something which reinforced their racial or ethnic background and did not acknowledge their religious identity. In a 1999 article 'From Scarman to Stephen Lawrence', Stuart Hall explored the history of race relations in Britain, describing "an ancient story, banal in its repetitive persistence". He outlined the ongoing problems which dominated this story, from the Nottingham and Notting Hill riots of 1958, through to campaigns in the 1970s against "sus" laws, and then in the early 1980s the "arson of Asian shops and homes" and the Brixton riots of 1981.¹⁰⁸ The Scarman Report, which was written in response to the Brixton riots and which sought to explain and analyse the rising racial tensions in Britain, was published in between the Rampton and the Swann Reports.¹⁰⁹ In a 2014 blog post on 'The Failure of Multiculturalism', Kenan Malik also argued that multicultural policies in Britain developed following the "explosive climax" of black and Asian grievances in the "riots that tore through the United Kingdom's inner cities in the late 1970s and early 1980s". He linked this directly to the development of multicultural policies, which he argued emerged because "British authorities recognized that unless minority communities were given a political stake in the system, tensions would continue to threaten urban stability".¹¹⁰ This backdrop of heightened racial tensions, and of government attempts

¹⁰⁷ Anwar, *The Myth of Return*, p.4.

¹⁰⁸ Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London: Verso, 1988), p.188.

¹⁰⁹ Baron Leslie Scarman, *The Scarman Report: The Brixton Disorders 10-12 April 1981: Report of an Inquiry* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982).

¹¹⁰ Kenan Malik, 'The Failure of Multiculturalism', *Pandaemonium*, 2015, p.9 <https://kenanmalik.wordpress.com/2015/02/17/the-failure-of-multiculturalism/> [Accessed 26 September 2017].

to deal with these, is important as it provided part of the context in which Muslims interacted with the state over education. The government's attention was not focused on religious identity or issues which arose from this, and this had the potential to affect its ability to recognise Muslims as a religious minority, and to accommodate their religious needs.

In addition to the racial focus, there is also a strand of argument which suggests that approaches to diversity in this period had a secular predisposition, which had the potential to affect their ability to accommodate the needs of religious minorities. In a 2010 book chapter, Tariq Modood and Nasar Meer argued that:

Muslims did not appear in the early multiculturalist approach, which treated postwar migrants who arrived as Citizens of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth (CUKC), and subsequent British-born generations as *ethnic* and *racial* – but not as *religious* minorities – requiring state support and differential treatment to overcome distinctive barriers in the exercise of citizenship.¹¹¹

Parker-Jenkins similarly argued that “the liberal approach to multicultural education does not adequately address the convictions of the religious adherent: the secular has survived at the expense of the sacred”.¹¹² Nielsen argued that the Swann Report was an example of such secular multiculturalism, as it “dealt with Muslims in terms of cultural and ethnic groups, rather than in terms of religious principles and priorities”.¹¹³ In their 1995 article on Muslim attempts to receive state funding for their schools in Britain and the Netherlands, Claire Dwyer and Astrid Meyer stated that:

¹¹¹ Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood, ‘Britain: Contemporary Developments in Cases of Muslim-State Engagement’, in *Muslims in 21st Century Europe: Structural and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. by Anna Triandafyllidou (London: Routledge, 2010), pp.78-102 (p.79).

¹¹² Parker-Jenkins, *Children of Islam*, p.19.

¹¹³ Jørgen S. Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 58.

the dominant version of ‘multi-culturalism’ which informed the Swann Report, and the thinking on ‘ethnic minorities’ in the 1980s, rested on a belief in a ‘black community’ which was seen by some Muslims as ignoring the role of religion in providing focus for communal identity.¹¹⁴

This secular multiculturalism is at times also linked to the development of left-wing responses to diversity. Writing in 1986, in a study of the responses of local authorities to Muslim needs, Nielsen identified some councils which “operate with an explicitly secular ideology, often of the political left”, which led to the rejection of specifically Muslim demands.¹¹⁵ Some 20 years later, in 2004, Modood referred to the “hegemonic power of secularism in British political culture, especially on the centre-left”.¹¹⁶

There is also broad consensus in the literature that there was a second shift in educational thinking in the very late 1970s or early 1980s, which was a shift to the right under prime minister Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative government. This shift is perceived as further limiting the possibility of Muslim needs being accommodated in schools. Ansari argued that the arrival of the Conservative government in 1979 brought with it an ideological assault from the New Right on anti-racist and multicultural education, with a return to policies aimed at achieving homogeneity and the assimilation of minorities into a “monolithic British way of life”, as well as attacks on “municipal socialism” and local government.¹¹⁷ He argued that by the mid-1990s, “many of the issues which had preoccupied Muslim communities in the 1960s and 1970s, and which they had made vigorous efforts to resolve in the 1980s, had re-emerged, albeit with a different

¹¹⁴ Claire Dwyer and Astrid Meyer, ‘The Institutionalisation of Islam in the Netherlands and in the UK: The Case of Islamic Schools’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 21.1 (1995), 37–54 (pp.44–45).

¹¹⁵ Jørgen S. Nielsen, *A Survey of British Local Authority Response to Muslim Needs*, Research Papers. Muslims in Europe, no.30/31 (Birmingham: Selly Oak Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, 1986), p.33.

¹¹⁶ Modood, ‘Multiculturalism, Muslims and the British State’, pp.253–54.

¹¹⁷ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, pp.317–18.

emphasis”.¹¹⁸ Parker-Jenkins agreed that such a shift occurred, though she placed it later, arguing that the marginalisation of multicultural and anti-racist education was linked to the development of the 1988 Education Reform Act and related policies. She argued that:

an ideological counter offensive from the New Right has led to a discernible lobby reacting against a perceived preoccupation with multicultural teaching and instead invoking a doctrine of common British citizenship. It would appear, therefore, that society has come full circle, and is again contemplating a notion of assimilation.¹¹⁹

The consensus in these statements suggests that their authors viewed this second shift as having a negative impact on the ability of Muslims to have their voices heard and their needs met in the 1980s.

To sum up, these narratives suggest a situation where, when Muslim children first arrived in schools, they were subject first of all to assimilationist policies which did not acknowledge their difference, then to multicultural policies which were willing to accommodate certain differences, but focused on racial, ethnic and cultural differences at the expense of religious differences, and then finally to a return to assimilationist policies, accompanied by a desire for homogeneity in British citizenship. The implication of this was that Muslims struggled to have their needs acknowledged or accommodated in the education system for various reasons at each of the different stages outlined above.

4) *Islamophobia?*

A further strand of literature examining the situation of Muslims in England has looked at the impact of “Islamophobia”. The term was first brought to mainstream attention in the 1997 Runnymede Trust report *Islamophobia: A Challenge for us All*, some 8 years after the

¹¹⁸ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.323.

¹¹⁹ Parker-Jenkins, *Children of Islam*, pp.19–20.

height of the Rushdie Affair.¹²⁰ The report argued that, whilst the “dislike” of Muslims and Islam had existed for centuries, it had become “more explicit, more extreme and more dangerous” in the twenty years prior to 1997. The report offered an in-depth analysis of the definitions and manifestations of Islamophobia in Britain, before outlining a series of recommendations as to how this should be dealt with. This was significant in part because it identified prejudice and discrimination against Muslims as a phenomenon that was distinct from racism, acknowledging the existence of bias against Muslims on the basis of their Muslim identity, rather than their national, racial or ethnic background. It stated that:

it is an ingredient of all sections of our media, and is prevalent in all sections of our society. Within Britain it means that Muslims are frequently excluded from the economic, social and public life of the nation...and are frequently victims of discrimination and harassment.¹²¹

This thesis will use this Runnymede Trust Report as a yardstick to measure whether the responses of the state to Muslims in the education system can be understood as Islamophobic. The definition of Islamophobia in this report is not the most recent, and has been contested from all sides in the years following its publication. However, though there are more recent analyses of Islamophobia available¹²², the definition offered in *Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All* has the advantage of being broadly contemporary with, or emerging directly from, the events covered in this thesis. The period of twenty years

¹²⁰ Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia*.

¹²¹ Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia*, p.1.

¹²² *Thinking Through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives*, ed. by Salman Sayyid and Abdoolkarim Vakil, (London: C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2009); ‘Introduction: The Shared Story of Europe’s Ideas of the Muslim and the Jew - A Diachronic Framework’, in *Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Europe: A Shared Story?*, ed. by James Renton and Ben Gidley (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017), pp. 1-22; Nasar Meer, ‘Semantics, Scales and Solidarities in the Study of Antisemitism and Islamophobia’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36.3 (2013), 500–515.

during which it suggested that Islamophobia had intensified coincided with the latter part of the period when Muslim pupils were appearing in schools in growing numbers, and with much of the period covered by this thesis. The impact of such anti-Muslim sentiment has been acknowledged in some of the literature that has looked at Muslims in Britain. Ansari, for example argued that the:

1980s saw Muslims in Britain struggling for official acknowledgement of religious rights against a background of increasing anti-Muslim sentiment in the wider British society. The high point of this struggle was reached with the Rushdie affair.¹²³

It is therefore not anachronistic to use the Runnymede Trust's definition of Islamophobia as a yardstick with which to measure these events.

Another Runnymede Trust report *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain*, published in 2000, suggested that anti-Muslim sentiment was partly a consequence of growing secularism within British society, arguing that Islamophobia, along with antisemitism, merged "with a more widespread rejection of religion which runs through a significant part of 'tolerant society'".¹²⁴ Nasar Meer made a similar point in 2013 when he argued that approaches to religion "among contemporary intelligentsia invite the ridiculing of Muslims as healthy for intellectual debate", and that "the mocking of Muslims is seen as a sign of intellectual vitality and emancipation".¹²⁵ Others have suggested that the rejection of Islam has occurred not only through growing secularism, but also as a result of a sense that Islam was in opposition to many of the values upon which post-Enlightenment Europe felt itself to be founded. This argument perhaps originates in Edward Said's 1978 work *Orientalism*, in which he wrote that:

¹²³ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.232.

¹²⁴ Runnymede Trust, *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain. The Parekh Report*, p.235.

¹²⁵ Meer, pp.510–11.

given its special relationship to both Christianity and Judaism, Islam remained forever the Orientalist's idea (or type) of *original* cultural effrontery, aggravated naturally by the fear that Islamic civilization originally (as well as contemporaneously) continued to stand somehow opposed to the Christian West.¹²⁶

This perception of Islam's cultural effrontery and opposition to western values has been observed more recently. Meer and Tehseen Noorani drew attention to observations of an "unwillingness to conform to secular liberal values" which is "construed as the greatest obstacle facing Muslim integration".¹²⁷ They also commented that Muslims and Islam have been "characterised as anti-modern and antipathetic to democratic human rights".¹²⁸

In a very recent study of the relationship between antisemitism and Islamophobia, Ben Gidley and James Renton suggested that, though Muslims were affected by developing secularism, it was also true that "the idea of Europe has never broken free from Christendom". They argued that "the avowed secularism of contemporary Europe remains normatively Christian; the concept of Europe – and how it frames others – remains bound up with theology".¹²⁹ This relates to the fact that British society in the late twentieth century not only conceived itself as secular, but was also conscious of its heritage as a Christian – or "Judaeo-Christian" – society. A chapter in the same edited volume by Yulia Egorova and Fiaz Ahmed argued that the conception of a Christian Europe tended to include Jews and exclude Muslims. They referred to generalisations in the media "that essentialise both traditions, but construe Judaism as more compatible with life in the UK than Islam", before commenting on

¹²⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p.260.

¹²⁷ Nasar Meer and Tehseen Noorani, 'A Sociological Comparison of Anti-Semitism and Anti-Muslim Sentiment in Britain', *The Sociological Review*, 56.2 (2008), 195–219 (p.207).

¹²⁸ Meer and Noorani, pp.208–9.

¹²⁹ 'Introduction: The Shared Story of Europe's Ideas of the Muslim and the Jew - A Diachronic Framework', in *Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Europe: A Shared Story?*, ed. by James Renton and Ben Gidley (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017), pp. 1-22 (p.9).

the tendency of the political right to portray “Jewish people as potential ‘allies’ of European Christians in the fight against the ‘Islamisation’ of Europe”.¹³⁰

This element of interpretation suggests that Muslims were faced not only with a state that did not recognise their needs due to racial conceptions of their identity and prevailing educational philosophies, but also with a society in which they were often disliked, and a population that was suspicious of them and which did not consider the confident assertion of their religious identity compatible with the developing character of late twentieth century Britain.

5) Muslims and Education: A further note on sources

Despite the various obstacles, there is evidence in many accounts that by the early 1970s, if not before, some Muslim needs were being accommodated in a number of schools in England. In 1979, Ally noted that the Muslim Educational Trust (MET), a Department for Education and Science (DES) registered charity, was attempting to “co-ordinate local efforts” in order to accommodate the religious and cultural needs of Muslim pupils, noting that the MET was providing “Islamic education facilities to Muslim children in 56 county schools in Britain”.¹³¹ A 1984 article by Akram Khan-Cheema, though critical of many of the approaches taken by the state to Muslim pupils, argued that some LEAs had adopted some policies which successfully accommodated Muslim needs.¹³² Taylor and Hegarty, in their 1985 work reviewing research into the education of pupils of South Asian origin, argued that there is evidence from the decade prior to 1985 which “suggests that many parents made representations to their children’s schools on matters such as discipline, dress, diet, physical

¹³⁰ Yulia Egorova and Fiaz Ahmed, ‘The Impact of Antisemitism and Islamophobia on Jewish-Muslim Relations in the UK: Memory, Experience, Context’, in *Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Europe: A Shared Story?*, ed. by James Renton and Ben Gidley, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 283-301 (p.293).

¹³¹ Muhammad Mashuq Ally, *The Growth and Organization of the Muslim Community in Britain*, p.7.

¹³² Akram Khan-Cheema, ‘Islamic Education and the Maintained School System’, *Muslim Education Quarterly*, 2.1 (1984), 5–15 (p.15).

education, single-sex schooling and religious education”, and “there has been considerable adjustment on both the part of the school to make certain accommodation to parents’ wishes, and also on the part of parents to permit their children to participate in what, in many cases, has been an almost monolingual and monocultural environment in schools”.¹³³ Parker-Jenkins argued that a number of Muslim needs, including those relating to worship and religious education, and needs relating to dress, diet, language and curriculum, had been accommodated in at least some schools going back to the 1970s.¹³⁴ Writing in 1986 of the results of a survey he had recently conducted, Nielsen argued that “there has been substantial anecdotal evidence to suggest that in many areas working relations between local government and ethnic and religious minority groups have existed for some time”.¹³⁵ In 2005, he again argued that the “1970s saw major advances in recognising that some practical concessions had to be made by schools for Muslim children to feel at home to some degree”.¹³⁶ Writing in 1990, Modood commented that some schools and LEAs had attempted, “usually in the glare of adverse publicity, to make provision for minority religions and languages, celebrate non-Christian religious festivals and even to adjust school holidays to coincide with some of them”.¹³⁷

The accommodation of religious needs, at a time when the primary focus of policy was on race and ethnicity, suggests that another layer of interpretation is necessary if the situation is to be fully understood. It is necessary to address the question of why, in the midst of a secular framework that focused on issues of ethnic and racial difference, the needs of a religious minority were being accommodated. The starting point of this thesis is that, whilst some accounts do provide evidence of such accommodation, the reasons for this

¹³³ Taylor and Hegarty, *The best of both worlds...?*, p.400.

¹³⁴ Parker-Jenkins, *Children of Islam*.

¹³⁵ Nielsen, *A Survey of British Local Authority Response to Muslim Needs*, p.6.

¹³⁶ Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe*, p.56.

¹³⁷ Modood, 'Muslims, Race and Equality in Britain: Some Post-Rushdie Affair Reflections', p.131.

accommodation have yet to be fully researched or understood. In fact, where this issue is addressed, the sources used are very limited, based on just a handful of surveys, studies and archival source materials. Many works rely very heavily on two studies published in the early 1970s to inform their interpretation of the situation of Muslims. The first of these is Herbert Townsend's 1971 work *Immigrant Pupils in Britain: The L.E.A. Response*, which discussed the needs of minority children, including Muslim children, in a chapter entitled 'Miscellaneous provisions'. This chapter indicated that some schools and LEAs were accommodating some of the religious and cultural needs of Muslim pupils.¹³⁸ The second work is a publication by Townsend and E.M. Brittan which looked at immigrant children, including Muslim children, in a chapter entitled "Some Problem Areas". This chapter also observed a willingness in a number of schools to adopt a flexible approach in response to a number of Muslim requests.¹³⁹ Both of these studies were based on research carried out in the early 1970s, including a survey by the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales, funded by the DES, into "the educational arrangements in schools for immigrant pupils".¹⁴⁰

These two chapters are used as evidence in several of the key texts on British Muslims mentioned above. They appear repeatedly in *The Infidel Within*, and seem to have informed Ansari's observations on the educational experiences of Muslims in the 1970s to a considerable degree. Nielsen also seemed to be referring to these surveys in *Muslims in Western Europe*, when he discussed provision for Muslims in the 1970s, though he did not provide a reference to them.¹⁴¹ While Townsend and Brittan do not appear directly as references in Gilliat-Ray's *Muslims in Britain*, she relied heavily on Ansari and to some extent

¹³⁸ Herbert Ellwood Routledge Townsend, *Immigrant Pupils in England: The L.E.A. Response* (Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales, 1971).

¹³⁹ Herbert Ellwood Routledge Townsend and E. M. Brittan, *Organization in multiracial schools*. (Windsor: National Foundation for Educational Research, 1972), pp.58–65.

¹⁴⁰ Townsend, *Immigrant Pupils in England*, p.5.

¹⁴¹ Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe*, p.56.

on Nielsen for her brief discussion of the 1970s, and so their influence can be found in her work too. This is important because these two surveys – both written up as short chapters in much larger studies – appear to form the basis of much of the understanding of the situation of Muslims in schools in the 1970s.

In addition to the use of these two studies, research carried out by Nielsen in the mid-1980s has been used to inform key works on Muslims and education. His 1986 paper ‘A Survey of British Local Authority Responses to Muslim Needs’, based on a survey of local councils conducted in 1984,¹⁴² was the basis for his own subsequent writings.¹⁴³ This study, as well as Nielsen’s 1989 article in the *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* which compared his findings with those of the survey used by Townsend and Brittan¹⁴⁴, were both used as references by Ansari. Gilliat-Ray also used Nielsen’s survey and his later works to inform her discussions of the 1980s.¹⁴⁵

Ansari also used Taylor and Hegarty’s 1985 study as a reference. This lengthy work made some specific mention of Muslim children, but its focus was on the wider experiences of Asian children in the UK education system.¹⁴⁶ Analysis of the references that Taylor and Hegarty used to inform their discussion of Muslim pupils reveals that their sources were limited. The main source that they used which clearly focused on the education of British Muslims was a 1977 article in the journal *New Community* by Mohammad Iqbal entitled ‘Education and Islam in Britain – a Muslim view’, that was only seven pages long.¹⁴⁷ Other sources they referred to – the *Muslim Educational Review* of January 1982, *Muslim*

¹⁴² Nielsen, *A Survey of British Local Authority Response to Muslim Needs*.

¹⁴³ Jorgen S. Nielsen, ‘Muslims in Britain and Local Authority Responses’, in *The New Islamic Presence in Western Europe*, ed. by Tomas Gerholm and Yngve Georg Lithman, (London: Mansell, 1988) pp.53–77.

¹⁴⁴ Nielsen, ‘Muslims in English Schools’.

¹⁴⁵ Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction*, p.149.

¹⁴⁶ Taylor and Hegarty, *The best of both worlds...?*, p.9.

¹⁴⁷ M. Iqbal, ‘Education and Islam in Britain-a Muslim View’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 5.4 (1977), 397–404.

Education from the summer of 1982¹⁴⁸ and *Muslim Education Quarterly*, published by the Islamic Academy, from the autumn of 1983¹⁴⁹ – did not focus specifically on Muslims in England, but were concerned with the broader educational issues facing Muslims living in non-Muslim states.

There are also some studies of Muslims and education which have tended to focus on a particular area of the country, for example Halstead's study of the Honeyford Affair and Daniele Joly's works on Birmingham. Halstead's work was a detailed study of the education of minority children in Bradford in the 1970s and early 1980s, the majority of whom were Muslim.¹⁵⁰ Joly's *Britannia's Crescent* looked in some depth at the situation of Muslims in Birmingham in the 1980s, including two chapters focussing on education.¹⁵¹ Both Joly and Halstead are used as references by Ansari in *The Infidel Within*.

These are, of course, not the only sources used in works looking at Muslims and education. Parker-Jenkins and Ansari both made use of the British Muslims Monthly Survey, but this has only been published since 1993, and so is of limited use in an analysis of the 1970s and 1980s. Some studies referred to Department for Education publications. Ansari also made extensive use of literature pertaining to the education of immigrants and to race and education more broadly. But the studies by Townsend and Brittan, Nielsen, and Taylor and Hegarty are the key, substantive sources on the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s referenced by the few writers who have sought to provide any sort of historical analysis of the education of Muslims in the state school system in England: Ansari, Parker-Jenkins, Nielsen and Gilliat-Ray.

¹⁴⁸ *Muslim Education.*, Vol.1, no.1 (Summer Issue 1982)-vol.1, no.3 (Winter 1983) (Jeddah, London: King Abdulaziz University, 1982).

¹⁴⁹ *Muslim Education Quarterly* (Cambridge: Islamic Academy, 1983).

¹⁵⁰ Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*.

¹⁵¹ Joly, *Britannia's Crescent*.

6) What is missing?

The previous section is not an exhaustive survey of every single piece of literature used thus far in studies of Muslims in the education system in England. Rather, it demonstrates that the current understanding of Muslims in English state schools from the mid-1960s until the early 1980s is based on a limited pool of resources which offer limited conclusions, the implications of which have not yet been fully explored in subsequent research. A consequence of this is that current assumptions about how Muslims experienced their entry into English schools, and how these schools and the state accommodated them, are based on relatively thin evidence, and as such are overdue a reconsideration. There are a number of archival materials that have either only recently become available, or have not been fully exploited in the past. These include local authority sources from the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), Bradford and the London Borough of Brent, as well as DES files from the 1980s. This thesis will use these sources, seeking to create a more comprehensive picture of how Muslims and the state interacted over education in late twentieth century.

In its use of these sources, the thesis will seek to provide answers to some of the questions which arise from the issues covered in this introduction. It will re-evaluate the existing chronology of Muslim-state interactions over education, and the interpretations that arise from this chronology. In order to do so, it will firstly offer a closer analysis of the events of the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s than previous accounts have given. It will ask why, despite the apparent race relations and secularist emphasis of the state, it appears to have been the case that some Muslim needs were being acknowledged and met in this period. This discussion will be embedded in a so far underexplored strand of interpretation: the role of the historical framework of religious and cultural pluralism in guiding Muslim-state relations in the late twentieth century. In his 2011 article 'Why the English like Turbans: Multicultural politics in British history', David Feldman argued that "the recurrence of conservative

pluralism over three centuries is a neglected and significant phenomenon”.¹⁵² He highlighted what he referred to as “the striking recurrence in British history of pluralist solutions to multicultural dilemmas”,¹⁵³ arguing that “policies which sanctioned pluralism predate the drive to multiculturalism in the 1980s”.¹⁵⁴ Where others have perceived Muslims as fighting against an assimilationist agenda and unaccommodating system, Feldman has drawn attention to the capabilities of the pluralist framework to accommodate some minority needs, stating that there is a “[n]eed for a narrative that takes into account the history of pluralism”.¹⁵⁵ Joppke similarly wrote that “[a]n often overlooked, but fundamental, source of multiculturalism *avant la lettre* has been the English common-law tradition”. He argued that “[g]uided by the unprincipled pragmatism of ‘common sense, good manners and a reasonable tolerance’ (Poulter, 1987, 594), the common-law judiciary has been remarkably tolerant of cultural pluralism, outlawing only morally ‘repugnant’ practices like polygamy, forced marriage, female circumcision and some Muslim divorce”.¹⁵⁶ The existence of the conservative pluralist framework has more recently been acknowledged by Fazakarley, who observed its role in educational provision for Muslim children in schools. However, he has suggested that this framework is an aspect of late twentieth century multiculturalism, which he defines as largely static and multifaceted, incorporating assimilationist, accommodationist and integrationist approaches.¹⁵⁷ Such an approach is problematic, for while it gives the pluralist framework greater prominence than some previous accounts have done, it leads to a vague and indistinct understanding of its role and further confuses the already complicated and contested terminology relating to multiculturalism. This thesis will

¹⁵² David Feldman, ‘Why the English like Turbans: Multicultural Politics in British History’, in *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History*, ed. by David Feldman and John Lawrence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) pp. 281–302 (p.300).

¹⁵³ Feldman, ‘Why the English like Turbans: Multicultural Politics in British History’, p.293.

¹⁵⁴ Feldman, ‘Why the English like Turbans: Multicultural Politics in British History’, p.296.

¹⁵⁵ Feldman, ‘Why the English like Turbans: Multicultural Politics in British History’, p.285.

¹⁵⁶ Joppke, *Immigration and the Nation-State*, pp.233–34.

¹⁵⁷ Fazakarley, *Muslim Communities in England 1962-90*, pp.15–19.

consider the idea of conservative pluralism as a separate framework with its own distinct place in the developing chronology of Muslim-state relations in England, and will provide further insight into the implications and the limitations of this framework which, as Feldman noted, have not yet been fully explored.

A second part of the re-evaluation, which is closely linked to the first, is to raise questions about the role and significance of the educational framework which underpinned the pluralist approach in the late twentieth century. Several existing accounts mention the role of local education authorities (LEAs) and the devolution of decision making to individual schools in the process of interaction between Muslims and the state. LEAs crop up frequently as loci of interaction in works by Nielsen, as do individual schools and head teachers.¹⁵⁸ Joly also argued that the decentralised nature of local government meant that many issues could be dealt with at a local level and with “pragmatic solutions and compromises”.¹⁵⁹ Yet though the function of LEAs in the administration, organisation and delivery of education is acknowledged, these accounts do not fully explore the significance or implications of the role they played, and of the considerable autonomy and flexibility of LEAs for Muslim-state interactions. This thesis will ask what role LEAs and individual schools played in the development of Muslim-state interactions over education, and consider the place of these interactions in the accommodation of Muslim needs. It will also raise the question of why the role and significance of local interactions has tended to be minimised in the existing historiography.

Thirdly, the thesis will raise questions about the limitations of the conservative pluralist framework and of the state’s ability to accommodate Muslim needs. It will ask why it was that some Muslim requests were very easily accommodated, whilst others proved

¹⁵⁸ Nielsen, *A Survey of British Local Authority Response to Muslim Needs*, p. 33; Nielsen, ‘Muslims in English Schools’, p.227.

¹⁵⁹ Joly, *Britannia's Crescent*, pp.12–13.

intractable and sources of tension between Muslims and the state. It will go on to explore how Muslims and the state coped with the difficulties that arose from these limitations. In asking this, it will consider whether the boundaries of conservative pluralism were rigid or fluid, and how far they could be pushed back. This discussion will also pose questions of whether the boundaries, and the flexibility, of the pluralist system changed over time, and what factors allowed or prevented change. In posing these questions, it will consider the impact of the secular, post-Christian, multicultural and race relations paradigms, as well as the impact of changes in government and policy. It will reflect on the implications of developing perceptions of Muslims, including Islamophobia and responses to it, on Muslim-state relations. Finally, it will consider the relationship between this framework and the policies of the governments of Britain in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, evaluating how far the conservative pluralist framework was disrupted by both Conservative centralisation and by the development of multicultural education in the 1980s.

In the process of answering these questions, this thesis will contribute a new chronology of developing Muslim-state relations over education, and consequently a new interpretation which gives greater prominence than has so far been allowed to early interactions and the role of the framework of conservative pluralism. The thesis will not attempt to reconsider or re-evaluate the multicultural framework as a whole. It will acknowledge that this framework had an impact on how the state responded to ethnic, racial and religious minorities in the late twentieth century. But whilst acknowledging the significance of multiculturalism, it will demonstrate that when the role of the older conservative pluralist framework is included in an analysis of how the state and Muslims interacted over education, a richer and more complex picture of the experiences of Muslims as a religious minority in the English education system emerges. In particular, it will provide a different understanding about how these experiences and how Muslim-state interactions changed over time.

The next chapter will focus on education in Britain in the late twentieth century, outlining key developments in education policy and practice from 1944 until the early 1990s. The third chapter will explore early Muslim interactions with the state, focusing particularly on the period from the late 1960s until the mid-1980s. It will examine how and when Muslim needs were expressed, and how the state responded to these needs at both a local and a national level. These two chapters will highlight the significance of a pre-existing framework of religious and cultural pluralism in Britain, demonstrating how this framework was instrumental in the development of Muslim-state interactions in this period, before ideas about multicultural education became mainstream. The fourth chapter will look in depth at educational developments in the city of Bradford, examining the different responses to needs when they were understood as religious or cultural needs as compared to racial or ethnic needs. The fifth chapter will examine the background to attempts by Muslims to seek voluntary-aided schooling, exploring what this reveals about the possibilities and limitations of the pluralist framework. The final chapter will be a case study of the attempt by the Islamia Primary School in the London Borough of Brent to achieve voluntary-aided status and receive state funding.

Chapter Two

The Educational Background

This chapter will examine the educational backdrop which provided the context for Muslim interactions with the state over education in the second half of the twentieth century, providing an institutional framework for the thesis overall. This institutional framework underpinned state education provision in the second half of the twentieth century. It formed the context and structure within which possibilities for pluralism existed, and both created and limited the possibilities for minorities within the education system. Before going on to explore the situation of Muslims being educated in late twentieth century England, it is therefore necessary to have a clear picture of the key administrative, financial and conceptual characteristics of this institutional framework.

The chapter will take as its starting point the 1944 Education Act. This Act established an educational framework that remained in place for almost half a century, until the Education Acts of 1988 and 1993.¹ It was during the period between 1944 and 1988 that large numbers of Muslims arrived in England, and their children started attending schools. It was therefore within this framework that negotiations with the state over the educational needs of Muslim children first occurred. However, by the mid-1970s, and within a decade or so of Muslim children beginning to attend state schools, profound shifts began to take place in educational philosophies, precipitated by the end of the post-war boom, the oil crisis of the 1970s, and the impact of these developments on public finances. These shifts, accompanied by the growth of the New Right, neoliberalism, and ultimately Thatcherism, led to fundamental changes in both the educational framework and the philosophies that underpinned it. These changes had the potential to affect the interactions of Muslims with

¹ Michael Barber, *The Making of the 1944 Education Act* (London: Cassell, 1994), p.116.

the state, particularly by the late 1980s. After examining the framework put in place in 1944, this chapter will explore how it changed in the decades that followed. It will then look in some depth at the 1988 Education Reform Act, considering what broader changes in approaches to education this act indicated. It will also highlight how these changes had the potential to affect the interaction of Muslims, as a religious minority, with the state.

1) The background to the background

The 1944 Education Act, part of the raft of legislation passed at the end of the Second World War, considerably expanded the social function of state-financed education in England and Wales. The rhetoric surrounding this act was forward-looking. Those involved in its creation spoke of making England “a better place”, of “the egalitarian England of tomorrow”², of “opportunity” and of “enriching the inheritance of the country” for its citizens.³ It is this “England of tomorrow” and the future citizens of 1944 that this thesis is largely concerned with: Muslims pupils began to arrive in English schools in large numbers a decade or two after the 1944 Act. Their interactions with the state were therefore governed by the framework put in place in 1944. However, before we get to 1944 it is necessary to consider that the post-1944 educational world was also governed to some degree by what had come before. In fact, it created very little that was new, rather consolidating, centralising and codifying what had gone before it. By the time Muslim pupils began to arrive in English schools, there had been a history of accommodating religious diversity within a state-funded education system for more than a century.

The churches were involved in education in England before the state was, with a network of Anglican and non-Anglican schools existing on a voluntary basis until the early nineteenth

² S. J. D. Green, *The Passing of Protestant England: Secularisation and Social Change, c.1920-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.223.

³ Board of Education, *White Paper: Educational Reconstruction* (London: Board of Education, 1943) p.1 <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/wp1943/educational-reconstruction.html>, [Accessed 25/04/2017].

century.⁴ The extension of the vote in the 1832 Reform Act created the conditions from which the beginning of a system of free, compulsory schooling in Britain emerged.⁵ From 1833, the government began subsidising education with building grants for schools⁶, and within twenty years, such funds were extended not only to Anglican schools, but also to Catholic, Wesleyan and Jewish schools.⁷ From the very beginning, the state's financial involvement in education was accompanied by an acknowledgement of religious diversity, and with a willingness to accommodate religions and denominations other than that of the state.

The broad principle of a willingness to accommodate religious difference is in evidence up to and including the 1944 Education Act. During the nineteenth century, provision developed unevenly, and by the time of the 1870 Forster Education Act there was a "confessionally based, and predominantly Anglican system of 'national' education, wide in scope but geographically uneven in provision".⁸ The Forster Act sought to improve this situation, establishing School Boards which took responsibility for education in local areas where there were gaps in voluntary provision.⁹ This marked the beginning of the "Dual System" in which the churches and the state became parallel education providers, with the state filling in the gaps in the areas where there was no church provision.¹⁰ The Act contained a number of provisions which recognised and accommodated religious diversity. One of the problems it

⁴ Gary McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction: The 1944 Education Act and the Twenty-First Century* (Ilford: Woburn Press, 1994), p.21.

⁵ McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction*, p. 19; Priscilla Chadwick, 'The Anglican Perspective on Church Schools', *Oxford Review of Education*, 27.4 (2001), 475–487 (p.476).

⁶ Lois MR Loudon, 'The Conscience Clause in Religious Education and Collective Worship: Conscientious Objection or Curriculum Choice?', *British Journal of Religious Education*, 26.3 (2004), 273–284 (p.274).

⁷ David Feldman, 'Why the English like Turbans: Multicultural Politics in British History', in *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History*, ed by David Feldman and John Lawrence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 281–302 (p.291).

⁸ Harry Judge, 'Faith-Based Schools and State Funding: A Partial Argument', *Oxford Review of Education*, 27.4 (2001), 463–474 (p.466).

⁹ McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction*, p.23.

¹⁰ Barber, *The Making of the 1944 Education Act*, p.9.

had to address was the fact that in a number of parishes, particularly in rural areas, the only school available was an Anglican one. The effect of this was that parents, regardless of their faith, were left with little choice but to send their children to these schools.¹¹ This concerned Forster, and other interested parties, who disagreed with the principle that tax-payers, who were contributing to the cost of secular education, should be forced to send their children to schools that contravened their own religious beliefs.¹² The 1870 Act therefore contained a conscience clause which allowed parents to withdraw their children from religious instruction if they felt that instruction to be inappropriate.¹³ This was accompanied by a “timetable clause”, which stipulated that religious worship and education should take place either at the beginning or end of the school day, in order to make it easier for parents to manage the logistics of withdrawing their children.¹⁴ The effect of such an approach was twofold. On the one hand, it enshrined the right to difference of religion within the legal educational framework, meaning that the first major education act for England and Wales was created on a pluralist principle. On the other hand, by codifying the right to withdrawal, it allowed for the continued predominance of Anglican schools, and the elevated role of the Church of England within the education system.

After 1870 the role of the state in education increased, though the role of the churches did not diminish correspondingly. In 1899 the Board of Education was established and “charged with the superintendence of matters relating to education in England and Wales”.¹⁵ The 1902 Balfour Education Act abolished the School Boards, and placed the responsibility for education in the hands of the 318 local authorities which became responsible via rate aid for

¹¹ Chadwick, ‘The Anglican Perspective on Church Schools’, p.477.

¹² Loudon, ‘The Conscience Clause in Religious Education and Collective Worship: Conscientious Objection or Curriculum Choice?’, pp.280–82.

¹³ Chadwick, ‘The Anglican Perspective on Church Schools’, p.476.

¹⁴ Loudon, ‘The Conscience Clause in Religious Education and Collective Worship: Conscientious Objection or Curriculum Choice?’, p.280.

¹⁵ Board of Education, *Board of Education Act 1899*, p.199

<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/acts/1899-board-of-education-act.html> [Accessed 25/04/2017].

problems arising from the wear and tear of church school buildings and for teachers' salaries.¹⁶ This Act further enshrined the pluralist principle, in particular the principle that state funds, including those raised through taxation, could be used to fund not only Anglican schools, but also Catholic and Jewish schools.¹⁷

Though there were several subsequent education acts, the principles of 1902 – namely the ongoing existence of the Dual System, the role of local government in education and willingness on the part of the state to fund schools of various denominations – remained in place until the 1944 Act. As will be seen below, the 1944 Act included all of these principles within its provisions meaning that, by the time Muslims started attending schools in England in large numbers, a pluralist education system had been in place for several generations. It is for this reason that the above history, and the longevity of this approach, are significant.

2) The 1944 Education Act

The 1944 Education Act – the Butler Act – considerably expanded the role of the state in education in England, including an increase in state expenditure and the role of central government, and a focus on social engineering. Education expenditure rose from 3 per cent of GNP in 1938 to 4.5 per cent in 1965, and the number of pupils in state maintained schools rose from just over 5 million in 1947 to 9.1 million in 1965.¹⁸ The Act codified and consolidated the structure of the education system, introducing three progressive stages of education (primary, secondary and further). It raised the school leaving age, putting in place provision for further rises in the future. It replaced the Board of Education with the Ministry of Education and the President of the Board with the Minister of Education. It created two Advisory Councils, one for England and one for Wales.¹⁹ It reasserted the place of Local

¹⁶ Barber, *The Making of the 1944 Education Act*, pp.9–10.

¹⁷ Feldman, 'Why the English like Turbans: Multicultural Politics in British History', pp.291–92.

¹⁸ Barber, *The Making of the 1944 Education Act*, p.117.

¹⁹ McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction*, p.28.

Education Authorities (LEAs) at the centre of educational management and provision. It formalised the dual system, introducing three classes of state-funded denominational schools: voluntary-controlled, voluntary-aided and special agreement. It also formalised the provision of religious education, with the compulsory formation of Agreed Syllabus Conferences in each LEA area.

The LEAs

In the post-1944 world, every child in Britain was legally required to receive an education up to the age of 15. This meant that the vast majority of people living in Britain was likely to come into contact with the state education system – including the children of future Muslim immigrants. The responsibility for ensuring that everyone received such education was placed in the hands of the LEAs, who were tasked with providing schools, both primary and secondary:

sufficient in number, character and equipment to afford for all pupils opportunities for education offering such variety of instruction and training as may be desirable in view of their different ages, abilities and aptitudes.²⁰

This located the state, in the form of local government, at the centre of the education system. The responsibilities of the LEAs included establishing and maintaining primary and secondary schools, ensuring that the premises of all maintained schools met Ministry standards, monitoring the secular curriculum, determining the length and timings of the school day and the dates of terms, enforcing attendance and appointing and dismissing teachers. These responsibilities applied in county, controlled and special agreement schools.

²⁰ Board of Education, *Education Act 1944*, (London, 1944) p.5
<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/acts/1944-education-act.pdf> [Accessed 21/04/2017].

As will be seen in subsequent chapters it was over such issues which Muslim parents first came into contact with the state via the LEAs.

Though much of the responsibility for educational provision was devolved to the LEAs, there was also a degree of central government control. The framework created by the Act had the Ministry for Education at its centre, and many of the ultimate decisions lay with the Minister. While LEAs were responsible for ensuring that school premises were up to standard, it was the Minister who determined what that standard should be. Though LEAs were responsible for financing and monitoring voluntary schools, the final decision about whether an LEA should maintain or cease to maintain a particular voluntary school was made by the Minister.²¹ And while LEAs were responsible for the locally-based development of religious education syllabus, via the Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) and the development of an Agreed Syllabus, if this was not agreed upon, it was the responsibility of the Minister to impose a religious education syllabus.²² For Muslims who entered the education system in the half century following the Act, these provisions, particularly those relating to denominational schooling and religious education, had the potential to bring them into contact with not only LEAs, but also central government.

The Dual System

The Act stated that LEAs would be expected to:

“contribute towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community by securing that efficient education throughout those stages [primary,

²¹ Board of Education, *Education Act 1944*.

²² Jack Priestley, ‘Agreed Syllabuses: Their History and Development in England and Wales, 1944–2004’, *International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education*, ed. by Marian de Souza *et al.*, (Dordrecht; London: Springer, 2006), pp. 1001–1017 (p.1005).

secondary and further education] shall be available to meet the needs of the population of their area".²³

This appears to indicate that the post-1944 educational world was one in which the state, via the LEAs, intended to take an active role in the education of the nation's children. The reference to "spiritual" and "moral" education seems to cover roles previously taken mainly by the churches. Yet for all the increase in the role of the state, the post-war educational framework was one in which the churches were still very much present and active. After protracted negotiations, the Dual System remained in place, and was strengthened considerably by the Act. The state of the system by the outbreak of the Second World War could suggest that its continuation could not have been taken for granted. Many of the buildings housing church schools were in serious need of repair²⁴, and the voluntary societies that owned them were struggling to maintain them.²⁵ The system was unsustainable in its existing form. However, despite its shortcomings, there is little evidence to suggest that the abolition of the Dual System was ever considered as a serious possibility by the Board of Education, and its discussions instead focused on whether the state should increase its financial contribution.²⁶

The final settlement over church schools demonstrated a clearer link between state funding and state control than had been evident in previous education acts. The Church of England's weak financial position and its desire to see the continuation of the Dual System led to the creation of voluntary-controlled schools which were both funded and managed by the local authority, but "with certain safeguards for denominational religious instruction". After the Act, the majority of Church of England schools became voluntary-controlled.²⁷ This

²³ Board of Education, *Education Act 1944*.

²⁴ Barber, *The Making of the 1944 Education Act*, p.24.

²⁵ Green, *The Passing of Protestant England*, p.215.

²⁶ Barber, *The Making of the 1944 Education Act*, p.24.

²⁷ Chadwick, 'The Anglican Perspective on Church Schools', p.478.

demonstrates that in 1944 there was considerable willingness on the part of the state to provide a high level of funding in return for a high level of control. It also demonstrates a willingness on the part of the Anglican Church to accept such control, the reasons for which will be discussed below.

The continuation of the Dual System is particularly interesting when it is considered in relation to the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church was not happy with the idea of voluntary-controlled status. It sought, in the words of Barber, “the maximum financial assistance with the minimum loss of control”.²⁸ This meant that the voluntary-controlled option was not considered suitable, as it placed more control in the hands of the LEA than the Catholic Church was willing to concede, particularly in the areas of curriculum and admissions. The response of the state was to create voluntary-aided schools, which were designed specifically to meet the needs of the Catholics.²⁹ These differed from voluntary-controlled schools in that the governors of the school were in the position of employers of the staff, and held the responsibility for the school’s admissions policy.³⁰ The LEA would be responsible for the running costs of the school, and would contribute 50 per cent of capital building costs.³¹

In understanding how the post-1944 educational world worked, it is of considerable importance that the Board of Education was willing to negotiate separately with the Catholic Church, and ultimately to create an alternative acceptable to that Church. The negotiations with the Catholic Church were protracted and difficult. The Catholics were also in a particularly weak position, facing considerable financial difficulties.³² Yet, rather than forcing an undesirable settlement upon them, the state sought to meet their needs. It should be

²⁸ Barber, *The Making of the 1944 Education Act*, p.39.

²⁹ Green, *The Passing of Protestant England*, p.234.

³⁰ Marie Parker-Jenkins, Dimitra Hartas, and Barrie A. Irving, *In Good Faith: Schools, Religion, and Public Funding* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p.14.

³¹ Chadwick, ‘The Anglican Perspective on Church Schools’, pp.478–79.

³² Barber, *The Making of the 1944 Education Act*, p.39.

noted that this was perhaps in part because Catholic schools tended to be in areas where there were a lot of Catholics, and therefore there was a concentrated Catholic vote.³³

However, even if this is taken in mitigation, as Gerald Grace argued, the Act enhanced the educative role of the Catholic Church, placed it in partnership with the state and expanded school development “with a minimum encroachment on the church’s autonomy”.³⁴ This is indicative of an ongoing pluralism in the 1944 Act which was active in seeking to accommodate minority religious needs. There is evidence of this continuing beyond 1944: the Catholic Church was unhappy with the 50 per cent contribution to capital costs, arguing for a greater state contribution towards building costs and, though it was unsuccessful on this point in 1944, the figure gradually increased over the next 30 years, and by 1975 had reached 85 per cent.³⁵

England’s Jewish population was also accommodated in the 1944 Act, which can be seen to support the idea that the motivation for accommodating Catholic schools went beyond the desire to appeal to Catholic voters. By 1944, state-funded Jewish schools had been in existence in England for around a century. However, by the outbreak of war, few remained, with only two of the seven that had existed in London still in operation. For a variety of reasons, Jewish children began increasingly to attend board schools, receiving any Jewish education at supplementary schools.³⁶ By 1944, therefore, funding for Jewish day schools was not a major concern of English Jews. There does not appear to have been any specific lobbying of the state by Jewish representatives on this issue. Internal Board of Deputies correspondence reveals a view that there was no need for lobbying over the Education Bill as “[n]o special Jewish interests are touched in the Bill” and that rather its provisions affect

³³ Green, *The Passing of Protestant England*, p.233.

³⁴ Gerald Grace, ‘The State and Catholic Schooling in England and Wales: Politics, Ideology and Mission Integrity’, *Oxford Review of Education*, 27.4 (2001), 489–500 (p.491).

³⁵ Chadwick, ‘The Anglican Perspective on Church Schools’, p.479.

³⁶ Helena Miller, ‘Meeting the Challenge: The Jewish Schooling Phenomenon in the UK’, *Oxford Review of Education*, 27.4 (2001), 501–513 (pp.503-9).

“Jews as citizens, not as Jews”.³⁷ Yet there was clearly a willingness on the part of the state to accommodate Jews within the new framework. In January 1943, Chuter Ede, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, met with members of the Board of Deputies, explaining that the state wished to work with the Board to include Jewish needs within the educational settlement.³⁸ Then, in September 1943, Butler met with Selig Brodetsky, President of the Board of Deputies, and made clear that the government was willing to accommodate Jewish educational needs much as they were accommodating Catholic needs.³⁹ The state, therefore, showed willingness to accommodate a non-Christian minority, and did so without having any particularly strong demands placed upon it by that minority.

The Church-State Partnership

The religious aspects of the 1944 settlement did not only involve the pluralist provision for separate denominational schools; they also involved negotiations over the broader role of religion in post-war education. By the 1940s there were fears that British society as a whole was becoming less religious, and there was a desire to reverse this trend,⁴⁰ not least through a more prominent place for religious education in schools.⁴¹ This can be linked to a focus on values and morality that emerged during the war.⁴² Barber has argued that the idea of creating a “New Jerusalem” in Britain “was laced through with commitment to promoting

³⁷ London Metropolitan Archives, Board of Deputies of British Jews (BDBJ) Papers, Board of Education: Minutes, Reports and Correspondence, Letter from Brodetsky to Epstein, 14/01/44 (ACC/3121/E/02/032.)

³⁸ LMA, BDBJ Papers, Board of Education: Minutes, Reports and Correspondence, Minutes of meeting between Chuter Ede and Board of Deputies of British Jews (ACC/3121/E/02/032).

³⁹ LMA, BDBJ Papers, Board of Education: Minutes, Reports and Correspondence, Minutes of meeting between Butler and Brodetsky (ACC/3121/E/02/032).

⁴⁰ Green, *The Passing of Protestant England*, p.219.

⁴¹ Loudon, ‘The Conscience Clause in Religious Education and Collective Worship: Conscientious Objection or Curriculum Choice?’, p.276.

⁴² Loudon, ‘The Conscience Clause in Religious Education and Collective Worship: Conscientious Objection or Curriculum Choice?’, p.275.

Christian faith as the basis for policy and as a moral code for the whole of society”.⁴³

Historians often interpret the Act as having intended to promote Christian faith, and to create a Christian population.⁴⁴ This led to a strong sense throughout the negotiations that religion should continue to play a role in mainstream education in England and Wales.⁴⁵

S.J.D. Green has argued that Butler consciously sought “to draw church and state together in pursuit of Christian education for all”.⁴⁶ Chadwick agreed that this was fundamental to the Act, and that “the concept of ‘partnership’ between the government and other education providers, especially the churches, underpinned the creation of a viable maintained system of primary and secondary education”.⁴⁷ This “partnership”, whilst involving all the churches to an extent, also revealed a difference in the position of the Church of England in the education system in comparison to other religious groups. In its position as the established church, the Church of England was interested not only in the future education of Anglican children and the future of Anglican schools, but also in the future education of the population as a whole.⁴⁸ R.J.K. Freathy states that the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, “argued that the Church of England is the agent of common Christianity which provides the foundation for the national community”.⁴⁹ Green commented that Temple wished to “extend the influence of the Church of England over the whole of English society”.⁵⁰ This put it in a different position from the Catholic Church which sought as far as possible to secure a Catholic education from every Catholic child in England and Wales, and

⁴³ Barber, *The Making of the 1944 Education Act*, p.39.

⁴⁴ Green, *The Passing of Protestant England*, p.213; Priestley, ‘Agreed Syllabuses: Their History and Development in England and Wales, 1944–2004’, pp.1005–6.

⁴⁵ Loudon, ‘The Conscience Clause in Religious Education and Collective Worship: Conscientious Objection or Curriculum Choice?’, p.276.

⁴⁶ Green, *The Passing of Protestant England*, p.239.

⁴⁷ Chadwick, ‘The Anglican Perspective on Church Schools’, p.479.

⁴⁸ Chadwick, ‘The Anglican Perspective on Church Schools’, p.475.

⁴⁹ R. J. K. Freathy, ‘Ecclesiastical and Religious Factors Which Preserved Christian and Traditional Forms of Education for Citizenship in English Schools, 1934–1944’, *Oxford Review of Education*, 33.3 (2007), 367–377 (p.372).

⁵⁰ Green, *The Passing of Protestant England*, p.230.

so had relatively little interest in what went on in mainstream schools.⁵¹ It meant that both the state and the Church of England felt that a role of mainstream education was the Christian education of English children.

The desire of the Church of England to play a role in the education of children in all schools, in a society in where there were many Christians outside the Anglican church, led to the continuity of some of the key tenets of the 1870 Act: the creation of a system that allowed for specific denominational worship and education, but with the existence of a conscience clause allowing the withdrawal of those of other denominations and faiths. The Act made religious instruction and collective worship – both common practice in many schools before the war – compulsory in both primary and secondary schools.⁵² The school day was to begin with a collective act of worship in all schools; religious education according to an Agreed Syllabus became compulsory in all schools; religious education was to have an equal status with other subjects in the curriculum, was open to inspection and could be taught at any time of day.⁵³ Non-Christian minorities were to be accommodated through the continued existence of a conscience clause in the 1944 Act: as Jack Priestley stated, under the Act religious education “had to be taught but it did not have to be learned”.⁵⁴ The daily act of worship, though not religious education, was kept at the start of the school day in order to make arrangements for withdrawal easier. The Act also required that arrangements were made at both county and voluntary schools for parents to be able to withdraw their children from religious education, and receive instruction in their own religion elsewhere.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Grace, ‘The State and Catholic Schooling in England and Wales: Politics, Ideology and Mission Integrity’, pp.490–91.

⁵² Louden, ‘The Conscience Clause in Religious Education and Collective Worship: Conscientious Objection or Curriculum Choice?’, p.276.

⁵³ Chadwick, ‘The Anglican Perspective on Church Schools’, p.479.

⁵⁴ Priestley, ‘Agreed Syllabuses: Their History and Development in England and Wales, 1944–2004’, p.1007.

⁵⁵ Louden, ‘The Conscience Clause in Religious Education and Collective Worship: Conscientious Objection or Curriculum Choice?’, p.281.

To determine the content of religious education, each LEA was to convene an “Agreed Syllabus Conference”, which would decide upon the religious education (RE) syllabus to be taught in controlled and provided schools in that LEA area. The idea of this was that the RE curriculum could be determined locally, in accordance with the needs of the local population. They were to consist of four panels: Church of England; other religious denominations; the LEA and teachers, and all four panels had to agree on the syllabus.⁵⁶ The broader idea behind RE in the 1944 Act, however, was that it required that RE “shall not include any catechism or formulary which is distinctive of any particular religious denominations”.⁵⁷ This led to “a synthesis of denominationally uncontested, common Christianity that could be taught by competent teachers to children of any religious persuasion, bar Roman Catholics and Jews”.⁵⁸ That is to say that it could be taught to Anglican and Nonconformist children in mainstream and controlled schools.

The educational world in the post-war period, then, was one which placed the values of the established church at the heart of the education system. Green has argued that:

it was a protestant Act It was a piece of legislation conceived with the interests, prejudices and sensibilities of indigenous Anglicans and nonconformists – but not Roman Catholics – in mind.⁵⁹

There is certainly a degree of truth in this, and the educational world that Muslims entered was one which heavily reflected the Christianity, and specifically the Protestantism of the majority of the population. The Act consolidated the partnership of Church and state in Britain. It bolstered the position of the established Church and reinforced the centrality of religion, and Protestantism, in mainstream education. However, the Act also made

⁵⁶ Priestley, ‘Agreed Syllabuses: Their History and Development in England and Wales, 1944–2004’, p.1005.

⁵⁷ Board of Education, *Education Act 1944*.

⁵⁸ Green, *The Passing of Protestant England*, pp.236–37.

⁵⁹ Green, *The Passing of Protestant England*, p.214.

considerable provision for the accommodation of religious difference, formalising the pluralist approach that had been exercised previously. This can be seen in the funding of Catholic and Jewish schools, in the conscience clause and in the approach taken to the Agreed Syllabus. Pluralism was extended to all those religions that had been accommodated previously, and the Act did not put a limit on its future scope. The framework created in 1944 was still in place when Muslim children began attending schools in England and Wales. As there were no Muslim schools in Britain at this time, the vast majority of these pupils would attend county schools. When they began to do so, there was theoretically a framework in place that was able to accommodate their needs as a religious minority, and which could potentially allow them to worship and receive instruction in their own religion as part of the mainstream education system, and even potentially allow them to establish their own state-funded schools.

However, the post-1944 world was created by those who did not, and could not have envisaged the developments that led to mass migration to Britain of those from the former colonies and beyond, bringing with it a greater diversity of religious practice and considerable numbers from a variety of religions previously only encountered in relatively small numbers in Britain. So while it is true to say that the framework created in 1944 *could* accommodate these minorities, whether it *would* do or not was a different matter. As will be discussed shortly, the national, racial and ethnic composition of the newly-arrived population raised questions and difficulties that had the potential to affect their ability to access this framework.

3) The Consensus Years

Of similar importance to the provisions of the Act is the context in which these provisions were implemented. The economic and social context determined how the provisions were

interpreted, and how the framework created by the Act was used. This in turn determined how the Act was likely to affect minorities, including Muslims, as they arrived in Britain.

Expansion and Expenditure

In Britain, the decades immediately following the Second World War were a period of expansion, of high expenditure and of an increased state role in economic matters. In particular, it was a period of expansion for the public sector and of “big government”, both in Britain and in western states more generally.⁶⁰ This period was one of “consensus”, in which the major political parties agreed on certain key features of government.⁶¹ Roger Middleton has identified five core areas upon which this consensus was based: the mixed economy and public ownership of basic utilities; full employment through Keynesian economic policies; the conciliation of trade unions as well as a degree of freedom for private industry; the welfare state; and the maintenance of a suitable “geopolitical posture” as Britain retreated from empire.⁶² The idea of an absolute consensus is problematic, for, as Middleton has acknowledged, there were considerable divisions, not least a lack of ideological agreement between the Labour and Conservative parties. However, the spending records of the two parties when in government suggest striking similarities in economic policy despite such ideological differences, and that the growth rate of state expenditure rose under both parties until the mid-1970s.⁶³ This can be seen in the rise in public expenditure as a percentage of GDP from 28.1 per cent in 1938, to 38.9 per cent in 1951 and to 43.7 per cent in 1973.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Roger Middleton, *The British Economy since 1945: Engaging with the Debate* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp.73–74.

⁶¹ Rodney Lowe, ‘Postwar Welfare’, in *Twentieth-Century Britain: Economic, Social and Cultural Change*, ed. by Paul Johnson (London: Longman, 1994), pp. 356–73 (p.357).

⁶² Middleton, *The British Economy since 1945*, pp.71–72.

⁶³ Middleton, *The British Economy since 1945*, p.82.

⁶⁴ Roger Middleton, ‘Economic Policy and Management’, in *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain. Volume 2: 1870 to the Present*, ed. by Roderick Floud, Jane Humphries, and Paul A. Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 476–505 (p. Table 18.2).

This period of growth had a direct impact on education, which saw considerable expansion in the post-war decades. As a result of the baby boom from the late 1940s, the school-age population rose from less than 5 million at the end of the Second World War to more than 6 million by 1960.⁶⁵ The willingness of the government to spend money on the public sector can be linked to a belief that improving education could palliate social inequality by opening opportunities for all.⁶⁶ This economic approach was also governed by a belief that, as the post-war economy developed, there would be more jobs requiring a skilled workforce, and that it was the role of the education system to create such a workforce. Investment in education was seen, in the words of Phillip Brown, as “both a sure way of maintaining economic competitiveness, and, for the individual, an insurance policy against unemployment”.⁶⁷ In the years following the Second World War, this led to what Robert Millward described as “all-embracing state provision in health and education”.⁶⁸ Spending on education rose steadily during these years.⁶⁹ The growth rate of real expenditure on education rose considerably, from 3.3 in the years 1951-5 to 6.3 in the years 1959-64, though then dropping to 4.1 in the period 1964-70.⁷⁰ There was a threefold rise in expenditure per pupil in the years between 1947 and 1973.⁷¹

The period of economic expansion and high spending also provided fertile ground for the LEAs to flourish, thanks to a willingness on the part of central government to finance the

⁶⁵ Peter Mandler, ‘Educating the Nation I: Schools’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (Sixth Series)*, 24 (2014), 5–28 (p.16).

