

Educational Philosophies

Example 6

Islamic Home Education

We believe education begins at birth and concludes at death, and we further believe it is not restricted to books, buildings, or types of individuals.

Our family's Education provision is based on Living Islam i.e. following the word of Allah, as given in the Quran. Islam has many facets, and depending on the level of understanding of our children, new dimensions will be added as this understanding progresses.

Our commitment to an Islamic way of life means that we are primarily concerned with raising children who appreciate their Creator and are not at odds with their natural place in this world.

Our current focus is in establishing two main areas, the daily worship of a Muslim and the idea of individual responsibility and that of community responsibility.

Worship takes many forms, and each involves for the 'facilitator' tasks of planning, finding suitable resources and providing a guided programme that increases in understanding and content as the child progresses.

For example reading the Quran: originally in Fusha Arabic, (pure Arabic) means the children are learning Arabic as a second language. We currently have an online tutor in Alexandria, Egypt, who sends us lessons as winrar files, and then once a week we have a spoken class over the Pal talk system. We have a number of CD ROMs for Arabic as a second language and we are using the Gateway to Arabic series for written work.

Another form of worship is observation of the wonders around us. the Quran says, "Verily in the heavens and the earth are signs for those who believe". The observation and awareness translates into study of Nature in our home education, from watching a seed turn to a plant, or a kitten turn to a cat, or the Seasons being reflected in what grows in the garden. Science also comes in as we discuss why leaves are green, how does the plant 'eat', what is an insect etc.

Mathematics makes a silent entry in the form of tallies and recording of information when we went on our bug hunts in the garden, th park and in the grounds of stately homes.

Under individual responsibility our children are learning that their actions have consequences, they are also learning about which behaviour is appropriate and which is not. Part of this learning journey is to learn about themselves, how they see things, how they react to situations around them.

Interaction with people of all ages, religions and cultures is very much a part of this. Islam teaches how we should behave to the young and ols, the sick and old, those who love us and those who do not.

Some of the values we hope to pass along to them are those of:

Honesty: to deal with each other in a fair and straight forward manner without manipulation or coercion

Integrity: to let our actions follow our beliefs and reflect them in a sincere manner

Respect: to treat other human beings/other animals, other life in the natural world with the respect we would want to be shown ourselves.

As parents or teacher, we believe it is our role to encourage our children's learning, to work with their natural inclinations and interest at their own pace and to provide a rich educational environment.

After a number of trial and error sessions we have found that the best way for our children to learn is to provide them with some structured work but also to encourage some child-led learning.

Where our primary aim is concerned structure works best; but perhaps it may be as well to describe our view of what that is:

Children are naturally curious and willing to explore and learn, we nurture that and provide resources they can explore with, talk about and question etc.

For example we are currently in the Islamic month of Dhul Hijjah when the annual pilgrimage takes place. In order to bring this to 'life' for the children we started with mathematics and shapes, coming to cubes and their nets. There are 11 different ways of making the net of a cube, a good fun investigation!

Using our new found results we make a cube from our craft materials (plenty of maths, measuring and sizing etc. as well as crafts). We used lego people to be our pilgrims and have them don their tissue made Ihram, (pilgrim uniform).

We act out the hajj and I read them stories of Prophet Ibrahim and his Hajj, as well as Prophet Muhammad's pbuh Hajj.

We went on a virtual hajj here, <http://www.pbs.org/muhammad/virtualhajj.shtml> .

Books from the library result in a discussion on transport, i.e. then people walked or rode camels and donkeys, a person in India would have had to start walking now, to get to next years Hajj! today we hop on a plane for 8 hours. Etc.

The topic is initiated by mum or dad , but often the direction we turn is child led and they are learning all the time.

Beyond these basics , we limit even initiating and are heading for child-led and child-inquiry driven. A good example of this is when ***** expressed a desire to learn more about electricity, electronics and robotics. From the initial discussions we went to the library and got several books. We conducted a lot of basic experiments to secure the idea of conductor / non conductor. We visited the science museum 'hands on' basement to try the hand powered toaster etc.! and explored generators.

Most of our inquiries then led us to explore the idea of building a motor, and using parts from his meccano kit to try and build a 'robotic' creature. . Since then, we have continued reading about ideas on robots, attending a science lecture on basic electronics and purchased kits from the Opittec centre and the Maplin store, to further his ideas.

Some library books had hands-on-experiments to explain some of the concepts, some of the experiments and other books attempted to explain more electronics at a child's level.

CURRICULUM:

Curriculum may be subdivided into the following sections,

- Islam
- English
- Mathematics
- I.T. skills
- Research skills
- History
- Geography and Social studies
- Science
- Art
- Music and singing
- Arabic
- Arts and crafts
- Sports and activities
- Outings and camps

But these subdivisions are often irrelevant in the sense that areas will overlap and be present at the same time. We will not always 'timetable' a subject as we do not always follow that style of learning.

For example in their comic book efforts the boys are reading (ENGLISH) and drawing (ART), making use of the computer via Paint programme and Word

(I.T. SKILLS).

For example when we visited a Bee farm (OUTING), the children learned about the nature of bees and how honey was made, (SCIENCE and NATURE), as well as by-products such as candles from wax. We followed this up at home but also added verses of the Quran which relate how honey is made, and the benefits of honey as told in the Sunnah by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH (Quran, Islamic studies, Hadith, Health).

Cross curriculum ideas are the ones we follow themost, where everything can be explored when the interest level is high. Below are some details of what each area can contain but it is not possible to include everything.

Islam

As our primary aim is to raise our children with a firm foundation in Islam we are following a fairly relaxed structure that, on a weekly basis , covers the essentials via:

QURAN: reading and memorization, plus meaning, using the Tafsir by ibn Kathir

ARABIC : learnt as a second language with the help of CD ROMs, an online tutor, and workbooks as the Quran is in Arabic

ISLAMIC STUDIES: covering the background of the Quran, placing events in context, studying the history, culture and geography of the people and Prophets of the times: using a variety of books and resources off the internet.

HADITH: the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH

SEERAH: the life of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH

LIVING ISLAM: today's world, living as a Muslim today, Islam in a world context

MUSLIM HERITAGE: <http://www.muslimheritage.com/>

MUSLIMS IN BRITAIN: our heritage here, examples of Muslims from the earliest time: resources from the net, eg. http://www.isb.org.uk/docs/Mus_in_Brit2.