⁶⁶ Les Bell, ‘Back to the Future: The Development of Educational Policy in England’, *Journal of Educational Administration*, 37.3 (1999), 200–229 (p.202).

⁶⁷ Phillip Brown, ‘The “Third Wave”: Education and the Ideology of Parentocracy’, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 11.1 (1990), 65–86 (p.70).

⁶⁸ Robert Millward, ‘The Growth of the Public Sector’, in *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain. Volume 2: 1870 to the Present.*, ed. by Roderick Floud, Jane Humphries, and Paul A. Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 387–415 (p.400).

⁶⁹ Roger Middleton, *Government versus the Market: The Growth of the Public Sector, Economic Management and British Economic Performance, c.1890-1979* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1996), p.506.

⁷⁰ Middleton, *Government versus the Market*, p.506.

⁷¹ Vincent Carpentier, ‘Public Expenditure on Education and Economic Growth in the UK, 1833-2000’, *History of Education*, 32.1 (2003), 1–15 (p.12).

expanding provision that LEAs felt necessary to meet the increasing school population.⁷² As Vernon Bogdanor explained in a 1979 article, “[w]here there are financial resources for expansion conflict is likely to be less severe, since each interest can secure a share of what is available”.⁷³ An effect of the post-war economic mood of the government was a high level of flexibility, and a willingness on the part of central government to provide the funds to LEAs, and then defer to them in decisions relating to the needs of a particular area. Though the 1944 Act theoretically gave considerable power to the Minister and Ministry of Education, during this period the state was largely willing to provide LEAs with funding without having very much in the way of control over, or at times knowledge of, how that money was being spent. This could be seen in the organisation of schooling after the 1944 Act. Section 11 of the Act required each LEA to draw up plans, in consultation with the Ministry of Education, specifying the nature of local provision in its own area.⁷⁴ Yet though the Ministry encouraged the implementation of a system of tripartite education, with grammar, modern and technical schools in each area⁷⁵, it did not compel LEAs to develop plans along these lines.⁷⁶ While many LEAs did implement such a system, others opted for a bipartite system, without technical schools.⁷⁷ Others still, particularly those in rural areas where there were insufficient pupils numbers to warrant the creation of multiple schools, submitted plans for comprehensive schools. Moreover, such plans were often, although not always, approved by

⁷² Tim Brighouse, ‘The View of a Participant During the Second Half—a Perspective on LEAs since 1952’, *Oxford Review of Education*, 28.2–3 (2002), 187–196 (p.190).

⁷³ Vernon Bogdanor, ‘Power and Participation’, *Oxford Review of Education*, 5.2 (1979), 157–168 (p.159).

⁷⁴ Gary McCulloch, ‘Local Education Authorities and the Organisation of Secondary Education, 1943–1950’, *Oxford Review of Education*, 28.2–3 (2002), 235–246 (p.235).

⁷⁵ McCulloch, ‘Local Education Authorities and the Organisation of Secondary Education, 1943–1950’, p.235.

⁷⁶ David Crook, ‘Local Authorities and Comprehensivisation in England and Wales, 1944–1974’, *Oxford Review of Education*, 28.2–3 (2002), 247–260 (p.248).

⁷⁷ McCulloch, ‘Local Education Authorities and the Organisation of Secondary Education, 1943–1950’, pp. 238–39.

the Ministry.⁷⁸ This suggests that there was a considerable degree of devolution to local authorities, and of autonomy on the part of those authorities.

Maurice Kogan has explored the benefits of a locally-administered system for the accommodation of diversity. In his article 'The Subordination of Local Government and the Compliant Society', he cited a 1950 Ministry of Education report which stated that the aim of the 1944 Act had been "to build a single, but not a uniform, system out of many diverse elements."⁷⁹ He argued that "[f]or a long time, ministers were loath to interfere in what local authorities did even when some of their decisions were thought to be wrong or unfair".⁸⁰ He cited the following from John Stuart Mill:

"[t]he very object of having local representation is in order that those who have an interest in common which they do not share with the general body of their countrymen may manage that joint interest by themselves".⁸¹

The potential benefits of such devolvement of power were also alluded to by Peter Mandler in his 2013 presidential address to the Royal Historical Society in which he commented that the "decentralising principle was one of the healthy sources of vagueness in the Butler Act of 1944, which left so much in the hands of the local authorities".⁸² Particularly important in the comments made by both Mandler and Kogan is the suggestion that the ability to accommodate diversity, and to allow for local difference, was a conscious and intentional aspect of the 1944 Act. It was designed to allow for the ad hoc, flexible accommodation of those needs which arose, rather than to achieve conformity in education across the country.

⁷⁸ Crook, 'Local Authorities and Comprehensivisation in England and Wales, 1944-1974', p. 248.

⁷⁹ Maurice Kogan, 'The Subordination of Local Government and the Compliant Society', *Oxford Review of Education*, 28.2-3 (2002), 331-342 (p.332).

⁸⁰ Kogan, 'The Subordination of Local Government and the Compliant Society', p. 333.

⁸¹ Kogan, 'The Subordination of Local Government and the Compliant Society', p. 332.

⁸² Mandler, 'Educating the Nation I: Schools', p. 22.

The implication of this is that the education system that Muslim pupils entered in England in the 1960s was one that was designed and implemented in such a way that there was considerable scope for the accommodation of diversity. It was not only designed to deal with religious diversity, but also more broadly to accommodate the varying needs of those living in different local areas. The process of migration outlined in the introduction, and particularly chain migration, had the effect that minority groups including Muslims were not evenly distributed in England and Wales, and there have been high concentrations of particular minority groups in particular areas.⁸³ This meant that Muslim educational needs were likely to initially arise in those areas where concentrated groups of South Asians or other Muslims had settled. The power of the LEAs during this period meant that the educational world entered by Muslim children was one that was set up to respond to just such locally occurring needs. Their initial interactions with the state, therefore, were with a state that was set up to accommodate and sympathetic to the needs of, if not specifically Muslims, then minority and religious minority needs.

This approach and the era of LEA control lasted until the early 1970s and, as suggested earlier in the discussion of economic policy, continued regardless of which party was in government at the time. Its continued existence can be seen, for example, in the approach to the 1965 DES Circular 10/65, which requested, but did not require, LEAs to submit plans for comprehensivisation within 12 months.⁸⁴ This was in part a reflection of what was already occurring – during the period of Conservative government from 1951-64, the number of comprehensive schools rose from 5 to 195, with close to 100 LEAs contemplating a shift to comprehensivisation.⁸⁵ It is not the case that there was agreement within or across

⁸³ Ceri Peach, 'Islam, Ethnicity and South Asian Religions in the London 2001 Census', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 31.3 (2006), 353–370; *Ethnicity in the 1991 Census. Vol.2, The Ethnic Minority Populations of Great Britain*, ed. by Ceri Peach (London: HMSO, 1996), pp.10–14.

⁸⁴ Crook, 'Local Authorities and Comprehensivisation in England and Wales, 1944-1974', p.252.

⁸⁵ Christopher Knight, *The Making of Tory Education Policy in Post-War Britain 1950-1986* (London: Falmer, 1990), p.15.

the parties about the merits of comprehensive education – there was not.⁸⁶ But what is important is that regardless of these broader arguments, in the mid-1960s the government was still willing to defer to the LEAs as to what sort of provision was most suitable for their particular areas. The circular stated that “the evolution of separate schools into a comprehensive system must be a constructive process requiring careful planning by local education authorities in consultation with all those concerned”.⁸⁷ In this choice of language, there was room for flexibility and for LEA autonomy. This process again highlights the role of LEAs as providing the impetus for education policy. As Mandler argued, “the prime movers in educational reform were not in Whitehall or Westminster, but in a couple of hundred local authorities, and millions of homes around the country, drawn from all political persuasions”.⁸⁸

There were, however, hints of a shift in approach in some of the responses to the circular. Many Conservative-run LEAs chose not to submit plans for comprehensivisation, not because of local needs necessarily, but because they favoured selective education.⁸⁹ The role of political ideology was to become more prominent in education, and this can be interpreted as an early sign of how this could work at a local level. However, the National Advisory Committee of the Conservative and Unionist Teachers Association’s motion of May 1966 in response to Circular 10/65 stated that it:

⁸⁶ Knight, *The Making of Tory Education Policy in Post-War Britain 1950-1986*, p.28.

⁸⁷ DES Circular 10/65 ‘The Organisation of Secondary Education’, 1965 <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/des/circular10-65.html> [Accessed 11/07/2017]; Clyde Chitty, ‘The Role and Status of LEAs: Post-War Pride and Fin de Siècle Uncertainty’, *Oxford Review of Education*, 28.2–3 (2002), 261–273 (p.265).

⁸⁸ Mandler, ‘Educating the Nation I: Schools’, p.19.

⁸⁹ Crook, ‘Local Authorities and Comprehensivisation in England and Wales, 1944-1974’, p.252.

attempts to blackmail Local Education Authorities into re-organising Secondary Education in a manner which they do not consider to be in the best interests of children and which is directly contrary to the 1944 Education Act.⁹⁰

This criticised the Circular for being too strongly worded in its request of LEAs, suggesting that the problem was that it could prevent LEAs from adapting in order to meet the needs of their local area. It advocated the idea that LEAs knew best how education should be managed in a particular area and should be allowed the scope to run things as they saw fit, demonstrating that the power of the LEAs was still acknowledged and accepted in the mid-1960s.

There was also considerable freedom given to LEAs, and to individual schools, over curriculum. The 1944 Act had left curriculum in the hands of the LEAs, many of which were happy to devolve this further and leave it up to individual schools.⁹¹ There had been some moves, for example under David Eccles as Minister for Education in the late 1950s, towards more direct state involvement, such as the replacement in 1964 of the Curriculum Study Group with the Schools Council for Curriculum and Examinations.⁹² The 1967 Plowden Report *Children and Their Primary Schools* offered curriculum guidance, encouraging child-centred, progressive methods of teaching, and discouraged selection and the streaming of children by ability. It also reinforced the need to adapt provision in different areas, and encouraged positive discrimination (the redistribution of certain educational resources in favour of those schools and areas deemed most in need) for schools in deprived areas.⁹³ It encouraged such flexibility in areas where there were disproportionate numbers of children

⁹⁰ Conservative Party Archive, Minutes of meeting of National Advisory Committee of the Conservative and Unionist Teachers Association, 21/05/66 (CCO505/1/3).

⁹¹ Chitty, 'The Role and Status of LEAs', p.263.

⁹² McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction*, p.34.

⁹³ McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction*, p.34.

who were unable to speak English.⁹⁴ This offers an indication of how the devolution of curriculum to LEAs was of direct relevance to minority groups, and potentially relevant to Muslim children. Such devolvement of curriculum lasted at least into the 1970s. This became apparent following DES Circular 14/77 which requested basic information regarding curriculum policies from LEAs: few LEAs had sufficient information about what was going on in schools in terms of curriculum to be able to satisfactorily respond.⁹⁵ This is further indication of the willingness of central government during this period to provide funding to LEAs without knowing – or even requiring the LEAs themselves to necessarily know – the detail of what that money was being spent on. Shortly after this, however, things began to change.

4) The End of Consensus

The period when Muslims began to enter the state education system in significant numbers was, then, a period of expansion, of high spending and of the capacity to accommodate minority needs at a local level. However, this period was short-lived, and within around a decade of the beginning of interactions between Muslims and the state over education, significant changes began to occur within the education system. What consensus there was found itself under threat by the late 1960s, and by the end of the 1970s was the subject of a head-on ideological attack. By the time the Conservatives came to power in 1979, many of the political, economic and social assumptions that had underpinned the post-war consensus were being questioned, and the role of the LEAs was seriously threatened. By the late 1980s, and Margaret Thatcher's third term as Prime Minister, education found itself the subject of something of a revolution.

⁹⁴ Great Britain. Department of Education and Science, *The Education of Immigrants*. ([S.l.]: Department of Education and Science: HMSO, 1971), p.26.

⁹⁵ Chitty, 'The Role and Status of LEAs', p.266.

The economic crisis of the 1970s brought about a shift, both ideologically and practically, which manifested itself in a move away from Keynesian approaches to economic management⁹⁶ and towards monetarist policies⁹⁷ which led to cuts in government spending and the reduction of the role of the state.⁹⁸ As argued above, the educational approach based on “consensus” had been considerably aided by relative prosperity, and by a willingness on the part of the government to spend money on education.⁹⁹ The ability of the government to provide sufficient funds for the LEAs to act largely independently was dependent on both the existence of those funds, and on a philosophy of high spending. Yet by the early 1970s the British economy was struggling. Underlying economic problems were exacerbated by the oil crisis of 1973-4 and the terms of the subsequent International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan of 1976, one of the conditions of which was cuts in public expenditure.¹⁰⁰ Middleton argued that the intervention of the IMF led to “the most significant retrenchment of the whole postwar period”.¹⁰¹

The economic crisis had a direct impact on the state’s approach to education. The possibility of a reduction of public spending on education was made clear by the Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan in a 1976 speech at Ruskin College in Oxford, when he stated that “in present circumstances there can be little expectation of further increased resources being made available, at any rate for the time being”.¹⁰² This shift predated the arrival of Thatcher as prime minister in 1979 and therefore cannot be understood entirely as a consequence of

⁹⁶ Clyde Chitty, *The Education System Transformed* (Tisbury: Baseline, 1999), p.12.

⁹⁷ RAW. Rhodes, *Understanding Governance: Policy Networks, Governance, Reflexivity and Accountability* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997), p.113.

⁹⁸ Jim Tomlinson, ‘Thatcher, Monetarism and the Politics of Inflation’, in *Making Thatcher’s Britain*, ed. by Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 62-77 (pp.73–77).

⁹⁹ Chitty, *The Education System Transformed*, p.12.

¹⁰⁰ Hugh Atkinson and Stuart Wilks-Heeg, *Local Government from Thatcher to Blair: The Politics of Creative Autonomy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), p.29.

¹⁰¹ Middleton, *The British Economy since 1945*, p 93.

¹⁰² James Callaghan, ‘Ruskin College Speech’, 1976 <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/speeches/1976ruskin.html> [Accessed 25/04/2017].

the arrival of the Conservative government in that year. In his article 'Tale of a death exaggerated: How Keynesian Policies Survived the 1970s', Jim Tomlinson argued that there were "unprecedentedly large cuts in public spending" in 1976-7, during Callaghan's time as prime minister.¹⁰³ The percentage of GDP that went on public expenditure had risen from 39.3 per cent in 1972 to 46.3 per cent in 1976, and then dropped to 43.8 per cent by 1977 and 42.7 per cent by 1979.¹⁰⁴ There was also a reduction in the percentage of public expenditure that went on education, from 12.9 per cent in 1970 to 11.9 per cent in 1979.¹⁰⁵ During the same period, as a result of rising unemployment the percentage of public expenditure that went on income maintenance rose from 18.8 per cent to 21.8 per cent, suggesting that the Department for Education was in competition with other departments for an already reduced pool of money. The effects of this can be seen more starkly when figures for the growth of real expenditure on education are taken into account, falling from 4.1 from 1964-70, to 3.8 from 1970-74, and then to 0.6 1974-79.¹⁰⁶ Les Bell described this as a shift from "encouraging well-resourced expansion" in education to "managing a severe contraction".¹⁰⁷

The move away from a high-spending, low-intervention approach led to restrictions on local expenditure¹⁰⁸, which had the potential to have a direct impact on the independence of the LEAs. Chitty argued that this caused a breakdown in the "trust and confidence that central government had once reported in the wisdom and good sense of local education authorities" and that the "constructive cooperation" seen in Circular 10/65 "could not survive the economic dislocation and uncertainties of the mid-1970s".¹⁰⁹ Kogan similarly

¹⁰³ Jim Tomlinson, 'Tale of a Death Exaggerated: How Keynesian Policies Survived the 1970s', *Contemporary British History*, 21.4 (2007), 429–48 (p.437).

¹⁰⁴ Middleton, *Government versus the Market*, p.92.

¹⁰⁵ Middleton, *Government versus the Market*, p.506.

¹⁰⁶ Middleton, *Government versus the Market*, p.506.

¹⁰⁷ Bell, 'Back to the Future: The Development of Educational Policy in England', p.204.

¹⁰⁸ Rhodes, *Understanding Governance*, p.113.

¹⁰⁹ Chitty, 'The Role and Status of LEAs', p.266.

referred to the “seismic changes” in the relationship between central and local government, including “an ebbing of trust” and “a serious breakdown in consensus and style on many of the issues that fell between the centre and local areas”.¹¹⁰ Within this breakdown of consensus and trust were the seeds of the demise of the locally-administered system that had previously been a key locus in the accommodation of minorities.

Concurrent with, and closely linked to, the changing economic situation were shifts in the dominant educational philosophies. These shifts appeared across the political spectrum, but particularly on the right-wing. The need to reduce spending, along with rises in local taxation in the mid-1970s¹¹¹, led to close scrutiny, by both the government and those in opposition, of educational provision, and under such scrutiny education was found wanting. Following the oil crisis and the economic downturn, the job market reduced in size, and there is evidence that key politicians and thinkers on both the left and right wing viewed education as a commodity for those seeking employment. They blamed unemployment, and particularly youth unemployment on “inadequately educated young people and the school from which they came”.¹¹² They were also critical of the progressive, child-centred approaches that had been advocated by Plowden and which had been popular in the 1960s and early 1970s, deeming them to have failed to successfully educate the population as a workforce capable of dealing with the needs of late twentieth century Britain. Such thinking was clearly evident in the Black Papers, produced by a number of prominent right-wing educationists between 1969 and 1977. Their broad overall argument was that the education system since 1944 had failed to adequately educate children. They argued that literacy and mathematical skills were poor, and blamed progressive educational approaches for this. They criticised comprehensive schooling as perpetuating social inequality, and argued in

¹¹⁰ Kogan, ‘The Subordination of Local Government and the Compliant Society’, p.331.

¹¹¹ John Davis, ‘The Inner London Education Authority and the William Tyndale Junior School Affair, 1974-1976’, *Oxford Review of Education*, 28.2-3 (2002), 275-298 (p.281).

¹¹² Bell, ‘Back to the Future: The Development of Educational Policy in England’, p.204.

favour of selective schools and more parental choice. They also argued for the greater monitoring of education through testing children at various stages of their education.¹¹³

The themes that emerged from the Black Papers – the need for an improvement in standards, for greater accountability and for increased parental choice – were echoed on the left by Callaghan’s Ruskin College speech. He stated that he had “heard complaints from industry that new recruits from the schools sometimes do not have the basic tools to do the job that is required”, arguing that “[i]n today’s world, higher standards are demanded than were required yesterday and there are simply fewer jobs for those without skill”.¹¹⁴ He argued that parents and industry should be included in the educational partnership on the basis that it was they, along with the government, who funded education and who must be satisfied by what was going on in schools.¹¹⁵ He also argued in favour of a “core curriculum”, and for the “role of the inspectorate in favour of national standards” and made a case for a stronger, more centrally-driven examinations system.¹¹⁶ Chitty argues that Callaghan shifted the “dominant metaphor of informed educational discourse from “partnership” to “accountability”.¹¹⁷ His speech was part of the wider “Great Debate” on education which, in the words of Crook, “shifted the focus away from structures and towards the issues of standards, curriculum and teacher training”.¹¹⁸ Mandler has also commented on the “language of ‘standards’” which he described as an “element of educational reform jargon closely associated with the New Right”.¹¹⁹ He linked this to “accountability”, arguing that “[f]or New Right champions of ‘standards’, the only way to measure educational quality was

¹¹³ Charles Brian Cox and Anthony Edward Dyson, *Fight for education: a black paper* (London: Critical Quarterly Society, 1969); Charles Brian Cox and Rhodes Boyson, *Black paper 1975: the fight for education* (London: Dent, 1975); Brian Cox and Rhodes Boyson, *Black Paper 1977* (London: Temple Smith, 1977).

¹¹⁴ Callaghan, ‘Ruskin College Speech’.

¹¹⁵ Robert Phillips, ‘Education, the State and the Politics of Reform’, in *Education, Reform and the State: Twenty-Five Years of Politics, Policy and Practice*, by J. Furlong, 2001, pp. 12-28 (p.13).

¹¹⁶ Callaghan, ‘Ruskin College Speech’.

¹¹⁷ Chitty, *The Education System Transformed*, p.266.

¹¹⁸ Crook, ‘Local Authorities and Comprehensivisation in England and Wales, 1944-1974’, p. 258.

¹¹⁹ Mandler, ‘Educating the Nation I: Schools’, p. 23.

testing the publication of test results for individual schools (or even individual teachers) would promote competition between schools and thus drive standards up further.

‘Accountability’ was thus primarily about exposing schools to market test”.¹²⁰

These shifts in perception of education, as well as in approaches to government and the economy more generally, must also be understood as part of a broader attack on public spending and “consensus” politics which were at least in part the result of a shift towards neoliberalism and the New Right in British politics in the late 1970s. Middleton has argued that the election of Thatcher was a turning point not so much because her governments “succeeded in rolling back the frontiers of state, not least in terms of expenditure and taxation”, but rather because the economic crisis “shifted quite profoundly the conception of government’s capacity to engineer economic and social advance”.¹²¹ He argued that in the mid-1970s, “the government itself begins to be seen as the cause of Britain’s economic problem” and that for “the New Right, consensus was wrong-headed and had brought Britain’s economy and society to the brink of disaster” and therefore “had to be abandoned”.¹²² This was broadly corroborated by Ben Jackson in his book chapter ‘The Think-Tank Archipelago: Thatcher and Neo-Liberalism’, in which he described the view of neoliberals that “the continual expansion of social democratic institutions and policies in the western democracies was eroding both individual liberty and economic efficiency”. Neoliberals, he argued, were critical of the power given to “collective agencies, especially the state and unions, at the expense of free exchange between individuals promoted by markets”, and thus “sought to reduce the power of such collective agencies”.¹²³ This led to a view that collective agencies, including the state in the form of local government, were

¹²⁰ Mandler, ‘Educating the Nation I: Schools’, p. 25.

¹²¹ Middleton, *The British Economy since 1945*, p.75.

¹²² Middleton, *The British Economy since 1945*, p.72.

¹²³ Ben Jackson, ‘The Think-Tank Archipelago: Thatcherism and Neo-Liberalism’, in *Making Thatcher’s Britain*, ed. by Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 43–61 (pp.50–51).

“primarily self-interested, concealing their own sectarian agendas with rhetoric about the public interest”.¹²⁴ In his 2008 article ‘Hollowing Out the State: Public Choice Theory and the Critique of Keynesian Social Democracy’, Noel Thompson argued that this view, which he placed in the context of public choice theory, was at the heart of the ideas being put forward by think tanks such as the Institute of Economic Affairs and the Centre for Policy Studies, which came to influence Thatcher and her governments in the 1980s.¹²⁵

These new ideas led the Conservative government of the 1980s to seek to roll back the state. Tomlinson argued that by the 1970s this approach had become a key facet of the Conservative narrative of the post-war decades which viewed economic problems as “symptoms of a profound, long-term malaise in the British economy and society”.¹²⁶ He commented that the

expanding role of the state under the Labour government of the 1970s provided the basis for Conservatives to tell both declinist accounts of the long-run significance of such expansion, and apocalyptic stories of what would happen if this expansion were not reversed.¹²⁷

This narrative, and the consequent desire to redress this malaise and reverse the economic and political behaviours they believed to have caused it, were fundamental to the stance of the Conservative Party during Thatcher’s time in office, and had the potential to impact on education policy. Such interpretations also became the dominant political narrative on the events of the 1970s and 1980s. Tomlinson wrote that the economic crisis:

opened a political space for those on both Left and Right who wanted to claim the crisis as a long-term culminating episode, and this political narrative triumphed in

¹²⁴ Jackson, ‘The Think-Tank Archipelago: Thatcherism and Neo-Liberalism’, p.52.

¹²⁵ Noel W. Thompson, ‘Hollowing Out the State : Public Choice Theory and the Critique of Keynesian Social Democracy’, *Contemporary British History*, 22.3 (2008), 355–82.

¹²⁶ Jim Tomlinson, ‘Thatcher, Monetarism and the Politics of Inflation’, p.62.

¹²⁷ Jim Tomlinson, ‘Thatcher, Monetarism and the Politics of Inflation’, p.73.

1979 with the election of Mrs Thatcher, whose central political claim was precisely that the problems of the 1970s were the consequences of the whole period of mistaken policies pursued by Labour and Conservatives alike since 1945.¹²⁸

Saunders similarly argued that the Thatcherite “diagnosis” was “far from the only reading in play”, and the fact that “it became the hegemonic narrative was Thatcher’s first great achievement, and served as a foundation for all others”.¹²⁹ The dominance of this interpretation has meant that it has the potential to colour all other readings of this period, including those which look at education. Mandler highlighted that since the 1970s “the democratic public discourse about schools has been dominated by a diverse set of issues – curricular reform, “standards”, accountability, “parental choice”, observing that “on the whole, though not entirely the Right has done better in setting the terms of this public discourse than the left”. He supported this by referring to New Right views on “market competition” which “have inspired new testing regimes, league tables, better information for parents about school performance, independent management of schools and parental choice”. The Left, however, “offers as alternatives to market mechanisms only alleged instruments of collective control – local authorities, teachers’ unions, class consciousness – that have lost salience and public support”.¹³⁰

These shifts led to a period of uncertainty within the education system, not least for minorities. The day-to-day running of the education system changed relatively little: it was still a system that was locally-administered and which had various structures in place that would be able to accommodate minority needs. Yet though the framework remained the same, the economic structures which underpinned it were shifting, as were the dominant

¹²⁸ Jim Tomlinson, ‘Tale of a Death Exaggerated’, p.441.

¹²⁹ Robert Saunders, “‘Crisis? What Crisis?’: Thatcherism and the Seventies”, in *Making Thatcher’s Britain*, ed. by Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 25–42 (p.25).

¹³⁰ Mandler, ‘Educating the Nation I: Schools’, p.27.

political and educational philosophies. This was perhaps exacerbated by changes in the structures of local government in 1974 which set up larger local government units than had previously existed.¹³¹ A side effect of this change was that it undermined the role of independent councillors, leading to a rise in partisan politics at a local level, with political parties dominating most local authorities since the 1974 changes.¹³² This meant that though the framework and structures had not changed, the people acting within those structures at a local level had, at least in some areas. Moreover, those personnel were more likely, from the mid-1970s, to be involved in partisan politics and therefore potentially affected by the shifts in educational philosophy outlined above. This had the potential to affect the interactions of Muslims with LEAs in certain areas, even though the educational framework, structures and legislation had not yet changed. Such changes would, however, come over the next decade following the election of a Conservative government in 1979.

5) Thatcherism

The arrival of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister in 1979 brought with it the crystallisation of many of the themes that had emerged in the 1970s. Thatcherism blamed the economic crisis, and also Britain's perceived industrial and moral decay, on the collectivist economic and social policies of the post-war period.¹³³ Thatcher herself, drawing on neoliberal ideas and the ideologies of the New Right, was hostile to those institutions which she believed represented and implemented such policies.¹³⁴ Her government, in the words of Atkinson and Wilks-Heeg, "was concerned to rein in what it perceived to be a bloated public sector and was deeply suspicious of Labour-controlled local authorities".¹³⁵ This comment alludes to the fact that local authorities were also often a key site of power for the left, and of leftist

¹³¹ Atkinson and Wilks-Heeg, *Local Government from Thatcher to Blair*, p.18.

¹³² Atkinson and Wilks-Heeg, *Local Government from Thatcher to Blair*, p.26; Bogdanor, 'Power and Participation', p.165.

¹³³ Chitty, 'The Role and Status of LEAs', p.266.

¹³⁴ Chitty, 'The Role and Status of LEAs', p.266.

¹³⁵ Atkinson and Wilks-Heeg, *Local Government from Thatcher to Blair*, p.29.

opposition to the Thatcher government.¹³⁶ Thatcher was particularly critical of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) which she viewed as high-spending, ineffective and a barrier to the effective development of the education system.¹³⁷ Such views were present in other key figures in the Conservative Party in this period. In his autobiography the former Conservative MP Rhodes Boyson referred to the ILEA as “crafty”, describing its “machinations” in relation to attempts to close a failing school.¹³⁸ Kenneth Baker, in his memoirs, outlined his opposition to the ILEA – which he referred to as “the last of the big spenders” – from the late 1970s, noting that it “educated 4 per cent of the country’s children but spent 8 per cent of the country’s budget for schools”.¹³⁹ He stated that “I vowed that I would do everything I could to bring an end to an Education Authority where dogma took precedence over good education”.¹⁴⁰ Ken Clarke, looking back at the Conservative government of the 1980s, referred to schools which had “escaped” from local authority control.¹⁴¹ These views led to what Roger Dale referred to as “the gradual removal of education from the place in the public expenditure sun it had enjoyed for the previous 20 years or more”.¹⁴² LEAs, which remained the main locus of educational provision for much of Thatcher’s time as Prime Minister, found themselves under financial pressure which affected their ability to make changes. As Mandler stated in his discussion of the desire of some LEAs to return to selective education in the 1980s, many such LEAs “had little appetite for more upheaval that would require money they did not have”.¹⁴³

¹³⁶ Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.461.

¹³⁷ Chitty, ‘The Role and Status of LEAs’, p.266.

¹³⁸ Rhodes Boyson, *Speaking My Mind: The Autobiography of Rhodes Boyson*. (London: P Owen, 1995), p.166.

¹³⁹ Kenneth Baker, *The Turbulent Years: My Life in Politics* (London: Faber, 1993), pp.223–24.

¹⁴⁰ Baker, *The Turbulent Years*, p.224.

¹⁴¹ Ken Clarke, *Kind of Blue: A Political Memoir* (London: Macmillan, 2016), p.272.

¹⁴² Roger Dale, ‘Thatcherism and Education’, *Contemporary Education Policy*, 1983, 233–255 (p.250).

¹⁴³ Mandler, ‘Educating the Nation I: Schools’, p.22.

The desire to decrease the size of the state was accompanied by a desire to increase the size of the market. Robert Saunders argued that, in the context of her support of private property over public ownership, Thatcher “began to trumpet the democratising power of the market as a complement to strictly political institutions”.¹⁴⁴ Middleton made a similar point, arguing that from 1983 onwards there were “efforts to make markets more efficient and to broaden the influence of market disciplines on public sector activities”.¹⁴⁵ This meant that, though the education system remained firmly in the public sector, the language politicians used to describe it began to shift.

Thatcher was also critical of child-centred approaches to education, arguing that these had resulted in a drop in standards and that “too many people left school without a basic knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic”.¹⁴⁶ In a speech to the Young Conservative Conference in February 1987, she argued that parents wanted:

traditional values and a framework of discipline. This means a policy of increasing choice and raising standards. It means insisting that every child is taught certain basic subjects. It means taking some powers away from the Haringeys and the Brents and giving them to the parents, governors and head teachers, where they belong.¹⁴⁷

At the same time, she favoured a degree of centralisation in a curriculum of core subjects, writing in her memoirs that the “state could not just ignore what children learned: they were, after all, its future citizens and we had a duty to them”.¹⁴⁸ These views were to govern education policy over the subsequent fifteen or so years.

¹⁴⁴ Saunders, “‘Crisis? What Crisis?’: Thatcherism and the Seventies’, p.35.

¹⁴⁵ Middleton, *The British Economy since 1945*, p.96.

¹⁴⁶ Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperPress, 2012), p.590.

¹⁴⁷ Margaret Thatcher ‘Speech to Young Conservative Conference’, 07/02/87, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106743>, [Accessed 09/08/2017].

¹⁴⁸ Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.590.

Another facet of Thatcherism that is pertinent to this thesis is its tendency to link Britain's economic decline in the 1970s to a more general national and moral decline. In his book chapter "'Crisis? What Crisis?' Thatcherism and the Seventies', Robert Saunders highlighted this tendency, arguing that Thatcher's "analysis of British economic history was almost entirely psychological, founded upon a collapse of personal responsibility and the corrosive moral effects of socialism".¹⁴⁹ This view has been supported by Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite who observed that Thatcherites argued that "[s]ocialist structures, particularly the punitive taxation and dependency-inducing benefit systems, had undermined 'Victorian virtues' like thrift and hard work", and that socialism "had thus caused economic, but also *moral* decline. Reversing this moral decline lay at the heart of Thatcherism".¹⁵⁰ Matthew Grimley similarly argued that for Thatcher "a crisis of values was an important part of the broader crisis she diagnosed in the 1970s and the remoralisation of society was among the medicines she prescribed".¹⁵¹

The sense of moral - and more general - decline in the late twentieth century is relevant to this thesis in part because of its impact on the relationship of the state with the immigrant and ethnic minority population. Rose drew attention to this, commenting that "[i]t was into this atmosphere of what might be called 'British angst' that the first and second waves of British immigrants arrived and the issue of 'race' became paramount".¹⁵² This timing is important: the arrival of a large immigrant population at point when Britain was in the throes of postcolonial uncertainty, trying to forge a new, non-imperial identity, had an impact on how that population was treated. Rose noted, for example, that the 1981 British

¹⁴⁹ Saunders, "'Crisis? What Crisis?': Thatcherism and the Seventies', p.40.

¹⁵⁰ Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 'Neo-Liberalism and Morality in the Making of Thatcherite Social Policy', *Historical Journal*, 55.2 (2012), 497–520 (p.512).

¹⁵¹ Matthew Grimley, 'Thatcherism, Morality and Religion', in *Making Thatcher's Britain*, ed. by Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 78–94 (p.78).

¹⁵² Sonya O. Rose, 'Who Are We Now? Writing the Post-War Nation, 1948-2001', in *Race, Nation and Empire: Making Histories, 1750 to the Present*, ed. by Catherine Hall and Keith McClelland (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), pp. 154–74 (p.155).

Nationality Act “created a domestic rather than an imperial or commonwealth based notion of Britishness”.¹⁵³ The removal of the Commonwealth and empire as a facet of British collective identity had the potential to affect the perception of those living in Britain who had their origins in the former British empire, and their place in British society. Stuart Hall made a similar point when he wrote that:

social, economic, cultural, technological and moral shifts, unsettling established patterns and norms, have combined with Britain’s relative economic decline, the unrequited loss of imperial destiny and the onset of globalization, which relativizes the power of the nation-state and national culture, to produce nothing short of a crisis of British, and especially English, identity. What does it mean to be ‘British’ in a world in which Britain no longer rules the waves?¹⁵⁴

The forging of the new British identity took place not only in the context of imperial decline, but also at a time of perceived religious decline. Saunders has alluded to this, commenting that:

for a political tradition rooted in church, crown and the colonies, the combined effort of the end of empire, the decline of religious authority, and Britain’s new identity within the European community had been profoundly dislocating.¹⁵⁵

Eliza Filby, in her book *God and Mrs Thatcher: The Battle for Britain’s Soul* also argued that Britain in the 1980s “was at the crossroads of its religious identity, neither exclusively Christian, nor fully secular and certainly not ‘multi-faith’.”¹⁵⁶ This sense of religious

¹⁵³ Rose, ‘Who Are We Now? Writing the Post-War Nation, 1948-2001’, pp.159–60.

¹⁵⁴ Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London: Verso, 1988), p.192.

¹⁵⁵ Saunders, “‘Crisis? What Crisis?’: Thatcherism and the Seventies’, p.27.

¹⁵⁶ Eliza Filby, *God and Mrs Thatcher: The Battle for Britain’s Soul* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2015), p.255.

uncertainty emerged in part from the developing secularisation and de-Christianisation of the British state and society during the twentieth century. Callum Brown has argued that “the dominant trend in British religion since 1900 has been that of secularization”, identifying both the de-Christianisation of the state and the “decline of religious faith, behaviour and identity” as key aspects of this.¹⁵⁷ Jeremy Morris has similarly identified three significant strands in the process of secularisation in Britain, which he categorised as “institutional marginalization”, “institutional attenuation” and “cultural displacement” of religion”.¹⁵⁸

This sense of decline raised questions of what would fill the gap that Christianity had left. Grimley argued that the Conservatives appealed to “traditional morality and to the idea of a Christian nation”.¹⁵⁹ Thatcher appealed to Christianity if not as an active part of the lives of the British people, then as a part of their heritage. This can be seen, for example, in a speech she made to the Bow Group in May 1978 in which she stated that:

we are the heirs of a society whose religion and whose way of life has been Christian for century on century. Most of us, whether Christian or not are thus inspired directly or indirectly by the absolute value which Christianity – deriving in part from the Old Testament and Greek philosophy – gives to the individual soul, and hence to man’s innate responsibility for his own acts and omissions.¹⁶⁰

The reference to the Old Testament here is significant. Grimley argued that Thatcher “often described the values she extolled as coming from the ‘Judaeo-Christian’ or ‘Judaic-Christian’

¹⁵⁷ Callum G. Brown, ‘Secularization, the Growth of Militancy and the Spiritual Revolution: Religious Change and Gender Power in Britain, 1901–2001’, *Historical Research*, 80.209 (2007), 393–418 (p.395).

¹⁵⁸ Jeremy N. Morris, ‘The Strange Death of Christian Britain: Another Look at the Secularization Debate’, *Historical Journal*, 46.4 (2003), 963–76 (pp.972–76).

¹⁵⁹ Grimley, ‘Thatcherism, Morality and Religion’, p 89.

¹⁶⁰ Margaret Thatcher, ‘The Ideals of An Open Society’, Speech to the Bow Group, 06/05/78, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103674> [Accessed 14/08/2017].

tradition', thus deliberately including Jews and emphasising the contribution of the Old Testament".¹⁶¹ Saunders similarly picked up on this, arguing that Thatcher's discussion of "values" was "often couched in moral terms, aligning the Conservative Party with the norms of a Judeo-Christian civilisation".¹⁶² Thatcher went on to state that "[t]hese teachings underlie the essential values in our society. No effort is too great to preserve them and to ensure that new generations understand their heritage".¹⁶³ The appeal to the past and to Christianity made here are both typical of Thatcher in this period. Saunders observed that "Thatcher mobilised the superior authority of British history" in her argument in favour of free enterprise. He quoted her speech to Conservative Central Council in March 1976 in support of this, in which she stated that the people of Britain would respond to an economic approach such as hers because "it is freedom on which the advance of civilised societies is based, a freedom that for us goes back to Runnymede".¹⁶⁴

Thatcher's focus on shared history and shared Judaeo-Christian tradition are an important backdrop to the relationship between Muslims and the state over education in the 1980s, not least because Muslims were not included in this shared history or tradition. Grimley has suggested that the focus on Christianity to the exclusion of others may well have been deliberate:

emphasising the nation's Christian heritage may also have been a discreet way of addressing concerns about immigration. Though Thatcher rarely addressed immigration in opposition, aside from her notorious reference to 'swamping' in 1978, this did not mean that it was absent from her appeal to the electorate. Talking about the Christian nation may have carried a subliminal message.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Grimley, 'Thatcherism, Morality and Religion', p. 92.

¹⁶² Saunders, "'Crisis? What Crisis?': Thatcherism and the Seventies', p. 29.

¹⁶³ Thatcher, 'The Ideals of an Open Society'.

¹⁶⁴ Saunders, "'Crisis? What Crisis?': Thatcherism and the Seventies', p. 41.

¹⁶⁵ Grimley, 'Thatcherism, Morality and Religion', p.88.

Whether intentional or not, this context is important in understanding the educational situation of the 1980s, as will be demonstrated in the discussion of state-funded Muslim schooling in later chapters. The broader context of economic contraction and a sense of decline were also pertinent to the more general education policies in the 1980s, and it is to these that we will now turn.

The Early Years: Carlisle and Joseph, 1979-86

Despite the development of a strong ideology, during the first two terms of the Thatcher government alterations in the educational landscape were subtle and for all the debates going on, there were relatively few actual changes in policy. As during the 1970s, the LEAs retained a considerable degree of control over education, and therefore the fundamental modes of interaction between Muslims and the state remained the same. However, though the overarching framework remained fundamentally the same, shifts were being made on the periphery of that framework.

A difference in educational approach can be seen in promises of increased parental choice and higher educational standards in the 1979 Conservative manifesto.¹⁶⁶ To this end, Thatcher's first Education Secretary Mark Carlisle repealed legislation that asked LEAs to plan for comprehensive schools, and also introduced the Assisted Places Scheme (APS) which helped academically able children to attend private schools beyond their parents' financial means.¹⁶⁷ This idea of increased parental choice was also evident in the debate which had begun in the Black Papers and continued in the early 1980s before being abandoned in 1983, about school vouchers.¹⁶⁸ In an article in the 1975 Black Paper, Boyson argued that school vouchers would improve the education system because they "put the parent (and older pupils) as consumers in charge of schools", and that reliance of schools on

¹⁶⁶ Dennis Lawton, *The Tory Mind on Education: 1979-1994* (Basingstoke: Routledge, 2012), p.48.

¹⁶⁷ Lawton, *The Tory Mind on Education* p.48.

¹⁶⁸ Chitty, *The Education System Transformed*, pp.19–20; Lawton, *The Tory Mind on Education*, p.49.

parental choice “would ensure both accountability and variety”.¹⁶⁹ This is indicative of a shift in rhetoric which applied the language of the market to education, identifying parents and pupils as consumers and advocating parental choice in educational matters.

The theme of parental choice and the shift in rhetoric that accompanied it were important as they came at a time when Muslims in certain parts of England were beginning to explore the possibility of establishing Muslim schools. The 1944 framework allowed the establishment of state-funded religious schools which could potentially have become part of the range of choices available to parents. However, state-funded faith schools were run by LEAs, and though the role of the LEAs in educational provision remained technically unchanged until 1988, there were a series of moves throughout the early 1980s which undermined their power. The APS was an example of this for, in addition to increasing parental choice, it placed a number of children in schools outside of LEA control. It was also evident in the introduction of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) in 1983, under Sir Keith Joseph as Education Secretary, which was developed without consultation with the DES, LEAs or teacher groups.¹⁷⁰ This was an indication of a desire to bypass LEAs in the development of education policy, which had the potential to affect the choices exercised by Muslim parents.

Robert Phillips argues that the TVEI signalled:

a shift in the direction of education away from the DES and LEAs and towards new branches of government, more closely associated with industry, employment and enterprise, and quangos which increasingly became a part of a third tier of governance in the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Rhodes Boyson, ‘The Developing Case for the Educational Voucher’, in *The Fight for Education. Black Paper*, by Charles Bryan Cox and Rhodes Boyson (London: Dent, 1975), p.27.

¹⁷⁰ Chitty, *The Education System Transformed*, p.22.

¹⁷¹ Phillips, ‘Education, the State and the Politics of Reform’, pp.16–17.

There is evidence of the development of such a “third tier” throughout the 1970s and 1980s, with the development of bodies, both quangos and civil society organisations, seeking to influence educational policy, particularly on the right wing, and particularly under the influence of neoliberal ideas. In 1974, Thatcher and Keith Joseph, who served as Secretary of State for Education and Science from 1981-1986, set up the Centre for Policy Studies, which had an Education Study Group. In the same year, the Friends of the Education Voucher Experiment in Representative Regions was set up. The Institute of Economic Affairs, established in 1955, was active in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁷² In ‘The think-tank archipelago: Thatcherism and neoliberalism’, Jackson explored the developing relationship between such think tanks and the Conservative government of the 1980s, not least the role of Joseph.¹⁷³ As Chitty argued, by the mid-1980s, some of these think tanks had begun to exercise considerable influence at the DES.¹⁷⁴

The Baker Years

Until 1986, the Conservative approach to education involved much in the way of rhetoric, but relatively little in the way of new policies. The arrival of Kenneth Baker as Education Secretary in the spring of 1986 changed this. Baker brought with him a profound shift in how the educational agenda was to be set. Following a meeting with the Centre for Policy Studies study group in spring 1987, Baker said “these are the people who are setting the educational agenda”.¹⁷⁵ The mandate that the Conservatives received for a third term in office in the 1987 general election heralded the beginnings of wide-ranging changes in education that had thus far only been toyed with. This was hinted at by Thatcher in an interview in the *Daily Mail* in May 1987, shortly before the general election:

¹⁷² Chitty, *The Education System Transformed*, p.15.

¹⁷³ Jackson, ‘The Think-Tank Archipelago: Thatcherism and Neo-Liberalism’.

¹⁷⁴ Chitty, *The Education System Transformed*, p.34.

¹⁷⁵ Chitty, *The Education System Transformed*, p.25.

We are going much further with education than we ever thought of doing before. When we've spent all that money per pupil, and even with more teachers, there is still so much wrong; so we are going to do something determined about it. There is going to be a revolution in education.¹⁷⁶

It was Baker who was to lead this revolution.

In his memoirs, Baker wrote that:

as the incoming Education Secretary I had two watchwords: standards and choice. Those twin themes, exemplified by the introduction of a national curriculum and testing, and city technology colleges and grant-maintained schools were the ways I intended to achieve my overriding aim.¹⁷⁷

Though this may not sound particularly revolutionary, these “twin themes” and their exemplification led to a major overhaul of the educational framework in the form of the 1988 Education Reform Act. Prior to this, perhaps the biggest change made by Baker was the introduction of City Technology Colleges (CTCs) – schools that were to be funded partly by local companies and partly by central government.¹⁷⁸ These were designed to further the idea that education should allow Britain to compete in the wider world, particularly in the field of technology.¹⁷⁹ They were also indicative of the ways that Baker wished the education system to function: “parental choice, per capita funding, local managerial control and independence from the LEA”.¹⁸⁰ The relocation of power away from LEAs, placing an emphasis on the role of parents and allowing headteachers to control the ethos, budget and staffing of a school is crucial and as it is indicative of the beginning of Baker’s attempt to

¹⁷⁶ Chitty, *The Education System Transformed*, p.29.

¹⁷⁷ Baker, *The Turbulent Years*, p.165.

¹⁷⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/city-technology-colleges>, [Accessed 16/02/16].

¹⁷⁹ Lawton, *The Tory Mind on Education*, p.57.

¹⁸⁰ Baker, *The Turbulent Years*, pp.187–89.

undermine what he termed “reactionary local education authorities”.¹⁸¹ The CTCs made the strength of opposition to the LEAs within the Conservative Party clear: Chitty referred to the “rapturous applause” at the 1986 Conservative Party Conference when Baker announced that CTCs would be completely free of LEA control.¹⁸² The LEAs remained the main locus of interaction between pupils and their parents – including Muslims – and the state. Yet the vehemence with which they were opposed by the ruling party and the national government made their role uncertain, and had the potential to affect such interactions. With the 1988 Education Reform Act, such opposition began to take a more concrete form.

6) *The Education Reform Act*

The Education Reform Act of 1988 fundamentally changed the education system. Through the Act, in the name of parental choice and raised standards, Baker reformed, undermined or even entirely removed many of the key structures and tenets that had underpinned the educational framework for the previous half century. The concept of “a national education system that was locally administered”¹⁸³ no longer guided the educational framework, with individual schools, central government and independent bodies taking on many of the roles formerly held by the LEAs. Schools began to liaise directly with central government, and a national curriculum was introduced along with standardised testing, and the creation of bodies to inspect, examine and enforce this curriculum and the improved standard of education it was expected to bring. The Act also increased the power of the Secretary of State for Education and Science. Peter Cumper highlighted the “415 new powers that the Secretary of State for Education has received under the Education Reform Act”.¹⁸⁴ Chitty

¹⁸¹ Baker, *The Turbulent Years*, p.177.

¹⁸² Chitty, *The Education System Transformed*, p.33.

¹⁸³ Geoffrey Walford, ‘Educational Reform and Sociology in England and Wales’, in *Education and Sociology: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by David L. Levinson, Peter W. Cookson Jr, and Alan R. Sadovnik (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 211–19 (p. 211).

¹⁸⁴ Peter Cumper, ‘Muslim Schools: The Implications of the Education Reform Act 1988’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 16.3 (1990), 379–389 (p.380).

similarly argued that the Act “increased the powers of the education secretary to a quite alarming degree”.¹⁸⁵

Parental Choice

Parental choice – or, as Lawson put it, “consumerist parental choice”¹⁸⁶ – was a thread of policy that underpinned much of the ERA. It was achieved through the creation of more new categories of schools which would in theory widen the choice available to pupils and parents. CTCs were incorporated into the framework created by the Act, as was a new kind of school, the grant maintained school (GM). Becoming GM came to be known as “opting out” of LEA-based education, because GM schools were funded directly by central government and, like CTCs, were independent of LEA control.¹⁸⁷ The removal of a sizeable proportion of schools from LEA management appears to have been a deliberate choice, and a continuation of the policies of the early 1980s. In a 1987 memorandum to the Prime Minister in preparation for the Act, Baker wrote that he aimed “to establish a substantial minority of schools in a new sector outside local government control by the end of the next Parliament.”¹⁸⁸ In a DES covering letter to a draft paper on opting out, NW Stuart suggested that the proposals would mean that “opted out schools will continue to form part of local provision available to local people, but free of local authority interference”.¹⁸⁹ RAW Rhodes has interpreted this as a part of a broader shift in approach which linked citizen’s choice with the bypassing of local government. He associated the expanding variety of schools with, for

¹⁸⁵ Chitty, *The Education System Transformed*, p.31.

¹⁸⁶ Lawton, *The Tory Mind on Education*, p.65.

¹⁸⁷ Phillips, ‘Education, the State and the Politics of Reform’, p.17; Lawton, *The Tory Mind on Education*, p.65.

¹⁸⁸ The National Archives (TNA), ED207/195 Education Reform Bill (ERB): Consultations between Department for Education and Science, Treasury and Cabinet Office for the proposed arrangements for financing grant maintained schools, Memorandum from Kenneth Baker to Prime Minister, 06/04/87

¹⁸⁹ TNA, ED207/195, ERB: Consultations between Department for Education and Science, Treasury and Cabinet Office for the proposed arrangements for financing grant maintained schools, Covering letter by N.W. Stuart, 30/04/87.

example, the Housing Act of 1988 which allowed Council tenants to choose a landlord other than the local authority.¹⁹⁰ Thatcher was very clear on her view that GM schools would directly tackle the problems that she believed had been created by LEAs. She argued that one of the most likely candidates for GM status would be schools “which wanted to escape from the clutches of some left-wing local authority keen to impose its own ideological priorities”.¹⁹¹

With the creation of GM schools came the possibility that the route of opting out could be used to create state-funded Muslim schools. This had the potential to directly affect those Muslims who had, up until this point, been seeking state funding through the voluntary aided route. But Thatcher’s comments highlight that that the primary goal of the DES in creating GM schools was to diminish the role of the LEAs, not to increase parental choice by increasing the variety of denominational or religious schools. In fact, the ERA made very clear that opting out could not be used as a means of changing the religious character of a school. DES Circular 10/88 of October 1988 made clear that “the Secretary of State would not normally approve proposals for a change of character for a school within five years of its acquiring grant-maintained status”.¹⁹² In 1988, only existing county and voluntary-aided schools were eligible to apply for GM status, and as there were no voluntary-aided Muslim schools at this time, there was therefore no possibility of creating GM Muslim schools.¹⁹³

This changed in 1993 when the new Education Act allowed independent schools to apply for GM status.¹⁹⁴ Parker-Jenkins estimated that in 1989 there were around 15 Muslim

¹⁹⁰ Rhodes, *Understanding Governance* pp.124–25.

¹⁹¹ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.592.

¹⁹² TNA, ED207/195, ERB: Consultations between Department for Education and Science, Treasury and Cabinet Office for the proposed arrangements for financing grant maintained schools, DES Circular No.10/88, 14/10/88, p.15 Though this circular did not specify that this included a change in religious character, in a memorandum prepared for the cabinet committee E(EP) in October 1987 the Secretary of State suggested that “a requirement that any intention to change the denomination or religious ethos of a grant-maintained school should be treated as a significant change of character”.

¹⁹³ DES, *Education Reform Act 1988*, <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/acts/1988-education-reform-act.pdf> [Accessed 11/08/2017].

¹⁹⁴ Walford, ‘Educational Reform and Sociology in England and Wales’, p.216.

independent schools in Britain, rising to around 20 by the early 1990s, catering for roughly 1 per cent of Muslim pupils (3-5,000 children).¹⁹⁵ This meant that from 1993 Muslims seeking state-funded schooling could theoretically apply for GM status and this was how the first Muslim schools received funding in 1998 under the Labour government. But it remains the case that the aim of the ERA in creating GM schools was to undermine the position of LEAs, not to diversify the choices of school available to pupils and parents in terms of character and ethos.

The Conservative belief in greater parental choice and the widening choice of schools raised the question of where the existing network of state-funded faith schools would fit in the new framework created by the 1988 Act. This was again relevant to those Muslims who were seeking to create voluntary-aided schools in the 1980s and early 1990s, which will be discussed in more depth in chapters 5 and 6. Parker-Jenkins *et al* argued that faith schools were still viewed as part of the partnership under Thatcher, “particularly as they appeared to fit into a market economy model of responding to client demand, and they assumed some element of independence and self-finance”.¹⁹⁶ This is evident in Thatcher’s comments in her memoirs, where she argued that with “a healthy range of GM schools, City Technology Colleges, denominational schools and private schools... parents would have much wider choice”.¹⁹⁷ This seems to indicate that, though LEAs found themselves under attack in the late 1980s, Thatcher still considered denominational schools as part of the educational framework put in place by the ERA. This is borne out by statistical evidence: 1991 Department for Education and Science figures revealed that roughly one third of maintained schools were denominational schools, educating 23 per cent of pupils in the state system. At this point, there were 4,936 Church of England schools, 2,245 Roman

¹⁹⁵ Marie Parker-Jenkins, *Children of Islam: A Teacher’s Guide to Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils* (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham, 1995), p.12.

¹⁹⁶ Parker-Jenkins *et al*, *In Good Faith*, p.16.

¹⁹⁷ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.592.

Catholic schools, 31 Methodist schools and 21 Jewish schools.¹⁹⁸ The number of such schools had been growing in all of these faiths and denominations since 1944, and continued to do so in the 1990s.

Yet the creation of GM schools had the potential to make the situation more difficult for schools wishing to become voluntary-aided. In their discussions of Church of England schools, Parker-Jenkins *et al* raised the issue that the introduction of GM schools meant that such denominational schools “had to compete harder for limited finance available from central government”.¹⁹⁹ This competition took place between schools – CTCs and GM schools on the one hand, and voluntary schools on the other – that were effectively operating in two different frameworks. CTCs and GM schools were new, funded directly by central government and were in line with the key trends of Conservative policy in this period. Voluntary-controlled and voluntary-aided schools, however, were a remnant of the 1944 Education Act, overseen by LEAs. The fact that the government made clear that it favoured moves away from LEA control had the potential to adversely affect those schools applying for voluntary status.

Both the theme of parental choice, and that of the reduction of LEA powers can also be seen in the introduction of Local Management of Schools (LMS). LMS meant that a school’s budget was determined primarily by the number of pupils on its roll, and that the management of this budget was delegated to the individual school.²⁰⁰ This quantifiable link between the number of pupils and a school’s budget was a key component of the consumerisation of education by way of parental choice. Thatcher felt that such an approach would improve the education system because:

¹⁹⁸ Parker-Jenkins, *Children of Islam*, p.11.

¹⁹⁹ Parker-Jenkins *et al*, *In Good Faith*, p.16.

²⁰⁰ Chitty, *The Education System Transformed*, p.30.

parents would vote with their children's feet and schools actually gained resources when they gained pupils. The worst schools in these circumstances would either have to improve or close.²⁰¹

She also argued that "the very act of having all the important decisions taken at the level closest to parents and teachers, not by a distant and insensitive bureaucracy, would make for better education".²⁰² However, the removal of the LEAs as a source of power and negotiation may not have this effect on minority groups. If the LEAs were "distant", then central government was even further removed. The removal of the LEAs would mean that those with particular educational needs would either have to work with individual schools, or take their case to the central government. There is little to suggest that it would be more sensitive than the LEAs had been. In 1988, Muslims were still a minority group lacking in power and influence at a national level, and lacking in representative organisations to argue in their favour on the national stage. The prospect of the removal of local government as a locus of interaction between Muslims and the state therefore raised questions of how this would affect their ability to have their needs accommodated, and how they would fare once left potentially vulnerable to the tyranny of the majority both in individual schools, where headmasters and governors would make decisions, and also at a national level.

It is necessary also to briefly mention changes that were made to admissions regulations, meaning that schools would be required to admit pupils until they reached capacity – known as open enrolment.²⁰³ This was in a period when schools in London in particular were suffering from falling rolls. Thatcher argued that this policy "significantly widened choice further and prevented local authorities setting arbitrary limits on good schools just to keep unsuccessful schools full".²⁰⁴ The issue of open enrolment, along with falling rolls, was to

²⁰¹ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.591.

²⁰² Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.592.

²⁰³ Chitty, 'The Role and Status of LEAs', p.30.

²⁰⁴ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.591.

become key in the attempt by a Muslim school to achieve state funding in the late 1980s, as will be explored in Chapter 6.

Curriculum and centralisation

Accompanying the ERA's increased parental choice, and the devolution of budgets and decisions to individual schools, was a strong degree of centralisation and state control.²⁰⁵

This was perhaps clearest in the creation of the National Curriculum, described by Phillips as symbolising “an unprecedented move by the central state to control education”.²⁰⁶ The vast majority of curriculum planning was taken away from individual schools and LEAs, and placed in the hands of central government. The National Curriculum was wide-ranging in its scope, going beyond the core subjects of English, maths and science and incorporating languages, the arts and humanities.²⁰⁷ The fact of the curricula for these subjects becoming largely centrally-determined had the potential to limit the possibility of schools and LEAs adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of the school population. Tomlinson has argued that this “signalled an end to many of the multicultural curriculum initiatives developed during the 1970s and 1980s”, creating new disadvantages for minority groups.²⁰⁸ She highlighted that, though Baker did instruct the National Curriculum Council to “take account of ethnic and cultural diversity”, in October 1990 a *TES* editorial observed that “there seems to have been an unformulated attempt to starve multicultural education of its resources and let it wither on the vine”.²⁰⁹

The National Curriculum was also a component of the development of accountability in education. Mandler has argued that such a focus on accountability can be found in the early

²⁰⁵ Phillips, ‘Education, the State and the Politics of Reform’, p.17.

²⁰⁶ Phillips, ‘Education, the State and the Politics of Reform’, p.17.

²⁰⁷ Lawton, *The Tory Mind on Education* p.51.

²⁰⁸ Sally Tomlinson, ‘Some Success, Could Do Better: Education and Race 1976-2000’, in *Education, Reform and the State: Twenty-Five Years of Politics, Policy and Practice*, 2001, pp. 192–206 (pp.192–93).

²⁰⁹ Tomlinson, ‘Some Success, Could Do Better: Education and Race 1976-2000’, pp.200–201.

years of the Thatcher government, including the requirement that inspection reports be published from 1983 onwards, and was continued in, for example, the requirement in the ERA that exam results be published.²¹⁰ Along with the standardised testing that accompanied its introduction, the Act was designed to give the “consumers” – parents – the information they needed to choose a school for their children.²¹¹ It was perceived by some as “a method of producing assessment data, school by school, which could be published and which allowed parents to make reasoned choices between schools”.²¹² Baker argued in favour of the publication of test results “so that parents and the local community would be able to see how well the school was doing”.²¹³ The Act also established new independent bodies – the National Curriculum Council (NCC) and the Schools Examination and Assessment Council (SEAC), described by Baker as “the twin guardians of the curriculum”.²¹⁴ That Baker stipulated that the National Curriculum should be overseen by such bodies demonstrates that it was a centralising move that sought conformity across the board in both content and standards. This was markedly different to what had come before, and was likely to affect the interaction of pupils and parents with the state.

Religious Education

For all the reforming zeal and the significant changes outlined above, religious education and worship stand out because there was relatively little change made to their provision in the ERA. The pluralist principle that had governed the teaching of religion in state-funded schools since state-funded schools existed was clearly evident in the Act. As such, this was an aspect of the Act that had clear potential to affect religious minorities such as Muslims, and did so by allowing continuity of provision and ongoing space for religious difference. The

²¹⁰ Mandler, ‘Educating the Nation I: Schools’, p.25.

²¹¹ Phillips, ‘Education, the State and the Politics of Reform’, p.18.

²¹² Lawton, *The Tory Mind on Education*, p.51.

²¹³ Baker, *The Turbulent Years*, p.199.

²¹⁴ Baker, *The Turbulent Years*, p.198.

ERA either kept in place or strengthened most of the religious provisions of the 1944 Act. It required that all pupils should take part in a daily act of collective worship, and specified that it “shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character”. It made the establishment of a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education a requirement of every LEA, and reaffirmed the use of Agreed Syllabuses to determine RE provision. It also kept in place a conscience clause allowing withdrawal from the daily act of worship and religious education.²¹⁵

The continuation of the religious clauses is interesting, as it is an anomaly. The ERA was an Act that centralised, and which took away powers from the LEAs. Yet in the areas of RE and worship it retained localised provision and left powers with the LEAs – something that Baker did very consciously.²¹⁶ Priestley noted that RE:

became the only subject whose teachers played a more prominent part in syllabus construction as the status of churches and local politicians declined, while colleagues in other subjects received their syllabuses from central government.²¹⁷

It is possible to interpret this as an attempt to diminish the role of religion by leaving in the hands of a framework in decline. There were concerns that if RE continued to be determined locally it could be side-lined by schools as a result of the pressures exerted by the centrally-determined National Curriculum.²¹⁸ Yet this does not appear to have been the case and there is clear evidence of the desire to give religious education and worship a prominent place within the new educational framework. Baker had noted that there had been concern in 1988 that the religious provisions of the 1944 Act “had in many schools fallen by the

²¹⁵ Gerald Parsons, ‘There and Back Again? Religion and the 1944 and 1988 Education Acts’, *The Growth of Religious Diversity-Vol 2: Britain From 1945 Volume 2: Controversies*, 2013, pp. 161-198 (p.184).

²¹⁶ Chadwick, ‘The Anglican Perspective on Church Schools’, p.482.

²¹⁷ Priestley, ‘Agreed Syllabuses: Their History and Development in England and Wales, 1944–2004’ p.1013.

²¹⁸ Chadwick, ‘The Anglican Perspective on Church Schools’, p.482.

wayside, or been transformed into other studies” and that “the first clause of the 1987 Education Bill stated clearly that one of the purposes of education was the spiritual education of the child”. With regards to RE, while it was not to be included as one of the core subjects of the National Curriculum, it was given the status of being part of the “basic curriculum” of schools, with the onus of ensuring suitable provision placed on headteachers, governors and LEAs.²¹⁹ The retention of localised provision appears to have been an acknowledgement of, and to have shown a willingness to, accommodate religious diversity in the educational framework. The continued use of the 1944 framework is a testament to its flexibility: the religious constitution of English society had changed considerably in the 44 years between 1944 and 1988, particularly with the arrival of a large and growing population of people of non-Christian religions. The patterns of settlement that saw these groups living concentrated in particular areas meant that they had been able to benefit considerably from the flexibility to alter provision at a local level. It is interesting, therefore, that in the area of religion, it was felt necessary to ensure the continuity of this approach.

However, as in 1944, whilst allowing for localised provision, the ERA sought to ensure that both worship and RE were predominantly Christian in character. The daily act of worship was required to reflect “the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any particular denomination”. There was room for flexibility with this: not every act of worship had to be Christian, but “taking any school term as a whole, most such acts” should be so. Schools could also apply for exemptions to this, were it felt necessary due to their religious make-up. This was handled at a local level, with such applications being managed locally by the SACRE.²²⁰ In fact, these clauses were not simply a continuation of 1944, but rather a strengthening of two important tenets of that Act. The first was in the fact that the ERA required Agreed Syllabuses to “reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great

²¹⁹ Baker, *The Turbulent Years*, p.207.

²²⁰ Parsons, ‘There and Back Again? Religion and the 1944 and 1988 Education Acts’, p.184.

Britain are in the main Christian”.²²¹ Gerald Parsons argued that this indicated a shift since 1944, as it meant that “Christianity was now *formally* and *officially* given a prominence which it had not enjoyed under the previous legislation”.²²² At the same time, however, the Act required that Agreed Syllabuses take “account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain”.²²³ Parsons comments that this, along with the recognition that acts of collective worship could represent non-Christian religions, and the right of non-Christian groups to participate in SACREs, also made “the inclusion of religious traditions other than Christianity a *formal* requirement for the first time”.²²⁴

However, while it is necessary to acknowledge the pluralism inherent in the Act, the strength of the Christian focus should not be ignored. It was essentially a conservative pluralism, which allowed for the ongoing prominence of protestant Christianity in mainstream education by means of allowing the withdrawal and separate education of both Christian and non-Christian minorities where required. This was seen as preferable by the majority of interested parties than a “world religions” approach. This preference can be seen in the words of the Chief Rabbi, Lord Jakobovits, for example, who argued that RE “must be a transmission of a commitment even more than of mere knowledge” and arguing against the world religions approach, or “the presentation of a multi-faith worship and education which amounted to ‘a cocktail of faiths’”.²²⁵ It is worth pointing out, however, that no representatives of the faith groups that were relatively new to England were involved in these debates. Along with Jakobovits, in the House of Lords the Anglican Church, the Free Churches and the Catholics were all involved in the debates²²⁶. Therefore, though the

²²¹ Priestley, ‘Agreed Syllabuses: Their History and Development in England and Wales, 1944–2004’, p.1014.

²²² Parsons, ‘There and Back Again? Religion and the 1944 and 1988 Education Acts’, p.185.

²²³ Priestley, ‘Agreed Syllabuses: Their History and Development in England and Wales, 1944–2004’, p.1014.

²²⁴ Parsons, ‘There and Back Again? Religion and the 1944 and 1988 Education Acts’, p.185.

²²⁵ Parsons, ‘There and Back Again? Religion and the 1944 and 1988 Education Acts’, p.189.

²²⁶ Chadwick, ‘The Anglican Perspective on Church Schools’, p.482; Grace, ‘The State and Catholic Schooling in England and Wales: Politics, Ideology and Mission Integrity’, p.494.

religious clauses of the ERA were created in a society that was considerably more religiously diverse than that of 1944, this new diversity did not extend to those involved in the debates and making the decisions, who were no more diverse than they had been in 1944.

Referring to the debates in the House of Lords, Parsons argued that for some, the priority given to Christianity in the Act:

was expressed not merely in terms of the historical predominance of Christianity within British society and culture, but also in terms of Britain still being essentially a 'Christian nation' or a 'Christian country'.

Where the debate was couched in such terms, it had the potential to alienate non-Christians, making those of a different religion, in the words of Lord Beloff, "appear in some way to be second-class citizens".²²⁷ Though this was not present in the wording of the Act, it did become evident in the way parts of it were implemented. Those groups who were not Christian, or rather not Judaeo-Christian and therefore not involved in the debates over its religious clauses, were more likely to run into difficulties in having their needs accommodated.

7) Post-1988

The ERA introduced most of the key legislation that was to affect the interaction of minorities and the state in the final decade of the twentieth century. There were, however, a number of subsequent Education Acts under the Conservative government that remained in power until 1997. These tended to reinforce and expand the changes made in 1988.

Support for GM schools strengthened within government in the years following 1988. Baker had introduced GM schools with the idea that there would be a limited number of them which offered parents the option of choice. Thatcher, however, wished to encourage as

²²⁷ Parsons, 'There and Back Again? Religion and the 1944 and 1988 Education Acts', p.189.

many schools as possible to become GM, as did a number of subsequent Education Secretaries.²²⁸ John MacGregor, who immediately followed Baker, was impressed by and sought to expand the GM sector.²²⁹ In his speech to the Conservative Party Conference in 1992, John Patten made clear that he would like all schools to become GM.²³⁰ Patten's successor, Ken Clarke, interviewed by Peter Ribbins and Brian Sherratt about his time as Education Secretary, stated that "I promoted grant-maintained policy as the policy for the future", linking this to the fact that "educational standards were not high enough".²³¹ The effect of this was an increase in schools that managed their own budgets and liaised directly with central government, and a correlating steady diminishment of the role of the LEAs.

The 1992 White Paper *Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools* focused on the themes of "quality, diversity, parental choice, autonomy and accountability".²³² It reinforced the National Curriculum as "a device to secure equality of opportunity whatever the type of school attended".²³³ The government also believed that the introduction of the National Curriculum made it necessary to regularly inspect schools to ensure its effective implementation.²³⁴ This had already been furthered by the 1992 Education (Schools) Act which introduced the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (OHMCI) to this end.²³⁵ The 1993 Education Act – a larger piece of legislation than the 1988 Act – and Patten's time as Secretary of State involved moves towards more specialisation and selection, to initiatives against truancy, new procedures for the reviewing of religious education and a greater emphasis on morality.²³⁶ The

²²⁸ Peter Ribbins and Brian Sherratt, *Radical Education Policies and Conservative Secretaries of State* (London: Cassell, 1997), p.142.

²²⁹ Ribbins and Sherratt, pp.143–44.

²³⁰ Lawton, *The Tory Mind on Education*, p. 83; McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction*, p.38.

²³¹ Ribbins and Sherratt, pp.165–66.

²³² Phillips, 'Education, the State and the Politics of Reform', p.18.

²³³ McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction*, p.89.

²³⁴ Gerran Thomas, 'A Brief History of the Genesis of the New Schools' Inspection System', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 46.4 (1998), 415–427 (p.417).

²³⁵ Thomas, 'A Brief History of the Genesis of the New Schools' Inspection System', p.415.

²³⁶ McCulloch, *Educational Reconstruction*, p.38.

standardising, centralising and moralising themes of 1988 became stronger during this period.

The 1993 Act also encouraged the created of state-funded faith schools,²³⁷ though it is worth noting that Muslim schools seeking state funding did not at any point receive this under this Conservative government, and it was not until the election of Labour in 1997 and the School Standards and Framework Act of 1998 that a Muslim school became voluntary-aided.²³⁸

Conclusion

The half century between 1944 and the end of the twentieth century saw significant changes in the educational framework, in legislation and in the central philosophies that underpinned educational policy, and also government policy more generally. These changes had the potential to affect the ability of minority groups, including Muslims, to interact with the state.

When Muslim children first entered the education system in the late 1950s and 1960s, they entered a system that was predominantly locally-administered, allowed considerable flexibility at a local level, allowed trends at a local level to influence policy at a national level and had the financial wherewithal to allow individual localities considerable effective autonomy. This system also offered a longstanding framework that could cater for religious minorities, including state-funded religious schools of various denominations and provision for both withdrawal and non-Christian worship and education within the mainstream education system.

However, though this was the system in place when Muslims first arrived, within a relatively short time after their arrival they found the system undergoing profound changes which affected their abilities to interact with it. From the mid-1970s, the ability and willingness of

²³⁷ Tomlinson, 'Some Success, Could Do Better: Education and Race 1976-2000', p.201.

²³⁸ Parker-Jenkins *et al*, *In Good Faith*, p.20.

central government to fund LEAs without being involved in provision was in decline. New measures of educational success, linked to industry, technology and the need for a modern workforce began to be applied, and against these measures the education system was felt to be unsuccessful. This led to centralisation, standardisation and bids to ensure conformity of content and standards. There is also evidence of the language of the market being used in relation to educational provision, with individual schools being encouraged to compete for the resources of the state based on their ability to meet the new criteria for success. This led to further decline in the role of the LEAs. The removal of this locus of interaction between Muslims and the state was of potential significance, as it raised questions over how far Muslims were in a position to compete for the resources of the state.

The main area of continuity was religious education. The provisions of the 1944 Act in this area remained in place, and were strengthened by Conservative legislation, particularly the 1988 ERA. This created a pluralist system, in which room was made for minority religions. Yet it also reinforced the place of Christianity at the centre of both religious education, and also the education system more broadly. Minority religions were accommodated in mainstream schools mainly through the ability to withdraw from Christian acts of worship and Christian RE. Though this approach was broadly favoured by minority groups involved in the development of the framework, it also had the potential effect of making minority religions, and those who followed them, seem inferior to mainstream Christianity.

This chapter has outlined the educational framework established in 1944, and examined the changes this system underwent in the period 1944-1997. The next chapter will explore the situation of Muslims who sought education within this framework, showing the developing nature of the interactions between Muslims and the state over Muslim needs.

Chapter Three

Muslims and the State: the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s

This chapter will explore the issues surrounding Muslims and education in Britain in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, considering if and how the educational needs of Muslim children were accommodated within the shifting educational frameworks outlined in the previous chapter. In doing so, it will evaluate existing narratives about how Muslims interacted with the state over education in twentieth century England, and will suggest that a re-evaluation of existing interpretations is necessary. Firstly, it will draw attention to early Muslim interactions with the state, in particular those in the 1960s and 1970s, suggesting that these are of greater significance than has previously been acknowledged. This is part of the new chronology and new interpretation offered by this thesis. It will highlight that these interactions can be understood not through the lens of race relations, or through the later multicultural or anti-racist frameworks that developed in the early 1980s, but rather in the context of the framework of pluralism which had been accommodating religious diversity since the mid-nineteenth century. When understood in the light of this framework, the interaction of Muslims with the state over education can be characterised as localised, flexible, governed by a well-established framework and potentially very effective. This characterisation challenges many interpretations which have portrayed such interactions as disorganised, reactive, and ad hoc.

Secondly, after highlighting the significance of the pluralist framework, the chapter will also explore the limitations of that framework. Though it had considerable success in accommodating some Muslim needs, pluralism was a conservative approach, seeking to create space for minorities without fundamentally altering existing frameworks, systems and approaches to education. As such, it was limited in the range of needs it could accommodate. It was not equipped to tackle those problems where Muslim needs were held

to be at odds with prevailing social, political, cultural or moral approaches. This will be raised in this chapter, though discussed at greater length in subsequent chapters. Finally, it will consider how the changes of the 1980s, outlined in Chapter One, affected Muslim interactions with the state. It will examine the context of the tendency towards centralisation, rationalisation and uniformity in educational approaches in this decade, arguing that this tendency can be seen in the policies of the Conservative government and the ideas of the rising New Right, but also in the version of multiculturalism advocated by the Swann Report of 1985. It will argue that both centralisation and the development of multicultural education had the potential to disrupt the pluralist framework.

1) Existing interpretations

Before exploring the events of the 1960s and 1970s, it is worth spending a little time revisiting the existing interpretations of Muslim-state interaction over education in the late twentieth century which were outlined in the introduction, in the context of the previous chapter.

A key characterisation in existing accounts of the Muslim-state relationship over education in the 1960s and 1970s is that it was *ad hoc* and localised, with no national coordination of policy. Tomlinson argued, for example, that there were “no national policies to assist in the incorporation and successful education of minority children.”¹ Numerous works cited above describe local authority responses as *ad hoc*: Gilliat-Ray stated that the responses of local authorities to Muslim needs were “regionally variable, confused and *ad hoc*”²; Ansari referred to “*ad hoc, laissez faire* and uncoordinated provision” and argued that, in response to the number of Muslim pupils, schools “tended to generate educational provision ‘on the

¹ Sally Tomlinson, ‘Some Success, Could Do Better: Education and Race 1976-2000’, in *Education, Reform and the State: Twenty-Five Years of Politics, Policy and Practice*, 2001, pp. 192–206 (p.193).

² Sophie Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.149.

hoof”.³ Such accounts suggest that, where Muslim needs arose, there was no framework in place to govern how the state in each area would respond to those needs. They are based on assumptions that the lack of national policy, and examples of local variation, were problematic, or indicative of failure on the part of the system. Ansari, for example, referring to the campaign for the teaching of Islam in schools, argued that “this ‘battle’ had to be fought over and over again, all the more so because of the decentralised and fragmented nature of the education system”.⁴

These interpretations are often accompanied by a tendency to portray Muslims in this period as disorganised, lacking in understanding of how to interact with the state and the wider society, and without effective organisations to campaign for their rights. For example, Anwar and Ansari have both argued that Islam was not an effective unifying factor in the recently-arrived populations, with ethnicity, nationality, language, or sectarianism being more significant factors.⁵ Lewis and Ansari both highlighted the scarcity of models for Muslims living in a non-Muslim state⁶, with Ansari also observing that “[m]uch of the early organisational machinery was inherited from the societies to which Muslim migrants originally belonged”, and that Muslim organisations did not become effective until the mid-1980s.⁷ Ansari has also argued that Muslim parents were “unfamiliar with the system and knew little about how to make demands of the relevant institutions”.⁸ Gilliat-Ray referred to the “relative lack of effective lobbying from organizations within Muslim communities”.⁹ Joel S. Fetzer and Christopher Soper similarly referred to a theme in a number of accounts of European Muslims “that Muslim groups have been politically ineffective because they lack

³ Humayun Ansari, *The Infidel within: Muslims in Britain since 1800* (London: C Hurst, 2004), pp.299–300.

⁴ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.314.

⁵ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.6; Muhammad Anwar, *The Myth of Return: Pakistanis in Britain* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1979), p.13.

⁶ Philip Lewis, *Young, British and Muslim* (London: Continuum, 2007), p.17.

⁷ Humayun Ansari, *Muslims in Britain* (London: Minority Rights Group International, 2002), p 6.

⁸ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p. 301.

⁹ Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction*, p.149.

the resources necessary to bargain effectively with the state”, arguing that this “explains why Western European states have failed to respond to the political demands of Muslim immigrants and citizens”.¹⁰

Such interpretations do not account for the fact that the educational framework created in 1944 was designed to devolve much of the responsibility for educational provision to the LEAs, with a view to allowing flexibility of provision based upon differing local needs. This is evident in the pejorative use of the phrase “ad hoc”, which ignores the fact that such flexibility was a deliberate facet of the 1944 framework, allowing LEAs to adapt their approach to the varying needs of minority groups according to the underlying pluralist approach. Many such accounts have ignored the existence of the 1944 framework altogether. Modood, writing in 1990, mentioned the role of local authorities in making some provision for “minority religions and languages”, but then went on to argue that “religious and cultural protection in Britain is not comprehensive, and is “derived from *race* legislation”.¹¹ Ally, writing in 1979, noted that the Muslim Educational Trust (MET), a DES registered educational charity which attempted to “co-ordinate local efforts” to have Muslim needs accommodated, was providing “Islamic education facilities to Muslim children in 56 county schools in Britain”.¹² In considering why such provision had been allowed, he stated that “the EEC provides that member countries should offer facilities for the teaching of religion and culture and the mother tongues of minority groups”. He argued that this effectively gave Muslim parents the right to ask for Islam to be taught to their children in school, and that “providing the numbers are adequate, the school is obliged to provide this facility”.¹³ While these may have been factors in encouraging such provision, this

¹⁰ Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.8.

¹¹ Tariq Modood, ‘Muslims, Race and Equality in Britain: Some Post-Rushdie Affair Reflections’, *Third Text*, 4.11 (1990), 127–34 (p.131).

¹² Muhammad Mashuq Ally, *The Growth and Organization of the Muslim Community in Britain* (Birmingham: Selly Oak Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, 1979), p.7.

¹³ Ally, *The Growth and Organization of the Muslim Community in Britain*, p.10.

explanation again does not acknowledge the existence of the 1944 framework, and the long history of pluralism in the approach of the government to religious minorities.

As examined in the introduction, the majority of key works on Muslims have relied on a limited pool of archival material and primary research to support the chronology and interpretations that they offer. For example, the surveys written up by Townsend and by Townsend and Brittan in the early 1970s are a major source used by those writing about Muslim education in England. They did not focus specifically on Muslims, but Muslims did feature in their findings which covered issues such as school uniform, clothing for PE, swimming lessons, showers, diet and co-education as well as issues relating to religious education.¹⁴ These two surveys directly underpinned works by Ansari and Nielsen, and their influence was also evident in Gilliat-Ray's findings. Yet works using them have tended to focus on what is missing, rather than what is shown in these surveys. Nielsen, for example, in his 1989 article 'Muslims in English Schools', focused on the priority Townsend and Brittan give to ethnic and racial diversity in the 1970s, observing that "only very limited attention had been paid to the religious dimension". He argued that as a result of "great variations from area to area, as well as the lack of national coordination, the scene is confusing", commenting that all "the questions relating to RE, assembly, school uniform, dress for PE and swimming, and diet were tucked away under the heading "miscellaneous provisions".¹⁵ Such comments ignore the fact that there is something to be learned about educational provision for Muslims in the state system in this period from the surveys, and that they mention the role of the 1944 Education Act. This is symptomatic of a broader tendency: whilst Nielsen, and others, have made much about the scarcity of information about religious minorities in Britain, relatively little work seems to have been done focusing on

¹⁴ Herbert Ellwood Routledge Townsend and E. M. Brittan, *Organization in multiracial schools*. (Windsor: National Foundation for Educational Research, 1972), pp.58–65.

¹⁵ Jørgen S. Nielsen, 'Muslims in English Schools', *Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs. Journal*, 10.1 (1989), 223–245 (pp.225–26).

what the existing literature *does* tell us about the interactions of Muslims with the state over education. This leaves a considerable gap in the literature, and it is this gap that the following chapter will address.

From a starting point that there is evidence to suggest that some of the needs of Muslim children were being met in schools by the early 1970s, this chapter will look at previously neglected sources, using them to gain a clearer picture of what these needs were, how they were understood, and if and why they were being accommodated. This will form part of the new chronology suggested by this thesis, and will strengthen the new interpretation that it offers.

2) Muslims and the State: the 1960s and 1970s

The next section of this chapter will provide evidence that from the mid-1960s some British Muslims had formed representative organisations, were aware of their rights under the existing educational framework, and were interacting with the state over their needs, with such needs often being met. Such evidence will be used to challenge narratives that suggest that Muslims were unacknowledged as a distinct population in the early period of diversity and responses to that diversity in Britain.

A good starting point for this discussion is the foundation of the Muslim Educational Trust (MET) in 1966. It was a national organisation, and in its early years, its primary concern was ensuring that Muslim children, including those attending state schools, received Islamic education as their religious education. Writing in one of the Trust's earliest publications, the *First Primer of Islam* in 1969, chairman Afzal Rahman wrote that:

the Muslim Educational Trust, London, has been established to cater to the educational needs of the Muslims in general, and of the Muslim children in the United Kingdom in particular. The Trust proposes to make adequate arrangements for the education and training of the Muslim children from the earliest levels. Where

this is not possible, it shall try to arrange for their religious and moral training in all possible means.¹⁶

From the start, the MET was consciously operating within and interacting with the state based upon the provisions of the 1944 Education Act, which allowed students to be withdrawn from religious worship and religious instruction, and to receive instruction in their own religion. The work of the MET was widely reported and written about at this time. By 1973, the newsletter of another recently-formed national Muslim organisation, the Union of Muslim Organisations of the UK and Eire (UMO), stated that the MET was supplying teachers of Islam to 47 schools in London, Manchester and Rochdale, and that they were teaching Islamic education to Muslim pupils during school hours.¹⁷ In the summer of 1976, *The Times* newspaper reported that the “trust’s work in supplying peripatetic teachers of Islam has doubled during the past two years. It now sends 19 teachers to more than 50 schools, of which nearly a quarter are in north-east London. Lessons are provided at its expense either during or after the religious assembly or after school hours”.¹⁸ The UMO Newsletter also reported that the Leeds Islamic Centre was offering a similar service to four county schools in the Leeds area.¹⁹ In 1977, an article by Mohammed Iqbal entitled ‘Education and Islam in Britain – A Muslim View’ observed that “Muslim Religious Education teachers from the Muslim Educational Trust teach Islam to 3000 Muslim children in 59 local education authority schools immediately before or after school hours”, making reference to the framework established in 1944.²⁰ In its oral evidence to the Swann Committee in 1982, the MET reported that it had 42 teachers working in 67 schools in 5 areas of the country,

¹⁶ Muslim Educational Trust, *First Primer of Islam*. (London: Muslim Educational Trust, 1969), p.3.

¹⁷ Union of Muslim Organisations, *Newsletter* (London: Union of Muslim Organisations of UK & Eire, 1973).

¹⁸ *The Times*, ‘05/07/76.

¹⁹ Union of Muslim Organisations, *Newsletter* p.5.

²⁰ M. Iqbal, ‘Education and Islam in Britain-a Muslim View’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 5.4 (1977), 397–404 (p.397).

teaching Islam to in the region of 3600 pupils aged between 5 and 16, mostly before or after school hours.²¹

3) *The Inner London Education Authority*

One of the LEAs that the MET interacted with over the teaching of Islam was the Inner London Education Authority. In order to highlight the fact that these interactions were neither ad hoc nor unfruitful, and to demonstrate the role played by the 1944 Education Act and the pluralist precedent, it is useful to examine these developments more closely.

The focus of this section will primarily be on London, and the majority will focus on the interactions of Muslims with the ILEA, or with schools that were under the authority of the ILEA. It will not attempt to make an argument that the experiences of Muslims in London, and of those interacting with the ILEA were necessarily typical, and will not attempt to generalise these experiences or consider them as representative of the experiences of all Muslims in England at this time. They were not and there is no reason why they should have been. In an examination of a permissive framework that consciously accommodated diversity, allowing devolution of decision-making over suitable provision based on local needs, and encouraging ad hoc responses to such needs, such an approach would be nonsensical. Rather, this section shows in some depth the ways in which a particular local authority was able to respond within this framework.²²

²¹ The National Archives (TNA), ED282/62, Department for Education and Science (DES), Oral evidence for Muslim, Hindu and Asian Organisations to Swann Committee.

²² The challenge of attempting to create a national picture of a minority experience using archival research is discussed by Becky Taylor in the introduction to *A Minority and the State: Travellers in Britain in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). She writes that she does not “claim to provide consistent documentary evidence from all parts of the country, as the in-depth research is concentrated in areas which yielded the largest bodies of archives”, an approach which is adopted in this thesis as well. However, where Taylor was able to “create a broadly national picture of the relations between Travellers and settled society”, this thesis is more tentative, demonstrating the possibilities offered by a flexible and devolved system rather than seeking to create a national picture.

Certain developments in London were in line with those taking place in the rest of the country. The first is that from the early 1970s ethnic minorities were beginning to be represented on local councils. The first Muslim councillor in Britain was Bashir Maan, a Pakistani immigrant who was elected to Glasgow City Corporation in 1970.²³ Due to the lack of focus on Muslims in existing research on this period, it is not possible to provide numbers of specifically Muslim councillors in this period, the number of ethnic minority councillors rose from four in 1974, to 35 by 1978, 79 in 1982 and 193 by the early 1990s.²⁴ In his 2005 work *Getting into Local Power: The Politics of Ethnic Minorities in British and French Cities*, Romain Garbaye noted that this increase in ethnic minority councillors was “closely correlated with the development of policies against racial discrimination in local councils and the institutionalization of ethnic minority-run social services by councils”, as well as an increasing effectiveness by ethnic minorities in influencing decision-making in local politics.²⁵

Secondly, like many other LEAs in this period, the ILEA was under Labour control for the majority of the period in question. After three years of Conservative control, Labour took over the ILEA in 1970 and retained control until its abolition following the 1988 Education Reform Act.²⁶ This meant that for much of the period the ILEA was in opposition to the Conservatives as national ruling party – and was one of the left-wing authorities that the Conservatives targeted.²⁷ While much of what the ILEA found itself under attack for was perceived discrepancies between its high spending and lack of significant improvements in attainment, leading to accusations that it was ineffective²⁸, its policies on race relations also

²³ Eren Tatari, *Muslims in British local government: representing minority interests in Hackney, Newham, and Tower Hamlets* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014), p.39.

²⁴ Romain Garbaye *Getting Into Local Power: The Politics of Ethnic Minorities in British and French Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), p.7.

²⁵ Garbaye, *Getting Into Local Power*, pp.8-9

²⁶ Stuart Maclure, *A History of Education in London, 1870-1990* (London: Allen Lane, 1990), p.193

²⁷ It also found itself in opposition to a Conservative Greater London Council (GLC) for periods of the 1970s and early 1980s, which was responsible for the delegation of educational authority over inner London to the ILEA in the first place.

²⁸ Sir Peter Newsam, *The Autobiography of an Education: Part 2 (1972-1982) The Inner London Education Authority* (Pickering: Greenlea Books, 2014), pp.206-10.

came under attack. These policies were often perceived by those on the right as unacceptable attempts as social engineering.²⁹

It was within this context that the following discussions and negotiations took place, though largely in the early period when numbers of councillors and representatives from ethnic minority backgrounds were just beginning to grow.

Withdrawal

Many of the early interactions of parents and the MET with the state were over the withdrawal of Muslim pupils from religious education and worship, and alternative provision for withdrawn pupils, both of which were provided for in the 1944 Education Act.

In 1968, during a brief period of Conservative control, in a letter of response to an enquiry from the Islamic Cultural Centre at the Regent's Park mosque, a representative of the ILEA wrote that:

I should perhaps also mention that, as you are aware, there is provision under the Education Act 1944 for a pupil to be excused from attendance at religious worship and instruction within the school and to be withdrawn from the school (under certain conditions) for religious instruction elsewhere but that this request for withdrawal must come from the parent of the pupils concerned.³⁰

This indicates awareness of the 1944 framework on the part of the ILEA, and also willingness to inform interested parties. It suggests a proactive, rather than a reactive, approach, and a willingness not only to accede to minority requests, but also to inform affected parties of

²⁹ Alan Radford, 'An enquiry into the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority, (1964-1988): with particular references to politics and policy making', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Bath, 2009), p.170

³⁰ London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, Inner London Education Authority Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education Working Files (ILEA SACRE WF), Letter from the Education Officer to Mohammad El Geyoushi, 27/02/68.

their rights. This suggestion is supported by a study of interactions of the MET with the ILEA in the mid-1970s, once Labour had taken control, over the issue of withdrawal and the provision of alternative religious instruction. These interactions also reveal a proactive MET that was conscious of the 1944 framework and the rights of Muslims within this framework, and confident in helping interested Muslims interact with the state over these rights.

The first example that will be examined is the process of negotiation in 1974 over the provision of religious education at the Robert Montefiore School in East London. In the summer of 1974, the MET corresponded with the school, requesting permission to be allowed to provide Islamic instruction to Muslim pupils from September of that year, which they were, after a short period of negotiation, granted. In its request, the MET highlighted precedents at other schools which had already acceded to their request to provide religious instruction. In a letter to the ILEA, the MET stated that it had “been allowed by the Inner London Education authority to provide Islamic religious education to Muslim children in County Schools”.³¹ MET representative Ghulam Sarwar drew attention in a later letter to the fact that “[m]any of the schools visited by our teachers have agreed to two lessons per week; one in the morning and another in the afternoon”, mentioning in particular Daneford and Tollington Park schools.³² The existence of such precedents, and their use in negotiations, suggests an impetus for consistency on the part of the MET.

The school’s headmistress, however, did not appear to view the matter as relating only to the provisions of the 1944 Act, or to be fully aware of her obligations under these provisions. The minutes of a meeting between MET representatives, the headmistress and Muslim staff at the school suggested that the school understood the request for withdrawal and alternative provision at least in part through the lens of issues relating to immigrants and

³¹ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Letter from Mohammad Afzal to the Education Officer 24/07/74.

³² LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Letter from Sarwar to Mrs MacDonald Murdoch, 05/10/74.

race relations. Concerns were expressed at the meeting about “any form of special weekly assembly of immigrants segregated from the rest of the school”. The reason given for this was that it would “destroy completely the multi-racial Assembly taken by the Headmistress which was considered absolutely appropriate to a multi-racial school and offended no religion”.³³ It is potentially significant that these minutes referred to the pupils to be withdrawn as “immigrants” rather than “Muslims” as this could have led to a response more in line with a race relations approach which did not specifically cater for religious difference. The reference to a “multi-racial Assembly” which “offended no religion” is also worthy of note, as it suggests that the school was approaching religious education from a multi-faith standpoint, that is attempting to teach religious education and approach worship in a way that was acceptable to children of all faiths and denominations. The ILEA wrote to the MET of religious education at the school that:

there is an equal amount of time in the school curriculum devoted to instruction in the Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths and at the end of the Christmas and Easter terms Muslim gatherings are held in the same way as Christian gatherings.³⁴

This is different to the pluralist approach outlined in the 1944 Education Act, and is also different to what would have been acceptable to many Muslims who sought the teaching of Islam by Muslim teachers. Beyond this, there is also evidence that the headmistress was not fully aware of her obligations under the 1944 Act. The minutes of the above meeting stated that she:

made it clear that in her opinion as per provisions of the 1944 Act, the teaching of Christian Divinity at the school was mandatory, but the teaching of Divinity in any

³³ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Minutes of a meeting at the Robert Montefiore School, 24/09/74.

³⁴ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Letter from Mrs B. Carter-Ruck for the Education Officer to the MET, 04/09/74.

other religion entirely dependent upon the grace of the Authorities and they had been very co-operative to Muslims in this respect.³⁵

The headmistress is mistaken in her interpretation, as she does not acknowledge the right to withdrawal and alternative provision within the 1944 Act.

The role of the MET here is significant: it was able and willing to invoke the 1944 Education Act to make sure that it achieved its aims. The MET's request itself was accompanied by a list of pupils whose parents wished them to receive Islamic religious education, in accordance with the stipulation in the Act that the request for withdrawal and alternative provision must come from individual parents.³⁶ Sarwar wrote in a letter to the headmistress about the decisions made by the school that "[i]n arriving at these decisions, I think you have ignored the relevant provisions of the 1944 Education Act (Sec. 25 and 26). Sec 3 of the proceedings of the meeting of 24.9.74 is also not in conformity with the Act". The letter also criticised the fact that the headmistress seemed to be seeking consent from the staff about the provision of Islamic religious education, which was a right enshrined in law.³⁷ These interactions reveal a proactive, self-aware and confident Muslim organisation that was not satisfied simply with being allowed to provide education, but which chastised the headmistress of a school it was working with for her lack of awareness of the legal framework, and clearly asserted that its teaching was permitted by, and would take place within, that framework.

The same confidence is evident in the MET's negotiations over the teaching of Islam to pupils withdrawn from religious education at the Shelburne Secondary School in 1975. The

³⁵ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Minutes of a meeting at the Robert Montefiore School.

³⁶ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Letter from Mohammad Afzal to the Education Officer 24/07/74; Letter from Afzal Rahman to the Education Office 13/08/74.

³⁷ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Letter from Sarwar to Mrs Macdonald Murdoch, 05/10/74.

MET sent a request to be allowed to provide Islamic instructors at the school, and enclosed copies of an identical letter from the parents making the requests, in accordance with the requirements of the 1944 Act. The letters specifically referred to the Act, asking that the MET be allowed to provide instruction “under section 25 (4) and (5) a, b and c, Manual of Guidance, Schools No.1 Choice of Schools Page 140-141 Education Act 1944”.³⁸ This detail is important in what it tells us about the role of the MET: if there were parents who were unsure of their rights and of ways to interact with the state, by 1975 (and, from the evidence above, probably earlier) the MET was able to step in and provide them with the means to understand these rights and to ensure that their needs were met.

The headmistress of the school, though agreeing to the withdrawal, said she was unable to accommodate the withdrawn pupils on the school premises, and asked for them to be withdrawn to the offices of the Trust in Stroud Green Road.³⁹ Sarwar challenged this, highlighting that “the Education Act of 1944 provides for the religious education to be given within the school premises provided they involve no expenses on the authorities”.⁴⁰ A second refusal by the headmistress, which argued that there was no space in the school for such provision, that she could not permit pupils to go elsewhere as it would mean them missing out on other classes, and that the “problem from your point of view must therefore be resolved by out of school hours instruction”,⁴¹ had the effect of bringing the ILEA into the discussions. As well as writing to the MET, she wrote to the ILEA that:

³⁸ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Letter from parents to Shelburne School.

³⁹ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Letter from Carter-Ruck to Sarwar, 18/04/75.

⁴⁰ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Letter from Sarwar to the Education Officer, 21/04/75.

⁴¹ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF Letter from M. Taylor to Sarwar, 22/04/75.

if the teaching of reading in my school cannot be developed to the satisfaction of myself and my staff through lack of accommodation, perhaps the mass of parents might justifiably be interested in this kind of minority pressure.⁴²

The final part of this sentence is a little oblique, but worthy of consideration. There appears to be a veiled threat, based on the idea that in seeking different treatment as a group in this situation, Muslims were doing something that other parents may be justified in objecting to. This suggests that the headmistress was considering the application as an issue which went beyond that which could be accommodated within a framework of conservative religious pluralism. Internal ILEA correspondence supports this, and indicates that she had some concerns relating to race relations. One memo noted that she was “concerned that as a multi-racial school she will be subjected to numerous requests from other religious groups if authority is given to the Muslim Educational Trust to send religious instructors into the school.”⁴³ A handwritten ILEA memo of May 1975 also observed that the issue was “[o]stensibly a matter of interpretation of religious education clauses in the 1944 act”, but that “it could easily widen to a race and community relations matter”.⁴⁴ Yet despite such concerns, the 1944 framework prevailed.

The application of the 1944 framework here should be understood as a result of a combination of the actions of the ILEA and the MET. After a series of debates over the requirements of the Act and what they meant⁴⁵, an ILEA memo of 20th May stated that:

we could say that in every other case the school has provided the accommodation. If she is absolutely convinced that she cannot – even for the short periods required – it

⁴² LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Letter from M. Taylor to Carter-Ruck, 22/04/75.

⁴³ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Memo from Assistant Divisional Officer to Education Officer, 24/04/75.

⁴⁴ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Memo from Chanin, 15/05/75.

⁴⁵ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Internal Memo, 14/05/75; Internal Memo, 15/05/75.

will be necessary to transfer the burden to one of her colleagues in another school since the law is quite explicit and the Muslim Educational Trust are well aware of it.⁴⁶

After further pressure from the ILEA, and being reminded of her obligations under the 1944 Act⁴⁷, the headmistress agreed that an instructor could teach Islam to Muslim pupils during school assemblies when all other pupils were in the school hall for two days per week.⁴⁸ A handwritten note commented that the headmistress “would prefer that the instruction would be held before and after school but I pointed out that under the provision of the 1944 Education Act this instruction should be given during school hours.”⁴⁹ This challenges interpretations of a passive, ill-informed Muslim population and an unreceptive state. It provides evidence of a well-informed Muslim organisation working to ensure parents knew their rights, and of a state that was aware of its legal position, aware of the scrutiny of its provision by the MET, and wishing to be consistent, looking to precedents to determine its policy. It highlights the strength and scope of the 1944 Act, and Muslim awareness of the framework that it created. This does not fit in with the idea of provision being “ad hoc” or “on the hoof”.

The role of the ILEA, without the involvement of the MET, can be seen in negotiations over the religious education of Moroccan Muslims which arose in North Kensington in the spring of 1977. Robert Vagars, member of the Greater London Council for Kensington and leader of the opposition in the ILEA, was approached by leaders of the Moroccan community about problems concerning morning assembly and religious instruction.⁵⁰ The ILEA then held a

⁴⁶ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Memo from R Chanin, 20/05/75.

⁴⁷ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Letter from Education Officer to Taylor, 29/05/75.

⁴⁸ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Letter from Carter-Ruck to Education Officer to Sarwar, 05/06/75.

⁴⁹ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Note from Mrs Carter-Ruck, 05/06/75.

⁵⁰ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Letter from Robert Vagars to Miss Blackford, 25/04/77.

meeting for the head teachers of affected schools, at which a Divisional Officer “explained in detail the implications of Section 25 and 26 of the Education Act 1944 and gave the heads copies of the form prepared some years ago by GP Branch to cover requests for withdrawal”. In his report of the meeting, commenting on the fact that requests for withdrawal had to come from individual parents rather than from a representative organisation, the Divisional Officer wrote that “[n]evertheless, in the circumstances of this Moroccan community, I recognise that it would be unreasonable to expect parents to fill up our forms. Most of them are illiterate even in Arabic.”⁵¹ This again demonstrates awareness on the part of the ILEA of the stipulations of the 1944 Act, willingness to communicate these to affected groups, and a flexible and sympathetic approach to the difficulties that some Muslim groups may face. This challenges perceptions of a state that was reluctant to allow groups their rights under the 1944 Act.

Worship

A flexible approach rooted in the provisions and requirements of the 1944 Education Act can also be seen in interactions of the ILEA with Muslims over the issue of religious worship in the early 1980s. In the early months of 1981, the Authority engaged in protracted discussions over the question of whether Muslim boys should be allowed time out of school on Fridays in order to attend prayers. The issue arose following an enquiry into the ILEA’s policy from a headmistress who had received a request from a father who wished to take his son to the mosque on Fridays. In its discussions of this enquiry, the ILEA observed that this issue had arisen previously and was likely to arise again due to the “presence in Tower Hamlets of a very large Muslim community who are becoming progressively more interested in educational matters”.⁵² The initial response of the ILEA was to agree that the boy’s father

⁵¹ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF Note from Divisional Officer to Education Officer, 13/05/77.

⁵² LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Minute from DM Collins, Acting Divisional Officer at ILEA, to R Chanin, 05/01/81.

could collect his son at noon and return him to school after prayers, with a note commenting “[t]his will be a temporary arrangement under a rather generous interpretation of Section 25(5), until we receive advice from County Hall.”⁵³ This approach appears to indicate willingness, rather than reluctance, to accommodate Muslim needs even when the precise legal situation was not clear. It was also evident a couple of months later when the head at Spencer Park School in Wandsworth received a request from the South London Islamic Centre for a room to be made available for Muslim boys to pray on Friday lunchtimes. The ILEA advised him that the matter was under consideration, and so a room should be made available on a temporary basis until a decision was made.⁵⁴

At the same time as such temporary solutions were being implemented, a quest for a more permanent one was underway. A key concern of the ILEA was that the 1944 Education Act did not provide a legal framework for pupils to leave school for purposes of religious worship – such provision was limited to religious instruction.⁵⁵ The MET was consulted,⁵⁶ and Sarwar responded that Friday attendance at mosque was compulsory for the over 12s and encouraged for the under 12s, and was normally held between 1 and 2pm. He also wrote that “Friday prayer at mosques is an integral part of the Muslim religious worship and as such cannot be called religious instruction in the usual sense of the term”.⁵⁷ In response, an internal ILEA memo commented that “[t]he MET is not entirely helpful to us (though honest) because it stressed that worship rather than instruction is involved.”⁵⁸ This seems to suggest that the ILEA was seeking to find legal support for a position of allowing students to attend the mosque on Fridays rather than to prevent them from doing so. This suggestion is

⁵³ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14 ILEA SACRE WF, Minute from DM Collins to Chanin, 20/01/81.

⁵⁴ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Note from Dawn Russell, 05/03/1981.

⁵⁵ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Letter from Dawn Russell to Gordon and Woodroffe, 07/01/81.

⁵⁶ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Letter from Dawn Russell to Sarwar, 07/01/81.

⁵⁷ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Letter from Sarwar to ILEA, 16/01/81.

⁵⁸ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Note from Chanin, 30/01/81.

supported by a subsequent handwritten note which stated that “[f]ollowing advice from MET, as prayer is ‘worship’ we have no authority to allow pupils to attend the mosque under the 1944 Act; but no doubt we would wish to make some arrangements for the benefit of community relations”.⁵⁹ It is also supported by a statement in a later internal memo which commented that the ILEA was really looking for a suitable interpretation of the 1944 Act, and that “[t]his could be that religious instruction in S 25 (5) and S 26 can be interpreted in practice to include ‘religious worship’ or that, in this particular case of the Muslim requirement to pray at lunchtime on Fridays, there is a mix of ‘worship’ and ‘instruction’ which can [therefore] satisfy S 25 (5) and S 26 as one would normally interpret them”.⁶⁰ This suggests that the ILEA was prepared to test, and to potentially expand, the limits of the pluralist framework.

There is considerable evidence of a desire to develop a consistent policy. After these initial consultations and discussions, the ILEA then decided to consult with two other local education authorities – Bradford and Ealing – over their policies about Friday Worship. The letter to the two LEAs stated that “[w]e have so far dealt with these requests as they have arisen but we should like to adopt a practice which is consistent and regarded as fair to the Muslim community”.⁶¹ The response from Ealing said that the question had not yet arisen, but that the authority would like to have a consistent approach for when it did: “[w]ould this, therefore, be a matter which might be considered by the conference of Education Officers of London and the Home Counties in order that a common approach might be formulated?”⁶² The response from Bradford was that it had not received many requests for early departure on Fridays, but that it allowed Muslim children to be absent from school for

⁵⁹ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Handwritten note, 27/01/81.

⁶⁰ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Note from Chanin to Goff, Russell and Gleesman, 10/03/81.

⁶¹ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Letter from Russell to Ealing and Bradford LEAs, 05/03/81.

⁶² LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Letter from R.J. Hartles, Ealing Chief Education Officer, to ILEA, 19/03/81.

the last hour on Fridays.⁶³ The Bradford response came up repeatedly in subsequent ILEA discussions of how to resolve the issue.

The ILEA was also keen to consider the implications of the precedent of how similar requests from Jewish children had been handled. An internal note mentioned that Jewish children were allowed to leave school early on Friday afternoons in winter in preparation for the Sabbath, and that

they are given this dispensation for religious observance, not religious instruction. I cannot see any substantive difference between this practice, which is universal, and that of Muslims leaving school for a period in the middle of the day on a Friday also for religious observance. In neither case can the law be said to be strictly complied with since the purpose of absence is not religious instruction. But as we allow it for one religious group, it is difficult to see how we can deny it to the other.⁶⁴

This was again brought up in an internal note on 12th May in which Goff of the ILEA said that, based on the response from Bradford and also the previous approach taken to Jewish children, “I can’t see that we can really do anything else when Jewish children have had a similar facility, although later in the day, for a number of years.”⁶⁵

Such negotiations were perhaps helped by the fact that there had been negotiations on similar issues between members of Britain’s Jewish community and the state going back to at least the 1950s. For example, in 1951-2, the Board of Deputies of British Jews campaigned to ensure that Jewish children at Chandor School in Stanmore were given a mark on Friday afternoons, even if they left early for Shabbat.⁶⁶ Correspondence between the Board of

⁶³ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Letter from W.R. Knight, Bradford Director of Educational Services, to Russell, 07/05/81.

⁶⁴ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Handwritten note to Goff and Russell, 08/04/81.

⁶⁵ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Note from Goff, 12/05/81.

⁶⁶ LMA, City of London, ACC/3121/E/04/0345, Board of Deputies of British Jews (BDBJ) General Correspondence, Correspondence between Board of Deputies and Office of the Chief Rabbi, 1951-2.

Deputies of British Jews and the Office of the Chief Rabbi highlighted the role of Jewish organisations in negotiating over such issues. In a letter to the Board of Deputies, Michael Wallach of the Office of the Chief Rabbi noted that the 1944 Education Act made provision for pupils to attend worship “[o]n Sundays or other days exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs”, and that this included Jewish children wishing to leave school early for Shabbat. He then stated that:

efforts are continuously made both by this Office and by the London Board of Jewish Religious Education and other bodies to inform parents of their rights in this matter and to advise them as to the procedure for claiming these rights.⁶⁷

There is also evidence of interaction of Jewish parents with the state over such issues from the 1950s. This can be seen, for example, in correspondence over difficulties which arose at Hendon school in 1956 over Jewish children being absent on Holy Days which indicated that it was common practice for Jewish children to be allowed time off for holy days provided parents signed a written request.⁶⁸

The culmination of these discussions can be seen in the ILEA Circular 81/156, “Guidelines on Muslim Pupils”, issued in September 1981, which is discussed at greater length below. The final version of the Circular, though stating that prayer was not obligatory for children, suggested that a room be made available within schools for prayers upon request, and then stated that “[a]lternatively, if a written request is made by a parent, a Muslim child may be absent for school for the latter part of Friday afternoon to attend the Mosque”.⁶⁹ This was added after a comment by Dawn Russell in relation to the first draft of the circular that

⁶⁷ LMA, City of London, ACC/3121/E/04/0345, BDBJ General Correspondence, Letter from Michael Wallach at Office of the Chief Rabbi to N. Levy at Board of Deputies, 10/06/55.

⁶⁸ LMA, City of London, ACC/3121/E/04/0345, BDBJ General Correspondence, Letter from RI Minchon to Eccles, 23/09/56.

⁶⁹ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/014, ILEA SACRE WF, Circular 81/156 ‘Guidelines on Muslim Pupils’, 09/81.

“bearing in mind that we already interpret S.39 of the 1944 Education Act liberally to allow Jewish children to leave school early on Fridays during the winter months it may be difficult to justify not permitting a similar arrangement for Muslims, should they wish it”.⁷⁰ This highlights the significance of not only the 1944 Education Act in governing interactions between Muslims and the state, but also of the history of pluralism and the precedent of Jewish interactions with the state.

4) “Cultural” needs

There is also evidence to suggest that the state was willing to accommodate needs of Muslims that were not explicitly catered for in the 1944 Act, and which did not pertain to religious worship, instruction or education. These are the needs that Ansari has referred to as cultural “problem areas” which “were likely to have an adverse effect on Muslim children’s self-esteem and security, and hence on their educational achievement”.⁷¹ Ansari’s description does not suffice in explaining what these needs were, however. They were needs, for example those relating to diet and dress, which for some members of the immigrant population were a product of their ethnic, national or cultural identity, but for Muslims often originated in the desire to live in accordance with their Islamic beliefs. In other words, for Muslims these were religious needs.

Such needs were not explicitly covered by the 1944 Act, but could potentially be accommodated within the pluralist framework and there is evidence of willingness on the part of the state, going back to the 1960s, do just this. In September 1967, *The Times* newspaper reported, under the headline “Muslim concession”, that Muslim children at Moat Girls School in Leicester were to be allowed to wear the shalwar kameez – “traditional baggy trousers” – after a decision made by the secondary school education sub-committee,

⁷⁰ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/014, ILEA SACRE WF, Note from Russell to CEC7, 06/07/81.

⁷¹ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.308.

commenting that this “will be allowed on religious grounds after a protest by parents of Muslim children”.⁷² Two years later, the newspaper reported that schoolchildren in Bradford were also to be allowed to wear the shalwar.⁷³ The events in Leicester were mentioned by Iqbal in his 1977 article⁷⁴, but no attempt seems to have been made to explore the situation in any depth. These cases stand out partly because both were presented by the Muslims involved as an issue of religious need, and were understood as such by the relevant LEAs and some sections of the local population.

A local newspaper, the *Leicester Mercury*, initially reported a “ban” on such trousers at Moat Girls School (though there does not seem to have been a serious ban and girls don’t seem to have been sent home for wearing the shalwar), and stated that the Muslim Parents Group, formed to campaign on this issue, “see the attempt to ban trousers at the school as a religious issue”. It quoted Y.A. Badat, a representative of the group, who said “[t]he matter of women wearing trousers is most important to us [because] in our religion women are not allowed to show their legs”.⁷⁵ A week later, reporting on the resolution of the issue, the paper quoted a statement made by the governors in which they said that they

were concerned to maintain the religious tolerance which is traditional in this country and the governors therefore advise the headmistress to make a variation in the standard school uniform for girls of the Muslim faith.⁷⁶

The invocation of the tradition of tolerance here is important in demonstrating the thinking that underpinned the interactions of Muslims with the state. Correspondence sent to the paper further demonstrated that, though there were some who perceived this as an issue of immigration or race relations, others from the local community understood it as an issue of

⁷² *The Times*, 27/09/67.

⁷³ *The Times*, 17/11/67.

⁷⁴ Iqbal, ‘Education and Islam in Britain—a Muslim View’, p.397.

⁷⁵ *Leicester Mercury*, 18/09/67.

⁷⁶ *Leicester Mercury*, 27/09/67.

religious pluralism. One letter argued that “schools used to supply Catholic pupils with fish on Fridays until the ban was lifted, so why cannot a little tolerance be shown on this issue?”⁷⁷ A letter from the Reverend Stephen J. Twycross argued, in response to letters criticising the “immigrants”, that “religious toleration has been the order of the day in this country since the repeal of the Test Act in 1863 [sic]”.⁷⁸ Yet another letter argued that “[i]n banning the trousers, the headmistress is interfering with the principle of religious liberty so vital to English society. Every parent has the right, in educational law, to determine the religious upbringing of the child.” It declared that the idea of banning the shalwar was “surely analogous” with Catholics being unable to withdraw their children from morning assembly or rosaries being banned in state schools.⁷⁹

Discussion of the situation in Bradford in the local newspaper the *Telegraph and Argus* clearly identified the girls concerned as “Moslem”, and raised several other issues over which Muslims had been interacting with the LEA for the previous couple of years. It reported that the Director of Education at the LEA would “re-issue a two year old circular to schools instructing heads that where parents of immigrant children wished to wear certain dress for cultural and religious reasons, they should be allowed to wear a compromise shalwar...” The paper also quoted the director of the Bradford Islamic Centre after meeting with a representative of Bradford Council as saying “[w]e had a long talk with Mr. Adams in a very friendly way. We are very pleased with the meeting”.⁸⁰ The newspaper also wrote that the Director “told the deputation that he would instruct head teachers to arrange for immigrant children to be told when pork was being served as school dinners. (The Moslem religion does not permit the eating of pork.)” Regarding the issue of religious instruction, however, Adams was quoted as saying “[w]e will have to study this question very carefully

⁷⁷ *Leicester Mercury*, 26/09/67.

⁷⁸ *Leicester Mercury*, 25/09/67.

⁷⁹ *Leicester Mercury*, 25/09/67.

⁸⁰ *Telegraph and Argus*, 17/11/67.

indeed. If it seems a feasible proposition and within the legal requirements, I expect that in due course we shall ask the Education Committee to consider it.”⁸¹ This seems to indicate that, where they were recognised as originating in religion, cultural needs were being met even before those over religious provision. Such issues also arose in London, and in negotiations of the ILEA with Muslims, as will be discussed in more detail shortly.

The precedent set by the Jewish community may have had some significance in the response of the state to Muslim children. This can be seen in relation to the provision of kosher meals to children in London schools, a provision which was made even before the Second World War and the 1944 Education Act. In 1954 London County Council explored the logistics of providing kosher meals in schools, noting that previously two organisations, the Organuatio Sanitaria Ebraica and the Kosher School Meals Service, were paid by the Council, who in turn took payment from parents, to provide such meals. The report argued that there had been an increasing number of requests for such meals from parents in East and North-East London, and as a result the Education Committee of the LCC was reviewing its policy in relation to such provision. The conclusion of this report was that kosher meals should be provided in schools where at least 75% of the children were Jewish, where such provision would lead to an increase in the number of children having school dinners, where it was practicable, and where no expenditure would be required of the council.⁸² In 1968, when it seemed that the Kosher School Meals Service might close down, a letter from the Service to Michael Fidler, President of the Board of Deputies stated that:

I am sure you will appreciate that the closure of the Service will mean the breaking up of the intricate arrangements which have been made with the local authorities

⁸¹ *Telegraph and Argus*, 17/11/67.

⁸² LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/001, ILEA SACRE WF, Report on Provision of Kosher Dinners to London School Children, 14/10/54.

who have always been most generous towards the Jewish community in this respect.⁸³

This indicates a precedent of a religious minority successfully negotiating with LEAs over religious needs which went beyond religious instruction and worship.

There are some further points to be drawn out of the description of events above, beyond the evidence of successful Muslim-state interactions, the role of the pluralist framework and an apparent desire for consistency on the part of the state from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. Firstly, it is worth highlighting the existence of local Muslim organisations and pressure groups representing the needs of Muslims and negotiating with the state on their behalf. Wherever issues of Muslim education cropped up, so did such groups. We have already seen the Muslim Parents Group in Leicester and the Bradford Islamic Centre. In addition to these, Anwar mentioned the Rochdale Muslim Society which campaigned, amongst other things, over school uniform issues for Pakistani girls.⁸⁴ The ILEA corresponded with Hackney Muslim Council in the late 1970s and with a Muslim Welfare Association.⁸⁵ In Walsall in Staffordshire where issues arose over the wearing of the shalwar in 1969-70, Muslims were represented by the local Muslim Welfare Society.⁸⁶ The presence of such organisations is evidence of the success, not of the failure of the existing system. It was a system designed to be flexible, and to allow the promotion and accommodation of different local needs where they arose. Areas such as Bradford, Birmingham, Leicester and parts of London, as well as others, were therefore able to respond to local needs at a local level, with little or no intervention from central government. This challenges, for example, Ansari's observation that Muslim organisations did not flourish until the slashing of funding for

⁸³ LMA, City of London, ACC/3121/E/04/0346, BDBJ General Correspondence, Letter from Kosher School Meals Service to Michael Fidler, 05/10/68,.

⁸⁴ Anwar, *The Myth of Return*, p.162.

⁸⁵ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/014, ILEA SACRE WF, Correspondence between Hackney Council and the Muslim Welfare Association.

⁸⁶ *The Times*, 06/12/69.

multicultural initiatives due to the New Right policies of the 1980s, “which left room for specifically Muslim organisations to emerge with renewed strength.”⁸⁷ The need for national Muslim coordination over education did become more pressing in the mid-to-late 1980s, but this has to be understood in the context of the centralisation of education policy and administration. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was no such need for nationwide coordination, for it was at local level that most educational needs were accommodated and promoted.

A second point to be made is that, in addition to these local organisations, there were also a number of national organisations which worked to oversee some of the broader educational concerns faced by Muslims in England. The MET fulfilled such a role, and in addition to its attempts to coordinate the provision of religious instruction it produced a series of publications of increasing scope throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The earliest of these, the *First Primer of Islam*, published early in 1969, was designed for use by teachers and parents in the teaching of Islam to young children⁸⁸ and was followed by second and third primers in 1969 and 1978.⁸⁹ These were then followed by a range of texts about Islam, designed to be used in schools, including the *Syllabus and Guidelines for Islamic Teaching in Secondary Schools* in 1980⁹⁰ and *Islam: A Brief Guide* in 1981.⁹¹ They also produced a series of guidelines on the teaching of Islam in the UK in 1983, entitled *Muslims and Education in the UK*⁹² and an annotated bibliography entitled *Books on Islam in English*.⁹³ The UMO, whose newsletter was quoted above, was founded in 1970 as an umbrella organisation for other Muslim organisations, and in 1971 it formed an Education Committee, according to its 1976

⁸⁷ Ansari, *Muslims in Britain*, p.20.

⁸⁸ Muslim Educational Trust, *First Primer of Islam*.

⁸⁹ Muslim Educational Trust, *Third Primer of Islam: Salah*. (London: Muslim Educational Trust, 1978).

⁹⁰ Ghulam Sarwar, *Syllabus and Guidelines: For Islamic Teaching in Secondary Schools* (London: Muslim Educational Trust, 1980).

⁹¹ Muslim Educational Trust, *Islam: A Brief Guide*. (London: Muslim Educational Trust, 1981).

⁹² Ghulam Sarwar, *Muslims and Education in the U.K.* (London: Muslim Educational Trust, 1983).

⁹³ Ghulam Sarwar, *Books on Islam in English* (London: Muslim Educational Trust, 1983).

publication *Guidelines and Syllabus on Islamic Education*, in order to tackle the “major problem” of “the imparting of Islamic Education to Muslim children”. Its aim was to prepare “blueprints for the establishment of Primary and Secondary Schools, leading ultimately to the establishment of an Islamic University in Britain”.⁹⁴ It held a conference in the summer of 1974 focused on the issue of single sex schools. Its 1976 *Guidelines* stated that “[i]t emerged at this conference that the subject of Islamic Education is so vast that it is necessary to set up a National Islamic Education Council under the auspices of the UMO with the co-operation of other Muslim Organisations who have specialised in the field of Islamic Education”.⁹⁵ Submissions to the Swann Committee in 1982 provide evidence of the existence of further organisations. The British Association of Muslims gave written evidence⁹⁶ and the Muslim Education Consultative Committee, which was formed after a series of conferences in 1979, gave oral evidence.⁹⁷ The nature of these submissions will be discussed in more depth below, but it is important to highlight that, by the early 1980s, there were multiple organisations which had the aim of considering the educational issues faced by Muslims in England, some of which had been in existence for more than a decade.

5) *The Limitations of Pluralism*

This chapter has so far demonstrated that Muslims were interacting with the state over education in the 1960s and 1970s, that this largely took place at local authority level and that at least some of the interactions were fruitful, with Muslim needs being accommodated and local authorities showing flexibility in their accommodation of such needs. This expands

⁹⁴ Union of Muslim Organisation of United Kingdom and Ireland, *Guidelines and Syllabus on Islamic Education* (London: Union of Muslim Organisations of UK & Eire, 1976), p.4.

⁹⁵ Union of Muslim Organisation of United Kingdom and Ireland, p.4.

⁹⁶ TNA, ED 269/211/1, Department for Education and Science (DES): Schools Branch II, Special Education: Registered Files (SS Series), Written evidence to Swann Report from British Association of Muslims, 20/03/82.

⁹⁷ TNA, ED 282/26, Department for Education and Science: Schools Branches: Committee Minutes, Oral evidence for Muslim, Hindu and Asian Organisations to Swann Report, 1982.

on, and at times challenges, many existing accounts of education in this period which, while they may mention such interactions, tend not to acknowledge or examine their significance.

Such interactions took place within the framework created by the 1944 Education Act and the longer history of religious pluralism that underpinned state interactions with religious minorities in Britain. This framework was one which was inherently conservative: it accommodated needs which did not require any fundamental changes to the existing system, but did not tend to address more difficult questions about the nature of majority-minority relations in Britain. Feldman has described how, in the pluralist framework, solutions to problems “were part of a strategy of incorporation and governance; designed to preserve English dominance within the United Kingdom, to govern subject peoples within the empire, and to preserve the privileges of the established church” and were “in a structural sense, conservative”.⁹⁸ As such, this framework both created the context in which Muslim needs could be met and also imposed limitations on which needs could be met. So, for example, it led to a situation in which Muslim pupils could be withdrawn from religious education, music, drama and sex education classes where their parents were dissatisfied with the curriculum, but did not seriously raise questions about whether the curriculum itself should be altered.

The scope and limitations of the pluralist approach can be seen in the ILEA Circular 81/156, “Guidelines on Muslim Pupils”, which was issued to head teachers across the Authority in September 1981. Its stated purpose was “[t]o issue information to schools on the problems faced by Muslim pupils and advice on how to deal with these”.⁹⁹ The contents of the Circular make clear that it should be interpreted as falling within the pluralist framework. It offered

⁹⁸ David Feldman, ‘Why the English like Turbans: Multicultural Politics in British History’, in *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History*, ed by David Feldman and John Lawrence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 281–302 (p.293).

⁹⁹ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/014, ILEA SACRE WF, ILEA Circular 81/156 ‘Guidelines on Muslim Pupils’, 09/81.

the following guidelines: parents had the right to withdraw their children from assemblies; Muslim children should be allowed time off for Eid-al-Fitr and Eid-al-Adha; Muslim children should be excused from swimming lessons on parental request; alternative changing arrangements should be made for Muslim children upon parental request; Muslim children should be permitted to wear swimming costumes while showering; schools wishing to add books on Islam to their libraries should seek the advice of the Islamic Cultural Centre; Muslim clubs should be permitted where children wanted to form them; there should be an awareness in schools and provision made for Muslim and Hindu diets; girls should be allowed to wear trousers as long as they fit in with school uniform; permission should be given for Muslim pupils to withdraw from dance and music classes upon parental request; parents should be kept informed about what is going on in sex education, and withdrawal should be allowed if requested by parents.¹⁰⁰ The Circular accommodated difference and permitted withdrawal from problematic subject areas, but did not seek to fundamentally change the nature of the education provided by the ILEA, or the framework through which that was provided. It was therefore very clearly a product of the pluralist framework, consolidating those policies that had been developed within this framework over the previous decade or so.¹⁰¹

The events described so far in this chapter took place from the late 1960s until the start of the 1980s, predating the development of overt multiculturalist education policies in the early and mid-1980s. The parameters of the pluralist approach and attempts to expand the limits of what it could accommodate will be explored in more depth in chapters 4, 5 and 6. Before this is examined, however, it is necessary to look at developments in education in the 1980s, and the responses of various interested groups including Muslims to these

¹⁰⁰ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/04/014 ILEA SACRE WF, ILEA Circular 81/156 'Guidelines on Muslim Pupils', 09/81.

¹⁰¹ Mark Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity: An Examination of the Honeyford Affair, 1984-85* (London: Falmer, 1988), p.33.

developments. Until the mid-1980s, the pluralist framework had existed alongside different approaches which covered race relations and offered other ways of governing majority-minority relations, as was outlined in the introduction to this thesis. By the mid-1980s, shifts were beginning to take place in both frameworks which had a considerable, and often detrimental, impact on the ability of Muslims to interact with the state over educational issues.

6) Rethinking the 1980s

The introduction to this thesis, as well as the early part of this chapter, have drawn attention to the fact that many existing accounts of Muslims in Britain suggest that it was not until the 1980s that Muslims were successful in having their needs heard and accommodated by the state. The examination of the events of the 1960s and 1970s has suggested that this chronology is not fully accurate and complete, and that there is a need for a re-evaluation of existing interpretations. If Muslim needs were being heard and accommodated in at least some areas in the 1960s and 1970s, it is necessary to ask why it is often the 1980s that are usually in the spotlight when this issue is explored. This section will reconsider the 1980s, taking into account the existence and influence of the pluralist framework, and the role of local provision and the 1944 Education Act in Muslim state-interactions prior to the 1980s.

Education for All? The Swann Report

A good starting point for a discussion of the education of minority groups in England in the 1980s is the Swann Report *Education for All: Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups*. The report was published in 1985, and was one of a series of reports focusing on ethnic minorities in Britain in the early 1980s. It grew from the 1981 Rampton Report *West Indian Children in Our Schools*, which emerged from concerns about the poor performance of West Indian children in schools noted by a 1977 Report by the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration. The origins of the

Swann Report can therefore be found in initiatives relating to race relations and ethnicity, and concerns about the educational underachievement of non-white students which were prevalent in the 1970s and early 1980s.¹⁰² Though these origins do not suggest a focus on religious minorities such as Muslims, the Swann Report is useful because it gives an insight into key strands of educational thinking in the early 1980s. It is therefore worth spending some time considering its findings, the implications of these, and responses to them.

The Report has been feted by some as a significant development, or even a high point, in multicultural education. Halstead referred to the Report as the “government’s major contribution to the debate about the needs of ethnic minority pupils”.¹⁰³ Parker-Jenkins argued that the Report gave legitimacy to local authorities that had been adopting multicultural and anti-racist policies.¹⁰⁴ Joppke argued that, even before its publication, Swann had an impact, and that following the creation of the Swann Committee, “[m]ulticultural curriculum reform and teacher training bloomed especially at the local level, and by 1983, 36 of 105 surveyed Local Education Authorities had written policy statements on multicultural education”.¹⁰⁵ Other responses have been less positive. Ansari stated that the Report “was tepidly received, its recommendations accepted only in part and reluctantly”.¹⁰⁶ At the time of its publication, responses to the Swann Report were also mixed, with educators, academics and others often expressing criticism of its methods and findings. Several of the chapters in T.S. Chivers’ 1987 work *Race and Culture in Education: Issues arising from the Swann Committee* expressed doubts over the potential of the

¹⁰² Tomlinson, p. 194; Barry Troyna, “Swann’s Song’: The Origins, Ideology and Implications of Education for All’, *Journal of Education Policy*, 1.2 (1986), 171–181 (p.29).

¹⁰³ Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.28.

¹⁰⁴ Marie Parker-Jenkins, *Children of Islam: A Teacher’s Guide to Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils* (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham, 1995), p.17.

¹⁰⁵ Christian Joppke, *Immigration and the Nation-State: The United States, Germany, and Great Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.236.

¹⁰⁶ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.318.

report's vision of the creation of a harmonious multicultural society.¹⁰⁷ However, many such early responses to the Swann Report were primarily concerned with the report's ability to deal with issues of underachievement and racism, and did not pay particular attention to its effect on Muslims, or other religious minorities.¹⁰⁸

Whilst such arguments are of potential pertinence, they are not the primary concern of this thesis, which seeks to understand the place of the Swann Report not only in the broader history of multiculturalism and the education of ethnic minorities, but also in the specific history of the development of Muslim-state relations within a framework of pluralism. Such a perspective brings different themes within the report to the surface, and suggests a new interpretation of the Report and of its position in this history. This section will evaluate the Report from such a perspective, considering its impact on Muslim-state relations over education.

The Swann Report took as its terms of reference the idea of "[r]ecognising the contribution of schools in preparing all pupils for life in a society which is both multiracial and culturally diverse".¹⁰⁹ The focus on all pupils was echoed in the Report's title *Education for All*. The foreword, written by Secretary of State Joseph, stated that:

the government is firmly committed to the principle that all children, irrespective of race, colour or origins, should have a good education which develops their abilities and aptitudes to the full and brings about a true sense of belonging to Britain.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ *Race and Culture in Education: Issues Arising from the Swann Committee Report*, ed. by T. S. Chivers (Windsor: NFER-Nelson, 1987).

¹⁰⁸ Gajendra K. Verma, 'Education for All: A Landmark in Pluralism', in *Education for All: A Landmark in Pluralism* (Psychology Press, 1989), pp.1–10.

¹⁰⁹ Department for Education and Science, *Education for All: Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups*, <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/swann/swann1985.html>, p.vii, [Accessed 18/07/2017].

¹¹⁰ DES, *Education for All*.

Evident in these statements and throughout the report is a call for a common experience for children in their education regardless of their ethnic or cultural background. Swann recognised and encouraged diversity within society and the diversity of children within the education system. It did not, however, encourage the idea of different children being treated differently in their education as a result of that diversity. This is reflected in the fact that the Report chose to eschew the term “multicultural education”, which it argued “appears to have encouraged schools and LEAs in ‘all-white’ areas to believe the issues involved are of no concern to them since they see themselves as monocultural”, in favour of the term “Education for All”.¹¹¹ This desire for a uniform educational experience for all pupils is important for this thesis, as it meant that Swann did not, on certain levels at least, recognise the benefits or support the continuation of the pluralist framework which consciously provided for diversity where necessary. The form of multicultural education advocated by Swann therefore had the potential to disrupt the conservative pluralist framework which was based in part on the ability and desirability of providing different education according to local need.

The Report did offer some acknowledgement the existence of the pluralist framework. It referred to the “decentralised education system”, arguing that it was possible that “it is neither appropriate nor desirable to seek to dictate policy too closely to LEAs or schools”. However, it then disputed the idea of supporting the continuation of such decentralisation, arguing that the absence of central control had been detrimental to the development of multicultural education and a “consensus view of what needs to be done”, and that there had been “a marked divergence of view as LEAs and schools have continued to develop their own particular ‘brands’ of multicultural education, with little reference to activities in other areas of the country.”¹¹² This view is significant as it is based on a view that ongoing

¹¹¹ DES, *Education for All*, p.317.

¹¹² DES, *Education for All*, p.315.

differences between different LEAs was a failure of the existing system rather than something built into the framework. It also suggests a lack of knowledge of the approach of the ILEA outlined above, both in seeking to ground its actions within the existing framework and also in coordinating with other LEAs.

The Report also criticised the “‘tailoring’ of multicultural education” to specific communities, and the fact that existing provision was made “very much in response to perceived ‘problems’ or to direct requests from schools or from certain communities for action on particular issues, rather than as part of a coherent and planned strategy”. It was critical of local multicultural provision which, it argued, “can be said to have evolved as a range of ad hoc measures which have been ‘lumped together’ under a common heading but are essentially unrelated”.¹¹³ It also commented that “central government appears to have lacked a coherent strategy for fostering the development of multicultural education and thus to have been able to play a leading role in co-ordinating or encouraging progress in this field.”¹¹⁴ This raises the question of what state policy in relation to the accommodation of minority needs would be based upon, if not requests and expressions of need by relevant minority groups.

The Swann Committee did hear from minority groups, including submissions from a number of explicitly Muslim organisations, and several others that represented Muslims within their remit. These submissions outlined many of the issues over which Muslims had previously been interacting with the state. Written evidence was given by the Pakistan Workers Association North West London and the British Association of Muslims, as well as the Wycombe and District and North Kirklees Community Relations Councils (CRCs) and Berkshire Department of Education, all of whom had consulted with Muslim individuals

¹¹³ DES, *Education for All*, p.222.

¹¹⁴ DES, *Education for All*, p.220.

and/or organisations before making their submissions.¹¹⁵ Oral evidence was given by the Union of Muslim Organisations, the Muslim Education Consultative Committee and the Muslim Educational Trust. A letter was also sent by the Islamic Resource Centre.¹¹⁶ The very fact that these organisations existed, and that councils and CRCs had previously consulted with Muslims over their needs, is an indication of a pre-existing framework which allowed a dialogue about Muslim needs, something that was not made explicit by Swann.

The submissions made by these groups to Swann raised many familiar themes, and many of the issues put forward were those that had been addressed at a local level in areas with large Muslim populations since the late 1960s: withdrawal from assemblies and religious education, and alternative provision; Friday prayers; time off for Eid holidays; swimming lessons and changing for swimming and PE; school uniform; provision of halal meat or vegetarian meals for Muslim pupils; the right to be excluded from dance, music and drama classes; concerns over sex education; the provision of books on Islam in school libraries; parent/school communication; supplementary schools; and single sex schooling.¹¹⁷ These submissions revealed that though some needs were being accommodated, there was still considerable room for improvement in many areas. They referred to the existence of the pluralist framework, and seemed to be based on ongoing interactions with the state in accordance with that framework. They also identified areas within this framework which needed improvement and needs which were not being met. Some of the issues raised were the sort of concerns that Gilliat-Ray has referred to as “more fundamental pedagogical and practical issues” which had not thus far been addressed, including issues of a “Euro-centric curriculum”, racism and Islamophobia in schools and low expectations from teachers based

¹¹⁵ TNA, ED 269/211/2, DES: Schools Branch II, Special Education: Registered Files (SS Series), Written Submissions to Swann Report, 20/03/82.

¹¹⁶ TNA, ED 282/26, DES: Schools Branches: Committee Minutes, Oral evidence for Muslim, Hindu and Asian Organisations to Swann Report, 1982.

¹¹⁷ TNA, ED 269/211/1, DES: Schools Branch II, Special Education: Registered Files (SS Series), Written Submissions to Swann Report, 20/03/82; TNA, ED 282/26, DES: Schools Branches: Committee Minutes, Oral evidence for Muslim, Hindu and Asian Organisations to Swann Report, 1982.

on stereotypical understanding of Muslims, especially girls.”¹¹⁸ The British Association of Muslims, for example, raised concerns over mother tongue teaching, curriculum issues relating to cultural heritage and history, and concerns over standards of educational provision and resources, as well as complaints over the persistence of “imperialist attitudes from education providers”.¹¹⁹

The comments made in these submissions provided an opportunity for the Swann Committee to also acknowledge the successes of the existing framework, and to consider how it could be adapted and expanded to better accommodate minority needs. There was an opportunity to assess whether the existing successes in Muslim-state interactions could be replicated on a wider scale, and also to find ways to manage those issues that could not be so readily accommodated by the existing framework. Yet the situation did not appear to have been understood in this way by the Committee, and such reflection on and evaluation of the existing system did not happen. It is in this context that the role of the Swann Report in the development of Muslim-state relations over education should be understood. The Report rarely acknowledged the role or significance of existing structures and systems, and where it did acknowledge them it was often critical of them, seeking to change them. By ignoring the existence of this framework, the Report’s recommendations posed a threat to it and to the ability of religious minorities to continue to have their needs accommodated.

Another important facet of the report was its focus on the need for commonality of experience, and a “coherent and planned strategy”, which would be achieved at the expense of the recognition or upholding of the pluralist framework. This can be seen in the Report’s approach to religious education: it did not support the continuation of the framework of withdrawal and alternative provision for religious education and worship established in the

¹¹⁸ Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction*, p. 150.

¹¹⁹ TNA, ED 269/211/1, DES: Schools Branch II, Special Education: Registered Files (SS Series), Written Submissions to Swann Report, 20/03/82.

1944 Act. Rather, it supported what is often referred to as a “multi-faith” approach. This approach was clearly described as follows by an RE teacher, quoted by Mervyn Hiskett in his 1989 work *Schooling for British Muslims: Integrated, opted out or denominational?*:

Christianity is seen as but one of several world religions, each of equal validity.

Religion is seen as a human phenomenon and if pupils are made aware of the rites and customs of a few religions, it will promote good race relations through tolerance, today’s virtue.¹²⁰

This “phenomenological” approach to RE dated back to West Yorkshire LEA’s adoption of such an RE syllabus in the mid-1960s, after which many other LEAs began taking a similar approach. This approach can also be linked to the development of SACREs, discussed in the previous chapter, which took on a role in the development of the RE curriculum. The Swann Report advocated this approach, rather than one which favoured the teaching of one religion and allowed the withdrawal of those of other denominations. After a discussion of the framework established in 1944, the Report concluded that:

we believe that the phenomenological approach to religious education reflects most closely the aims underlying ‘Education for All’, in laying the foundations for the kind of genuinely pluralist society which we envisaged at the opening of this report.¹²¹

It then stated, in relation to the 1944 Act, that “we have found it increasingly difficult to reconcile our own views on religious education with the requirements and spirit of the Act”. In relation to collective worship, it argued that “we do not believe that this requirement can continue to be justified with the multiplicity of beliefs and non-beliefs now present in our society”, arguing that this should no longer be compulsory, but rather left up to individual

¹²⁰ Mervyn Hiskett, *Schooling for British Muslims: Integrated, Opted-out or Denominational?* (London: Social Affairs Unit, 1989), pp.21–22.

¹²¹ DES, *Education for All*, p.496.

schools.¹²² Regarding religious education, it stated that “[i]f religious education is indeed regarded as such an important aspect of education, it seems difficult to accept the case for legally providing for pupils to be withdrawn from it”, and that this “raises serious doubts about the justification for the specific provisions of the Act”. It then concluded that “the Government, in consultation with religious and educational bodies, should look afresh at the relevant provisions of the 1944 Act, to see whether alterations are called for after an interval of 40 years...”.¹²³

The Swann Report’s dismissive approach to the pluralist precedent and criticism of the 1944 framework, and its call for similarity in educational experience for all pupils, are indicative of a view that the system in place until the 1980s had not been successful, and that therefore fundamental changes in the philosophy and practice of educational policy were necessary. It suggested that change, rather than continuity, was to be the way forward in creating an education system that was able to cater for the needs of all pupils in England. The impetus for change, and for standardisation of the educational experience, put Swann in line with some of the key tenets of developing Conservative educational ideology and policy in the 1980s, particularly those pertaining to the centralisation and standardisation of the education system. This is interesting in part because the background of the Swann Report was one of liberal secularism, which was very different to the New Right-influenced views of the Conservative Government in the 1980s.

The Muslim Response

There is evidence of considerable criticism of the approach and recommendations of the Swann Report amongst Muslims in England. The Report itself acknowledged that it had not based its recommendations on the views of minority parents:

¹²² DES, *Education for All*, p.497.

¹²³ DES, *Education for All*, p.498.

it is important to recognise that neither West Indian nor Asian parents, as distinct from some teachers and community workers from these groups, have pressed for what could be described as ‘multicultural’ education involving all pupils.¹²⁴

Opposition to the views of the Swann Report led to a coordinated national response from Muslim organisations. This is important in the new chronology presented in this thesis, as it suggests that the Rushdie Affair was not the first moment when Muslims in Britain organised themselves to make their voice heard on an issue of national significance.

There were several components of the Muslim response to the Swann Report. A group of Muslims set up the Council of Mosques in 1984, described by Ansari as “a conduit for joint action, specifically to coordinate a Muslim response to the Swann Report and recommendations on the education of ethnic minority communities in 1985”.¹²⁵ The Education Sub-Committee of the Council for Mosques published its response, entitled *The Muslims and Swann*, in 1986. The membership of the sub-committee comprised several significant figures from a variety of existing Muslim and multicultural organisations, including Muhammad Akram Khan-Cheema¹²⁶, Yusuf Islam of the Islamic Circle Organisation, Ghulam Sarwar of the Muslim Educational Trust and Professor Syed Ali Ashraf of the Islamic Academy.¹²⁷ A joint statement was also issued by the Islamic Academy and the Islamic Cultural Centre.¹²⁸

The response of these Muslim organisations was to interpret Swann as a threat to the 1944 framework in relation to religious education, and to their ability to continue to interact as

¹²⁴ DES, *Education for All*, p.203.

¹²⁵ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.361.

¹²⁶ Khan-Cheema was also a member of the Swann Committee, and was one of seven members of the Committee who dissented from the Report’s opposition to the expansion of the voluntary-aided framework to ethnic minority schools. For the statement of dissent see DES, *Education for All*, p.515.

¹²⁷ Council of Mosques U. K. & Eire. Education Sub-Committee, *The Muslims and ‘Swann’*. (London: The Council of Mosques: UK & Eire, 1986).

¹²⁸ Islamic Academy and Islamic Cultural Centre (IA & ICC), ‘UK Muslims React to the Swann Report’, ed. by Jorgen S. Nielsen, *News of Muslims in Europe*, 1980, 5–10.

they wished to with the state education system. Both the joint statement and the Council for Mosques' response were critical of the ethnic focus of the Swann Report. The joint statement argued that the Muslim community was "a multi-racial, multi-linguistic religious community" and that it "seriously resents being classified by the Swann Committee as an 'ethnic group'".¹²⁹ In the foreword to the Council for Mosques' response, the Chairman of the Council and his colleague at the Muslim World League wrote that:

there are 850 amillion [sic] Muslims in the world today which is about one fifth of the total world population and members of virtually every socio-linguistic and national group have accepted the ideals of Islam. It is therefore totally inappropriate to use the word 'ethnic' as the 'Swann Committee' has done to describe any section of the Muslim Ummah.¹³⁰

They were also both critical of the secular approach of Swann and the linked phenomenological approach to religious education. The joint statement said that the "Muslim community cannot accept the secular philosophical basis of the report" and that it "thus reserves the right to withdraw its children from courses and practices in schools which it regards as anti-religious or anti-Islamic".¹³¹ It rejected the report's "secularist, dogmatic approach to religion".¹³² The Council for Mosques expressed concern at "the direction in which society at large in its blind secularist euphoria is indoctrinating all the children towards the superficial glamour of the worldly glitter alone".¹³³

These points are crucial. The philosophical basis of the Swann Report, which sought to set out a vision for the future of education in a multicultural society, was rejected by leading figures in the Muslim population. This becomes further apparent in an examination of the

¹²⁹ IA & ICC, 'UK Muslims React to the Swann Report', p.5.

¹³⁰ Council of Mosques U. K. & Eire. Education Sub-Committee, *The Muslims and 'Swann'*, p.1.

¹³¹ IA & ICC, 'UK Muslims React to the Swann Report', p.6.

¹³² IA & ICC, 'UK Muslims React to the Swann Report', p.8.

¹³³ Council of Mosques U. K. & Eire. Education Sub-Committee, *The Muslims and 'Swann'*, p.38.

Report's focus on 'shared values' as a unifying factor in educational provision, and the Muslim response to this. Swann argued in favour of a pluralism

which enables expects and encourages members of all ethnic groups, both minority and majority, to participate fully in shaping the society as a whole within a framework of commonly accepted values, practices and procedures, whilst also allowing and, where necessary, assisting the ethnic minority communities in maintaining their distinct ethnic identities within this common framework.¹³⁴

The report was clear in its view that a "genuinely pluralist society" that was "both socially cohesive and diverse" would seek

to achieve a balance between, on the one hand, the maintenance and active support of the essential elements of the cultures and lifestyles of all ethnic groups within it, and on the other, the acceptance by all groups of a set of shared values distinctive of the society as a whole.¹³⁵

Before considering the question of what such "shared values" might be, it is necessary to highlight the significance of the fact that an argument for the importance of shared values was being made at all. This again puts the Swann Report in line with the Conservative drive of the 1980s towards a centralised, homogeneous educational experience. John White, writing in 1987, argued that "since 1975 the idea that schools should have theoretical freedom has come increasingly under fire", referring to the mid-1980s and what he termed "the full-blooded centralism of Joseph and Baker". He argued that the fact that the Report recommended that there should be a system of shared values was "a milestone in official

¹³⁴ DES, *Education for All*, p.5.

¹³⁵ DES, *Education for All*, p.6.

thinking about education in Britain this century”.¹³⁶ Halstead argued that, in the Swann Report, “the goal of social cohesion is taken more seriously than that of cultural diversity”, which he saw as being confirmed by “the tentative vision of society” offered by the report which stated that “[w]e are perhaps looking for the ‘assimilation’ of *all* groups within a refined concept of what it means to live in British society today”.¹³⁷ This use of the word “assimilation” suggests a desire to create a society which was homogeneous in some ways, but which required all groups including the majority to adapt to an agreed norm. In comparison to the devolved, decentralised approach of the decades following the Second World War, the idea of a central framework of values marks a considerable shift in approach.

Though the Report was clear on the need for such shared values, it gave little indication of what these values should be, as was highlighted in chapters by White and Graham Haydon in the 1987 book *Education for a Pluralist Society*.¹³⁸ Halstead also identified a vagueness within the report about what such “shared values” might be. He argued that it was not clear whether, overall, the Report was referring to “a set of values which is shared as a matter of empirical fact by all the major cultural groups that make up contemporary British society”, or whether it was pointing “in the direction of what our shared values *should* be, even if they are not in practice shared by all the groups in our society”.¹³⁹ He then suggested that the Report leant towards a definition of shared values which sought to dictate what those values should be, even if they were at odds with the views of certain groups. He interpreted Swann’s argument as meaning that that these values “must be rooted in rationality”¹⁴⁰, and

¹³⁶ John White, ‘The Quest for Common Values’, in *Education for a Pluralist Society: Philosophical Perspectives on the Swann Report*, by Graham Haydon (London: University of London Institute of Education, 1987), pp. 13–24 (pp.13–14).

¹³⁷ Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.214.

¹³⁸ Graham Haydon, ‘Towards a Framework of Commonly Accepted Values’, in *Education for a Pluralist Society. Philosophical Perspectives on the Swann Report*, by Graham Haydon (London: University of London Institute of Education, 1987), pp. 25–37 (p. 25); White.

¹³⁹ Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.216.

¹⁴⁰ Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, pp.208–9.

that Muslims and other minorities “may be less happy with this second account of ‘shared values’, since it is based on liberal assumptions which they do not necessarily share”.¹⁴¹

Halstead’s analysis is borne out by the Muslim response to the idea of shared values. The Joint Statement argued that when “Muslims refer to ‘shared values’ they mean values that are actually shared in practice by various groups in the society including those which may be beyond logic and reason” – i.e. the first category of values suggested by Halstead. The statement contrasted this with Swann’s reference to values that can “justifiably be presented as universally appropriate”, which it argued meant that “someone is going to evaluate according to some man-made criteria which values are justifiable and which are not”.¹⁴² The statement’s authors made clear that they anticipated that the imposition of such “man-made criteria” would lead to the creation of a framework of values which could potentially exclude Muslims. They stated that Swann allowed minorities to “maintain their individual cultures only in so far as they are not in conflict with rationally justifiable shared values”, but then argued that this could be of detriment to the Muslim community whose basic values “are already directly opposed to the new lifestyles in the majority community, the lifestyles that are regarded as destructive of basic values”.¹⁴³ A major concern of the Muslim response was the matter of “rationality”, which the Joint Statement argued was at the heart of Swann’s values. It argued that Swann, through its definition of multicultural education, “wants to impose on Muslim children what it considers of educational value – such as autonomy and a critical approach to their own faith and culture... – and is not ready, in the name of ‘rationality’ to accept that which is based on revealed truth”.¹⁴⁴ This suggests that one of the issues being contested in these discussions was the nature of rationality, and the differing ways in which different groups understood that nature.

¹⁴¹ Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.216.

¹⁴² IA & ICC, ‘UK Muslims React to the Swann Report’, p.7.

¹⁴³ IA & ICC, ‘UK Muslims React to the Swann Report’, p.7.

¹⁴⁴ IA & ICC, ‘UK Muslims React to the Swann Report’, p.7.

These debates about rationality emphasise the secular focus of the Swann Report, and were to come up repeatedly in the 1980s and 1990s over the campaign for state-funded Muslim schooling. The comments in the Report suggest that its recommendations were based on an assumption that the religious ethos of education that was likely to be desired by Muslims and promoted in Muslim schools was not compatible with a secular or “rational” approach as advocated by Swann. The Council for Mosques challenged this interpretation:

the secular and religious approaches to life are bound to differ but we would like to suggest that the conflicts of interest that result from this are not always as irreconcilable as the report implies.¹⁴⁵

It went on to argue that “most knowledgeable Muslims” would accept the Report’s idea that education should “encourage children to criticise, to investigate, to challenge, to debate, to evaluate and to be able to make decisions and choices about their future adult lives”, so long as doing so “does not take place in an anti-Islamic context”. The Council also argued that “it is unfair to talk of adopting ‘English standards and ideas’ and imply that these are all unacceptable to Muslims”.¹⁴⁶ In a similar vein, it was critical of the Report’s use of the concept of “Westernisation” as “something which is diametrically opposed to Islam”.¹⁴⁷

It is worth briefly drawing attention to parallels between this discussion and arguments made in the Runnymede Trust’s report *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All* over a decade later about discussions of open and closed views of Islam. The report argued that closed views were features of Islamophobia, and one of 8 views it discussed related to whether Islam is seen “monolithic and static, or as diverse and dynamic”. Another point related to whether Islam was viewed as inferior and opposed to the West, or different but equal.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Council of Mosques U. K. & Eire. Education Sub-Committee, *The Muslims and ‘Swann’*, p.39.

¹⁴⁶ Council of Mosques U. K. & Eire. Education Sub-Committee, *The Muslims and ‘Swann’*, p.39.

¹⁴⁷ Council of Mosques U. K. & Eire. Education Sub-Committee, *The Muslims and ‘Swann’*, p.37.

¹⁴⁸ Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all*. (n.p.: Runnymede Trust, 1997), p.4.

The suggestion in the Joint Statement that the Swann Report viewed the differences between Muslim and “western” approaches to Islam as “irreconcilable” and saw westernisation as “diametrically opposed to Islam” seems to foreshadow the analysis of certain views of Muslims set out by the Runnymede Trust in 1997. This brings up questions over how far such closed views of Islam were present among those on the Swann Committee, and how far these views may have influenced the development of their arguments about how best to educate a racially, ethnically and religiously diverse society. The call for shared values and the debate surrounding it can be understood at least in part as a corollary of the post-imperial, secularising, de-Christianising context of late twentieth century Britain. As explored in the previous chapter, until the mid-twentieth century, and even beyond the 1944 Education Act, churches and religion played a crucial role in education, with the transmission of Christian values being a key part of what education was understood to be about. By the 1980s, Swann appears to have been considering the role of education in the transmission of moral values more broadly. The Report was not alone in this understanding of the situation. Mandler has argued that:

most Western states (and increasingly non-Western ones) in the twentieth century have viewed education as about the development and socialisation of the individual; this is where education has increasingly assumed the role of religion, in providing for the moral and spiritual needs that are generally assumed to be intrinsic to the human condition.¹⁴⁹

The shift from a focus on religion to a focus on morality and values had implications for education policy in England: the Church of England and other churches played a role that was deeply embedded within the educational framework created in 1944. Once the central

¹⁴⁹ Peter Mandler, ‘Educating the Nation I: Schools’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (Sixth Series)*, 24 (2014), 5–28 (p.7).

role of Christianity in providing moral and spiritual education came into question, the framework itself had to also be questioned – the removal of religion, and of Christianity, from a system in which roughly a third of all schools were denominational or religious schools, would require profound shifts. The Swann Report, approaching these issues from the point of view of liberal secularism, was prepared to consider a fundamental re-evaluation of the educational framework, including a reconsideration of the role of the churches and the development of a framework of shared values.

As will be seen in the chapters on state-funded religious schooling, the Conservative government did not engage in such fundamental changes. But the potential implications of these debates for Muslims were significant. The educational framework until the mid-1980s, which drew much of its approach to morality and values from the Church of England, with space created for those who wished to base their own approach on a different denomination or religion, seems to have been one that many Muslims were comfortable with and were happy to find a place within. By the mid-1980s, however, when discussions were taking place over the development of values within the education system, Swann was questioning the role of the churches whilst ideas of British identity were being linked to notions of country rather than empire or Commonwealth and Britain was being presented by those in government and society as a Christian or Judaeo-Christian society. This had the potential to make the position of Muslims and other religious minorities in the educational framework less certain and tenable than it had previously been. It was in this context that Halstead argued that attempts by Muslims to fight for their right to have their children educated within the state system in a way compatible with their faith, and which nurtured and supported their religious identity, “must seem like an uphill task for even the most optimistic Muslim...”¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.216.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued the case for the need for a re-evaluation and new chronology and interpretation of the history of Muslims in the state education system in England, taking greater account of the history of pluralism and the educational framework put in place by the 1944 Education Act. It has demonstrated that Muslim needs – both religious and other needs – were accommodated by some schools within this framework, and that this was happening from as early as their presence became apparent in schools. This is true of both the fact that their needs were understood as religious in nature and were therefore accommodated within a framework of religious pluralism and of the fact that the main locus of interaction was local, with LEAs administering a system that was designed to cater for diversity.

This argument is not intended to dismiss, or to entirely contradict those accounts which have identified problems and difficulties in Muslim-state interactions, including the tendency to perceive Muslims through a racial lens, and the secular focus of many multicultural approaches. It recognises the validity of such interpretations and the impact that these issues have had on Muslim-state interactions. However, it seeks to highlight that when such difficulties are explored, the obstacles that they have presented are acknowledged, but there is often little or no analysis of the reasons why some Muslim needs *were* being met, and the rationale that underpinned such accommodation of Muslim needs. Such difficulties are often referred to without acknowledgement of the 1944 framework. This is problematic because, as has been demonstrated at length above, the 1944 framework, and a pluralist approach, often featured heavily in Muslim-state interactions in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s. There is therefore some discrepancy between how Muslim needs were understood and responded to, and how such Muslim-state interactions have since been interpreted. A more complete account of Muslim-state interactions must

include a discussion of the role and significance of the pluralist framework alongside its analysis of the presumed invisibility of Muslims in the decades after their arrival, and the racial and secular focus of many multicultural approaches.

The second key argument of this chapter has been that, once we have a greater understanding of the role of the pluralist framework in the 1960s and 1970s, many existing interpretations of the events of the 1980s no longer stand up, particularly those which suggest that it was only with the expansion of multiculturalism in the 1980s Muslim voices began to be heard. Rather, the 1980s should be understood as the point when the framework that had been accommodating Muslim needs thus far had the opportunity to be expanded and provide a basis for work with Muslims, but instead found itself under threat. The late 1980s were a time of significant educational upheaval there was a chance for the acknowledgement, development and evolution of the pluralist framework as a new educational framework developed. This did not happen. Instead, much of the legal framework that had underpinned pluralism, the structures that had administered it, and the ethos of accommodating religious diversity that lay behind the pluralist system, went unacknowledged and support instead emerged for a system that was centrally controlled and monitored, and that required a high level of standardisation and conformity to a shared ideal of a rational, secular, multicultural society from all groups. These changes occurred to the detriment and considerable dismay of many Muslims

The next three chapters will explore these issues in greater depth. The final two chapters will explore the campaign for state-funded Muslim schooling in more depth and in doing so will offer greater insight into some of the issues raised above. They will highlight that the Muslim campaign for state-funded schooling faced significant challenges in part from the dismantling of the system of LEAs, which had previously been responsible for the finance and administration of such schools. However, it will also demonstrate that the issue of

state-funded schooling was one of the key areas in which the matter of morality and 'shared values' came to the fore. These chapters will explore many of the issues raised towards the end of this chapter in much greater depth.

The next chapter will be a case study of Muslim-state interactions in the City of Bradford from the 1960s to the mid-1980s. It will explore the responses of Bradford LEA to needs that were perceived as religious, and to those which were perceived as ethnic or racial. It will also consider the implications of attempts in Bradford to adapt the pluralist framework to expand the sorts of needs that it was able to accommodate.

Chapter Four

Bradford Case study

This chapter is a case study which looks at the educational situation and experiences of Muslims in the city of Bradford in the late twentieth century. Bradford holds an important place in the story of Britain's Muslim population, not least because it was central to the events of the Rushdie Affair, holding a key place in narratives which have suggested that Muslims were invisible in Britain prior to the late 1980s, as outlined in the introduction. In 2008, for example, Modood wrote that "in Britain, nobody talked about the Muslims in the 1980s".¹ In his 2002 study of Bradford's Muslims, Philip Lewis raised this issue in relation to the city, arguing that in the 1980s, religious identity was considered a "marginal issue" and often "subsumed under the category of multiculturalism".²

In its analysis, this chapter will challenge the idea that Muslims in Bradford – and nationally – were largely invisible up until the end of the 1980s, adding to the new chronology and interpretation offered by the thesis overall. It will explore the ways in which Bradford's Muslims were neither culturally nor politically invisible from the 1960s onwards, showing interaction with the local authority beginning at the end of this decade and developing during the 1970s and 1980s. It will firstly demonstrate that, contrary to Modood's statement, by the 1980s in Bradford *Muslims* were talking about Muslims. In the 1970s, despite the apparent absence of space for religion in the developing multicultural paradigm, many of the needs that they campaigned for were met and there was an ongoing dialogue between Muslim bodies and Bradford LEA. Not only were Muslims talking about Muslims, but they were being listened to. This chapter will demonstrate that, as with the ILEA in the

¹ Tariq Modood, 'Muslim Integration and Secularism', in *Islam & Europe: Challenges and Opportunities* ed. by M.C. Foblets (Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2008), pp. 85–112 (p.85).

² Philip Lewis, *Islamic Britain: Religion, Politics and Identity among British Muslims: Bradford in the 1990s* (London: IB Tauris, 1994), p.1.

previous chapter, Muslim requests were not responded to on an *ad hoc* basis, but rather there were coherent and often consistent reasons why certain needs were or were not met. Secondly, the chapter will emphasise the role of the long-established framework of religious pluralism, highlighting its ability to understand those needs which were understood as religious needs. The accommodation of these needs did not require any fundamental changes to or re-evaluation of existing educational frameworks and philosophies, and there was a framework in place which allowed for them to be catered for with relatively little difficulty. They were accommodated based on legal requirements and precedents, and the approach taken by the LEA was anything but *ad hoc*.

Thirdly, the chapter will also bring up questions about the limitations of the pluralist framework. It will explore Muslim-state interactions over needs which were not universally recognised as religious needs, raising questions over why such needs were often less readily catered for and negotiations over them were sometimes problematic and unfruitful. Secondly, it will consider the impact of the race relations and multicultural frameworks upon such interactions. It will also explore how Bradford LEA and wider society responded to Muslim needs which were perceived as challenging prevailing educational or political philosophies, or the moral and ethical sensibilities of the majority population. Fourthly, in raising these questions, the chapter will explore the possibilities and limitations of the pluralist framework in Bradford in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s. It will ask which needs could and could not be accommodated by the conservative pluralist framework, and whether some needs were catered for by other frameworks. It will then go on to analyse whether there were opportunities for the adaptation and expansion of the boundaries of the pluralist framework in Bradford, in order to widen the scope of the needs that could be met. Finally, it will consider how events in Bradford fit into the overall picture of Muslim-state interactions over education in England in late twentieth century Britain.

1. Bradford

Before exploring the detailed negotiations over Muslim needs which occurred in Bradford during this period, it is necessary to take some time to consider why the city should feature so prominently in a thesis on religious minorities in the British education system. Firstly, as mentioned above, Bradford is central to the narrative in which the Rushdie Affair is perceived as a watershed moment for British Muslims. The protests in the city against Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* in 1989 projected the city's Muslims to a position of national prominence and, perhaps, notoriety. Lewis has commented that the affair was the point at which Bradford became known as:

a city of Islam, an infamous place where an enraged Muslim community had burned a novel. From being culturally and politically invisible, Muslims were suddenly projected as a fifth column, subversive of western freedoms: a Trojan horse in the heart of Europe with a deadly cargo of 'fundamentalist' religiosity.³

Secondly, and perhaps more simply, by the late twentieth century, Bradford had a sizeable and growing Muslim population. In the late 1950s and 1960s, significant numbers of migrants arrived, largely from rural areas of Pakistan, to work in the textile industry or for Bradford City Transport.⁴ The wives, fiancées and children of the initial male migrants arrived *en masse* in the late 1960s, leading to the establishment of mosques and supplementary schools in the city.⁵ The first mosque, run by the Pakistani Muslim Association, opened in Howard Street in 1959 and by 1989 the city had 34 mosques.⁶ By the early 1970s, many of the recent immigrants to Bradford had school-age children. By July

³ Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, p.1.

⁴ Mark Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity: An Examination of the Honeyford Affair, 1984-85* (London: Falmer, 1988), p.14.

⁵ Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, pp.54–56.

⁶ Philip Lewis, 'Being Muslim and Being British: The Dynamics of Islamic Reconstruction in Bradford', in *Desh Pardesh: The South Asian Presence in Britain*, ed. by Roger Ballard and Marcus Banks (London: C Hurst & Co, 1994), 58-87 (p.69).

1983, twenty percent of the 87,250 pupils in Bradford's schools were Asian, and seventeen percent were Muslim.⁷

As was the case in London and other cities around the country, the growth in the Muslim and ethnic minority population of Bradford led to a growth in their political representation. The first Muslim councillor in Bradford was Munawar Hussain who was co-opted as an alderman in 1972, though held it for just two years until the role disappeared due to the reorganisation of the area from a county borough into a metropolitan district council, incorporating several surrounding boroughs, in 1974. By 1981 there were three Labour Muslim councillors, increasing to nine by 1991 and 11 by 1992. Councillor Mohammed Ajeeb, one of these councillors who emigrated to Britain in 1957 from Kashmir and had worked for Bradford City Transport⁸, also became the city's first Asian Lord mayor in 1965-6 and was deputy leader of the ruling Labour group by the early 1990s.⁹ Both in the growth of ethnic minority councillors and in their being Labour, Bradford was similar to other metropolitan councils. In 1982, Birmingham elected its first Muslim councillor. By 1987 the council had six Labour Muslim councillors and by 1996 it had 13.¹⁰ Writing about Birmingham in 1995, Daniel Joly wrote that

the active participation of Muslims in British political life is still at an early stage although it has already made some impact at local level. Muslims have played a part in securing a Labour majority on the City council and are gradually becoming integrated into the Labour Party.¹¹

⁷ Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.15.

⁸ *The Times*, 04/11/86

⁹ Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, p.24; pp.68-9

¹⁰ Ansari, *The Infidel Within*, p.242

¹¹ Danièle Joly, *Britannia's Crescent: Making a Place for Muslims in British Society* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995), p.111

Writing about Leicester, Joanna Herbert highlighted the link between minority representation and policy

In 1976 councillor Peter Soulsby drew up a Declaration Against Racism that envisaged a multicultural future for the city and Leicester city Council along with a number of 'left led authorities in response to racism. However, progress was slow and it was not until the 1980s when South Asians established a stronghold within the Labour party that the City Council implemented this vision. By 1983, the City Council included nine Labour South Asian Councillors."¹²

It should be noted that despite growing representation and the likely link between this and the accommodation of Muslim needs, Muslims were nonetheless either under-represented or not represented at all in Bradford for much of the 1970s and 1980s. Lewis argues that it was only in the early 1990s that "Muslim councillors began to enjoy influence commensurate with their numbers".¹³

It is helpful at this point to refer to Clement Richardson's comment about Bradford, cited in the introduction, that education was "the principal 'leak' in an otherwise closed system"¹⁴ In other words, it was education which brought Bradford's immigrant, and Muslim, population into contact with the wider society and the state. This was evident, for example, when Riaz Shahid stood (unsuccessfully) as an independent candidate in a local election in 1973, prompted to do so by concern over the lack of single sex girls schools for his daughter to attend in the LEA area.¹⁵ The role of educational need in prompting interaction between Bradford's immigrant population and the state was also highlighted by the school governor

¹² Joanna Herbert, 'Immigration and the Emergence of Multicultural Leicester', in *Leicester: A Modern History*. Ed. Rodger, Richard; Madgin, Rebecca (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing Ltd, 2016), pp. 330–46., p.331

¹³ Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, pp.168-9

¹⁴ Clement Richardson, *A Geography of Bradford* (Bradford: University of Bradford, 1976), p.176.

¹⁵ Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, pp.69-70

Shah Mohamed Akbar at a 1982 public meeting at Drummond Middle School. The minutes of the meeting paraphrased his comments:

in the beginning the ethnic minority parents did not take much interest in the education of their children but with the passage of time they have realised that they were being discriminated educationally. The question arose: How can they make their voices heard by the Education Authority?¹⁶

That such a statement was made in 1982 by a Muslim school governor also indicates that the “leak” had occurred and there had been at least some Muslim educational awareness and representation, prior to the 1980s. What proceeds is an examination of precisely those attempts to make Muslim voices heard, what Bradford City Council thought it heard, and how it responded.

2. Religious Education

In October 1969, the Muslim Association of Bradford – which represented the families of the Pakistanis who worshipped at the Howard Street mosque¹⁷ – approached Bradford County Borough Council’s Educational Services Committee, asking permission, along with the Muslim Educational Trust, to provide Muslim religious instruction for children whose parents requested it.¹⁸ The initial request did not relate to the provision of religious education in schools, but rather in immigrant centres which were set up in Bradford in the mid-1960s as a strategy to deal with the influx of non-English speaking pupils in this period.¹⁹ These centres were created by Bradford LEA to help newly-arrived immigrant children to develop sufficient

¹⁶ West Yorkshire Archive Service (WYAS), WYB644/1/3/1) Bradford Racial Equality Council, Education Panel Minutes, reports and papers, Minutes of Public Meeting on Participation of Parents in the Education of their Children at Drummond Middle School 28/11/82.

¹⁷ Bradford Local Studies Library (BLSL), Race Relations Advisory Group, Bradford Council, *The Other Man’s View A summary of visits to Bradford’s Ethnic Minority Organisations* 1982 p.6.

¹⁸ WYAS, BBC1/55/6, Bradford Borough Council Minutes (BBCM), Minutes of Bradford Educational Services Committee, 26/11/69.

¹⁹ WYAS, BBC/1/55/9, BBCM, Minutes of Bradford Educational Services Committee, 20/10/70.

English language ability to be able to take part in mainstream education. Many were aimed at primary age children, but there were a handful of senior centres.²⁰ It was in these senior centres that the Muslim Association asked to be allowed to provide religious education. Following consultation with a range of bodies representing Muslims – the Pakistan Immigrant Welfare Association, the Pakistan Peoples Party UK, the Pakistan Society and the Muslim Educational Trust²¹ – Bradford’s Educational Services Committee agreed to allow the provision of Muslim religious instruction in three centres during lunch periods or outside of school hours.²² In October 1971, the same committee agreed to the continuation of this provision, and also noted that the Muslim Association had on more than one occasion requested that the provision be extended to certain secondary schools.²³ In the academic year 1972-3, provision was expanded into secondary schools, with classes being held at the two immigrant centres, and at six of the city’s 14 secondary schools.²⁴ The 1976 report of the Bradford Metropolitan Council Joint Working Party on the Education of Immigrants and their Children, *Education in a Multiracial City*, commented that the MET had continued to provide Muslim religious education “in the Senior Centres and at whichever of the Upper Schools they wish”.²⁵

In response to the Muslim Association’s requests, the Educational Services Committee also considered altering Bradford’s Agreed Syllabus for religious education. At the December 1969 meeting of the Muslim Association and the Educational Services Special Sub-Committee, this was discussed, though it was noted in the minutes of the meeting that

²⁰ WYAS, WYB644/2/8, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings and papers relating to education and Asian children, *Education in a Multi-racial City: The Report of the Joint Working Party on the Education of Immigrants and their Children*, 1976.

²¹ WYAS, BBC1/55/6, BBCM, Minutes of Educational Services Special Sub-Committee, 23/12/69.

²² WYAS, BBC1/55/6, BBCM, Minutes of the Educational Services Committee, 26/02/70.

²³ WYAS, BBC1/55/11, BBCM, Minutes of the Educational Services Committee, 19/10/71.

²⁴ WYAS, BBC1/55/17, BBCM, Minutes of Educational Services Committee, 04/11/73.

²⁵ WYAS, WYB644/2/8, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings and papers relating to education and Asian children, *Education in a Multi-racial City: The Report of the Joint Working Party on the Education of Immigrants and their Children*, 1976.

“[t]he representatives had no objection to this proposal, but did not see it as a substitute for the arrangements they were seeking to make.”²⁶ The Educational Services Committee nonetheless asked the Director of Education to investigate the possibility of revising the Agreed Syllabus “to make children, whether immigrant or indigenous, aware of the broad issues of the major religions of the world”.²⁷ By April, this had been completed and the Educational Services Committee had resolved to invite representatives of a range of religious groups to participate in the revision of the Agreed Syllabus, including the Muslim Association of Bradford.²⁸ The Agreed Syllabus conference was not convened at this time due to the reorganisation of the local authority²⁹, as part of the wider local authority reorganisation of the mid-1970s, but was revived in the early 1980s.³⁰

Events in Bradford formed part of Ansari’s analysis of the educational situation of England’s Muslims. In *The Infidel Within*, he said of the 1970 Agreed Syllabus Conference that

this measure did not go far enough for many of the city’s Muslims, who continued to request permission for their religious teachers to provide instruction in secondary schools, as stipulated in the 1944 Education Act.

He went on:

their efforts bore fruit when in July 1972, the LEAs relented and agreed to this being done, albeit after school hours. Since the official view that the teaching of Islam in state schools countered the aim of social harmony was so deeply entrenched, this

²⁶ WYAS, BBC1/55/6, BBCM, Minutes of Educational Services Special Sub-Committee, 23/12/69.

²⁷ WYAS, BBC1/55/6, BBCM, Minutes of Educational Services Committee, 26/02/70.

²⁸ WYAS, BBC1/55/6, BBCM, Minutes of Educational Services Committee, 09/04/70.

²⁹ WYAS, WYB644/2/8, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings and papers relating to education and Asian children, *Education in a Multi-racial City: The Report of the Joint Working Party on the Education of Immigrants and their Children*, 1976.

³⁰ BLSL, Minutes of Schools (Education) Sub-Committee 08/07/1982, 13/09/83.

'battle' had to be fought over and over again, the more so because of the decentralized and fragmented nature of the education system.³¹

In these comments, Ansari appears to place the negotiations between Muslims and the council in the context of his interpretation that Muslim-state relations over education were often difficult, hostile and *ad hoc*. This can be seen in his use of the word "battle", and his statement that 1972 was the point when the LEA "relented" and allowed religious instruction to be provided in schools. The evidence from the meetings does not support this interpretation. The date is not inaccurate, but Ansari ignored the fact that agreement to the principle of the provision of Islamic instruction was first given in 1970, within a few months of the request being made. This challenges the idea that the meeting of these Muslim needs was a "battle" and that the LEA "relented" in 1972. The time between the initial request to provide Islamic religious instruction and the agreement of Bradford Council was relatively short, and there was little in the way of resistance from the LEA.

Ansari's comments also ignored the cooperation of the Council and the Muslim Association over the Agreed Syllabus. The interaction shown here is significant: Bradford Council was stating its intentions to create a phenomenological, world religions RE syllabus of the sort opposed by many Muslims, but was also consulting with Muslims over the development of this syllabus. The suggestion of dialogue rather than conflict over this issue is worth highlighting. It is particularly interesting when considered in the context of the Runnymede Trust's conception of open and closed versions of Islam. One of the open versions of Islam, which the Trust contrasted with Islamophobic closed views, suggested that Islam was "seen as an actual or potential partner in joint cooperative enterprises and in the solution of shared problems".³² Though these events predated the Trust's report on Islamophobia by

³¹ Humayun Ansari, *The Infidel within: Muslims in Britain since 1800* (London: C Hurst, 2004), p.314.

³² Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all*. (n.p.: Runnymede Trust, 1997), p.5.

more than 30 years, the contrast with retrospective identification of “closed” views of Islam from the Swann Committee in the previous chapter is nonetheless worth noting, as it suggests that in some areas willingness to work with Muslims and understand their needs predated, or existed alongside, closed views of Islam.

Ansari did allow that Muslims were seeking permission for religious instruction “as stipulated in the 1944 Education Act”, though he did not acknowledge the significance of the Act, or of the broader frame of religious pluralism that was operating in the English education system in the late twentieth century. As seen in the actions of the ILEA in the previous chapter, when the Muslim Association asked the local authority to provide for a religious need in 1969, the authority was able to respond to this within an existing framework. The Council’s Educational Services Committee agreed that “facilities (heat, light and caretakers’ services) be made available by the Corporation at three immigrant centres for up to two sessions a week at each centre during term time”³³, and when the provision was extended to schools, so was the provision of such facilities.³⁴ This can be linked to Feldman’s observation of the existence of a pluralist approach since the 1830s, which included the acknowledgement of minority religions “in law and administrative practice and offering them financial support for their activities”.³⁵ Though Halstead has noted a degree of concern about the requests from Bradford’s Director of Education, F.J. Adams, the actions of the council demonstrated a good degree of support from the LEA, and challenge the idea of reluctance on its part.³⁶

A willingness on the part of the local authority to accommodate Muslim needs is also evident over the matter of the withdrawal of individual children from religious education,

³³ WYAS, BBC1/55/6, BBCM, Minutes of Educational Services Committee, 26/02/70.

³⁴ WYAS, BBC1/55/17, BBCM, Minutes of Educational Services Committee, 04/11/73.

³⁵ David Feldman, ‘Why the English like Turbans: Multicultural Politics in British History’, in *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History*, ed. by David Feldman and John Lawrence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 281–302 (p.291).

³⁶ Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.33.

assemblies and for religious festivals, all rights granted to parents under the 1944 Education Act.³⁷ In preparation for the 1969 meeting with the Muslim Association, the Educational Services Committee stated that the Association should be asked for its comments on letters which were to be sent by the Director of Education to inform parents of their right to withdraw their children from religious education classes, noting that “[s]uggestions have been made that some Muslims are not aware of this right”.³⁸ This indicates a proactive approach to this matter on the part of the LEA in the late 1960s, and challenges the view of an LEA that was reluctant to meet Muslim needs. This approach was again apparent in 1975, after the reorganisation of Bradford County Borough into Bradford Metropolitan District Council, which was under Conservative control from 1973-1980. In a letter to the recently-formed representative body the Muslim Parents Association (MPA), Bradford Council’s Chief Special Services Officer expressed willingness to inform parents of their rights, and commented on withdrawal that “I believe these rights are being exercised fairly frequently”.³⁹ That the letter uses the word “rights” would appear to indicate that the Council was operating within the framework of the 1944 Education Act. The 1976 report *Education in a Multiracial City* referred to the “absolute right” of parents to withdraw their children from religious assembly and instruction under the 1944 Education Act, commenting that “[f]or some years this right has been referred to in letters sent to parents whenever a child is allocated to school. To make doubly sure that parents understand their rights Head Teachers were asked to raise the subject with parents of all newly admitted children.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Marie Parker-Jenkins, *Children of Islam: A Teacher’s Guide to Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils* (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham, 1995), pp.60–63.

³⁸ WYAS, BBC1/55/6, BBCM, Minutes of Educational Services Committee, 26/11/1969.

³⁹ WYAS, WYB644/2/7, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings relating to the Muslim Parents’ Association and Schools, Letter from Chief Special Services Officer to MPA, 24/03/75.

⁴⁰ WYAS, WYB644/2/8, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings and papers relating to education and Asian children *Education in a Multi-racial City: The Report of the Joint Working Party on the Education of Immigrants and their Children*, 1976.

Education in a Multiracial City also suggested that the state's willingness to accommodate needs went beyond withdrawal from religious education. It commented that the local authority had suggested to heads that "it would be reasonable to release a pupil one hour before the end of the afternoon session" on Fridays for religious instruction, and that children could be withdrawn for whole days for religious festivals. It also stated that a circular on immigrant children should be issued to heads, including a list of dates of religious festivals.⁴¹ This willingness was also evident in correspondence between Bradford LEA and the ILEA quoted in the previous chapter. Bradford Council sent the ILEA a copy of the 1977 document *Children of Overseas Origin – Manual of Guidance*.⁴² This document, produced on the recommendation of the Working Party on the Education of Immigrants and distributed to head teachers in Bradford, noted that if parents requested that their children be withdrawn from religious assembly or religious instruction, "such requests must be acceded to", and that "[p]arents are informed of their rights to withdraw their children in the original letter of allocation." It also set out how children could be withdrawn for the whole day for religious festivals – naming Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Zahn, Muslim festivals – and that children could be withdrawn from school for the last hour on a Friday for religious observance. It stated that such withdrawal on Fridays had been permitted by the Council for a number of years.⁴³

This evidence from Bradford challenges the perception of Muslim parents in the 1970s as an unrepresented, uninformed and unorganised population whose views were not heard by the local authority. It suggests, rather, firstly that Muslim parents had knowledge of their rights and responsibilities and were able to choose to act upon them, and secondly that the local

⁴¹ WYAS, WYB644/2/8, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings and papers relating to education and Asian children *Education in a Multi-racial City: The Report of the Joint Working Party on the Education of Immigrants and their Children*, 1976.

⁴² London Metropolitan Archives, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/4/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Provision of religious education for Muslims, 07/05/81.

⁴³ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/4/14, Local Authority Memorandum 1/77, 1977.

authority was aware of the existence of these rights, active in helping both Muslims and schools to understand their rights and responsibilities and willing to accommodate certain Muslim needs.

3. Cultural needs

In January 1974, Alderman Doris Birdsall, a Labour representative of Bradford Council, met with five representatives of the Muslim Parents Association and Afzal Rahman of the MET to discuss the educational needs of Bradford's Muslims. In addition to agreement that Bradford LEA would not compel Muslim children to attend religious assemblies or religious instruction, all parties at the meeting agreed that they would not have to wear revealing clothes for physical education, or take part in mixed swimming classes against their parents' wishes.⁴⁴ This agreement relates to the sort of needs discussed in Chapter Two: needs understood as religious by Muslims, but which were not always understood as such by the state or wider society, at times being considered ethnic or cultural needs. The ongoing correspondence between the MPA and Bradford Council indicated that some of these needs were being accommodated by schools in the local authority area with relatively little difficulty.⁴⁵ This is supported by a number of other documents produced during the 1970s. The 1976 report *Education in a Multiracial City* stated that the LEA had recommended to head teachers that Muslim girls should be excused from swimming upon parental request, that they should be allowed to wear tights and long-sleeves for PE, that Muslim children should be made aware if school meals contained pork, ham or bacon, and that children should be allowed to wear national dress if attempts to persuade their parents otherwise failed.⁴⁶ The Bradford LEA 1977 Manual of Guidance for teachers stated that girls in mixed

⁴⁴ *The Guardian*, 08/01/74.

⁴⁵ WYAS, WYB644/2/7, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings relating to the Muslim Parents' Association and Schools Letter from MPA to Knight, 23/09/74.

⁴⁶ WYAS, WYB644/2/8, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings and papers relating to education and Asian children, *Education in a Multi-racial City: The Report of the Joint Working Party on the Education of Immigrants and their Children*, 1976.

schools could wear religiously appropriate clothing for PE, that girls must be excused from mixed swimming lessons “[i]f on religious grounds parents object” and that some accommodation should be made for children who required halal meat.⁴⁷

The new chronology and interpretation offered by this thesis are important in relation to such “cultural” needs. Their accommodation, or lack thereof, has often been understood in the context of the recognised shift from assimilationist to multicultural approaches. Ansari, for example, argued that there was a move in the early 1970s “from suppression of cultural differences to their recognition and celebration” and that “[p]olicy-makers became readier to accept Muslim campaigners’ demands as consistent with the general principles that parental beliefs had priority over predominantly secular ideas”. He went on to argue that after this shift “Muslims were no longer expected to accommodate entirely to existing norms and their right to maintain an identity was recognised.”⁴⁸ Others have also linked developments in Bradford to changes in the race relations and multicultural frameworks. Halstead, in his 1988 study of the Honeyford Affair, wrote that in the early 1980s, Bradford “enjoyed a reputation for its provision for ethnic minority groups that was second to none”.⁴⁹ The *TES* stated in 1983 that “[o]ther local authorities see Bradford as a leader in the field of race relations and multicultural education”. In the same article, however the *TES* commented that “Bradford had no policy on race until 1981”.⁵⁰ These potentially contradictory statements begin to make sense if the role of the framework of conservative pluralism is considered. The successful relations of Bradford Council with its minority populations was not a product of a race relations policy that did not exist; nor was it an accident. Rather, some of the needs of Bradford’s minorities, many of whom were Muslim, were being accommodated within the pluralist framework in the 1960s and 1970s. This

⁴⁷ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/4/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Local Authority Memorandum 1/77, 1977.

⁴⁸ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, pp.316–17.

⁴⁹ Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.21.

⁵⁰ *Times Educational Supplement*, 14/10/83.

framework was able to acknowledge and cater for religious needs, but existed parallel to and separately from the developing multicultural and race relations frameworks. Once the significance of that framework is acknowledged, it makes sense that Bradford LEA was successfully interacting with Muslims before it had a policy on race. What has yet to be explored, however, are the limitations of the pluralist framework: which needs could and could not be accommodated within it and why.

4) The Limitations of Pluralism

Before exploring its limitations in Bradford, it is necessary to consider the conservative nature of the framework of religious pluralism. Those needs which were easily met by Bradford Council were those which could be accommodated without altering the underlying principles of its education policy, or their practical application. For example, the Muslim Association's requests to provide Muslim religious education did not challenge the principles underlying the immigrant centres or the shift to mainstream schools. Rather, it asked that an already existing framework be extended to the city's Muslim minority: it asked that Muslim children could be provided with Muslim religious education wherever, and within whatever framework, the LEA was choosing to educate them. It is not, the case, however, that all needs were so readily met, and a reliance on the framework of religious pluralism had the potential to limit the minority needs that could be accommodated. Negotiations that could not take place within this framework had very different outcomes.

This can be highlighted by an examination of two issues: dispersal (the bussing of children to schools outside of their local area in order to control the ethnic mix in schools) and pupils taking long holidays to the Indian subcontinent during term time. These issues did not involve Muslims making requests to the state for the accommodation of religious needs, but they did nonetheless affect a significant number of Bradford's Muslims. They demonstrate that the experience of negotiating with the state was very different when it was not over

clearly expressed religious needs that could be accommodated within the existing system. On these issues, Bradford's Muslims were less successful at making the council understand their position, and Bradford LEA was considerably less willing to adapt its policies to take the views of Muslims into account.

Dispersal

In 1964, Bradford LEA introduced an educational policy of dispersal, a policy which was to continue in some form until 1980. This involved the bussing of ethnic minority children to schools outside of their local area in order to prevent the concentration of large numbers of such children in any one school. In 1964, the LEA aimed to limit the proportion of Asian pupils at any given school to 10 per cent.⁵¹ In 1969, the proportion was changed to allow 25 percent immigrant children in some schools, and 33 percent in others.⁵²

The policy in Bradford was at least in part motivated by national policy. Dispersal was introduced in 1965 by DES Circular 7/65, *The Education of Immigrants*⁵³, though it is worth noting that not all LEAs chose to adhere to this policy. The wording of this circular revealed the assimilationist underpinning of the policy at a national level. It argued that a high proportion of immigrant children increased problems in schools and reduced the chances of assimilation, for "[u]p to a fifth of immigrant children in any group fit with reasonable ease, but...if the proportion goes over about one third...serious strains emerge."⁵⁴ This motivation was evidence in Bradford as well, as made clear by the 1976 report *Education in a Multi-Racial City* which commented that the circular recommended to LEAs that "[a] cardinal point in the arrangements for educating immigrant children should be the limitation of the

⁵¹ Olivia Foster-Carter, 'The Honeyford Affair: Political and Policy Implications', in *Racial Inequality in Education*, by Barry Troyna (London: Tavistock, 1987), pp. 44–58 (p.44).

⁵² *Telegraph and Argus*, 27/06/69.

⁵³ David L. Kirp, 'The Vagaries of Discrimination: Busing, Policy, and Law in Britain', *The School Review*, 87.3 (1979), 269–294 (p.272).

⁵⁴ Kirp, 'The Vagaries of Discrimination: Busing, Policy, and Law in Britain', p.272.

numbers of such children in particular schools”.⁵⁵ These two statements indicate that both in Bradford and nationally, dispersal was part of an approach which required immigrants and their children to adapt to fit in with the majority. Ansari commented that dispersal was based on the belief that “for society to remain socially cohesive immigrants and their children needed to accept existing norms and values” and “those who deviated from the norm were deemed to be in need of further socialization, English tuition and greater contact and communication with their white peers.”⁵⁶ The need to improve English language skills, the acquisition of cultural knowledge by immigrant children and the need to reassure non-immigrant parents that their children’s education would not be adversely affected were frequently-cited justifications for the policy.⁵⁷ All of these statements are of an assimilationist bent, suggesting the need for immigrants and their children, rather than for the majority culture, to adapt.

At a national level, overtly assimilationist approaches were relatively short-lived⁵⁸, as was dispersal. A number of publications in the late 1960s and early 1970s – the 1967 Plowden Report⁵⁹, the 1971 DES publication *The Education of Immigrants*⁶⁰, and the 1973 Select Committee on Race Relations⁶¹ – argued for an end to dispersal. The 1975 Bullock report *A Language for Life* declared that “no child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as he crosses the threshold of the school”.⁶² Other LEAs faced with a significant non-white population – for example Bristol, the ILEA and the London borough of Brent – did not adopt the policy of dispersal.⁶³ Yet Bradford LEA continued with the policy

⁵⁵ WYAS, WYB644/2/8, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings and papers relating to education and Asian children, *Education in Multi-racial City: The Report of the Joint Working Party on the Education of Immigrants and their Children*, 1976.

⁵⁶ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.300.

⁵⁷ Kirp, ‘The Vagaries of Discrimination: Busing, Policy, and Law in Britain’, p.273.

⁵⁸ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.312.

⁵⁹ Kirp, ‘The Vagaries of Discrimination: Busing, Policy, and Law in Britain’, pp.274–75.

⁶⁰ Kirp, ‘The Vagaries of Discrimination: Busing, Policy, and Law in Britain’, p.278.

⁶¹ Kirp, ‘The Vagaries of Discrimination: Busing, Policy, and Law in Britain’, p.279.

⁶² Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.213.

⁶³ Kirp, ‘The Vagaries of Discrimination: Busing, Policy, and Law in Britain’, p.276.

until 1980. This was in the face not only of shifting national educational philosophies, but also of the repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the policy from the city's Asian parents. This was in marked contrast with the process of consultation, negotiation and accommodation that governed the LEA's accommodation of the religious and cultural needs of Muslim children.

The policy of dispersal was one on which there was agreement from Conservatives and Labour Councillors in Bradford.⁶⁴ The explicit motivation for the policy seems to have been twofold. It was part of the authority's response to the arrival in Bradford's schools of a significant number of pupils who spoke little or no English. It was combined with the use of infant centres for young children who reached school age with no English and with additional support provided in schools, increasing throughout the 1970s, for pupils with special educational needs, including extra linguistic needs. Such concern with linguistic needs was a significant motivating factor in the local authority's approach to the children of immigrants in this period.⁶⁵ The second motivating factor was the desire to ensure an equal level of education for all pupils across the LEA area, regardless of their background or ethnicity. A 1977 report by the Bradford Metropolitan Council Directorate of Educational Services stated that only through dispersal was "it considered that all children can be offered equal educational opportunity; the alternative is that children with special needs would be concentrated in schools in such large numbers that these needs could not be met".⁶⁶ This egalitarian approach was also evident in the LEA's approach to single sex schooling, as is discussed below. Dispersal appears to have been based on the belief that it, not parents, knew best how to achieve such an egalitarian approach to education. The effect

⁶⁴ Michel Le Lohé, 'The effects of the presence of immigrants upon the local political system in Bradford, 1945-77', in Robert Miles and Annie Phizacklea (ed.), *Racism and Political Action in Britain*, 1979 (185-203), p.202.

⁶⁵ TNA, DES, Schools II, ED269/83, Reports on the Education of Children of Immigrants in Bradford

⁶⁶ TNA, DES, Schools II, ED269/83, Reports on the Education of Children of Immigrants in Bradford, 'The Education of Children of Immigrant Parental Origin', November 1977

of this was that the LEA told Muslims and other minorities that dispersal was best for them, rather than engaging with and responding to their expressed needs.

Concerns over race and ethnicity do not appear to have been the primary driving force behind the policy of dispersal in Bradford in this period. There is evidence that such concerns existed in Bradford. In 1978, the *Telegraph and Argus* reported on a meeting of the Bradford Metropolitan Council Labour Group (who were not the ruling group) on the issue of dispersal, commenting that the “mixing up of different cultural, racial and linguistic groups provides an opportunity for younger generations to be better citizens of our multi-racial and multi-racial society and to establish racial harmony”, and noting that bussing prevented the creation of “ghetto schools”.⁶⁷ But discussions by Bradford Council of the matter focused entirely on issues of language and educational need. Race only became a concern in the aftermath of the 1976 Race Relations Act, which raised concerns about whether bussing was a racist policy. In 1978, at a meeting of Bradford’s Trades Council, it was suggested that the policy was racist because only black children were bussed.⁶⁸ But a document from the late 1960s and 1970s on the subject of ‘The Education of Children of Immigrant Parental Origin’ in Bradford give the impression of a local authority that was predominantly preoccupied with how to deal with what it felt was an influx of children whose English was not at a sufficient level to allow them to be placed in mainstream schools. While assumptions about race may have been made, racial concerns were not the driving force for policymakers.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *Telegraph & Arguss*, 19/12/78

⁶⁸ *Telegraph & Argus*, 17/9/78

⁶⁹ TNA, DES, Schools II, ED269/83, Reports on the Education of Children of Immigrants in Bradford, ‘The Education of Children of Immigrant Parental Origin’, November 1977

The policy of dispersal was only ever applied to a minority – 15 per cent – of Asian children in Bradford.⁷⁰ At the height of the policy in 1977, 1395 children were being bussed.⁷¹ These numbers were, however, sufficient to prompt interaction between the local authority and affected communities. Bradford Council engaged in some consultations with ethnic minority organisations in Bradford about dispersal. In response to allegations of a lack of consultation, Conservative Councillor Curtis stated in 1977 that a “tremendous amount of consultation, thought, effort, money and endeavour has gone into the problems of educating immigrants”, citing the working party on the matter which included Asian representatives on its committee.⁷² In 1974 the MPA complained to the LEA that dispersal meant that children were forced to get up early to go to school on time, that they lost touch with other children in their local area and that bussing caused children to develop a “sort of inferiority complex”. They highlighted the recommendations by the Select Committee that dispersal be ended and asked for a review of the policy, recommending that it be ended for younger children. They also argued that the quota system in schools adversely affected the ability of Muslims to be represented on governing bodies.⁷³ Yet the response to these concerns was for the Council’s Chief Special Services Officer to state that the Working Party realised the drawbacks of dispersal, but that “there is at present no alternative if all children are to receive the best possible education and the children of immigrants are to be educated on equal terms with indigenous children”.⁷⁴ A Muslim organisation had stated its views, but

⁷⁰ Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, p.71

⁷¹ TNA, DES, Schools II, ED269/83, Reports on the Education of Children of Immigrants in Bradford, ‘The Education of Children of Immigrant Parental Origin’, November 1978

⁷² *Telegraph and Argus*, 22/04/77.

⁷³ WYAS, WYB644/2/7, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings relating to the Muslim Parents’ Association and Schools Letter from Muslim Parents Association to Knight, 23/09/74.

⁷⁴ WYAS, WYB644/2/7, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings relating to the Muslim Parents’ Association and Schools, Letter from Chief Special Services Officer at Bradford Council to Muslim Parents Association, 24/03/75.

they were not taken into account in the development of this particular policy. This raises the question of why this should be the case.

There is evidence of a sense amongst Muslims and representative minority groups that they were not effectively consulted by Bradford Council over dispersal. This was alluded to in 1977 in the local newspaper the *Telegraph and Argus*:

A former Bradford councillor, Mr Chris Vincenzi, said that the council used the word “consultations” differently from other people. When it “consulted” the public it really told people what it was going to do.⁷⁵

This suggests that, even where the Council sought the views of the public over dispersal, it did not take them into account when developing the policy. In 1977, Mohammed Ajeeb, at this point of the Community Relations Council stated that the Working Party’s report on dispersal was “based on pure assumptions, because no parents or leaders had been consulted on the dispersal policy”. He said that it was “a one sided and not a democratic affair”.⁷⁶ The CRC’s Education Panel observed in 1977 that despite poor attendance at a meeting of immigrant leaders to hear their views on ways to improve the dispersal system, after five meetings the Working Party agreed unanimously to continue the policy.⁷⁷ In 1977, at the CRC annual meeting Ajeeb said

it is my belief that coloured parents are no longer prepared to accept the imposition of such decisions without their views being sought. The claims being made by the education authority that they had consulted leaders of coloured parents is not substantiated.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ *Telegraph and Argus*, 20/04/77.

⁷⁶ WYAS, WYB644/1/3/1, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Bradford Racial Equality Council, Education Panel Minutes, reports and papers, Minutes of meeting, 17/02/77.

⁷⁷ WYAS, WYV644/1/3/1, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Bradford Racial Equality Council, Education Panel Minutes, reports and papers, Minutes of meeting, 17/02/77.

⁷⁸ *Telegraph and Argus*, 20/04/77.

This is a significant contrast to the consultations over issues relating to religious education and cultural needs, which were accommodated based on the 1944 framework.

An analysis of the process of negotiation with the CRC can offer some insight into why the Council approached dispersal so differently to its negotiations over religious education, worship and withdrawal. It is crucial that the arguments it made were framed in the language of race and concerns over race relations, rather than relating to issues of religious need. Abdullah Patel of the MPA spoke to the CRC in 1977, challenging arguments made by Bradford Council that standards of education would drop in all-black schools. Ajeeb, speaking at the same meeting:

said that the present policy of bussing was based on colour and children were no better where dispersal was practiced compared with other cities, where children go to ordinary schools.⁷⁹

In August 1977, the Education Panel recommended rejecting dispersal, attacking the racial motive which only saw Asian children bussed,⁸⁰ stating that “[c]oloured children should be given the same choice as white children at all stages in respect to the allocation of the school”.⁸¹ The language of these statements is important – the children and their parents are referred to as “coloured”. Those involved were perceived as a racial, not a religious minority, and the matter of dispersal was not understood through the framework of pluralism but rather through the rubric of race relations.

That dispersal was neither presented nor perceived as a Muslim or a religious issue is reinforced by an examination of other representations made on the matter. Complaints and protests against dispersal in the 1970s were often led by organisations representing the

⁷⁹ WYAS, WYB644/1/3/1, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Bradford Racial Equality Council, Education Panel Minutes, reports and papers, Minutes of meeting, 13/06/77.

⁸⁰ *Telegraph and Argus*, 14/10/77.

⁸¹ WYAS, WYB644/1/3/1, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Bradford Racial Equality Council, Education Panel Minutes, reports and papers, Minutes of meeting, 04/08/77.

city's Asian or non-white population, rather than Muslims specifically. In 1978 the Indian Workers' Association (IWA) organised a petition against dispersal signed by 1,570 people which was handed to Bradford Council.⁸² Jagtar Sahota, the organisation's secretary commented on the "hardship" that parents and children faced, with his comments being broadly similar to those raised by the MPA.⁸³ He did mention Muslims, arguing that dispersal meant that they were not provided with halal food due to their small numbers, and did not have the option of going home for lunch.⁸⁴ However, in his attack on the philosophy behind dispersal, Sahota's focus was on race as he stated that "the aim of this policy is to destroy the Asian language and culture, rejecting the idea of a multi-cultural society".⁸⁵ He also argued that the IWA had "shown to the council that bussing is a racist policy".⁸⁶ Harjinder Gata-Aura of Bradford's Asian Youth Movement said that the policy was racist, and of no benefit to Asians. A representative of the Jamiat-Tabligh-ul-Islam said Asians did not like bussing, and that in a democracy their views should be respected.⁸⁷ This last comment is interesting as it is evidence of an organisation which identified itself as Muslim arguing its case on the basis of Asian identity.

The response of the council to such complaints was to argue that, whilst it acknowledged some of the difficulties dispersal caused for those being bussed to distant schools, a good standard of education could not be provided in schools in which the pupil population comprised a majority of ethnic minority children. The Working Party recommendation in favour of dispersal in 1975 was on the basis that "children would not otherwise receive the education suitable for their ages, ability and aptitude".⁸⁸ In December 1978, at a meeting of Bradford Council's Labour Group, Councillor Munawar Hussain, presented a discussion

⁸² *Telegraph and Argus*, 07/03/79.

⁸³ *Telegraph and Argus*, 29/04/78.

⁸⁴ *Telegraph and Argus*, 02/03/79.

⁸⁵ *Telegraph and Argus*, 29/04/78.

⁸⁶ *Telegraph and Argus*, 08/03/79.

⁸⁷ *Telegraph and Argus*, 07/03/79.

⁸⁸ *Telegraph and Argus*, 29/04/75.

paper on dispersal, which he said had been adopted on “socio-educational grounds.” He acknowledged that dispersal “causes strain, stress and hardship for both children and parents”. However, he then went on to say that dispersal had “tremendous social, cultural and educational benefits”, and that as a result of the policy, Asian and non-Asian children

get the opportunity to grow up together and be friendly which in turn helps to destroy the barrier of ‘black’ and ‘white’ and the ‘us and them’ situation. This mixing up of different cultural, racial and linguistic groups provides an opportunity for our younger generations to be better citizens of our multi-racial and multi-cultural society and to establish racial harmony.⁸⁹

He argued that bussing prevented the creation of ghetto schools and helped Asian children to improve their English pronunciation, which “is a ‘must’ for future generations of Asian children”.⁹⁰ This again suggests that the Council felt that it was better equipped than parents to decide what was best for the children in its schools. It is also evidence of a Muslim councillor defending the policy of bussing on the basis of race relations. This raises questions over the different manifestations of racial and religious identity in Bradford, demonstrating that there was more than one Muslim voice in Bradford, and that there was sometimes dissent within the Muslim population, particularly although not exclusively over issues that did not directly relate to issues of religious need. Within a few years of these events, Ajeeb had succeeded in a Labour councillor in Bradford and representing Muslims directly on the Council and by 1985 he was Lord Mayor.

Another aspect of the Council’s motivation for the continuation of dispersal was that there were not enough inner city school places available in Bradford – where most of the immigrant population was – but there was plenty of space available in suburban schools.⁹¹ A

⁸⁹ *Telegraph and Argus*, 19/12/78.

⁹⁰ *Telegraph and Argus*, 19/12/78.

⁹¹ Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.38.

similar argument was made in 1979 in favour of dispersal by Councillor Stanley Arthur, chairman of the Educational Services Committee. He wrote in the *Telegraph and Argus*, offering explanations as to why the Council continued to bus some 1,500 of Bradford's 11,000 Asian children. He framed his arguments in terms of the 1976 Race Relations Act, which "said that local educational authorities had to give ALL children equal educational opportunities"⁹², arguing that the only way for Bradford to do this was through bussing so that minority children could learn English properly. He also argued that there were not enough inner city school places, which further necessitated bussing. He stated

I think it is important to explain how we have come to bus some Asian children and why we think it's right...without special measures like this, young people cannot get the best out of their education and take their place as equals in an English speaking world.⁹³

This indicates that Bradford Council saw dispersal as a part of an agenda which focused on providing the same standard of education to all of those attending its schools, based on an egalitarian approach.

Despite the extensive rhetoric in favour of dispersal, Bradford Council ultimately scrapped the policy in 1980 – the year that Labour took control of the Council – following a threat from the Commission for Racial Equality of a formal investigation into educational policies in Bradford.⁹⁴ In 1983 the *TES* said of the decision:

by then, local politicians of both parties began to realize that minority votes counted and it was, perhaps, time that these communities were consulted. At the same time,

⁹² *Telegraph and Argus*, 22/03/79.

⁹³ *Telegraph and Argus*, 22/03/79.

⁹⁴ *TES*, 14/10/83.

Asian groups, especially the Muslims, were learning how to make their voices heard.⁹⁵

While this may have come about as a result of the repeated expression of concerns by affected groups, there is little to suggest that the decision was based on an acceptance of the legitimacy of these grievances by Bradford Council. Even as the policy ended, Councillor Jack Barker stated “[q]uite honestly, I think the vast majority of Asians would be better served under the present system”.⁹⁶ Though this change in policy was in some ways part of a more generally opening up of the willingness of Bradford Council to accommodate minorities, the expressed needs of those affected by dispersal do not seem to have been the primary motive for change which was rather a consequence of shifting national policy and increased scrutiny of policies on race following the 1976 Race Relations Act.

What becomes evident in an analysis of this is that when immigrants interacted with the council based on race or ethnicity rather than religion, they were less successful in being heard or having their needs met. The various arguments made by Bradford Council suggest that it was not willing to adapt its policy on dispersal in response to minority requests or demands because opposition to dispersal challenged not only that particular policy, but also the practical realities and the philosophies underlying its educational approach. The Council had adopted an ideological approach of sorts, based on the desire to provide all pupils with an equally high quality of education, and on the belief that this could not happen if there were schools with a high percentage of ethnic minority pupils. Criticisms of and complaints against this approach could not be understood within a framework of conservative pluralism. Rather, addressing them would have required a fundamental change to both the Council’s educational philosophies and to the framework which implemented them. It would

⁹⁵ *TES*, 14/10/83.

⁹⁶ *Telegraph and Argus*, 23/01/80.

have required the Council to either abandon its egalitarian approach, or to shift its ideas about the best way to realise such an approach. This made it far more difficult for Muslims and others to have their views heard and their wishes accommodated.

Extended Trips Abroad

There is some similarity to Bradford Council's approach to dispersal in its approach to the matter of extended trips abroad in that it asked parents to adapt in order to fit in with the existing legal and educational framework. However, there is also evidence of a greater level of flexibility on this issue.

Many Asian students went on lengthy visits to the Indian subcontinent during term time. Parents considered these visits important, as they allowed children to develop an understanding of the culture and language of their country of origin, and also provided an opportunity for children to meet their extended families.⁹⁷ Asian pupils had been taking such lengthy trips since they had started attending Bradford schools⁹⁸, despite the fact that the 1959 Education Act theoretically permitted no more than two weeks of term time absence.⁹⁹ These trips became an issue, however, in the early 1980s when, shortly after Labour took control of the Council, the LEA proposed a policy which would mean that schools could only keep places open for absent children for a maximum of six weeks.¹⁰⁰ This was a considerably shorter period of time than most trips lasted, and many parents were unhappy with the idea of such a policy. Tickets were expensive, and they felt it was impracticable and unreasonable to expect them to limit their trips to only 6 weeks.¹⁰¹ Bradford LEA, on the other hand, felt at this point that extended trips abroad were undesirable and educationally disadvantageous

⁹⁷ *Telegraph and Argus*, 15/06/81.

⁹⁸ Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.40.

⁹⁹ *Telegraph and Argus*, 15/06/81.

¹⁰⁰ *Telegraph and Argus*, 27/04/81.

¹⁰¹ *Telegraph and Argus*, 15/06/81.

to students, particularly to students for whom English was a second language.¹⁰² In January 1981, an Education Welfare Officer for Bradford LEA spoke to the CRC on the matter of extended trips abroad. He commented that it was often necessary for him to go to court to resolve situations relating to long absences, and that “[i]t is also very difficult for the Education Welfare Officer to get the indigenous [sic] populations to accept the laws of education in this country.”¹⁰³ The development of the policy and the response to it suggests some contradiction in approach. The idea that the Education Welfare officer should be pushing for minorities to adapt and conform to the cultural norms and laws of the majority society is indicative of an ongoing assimilationist approach. However, the fact that the Council was willing to extend the two weeks offered by the 1959 Education Act to six suggests some attempt to adapt on the part of the Council.

There was debate both within the Council and with the parents of Asian children over the desirability of a policy limiting extended trips abroad to six weeks. There was not even agreement amongst the Labour members of the Council.¹⁰⁴ In spring 1981, the CRC met with the ruling Labour Group Leader Councillor Derek Smith and the Chairman of the Education Committee, Councillor Birdsall, and proposed that a period of twelve weeks rather than six would be more appropriate.¹⁰⁵ There were also consultations carried out with parents in July 1981 at a meeting held at Drummond school. Around 120 parents attended and the following resolution was passed by the CRC:

that the system dealing with Asian children going abroad is working well at present because it is flexible and it should be allowed to continue. There should also be a

¹⁰² BLSL, Minutes of Schools (Education) Sub-Committee, 29/07/81.

¹⁰³ WYAS, WYB644/1/3/1, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Bradford Racial Equality Council, Education Panel Minutes, reports and papers, Minutes of meeting 13/01/81.

¹⁰⁴ *Telegraph and Argus*, 27/04/81.

¹⁰⁵ WYAS, WYB644/1/3/1, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Bradford Racial Equality Council, Education Panel Minutes, reports and papers, Minutes of meeting, 06/05/81.

discussion in the community to help educate parents of Asian children on the problems caused by keeping children away from schools for long periods.¹⁰⁶

This indicates a flexible approach which would create room for minority needs which fell outside the remit of religious pluralism. However, alongside this flexibility, the Council embarked upon a process of attempting to educate minorities as to why they should consider adapting its approach. In July 1981 the Schools (Education) Sub-Committee recommended the rejection of the restriction of extended trips abroad to 6 weeks. However, it also recommended adopting the recommendations of the Multi-Cultural Review Body “[t]hat the Authority emphasise to parents that prolonged absences from school are educationally disadvantageous to children in that their preparation for their future in this country is held back in both social and linguistic terms”, and that “[t]he Authority’s views on this matter be given the maximum publicity on Pennine Radio and Radio Leeds together with an announcement in the newspaper ‘RAVI’.”¹⁰⁷ The divergence in legal and rhetorical approaches here, which allowed parents freedom of choice, but encouraged them to act as the LEA wished them to, is important as it suggested flexibility and room for negotiation on the part of the Council.

Over time, Bradford Council softened its views on extended trips abroad, and in 1988 Halsted wrote that:

keeping children away from school for extended periods so that they can visit the Indian sub-continent is now officially viewed as a potentially enriching experience rather than a breach of the law.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ WYAS, WYB644/1/3/1, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Bradford Racial Equality Council, Education Panel Minutes, reports and papers, Minutes of meeting, 09/07/81(WYB644/1/3/1).

¹⁰⁷ BLSL, Minutes of Schools (Education) Sub-Committee, 29/07/81.

¹⁰⁸ Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.28.

He argued that the shift “indicated a value judgment which gives priority to the preservation of cultural identity over the promotion of social integration and cohesion”.¹⁰⁹ It should be noted that this was diametrically opposed to his interpretation of the Swann Report, which he perceived as prioritising social cohesion over cultural identity.¹¹⁰ This indicates that in Bradford in the early 1980s there was some room for adaptation in order to accommodate minority needs, even if they were not understood as religious needs and did not fall within the pluralist framework. It suggests that there were possibilities of either extending the pluralist framework to accommodate more needs than its conservative nature originally allowed, or of the pluralist framework interacting with other developing responses to diversity in Bradford.

5. Multicultural Matters

In the early 1980s, the Labour-controlled Bradford Council embarked upon a process of developing race relations and multicultural policies. This process was ushered in in 1981 by a twelve point race relations initiative which stated that every community had “an equal right to maintain its own identity, culture, religion and customs”¹¹¹, and a Race Relations Policy Statement which introduced a new idea of integration which “did not ‘assume a supremacy of one culture into which others would easily be assimilated’, but which aimed instead at the creation of ‘a society in which there is a co-operative and peaceful living together based on mutual respect for differences.’” At the same time, a letter was distributed to council employees which stated “[w]e no longer expect minority communities to integrate and change their ways to suit us” and “every section of the community has an equal right to maintain its own identity, culture, language, religion and customs.”¹¹² In this, Bradford was not alone, and the early 1980s was a period when similar approaches could be seen across

¹⁰⁹ Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.27.

¹¹⁰ Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.214.

¹¹¹ Lewis, *Islamic Britain* p.70; Mark Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.18.

¹¹² Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.49.

England in local authority areas with significant minority populations. By 1986, for example, there were 36 LEAs which had made statements on multicultural education.¹¹³ Jed Fazakarley has examined the development of such policies in areas including Manchester, Tower Hamlets, Bradford, Newcastle and Birmingham, all of which saw developments in policies on multiculturalism and anti-racism, and increasing consultation with minority groups. He frames this, however, in the context of the “homogeneity of local authority statements on multicultural education, and their divorce from practice”.¹¹⁴ It is therefore helpful to look in greater depth at events in Bradford during this period, and at the practice as well as policy of the LEA in relation to the education of Muslims.

In 1980 the Conservatives lost control of Bradford Council, and the 1980s was a period of pockets of Labour control – 1980-1982 and 1986-88 – but where the council was often a hung one, with no party having overall control. It was also a period in which Muslims began to be represented in the Council, particularly as Labour councillors, which may have had some impact on policy development. However, with only three Muslim councillors in the early 1980s they were still underrepresented, so this can only offer a partial explanation of any developments in multicultural education or the accommodation of Muslim needs.

The development of policies on multicultural education raises questions of how this new approach would accommodate or interact with the pluralist approach that had thus far governed Muslim-LEA interactions in Bradford. In 1982, Bradford Council announced “full consultations” with Muslim groups to find out how they wanted their children to be educated, before the 1977 guidelines were revised.¹¹⁵ In February of that year, Councillor Thorne explained in the *Telegraph and Argus* that “[w]ith 10,000 Muslim schoolchildren Bradford is at the very forefront of the debate over how different cultures learn to live

¹¹³ Jed Fazakarley, *Muslim Communities in England 1962-90: Multiculturalism and Political Identity* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) p. 57.

¹¹⁴ Fazakarley, *Muslim Communities in England 1962-90*, p.58

¹¹⁵ *Telegraph and Argus*, 17/02/82.

together”.¹¹⁶ However, though these statements focused on Muslims in particular, it is important to note that the consultations took place not only with Muslims, but with a broad range of minority groups. In 1981, the CRC’s Education Panel met with both West Indian and Asian parents to discuss their educational concerns. A number of explicitly Muslim issues were raised by Zafar Ali of the Keighley Community Association and a representative of the Azad Kashmir Muslim Association, but the focus of the meeting was West Indian concerns.¹¹⁷ The Education Panel’s consultations for Bradford CRC’s submissions to the Swann Committee in April 1982 also raised some Muslim issues, but amid a broader remit of hearing ethnic minority groups’ views.¹¹⁸ Also in 1982, the Race Relations Advisory Group of Bradford Council published *The Other Man’s View: A Summary of Visits to Bradford’s Ethnic Minority Organisations*. This document was based on consultations with thirteen organisations, five of which explicitly represented Muslims, three which included Muslims within the groups they represented, and five which represented other groups.¹¹⁹ What is significant about these consultations is that the groups consulted, and the language used by the Council to describe the process, suggested that they were being carried out as a part of developing policies on race and ethnic diversity, rather than with religious pluralism in mind. The Schools (Education) Sub-Committee, for example, stated that that the RRAG was engaging in these consultations “in order to test the “feel” of race relations in the city and to find out how the Council and its service were viewed by the ethnic communities”.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ *Telegraph and Argus*, 17/02/82.

¹¹⁷ WYAS, WYB644/1/3/1, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Bradford Racial Equality Council, Education Panel Minutes, reports and papers, Notes on the first meeting of the Education Panel with the West Indian & Asian Parents, 19/11/81.

¹¹⁸ WYAS, WYB644/1/3/1, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Bradford Racial Equality Council, Education Panel Minutes, reports and papers, Minutes of meeting of Swann Committee in Bradford, March 1982.

¹¹⁹ BLSL, Race Relations Advisory Group, Bradford Council, *The Other Man’s View A summary of visits to Bradford’s Ethnic Minority Organisations* 1982.

¹²⁰ BLSL, Minutes of Schools (Education) Sub-Committee, 27/07/82.

The shift towards accommodating racial and ethnic diversity does not appear to have been entirely separate from the pluralist framework, and was accompanied by a broadening in scope of the kinds of needs that Bradford LEA appeared prepared to accommodate. The process of consultation led to the production of the 1982 Local Authority Memorandum (LAM) 2/82, which comprehensively laid out the LEA's approach to minorities. In the consultations over this LAM the Council was at times didactic rather than willing to listen. For example, at a joint meeting of the Schools (Education) and Schools (Special) Sub-Committees, it was noted that parents were to be consulted over religious education, and part of this was "explaining to them the way in which the education system works and the importance of education in the future prospects of their children".¹²¹ There is also evidence, however, of a genuine process of consultation. A draft of the LAM was circulated to a number of organisations, including the Bradford CRC, the newly-formed Council for Mosques and "certain other Ethnic Minority Groups".¹²² It was eventually sent to schools in November 1982, and was implemented from January 1983.¹²³

In 1988, Halstead described the LAM as "a clarification and codification of policy which had been instituted ten years earlier".¹²⁴ Indeed, there was much in the LAM that did precisely this, indicating that it was at least in part based upon the pluralist precedent. Yet such a statement does not acknowledge the fact that the LAM was also both the indicative of, and the product of, the new readiness of the Council to acknowledge and try to accommodate a wider range of needs. While it retained the willingness to accommodate those religious requests which had previously been catered for through the pluralist framework, it also expanded the scope of those needs which could be met. This serves as a contrast with the

¹²¹ BLSL, Minutes of joint meeting of Schools (Education) and Schools (Special) Sub-Committees, 25/06/81.

¹²² BLSL, Minutes of Schools (Education) Subcommittee meeting, 06/03/82.

¹²³ BLSL, Minutes of joint meeting of Schools (Education) and Schools (Special) Sub-Committees, 22/10/82

¹²⁴ Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.32.

views of the Swann Report outlined in the previous chapter, which sought to replace, rather than to acknowledge or expand, the existing system. Perhaps in response to this, there is also some evidence of a widening of scope of the requests made by Muslim groups in the early 1980s. Some of the issues raised were familiar from the 1970s, with suggestions that sometimes schools did not carry out LEA policies.¹²⁵ However, there were also some less familiar concerns raised including the depiction of minority groups and their countries of origin in textbooks; sex education; gambling in schools (in the form of fundraising lotteries and tombolas)¹²⁶; supplementary schooling; mother tongue teaching; discipline and a lack of Asian teachers.¹²⁷

The apparent increase in consultations and the persistence of some difficult issues led to the creation of new bodies which would represent Muslim needs more effectively. Bradford's Council for Mosques was founded in 1981 by six Bradford Muslims representing the various Islamic sects in the city.¹²⁸ While it rose to national prominence for its role in the Rushdie Affair, its initial focus was on representing Muslims in the educational field. According to Lewis

the Council for Mosques was an institution whose time had come. Bradford Council had found that 'new channel of communication' it had sought – at least for Muslims – and other bodies welcomed the creation of an organization which they could consult on a range of issues.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ WYAS, WYB644/1/3/1, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Bradford Racial Equality Council, Education Panel Minutes, reports and papers, Notes on the first meeting of the Education Panel with the West Indian & Asian Parents, 19/11/81.

¹²⁶ BLSL Race Relations Advisory Group, Bradford Council, *The Other Man's View A summary of visits to Bradford's Ethnic Minority Organisations* 1982.

¹²⁷ WYAS, WYB644/1/3/1, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Bradford Racial Equality Council, Education Panel Minutes, reports and papers, Meeting of Swann Committee in Bradford, March 1982.

¹²⁸ The relationship between the Council and the MPA had broken down in the early 1980s, leaving room for the emergence of other Muslim representative bodies.

¹²⁹ Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, p.144.

These comments do not acknowledge the earlier role of organisations like the Muslim Association and the MPA in developing Muslim-state interactions in Bradford. However, it is true that the CFM marked a change in approach for Bradford's Muslims. It was a body widely recognised as representative of a significant proportion of the city's Muslims, which had support from and links to both the Council and the CRC. For example, in 1984 the CRC executive included two Muslim councillors, as well as Sher Azam and M. Khan, the president and future president of the CFM. Lewis clearly attributes the successes of the Council for Mosques to "overlapping membership and co-operation between Muslim councillors and Muslims active in the Council for Mosques and the Community Relations Council (CRC)." He highlighted that there were five Muslim councillors involved in the CRC in the 1980s, including Councillor Ajeeb who was CRC chairman from 1976-83, a councillor from 1979 and active in the establishment and running of the Council for Mosques before becoming Lord Mayor in 1985.¹³⁰

Perhaps as a result of the Council's consultative approach in the early 1980s, the CFM was able to work with a range of organisations, including those which fell under the umbrellas of multiculturalism and anti-racism. By 1994, Lewis was able to comment that that the organisation had successfully campaigned over a number of educational issues including the merging of two single sex schools, dress requirements, single sex PE lessons, halal food, the teaching of community languages and a new RE syllabus.¹³¹

Two of these needs – single sex schooling and halal food – will now be examined. These were matters over which LEA engagement with Muslims veered into discussions of moral and ideological, as well as practical, concerns. Both were perceived by Muslims as religious needs, but were perceived differently by sections of state and society. Single sex schooling

¹³⁰ Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, p.147.

¹³¹ Lewis, *Being Muslim and Being British*, p.78.

was perceived as a religious matter by Muslims, but through the lens of gender equality by others. Similarly, the state and society perceived the provision of halal meat in schools not only as a religious need, but also from the point of view of animal rights. Such duality, or sometimes multiplicity of interpretation, moves these issues away from the fairly solid ground of religious pluralism, and into the more difficult terrain of the relative morality of different cultural practices, and how to accommodate them in a multicultural setting. On these issues, Muslims came up against moral as well as educational challenges to their expressed needs: the state began to question not whether it was possible to accommodate certain needs, but whether those needs should be accommodated in late twentieth century Britain.

Single Sex Schooling

The provision of single sex schooling was an issue that simmered steadily in Bradford throughout the 1970s and 1980s, occasionally bubbling over. For many of Britain's Muslims, it was a fundamental religious need. From the late 1960s onwards, the UK Islamic Mission, the UMO and the Islamic Cultural Centre had been lobbying for single sex provision in Britain.¹³² In 1974, *The Guardian* commented that Rahman of the MET said "that it was a fundamental principle of their religion that a girl could not mix with boys when she reached puberty".¹³³ In 1975, a discussion paper by the Yorkshire Committee for Community Relations (YCCR) on *The Education of Muslim Girls* highlighted both the religious nature of the need, and its critical importance to Muslims. It stated that Muslims were concerned

¹³² Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.315.

¹³³ *The Guardian*, 09/01/74.

about the possible development of sexual relationships in co-educational schools, and the effect this could have on the *izzat* (honour) of girls and their families.¹³⁴

In 1974, Bradford LEA adopted a policy of coeducational schooling, which meant the potential end of single sex schooling in the area. Such provision was further threatened in 1976 with the decision to merge Belle Vue Girls' and Boys' schools which, if it went ahead, would remove the LEA's remaining single sex schools.¹³⁵ This decision was made at a time when the number of Muslim children – a group who were in need of single sex provision – in Bradford's schools was increasing. It was also at a time when the government was placing increasing emphasis on parental choice in education nationally.¹³⁶ The decision to go ahead with a move to coeducation in the face of these two developments is one that is worth exploring. The MPA was initially formed in response to the decreasing provision of single-sex schooling. Its founders, Riaz Shahid and Abdullah Patel, were prompted by the allocation of co-educational secondary school places to their daughters, places which the two men refused.¹³⁷ Yet at the initial meeting of the MPA with Birdsall described above, single-sex schooling was the only issue upon which agreement was not reached. Looking back on the 1974 discussions in the early 1980s, Birdsall commented that:

some of the group's demands were very unreasonable. They wanted single-sex schools when the authority was going co-educational.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ WYAS, Newspaper cuttings relating to the Muslim Parents' Association and Schools, Yorkshire Committee for Community Relations (YCCR) *The Education of Muslim Girls – a discussion paper*, September 1975, CRC, London (WYB644/2/7).

¹³⁵ WYAS, Bradford Racial Equality Council, Education Panel Minutes, reports and papers, *Telegraph and Argus*, 'Schools face co-ed merger', 26/01/1985 (WYB644/1/3/1).

¹³⁶ WYAS, Newspaper cuttings relating to the Muslim Parents' Association and Schools, YCCR, *The Education of Muslim Girls – a discussion paper*, September 1975, CRC, London (WYB644/2/7).

¹³⁷ WYAS, WYB644/2/7, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings relating to the Muslim Parents' Association and Schools, YCCR *The Education of Muslim Girls – a discussion paper*.

¹³⁸ *Telegraph and Argus*, 27/01/82.

It is possible to interpret Birdsall's view as coming from an assimilationist perspective, requiring Muslims to adapt in order to fit in with prevailing educational trends. However, it is helpful to also consider her words in the context of an egalitarian or universalist approach which was discussed in the section on dispersal. The authority felt that it was in the best interests of pupils to be taught in coeducational schools, and that this should apply to all pupils including Muslims. This drive for equality of experience for all pupils took precedence over the accommodation of religious need in the view of Birdsall in this instance. A useful comparison is Feldman's discussion of the opposition to the Sikh campaign to be exempt from laws requiring motorcyclists to wear helmets. He argued that some opposition was based on "a universalist vision of laws being made for the general good" and outlined the views of the major political parties and others that the "law had been passed to save life and prevent injury and an exemption would make Sikhs privileged members of the community: an unacceptable outcome".¹³⁹

The YCCR's discussion paper highlighted how limited the options for Muslim parents who wished to choose single sex schooling became, once the Council had decided to end such provision. If a girls' school were to be set up, it argued:

this would have to be a private school. There is no provision under the 1944 or other education acts for it to receive DES/LEA aid.

Regarding the possibility of setting up a school for girls aged 13-16, it stated that:

the DES would not consider giving grant-aid to a school whose only *raison d'être* was considered to be single sex. At a time when a local authority is going co-educational such a proposal might meet considerable objection within it.

Of the possibility of setting up a voluntary-aided school, it commented that:

¹³⁹ Feldman, 'Why the English like Turbans: Multicultural Politics in British History', pp.286–87.

it would have to be denominational, ie it would have to be seen as a religiously motivated foundation and therefore, it would probably have to be co-educational, in areas which had abolished single sex schools.¹⁴⁰

These comments indicate that the authors of this discussion paper did not regard single sex schooling as a religious need that could be met under the provisions of the 1944 Education Act. This is significant. The Act allowed for the creation of state-funded denominational schools as one means of meeting children's religious needs – something which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. For Muslims, one of their most fundamental needs was single-sex schooling. Yet this was felt by the YCCR to be neither provided for under the Act, nor to be within the remit of religious pluralism.

At least part of the reason that the need for single-sex schooling proved so complex a matter was that it was perceived by many not as an issue of religious pluralism, but as one of gender equality, with links to an egalitarian approach. It was an issue on which the Muslim viewpoint was held by the state to be fundamentally at odds with that of the majority.

Ansari highlighted this when he commented that single sex schooling brought Muslims:

into conflict with the authorities, whose attitude was that coeducation promoted the goal of gender equality and benefited all pupils, especially girls... while schools emphasized equality of opportunity and treatment, many Muslim parents wanted girls treated differently from boys, and asserted their right to chose single sex schooling for their children.¹⁴¹

The different treatment of girls and boys was in this context felt to be at odds with ideals of gender equality, and also with other prevailing educational philosophies. For example,

¹⁴⁰ WYAS, WYB644/2/7, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings relating to the Muslim Parents' Association and Schools YCCR *The Education of Muslim Girls – a discussion paper*, September 1975, CRC, London.

¹⁴¹ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.215.

Halstead has argued that what he termed the “integrationist” policy being followed by Bradford Council in the 1970s involved treating all pupils the same in the interest of avoiding racial and cultural tensions. He wrote that if an exception were made for Shahid and Patel of the MPA over their daughters’ places, it would:

undermine doubly the Council’s policy of treating all pupils the same: he wanted Muslims treated differently from non-Muslims, and girls treated differently from boys. If there were sound educational reasons for a policy such as co-education in the first place, and if the policy were agreed upon by the democratic decision of the Council, then it was considered justifiable to compel parents to conform.¹⁴²

As with the matter of dispersal, where policies were being implemented for egalitarian reasons, there was little room for parents to argue for exceptions to be made, even if these exceptions were based on religious need.

The desire to separate boys and girls in schools was understood by many as an attempt to restrict the education of girls. This interpretation is not entirely without grounding, and was reinforced by Muslim responses to decreasing single sex provision which tended to focus on the impact of coeducational provision on girls rather than boys. In 1973, Bradford’s Muslim Association wrote to Margaret Thatcher, the Education Minister, asking her to cut the school leaving age to 12, so that Muslim girls could legally be kept at home once they reached puberty.¹⁴³ In his 1975 *Islamic Education and Single Sex Schooling*, Muhammad Iqbal argued that men and women were essentially different and girls needed education to prepare them for their natural role as wives and mothers, which could not be provided by coeducation.¹⁴⁴

A memorandum from the MPA to Bradford Council’s Education Committee stated “[o]ur

¹⁴² Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.47.

¹⁴³ *Telegraph and Argus*, 03/02/73.

¹⁴⁴ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.316.

girls over the age of 11 must not be forced to attend co-educational schools”.¹⁴⁵ The 1975 YCCR discussion paper identified as a concern the “exposure of Muslim girls to current educational and social developments in Britain. It also commented that some girls were being sent back to Pakistan, while others were being kept at home in England, rather than being sent to co-educational schools.¹⁴⁶ In May 1983, the *Telegraph and Argus* reported that Sher Azam, president of the Muslim Association of Bradford, said that teenage Muslim girls were hiding at home to avoid having to go to mixed schools.¹⁴⁷ In 1984, a Muslim father spoke on the BBC programme Panorama, saying that he would not send his daughter to a mixed school and that if this were the only option he would keep her at home.¹⁴⁸

The possible impact upon girls of being denied an education led the YCCR discussion paper to state that girls:

may become the semi-literate mothers of the next generation of Muslim Britons, lacking English themselves and unfitted for life in Britain.¹⁴⁹

In response to the 1984 Panorama report, former Bradford Lord Mayor Norman Free said that parents were “denying their girls an education”.¹⁵⁰ This raises the question of whose responsibility it was to ensure that Muslim girls were provided with a good education. The assumption made by Free, and also in Birdsall’s comments, was that it was the responsibility of parents to send their children to school, whatever the available schooling was. This can be linked to the egalitarian approach: once the Council had decided what it felt was the best

¹⁴⁵ WYAS, WBY644/2/7, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings relating to the Muslim Parents’ Association and Schools, Memo to the Education Committee.

¹⁴⁶ WYAS, WYB644/2/7, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings relating to the Muslim Parents’ Association and Schools, YCCR *The Education of Muslim Girls – a discussion paper*.

¹⁴⁷ *Telegraph and Argus*, 20/05/83.

¹⁴⁸ *Telegraph and Argus*, 11/06/84.

¹⁴⁹ WYAS, WYB644/2/7, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings relating to the Muslim Parents’ Association and Schools, YCCR *The Education of Muslim Girls – a discussion paper*.

¹⁵⁰ WYAS, WYB644/1/3/1, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Bradford Racial Equality Council, Education Panel Minutes, reports and papers, *Telegraph and Argus*, 11/06/84.

educational approach for those in its schools, it was up to parents to then send their children to those schools without asking for exceptions to be made. The outcome of this was in effect the same as if it had been an assimilationist policy: in the case of single sex schooling it was up to Muslim parents to adapt and compromise, fitting into the existing system. The accommodation of the wishes of Muslim parents for their children to attend single sex secondary schools would have required a fundamental re-evaluation of the educational philosophies of Bradford Council. It would have necessitated a shift in educational approach on the part of the Council, abandoning universalism and allowing different experiences for different groups. Even where single-sex schooling was acknowledged as a religious need, this meant that it was very difficult for the Council to accommodate it as it could not be understood within the 1944 framework.

By the early 1980s, there was some evidence of a shift in approach. Despite the 1976 decision, the Council did not merge the Belle Vue schools, meaning the authority retained at least token single sex provision.¹⁵¹ There was also an alteration of admission policy – prior to 1980, Bradford Council had refused to allow Muslim pupils to transfer to Belle Vue Girls' on cultural grounds due to the fear that if they did, the school would become almost, if not entirely, Muslim. In 1980, however, this admissions policy was altered to account for parental choice, and the school's pupils fairly rapidly became two thirds Muslim.¹⁵² In October 1983 when the opposition Labour group moved to implement the Belle Vue merger, it was defeated in the education committee.¹⁵³ Following this decision, both Labour and Conservative spokesmen – operating by this time within a hung council – promised to retain the single sex option. There is further evidence of provision of single sex schooling into the 1980s, even in the face of the arguments outlined above. In 1983, a fee-paying

¹⁵¹ BLSL, Minutes of Schools (Special) Sub-Committee, 29/07/83.

¹⁵² Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.34.

¹⁵³ *TES*, 14/10/83.

school for Muslim girls with 100 places was opened by the Muslim Association. Bradford Girls' Grammar also had a small percentage of Muslim pupils and there was also a single sex Catholic voluntary aided school, though 85 percent of the places were for Catholics.¹⁵⁴ The existence of this Catholic single sex school undermines somewhat claims by the LEA that an egalitarian policy, rather than specific concerns about the separation of boys and girls in Islam, underpinned the policy. This suggests that a Muslim school seeking single-sex schooling in a co-educational authority was felt to test the limits of pluralism in a way that a Christian school seeking the same thing did not – something that will be discussed at much greater length in the next two chapters.

This apparent relaxation of – or at least wavering over – approaches to single sex education was accompanied by a phenomenon which was considerably less favourable to Bradford's Muslims: the idea of them seeking privileged treatment. A *Sunday Times* article reporting on the education committee's 1983 decision to retain single sex provision was entitled "'Purdah' to stay in schools". The use of the word "purdah" – the separation of men and women in Islam – indicated unease about non-Western beliefs being imposed upon British establishments. The article commented:

had the voting gone the other way, Muslim leaders and some Muslim councillors feared a Muslim exodus from the state schools to separatist racially divisive establishments.¹⁵⁵

The suggestion of a threatened "exodus" is curious. In 1983 there were no state-funded Muslim schools, and there did not appear to be an imminent risk of any being created, let alone in the sort of numbers that would allow an exodus of children to them. Attempts had been made to create such schools by this point, but they had been unsuccessful, as will be

¹⁵⁴ Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.34.

¹⁵⁵ *Sunday Times*, 02/10/83.

examined in the next chapter. Muslim private school provision was also scarce and, where it did exist, often inadequate. Bradford's Muslims were in a weak position in terms of having this particular need met, yet were being presented as being in a position of some strength and able to threaten the status quo. A similar approach can be seen in a response to the 1984 Panorama programme, in which a Muslim parent stated that he would keep his daughter out of school in the face of a lack of single sex provision. Norman Free commented, "I dearly hope these parents will be dealt with in the same manner as parents of other religions".¹⁵⁶ This comment implied not only that Muslims were being treated differently from other parents, but also that the treatment that they were receiving was preferential. By the early 1980s, Muslims were sometimes being portrayed as a threat, as receiving preferential treatment and, crucially, as being in a position of strength. It meant that requests for equal treatment came to be regarded as requests for special treatment, thus adversely affecting the response of the state to them.

Halal meat

The provision of halal meat for pupils in schools was another issue which was perceived as a religious need by Muslims, but as something else by Bradford Council and significant parts of local civil society. This is particularly interesting, as it was a need that was initially presented along with some of the "cultural" needs which were accommodated within the pluralist framework, but unlike other such needs it was not accommodated in the 1970s. The issue of halal provision was raised in 1974 by the MPA¹⁵⁷ who received a reply from Bradford Council highlighting the logistical difficulties of providing halal meat, before stating:

¹⁵⁶ *Telegraph and Argus* 11/06/84.

¹⁵⁷ WYAS, WYB644/2/7, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings relating to the Muslim Parents' Association and Schools, Letter from MPA to Knight, 04/10/74.

there might well be conscientious objections to handling meat which had not been subject to the normal processes of humane killing accepted in this country.¹⁵⁸

It should be highlighted that halal slaughter (dhabihah) was legal in Britain and had been explicitly so since the 1933 Slaughter of Animals Act. It was therefore, legally at least, a process of killing that was accepted in Britain, contrary to the intimation made by Bradford council. In 1976, Bradford Metropolitan Council's report *Education in a Multi-Racial City: the Report of the Joint Working Party on the Education of Immigrants and their Children* advocated the provision of meals which children could eat, "whatever their religion forbids", but also stated that the supply of halal meat would be "impracticable" for reasons of cost, as well as "the impossibility of preparing it entirely separate from other food and the likelihood of conscientious objections to handling meat from animals which had not been humanely slaughtered".¹⁵⁹ These two comments indicate that the report's authors took the stance that the framework of religious pluralism could not be extended to the provision of halal food, as it was also felt to be an issue of animal rights. This was despite the fact that, as mentioned in the previous chapter, kosher food had been provided for Jewish children in schools in for a number of years.

The 1977 Local Authority Memorandum 1/77 stated that religious objections should be respected and alternative meals should be provided if necessary and, "[w]here this is not possible due to the smallness of numbers, additional numbers of vegetables will be provided".¹⁶⁰ This indicated a degree of compromise, where food meeting Muslim dietary requirements was to be provided, but not halal meat. The matter really came to prominence

¹⁵⁸ WYAS, WYB644/2/7, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings relating to the Muslim Parents' Association and Schools, Letter from Bradford Council to MPA, 26/03/75.

¹⁵⁹ WYAS, WYB644/2/8, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings and papers relating to education and Asian children, City of Bradford Metropolitan Council, *Education in a Multi-Racial City: The Report of the Joint Working Party on the Education of Immigrants and their Children* 1976).

¹⁶⁰ LMA, City of London, ILEA/S/SB/26/4/14, ILEA SACRE WF, Local Authority Memorandum 1/77, 1977.

in Bradford in the early 1980s, during the period when the LEA was engaged in consultations leading to the production of LAM 2/82, which was discussed in the section of this chapter on multiculturalism in Bradford. The LAM stated that “[t]he Authority is considering the provision of Halal Meat in schools and is actively investigating ways in which this can be done”.¹⁶¹ In autumn 1983, halal meat began to be provided in some Bradford schools, and the scheme was then rolled out in time to all Muslim pupils.¹⁶² However, though Bradford Council was willing to accommodate this as a religious need, others continued to perceive it as an animal rights matter, and a further debate on the matter was scheduled in early 1984.¹⁶³

The Council for Mosques was keen to present the provision of halal meat as a Muslim – as opposed to an Asian or immigrant – concern. It liaised with Bradford Council over the organisation of demonstrations and its representatives Azam and Khan spoke at the demonstrations.¹⁶⁴ It organised a campaign, circulating a document “Historic Decision on Halal Meat” in Urdu, and asking parents to boycott school on the day of the debate. Muslim councillors spoke in the debate.¹⁶⁵ The language of religion and religious need was also adopted by political leaders, newspapers and other organisations which represented Muslims. Conservative deputy leader Councillor Farley observed that the subject involved “animals, religion and children”.¹⁶⁶ Following the boycott on 6th March, Mohammed Iqbal, president of the Islamic Youth Mission (Al Falah), thanked the “Muslim children” involved, in comments made to the *Telegraph and Argus*.¹⁶⁷ The same newspaper identified CFM and Al-Falah spokesmen threatening a rates boycott as “Islamic leaders”.¹⁶⁸ An article with the

¹⁶¹ BLSL, Minutes of joint meeting of Schools (Education) and Schools (Special) Sub-Committees, 22/10/82.

¹⁶² *The Times*, 05/07/83; Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.49.

¹⁶³ Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, p.149; Halstead, *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.46.

¹⁶⁴ *Telegraph and Argus*, 07/03/84.

¹⁶⁵ Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, p.149

¹⁶⁶ *Telegraph and Argus*, 05/03/84.

¹⁶⁷ *Telegraph and Argus*, 09/03/84.

¹⁶⁸ *Telegraph and Argus*, 28/02/84; 06/03/1984.

subheading “Muslims rejoice as city rejects animal rights call” stated that “Muslims were demonstrating outside City Hall during the vote, and there were shouts of “Allah” from within the public gallery.¹⁶⁹ A 7,000 name petition handed to Bradford Council’s chief executive was signed, in the words of the *Telegraph and Argus*, by “Muslims”.¹⁷⁰ Chief Superintendent Bill Roper was said to have been “delighted with the Muslim groups’ handling” of the demonstration, mentioning their “close liaison” with the police beforehand.¹⁷¹

Opposition to the provision of halal meat from the media and wider society, however, tended not to focus on the rights of Muslims as a religious minority, but on animal rights. On 24th February 1983, the Schools (Education) Sub-Committee reported on a petition submitted by the Bradford Animal Rights Group relating to both “the stunning of animals before slaughter” and “the provision of halal meat in schools”¹⁷² Kathryn Reynolds, the leader of the anti-halal movement, was identified by the *Telegraph and Argus* as an “[a]nimal rights campaigner”.¹⁷³ In 1984, one letter to the *Telegraph and Argus* stated that opposition to halal meat did not come only from the Animal Rights Group, but from “the majority of Bradfordians like myself” who “are still very concerned about the treatment and unnecessary suffering of animals”, before referring to “the cutting of an animal’s throat while it is fully conscious.”¹⁷⁴ In September 1984, a petition was received from pupils at Rhodesway Upper School protesting the provision of halal meat “which they alleged involved an inhumane method of slaughter and was breaking the law”.¹⁷⁵ It is again worth highlighting that this was incorrect at least in part, as halal slaughter was legal.

¹⁶⁹ *Telegraph and Argus*, 07/03/84.

¹⁷⁰ *Telegraph and Argus*, 06/03/84.

¹⁷¹ *Telegraph and Argus*, 07/03/84.

¹⁷² BLSL, Minutes of Schools (Education) Sub-Committee, 24/02/83.

¹⁷³ *Telegraph and Argus*, 28/02/84.

¹⁷⁴ *Telegraph and Argus*, 14/03/84.

¹⁷⁵ BLSL Minutes of Educational Services Special Sub-Committee, 18/09/84.

There is also evidence in the press and in the response of the wider society of a failure to acknowledge that, in seeking the provision of halal meat in schools, Muslims were not asking for anything that had not already been granted to other minorities, and that could not be accommodated within the pluralist framework. As discussed in Chapter 3, Jewish authorities had previously worked with LEAs to provide kosher meat for Jewish children in schools. But the tone of several letters sent to Bradford's *Telegraph and Argus* suggested that Muslim requests for halal meat were understood as being something different. On 15th March, a letter to the editor called the Council's decision to retain provision of halal meat:

a blatant and cynical example of the sacrificing of compassion in order not to be disadvantaged in respect of the Muslim votes. Had the minority been composed of 10,000 vegetarian Muslims one could well imagine Councillors Gilmour and Ajeeb singing a different tune.¹⁷⁶

Another letter to the editor picked up on Bradford Council's emphasis on the fact that Muslims were ratepayers, and so had a right to determine how the animals for their meat were slaughtered. It argued that of the 140,000 rate payers in the district of various religions, "remarkably few of these would wish animals to suffer in the process of death". It went on: "[i]f the manner of death is determined by the payment of rates doesn't it follow logically that those who take the greatest rate burden should have the greatest say?"¹⁷⁷

These views, and those views relating to animal rights, did not understand the request for halal meat in schools as a religious need to be accommodated within the pluralist framework. Rather, they suggested that such a request placed Muslims at odds with what was acceptable in late twentieth century Britain – even suggesting erroneously at times that halal slaughter was unlawful. This indicates a perception of this need which cast Muslims as

¹⁷⁶ *Telegraph and Argus*, 15/03/84.

¹⁷⁷ *Telegraph and Argus*, 15/03/84.

being in opposition to “the west”. It can perhaps be retrospectively understood in the context of the Runnymede Trust’s definition of Islamophobia which included understanding of Islam as being barbaric and primitive¹⁷⁸, again raising questions over how views which were later identified as Islamophobic influenced Muslim experiences in education in the 1980s and before.

It is also worth asking why Muslim requests for halal meat were more likely to be perceived negatively than were Jewish requests for kosher meat, which had been accommodated in schools for decades. This brings up questions of whether prejudice against Muslims based on their race or colour, as well as their religion, may have played into opposition to halal meat. It is certainly the case that there was a different response over some issues to white and non-white groups doing essentially the same thing. It is possible also to link this to conceptions of late twentieth century British society as secular, but based on a Christian or Judaeo-Christian legacy: though halal and kosher meat were very similar, one had its origins in that Judaeo-Christian tradition whereas the other did not. It is possible that this had a further impact on the way that halal slaughter was perceived.

The Honeyford Affair

It was shortly after these debates over the provision of halal meat in schools that the Honeyford Affair brought Bradford’s Muslim population to national prominence. Ray Honeyford’s controversial article in *The Salisbury Review* touched on some of the issues discussed in this chapter such as extended trips to South Asia and single sex schooling.¹⁷⁹ The article was summarised in the *Yorkshire Post*, triggering an acrimonious battle in Bradford which ended Honeyford’s career.¹⁸⁰ In addition to famously criticising Pakistani

¹⁷⁸ Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia*, p.5.

¹⁷⁹ *The Daily Telegraph*, 27/08/06 [reproduction of Honeyford’s 1984 article]

¹⁸⁰ Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, pp.149-50

cultural practices and politics, Honeyford's article criticised the development of multicultural policies, for example "the Muslim parent's insistence on banning his daughter from drama, dance and sport, i.e. imposing a purdah mentality in schools committed to the principle of sexual equality."¹⁸¹ His views were not novel and were typical of criticism of multiculturalism coming out of the New Right at this time.¹⁸² But the furore surrounding the publication of his article is significant because of its impact on politics in Bradford and also on the national discourse about Muslims and ethnic minorities in education.

The campaign to have Honeyford removed as head teacher was fronted by the Drummond Parents Action Committee (DPAC), an organisation led not by a Muslim or a Pakistani, but by Jennifer Woodward, a white former law student and parent of a child at Honeyford's school.¹⁸³ In time the DPAC gained the support of the Community Relations Council and the Council for Mosques, though the Council for Mosques did not take the lead in the campaign and was often a moderating voice, worried about the rising tensions caused by the affair.¹⁸⁴ Though the campaign to have Honeyford removed was successful, the impact on Muslims locally and nationally was considerably less positive. Lewis describes how, as a result of the Affair

Muslims found themselves tarred with the excesses committed by opponents of Ray Honeyford. The affair was misconstrued as simply a 'Muslim' issue with negative terminology – fundamentalism, extremism and fanaticism – and disturbing images of 'Muslims' fixed in the public mind; pictures of angry parents and children baying for the head's blood outside the gates of the school became the staple fair of

¹⁸¹ *The Daily Telegraph*, 27/08/06 [reproduction of Honeyford's 1984 article]

¹⁸² Ansari, *The Infidel Within*, p.317

¹⁸³ Halstead *Education, Justice and Cultural Diversity*, p.85

¹⁸⁴ Lewis *Islamic Britain*, pp.149-151

national television...The often moderate and pragmatic stance of the Council for Mosques' leadership remained invisible.¹⁸⁵

This image of Muslims, which foreshadowed that of the book burnings and public demonstrations of the Rushdie Affair, was in the public consciousness in the latter half of the 1980s, after the majority of the events explored in this chapter. Locally, the Honeyford Affair caused division within the Council for Mosques and had an inverse impact on the organisation's local reputation.¹⁸⁶ Nationally, it drew attention to the plight of Muslims in education, but the response was not always positive, something which was to have implications for Muslims seeking state-funded schools in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined developments in one town. This analysis has added depth to the new chronology and interpretation being developed in this thesis. It has demonstrated that in Bradford, as in the ILEA, Muslims were negotiating with the local authority over their educational needs based on their religious identity from the 1960s onwards. Moreover, it has shown that a range of Muslim needs, including those relating to worship, religious education, dress and certain areas of the curriculum, were accommodated fairly easily. Over these needs, there was evidence of a confident Muslim population, which had organisations able to represent Muslim needs where necessary. There was also evidence of a willingness on the part of the state to accommodate those needs which it understood as falling within the 1944 framework, or the pluralist framework more generally. Further to this, there was clearly a developing relationship between the city's Muslims and the local authority, evident in the intention to include a Muslim on the Agreed Syllabus conference in the 1970s and also in consultations with the CFM and others over LAM 2/82.

¹⁸⁵ Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, p.153

¹⁸⁶ Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, pp.152-3

The chapter has also furthered this analysis with an examination of issues that Muslims and the council found it more difficult to reach agreement on, and needs that could not so readily be accommodated. In exploring the questions relating to these issues, the chapter has offered an evaluation of some of the limitations of the pluralist framework. It has revealed that Muslim needs or requests which either challenged prevailing educational philosophies, such as dispersal and extended trips abroad, or were held to be at odds with the ethical sensibilities of late twentieth century Britain, led to more difficult negotiations. Such negotiations were further complicated where Muslims were perceived as a racial rather than a religious minority. These needs could not be accommodated within the conservative pluralist framework because they did not require only the creation of space for minority difference whilst the status quo remained for the majority, but rather potentially necessitated fundamental changes in educational approach or moral conviction on the part of the majority.

Over these issues there was evidence of discourse that was ambivalent and at times hostile in its judgment of Muslims. This ambivalence emerged most clearly in the early 1980s over those issues which were perceived as morally contentious, such as single sex schooling and halal meat. At times, it took the form of the idea of Muslims as a sort of fifth column in British society. Peach and Glebe referred to this in 1995 when they wrote that:

there has...arisen a media view of Islam in Europe as a kind of monolithic group, the fifth column of the Third World, bent on destructing the secular ideals of western society.¹⁸⁷

There was also a sense at times of Islamic morality and values as inferior. In 2000, Zafar Kahn wrote that "[b]ecause Islam and its adherents do not measure up to the progressive and

¹⁸⁷ Ceri Peach and Günther Glebe, 'Muslim Minorities in Western Europe', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 18.1 (1995), 26–45 (p.26).

liberal values and expectations of the West, there is a reluctance to accord a level of respect and accommodation to Islam and Muslims”.¹⁸⁸ There was some evidence of these attitudes towards Muslims in Bradford in the 1970s and early 1980s.

However, this chapter has also demonstrated that, while the interactions over these more contentious issues may have been difficult and perhaps infused with prejudice or suspicion of Muslim beliefs and motives, the outcome was rarely entirely unsatisfactory for affected Muslims. The least satisfactory outcome was perhaps that over dispersal, where Muslims only ultimately saw the change that they wanted due to the effects of the 1976 Race Relations Act. Yet over extended trips abroad, single sex schooling and halal meat, there was ongoing dialogue between the local state and the Muslim population., Though suspicion and hostility may have been expressed, there appears to have been some level of genuine engagement and a perception of Muslim requests as legitimate – perhaps as a result of “open” rather than “closed” views of Islam. Bradford LEA was ultimately willing to make changes in its approach to these issues as a result of negotiations with Muslims. Though these issues may not all have fallen within the pluralist framework as it was understood in the mid-twentieth century, the shifts made by Bradford Council offer hints of the possibilities that there were for expansion of that framework. It suggests that the boundaries of what could and could not be accommodated were not rigid, and that there was scope in the early 1980s with the development of multicultural and race relations policies in Bradford for overlap of these policies with those originating in pluralism.

The events described in this chapter can be understood as being in contrast to the views of the Swann Report, which had recommended the dismantling of the former framework and

¹⁸⁸ Zafar Khan, ‘Muslim Presence in Europe: The British Dimension-Identity, Integration and Community Activism’, *Current Sociology*, 48.4 (2000), 29–43 (p.33).

its replacement with something new. The following chapter will expand on some of these discussions in its analysis of the issue of state-funded Muslim schooling.

Chapter Five

State-funded Schooling: the Background

The next two chapters will examine the issue of state-funded Muslim schooling in some detail. In doing so, they will provide a deeper analysis of some of the issues raised above relating to the possibilities and limitations of the pluralist framework in accommodating Muslim students.

As was outlined in chapter two, the 1944 Education Act created several categories of state-funded denominational schools, including voluntary-aided schools. From the early 1980s, some Muslim private schools in various parts of England began to look into applying for voluntary-aided status. The process involved applying firstly for the support of the relevant LEA, and then to the Secretary of State for Education. Despite the initial enquiries dating back to the early 1980s, the first Muslim schools to receive state funding did so in 1998. In the intervening period, several local authorities including the London boroughs of Brent and Newham and Bradford and Kirklees in Yorkshire, found themselves in discussions about or in receipt of applications for voluntary-aided status for Muslim schools. An application from the Islamia Primary School in Brent made it as far as the Secretary of State in the early 1990s, only to be rejected on two occasions. The first of these chapters will look at the background to Muslim attempts to receive state funding for faith schools, exploring the educational framework that underpinned the applications, the motivations of those seeking such funding, and the response to such attempts, including the perspectives of the two main political parties. The second chapter will be a detailed case study of the campaign by the Islamia Primary School to receive state funding in the years 1983-1998.

In a letter to the *TES* in November 1984, Yusuf Islam, a founder and representative of the Islamia Primary School, wrote that:

the Education Act of 1944 clearly entitles communities to establish and operate denominational schools. Such schools are abundantly available for Christian and Jewish communities. Why is it then that when the time comes for Muslims to avail themselves of this facility, the move appears “divisive”?¹

In its examination of the background to the attempt by Muslim schools to receive state funding, this chapter will address some of the issues identified in this statement. Firstly it will explore the “entitlement” to denominational schooling mentioned by Yusuf Islam, and the existence of many such Jewish and Christian denominational schools. Secondly, it will consider the implications of attempts by Muslim schools to access such funding and to be included in the educational framework, including the implications for England as a pluralist and a multicultural society. In doing so, it will provide a clear explanation of the context in which the Islamia campaign, explored in detail in the next chapter, took place.

1. The Framework

An important contextual starting point in an analysis of the ongoing attempts by Muslim schools to acquire state funding in the 1980s and 1990s is the educational framework created by the 1944 Education Act, which was discussed in some detail in Chapter Two. This framework made provision for the state funding of denominational and religious schools, provided that these schools met certain criteria and requirements, and were willing to submit to a degree of state control and monitoring.

The issue of state-funded Muslim schooling first arose in England in the 1980s, with a handful of private Muslim schools making enquiries into the possibility of becoming voluntary-aided. In March 1982, the *Times Educational Supplement* reported that Muslims in Batley in the Kirklees LEA area were planning to open a primary school for 300 pupils. It

¹ *Times Educational Supplement (TES)*, 08/11/84.

quoted Fred Evans, Kirklees director of education, discussing the possibility of the school seeking voluntary-aided status.² Also in 1982, Haji Iftikhar Ahmad began enquiring as to whether his recently-founded London School of Islamics, based in Newham, might be able to become voluntary-aided.³ In 1987, Ahmad began making enquiries about the possibility of existing schools becoming grant-maintained schools with a Muslim ethos.⁴ In 1992, he was again looking into voluntary-aided status.⁵ The Muslim Parents Association in Bradford was also looking into the possibility of state-funded Muslim schools in 1983.⁶ In 1988, the Zakaria Girls' School in Batley sought the support of the Kirklees education committee for an application for voluntary-aided status⁷, which it ultimately failed to receive.⁸

These specific enquiries were accompanied by a more general awareness of the possibility of a Muslim interest in state-funded schooling. In August 1980, discussing the situation of Rochdale's Muslims in schools, the *Daily Telegraph* quoted Stanley Hope, a member of the local Council for Racial Equality, who said "there is a danger as the years pass of them setting up their own schools".⁹ In February 1981, the *TES* reported that Education Secretary Mark Carlisle gave "cautious encouragement" to Muslims wishing to set up their own schools when he spoke at the annual dinner of the UMO.¹⁰ In September 1981, Tim Ottevanger, assistant education officer for multi-cultural education in the London Borough of Ealing, said on the subject of Muslim schools: "It's important to let the education authority you approach know who they are dealing with. You should be a body with legal status and

² *TES*, 12/03/82.

³ *TES*, 29/01/82.

⁴ *TES*, 16/10/87.

⁵ *TES*, 24/04/92.

⁶ West Yorkshire Archives Service (WYAS), WYB644/2/7, Race Relations in Bradford Papers and Reports, Newspaper cuttings relating to the Muslim Parents' Association and Schools.

⁷ *TES*, 24/11/88.

⁸ *The Times*, 22/02/89.

⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, 26/08/80.

¹⁰ *TES*, 20/02/81.

clearly defined membership. You need the sort of educational bureaucracy the Catholics, the Anglicans and the Jews have. Talk to them. They know the ropes.”¹¹

This awareness of the possibility of Muslim schools applying for voluntary-aided status raised the question of whether state funding, in accordance with the 1944 Education Act, could be extended to Muslim schools. In this period, the question related primarily to schools seeking to apply for voluntary-aided status, whereby they would receive 85 per cent of capital costs plus 100 per cent of running costs, in exchange for a degree of local authority control. By the end of the 1980s, there was a shift towards grant maintained schools, as discussed in Chapter Two. However, much of the debate focused on whether Muslim schools should be allowed voluntary-aided status, and this will be the focus here.

The question of the eligibility of Muslim schools for voluntary-aided status was not a straightforward one. On the one hand the framework created by the 1944 Education Act did not specify which denominations could receive such funding, and therefore theoretically all denominational groups were eligible for it. This was discussed by Parker-Jenkins *et al* in their work *In Good Faith: Schools, Religion and Public Funding*. They pointed out that the 1944 Act “did not specify religious affiliation or which denominational schools were going to be included in the scheme”. They also interpreted the existence of Jewish state-funded schools as evidence of an ongoing willingness on the part of the state to provide funding for non-Christian schools, arguing that “the door was open for other religious groups such as those based on an Islamic ethos”.¹² Nielsen also argued, after a discussion of Christian and Jewish state-funded schools, that “[t]here was no reason why other communities should not be able to establish their own schools with voluntary aided status”.¹³ Ansari drew attention to

¹¹ *TES*, 18/09/81.

¹² Marie Parker-Jenkins, Dimitra Hartas, and Barrie A Irving, *In Good Faith: Schools, Religion, and Public Funding* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p.15.

¹³ Jørgen S. Nielsen, *Muslims in Europe: An Overview*. (Birmingham: Selly Oak College Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim, 1981), p.59.

the fact that many Muslims felt that the educational framework made legal provision for Muslim schools, mentioning the contribution of taxes paid by Muslims to state education, and that they therefore “felt it was unfair that the right to voluntary-aided schools was withheld from them while under the 1944 Act such schools were available to members of the Church of England, Roman Catholics, Methodists and Jews”.¹⁴

Joel Fetzer and Christopher Soper, however, had a different interpretation. In their work *Muslims and the State in Britain, France and Germany*, they drew attention to the fact that, though the 1944 Act did not restrict its provisions to certain religions or denominations, the “historical compromises” which led to the provisions of the Act had not included Muslims.¹⁵ They questioned, therefore, whether or not newly-arrived groups, including Muslims, could benefit from these provisions, arguing that “Britain does not have a constitution that established religious rights as fundamental”.¹⁶ They also observed that “rights and privileges are not automatically extended to incoming groups”.¹⁷ Rather than interpreting the Act as permissive, therefore, they argued that it “solidified a partnership between the churches and the state in education by creating state-run and religious schools that shared the responsibility for educating British schoolchildren”.¹⁸ The implication of this interpretation is that the Act was primarily about codifying and consolidating the relationship of the church and state over education, not about opening state-funded schooling to unanticipated minorities; that it did not explicitly proscribe the latter was a result of accident rather than design.

¹⁴ Humayun Ansari, *The Infidel within: Muslims in Britain since 1800* (London: C Hurst, 2004), pp.324–25.

¹⁵ Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.18.

¹⁶ Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*, p.35.

¹⁷ Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*, p.34.

¹⁸ Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*, p.43.

Fetzer and Soper also argued that that it was likely that the system would ultimately accommodate Muslim schools, referring to the state's "pragmatic approach to religious pluralism", and observing that "the pattern has been for the state to minimize conflict by eventually accommodating newly arrived groups".¹⁹ They argued that the fact that Catholics, Methodists and Baptists were initially accommodated, followed by Jews, meant that a "twentieth-century pattern of accommodation created the expectation that all religious newcomers would eventually be included in the system". This meant, they stated, that:

when Muslims began to advocate for their own schools, therefore, it was within a church-state context where such arrangements had become ordinary and expected. Because of this church-state institutional precedent, it was only a matter of time before the state would acquiesce to funding for Muslim schools.²⁰

Their argument is perhaps borne out by the fact that in January 1998 the Islamia Primary School and the Al Furqan Primary School in Birmingham became the first Muslim schools to receive state funding as grant-maintained schools.²¹

Yet it is necessary to explore further, and perhaps challenge, the suggestion of inevitability in the phrase "it was only a matter of time". Though it can be interpreted thus retrospectively, the situation for Muslim schools seeking state funding in the 1980s and 1990s was uncertain. The treatment that they received during and even after their attempts to receive such funding was not equal, and this affected the relationship between Muslims and the state. On the one hand, they were faced with a legal situation in which they had the right to voluntary-aided schooling, and, in theory, all they had to do was make sure that the school seeking funding was able to meet the requirements of the Secretary of State, and then apply. On the other hand, it was by no means certain that the law would be interpreted

¹⁹ Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*, p.34.

²⁰ Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*, p.54.

²¹ *The Times*, 10/01/98.

in their favour; there was no suitable precedent to guide the response of the state to applications for funding from religious groups that had not been part of the 1944 settlement. This left Muslims in a position in which there was no certainty, and in which the ultimate success of any application lay with the relevant LEA and then the Secretary of State for Education. This meant that when Muslim schools sought state funding in the 1980s, they were subject to the views and policies of government, both at a local and at a national level, and could not confidently rely on the underlying framework or the fact that they would, in time, receive state funding. It is therefore worth further investigating the perspectives of the various stakeholders and participants in the Muslim campaign and the response to it.

2. The Political Parties

Both the Conservative and Labour parties appeared to interpret the 1944 framework as, in principle at least, giving Muslims and other minority religious groups the right to state-funded denominational schooling. From the side of the Conservative Party, this can be seen in the 1981 speech at the annual dinner of the Union of Muslim Organisations of the UK and Eire, in which Conservative Education Secretary Mark Carlisle, according to the *TES*, “emphasized that Muslims were entitled to set up their own schools with state support”. However, he then went on to stress that non-Christian denominational schools should provide “a full secular education” and that “it required a deep commitment and money to see the enterprise through”.²² In these comments, Carlisle showed an awareness of the legal framework, and suggested that he interpreted this framework as entitling Muslims to state-funded denominational schooling. The acknowledgment by the Conservative Party of the *right* of Muslims to state-funded schooling will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter.

²² *TES*, 20/02/81.

A similar approach is apparent in the views of the Labour Party. A Labour consultative paper written by Derek Fatchett in 1988 argued that:

the right to establish such schools has been extensively exercised by the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church and Jewish communities. As such, it is a right which should not be denied to Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and others – although whether the exercise of this right at this time would be beneficial is, we know, subject to a great deal of debate and controversy, in ethnic minority communities.²³

Labour support for the principle of voluntary-aided Muslim schooling can also be found in a draft of the Multi-Cultural Education Working Group document 'Schools and Multi-Cultural Education: Labour's Approach' which argued that "[t]here is simply no justice or consistency in allowing a right to the Anglican community, and then denying it to Muslims", going on that "to deny a right to some which exists for all, and which is currently exercised by some, would in turn be a denial of our commitment to equality of treatment".²⁴ Jack Straw, writing in 1988, argued that "[t]here can be no justification for denying voluntary-aided status to Muslims, Hindus or Sikhs when Anglican, Roman Catholic and Jewish schools exist throughout the country".²⁵ Yet despite such overall support, there was not consensus on this issue within the Labour Party. A resolution received from Rossendale and Darwen Constituency Labour Party, for example, in the summer of 1988 stated that it:

Believes that denominational schools help to foster intolerance, sectarianism and racism. Whilst understanding the difficulties in removing voluntary status from existing schools, it opposes the extension of this status to further schools of

²³ Labour Party Archives (LPA), National Executive Committee Minutes (NECM), Consultative Paper PD1566, 1988.

²⁴ LPA, NECM, Policy Directorate Paper PD2115 'Schools and Multi-Cultural Education: Labour's Approach', March 1989.

²⁵ *TES*, 22/04/88.

whatever denomination and calls upon the Labour Party nationally not to encourage the establishment of such schools.²⁶

Similar resolutions were received from a number of other Constituency Labour Parties in this period.

Both major political parties appeared to acknowledge the right of Muslims to state-funded schooling, whilst at the same time expressing some equivocation as to the wisdom of allowing Muslims to exercise that right. The implications of this combination of acknowledgement of rights, and equivocation over whether they should actually be granted, will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

3) Muslim motivations

The existence of a framework allowing the creation of state-funded faith schools did not automatically mean that Muslims would want to make use of that framework, and there were Muslim schools which actively chose not to seek state funding and remain private. Voluntary-aided status meant not only receiving funding from the state, but also submitting a school to a considerable degree of state control which was not something desired by all schools. For some Muslims, the creation of schools independent of state funding, and therefore free of much of the corresponding state control, was the point of the enterprise. An analysis of why some Muslims did seek state-funded denominational schooling is therefore useful in developing an understanding of the interactions between Muslims and the state. It is also useful in understanding some of the reasons for opposition to state-funded Muslim schooling.

The reasons Muslims sought state-funded schooling can broadly be divided into two categories. The first category is motivations based on the failings of mainstream schools,

²⁶ LPA, NECM, Policy Directorate, Home Policy Committee, Resolutions Received from Affiliates 5/8/88 – 21/11/88.

both in relation to the accommodation of Muslim needs, and in relation to attainment. The second category is motivations based on the desire of some Muslim parents for a holistic Islamic education for their children, and on the unsuitability of mainstream state schools as providers of such an education. The analysis below will demonstrate the persistent existence of both categories of motivation, with considerable overlap between the two, and show that both were important in the developing relationship between Muslims and the state.

In the first category, one motivation of Muslims for state-funded denominational schooling was based on concerns that mainstream schools were not satisfactorily accommodating the needs of Muslim children. This was based partly on the failure of some schools and LEAs to accommodate religious and cultural needs, including those issues outlined in the previous two chapters. Fetzer and Soper commented that the “failure to train their children adequately” contributed to the “rising popularity of religious schools among Muslim parents”²⁷ and that “[f]or some Muslim parents, the primary motivation for separate schools is to get out of a state system they have concluded has failed their children”.²⁸ This did not relate only to the accommodation of religious and cultural needs, but also concerns over attainment and some of the deeper issues outlined above that could not be readily accommodated by the existing framework. Gilliat-Ray argued that, though by the early 1980s, accommodation had been made for a number of Muslim needs, Muslim parents and students were far from satisfied. She commented that the accommodation of, for example, dietary requirements and school uniforms “do not address more fundamental pedagogical and practical issues which can amount to discriminatory practice”, listing issues such as a Eurocentric curriculum, racist and Islamophobic bullying, and stereotypical views held by some teachers which produce “the conditions for a vicious circle of continuing underachievement”. She argued that these concerns led to, amongst other things, greater

²⁷ Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*, p.42.

²⁸ Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*, p.44.

parental interest in what she referred to as “separate schools”.²⁹ Such concerns were also a facet of the Islamia campaign: Yusuf Islam argued at a June 1985 meeting with Brent Council’s Education Committee that the state system was falling short in areas of dress, diet and the provision of prayer facilities.³⁰ The Zakaria Girls’ School’s application was also fuelled in part by an ongoing struggle over the failure to serve halal meat, as well as by the lack of single sex schooling in the area.³¹

The significance of this motivation in the ongoing attempt by some Muslim schools to receive state funding should not, however, be overstated. Though such concerns often did lead parents and other interested parties in the direction of enquiries about state-funded schooling, they were often ultimately met with changes to mainstream provision, and were sometimes used by parents as a bargaining chip to achieve such changes. Ansari has drawn attention to this, commenting that the idea of Muslim schools was at times used by Muslim parents and others “to put pressure on local education authorities to pay greater attention to their concerns and bring them within state provision.”³² This was evident in Birmingham Council’s negotiations with the city’s Muslim Liaison Committee in the mid-1980s, when the threat of separate Muslim schooling was used to put pressure on the LEA to meet Muslim needs.³³ In Sheffield, tentative enquiries about Muslim voluntary-aided schools were successfully answered with compromises on issues such as food, dress and sex education.³⁴ The Swann Report also advocated the improvement of mainstream provision as a way to

²⁹ Sophie Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.150–51.

³⁰ BLA, Brent Council Education Committee Minutes, 03/06/85.

³¹ *TES*, 16/12/88.

³² Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.325.

³³ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, p.325; Daniele Joly and Jørgen S. Nielsen, *Ethnic Minorities and Education in Britain: Interaction between the Muslim Community and Birmingham Schools* (Birmingham: Selly Oaks Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, 1989), pp.19–20.

³⁴ Jorgen S. Nielsen, ‘Muslims in Britain and Local Authority Responses’, in *The New Islamic Presence in Western Europe*, ed. by Tomas Gerholm and Yngve Georg Lithman, 1988, pp. 53–77 (p.30).

allay parental desire for state-funded Muslim schools.³⁵ Therefore, whilst such concerns were a facet of the campaign, they were only one facet, and not the most significant one.

Regarding this motivation, it should also be noted that state-funded denominational schooling, as per the 1944 Education Act, was not contingent upon dissatisfaction with the existing system. The Act recognised as legitimate the desire of Catholic, Jewish and Anglican parents for their children to receive an education based in the principles of their own religion regardless of the sufficiency of mainstream provision. There was no reason why the same recognition should not apply to Muslim desires.

The second motivation for state-funded schooling must be considered in this context, for it was one that was not related to satisfaction *per se* with the mainstream system, and could not be met by alterations to that system within the pluralist framework. This motivation was based upon the desire of Muslim parents to see their children receive a holistic Islamic education, something which many felt was not possible in mainstream schools. This would be an education that was based on an Islamic interpretation of reality, based on the idea that “God is the source of all knowledge that is of value to humans”.³⁶ This would mean, for example, that “knowledge of science and technology from non-Muslim sources are permitted but not ‘the values and behaviour of people or societies which are not ruled by a strict sense of accountability to God’”.³⁷ Ansari highlighted the fact that many Muslim intellectuals felt that there was an “ideological contradiction between Islamic and mainstream schools in British education”, arguing that the Western and Islamic systems of education “mediated a different understanding of the nature and purpose of knowledge”.

³⁵ Department for Education and Science, *Education for All: Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups*, <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/swann/swann1985.html>, pp.509-10, [Accessed 18/07/2017].

³⁶ Marie Parker-Jenkins, *Children of Islam: A Teacher's Guide to Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils* (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham, 1995), p.43.

³⁷ Parker-Jenkins, *Children of Islam*, pp.41–42. Quote from Suzanne Haneef, *What Everyone Should Know about Islam and Muslims*. (Lahore: Kazi Publications, 1979).

This led to Muslim “dissatisfaction with the secular and relativist character of the existing multicultural provisions as the aims of Islamic education came to be better understood”.³⁸

This comment alludes to a growing interest in the Muslim world in the 1970s in the education of Muslims in non-Muslim states. The difference in Western and Islamic views of education was also discussed in a 1982 article by Yakub Zaki of the National Muslim Education Council of the UK, which argued that “Islam is careful to distinguish between relative and absolute knowledge, the latter being the prerogative of God”. He went on that “Islam does not admit the notion of secular learning” and that European education “has become progressively secular, developing along agnostic lines unacceptable to the Muslim”.³⁹ A similar viewpoint was put forward by Professor Sayed Ali Ashraf, Director of the Islamic Academy, at a meeting with the Association of Metropolitan Authorities Education Committee in March 1988. He argued that:

Islam is a whole code of life, within which knowledge cannot be divided into secular and divine. Revealed knowledge is central to Muslim education: to inculcate doubt in children’s minds about revealed knowledge would be to lead them away from the truth.⁴⁰

Fetzer and Soper also identified this motivation, arguing that the “ability to create a school in an environment in which Islamic religious values and cultural traditions can be upheld, and even flourish” was an important part of the Muslim campaign.⁴¹ They went on to state that the “leadership of the Muslim community...argues that separate Muslim schools are necessary to promote an Islamic way of life in a secular environment”.⁴² Parker-Jenkins

³⁸ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, pp.324–25.

³⁹ Yaqub Zaki, ‘The Teaching of Islam in Schools: A Muslim Viewpoint’, *British Journal of Religious Education*, 5.1 (1982), 33–38 (p.34).

⁴⁰ Cadbury Research Archive, AMA A/1/15, Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA) Papers, Education Committee Report No 2/1988, Appendix A ‘Islamic Expectations of the Public Education Service’ 24/03/88.

⁴¹ Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*, p.22.

⁴² Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*, p.44.

similarly argued that many Muslims saw “an incompatibility between values taught at home and those at school”, and that for Muslims, “the curriculum both explicit and hidden, should ideally reflect an Islamic orientation”.⁴³

In this motivation, Muslims were not dissatisfied with the state system on the basis that it disadvantaged or discriminated against Muslim pupils, or did not accommodate their basic needs. Rather, they felt that there was no possibility that the mainstream system could provide the sort of education that they wanted for their children, as this was a holistic Islamic education, designed to educate their children as Muslims. The Swann Report explored this motivation in some depth. It commented on the view amongst certain Muslims that “no accommodation is in fact feasible or desirable within the existing system and in order to provide a true Islamic education for their children, it is necessary to provide Muslim aided schools”. It outlined a desire on the part of parents “to create an Islamic ethos permeating every aspect of school life” and that the “major aspiration of such a school is seen as educating children to be first and foremost ‘good Muslims’” with “all other aspects being of secondary concern”.⁴⁴ This was also raised by Yusuf Islam in a 1985 meeting with Brent Council, where he argued that mainstream schools were “not yet able to provide what was necessary in the Muslim faith” or “to provide the full catechistic teaching of the Islamic faith”.⁴⁵ But this is not surprising: many parents seeking Muslim schools for their children did so because of a desire for a holistic Islamic education. The nature of such an education meant that it could only be provided at a Muslim school designed to cater primarily, or exclusively, to Muslim pupils. No amount of adaptation or concession on the part of mainstream schools would allow them to provide such an accommodation, and therefore this desire could not be answered or assuaged by shifts in mainstream provision.

⁴³ Marie Parker-Jenkins, ‘Muslim Matters: The Educational Needs of the Muslim Child’, *New Community*, 17.4 (1991), 569–582 (p.569).

⁴⁴ DES, *Education for All*, pp.503-4.

⁴⁵ Brent Local Archives, Brent Council Education Committee Minutes, 03/06/85.

This motivation for Muslims seeking state-funded schooling raised complex questions over the kind of education that the state was willing to fund: if Muslims sought state funding for schools designed to educate Muslims in the Islamic faith, was the state willing to use public money to fund such an education for those pupils?

It could be argued that this question was in fact of limited relevance in the question of Muslims seeking voluntary-aided schools. As has been outlined above, in pursuing applications for state-funded schooling, Muslims in England were not doing anything particularly novel, and were not seeking any changes to the existing educational framework. By the 1980s, the point when Muslims began seeking voluntary-aided schools, there were a considerable number of Christian schools of various denominations, and a not insignificant number of Jewish schools in England, with numbers of these schools still increasing in the 1980s and 1990s. There was considerable similarity between some of the motivations put forward by the different denominational groups seeking state funding. In 1992, Ahmad of the London School of Islamics argued in the *TES* that Muslim children attending ordinary state schools did not develop “an Islamic identity or positive attitude about their mother tongue”.⁴⁶ In a 1993 letter to the *TES*, Moeen Yaseen of the Islamia Schools Trust argued that one reason Muslim parents wished for denominational schooling was to exercise their right “to preserve and transmit their religious convictions”.⁴⁷ Ansari argued that for those campaigning for Muslim schools, the Islamic ethos of such schools “would give children a positive sense of their own identity, so important to integration within a truly multicultural society”.⁴⁸ These comments are broadly similar to the argument made by Clive Lawton of the Board of Deputies of British Jews in a letter to the *TES* in 1983, when he wrote that such

⁴⁶ *TES*, 24/04/92.

⁴⁷ *TES*, 31/07/92.

⁴⁸ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, pp.331–32.

schools allowed “pupils in particular traditions to grow up proud and aware of those traditions without feelings of inferiority or abnormality”.⁴⁹

Yet despite the similarity of motivation for state-funded schooling between Muslims and other denominational groups, the answer to the question of whether or not the state was willing to fund Muslim schooling was not a straightforward one. This brings us back to the question, posed by Yusuf Islam at the start of the chapter, of why Muslim schools seeking to do essentially the same thing as Christian and Jewish schools were treated differently from those schools. It is a question raised by Dwyer and Meyer also, in their comparative study of Muslim schooling in the UK and the Netherlands, when they asked why Muslims seeking state-funded schooling were treated “in isolation from the principle of religious state-funded schooling in other denominations”.⁵⁰

4) Opposition

The short answer to the question of why Muslims were treated differently from other groups over the issue of religious schooling is that, for many, the idea of the state funding Muslim schools was understood as being fundamentally different to its funding of Christian and Jewish schools. For various reasons, many representatives of both the state and the wider society did not feel that state-funded Muslim schools fell within the remit of the 1944 Education Act and the pluralist framework. Not all groups held this view for the same reasons. There were separate, though overlapping, concerns over issues of curriculum, the ethos of the education system, and race relations.

⁴⁹ *TES*, 15/05/83.

⁵⁰ Claire Dwyer and Astrid Meyer, ‘The Institutionalisation of Islam in the Netherlands and in the UK: The Case of Islamic Schools’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 21.1 (1995), 37–54 (p.48).

A key worry of the Swann Report appears to have been that the sort of education on offer in Muslim schools would be fundamentally at odds with the sort of education that the state would be willing to fund. The Report commented that it was “widely accepted” in England “that education should seek to encourage children to question, to criticize, to investigate, to debate, to evaluate and to be able to make choices about their future adult lives.” It then argued that this was “in conflict with a faith whose very essence is considered to lie in acceptance of revelation and an adherence to forms of behaviour and conduct”.⁵¹ In making such a statement, Swann was broadly in line with the views expressed by Ansari, Zaki and Ashraf, quoted in the previous section: Islamic and “western” approaches to education were based on fundamentally different standpoints. For a number of England’s Muslims, this was the basis of their desire for state funding schooling. For others, however, it was a major obstacle to them receiving such funding.

In this debate, the question of state-funded Muslim schooling brought to the fore the conflict between the liberal, secular approaches that were prominent in educational thinking in the 1980s, and the seemingly opposite religious approaches of Muslims. Fetzer and Soper argued that “Muslim schools challenge the liberal, secular presuppositions of the state school system and make education within the context of a Muslim worldview the central feature of the curriculum”. They also argued that “[f]or Muslims who wanted to retain their distinctive religious and cultural values, assimilating the values of a liberal, secular society was not necessarily attractive”.⁵²

These comments tap into debates about the place of religion, and of Muslims, in late twentieth century English society. It is worth briefly diverting to consider the perception of secularism and secularization in more depth, for it is neither straightforward nor

⁵¹ DES, *Education for All*, p.504.

⁵² Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*, p.44-45.

uncontentious. As was discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Muslims seeking state funding for religious schooling found themselves doing so not only in a society that was becoming decreasingly religious, but also in a society that *perceived* itself as increasingly secular, and viewed this as a positive development and a sign of progress. Jonathan Clark referred to this in his work ‘Secularization and modernization: the failure of a ‘grand narrative’’, when he wrote that “[w]hat historians securely report is evidence for a strengthening ideology demanding the separation of church and state, religion and political life”.⁵³ He went on to comment that:

secularization is not a process, but a project; not something happening autonomously within the phenomena, like ocean currents or hurricanes, but a project urged by some individuals who seek historical validation for a cause.⁵⁴

In his 2008 article ‘Public Religions Revisited’, Jose Casanova outlined a common secular narrative of European democracy, which viewed secularism as a positive response to the chaos and wars of the Reformation, leading Europeans to separate politics, religion and science, placing religion in the private sphere. He argued that, until recently, “the story of secularization was embedded within an even broader narrative of general teleological processes of social modernization and progressive human development”.⁵⁵ The implications of this are important: if secularisation was understood as a form of progress, a logical corollary of this is that those who were believed to be challenging it may have been seen to be threatening such progress. Muslims seeking state-funded religious schooling were seeking to assert a public religious identity in a nation which perceived doing so as a challenge to modernisation and progress. At the point when advancement in education was

⁵³ Jonathan Charles Douglas Clark, ‘Secularization and Modernization : The Failure of a “Grand Narrative”’, *Historical Journal*, 55.1 (2012), 161–94 (p.186).

⁵⁴ Clark, ‘Secularization and Modernization : The Failure of a “Grand Narrative”’, p.190.

⁵⁵ José Casanova, ‘Public Religions Revisited’, in *Religion: Beyond a Concept*, ed. by Hent de Vries (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 101-119, (p.109).

linked to the secularisation of the curriculum and moves away from religion, Muslims were seeking to extend the scope of religion in education, both in the form of creating new religious schools, and also by adopting a consciously religious, Islamic approach to pedagogy in these schools.

In the face of ideological secularisation, Muslims seeking to promote religion in the public sphere, in the state sector of education, stood out. Yet this only offers a partial explanation for some of the issues that they faced, for they stood out far more than the many Christian and Jewish schools seeking state funding at the same time. This can be linked to the observations made in the introduction that, though secularism must be acknowledged as a significant facet of late twentieth century English society, such secularism was still very much infused with Christianity and the idea of the “Judaeo-Christian” tradition. Writing in 2017, Sander L. Gilman made the following observation:

scratch secular Europe today, and you find all of the presuppositions and attitudes of Christianity concerning Jews and Muslims present in subliminal or overt forms. Secular society in Europe has absorbed Christianity into its very definition of the secular.

He linked this to “the adaptation of Christianity to the model of secularism that arose as a compromise formation out of the wars of religion following the Reformation”.⁵⁶ This can be linked to an argument made by Jeremy Morris in his article ‘The Strange Death of Christian Britain: Another Look at the Secularization Debate’, in which he challenged Callum Brown’s ideas about the death of Christianity in Britain. Whilst he acknowledged that there had been a decline in Christianity in Britain, he argued that the term “displacement” would be more appropriate than death, as “[n]o single alternative viewpoint to that of Christianity has yet

⁵⁶ Sander L Gilman, ‘The Case of Circumcision: Diaspora Judaism as a Model for Islam?’, in *Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Europe: A Shared Story?*, ed. by James Renton and Ben Gidley (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017), pp. 143-64 (pp.145–64).

emerged as a referent of public and private morality". He went on, "it is a strange sort of death that leaves the churches still amongst the largest voluntary organizations in the country, and Christianity still notionally the conviction of a majority of the population".⁵⁷ Clark similarly observed that legal disabilities on non-Anglicans "are residual even today".⁵⁸ The lingering of the churches as part of the structure of society, along with the presence of "notional" Christianity that has lacked an alternative, created a situation that had the potential to affect the position of Muslims seeking state-funded schooling. They faced a society that perceived itself as secular, and which based much of its morality and organisation on the lingering of Christianity.

It is important to highlight that, in addition to the persistence of Christianity as a facet of society, in the late twentieth century there was also an increasing tendency in government, media and society to refer to Britain as a "Judaeo-Christian" society. Though this was discussed in Chapter 3, it is worth revisiting in the context of state-funded religious schooling. In 1993, a leading article in *The Times*, 'Perversity and Prejudice', criticised the government's refusal of the Islamia school's application for state funding, making the comment that the schools would have been the first to run in a non-Judaeo-Christian tradition.⁵⁹ A few years later, in 1996, another leading article argued that:

in granting Islam its proper place and conceding some of its claims, it would be wrong not to recognise that the United Kingdom is still a nation built on Judaeo-Christian foundations. From Milton to Eliot, the glories of our culture are rooted in the two Testaments and our durable morality is sustained by the spiritual insights of Jesus.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Jeremy N. Morris, 'The Strange Death of Christian Britain : Another Look at the Secularization Debate', *Historical Journal*, 46.4 (2003), 963–76 (pp.975–76).

⁵⁸ Clark, 'Secularization and Modernization : The Failure of a "Grand Narrative"', p.178.

⁵⁹ *The Times*, 20/08/93.

⁶⁰ *The Times*, 23/02/96.

The linking of the idea of Britain as a Judaeo-Christian society to the issue of state-funded schooling is important. It created a situation that seemed to indicate that the existing system was a closed one, to be accessed only by those groups that were already part of the framework – in particular, Jews and Christians. This can be linked to Gilman’s analysis, in which he argued that by the late twentieth century, Jews in western Europe had undergone a process of adaptation to and absorption into the secularising Christian world which meant that they passed “civilizational litmus tests” in a way that Islam did not.⁶¹

The secular, Christian and Judaeo-Christian conceptions of society had an impact on the perception of Muslims who were seeking state-funded schooling. There were already a considerable number of state-funded Christian and Jewish schools which based their curriculum and teaching methods on views which were acceptable to a modern, secular society, even if those views had their origins in Christian or Jewish religious traditions. These schools were not, therefore, necessarily incompatible with the developing secularist paradigm. Muslim schools, however, which were seeking to encourage the fostering of a religious identity that could be interpreted as being in opposition to values of rationality and modernity, were not so compatible with this secularist paradigm. This meant that Muslims seeking state funding stood out doubly: firstly, they did not fit into the developing, consciously secularist approach; secondly, they did not fit into the subconscious lingering of Christianity, or the late twentieth century identification of Britain as “Judaeo-Christian”.

The fact that Muslim schools stood out brought questions over their integration into British society to the fore. These questions centred on the matter of how far the state was willing to fund education based upon a religion which was perceived as being outside of the desirable norms of that society. Ansari argued that the desire for Islamic schools would contest “the understanding of how ‘integration’ as presented by the British establishment

⁶¹ Gilman, ‘The Case of Circumcision: Diaspora Judaism as a Model for Islam?’, p.146.

might occur”.⁶² Fetzer and Soper, when discussing the arguments made by Swann against separate religious schools, commented that they “raised the thorny question about what “integration” into British society ought to mean for the Muslim community”.⁶³ Moeen Yaseen argued that, for Muslims, the possibility of aided schools offered “a means to negotiate the terms of multiculturalism and integration rather than the current imposed ones which lead to the dilution and disintegration of faith and identity”.⁶⁴ Yet it can be argued that such optimism was misplaced. Ansari commented that “[i]t seemed that Muslim schools were opposed because they were perceived as a threat to the dominant culture and to the notion of British identity”.⁶⁵ Implicit within this is the idea that Muslim identity and British identity were at odds with one another. It is from this oppositional positioning of the two identities that the idea of “threat” emerges. Dwyer and Meyer observed that the “ideological construction of Muslim” was embedded within the decision-making process”.⁶⁶ This suggests that, while Ansari, Fetzer and Soper and Yaseen were right to argue that the campaign for state-funded religious schooling brought questions about Muslim integration to the fore in England, the answers that emerged to those questions did not lead to an easy acceptance of such schooling, or the creation of a new space for Muslims in society.

For some, the matter of state-funded Muslim schooling was not limited to issues of integration, and rather it was necessary to undergo a broader reconsideration of what British society should look like. This led certain parties to call for a re-evaluation of the entire system of state-funded denominational schooling, and its place in late twentieth century England. Such arguments tended to focus on the changes that had taken place in the

⁶² Ansari, *The Infidel within*, pp.331–32.

⁶³ Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*, p.45.

⁶⁴ *TES*, 31/07/92.

⁶⁵ Ansari, *The Infidel within*, pp.327–28.

⁶⁶ Dwyer and Meyer, ‘The Institutionalisation of Islam in the Netherlands and in the UK’, p.38.

country, and the fact that England of the 1980s had different needs to England of the 1940s, when the Dual System was formalised. The Swann Report, for example, stated that:

we feel that it is important to acknowledge the real and far-reaching changes which have taken place in the nature of British society particularly in recent years. We believe therefore that the time has come for the DES, in consultation with religious and educational bodies, to consider the provisions of the 1944 Act to see whether or not alterations are required in a society that is now very different.⁶⁷

The view of Swann was that, by the 1980s, England had changed sufficiently to mean that voluntary schools were no longer an appropriate part of the education system. In this view, Swann emphasised the role of secularism in creating an integrated society. The Association of Metropolitan Authorities, after detailed discussions with a number of Muslim organisations in 1988, similarly resolved in 1989 that:

“[w]e believe that a fully integrated tolerant society will most easily be achieved by LEA maintained schools offering a broad high quality curriculum committed to equal opportunities on the grounds of gender as well as race”.

It went on to “urge all LEAs to adopt a common policy on this matter and to refuse to support any proposals from whatever source for voluntary aided status”.⁶⁸ The Commission for Racial Equality’s (CRE) publication *Schools of Faith* argued that “the development and future of religious schools which happen to be of ethnic minority religions cannot be divorced from the future of the large network of existing religious schools in the maintained

⁶⁷ DES, *Education for All*, p.514.

⁶⁸ Cadbury Research Archive, AMA A/1/16, AMA Papers, Education Committee Report No 2/1989, 16/03/89.

sector". It went on that "it is necessary to re-evaluate all religious voluntary schools in the light of today's society and its differences compared to 1944".⁶⁹

There is evidence that this view at times translated into a policy where existing schools would not lose their funding, but no new denominational schools would be created. When the London School of Islamics made renewed enquiries into becoming voluntary-aided in 1992, the *TES* quoted Andrew Panton, Newham's acting director of education, as stating:

the council policy is not to support the introduction of voluntary-aided schools. It does support Roman Catholic and Church of England schools, but will not support the new Islamic school. Mr Ahmad is aware of this.⁷⁰

While there were few people who expressed such a sentiment so explicitly, as will be seen in the following chapter, this approach, with the addition of continuing to approve applications from certain Jewish schools, was at the heart of Conservative government policy. By the mid-1980s, roughly one third of all state schools in England were state-funded denominational schools, either voluntary-aided or voluntary-controlled. The removal of these, or a change in their status and funding arrangement, would have required significant changes to the structure of the education system, and this would have been an enormous undertaking. As a result of this the state maintained and expanded these existing schools, but balked at the idea of adding new kinds of schools to the framework.

5) Race and ethnicity

Another significant facet of opposition to Muslim schools, and of the wider debates on the issues, had, ostensibly at least, very little to do with religion, and related rather to concerns about issues of race and ethnicity. This was related to the complexity of the ideological

⁶⁹ Great Britain. Commission for Racial Equality, *Schools of Faith: Religious Schools in a Multicultural Society*. (Commission for Racial Equality, 1990), p.19.

⁷⁰ *TES*, 24/04/92.

construction of Muslims. Dwyer and Meyer highlighted this when they observed that Britain's Muslims operated, at times simultaneously, sometimes as a religious group, sometimes as members of specific ethnic groups, sometimes as immigrants or migrants".⁷¹ The fact that Muslims were not simply perceived as a religious minority, but also as an ethnic or racial minority, had a further impact on how their attempts to create state-funded schools were understood.

In addition to fears over the nature of the education that would be provided in state-funded schools, in the 1980s concerns arose over who the pupils in those schools would be. The Swann Report raised concerns over this. It used the term "separate schools" to describe the schools desired by ethnic minority communities, usually for religious reasons.⁷² This term was not used to describe Christian or mainstream Jewish denominational schools. It was used particularly for schools sought by religious minorities that drew some or all of their numbers from non-white ethnic minorities. The CRE's *Schools of Faith* also argued that ethnic minority denominational schools "would, in effect, be 'separate' schools for particular racial groups" and that it was "by no means a matter of religion alone, but has important race relations implications".⁷³ It expressed concern that if the number of such religious schools increased, it would lead to "de facto racial segregation", which would have a negative effect on race relations, "since children of different races would have little experience or understanding of each other's cultures and identities...The result might be to promote a sectarian society polarised along racial lines."⁷⁴ The 1989 report of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities stated that a resolution opposing state-funded Muslim schools was passed as a result of "concern about this form of educational

⁷¹ Dwyer and Meyer, 'The Institutionalisation of Islam in the Netherlands and in the UK', p.38.

⁷² DES, *Education for All*, p.498.

⁷³ Great Britain. Commission for Racial Equality, *Schools of Faith*, p.3.

⁷⁴ Great Britain. Commission for Racial Equality, *Schools of Faith*, p.11.

separatism".⁷⁵ The effect of this is that debates over state-funded Muslim schools have to be situated not only within the broader context of debates over the position of religious groups, but also within debates over the situation of racial and ethnic groups. This locates some of the fears over Muslim denominational schooling in the context of approaches to multiculturalism which advocated racial mixing, and the interaction of different racial and cultural groups in all areas of life, as the most effective way to produce a harmonious multicultural society.

Even in this context, however, the concern was not simply about one-race schools or about religious schools in a secular society, but was specifically about Muslim schools. This distinction is brought out by a comment in the Swann report. In discussing the *de facto* existence of schools that were by circumstance pupiled entirely by ethnic minority children, the report argued that these were qualitatively different from ethnic minority denominational schools because:

they have not been set up expressly to cater for a denominational or racial group, and we would therefore expect them to be providing an education for their pupils essentially no different from that offered in any school in the country.

It went on to state that this would be "an education which reflects the pluralist nature of our society and which is not limited to the perspective of anyone [sic] group, whether minority or majority".⁷⁶ It is worth noting here, however, an issue raised by Ibrahim Hewitt in an article in the *TES* in July 1988. In response to a Tory Bow Group pamphlet which attacked Muslim schools as "one-race schools" and "breeding groups of fundamentalism", Hewitt wrote:

⁷⁵ Cadbury Research Archive, AMA A/1/16, AMA Papers, AMA Annual Report, 1989.

⁷⁶ DES, *Education for All*, p.499.

the fact that Jewish schools are excluded raises an interesting question: is it only when your skin colour makes it obvious that you are a different race that doubt is cast on your ability as a scholar?⁷⁷

This comment alludes to the fact that there were many schools already in existence in Britain in the late twentieth century which comprised pupils drawn from a single white ethnic or racial group. It highlights that, as with discussions of the secular and Judaeo-Christian nature of British society, concerns over race can go some way to explaining some of the issues that Muslim schools faced in the 1980s, but are not a sufficient or complete explanation of these difficulties. They are one piece of a much larger puzzle.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to provide a broad contextual backdrop to Muslim attempts to achieve voluntary-aided status for their schools. It has highlighted that, whilst there was in existence a legal framework that theoretically could be extended to Muslims should they so desire it, there were also considerable obstacles and opposition to the creation of state-funded Muslim schools. In seeking state funding, Muslims were asking permission to deliberately educate their children in a religious ethos that was neither Christian nor Judaeo-Christian at the expense of the state. They were asking for the extension of a religious framework in a society that perceived itself as increasingly secular yet which drew much of its morality and underlying framework from the lingering of Christianity and the conception of Britain as a Judaeo-Christian society. They were felt to be asking for separate schools in a society that favoured integration. Bearing in mind the discussions of education policy in Chapter 2, they were also asking for the extension of a framework that had fallen out of

⁷⁷ *TES*, 22/07/88.

favour with a government that had a very particular ideological bent to its education policy, and did not favour locally controlled schools.

The issue of state-funded Muslim schooling raised important and increasingly acute questions over the ability of the state to accommodate Muslim educational needs. It brought the issue of the role of the pluralist framework, and the limitations of that framework, to the fore in interactions between Muslims and the state. It prompted a debate about whether the state, via the pluralist framework and the terms of the 1944 Education Act, was able or willing to fund schools which intended to teach pupils in a way that it felt to be at odds with the prevailing trends in education and society, including secularism and Christianity. Though the framework of denominational schooling could legally have been extended to Muslims, in asking for it Muslims prompted a debate about whether the pluralist system could accommodate all religious beliefs and groups, or whether there were limits to what the state should be willing to fund. In prompting this debate, the issue of state-funded Muslim schooling led Muslim-state interactions to the threshold of what had previously been accommodated, asking if it was possible to extend that threshold. This led to very difficult conversations about the relationship between Muslims and British society, between Islam and “the west”. These conversations indicated that though early Muslim-state interactions had been governed by a pluralist framework that was originally developed to manage a country comprised of Christians and Jews, certain aspects of Islam and certain Muslim needs went beyond what that framework could provide. It was within this context that the Islamia campaign took place.

Fetzer and Soper commented that “[t]he issue of state funding became a powerfully symbolic one for Muslims, who wanted the state to recognize the legitimacy of their demands as a religious community”.⁷⁸ The Islamia campaign in particular, came to represent

⁷⁸ Fetzer and Soper, *Muslims and the State in Britain, France, and Germany*, p.45.

more than just one school seeking voluntary-aided status. It came to represent a battle for equality with other minorities, and for a place within late twentieth century British society. It is on this campaign that the following chapter will focus.

Chapter Six

The Islamia Primary School: A Case Study

This chapter will be a case study of the 15-year campaign by the Islamia Primary School in the London Borough of Brent to receive state funding. The previous chapter explored the institutional and contextual background to this campaign. This chapter will analyse how this background affected actual negotiations between a Muslim school and the state. In doing so, it will address some of the questions raised in the previous chapter about the limitations of the framework of conservative pluralism.

The chapter will be divided into three sections. The first will examine interactions between the Islamia school and Brent local authority as the school sought to gain the support of the local authority, which was usually the first step in the process of applying for voluntary-aided status. The second section will then look at the development of policy relating to state-funded denominational schooling within the Department for Education and Science in the late 1980s, including an analysis of its internal response to the impending application from the Islamia School. The third section will examine what happened when the Islamia application reached the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

1. The Local Campaign

This section will examine the interactions between the Islamia Primary School and Brent Council over the school's attempt to gain local authority support for an application to the Secretary of State for Education and Science for voluntary-aided status. Receiving such support was not a prerequisite of applying to the Secretary of State, but as it was the LEA that would be responsible for the school once it received voluntary-aided status, gaining its support was a usual first step.

The Islamia Primary School was founded in 1983, when the Islamic Circle Organisation (ICO) purchased 8 Brondesbury Park in the London Borough of Brent, with a view to turning the premises into a school. A driving force behind the founding of the school was the former pop star Cat Stevens, who took the name Yusuf Islam when he converted to Islam in 1977 and who by the mid 1980s was an increasingly prominent figure in London's Muslim community. For example, he served as chairman of Muslim Aid from its foundation in 1985¹ and had close links with the Islamic Cultural Centre, based at the Central London Mosque in Regent's Park.² After his daughter Hasanah was born in 1980, Islam began to consider how to go about giving his daughter a Muslim education. Feeling that existing provision was inadequate, he founded the Islamia Schools Trust, which led to the purchase of the house in Brondesbury Park and the foundation of the school.³ The creation of a Muslim primary school in the area appealed to Muslims in the area and beyond, including those of Middle Eastern and South Asian origin, but also converts like Islam himself.⁴ Within a few years, the school was oversubscribed with a lengthy waiting list.

The demand for a Muslim school in Brent was in part a consequence of the growth of the immigrant population in the borough. The black population rose in the 1950s and in the early 1960s a significant number of Asians arrived. By 1981, Brent had a population of 275,000, of which around 30 percent – 83,023 – were of New Commonwealth origin. Within this Asian population was a smaller minority of Muslims, who along with a group of white converts including Yusuf Islam, created the demand for a school. Much of this Muslim population could be found in the areas of Willesden and Cricklewood, close to where the school was founded.⁵

¹ *The Times*, 19/09/87

² *The Times*, 13/08/90

³ *The Times*, 19/08/87

⁴ *The Times*, 25/05/85

⁵ Jim Moher, *'Stepping on White Corns' Race, education and politics: the Brent experience*, (Wembley: JGM Books, 2007), pp.54-7

The political position of the Muslim population of Brent was different to that in Bradford. Whilst there was similarity in that by the early 1980s many from within the recently-arrived non-white population had begun to take roles in politics in some way, the majority of these were neither Muslim nor South Asian. In the period in which the Islamia School was seeking state funding, the Afro-Caribbean population was far more numerous in its representation in the local politics of Brent than was the Asian population, and even where the Asian population was represented it was generally on the basis of ethnic rather than religious identity.⁶

In June 1984, the ICO was given temporary three-year permission to use the site as an independent primary with a limit of 100 pupils.⁷ As this school was in development, Yusuf Islam of the ICO met with Brent Council's Education Committee to discuss the possibility of its becoming voluntary-aided at some point.⁸ Once the school was up and running, such talks began in earnest when, in June 1985, governors met with representatives of Brent Council's Education Committee to discuss the possibility of it receiving state funding. The overall conclusion of the meeting seemed positive, and after being provided with documentation showing the school's capability of meeting DES requirements for voluntary-aided status⁹, on 17th February 1986, Brent Council's Education Policy and Estimates Sub-Committee voted to support Islamia's application.¹⁰ This decision was then upheld by the Education Committee on 3rd March 1986¹¹ and the full Council on 9th April 1986.¹² This would appear to have been an indication that Brent Council was supportive of the Islamia Primary School's attempt to achieve voluntary-aided status.

⁶ Moher, *Stepping on White Corns*, pp.182-4

⁷ Brent Local Archives (BLA), Minutes of Development Control Sub-Committee meeting, 07/01/87.

⁸ *TES*, 30/09/83.

⁹ BLA, Brent Council Education Committee Minutes, 03/06/85.

¹⁰ BLA, Brent Council Education Policy and Estimates Sub-Committee, 17/02/86.

¹¹ BLA, Brent Council Education Committee Minutes, 03/03/86.

¹² *Willesden and Brent Chronicle*, 11/04/86.

Despite this seemingly positive start, however, an analysis of the discussions that took place whilst these negotiations were underway reveals ambivalence. The attitude of Brent Council can broadly be summarised as one of ostensible support, coupled with doubts over whether or not the school would be compatible with or able to provide the sort of education that the British state wished to fund. It is worth noting that the attitude was perhaps aided by knowledge that it was ultimately the decision not of Brent Council, but of the Secretary of State, which would determine whether the school received state funding. The Council could theoretically, therefore, express its support for the school in the interests of local harmony without this necessarily meaning that the school would become voluntary-aided.

The possibility of local harmony was, however, very limited in the 1980s: Brent Council was unstable and riven by often acrimonious divisions. From 1982-3 Labour controlled the council due the mayor being Labour, but did not have an overall majority and in December 1983 the defection of Councillor Ambrozone Neil from Labour to Conservative allowed the Conservatives to take control of the council.¹³ This seizure of power was followed by a period of hostility and intrigue during which, in the words of Jim Moher who was active in Brent politics in this period, they “were ‘in office’, but never in power and instead of setting the agenda, they could only preside over others.”¹⁴ Writing in the *Willesden and Brent Chronicle* in this period, local journalist Bill Montgomery wrote that the Council Chamber was like ‘a cross between a bullfight and visiting an institution for the criminally insane’.¹⁵ After many councillors from all sides stood down, exhausted by the situation, Labour regained control of the council in 1986.¹⁶

¹³ Rhodes Boyson, *Speaking My Mind: The Autobiography of Rhodes Boyson* (London: P Owen, 1995)p.192

¹⁴ Moher, ‘*Stepping on White Corns*’, p.131

¹⁵ Moher, ‘*Stepping on White Corns*’, p.131

¹⁶ Moher, ‘*Stepping on White Corns*’, p.131

The period of negotiations between Brent Council and the Islamic School was therefore one dominated by both inter- and intra-party division, particularly within the Labour Party. Moher described how in this period the “abandonment of normal government and inter-party conduct and civilities brought the worst elements in both major parties to the fore, especially in the deeply divided and morally indignant Labour Party.”¹⁷ This vacillation, hostility and councils operating on very slim majorities, was part of the context in which the discussions of the Islamia application took place. Hostility between the local authority and the national government was also a factor here: Brent Council, despite its precarious and vacillating leadership, was perceived by the Conservative government as one of the worst examples of a “loony left” Labour Council which it was planning to target in its 1987 general election campaign.¹⁸ Many of these hostilities played out in the McGoldrick affair of 1986 over the suspension of a headmistress of a primary school over allegedly racist marks she had made, an affair which was covered extensively in the media but which was only of peripheral significance to Muslim negotiations with the council.

Another part of the context was the development of policies on anti-racist and multicultural education in Brent. Like in many other London boroughs, in the aftermath of the Brixton riots, local politicians were “waking up to the need for changing their appeal in that now multi-racial, multi-cultural society.” In October 1981, Brent Council introduced a policy on multicultural education which introduced an approach to education which was anti-racist and multicultural. By 1986 a Development Programme for Racial Equality was introduced and a black Adviser in Multicultural Education had been appointed.¹⁹ However, despite the moves towards multicultural education, Moher highlights that Yusuf Islam founded the school “in the face of considerable opposition from all political parties initially...who were

¹⁷ Moher, *Stepping on White Corns*, p.131

¹⁸ Moher, *Stepping on White Corns*, p.10

¹⁹ Moher, *Stepping on White Corns*, pp.65-73

opposed in principle” indicating that it was “the maelstrom of opportunistic party politics” that ultimately led to the creation of a state-funded Muslim school.²⁰

There is evidence in the initial discussions of Brent Council having concerns over the curriculum that would be taught at Islamia, particularly in relation to the education of girls at the school. When Islam met with the council’s Education Committee in June 1985, he preemptively challenged concerns that the school would conflict with the council’s equal opportunities policy, arguing that the prophet Mohammed said that it was “incumbent on all Muslims, men and women to seek knowledge” and stating that the mixing of the sexes was allowed before puberty in Islam. It can be inferred from these statements that the school was aware of concerns within the council over the potential treatment of girls in a Muslim school. Islam also felt the need to stress at the meeting that the school’s curriculum would meet DES requirements, and that three quarters of teachers already had DES recognised qualifications, with the intention being that all teachers should be qualified.²¹ On 25th July 1985, in its approval of the minutes of the above meeting, the Education Committee resolved “that the Director of Education write to Brother Islam asking him if he had meant to include teaching of Darwinism as a criticism of the present state system”.²² This comment appears to suggest that Yusuf Islam did not suggest that the teaching of Darwin would be a problem for the school, but that the council assumed that this would be his view. This indicates that despite the positive statements made by the council, beneath the surface lurked a degree of suspicion of the school and a sense that it could be incompatible with the way that the English state wanted to educate English children.

There is also evidence of concerns from the state and the wider society over the implications for race relations of granting Islamia state funding. This was raised in the *Sunday Times* in

²⁰ Moher, ‘Stepping on White Corns’, p.57

²¹ BLA, Education Committee Minutes, Minutes of a meeting between representatives of the Education Committee and Governors of the Islamia Primary School, 03/06/85.

²² BLA, Education Committee Minutes, Brent Council Education Committee Minutes, 25/07/85.

August 1984 specifically in relation to the negotiations in Brent,²³ in spite of the fact that the school had made it clear at all stages that Islamia was not a one-race school. In his early meetings with Brent Council, Islam stated that “the present intake of the school covered many nationalities and there was certainly no racial restriction”.²⁴ That this comment was made to Brent Council again suggests that this was a concern at a local level. There is also evidence of this concern being raised, and answered, more broadly during this period. In July 1986 Islam again made this point in a letter to the *TES*. In response to a report of the annual Socialist Education Association Conference which suggested that the creation of Muslim schools would be racist, Islam argued that Muslims were not an ethnic minority and rather came from a variety of nationalities and spoke a number of languages.²⁵ Ibrahim Hewitt, a member of the ICO, responded to such concerns in his role as vice chairman of the Islamic Organisation for Media Monitoring, arguing that Islamia was attended by pupils of a wide variety of nationalities.²⁶

In addition to these concerns, the evidence also suggests that Brent Council did not unequivocally support the school’s application for voluntary-aided status. Any support offered by the local authority to Islamia was, in the short term, rendered moot by a decision of Brent’s Development Control Sub-Committee.²⁷ In August 1986, the school sought permission for an extension to its premises which it hoped would aid its application for state funding.²⁸ It was able to house 85 pupils, but the DES required 175 pupils before a school could be considered viable.²⁹ Unless the school was able to extend its premises, the support of Brent Council would be of little use in persuading the Secretary of State to give the school

²³ *Sunday Times*, 25/08/84.

²⁴ BLA, Education Committee Minutes, Minutes of a meeting between representatives of the Education Committee and Governors of the Islamia Primary School, 03/06/85.

²⁵ *TES*, 18/07/86.

²⁶ *TES*, 15/08/86.

²⁷ The Development Control Sub-Committee was a sub-committee of the Planning Committee and would report there rather than to the full Council.

²⁸ *Willesden and Brent Chronicle*, 21/11/86.

²⁹ *TES*, 16/01/87.

funding. The application was submitted in August 1986, and was considered by the Committee in January 1987. This delay was perceived by some as a deliberate attempt to hinder the school's application for aided status. In an article entitled "Anti Muslim claim as Brent drags its heels", the *Willesden and Brent Chronicle* quoted a statement by the ICO:

this is widely regarded within Brent's 15,000 strong Muslim community as open discrimination by a Labour-controlled borough pledged to fight racism and blatant proof that segments of the local Labour party seem determined to hinder the school's progress as much as possible.³⁰

The mention of Labour opposition here is important, as it demonstrates ambivalence within Brent Council over the Islamia application. Though the LEA was apparently offering the school its support, there was not unilateral agreement about this support within the authority, and some of the opposition came from a secularist, antiracist approach on the part of the Labour Party.³¹ At the same time that negotiations over the extension to the school were taking place, for example, Hewitt told the TES that the Brent East Constituency Party had a motion on its agenda to withdraw support for aided status. The Council denied this, stating that the delay was caused by a backlog.³² This reveals ambivalence in the Council's approach, and indicates that there was not agreement on the school from all parties, which is perhaps not surprising given the divisions outlined above.

Ultimately, the school was refused permission for the expansion, with the given reasons being that it was in a residential area and would be noisy and obtrusive, lead to a loss of

³⁰ *Willesden and Brent Chronicle*, 21/11/86.

³¹ Ansari has argued that Brent Council's opposed the Islamia opposition because this was "in line with its radical perspective of antiracist education", which was situation within a focus on secularism and regarded Muslims as "part of a shared though highly contested 'black' identity". Whilst this may describe the views of some within the Council, the overall situation was more nuanced than his comments suggest, and the Council did not show clear opposition to the school's application for state funding. (Humayun Ansari, *Muslims in Britain*, Minority Rights Group International Report (London: Minority Rights Group International, 2002), p. 326.).

³² *TES*, 12/12/86.

outlook and privacy and bring extra traffic.³³ Those involved with the school expressed considerable scepticism about the Committee's motives for turning down the application.³⁴

Yusuf Islam wrote to the *Willesden and Brent Chronicle*. He began:

we are deeply outraged by the attempts of Brent Council to stop the Muslim community's one and only school from obtaining equal rights under the Education Act, 1944, to be voluntary aided.

He highlighted that the 19 Christian and Jewish denominational schools in the area were partly supported by rates and taxes paid by Muslims, going on:

this is grossly unfair. The decision to refuse planning permission for a new extension to Islamia Primary School for fear of extra traffic and noise goes against all human logic and is clearly an act of discrimination.³⁵

Evaluation of these statements is complex. It is not easy to absolutely substantiate such claims, as it is difficult from the available evidence to be sure whether the refusal of planning permission was the result of anti-Muslim sentiment, or of development issues. The Development Control Sub-Committee reported to the Planning Committee rather than to the full Council, and made recommendations within its parameters as a planning committee. In its consideration of the application, therefore, the Sub-Committee stuck very closely to issues of traffic flow, privacy and very specific concerns relating to the buildings. The matter of the school being a Muslim school did not arise. In its consultations also, comments tended to stick to the issues mentioned above. There were a couple of instances of concerns being expressed that went beyond these issues. The Oaks (Brondesbury) Management Ltd objected to the proposal "on the grounds that there were already more than enough schools

³³ *TES*, 16/01/87; Brent Archives, London Borough of Brent, Minutes of Development Control Sub-Committee meeting, 07/01/87; *The Times*, 09/01/87.

³⁴ *TES*, 16/01/87.

³⁵ *Willesden and Brent Chronicle*, 16/01/87.

of all denominations in the area”.³⁶ In its summary of letters from individuals, one of the points noted by the Sub-Committee was that:

it is wrong to use a primary school as a “trojan horse” to allow a larger school to become established. Whilst the site may be suitable for a small kindergarten, it is not appropriate for a substantial school on what is a relatively small site in a residential area.³⁷

These statements do not explicitly make their arguments on the basis of the Islamic nature of the school; it is difficult to unequivocally assert that such concerns are even implicit within them. There is equally nothing to suggest that these two points were particularly significant in the Sub-Committee’s decision to refuse planning permission. The wording of the decision made very clear that it was based on the fact that the chosen site was felt to be inappropriate, offering no discussion of the principle of Muslim schooling. Yet it would perhaps be misleading to divorce entirely the decision over the Islamia extension from the concerns about the school within and the policies of Brent Council. The decision, however officially separate from those being made about the school’s status, was taken in the wider context of the discussions about the school’s application for state funding. For those making the application, the decision about planning made took place within this same wider context and therefore should not be understood as entirely separate. It was also clear that the Development Control Sub-Committee was aware of this context, as the school’s desire to receive state funding was mentioned in its discussions of this application to extend the premises, and the subsequent one.³⁸

In October 1988, a revised application to extend the school was successful. The application sought expansion to cater for 154 pupils, rather than for 175 as the 1986 application had

³⁶ BLA, Minutes of Development Control Sub-Committee meeting, 07/01/87.

³⁷ BLA, Minutes of Development Control Sub-Committee meeting, 07/01/87.

³⁸ BLA, Minutes of Development Control Sub-Committee meeting, 07/01/87; 19/10/88.

done. The *Willesden and Brent Chronicle* observed that “the go-ahead is being hailed by the school as an important victory in its struggle to become the country’s first Muslim voluntary-aided school. The final decision now rests with the Education Secretary Kenneth Baker.”³⁹

While the decision could be interpreted as supportive of Islamia, in fact it did not mean that the school’s application could now be sent to Baker, as one of the criteria for voluntary-aided status was that the school should be able to accommodate 175 pupils. The minutes of the conclusion of the meeting stated the following:

it should be noted that a school of the size now proposed is below the normal threshold for Voluntary Aided Status. Any increase in pupils will, in your Officers opinion, require additional land to be included in the site. To avoid any misunderstandings on this issue an informative is added to make it clear that it will be difficult to obtain planning permission for any increase in the number of pupils now proposed for this site.⁴⁰

There is nothing in the records of these meetings that would indicate that any such decisions were made on the principle of the school being a Muslim one. The school premises were small – a former house – and increasing the school’s capacity would not be easy. It is therefore possible that the decision was based on such practical criteria. However, there are points to be drawn from these events and from the meeting’s minutes. The first is that the Sub-Committee was clearly aware of the reason for the school’s desire to expand, as it was mentioned in the minutes of the meeting. Secondly, the school was only allowed to expand if even after expanding it would still be too small to receive state funding. When placed in the overall context of the school’s campaign to receive state funding, these decisions fit into a broader pattern: the school was repeatedly told in official responses to its enquiries that

³⁹ *Willesden and Brent Chronicle*, 27/10/88.

⁴⁰ BLA, Minutes of Development Control Sub-Committee meeting, 19/10/88.

there was no objection *per se* to its becoming voluntary-aided school, and it was at times actively offered support, yet whenever it attempted to achieve such status, it found a variety of obstacles in its way.

An understanding of the wider discussions of the issue, which arose in the context of the Islamia application, can be gained by examining views expressed in newspapers at the time. When the school's attempt to become state-funded was discussed in the press, the response was almost entirely the opposite of that of the Council: diverse opinions were expressed, almost all on the principle of Muslim schooling, with virtually none being interested in the capacity of the school buildings to accommodate pupils or of the school itself to meet DES requirements. In response to the original refusal of the application to extend the building, *The Times* observed that the decision had saved Baker from a difficult decision over whether to establish the school as a voluntary-aided school. In support of Islamia, it argued that there "*cannot* be any objection in principle to the extension of voluntary aided status to embrace Islam" and that this was particularly the case in the light of the government's focus on parental choice. However, it then went on to comment that the curriculum included "no sex education, no evolution and that girls were taught that a woman's first duty is to be an obedient wife".⁴¹ This comment is curious. In supporting the school's application, Brent Council appeared to be satisfied that the school was able to meet DES requirements, including those based on curriculum. This continued to be the case after the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988. Yet *The Times* still felt it necessary to comment on this as a major concern. This is perhaps evidence of a phenomenon identified by Yusuf Islam in a letter to the *TES* in April 1986: "we fail to see why this modest project should be bracketed with such issues as divorce law, women's rights and instances of juvenile marriage..."⁴² In this comment he alludes to a tendency to infuse discussions of

⁴¹ *The Times*, 09/01/87.

⁴² *TES*, 21/04/86.

voluntary-aided Muslim schools with an array of broader concerns relating to Islam and its relationship with late twentieth century British society. *The Times* also expressed concern that the result of Muslims receiving state funding for their schools would likely be the “further alienation of the Muslim community”.⁴³ This raises the question (which will be explored in more depth shortly) of why an independent school that already existed receiving state funding, and therefore becoming answerable to a LEA, should lead to “alienation”.

In the midst of these discussions, Islamia made another attempt to gain suitable premises in 1988. The school attempted to take advantage of Brent Council’s restructuring of its post-primary provision, one of the effects of which was that a number of school buildings were to be potentially left vacant at precisely the time that the school was seeking more suitable premises. This restructuring took place at least in part as a result of falling school rolls, an issue that would become significant in Islamia’s interaction with the DES. In February 1988, Islam wrote to Brent’s Director of Education, requesting that one of the newly-empty school buildings be made available to Brent’s Muslims so that the school could expand “in order to cope with our 600-strong waiting list”.⁴⁴ In March, Islam specifically enquired about the site of the Brondesbury and Kilburn High School, arguing that if the school could acquire the Brondesbury site it could “facilitate a decision from the Secretary of State for Education on our application for voluntary aided status”.⁴⁵ A proposal that the Islamia Schools Trust (IST), which had replaced the ICO, could receive the Brondesbury site was made in April 1988, again on the basis that the site would enable the school to expand to help accommodate

⁴³ *The Times*, 09/01/87.

⁴⁴ BLA, Education Committee, *Responses to Planning for Quality*, Letter from Yusuf Islam to Mr M. Stoten, 15/02/88.

⁴⁵ BLA, Education Committee, *Responses to Planning for Quality*, Letter from Yusuf Islam to Mr M. Stoten, 29/03/88.

more of the 600 children on its waiting list whose parents “desire the sort of education we are offering for their children”.⁴⁶

The discussions over this matter are illustrative of the reasons Islamia sought state funding. The move to create state-funded Muslim schools was often presented as a step towards separate schooling and therefore segregation of Muslims from the mainstream society. Yet there is evidence within these negotiations to challenge this. The introduction to the school’s proposal for the site highlighted a desire to work with the local authority: “we have been trying to obtain Voluntary Aided Status, wanting – as we do – to “opt-in” to the Local Education Authority – because we value the input that the LEA provides”.⁴⁷ A similar sentiment was expressed in an oral submission to Brent’s Working Party on Post Primary Reorganisation by the IST, in which Hewitt stated:

the trust wished to be involved in the Education system of the authority. It wished to dispel the feeling of the school being a ghetto institution outside the norms. In addition, the school wished to be able to benefit from the advisory and support services which the authority was able to offer.⁴⁸

A considerable part of the incentive for schools, including Islamia, for applying for state funding was financial. However, it is clear from these discussions that those responsible for the Islamia application were aware that such funding would be accompanied by an obligation to work with the local authority. When Hewitt was asked whether the school may seek grant-maintained status according to the terms of the 1988 Education Reform Act – and therefore to opt *out* once it had expanded – he argued that “the school was applying for

⁴⁶ BLA, Education Committee, *Responses to Planning for Quality*, Proposal from Islamia School Trust to Brent Education Committee Working Party, April 1988.

⁴⁷ BLA, Education Committee, *Responses to Planning for Quality* Proposal from Islamia School Trust to Brent Education Committee Working Party, April 1988.

⁴⁸ BLA, Education Committee, *Responses to Planning for Quality* Evidence of the Islamia School Trust to the Post Primary Re-organisation Working Party, 25/04/88.

voluntary aided status because it wished to be integrated into the Local Authority system”.

At the same meeting, the school’s headteacher Azam Baig said that “the school needed the support of the Borough’s services. It needed to be a part of the community, not in some way excluded from it”.⁴⁹

The negotiations over the Brondesbury and Kilburn site also provided a challenge to any ideas that the school would not provide a suitable standard of education. The written proposal stated that the school had “a staff of fully qualified teachers who teach according to the curriculum and a syllabus approved by the Department of Education and Science”, highlighting the breadth of the school’s secular curriculum.⁵⁰ In the school’s oral submission, Baig pointed to the fact that the “Authority’s Advisory Service appreciated the commitment and academic results of the school”, arguing that the fact that some children had been given assisted places at the school “showed that the curriculum provided by the school must be of good quality”. It was also clear that the Trust had the wherewithal to run the school. The submission stated that “Hewitt said that the trust had already been able to satisfy both the Council and the DES that it would be able to provide necessary funding”. Hewitt also stated in this submission that he was aware that the school may be legally obliged to accept some pupils who were not Muslims, and expressed willingness to do so.⁵¹ The proposal concluded with an appeal to help the school gain aided status, arguing that the issue of accommodation “has been the only outstanding item awaited by the DES” and that were the Council to respond to their request positively, it “would be a major step forward for Brent’s commitment to equal rights and opportunities for minorities in the Borough”.⁵²

⁴⁹ BLA, Education Committee, *Responses to Planning for Quality* Evidence of the Islamia School Trust to the Post Primary Re-organisation Working Party, 25/04/88.

⁵⁰ BLA, Education Committee, *Responses to Planning for Quality* Proposal from Islamia Schools Trust to Brent Education Committee Working Party, April 1988.

⁵¹ BLA, Education Committee, *Responses to Planning for Quality* Evidence of the Islamia School Trust to the Post Primary Re-organisation Working Party, 25/04/88.

⁵² BLA, Education Committee, *Responses to Planning for Quality* Proposal from Islamia Schools Trust to Brent Education Committee Working Party, April 1988.

At a meeting in April 1988, the Education Committee considered a proposal made by the Islamia Schools Trust that included offering “the Kilburn Building of the Brondesbury and Kilburn High School to the Islamia Trust for use as an Islamia Primary School”. This resolution was defeated, and the committee agreed to “consult on the principle of supporting voluntary aided schools including the possibility of an inter-faith school”, mentioning requests by Hindu and Christian schools as well as Muslims.⁵³ This seems to indicate that the school’s application for the building was not being considered only on merit, but also on the question of support of voluntary-aided schools. In June 1988, the application was refused, following a vote which was supported by 21 Conservatives and 3 other councillors, but defeated by the 42 Labour councillors. The decision led Ibrahim Hewitt to state:

Considering that, for the past five years, the council has been telling us to find more suitable premises, the decision is disgusting...What building can be more suitable for use by a school than a school building?⁵⁴

There is some lack of clarity in the archival records as to what happened next. The school’s website states that “in 1989, the Islamia Schools Trust bid for the Kilburn & Brondesbury Secondary School site which is now home to Islamia Primary School and the independent Islamia Girls Secondary School”.⁵⁵ By March 1990, the *Muslim News* reported that the Islamia Schools Trust had purchased a building in Salusbury Road, Queens Park.⁵⁶ This refers to the same site and is where the school is currently located. Despite this lack of clarity, what is clear is that by 1989 the school was in a position to send an application for state funding to the Secretary of State for Education and Science. Those running the school felt that the curriculum, staffing and premises were of a standard that met DES requirements for voluntary-aided status. The school’s application for voluntary-aided status, and the response

⁵³ BLA, Minutes of Brent Council Education Committee, 12/01/89.

⁵⁴ *TES*, 17/06/88.

⁵⁵ History of Islamia, <http://islamiaprimary.org.uk/history-of-islamia/>, [Accessed 25/09/17].

⁵⁶ *The Muslim News*, 23/03/90.

of the Secretary of State, will be examined shortly. First, however, it is necessary to examine events at the DES, in particular at Schools Branch II, whilst the Islamia school was engaged in these negotiations with the local authority.

2. The DES and “narrowly religious” schools

At the same time as those running the Islamia school were negotiating with Brent local authority, the DES, run by Conservative Kenneth Baker as Secretary of State, became aware of the likelihood that the school would ultimately apply for voluntary-aided status. The possibility of such an application, and the issues relating to it, seem to have been brought into sharp focus in the first half of 1988 by an application for voluntary-aided status by another school, the Yesodey Hatorah Girls’ Primary School in Hackney. This was an ultra-orthodox Jewish school which had made several unsuccessful applications for voluntary-aided status in the two previous decades.⁵⁷ The DES felt, for reasons that will become clear shortly, that it could not reach a decision on the application by Yesodey Hatorah without considering the implications of this decision for the impending Islamia application. This meant that in early 1988, whilst Islamia was still in the process of negotiating over suitable premises, the DES began considering how it might respond to an application from the school. This led to the drafting of a paper on the subject, which the Secretary of State hoped to discuss with the cabinet committee E(EP).⁵⁸ This next section will analyse the DES’s response to the Islamia and Yesodey Hatorah applications based on the paper and archival documents relating to the process of drafting the paper.

⁵⁷ LMA, City of London, ACC/2805/7/4/55, Records of the Office of the Chief Rabbi, Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits, Education and Chaplaincy Board, Miscellaneous Papers, Report by Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration to David Weitzman QC MP of results of his investigation into complaint made by Mrs V Prais, Solicitor, on behalf of Yesodeh Hatorah school for girls, Nov 1977.

⁵⁸ E(EP) was a cabinet committee with responsibility for education policy. It was chaired by the Prime Minister and attended by various cabinet ministers who had an interest in education policy. It was the main locus of the formal conduct of education policy in central government. The paper referred to is E(EP) 88 12 which was produced, but ultimately was not discussed by the committee.

In January 1988, Schools Branch II of the DES began considering in earnest how to respond to Yesodey Hatorah's application for aided status. This consideration immediately took the form of discussions about the wider implications of a possible approval of the application. A draft response to the application from January 1988 observed that, though approving the application "would involve the addition of only one to the number of Jewish aided schools it would be seen as a signal that applications from narrow religious communities, such as Yesodey Hatorah, can prove acceptable, and that would be a new departure". It then mentioned the impending Islamia application, before commenting that "the Secretary of State will wish to consider whether such a signal would be appropriate".⁵⁹ This sentiment was repeated in a minute of 3rd February 1988, which again suggested that approval of the Yesodey Hatorah application would be a "signal that narrowly religious schools can be given a place in the maintained sector", before mentioning Islamia. It then went on to state that "[m]any of the other 17 Muslim independent schools would consider following suit" and that if "Yesodey Hatorah is accepted there would arguably be a case for "come one, come all". Ministers need to be aware of the implications".⁶⁰

The DES's description of schools such as Yesodey Hatorah and Islamia as "narrowly religious" indicated that it regarded them as qualitatively different from existing Christian and Jewish schools. In a handwritten note about Yesodey Hatorah, Mrs Reisz of Schools Branch II wrote that "[a]lthough we normally take the view that Jewish schools were not covered by Swann and therefore lie outside our concerns this particular application raises issues on which I think we do need to comment."⁶¹ This was supported by a minute from N.W. Stuart at the DES which outlined the views of the Secretary of State on the matter of Yesodey Hatorah.

⁵⁹ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Draft 'Yesodey Hatorah Jewish Primary School for Girls: Application for Aided Status', 26/01/88.

⁶⁰ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Minute from Mrs J E Reisz 'Yesodey Hatorah Jewish Primary School for Girls: Application for Aided Status' 03/02/88.

⁶¹ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Minute from "Pam" to Mrs Reisz, 12/01/88.

Stuart noted that this was “the latest in a number [of applications] that have been made by groups of Ultra-Orthodox Hassidic Jews in Hackney”, before commenting that other Jewish applications had been approved, but “they do not raise the same educational problem of exclusivity”. He then went on to the question of Muslim schools, commenting that:

Muslim voluntary-aided schools would tend to be exclusive schools. They would not in their nature be open to all but rather would serve the very particular needs of religious communities....Exclusivity in these cases means deliberately establishing segregated schools and encouraging separate development.

This concern over exclusivity in admissions indicates that the DES regarded Yesodey Hatorah and Islamia as falling within the Swann Report’s definition of “separate schools”, which was discussed in the previous chapter, and that this meant that applications from these schools could not be regarded in the same way as applications from Christian and mainstream Jewish schools. Stuart explicitly stated that were such “segregated schools” founded, there “would be issues of race relations and the Government’s general stance towards a multicultural society. There is a Pandora’s box there”.⁶²

These comments are worth reflecting on for two reasons. Firstly, the comments in relation to Swann are significant in that they show that Swann did have at least some impact on educational policy in relation to ethnic minorities. This supports the interpretation outlined in Chapter Three which highlighted similarities between the recommendations of the report and the educational approach of the Conservative Party in the late 1980s. Secondly, they seem to indicate that, though the educational framework which allowed state-funded faith schooling was the result of the conservative pluralism that governed nineteenth and twentieth state approaches to education, the state viewed applications from schools such as

⁶² TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Minute by NW Stuart, ‘Yesodey Hatorah School, 16/02/88.

Yesodey Hatorah and Islamia as pushing against the limits of what the pluralist framework could accommodate and crossing over into questions of race and race relations.

The concerns of the Secretary of State and his department over “narrowly religious schools” and the possibility of them being “separate schools” led them to decide that the issue required further discussion. This sense was perhaps compounded by the Secretary of State’s view that the introduction of grant-maintained schools once the Education Reform Bill had passed would mean that there was “a likelihood that in the 1990s, if not immediately, the problem of exclusive schools will be brought more sharply into focus”. On the basis of these concerns over narrowly religious schools, exclusivity and issues of race relations, the minute called for the drafting by Schools Branch II, HMI and other Schools Branches, “a paper which sets out the problem and summarises the implications”.⁶³ This was the paper that was produced for discussion at E(EP). This paper is significant for two reasons. Firstly, the final draft of the paper appears to have become the blueprint for DES policy for funding voluntary-aided schools in the early 1990s. Secondly, an analysis of the process of drafting the paper, including the various drafts and correspondence surrounding them, gives clear insight into the thinking of the DES in relation to voluntary-aided schooling in the couple of years immediately preceding the refusal of funding to Islamia. The drafting of the paper and the writing of its conclusions seem to have been closely monitored by Secretary of State Baker, and his own views were central to the development of the paper itself and DES policy on voluntary-aided schooling. A study of what remained the same throughout the various drafts of the paper, and what changed, gives valuable insight into the views of those in the DES.

⁶³ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Minute by NW Stuart, ‘Yesodey Hatorah School, 16/02/88.

The final draft of the E(EP) paper argued that, though the legal framework created in 1944 did give Muslims and ultra-orthodox Jews, as well as other religious groups, the right to state-funded schooling if they met the stipulated criteria, it was not desirable that such groups be allowed to create or run voluntary-aided schools. It was clear that the Secretary of State interpreted the 1944 Education Act as giving all religious groups the right to apply for state-funded schooling should they meet the criteria set by the DES. The paper stated that:

The law obliges me to consider all statutory proposals for new voluntary aided schools on their merits. I cannot prevent proposals being made and once they are made I must act reasonably.⁶⁴

However, it made clear that despite this legal obligation, the Secretary of State did not feel that it would be desirable for such schools to be allowed to become voluntary-aided. The paper referred to Islamia as a “fundamentalist Muslim school”, and argued that applications from Islamia and Yesodey Hatorah were qualitatively different to those made by the many other Christian and Jewish schools which had become voluntary-aided in the past. It commented that in schools run by certain “minority groups” there could be “real difficulties about the nature of the education that they offer”, observing that the “religious and cultural stance of these groups makes no differentiation between the religious and the secular”. It argued that the religious basis of such education “results in teaching greatly at variance with, for example, a modern science curriculum” and “leads to excessive narrowing of the curriculum”. It expressed concerns over restrictions on the education of women, on unsuitable teaching ethos and styles and inadequate premises. It also argued that such schools “would of their nature be exclusive schools” which would “serve the particular needs of their religious communities” but “would not be open in principle or practice for

⁶⁴ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Draft Paper for E(EP), Versions 2-5.

all". It linked this to concerns over race relations: though it acknowledged that Islamia was "racially mixed", it argued that "particular sects, like some of the fundamentalist Christian ones, may draw their members almost exclusively from one racial group". It went on to state that:

such visible separation is likely to point up the racial tensions already apparent in society. It would make even more difficult the development of common ground between the various faiths and races, and greater feeling of national identity.⁶⁵

As a result of these concerns, the Secretary of State argued that, while he acknowledged the right of minority religious groups to have the freedom to "choose the types of school they want for their children", he also felt that "the right of religious groups to call upon public funds in support of their aims must, in my view, be circumscribed...what may be acceptable in an independent school meeting the needs of and financed by a particular group looks very much less so in a school which forms part of the maintained system and is supported at public expense".⁶⁶ This led to a conclusion that:

my present view is therefore that unless there were to be compelling arguments in a particular case I should not in general approve proposals for voluntary aided status. To act otherwise would be seen as a signal encouraging further proposals. It would not be easy thereafter to resist the demands, particularly of the Muslim community, for separate schools.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Draft Paper for E(EP), 03/06/88.

⁶⁶ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Draft Paper for E(EP), 13/04/88.

⁶⁷ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Draft paper for E(EP), June 1988.

The paper's conclusion was, therefore, that the Secretary of State should not approve applications for state funding for schools such as Yesodey Hatorah and Islamia.

Such a conclusion was, however, problematic: as the paper made clear, the Secretary of State for Education was legally required to consider each application in individual merit. He could not make a blanket refusal of schools from certain religions or denominations, even if he expressed a desire within the paper to do so. The contradictory nature of this standpoint was noted in the paper. It stated:

I have considered whether there may be ways of amending the law to strengthen my hand but concluded that any changes would hurt the established Churches more than the new minority groups.⁶⁸

This can again be tentatively linked to the views of Swann and others that a review of the entire system of denominational schooling was timely. However, there is also divergence from the views of Swann, as the Secretary of State clearly desired the continuation of the wider system of state-funded denominational schooling. He just wished to restrict access to that system for certain groups. Though the law could not be changed to achieve this, an analysis of the various drafts of the paper reveals that the Secretary of State and Schools Branch II sought a way to operate within the existing legal framework, but to interpret that framework in such a way that would make it very difficult for "narrowly religious" schools to meet the necessary criteria to receive state funding. Close analysis of the drafting of the paper is important, because it reveals a process by which a decision was made to effectively treat Muslims and other "narrowly religious" groups differently from Christian and mainstream Jewish schools seeking school funding. In other words, through such a close

⁶⁸ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Draft paper for E(EP), June 1988.

analysis we are able to see the state choosing to discriminate against certain religious groups and working out a means of doing so within the law.

The first draft of the paper outlined the views of the Secretary of State. He said that were he to approve the Yesodey Hatorah proposal, "I would not find it easy thereafter to resist the demands, particularly of the Moslem community, for separate schools". He then argued that:

I shall not be able to depend on finding educational reasons for rejecting such proposals: the proposers will often be able to make a persuasive case that they will be able to comply with my requirements for aided status and their applications may have considerable educational strengths, as indeed has that of Yesodey Hatorah. The introduction of the national curriculum in the maintained sector will provide a surer base on which to judge whether applicants are putting forward sound proposals, but it would be unwise to consider that they will prove unwilling or unable to do so.⁶⁹

The implication of this statement is that the Secretary of State was not concerned about whether schools such as Yesodey Hatorah and Islamia were able to meet curriculum requirements to receive state funding. He acknowledged that they may well be able to meet those requirements, but wanted to be able to refuse to fund them anyway.

The timing of this discussion is important – the Education Reform Bill would require all state-funded schools, including denominational schools, to follow the national curriculum. This meant that, in order to opt into the state system, denominational schools would be required to demonstrate that they were able to teach this curriculum. Those advising the Secretary of State seemed to feel that this criterion would suffice for excluding many "narrowly religious"

⁶⁹ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Draft Paper for E(EP), 10/03/88

schools. In response to the first draft of the paper, Stuart commented that he suspected that in most cases the Secretary of State would “be able to rely on his policies and the law in respect of the national curriculum”. He noted that many schools would be able to offer persuasive reasons as to why, with aided status, they could meet the demands of the national curriculum, and so “[m]y view is that we should not base our assessment of their proposal on what they assert they will do but instead take as evidence what in practice they now offer as independent schools”.⁷⁰ It also revealed a very clear expectation that “narrowly religious” schools would struggle to demonstrate the necessary ability to teach the national curriculum. It stated:

given the emphasis placed by these groups on the oneness of all aspects of life on the basis of a dominant religious philosophy and practice, it seems inevitable that their schools will find themselves at odds with the dictates of a secular national curriculum.⁷¹

This was then incorporated into the next draft of the paper, which stated that “[u]nless these independent schools demonstrate that they are meeting the requirements of the national curriculum rather than that, with aided status, they would have the potential for so doing, I believe that I can contain the position.”⁷²

A minute from Norbury in response to this second draft queried the wisdom of this thinking. Norbury acknowledged that the national curriculum would put the Secretary of State on “surer ground” in terms of the criteria for voluntary-aided schools, but suggested that it was unreasonable to expect that schools such as Yesodey Hatorah should be expected to be able

⁷⁰ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Minute by NW Stuart, 21/03/88.

⁷¹ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Draft paper for E(EP), 21/03/88.

⁷² TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Draft Paper for E(EP), 21/03/88.

to deliver the national curriculum, and observed that “[n]or can we require them, as independent schools, to meet the requirements of the national curriculum”. He also commented that “to this layman, Islamia Primary School in Brent might qualify even under this criterion”, before noting that such a stipulation would preclude applications by those planning to build voluntary-aided schools.⁷³ This led to the third draft of the paper relaxing the requirement over the National Curriculum, requiring schools rather to provide “detailed plans as to how they would meet their curriculum duties as part of the proposal for obtaining voluntary aided status”.⁷⁴

Norbury also queried concerns raised in the first paper over such schools being “exclusive”, observing that “no aided school can be “exclusive” in principle, or in terms of the law, is just what we are arguing with the Catholics about in the context of open enrolment”. He went on that “Yesodey Hatorah have emphasised that they understand the obligations on them, if they become an aided school, to consult the LEA about admission arrangements and to have published criteria which would not restrict admission to the members of the community.”⁷⁵ This is a reference to the fact that voluntary-aided schools were required to consult with the LEA over admissions policy – they were not free to decide on this independently, and so could not become “exclusive” in their admissions policy without the support of the relevant LEA.⁷⁶ Norbury went on, however, that “they are no doubt confident that there will always be sufficient girls from the community with prior claim which will make this obligation unnecessary to translate into practice”, suggesting that the paper should specify that

⁷³ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Minute from Norbury, 22/03/88.

⁷⁴ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Draft Paper for E(EP), 23/03/88.

⁷⁵ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Minute by BM Norbury, 22/03/88.

⁷⁶ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Letter from DK Timms to Mrs HK Douglas and Mrs C Tragheim, 25/03/88.

schools would be exclusive “in practice”.⁷⁷ This concern left the DES at risk of operating at a double standard: concerns over racially “exclusive” schools seemed only to apply to those schools whose population was drawn from those who were not white. During the drafting of the paper, in an internal Schools Branch II letter, DK Timms commented that schools which were “reserved exclusively for children belonging to the faith concerned” were “unusual, but I think there are one or two Jewish schools in the North-West in this position”.⁷⁸ As Jews were defined as a racial group under the 1976 Race Relations Act, these schools would draw their intake from just one race. There were also state-funded Christian schools in existence with exclusively white pupils. This suggests that the DES was aware that “one race” schools already existed, but was only concerned about this in relation to certain races.

Though the recommendation by Norbury was not incorporated into the paper, the tone of this minute and of the broader discussion of the paper is revealing. As observed in the discussion about curriculum, those working on the paper at Schools Branch II were not engaged in discussions to establish whether certain “narrowly religious” schools were able to meet the criteria which would allow them to receive state funding and become voluntary-aided. Rather they were working on the basic assumption, made clear in the paper, that such schools would be undesirable as part of the state education system in England, and were seeking to interpret the law and existing criteria in such a way that would give the Secretary of State firm legal ground for refusing schools such as Yesodey Hatorah and Islamia funding. There was also awareness within Schools Branch II of willingness on the part of schools applying for voluntary-aided status to adapt where necessary in order to meet DES requirements. In a note responding to the first draft of the paper, John Singh observed that Muslim primary schools (such as Islamia) were likely to be co-educational, as Islam did

⁷⁷ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Minute by BM Norbury, 22/03/88.

⁷⁸ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Letter from DK Timms to Mrs HK Douglas and Mrs C Tragheim, 25/03/88.

not require the separation of the sexes before puberty. He also observed that amongst Muslim schools there “has been no hesitation in attempting to adjust practice, not always successfully, when they have been involved in the discussions with HMI and others about more appropriate approaches in a UK context”, suggesting that this would indicate that those seeking “religious schools in the voluntary sector would require and be amenable to detailed advice and subsequent monitoring when and if such schools are being requested and after their establishment.”⁷⁹ Yet as analysis of the successive drafts of the paper reveals, awareness of this, however, led not to willingness to grant state-funding to such schools, but rather to the development of other strategies to refuse them funding within the existing legal framework.

The outcome of these discussions was that the criteria in the first two drafts of the paper would not suffice as means of providing legal grounds for refusing funding to certain schools. The third draft of the paper included an extra conclusion, which stated that:

in addition there will need to be not only a denominational need for new school places but an overall need for such places in the area of the LEA. It would run counter to our policies to add surplus school places.⁸⁰

The addition of this criterion is crucial to an understanding of subsequent interactions between Islamia and the Secretary of State. It was on the grounds of surplus places in the Brent LEA area that the Secretary of State for Education twice turned down Islamia’s application in the early 1990s. It is therefore possible to draw a direct line between the addition of this requirement to the development of policy in the E(EP) paper and the failure of Islamia to receive state funding under the Conservative government. It is also worth being

⁷⁹ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Minute from Singh to Arthur, 15/03/88.

⁸⁰ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Draft paper for E(EP), 23/03/88.

aware of the broader context in which this was added to the paper. The surplus places criterion was brought to prominence in policy development at a time when many London Boroughs, including Brent, were facing falling rolls in their schools. As discussed in the first section of this chapter, Brent Council was re-evaluating its post-primary provision precisely because of the issue of falling rolls. The addition of this criterion would give the Secretary of State considerable scope for refusing applications, given that it could be applied to schools in many LEA areas, and could certainly be applied to the LEA area in which Islamia was applying. Given the fact that the paper made explicit mention of likelihood of an impending application by Islamia, it is clear that the Secretary of State was aware of the situation in Brent and was therefore likely to be aware that this criterion could be used specifically to refuse an application from the school.

Though the paper was developed by Schools Branch II, there was involvement in the process of drafting and development of others from high levels of government. In between drafts four and five (the final draft) of the paper, Baker sought a meeting with Home Secretary Douglas Hurd about the wider issues raised by the paper. A meeting between the two departments took place on 20th May 1988 on the subject of “Brent, Burnage, Muslim schools and Section 11 Scrutiny”. The focus on “Muslim” schools in this heading is worth noting – there is no mention of Yesodey Hatorah or any other faith or denomination, suggesting that Muslims, in the form of Islamia, were the DES’s most pressing concern. The Schools Branch II minutes of this meeting noted that:

the Home Secretary’s view was that the Secretary of State should refuse applications for voluntary aided schools by extreme sects where he had grounds for thinking that they would emphasise separateness.⁸¹

⁸¹ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Schools Branch II minutes of meeting between Home Secretary and Education Secretary, 20/05/88.

The Home Office minutes of this meeting stated that Baker:

explained that his refusal of state assistance could be granted only on objective educational criteria concerning the quality of buildings, classroom facilities and in due course the national curriculum. In the longer run, however, he felt that there was a general question as to whether it was right for the Government to provide assistance for schools which specifically set out to teach children a different way of life from the country at large. (He mentioned, as an example, the strict Muslim teaching with regard to the role of women.)⁸²

This comment suggests that there was agreement between the two departments that it was undesirable to extend state funding to “narrowly religious schools”. Margaret Thatcher, the Prime Minister, was also consulted. A DES minute from Norbury to TB Jeffery on 27th June 1988 referred to this consultation, with Norbury commenting that the “Prime Minister agrees with the conclusion in paragraph 7 that your Secretary of State should not in general approve proposals for voluntary aided status. But she has commented that there might be exceptions and that there can be advantages in maintaining a choice of single sex schools”.⁸³

The fact that the DES felt it necessary to consult with the Home Office and the Prime Minister at this point is important. The development of the paper for E(EP) alone suggests that the Secretary of State felt that the application for state funding by the Yesodey Hatorah and Islamia schools warranted high level discussion before a decision was made. Ultimately, the Cabinet Office decided not to discuss the paper at E(EP), and given the support of Hurd and the Prime Minister for the paper’s overall conclusions, Baker decided to use it as the basis for his decision on the Yesodey Hatorah application and future applications from

⁸² TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Home Office minutes of meeting between Home Secretary and Education Secretary, 20/05/88.

⁸³ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Minute from Norbury, 27/06/88.

“narrowly religious” schools.⁸⁴ This suggests that a decision was made, based on input of those in key positions in the Conservative Government, to refuse applications that would lead to the creation of “narrowly religious” voluntary-aided schools, and was made at the time when the government was anticipating an application from Islamia. It is important to note that the involvement of the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister as well as the commitment to a policy that would refuse state funding to such schools including Islamia was taken prior to the Rushdie Affair and therefore cannot be understood as a consequence of it. The implications of this will be explored shortly, but it should be highlighted at this point that this demonstrates that concerns over the place of Muslims in British society was present in high levels of government in the late 1980s, and before the Rushdie Affair which is often seen as the pivotal moment.

The broader context within which these discussions were taking place was outlined in the previous chapter. The question of state-funded Muslim schools had appeared sporadically in the media since the beginning of the 1980s. The publication of the Swann Report, critical of faith schools in general and of those for ethnic minority religious groups in particular, brought further attention to the issue and raised questions about the place of religious minorities in the English education. The Honeyford Affair, which achieved national press coverage, also raised these questions and prompted discussions about the place of Muslims and South Asians in British society. It was in this context that the DES was making its decisions about state-funded Muslim schooling and, as will be seen shortly, once the case of the Islamia school became prominent in the national media, members of the Conservative government entered these discussions and echoed many of the themes raised by Swann and during the Honeyford Affair and then the Rushdie Affair.

⁸⁴ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Letter from Norbury to Jeffrey, 27/06/88; Letter from Mrs P. Tampi to Norbury, 29/06/88.

3. *The Secretary of State*

In mid-1989, the Islamia application for voluntary-aided status arrived on the desk of the new Secretary of State for Education and Science, John MacGregor.⁸⁵ In May 1990,

MacGregor turned down the application on the grounds that there were surplus school places in the neighbourhood, and so there was no case for establishing a new school.⁸⁶

Following appeals from the school, in April 1992 the High Court ordered the Education Secretary to reconsider the decision.⁸⁷ In August 1993, new Education Secretary John Patten

turned down the school's application for a second time, on the basis that there were more than 1,500 surplus places at local authority primary schools within a two-mile radius of

Islamia.⁸⁸ The period from May 1990 until August 1993 was therefore extremely significant in the ongoing attempts by Islamia to achieve voluntary-aided status. It is this period that will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter.⁸⁹

As has been stated, the first rejection of the Islamia application came in May 1990, and was made on the grounds of there being surplus places in the Brent LEA area. When questioned about his decision in the House of Commons in June 1990, MacGregor stated, in response to a question from shadow Secretary of State for Education and Science Jack Straw, that “[w]hen making the decision to approve an application for voluntary-aided status, the Secretary of State considers each case on its merits, taking account of a number of factors”.

⁸⁵ *The Muslim News*, 19/01/90.

⁸⁶ *TES*, 01/06/90.

⁸⁷ *The Times*, 15/05/92.

⁸⁸ *The Times*, 19/08/93.

⁸⁹ The approach in this section differs from the close examination of archival material in the previous section, as the available documents do not provide any insight into the actual application or the decisions made by MacGregor, and then Patten, to refuse the school funding. There was at one point a file in existence at the DES entitled “The Islamia Primary School”, which is referred to in the DES file analysed above as a “related file”. However, the file is not available and cannot be found, despite contact with the DES and a freedom of information request to the DES on 20th May 2016, which elicited a response stating that the file was “not held”. It is not certain that this file would have contained information about the applications and their refusal, but no other file containing such information has been found either, which means that the next section will not be able to rely so heavily on archival material, and will rather have to rely on other sources, and the archival material already studied to draw inferences about decisions made and the motivations behind them.

He then listed those factors, the first of which was “the overall need for school places in the area, as well as denominational need”.⁹⁰ In the absence of sources which give further insight into MacGregor’s decision-making it would not be unreasonable to suggest that there was considerable continuity between the development of policy under Baker and MacGregor’s decision, particularly given the focus of both on the issue of surplus places. However, interpretations of MacGregor’s decision are often influenced by the fact that his refusal occurred shortly after the Rushdie Affair: the refusal is often understood as a consequence of the Affair. The tension between these two different interpretations will now be explored.

An article in the *TES* argued that MacGregor’s decision was taken “in a jittery religious and political climate in the wake of the *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie, and the growth of Islamic fundamentalism”.⁹¹ Ansari also argued that:

by the 1990s, the question of state funding for Muslim schools was being debated in the context of the Rushdie affair and the Gulf War, and accompanying the heightened hostility towards Muslims in Britain that had resulted from them. In these circumstances it was difficult to generate much support for Muslim faith schools.⁹²

Parker-Jenkins, in *Children of Islam*, also noted that the Rushdie Affair led to a “preoccupation” in Britain with the rise in Islamic fundamentalism.⁹³

There is some evidence that the Rushdie Affair played a role in the discourse surrounding and interest in Islamia’s application for state-funded schooling. This can be seen in intensified interest in the school’s application from the Home Office. The Rushdie Affair

⁹⁰ Hansard, HC Deb, 08/06/90, vol. 173 cc.718-9.

⁹¹ *TES*, 08/06/90.

⁹² Humayun Ansari, *The Infidel within: Muslims in Britain since 1800* (London: C Hurst, 2004), p.338.

⁹³ Marie Parker-Jenkins, *Children of Islam: A Teacher’s Guide to Meeting the Needs of Muslim Pupils* (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham, 1995), p.8.

reached its peak in the first half of 1989, in the six months following the burning of books in Bolton and Bradford and the issuing of a *fatwa* against Rushdie by the Ayatollah Khomeini.⁹⁴ In the midst of this furor, the Home Office renewed its correspondence with the DES on the subject of state-funded Muslim schooling. In April 1989, in a note to John Hedger at the DES, RJ Fries at the Home Office referred to the E(EP) paper discussed in the previous section, before stating that “[p]erhaps it would be time for us to exchange views on developments on the questions arising from the call for separate schools for Muslim pupils”.⁹⁵ The following month, May 1989, a member of Schools Branch II attached a handwritten note to a minute about an upcoming meeting between Fries and Hedger, stating that the “Home Office...have asked to be consulted on any proposal for voluntary-aided status for a Muslim school before the Secretary of State reaches his decision”.⁹⁶ The timing of this interest, and the particular focus on Muslim schools as opposed to “narrowly religious” schools, could suggest that the Rushdie Affair had the effect of crystallising the previous views of the Home Office, providing the matter with a greater sense of urgency. But, as demonstrated in the analysis of the development of DES policy in the late 1980s, the Home Office had been interested in state-funded schooling prior to the Rushdie Affair, so the Rushdie Affair cannot be understood as a cause of this interest, only of its intensification.

There is further evidence that the Rushdie Affair brought more general questions about the position of Muslims in British society to the attention of the Home Office. Shortly after the correspondence with the DES, in early July 1989, John Patten, at this point the Minister of State for Home Affairs, wrote an open letter to the Muslim community of Britain, published in *The Times*. The focus of the letter was the position of Muslims in British society. Patten

⁹⁴ *The Guardian*, 19/02/89.

⁹⁵ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Letter from RJ Fries to John Hedger, 18/04/89.

⁹⁶ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary-Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Handwritten note, 26/05/89.

stated that the Affair had caused everyone in Britain to “think deeply” about “what it means to be British, and particularly about what it means to be a British Muslim”. He argued in favour of “full participation in our society by Muslim and other ethnic minority groups”, but that “there cannot be room for separation or segregation” and that minorities “should be part of the mainstream of British life”. He stated that Muslim children must have a clear understanding of British democratic processes, of the country’s laws, the system of government and the history that lay behind them, and of their own rights and responsibilities. He also commented that “new roots must be put down and must go deep”.⁹⁷

This letter is significant for two reasons. Firstly, it provides insights into the thoughts of the Home Office towards Muslims in Britain, thoughts which had the potential to affect education policy. Secondly, it provides insight into the views of Patten who, in August 1993 was the Secretary of State for Education who turned down Islamia’s second application for state-funding. This will be discussed in more detail shortly.

In relation to the first point, the letter suggests that the Rushdie Affair brought questions of what it meant to integrate, along with accusations of separatism, into the foreground in discourse relating to Muslims in Britain. In their analysis of Patten’s letter, Dwyer and Meyer have argued that it was indicative of a version of integration “which suggests that the responsibility lies with the members of the ‘minority’ culture to adapt to the ‘norms’ of the dominant culture”, and that “Muslims are constructed as outsiders who need to understand the British way of life and their British citizenship is seen as conditional on their recognition of their responsibilities to the British state”.⁹⁸ This can be seen, for example, in Patten’s comments that Muslim children must have a clear understanding of British democratic

⁹⁷ *The Times*, 05/07/89.

⁹⁸ Claire Dwyer and Astrid Meyer, ‘The Institutionalisation of Islam in the Netherlands and in the UK: The Case of Islamic Schools’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 21.1 (1995), 37–54 (p.49).

processes, of the country's laws, the system of Government and the history that lies behind them, and of their own rights and responsibilities.⁹⁹ It is also evident in his comment that "new roots must be put down and must go deep".¹⁰⁰ Dwyer and Meyer seem to have inferred an assimilationist bent from Patten's comments, which required Muslims not only to recognise their responsibilities and to integrate, but also to shed a considerable part of their Muslim identity if they wished to be accepted. This indicates that his view of "integration" was in many ways akin to assimilation: it was not a conservative pluralist approach and did not allow for the creation of space for minority groups. Such an interpretation was reinforced by an article in the *Muslim News* which reported that Patten, when addressing a meeting organised by the UMO in October 1989 during the Conservative Party Conference, said of learning English that "it is terribly important, not for integration – because I do not believe in integration – but for assimilation, so we all join the main stream."¹⁰¹

A leading article in *The Times* in May 1989 linked these discussions directly to the matter of state-funded Muslim schooling. It set out its opposition to the state funding of Muslim schools on the basis that "Islam is not a European faith, and indeed defines itself as a separate and comprehensive civilization at odds with many key European cultural and political values. It does not even accept the basic tenets of secular liberal democracy".¹⁰² This statement, whilst along a similar theme to that of Patten, is also significantly different. Whereas Patten recognised Muslims as individuals, encouraging them to make individual adaptations in order to fit into British society, the *Times* leader suggested that Islam was fundamentally unable to make such adaptations. The implication of this was that it was not possible to both be a Muslim and to also hold suitable values to be considered fully British.

⁹⁹ *The Times*, 05/07/89.

¹⁰⁰ *The Times*, 05/07/89.

¹⁰¹ *The Muslim News*, 20/10/89.

¹⁰² *The Times*, 18/05/89.

The article went on that in Britain, the “ordinary Muslim leadership” dreamed of creating “pockets of pure Islamic culture sealed off from the influences of the majority of Western Europe”.¹⁰³

The accusation that Muslims actively wished to segregate themselves was also evident in a speech made to the Coventry Conservative Anglo-Asians by Home Office Minister Tim Renton in 1989. After praising the morals and values of many immigrants and ethnic minorities, he then argued that “[e]qual opportunity will remain only an aspiration if the ethnic minorities themselves do not choose the route of greater integration”. He linked this very clearly to education, arguing that the “education system lies at the centre of this process of integration”. He was also very explicit in his discussion of which adaptations he felt needed to be made. He referred to the use of English, learning the “norms and customs of British life” and “recognising that, in this country, our tradition favours the equal treatment of women – affording girls the same educational and career chances as boys”. He also said that schools “must impart those moral values which promote tolerance, mutual respect, a sense of fair play, equal chances and freedom for all under the law” before stating that “[e]quality of opportunity is not best achieved by running one education system for Christian children, and another for Muslim, Hindu or Sikh. All those who must in future work together, will benefit from being brought up together”.¹⁰⁴

The fear of there being one system for Christian children and another system for others raises questions over what Renton, Patten and *The Times* meant when they used the term integration. As long as Muslims and other minority religious did not have state-funded schools, whilst Christians and Jews did, there *was* effectively one system for Christians and another for others, precisely the scenario which Renton wished to avoid. For those running

¹⁰³ *The Times*, 18/05/89.

¹⁰⁴ TNA, ED269/311, DES Establishment of Voluntary Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Mr Renton’s Speech to Coventry Conservative Anglo-Asians, 14/04/89.

the Islamia campaign, the school becoming voluntary-aided would be a signal that the school was able to become part of the pluralist system, and therefore to integrate into the system. In this light, the repeated refusals of Islamia's application by the government raises questions: a government that was openly and energetically impressing upon Muslims the need to integrate and to join the mainstream, when faced with a group of Muslims explicitly attempting to do exactly that, did not allow them to do so. By seeking to enter the state schooling system, those running Islamia were attempting to do exactly what Patten encouraged – to participate in society, to become part of mainstream British life and to recognise their rights and responsibilities. This directly challenged the accusation made in the *Times*, and by Patten and Renton, that Muslims were resisting integration and favoured segregation. This can be interpreted as an indication that for the two ministers, and for the author of the *Times* article, the word "integration" was effectively being used to mean "assimilation". They did not acknowledge or consider the possibilities of the conservative pluralist framework, including voluntary-aided schools, in the ongoing integration of Muslims into society, perhaps because this allowed space for the maintenance of religious difference in a way that assimilationist approaches to integration did not. Rather, it seems to be the case that the state did not recognise Muslim attempts to achieve voluntary-aided status as attempts to integrate. This raises important questions over why this might have been.

The previous chapter explored many of the reasons for opposition to Muslim schooling, as did the previous section of this chapter. Concerns about the suitability of Muslim schools for the state-funded denominational system based in intake, ethos, curriculum and wherewithal were evident throughout the 1980s. The Rushdie Affair appears to have brought these into the foreground, and had an impact on how Muslims were perceived. It led to the emergence of a "them" and "us" approach to Muslims in British society, evident in different degrees in the press, media and government. This approach was noted in Dwyer and Meyer's analysis

of Patten's letter, which argued that his approach to integration contained "an ideological construction which suggests that Islam is antithetical to the values of Western European culture" and that this relies on an "Orientalist legacy of opposition discourse which constructs the West as rational, modern and liberal while the East is seen as irrational, primitive and fundamentalist".¹⁰⁵ A form of this was in evidence in the *Times* leader. It positioned Muslim schools, which it opposed, in contrast to Church of England schools which "should not really be thought of as denominational schools at all", and Roman Catholic and Jewish schools which offered an education "which is in every aspect in conformity with European culture".¹⁰⁶ This suggests that there were limits to the framework of conservative pluralism, and the funding of religious schools which were not "in conformity with European culture" was felt by both the state and many within the wider society to be beyond those limits.

These discussions are helpful in providing insight into the political and discursive context in which successive Secretaries of State refused Islamia's application for state funding. However, while it must be recognised, it is again important not to overstate the significance of the Rushdie Affair in the story of the Islamia campaign. The suggestion that the Rushdie Affair was crucial ignores the fact that, as demonstrated in the previous section of this chapter, the decision that steps should be taken to prevent Islamia and other such schools from receiving state funding pre-dated even the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, and so cannot be understood as a consequence of the post-Rushdie environment. Rather, there is clear continuity from the decisions made at the DES in the late 1980s and the refusal of the school's applications. The DES had agreed upon the principle of refusing state funding for "narrowly religious" schools, including Muslim schools, before the Rushdie Affair, along with the surplus places criterion. With this in mind, it seems unlikely that the renewed interest of

¹⁰⁵ Dwyer and Meyer, 'The Institutionalisation of Islam in the Netherlands and in the UK', p.49.

¹⁰⁶ *The Times*, 18/05/89.

the Home Office, or discussions of Muslims in the media, significantly changed the course of events.

A Double Standard?

In addition to continuity in the use of the surplus places requirement, there is also evidence of continuity in the desire to refuse funding to Muslim schools, whilst allowing other kinds of school, denominational and other, to expand. The different treatment of Muslim schools can be seen in a comparison of the experiences of Islamia and Yesodey Hatorah. Both were refused funding, but only Islamia was refused funding based on failure to meet the surplus places requirement. A minute by TB Jeffery of Schools Branch II about Yesodey Hatorah documented a meeting between the Secretary of State and others. It stated that:

the fact that there were surplus places in voluntary and country schools in the area should not be a material factor in determining the Yesodey Hatorah application. Those surplus places were for ILEA to deal with; they would not be filled by the children who attended the Yesodey Hatorah schools.

In other words, there were surplus overall places in the Yesodey Hatorah LEA area, but this was not seen as grounds for refusal of the school's application. The school's application was refused, but largely due to doubts over its capacity to effectively deliver the National Curriculum. However, the same minute noted that with "financial assistance, perhaps from individual philanthropists", the school should be able to change this within two years, and suggested that someone from the DES could meet with the Zionist Educational Trust to that end, and that "the Secretary of State himself might see the Chairman of the Board of

Deputies of British Jews.”¹⁰⁷ This then led to discussions between the DES and the London Board of Jewish Religious Education over how to best assist Yesodey Hatorah.¹⁰⁸

The willingness to help Yesodey Hatorah in this way, and to waive the surplus places criterion, stands in marked contrast to the experience of Islamia, which was refused funding based on a factor outside of its own control, and offered no assistance by the state. It also stands in contrast to the experience of other Muslim schools. Though Islamia was the only school whose application had reached the Secretary of State by 1990, there were other schools who were attempting to put together applications at this time. The Zakaria Girls School in Batley in West Yorkshire was another Muslim school seeking voluntary-aided status. In response to discussions by the school with Kirklees LEA, John Greenway, the Conservative MP for Ryedale in North Yorkshire, wrote to Secretary of State Baker on behalf of a constituent who was concerned that the government should not provide funding for Islamic schools.¹⁰⁹ The DES replied to Greenway, suggesting a response which asserted the government’s support of the existing network of voluntary-aided schools and the right of any religious group to apply for voluntary-aided schooling, and a statement that each school would be considered according to its individual merits based on curriculum, including the ability to teach the National Curriculum, the quality of teaching staff and the suitability of their premises. The surplus places requirement was, curiously, not mentioned.¹¹⁰ Others enquiring about Muslim schooling at this point received very similar responses.¹¹¹ An internal Schools Branch II memo referred to this as “the standard line in explaining how the

¹⁰⁷ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Minute by TB Jeffery, 27/07/88.

¹⁰⁸ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Minute by BM Norbury, 12/09/88.

¹⁰⁹ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Letter from John Greenway MP to Kenneth Baker, 11 January 1989.

¹¹⁰ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Letter from John Butcher, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Education and Science, to John Greenway MP, 05/02/89.

¹¹¹ TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Letter from John Butcher to Toby Jessel MP, 07/04/89; Letter from Peter Swift to Perry Miller, undated.

Secretary of State will consider all applications for voluntary aided status. It does not enter into debate on the case for and against Muslim schools”.¹¹² This response suggests a conscious policy on the part of the DES not to engage with the public on the deeper issues relating to state-funded denominational schooling.

In addition to statements that they would consider each application on individual merit, the DES also made clear to Muslim groups that they were not supportive of the idea of expansion of the network of denominational schools. In July 1991, the *Muslim News* reported that Dr Aziz Pasha of the UMO had, at an informal meeting at the House of Commons, asked the Education Secretary Kenneth Clarke about funding for Muslim schools “to which Mr Clarke replied that Government policy had not changed and was one of not encouraging voluntary aided status for schools”.¹¹³ Yet this statement was not borne out by the actions of the DES. The *Muslim News* highlighted that this claim was problematic in the light of the recent approval by Clarke of voluntary-aided Jewish school in Redbridge.¹¹⁴ In January 1990, it reported that the Borough’s Education Committee was supporting the establishment of a school in the borough. It quoted Sahib Mustaqim Bleher, secretary of the Islamic Party of Britain and head of the Muslim Education Service, who said that it was “interesting to note that you have a school for a minority faith being supported for voluntary aided status *before* it has even opened”. However, when it comes to Muslims, the “council expects us to have the school running and flourishing up to the highest standards before we can ask for voluntary aided status”.¹¹⁵ Comparing the support for the school with Clarke’s comments about not supporting new voluntary-aided schools it quoted Pasha as saying “[e]ither the Secretary of State does not know what his ministers are doing or the Secretary

¹¹² TNA, ED269/311, DES, Establishment of Voluntary Aided Schools for Ethnic Minorities, Schools Branch II Memo, undated.

¹¹³ *The Muslim News*, 19/07/91.

¹¹⁴ This most likely refers to the successful application for funding by the King Solomon School.

¹¹⁵ *The Muslim News*, 19/01/90.

of State does not want to fund Muslim schools”.¹¹⁶ In 1991, the Secretary of State approved this school and one in Enfield because of an increased demand for Jewish denominational schooling.¹¹⁷ This is evidence of the government allowing the creation of Jewish schools for reasons of denominational need rather than overall need. The *TES* quoted Ibrahim Hewitt, deputy director of the MET, who said this showed “that there is one law for one group and another law for another group”.¹¹⁸ Speaking to the *Muslim News*, Yusuf Islam said:

it leaves me with a bitter taste. After all is said and done, the simple and undeniable fact is that Muslims will never be fairly treated till there is an organised lobby like the Jews to change the situation.¹¹⁹

Paddy Ashdown, the leader of the Liberal Democrats, was also quoted in the *Muslim News* as saying “[t]he present government is indeed operating double standards over the granting of voluntary-aided status to Muslim schools”.¹²⁰ The evidence does appear to support an interpretation that Muslims were treated differently from other religious and denominational groups when applying for state funding. This would become further evident with the second refusal of the school’s second application.

There is also evidence of a more general double standard, relating to the expansion of different kinds of schooling being advocated by the Conservative Party in the late 1980s. Following MacGregor’s 1990 rejection of the school’s application, the *Muslim News* stated that “[t]he argument of spare places had been rejected by many. City Technology Colleges are to be established and schools to opt out of local authority control in areas where there are surplus places in existing schools”.¹²¹ This was echoed by the Islamia head teacher Baig

¹¹⁶ *The Muslim News*, 19/07/91.

¹¹⁷ *TES*, ‘01/11/91; the school in Enfield referred to is likely to be the Wolfson Hillel School.

¹¹⁸ *TES*, 01/11/91.

¹¹⁹ *The Muslim News*, 21/06/91.

¹²⁰ *The Muslim News*, 23/08/91.

¹²¹ *The Muslim News*, 30/06/90.

who, following the High Court ruling, according to the *TES* “says the Government’s original argument was a “sham”, highlighting the money set aside for city technology colleges and grant-maintained schools”.¹²² Both of these comments draw attention to the fact that there were instances when the government was willing to give funding to schools that did not necessarily meet all DES requirements – including the surplus places requirement – so long as they were not voluntary-aided Muslim schools. This was also brought up in questions put to Secretary of State for Education Ken Clarke on the subject of state-funded Muslim schools, in the House of Commons. Paul Boateng, the MP for Brent South, asked whether or not the surplus places criterion would “apply to the imposition of city technology colleges on local education authorities?”. Clarke’s response was as follows:

That is pure education policy. It has nothing to do with ethnic minority policy...The criterion is applied because city technology colleges are a valuable acquisition of educational provision in some areas, some of which are governed by Labour authorities, where the present level of provision is fairly appalling.

“Take an obvious example, in Nottingham the CTC is providing educational opportunities to people from deprived parts of that city and especially from ethnic minority families who would not have had those opportunities if the policy of the local Labour council to resist the opening of that CTC had been successful. To that extent, CTCs are relevant to this debate.”¹²³

Though this answer is quite vague, it does offer interesting insight into Clarke’s thinking. In response to a question relating to whether or not the state’s approach to denominational schooling was discriminatory, an answer was given about improving the educational situation of ethnic minority groups. This may indicate that the issue of Muslim schooling was

¹²² *TES*, 22/05/92.

¹²³ Hansard, HC Deb 09/06/92, vol.209 cc162-163.

not understood at the DES as one relating to the framework of conservative pluralism, but rather as relating to issues of race relations and ethnic minority disadvantage and discrimination.

The Second Attempt

In April 1992, the High Court ruled that the Secretary of State should reconsider the decision to deny funding to Islamia.¹²⁴ The decision was made on the basis that Brent Council had initially argued that there were school places needed in Brent, then changed its views and argued that there were sufficient places, but did not inform Islamia of this decision.¹²⁵ In May 1992, following the high court ruling, the *TES* stated that it was becoming increasingly difficult to find any good reason why Muslim schools should not have voluntary aided status.¹²⁶ This statement does not really reflect the reality of the situation: the government had already found the reason to refuse Islamia state funding. Though the application of the criteria in the first instance was questioned, the surplus places criterion remained in place, and there was a possibility of it being used again in Brent.

The response of the government to the High Court decision was to reiterate claims that all applications would be considered on their individual merit. On 3rd June 1992, Roger Godsiff, MP for Birmingham Small Heath, asked in the Commons if the Secretary of State for Education “will make it his policy to accept applications for voluntary aided status from Muslim schools on the same criteria as applications from Anglican, Catholic and Jewish schools”. The response, from Under-Secretary Eric Forth, was that “[i]t has always been my right hon. Friend’s policy to consider each proposal for voluntary-aided status, put forward by any persons or voluntary body of any religious persuasion, on its individual merits”.¹²⁷ A

¹²⁴ *The Times*, 15/05/92.

¹²⁵ *The Times*, 22/05/92.

¹²⁶ *TES*, 22/05/92.

¹²⁷ Hansard, HC Deb 03/06/92, vol. 208 c.567.

few days later Kenneth Clarke said “[i]t is simply not the case that education policy discriminates against Muslim schools – of course it does not”. He stated that schools of all denominations or confessions could apply for state funding, before saying of Islamia that “I know for a fact that the decision of my predecessor was not based on any rule which he would not apply to a Jewish, Catholic or Anglican school”.¹²⁸ These statements are worthy of exploration. Clarke appears to have been claiming that Muslims seeking state funding for their schools were treated in the same way as other groups doing the same. He went so far as to attack those who suggested otherwise:

it is wrong and positively unhelpful to good race relations for anyone to imply for political reasons, as did a few in the last election, that decisions on Muslim schools are taken according to some criteria which discriminate against Muslims.¹²⁹

Clarke stated that “[i]t is difficult to open a new voluntary-aided school because of the rules which are applied to all such schools”. In relation to Islamia specifically he stated that the “criterion [sic] applied to that school were exactly the same as those applied to any other school”. He commented that schools were required to follow the national curriculum, and while acknowledging that this did not apply to Islamia, argued that “private Muslim schools have sailed near to teaching the female pupils domestic science, Koranic science” and not a lot else. He then said that “the key criterion is whether there is a demand for places in the education authority”, arguing that it had been policy for “many years” to turn down applications from denominational schools that would create extra school places where there was already a surplus.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Hansard, HC Deb, 09/06/92, vol. 209 cc 165-7.

¹²⁹ Hansard, HC Deb, 09/06/92, vol. 209 cc 165-7.

¹³⁰ Hansard, HC Deb, 09/06/92, vol. 209 cc.166-7 Again, this is likely to refer to the King Solomon School.

It is difficult, in the light of what is to follow, to interpret these statements as anything other than untrue. At a very basic level, it may have been the case that the surplus places requirement was applied to all schools seeking aided status, but it was not the case that it was applied equally. As evidence of the government's equal treatment of all religious minorities, Clarke commented that he had recently demanded that a Jewish school in north east London prove that surplus places would not be a problem before he granted that school voluntary-aided status.¹³¹ This comment was timely, for in the summer of 1992 Islamia was working on its own response to the surplus places criterion. In July 1992, the *Muslim News* reported on the Islamia campaign in some depth, reporting that the Conservative MP Rhodes Boyson was supporting the school, and "had been satisfied with the implementation of the National Curriculum in the school and the qualification of the teachers".¹³² It is worth highlighting that Boyson was an author of the Black Papers and a key proponent of the New Right, which demonstrates that there was not unilateral agreement on state-funded schooling within even this faction of the Conservative Party. The article outlined correspondence between Yusuf Islam and the DES about the school's ability to meet the criteria for state funding, in particular those relating to surplus places, as well as additional criteria on admissions policy and capital costs. With regards changes in admissions policy, Islam said: "[t]hat suits us because we no longer have to give preference to students in Brent. In any case we were taking students from many other boroughs, some of which have under capacity". He mentioned that some of the school's pupils were travelling from Tower Hamlets "which has an acute shortage of school places".¹³³ He also said that "[o]ur school serves a 15 mile radius and is relieving pressure from other areas". He then mentioned the closure of Chamberlain Wood school two miles from Islamia, which would result in 640 places being lost in the area. The article also stated that Yusuf Islam had told the Education

¹³¹ Hansard, HC Deb, 09/06/92, vol. 209 c.167.

¹³² *The Muslim News*, 31/07/92.

¹³³ *The Muslim News*, 31/07/92.

Committee at Brent Council, which had reaffirmed its support for Islamia on 7th July 1992, that the school had a waiting list of 1,300 pupils, 72 per cent of whom were outside of Brent, meaning that were the school to become voluntary-aided, it “would receive substantial amounts of money from out of borough places”.¹³⁴ The implication of these comments is that it was unlikely that the state providing funding for Islamia would have had an adverse effect on the surplus places situation in Brent. It is hard to conceive that these arguments held less weight than those of the Jewish school mentioned by Clarke. However, the same article paraphrased MacGregor as having cautioned that “the calculation of surplus places was far from being an exact science”.¹³⁵

There was a further development in the Islamia campaign that had the potential to adversely affect the school’s chances of success. This development is something of an aside, but is nonetheless interesting. In March 1993, before Patten’s final decision, the *Muslim News* reported that the Department for Education (DfE)¹³⁶ had informed Islamia that Brent Council’s Director of Education, Benham, had written to them to say that Brent Council’s budget for 1993/4 had not made allowances for the Islamia school if it did receive voluntary-aided status. The paper reported that Islam was surprised in this because he had asked Benham at an education committee on 10th December 1992 whether this absence would affect Islamia’s application, and Benham had replied that it would not.¹³⁷ There is no specific evidence that this had a direct impact on the decision of the DfE; the considerable continuity throughout the DfE’s approach would suggest that at the most this would have reinforced the decision that would have been made anyway. However, it illustrates the scale of what Islamia faced in its campaign. It highlights that the school had to deal, at all stages of its application, with both issues arising with the local authority which would provide the

¹³⁴ *The Muslim News*, 31/07/92.

¹³⁵ *The Muslim News*, 31/07/92.

¹³⁶ In 1992 the Department for Education and Science became the Department for Education.

¹³⁷ *The Muslim News*, 26/03/93.

funding should the school become voluntary-aided and also the central government who would make the decision about whether or not the local authority should provide the funding. There was also a lack of communication and consistency between the local and national levels. Brent Council, for example, did not know when it was planning its budget whether the Secretary of State would approve the school's application. It is possible that, for pragmatic reasons, the council hedged its bets when planning the budget, and guessed that it was unlikely that the government would grant the school voluntary-aided status. This added another layer of difficulty to the situation of Islamia, which found itself at the mercy of not only the position of the DES, but also Brent local authority's attempts to second guess that position. It is perhaps in relation to this that, in the summer of 1992, the *Times* argued that the decision to refuse the school came from "administrative inertia" rather than "malice".¹³⁸

In August of 1993, the Islamia application was turned down for a second time, on the basis that there were more than 1,500 places at local authority primary schools within a two-mile radius of Islamia.¹³⁹ Again, whatever developments there were in the early 1990s, this links directly to the development of the paper for E(EP) in the late 1980s which emphasised the possibility of using this criterion to refuse funding to schools which were not desirable. There is evidence from this refusal again that the school was singled out for such treatment, and that other schools were not subjected to the same criteria. In 1993, the same month that Islamia was refused funding for the second time, the Oakington Manor Primary School, which was three miles from Islamia, was given grant-maintained status, even though it needed expensive structural repairs. In response to this decision, Boyson, the Conservative MP for Brent North, described the government's approach as "nonsensical"¹⁴⁰ and asked

¹³⁸ *The Times*, 08/06/92.

¹³⁹ *The Times*, 19/08/93.

¹⁴⁰ *TES*, 27/08/93.

why, if there were too many places in the borough, a school which needed considerable repairs should be saved.¹⁴¹ Yusuf Islam stated:

A golden opportunity to allow the Muslim community to opt into the state system was rejected. Yet within 24 hours the government is willing to pay up to £3 million for another school to opt out. It does not make economic sense. Can there be explanation other than malicious prejudice against Muslims?¹⁴²

The *TES* quoted Moeen Yaseen of the Association of Muslim schools who said that the matter raised profound questions about the criteria adopted towards Muslim schools.¹⁴³

The answer to Yusuf Islam's question is that, while such prejudice may have played a role, there is another explanation. It is significant that Oakington Manor's application was for grant-maintained status, rather than voluntary-aided status. As discussed in the previous chapter, grant-maintained status was new, and a part of the Conservative government's overall approach to education that wished to wrest control of schools away from LEAs.

There was therefore a willingness on the part of the government to grant such status which did not necessarily exist in the case of voluntary-aided schools which were a remnant of an earlier system which was being dismantled and undermined by the Conservative government. Following Patten's refusal of Islamia, the *Muslim News* reported that the school was looking into GM status, quoting Moeen Yaseen who said "We have been informed that GM applications will be looked at sympathetically".¹⁴⁴ The paper stated, however, that there was no guarantee "that the government will accept Islamia's application as the surplus places criteria used by the Education Secretary, John Patten, to reject Islamia's application, also applied to GM applications". It also quoted Yusuf Islam who said

¹⁴¹ *The Times*, 27/08/93.

¹⁴² *The Times*, 27/08/93.

¹⁴³ *TES*, 05/08/94.

¹⁴⁴ *The Muslim News*, 24/09/93.

that the “current government is pursuing a policy of discrimination against the Muslim community”.¹⁴⁵

4. Conclusion

The Islamia Primary School did not receive state funding until 1998, after the election of the Labour Party in 1997. In January 1998, Secretary of State for Education and Employment David Blunkett approved applications by Islamia and the Al Furqan School in Birmingham to become grant-maintained schools.¹⁴⁶ It had taken 15 years for the Islamia Primary School to become a state-funded Muslim school. Reporting on the decision, the *TES* commented that:

for the Muslims, the decision marks a milestone. One of the main religions in Britain, it is the only one to have been consistently rejected for public funding for its schools.¹⁴⁷

A month later, a comment piece in the paper argued that:

Muslim schools have felt largely ignored by the educational establishment and have seemed somewhat isolated and defensive. The co-operation and openness expected of them under the new arrangements will, therefore, take some time to achieve.¹⁴⁸

This illustrates the fact that, in understanding Muslim-state relations over education, the process of application and repeated rejection is at least as important as the ultimate approval of state-funded Muslim schooling. It was noted in the previous chapter that Fetzer and Soper argued that the pluralist precedent meant that for Muslims it was only a matter of time before they received such funding. But the process that it took, and the uncertainty

¹⁴⁵ *The Muslim News*, 24/09/93.

¹⁴⁶ *TES*, 16/01/98.

¹⁴⁷ *TES*, 16/01/98.

¹⁴⁸ *TES*, 20/02/98.

and vulnerability of the Muslims seeking state funding, are a crucial part of the bigger picture.

The feelings of injustice did not end with the second rejection. They were further stoked a year later in August 1994, when it emerged that the Jewish Hasmonean primary school in the London Borough of Barnet had been approved for voluntary-aided status shortly after the refusal of Islamia, despite it being only a few miles from Islamia. The decision had been kept secret for several months.¹⁴⁹ The *TES* quoted Ahmed Versi, editor of the *Muslim News*, who said in response to this:

this is discriminatory. Unfortunately, Muslims are not protected because there is no specific law of religious discrimination, so we cannot take the Government to court.¹⁵⁰

The discriminatory interpretation of the law which disadvantaged Muslims was referred to in the 1997 Runnymede Trust report *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All*. In relation to the surplus places argument, the report stated:

at first sight this argument has a certain weight. However, the Government has agreed to provide funding for new Jewish schools in areas where there are already empty places and has therefore appeared inconsistent and unjust in its dealings with Muslim applications. In any case, Muslim schools (like Jewish and Roman Catholic schools) draw their pupils from a wide surrounding area, not from the immediate neighbourhood. They have little or no impact, therefore, on the size of schools in the immediate vicinity.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ *TES*, 05/08/94.

¹⁵⁰ *TES*, 05/08/94.

¹⁵¹ Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia: a challenge for us all*. (n.p.: Runnymede Trust, 1997), pp.47–48.

These comments by the Runnymede Trust support the interpretation developed throughout this chapter, that the state in the form of the Conservative government of the 1980s and 1990s adopted a discriminatory policy towards Muslims seeking state-funded schooling, and did so consciously and deliberately. The Race Relations Act of 1976 made it “unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of colour, race and nationality, and on grounds of ethnic or national origins, in the fields of employment, education, housing and the provision of goods, facilities and services”.¹⁵² This included both direct and indirect discrimination, with the latter being practices which:

appear at first sight to be entirely satisfactory, since they apply the same neutral requirements to everyone regardless of their race or origins...[but] are seen on closer examination to have a disproportionately adverse impact on certain minority groups.¹⁵³

The terms of the Race Relations Act did not at this point, as alluded to by Versi, apply to Muslims, as they were not recognised as a racial or ethnic minority, and the Act did not prohibit discrimination on religious grounds.¹⁵⁴ However, the definition of indirect discrimination seems to fit well with the experiences of the Islamia school in its interactions with the DES: the development of neutral requirements in the form of the surplus places criterion, which in practice adversely affected Muslims but not other groups. So, though the actions of the DES may not have counted as unlawful discrimination at this point, they do seem to have been nonetheless discriminatory. This also highlights the weakness of the position of Muslims in the early 1990s: the lack of legislation against religious discrimination limited their opportunity to appeal against their treatment at the hands of the state.

¹⁵² Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia*, p.56.

¹⁵³ Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia*, p.57.

¹⁵⁴ Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia*, p.57.

There are also questions of whether the treatment of Muslims over state-funded religious schooling can be considered as the consequence of Islamophobia on the part of the state. The Runnymede Trust argued that Islamophobia could arise from “closed” views of Islam. These included: Islam being perceived as “a single monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to new realities”; Islam being seen as “separate and other”, including “not having any aims or values in common with other cultures”, and being neither affected by nor influencing those cultures; Islam being understood as “inferior to the West – barbaric, irrational, primitive, sexist”; and finally, “hostility towards Islam” being “used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society”.¹⁵⁵ Many such views were in evidence both in the development of the paper for E(EP) and also in the responses by the various Secretaries of State. Concerns over the incompatibility of what would be taught in Muslim schools with what was desirable in the state education system – that they were “unresponsive to new realities” – persisted, even in the face of evidence that such schools were willing and able to adapt. The idea of Muslim schools as “separate and other”, even when the expressed intent of those seeking state funding was to integrate, is also evidence of a “closed” view of Islam. The idea that Islamic education was “inferior to the West” was apparent in some of the comments made by Brent Council, as well as discussions at the DES over curriculum and in some of the press discussions of the Islamia campaign. Finally, a sense of “hostility towards Islam” which led to the decision to interpret the law in a way that discriminated against Muslims was in evidence in government discussions, including those with the Home Office and the Prime Minister, which agreed on the undesirability of “narrowly religious schools”, and in the case of the Home Office and the DES, Muslim schools. Based on these criteria, it can be argued that the state’s development of a discriminatory policy was motivated in part by underlying Islamophobia.

¹⁵⁵ Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia*, p.5.

However, Islamophobia is not the sole explanation for the development of this policy. The implications of Muslims applying for state funding through a framework which dated back to the 1944 Education Act, and whose position was uncertain in the late 1980s should be considered. Though some Jewish and Christian schools did become voluntary-aided in the years following the Education Reform Act, this happened in an atmosphere of ambivalence about the place of faith schooling in the broader educational picture, including calls for the removal, or at least the curtailing of this sector. In this atmosphere, while the state appeared willing to allow the continuation of the status quo, it was less keenly disposed to the idea of expanding such provision. This led to a degree of inertia which saw the dual system continuing *de facto* even where there were questions about its suitability, but not being expanded. This further disadvantaged Muslims who were seeking state funded schooling

The combination of Islamophobia, and uncertainty and inertia in relation to the voluntary system more generally, placed the Islamia school in a very difficult position. Schools Branch II based the development of its policy on a view that Muslim schools would not be, in terms of their curriculum or ethos, a desirable part of the new educational framework post-1988, even if they were able to prove that they met DES standards and criteria. The impact upon Muslims of the state's decision to follow a discriminatory and Islamophobic policy is significant, in that it created feelings of having been treated unfairly in the Muslim population. These feelings were exacerbated by the lack of transparency on the part of the state as to its intentions and motivations. Despite the ongoing discussion of the principle of state-funded Muslim schooling in the media, the DES refused to engage on such matters of principle over its decision. This is of crucial importance to an understanding of the development of the relationship of English Muslims with the state over education. For not only were they denied funding for their schools, they were also denied the chance to openly discuss the reasons that they were being refused funding. At no point did the DES, or those

involved in the decision-making process behind the school's refusal, engage with Muslims on the broader issues of integration, separation, segregation and the place of Islam in society. Rather, they relied on the repetition of two key themes: firstly, the insistence that each application was considered on its own individual merit, and secondly the existence of surplus places. These arguments served as a sort of buffer between the state and the Muslims, and prevented more genuine engagement on the issues at stake. In their repetition, the government was not only attempting to deflect discussion of the broader issues, it was also being disingenuous, if not outright dishonest.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued the case for a new chronology and a new interpretation of the interactions of Muslims with the state over education in England in the second half of the twentieth century which takes into consideration the role of the framework of conservative pluralism. It has disputed existing chronologies which have characterised interactions in this period as unsuccessful, and which have suggested that Muslim-state relations should be understood in the context of the frameworks of race relations and multiculturalism which developed in the late 1970s and 1980s. It has argued that Muslims were successfully negotiating to have their needs met by the state earlier than is usually acknowledged, as far back as the late-1960s. It has also argued that political, economic and ideological shifts that occurred in the 1980s, combined with growing unease in state and society about the place of Muslims in late twentieth century Britain, led to the erosion and undermining of the educational framework which had allowed these early successful interactions in favour of approaches that were less amenable to the accommodation of minority groups, including Muslims.

The first component of this new chronology – that Muslims were interacting with the state effectively over education from earlier than has usually been acknowledged, essentially as soon as Muslim children arrived in classrooms in English schools in significant numbers – is based on three main points of interpretation, which relate to the questions raised in the introduction.

Firstly, the new chronology offered is based upon a reinterpretation of the role and significance of LEAs in the process of interaction between Muslims and the state over education. Previous accounts have tended to downplay the significance of the role of LEAs, rather highlighting the lack of a coherent national policy, and the role of the frameworks of multiculturalism and race relations. Though such accounts have acknowledged the existence

of LEAs, the details of their role and their negotiations with Muslims over their needs have not been given very much attention. The reinterpretation of their role offered by this thesis has been constructed through a close study of archival materials, particularly those pertaining to Bradford LEA and the ILEA, showing not only that Muslims were interacting with the state during the 1960s and 1970s, but also what such interactions looked like. The case study of Bradford and the close analysis of the approach of the ILEA has provided evidence that there were LEAs which were aware of the framework created by the 1944 Education Act, and were usually keen to act according to that framework. This evidence has also demonstrated a desire for a consistent approach, with contact and discussion taking place between the LEAs. This has shed new light on the role and importance of local authorities as a locus of early contact between Muslims and the state, and also on the ongoing relationship that the two parties had.

Secondly, the thesis has also challenged previous perceptions of the Muslim population as unaware, and a passive casualty of the indifference of the state. It has shown that both individual Muslim parents and representative organisations were active in negotiating with the state over their children's educational needs. It has provided evidence of how Muslim organisations were able to represent Muslim needs effectively at a local level, at a time when LEAs were able to respond effectively to those needs. This has demonstrated the need for a more nuanced approach to analysis of levels of Muslim organisation and of their awareness and understanding in this period: many Muslims had a good understanding of the legal and political framework in which they were operating and of their rights as members of a religious minority as per the 1944 Education Act. Some Muslim representative organisations were confident, coordinated and very effective in their negotiations with the state.

The third point of interpretation that is crucial to the new chronology is the emphasis on the role of the long-standing framework of religious pluralism in governing Muslim-state relations. The close analysis of the development of Muslim-state relations has revealed that, when Muslims appeared in schools making certain demands or requests, LEAs were not unprepared or unable to deal with them. Rather, they understood many of the enquiries made by Muslims in the context not only of the framework created by the 1944 Education Act, but also of the longer history of religious pluralism. Where an LEA, as the representative of the state in interactions with Muslims, understood these requests as being the result of religious identity and religious need, they tended to take a sympathetic stance and displayed both understanding of the needs expressed and also willingness to accommodate them. This was in evidence in studies of Bradford and the ILEA, and also in some of the discussions relating to the Islamia school's campaign for state-funded schooling. The significance of the pluralist framework reinforces the notion of the role of LEAs as an important and previously overlooked site of Muslim-state relations. Devolved, localised, flexible provision – *ad hoc* provision as it has often been described – was not a sign of a failing system, but was an intentional aspect of a framework that had been developed over the previous two centuries to accommodate difference. When this is given prominence in an interpretation, it is necessary to write a chronology of Muslim-state interaction that places greater significance on the successes of this early period.

A reinterpretation of the events of the 1960s and 1970s has implications for how we understand the events of the 1980s. The successful negotiations that occurred between Muslims and the state in this period predated the development of policies relating to race relations and multiculturalism, and therefore cannot be understood as a consequence of them. Nor as a religious minority, as opposed to a racial or ethnic minority, were the interactions and negotiations of Muslims with the state in this period dependent on these frameworks in the early stages of their development. The separation of Muslim-state

interactions from developing approaches to multiculturalism and race relations, and the emphasis of the successes of the pluralist framework in the educational setting, are key aspects of the new chronology and interpretation offered by this thesis.

The conclusions about the events of the 1980s go beyond the separation of these two narrative strands, however. This thesis has demonstrated that by the 1980s, questions were beginning to arise in Muslim-state negotiations over needs which could not be so readily accommodated by the pluralist framework, and over the limitations of that framework. In some LEA areas, there were attempts to work out how the framework could adapt to better accommodate some of these needs. This was demonstrated, for example, in the analysis of the negotiations in Bradford over halal meat and single sex schooling, and in the ILEA and Bradford over Muslims having time off to pray on Fridays. In the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, the idea of LEAs developing this framework and expanding the boundaries of what it could accommodate seemed feasible: LEAs still had a good degree of autonomy and influence on educational provision, and the developing multicultural policies allowed, theoretically at least, the maintenance of space for difference within the education system. This suggests that multiculturalism in education did play some role in the accommodation of Muslim needs in the early 1980s, as was seen in particular in Bradford; but this thesis has shown that it was not the only or the most significant framework in such accommodation. There were possibilities in this period for pluralist and multiculturalist approaches to overlap and to work together in expanding the possibilities of how diversity could be accommodated. However, at the point when questions about the ability of the state to meet the needs of Muslims and other minority groups arrived on the agenda of central government, usually the DES, new educational philosophies and frameworks emerged which ignored and disparaged what had existed previously. Both the move to centralise and standardise education and the development of some multicultural policies, particularly those with a racial or secular focus, threatened to disrupt the earlier successes of the

pluralist framework. This can be seen particularly clearly in the case of applications for state-funded Muslim schooling.

The narrative which developed in the 1980s also became the dominant one in literature in the decades following the 1988 Education Act. The idea that before the Conservative reforms of the mid-to-late 1980s, the education system was failing minorities and was not accommodating their needs effectively was an important theme in much of the existing literature. This thesis has demonstrated that this interpretation arose primarily from claims that were made by the Swann Report, the Conservative government and a few others in the mid-1980s. The government and others in the late 1980s either did not acknowledge the interactions of the 1960s and 1970s at all, or characterised them as piecemeal, kneejerk, *ad hoc* and generally unsuccessful. This idea that the system was failing existed in both left and right wing politics. This was evident in the Swann Report and in the views and actions of the Conservative government in the 1980s. Their failure to recognise these earlier interactions meant that at a national level there was no scope for exploring the limits of the existing framework or negotiating over those limits, as had been happening at a local level. A re-evaluation of the 1980s has revealed that ideological and logistical shifts, including a drive for standardisation and centralisation and the attack on the LEAs, which disregarded the system which had previously allowed devolution, flexibility and the accommodation of diversity, had an adverse effect on the ability of Muslims to have their needs met within the education system.

The revelation of a self-confident, well informed Muslim population in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s also has an impact on existing chronologies and interpretations of the development of an organised Muslim “community” in Britain. The development of an organised Muslim community which worked together to promote Muslim views and needs has often been understood as resulting from the Rushdie Affair, and the weaknesses that it

revealed in the situation of Britain's Muslims. Whilst it is certainly the case that Britain's Muslim population came to increased prominence following the Affair, and that they did become more vocal and sought to become more organised in the 1990s, this thesis has demonstrated that these developments did not come out of nowhere, and in fact many of the early developments in the organisation of Britain's Muslim community predated the publication of the *Satanic Verses*. This was particularly evident in the organisation of a national Muslim response to the Swann Report in 1985-6, several years before the Rushdie Affair. This can perhaps be retrospectively understood as a sort of dry run for the Rushdie Affair, where a perceived threat or injustice led to an organised Muslim response. That is not to say that the Rushdie Affair was not a significant event in the history of Britain's Muslim population. It was. Rather, this thesis has demonstrated that the Rushdie Affair should be understood as a point some way along an ongoing trajectory of growing organisation, rather than as a singular explosion which changed everything.

The reinterpretation of the events of the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s also has implications for existing perceptions of the role of the Rushdie Affair and Islamophobia on relations between Muslims, state and society. The Rushdie Affair, and at times the Gulf War, have been understood as being the issues which brought Muslims to the attention of the British state and society, provoking concerns over the ability of Muslims to integrate into British society. The evidence presented in this thesis, however, including the case studies of Bradford and the Islamia School, suggests that these concerns predated the Rushdie Affair, and were more entrenched than is often acknowledged. There have been indications throughout the thesis of a nascent form of the idea of Muslims as a "fifth column" in British society, and as a group that was unable and unwilling to integrate itself into that society. This idea developed further following the Rushdie Affair, the Gulf War and the September 11th attacks. This thesis has shown, however, that it can be seen in some form as far back as the 1970s in Bradford and nationally over questions of whether single sex schooling for

Muslims was appropriate in late twentieth British society. It was also apparent in some of the discussions in Bradford over the provision of halal meat which cast Muslims as barbaric, uncivilised and exercising disproportionate influence. It was also particularly evident in discussions over state-funded Muslim schooling, which raised questions over whether the curriculum (especially the science curriculum), the religious ethos, the separation of the sexes and the teaching of all subjects through the filter of Islam, would be desirable aspects of late twentieth century British society. The development of the E(EP) paper with the clear aim of preventing Muslims from receiving state funding for their schools also predated Rushdie, as did the view expressed by the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister that “separate” schools should not receive state funding. This again indicates that the Rushdie Affair should be interpreted not as the starting point of a conflict between Muslims and British state and society, but rather as the eruption of something that had been building for some time.

This thesis has demonstrated that the existence of such concerns over the compatibility of Islam and late twentieth century British society, going back to at least the 1970s, can offer a partial explanation over why some of the educational needs expressed by Muslims were felt to be beyond what could be accommodated not only within the pluralist framework, but also in late twentieth century Britain more generally. Whilst there is some evidence of attempts to extend the limitations of the pluralist framework to accommodate a greater range of needs in schools, there were some needs which proved intractable. This was particularly the case with the issue of state-funded religious schooling, raising the question of why it was that this was felt to go beyond what was acceptable and what could be accommodated.

A part of the problem was timing: Muslims seeking voluntary-aided schooling were doing so at a time when the system which administered such schools, the LEAs, was under sustained

government attack. This made the future of the framework of state-funded religious schooling uncertain, and affected the likelihood of the government making changes to that system which would lead to its expansion. This does seem to have had some impact on their chances of successfully applying for state funding, but it is not sufficient as an explanation. Firstly, there were Christian and Jewish schools which became denominational at the same time that the Islamia school was being refused funding. Secondly, when developing the framework for GM schools, the government developed clauses to make it difficult for Muslim schools to become state-funded via this route. So whilst shifts in educational frameworks and ideologies can account to some extent for the refusal of the Islamia application, they only offer a partial explanation.

This thesis has suggested that the difficulties faced by the Islamia school, and by Muslims seeking to have their needs met in schools, were deeply embedded in narratives relating to the development of late twentieth century British identity. Muslims applying for state-funded schooling, or making other educational requests, found themselves doing so in a society that was increasingly inclined to perceive itself as secular or Judaeo-Christian, or a seemingly paradoxical amalgamation of the two. On the one hand, Muslims were attempting to assert a confidently religious identity in a country that increasingly perceived itself as secular. Responses to this can be seen in the views of the Swann Report and the Commission for Racial Equality over state-funded religious schooling, as well as in some left-wing views. Muslim attempts to have their needs heard were affected by a rejection of religion in the public sphere. Yet the role of secularism is not sufficient to explain all of the difficulties faced by Muslims: there is evidence that the state repeatedly accepted applications for state-funded schooling from other religious groups, and that Muslims were singled out for different treatment than Christians and Jews when making requests over their educational needs. Rather, it is the role of secularism combined with the conception of Britain as a Christian or Judaeo-Christian society which affected so significantly the ability of

Muslims to be accommodated in the education system. They were understood not only to be asserting a religious identity in a secular society, but also to be asserting a non-Western religious identity in a country that drew much of its morality and many of its values from the legacy of Christianity. This meant that Muslims were often perceived as outsiders or “others” and their needs were increasingly understood as being beyond the boundaries of what should or could be accommodated in a state-funded education system in England in the late twentieth century.

In addition to being a nation that perceived itself as both increasingly secular and Judaeo-Christian, Britain in the period from the 1950s until the 1980s was a country fraught with concerns over race relations, and the relationship between the new immigrant population and the “indigenous” population could be difficult. This meant that in this period, Muslims seeking to have their educational needs met suffered not only as a result of their religious identity, but also as a result of a racial identity which was often imposed upon them. This could be seen, for example, in the debates surrounding dispersal in Bradford and in the approaches of the Swann Report to “separate” schooling. It can in part help to explain why Muslims making similar requests to Jews, for example over dietary requirements and religious schooling, were treated differently.

This raises a final question of whether the difficulties faced by Muslims during the late twentieth century can be understood as examples of, or being caused by, Islamophobia on the part of state and society. The final chapter, in its analysis of the interactions between the Islamia school and the state, argued that based on the criteria of the Runnymede Trust the state’s actions can be understood as being at least in part influenced by Islamophobia.

Overall, the evidence provided in this thesis suggests that in the 1980s, Islamophobia was certainly a factor in Muslim-state relations, and was a factor in some of the educational policies developed by the Conservative government. There is evidence in negotiations of a

perception of Muslims as being separate from and not sharing values with other cultures, to perceive Islam as inferior, irrational, primitive and sexist, and of hostility to Islam affecting decision-making over policy, leading to discriminatory policies against Muslims.

It is less certain whether Islamophobia was a key factor in the earlier period of interactions.

There is certainly evidence of a degree of suspicion on the part of state and society of Muslim requests for single sex schooling and halal meat in the earlier period. But there was also evidence of dialogue and negotiation over these needs, which usually saw adaptations on part of the state and acknowledgement of these Muslim needs as legitimate. When interactions over education occurred at LEA level, there was room for such negotiations, and Muslims were understood as a local community to be interacted with. By the late 1980s, Muslims were increasingly forced to interact with a distant state in the form of the DES, which viewed them as monolithic and unchanging. So whilst Islamophobia was not the only factor in determining the successes and failures of Muslim-state relations, it was certainly a factor.

The struggles documented here continued into the 1990s and beyond. Many of the unresolved issues of the 1980s which had tested the limits of pluralism remained unresolved. As Gilliat-Ray has argued about the needs identified in this thesis as being accommodated within the pluralist framework “such adjustments do not address more fundamental pedagogical and practical issues which can amount to discriminatory practice”. Writing in 2010, she identified persistent issues such as “a Euro-centric curriculum, poor home-school communications, racist/Islamic bullying of pupils and stereotypical views held by some non-Muslim teachers”.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Sophie Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) p.150

Yet there have been some shifts in the context in which these debates and interactions have been taking place. Parent power and local management of schools had important implications, up to and including the period of New Labour post-1997. The shift in the locus of decision-making in schools away from Local Education Authorities in the direction of central government on the one hand and head teachers and parents on the other, has affected how Muslims interact with the state. Parker-Jenkins *et al* have argued that “multicultural/anti-racist teaching has been marginalized in some community schools as the implications of the Education Reform Act...and local school management became apparent in the early 1990s”.¹⁵⁷ But the new educational framework of the 1990s also provided new possibilities for Muslim parents and educationalists. Ansari argues that by the 1990s Muslim parents were “more assertive about what they wanted for their children in the educational system”. For example, the number of Muslim school governors increased as a result of the changes introduced under Local Management of Schools and these governors were able to secure grant-maintained status – and therefore a greater degree of control over – some schools with a majority of Muslim pupils.¹⁵⁸ Gilliat-Ray noted how, by 2010, there were British Muslim organizations who were “actively lobbying to promote greater parental involvement in schooling issues, such as by encouraging Muslim parents to become school governors or promoting Muslim teachers as role models”.¹⁵⁹ In the 2010s, the rise of academies and free schools has opened up further possibilities of Muslim influence and control over schools with significant Muslim intakes.

The state’s approach to state-funded Muslim schooling also shifted in the late 1990s, with the Islamia School being one of four Muslim schools to achieve state-funded status under

¹⁵⁷ Marie Parker-Jenkins, Dimitra Hartas, and Barrie A Irving, *In Good Faith: Schools, Religion, and Public Funding* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p.92

¹⁵⁸ Ansari, *The Infidel Within*, p.321, p.329

¹⁵⁹ Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain*, pp.150-1

New Labour, first as a grant-maintained school and then becoming voluntary-aided.¹⁶⁰ The New Labour government adopted and extended the Conservative belief in parental choice in education with faith schools as one element of that choice. The School Standards and Framework Act of 1998 created four categories of state school in England and Wales – community schools, foundation schools (formerly GM schools), voluntary-aided and voluntary-controlled schools, reaffirming the place of state-funded religious schools in the English educational framework at the start of the twenty-first century.¹⁶¹ Debates over the appropriateness of state-funded Muslim – and religious – schools in twenty-first century England have not abated and still regularly appear in the media.¹⁶² But Muslims seeking state-funded schooling have received the same legal treatment as Christians, Jews and other faiths for the past twenty years, something which should not be ignored.

Overall, this thesis has demonstrated that Muslims were successfully interacting with the state over education from the late 1960s onwards, effectively starting as soon as Muslim children arrived in English schools in significant numbers. The framework of religious pluralism that had existed in some form for over 100 years, and which was enshrined in the 1944 Education Act, was able to accommodate Muslim needs, as it evolved out of a need to accommodate religious diversity in England. However, the potential of this framework was limited: firstly, it was a conservative framework which sought to maintain the education system in its existing form; secondly, it was a framework that was ideologically and practically linked to the development of policy during the post-war years, based on expansion and high spending. By the mid-1970s, Muslims were seeking to have needs accommodated that could push the boundaries of the framework of conservative pluralism. However, this coincided with the beginning of a political and ideological movement that

¹⁶⁰ Humayun Ansari, *The Infidel within: Muslims in Britain since 1800* (London: C Hurst, 2004), p.337

¹⁶¹ Marie Parker-Jenkins, Dimitra Hartas, and Barrie A Irving, *In Good Faith: Schools, Religion, and Public Funding* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p.17

¹⁶² *The Guardian*, 07/11/17

shifted economic policy, and sought to fundamentally alter the ethos of the education system and the logistics of its administration. The effect of this was that, rather than being able to evolve to accommodate the needs of new groups including Muslims, the framework within which they had previously been interacting was effectively swept away. The flexibility and diversity which had benefitted them, allowing them to have their needs met at a local level, was replaced by one which called for the centralisation and homogenisation of the educational experience of all children. This left Muslims vulnerable to the tyranny of the majority at a national level, as well as in individual schools. This occurred at a time when there was rising discussion about the place of Muslims in society, and the compatibility of “Islam” with a “western” society. This can be understood in part as having emerged from a similar homogenising drive as the one that occurred in education. The creation of an “us” and “them” mentality requires a standardisation of what it means to be “us” as well as of how we perceive “them”. This homogenisation was based on the perception of Britain as a secular nation, but also on the legacy of Christianity and the identification of Britain as a Judaeo-Christian society. In this context, Muslims were cast as the “other”. The effect of this was that Muslims found themselves less, rather than more able to have their needs met as the twenty-first century approached.

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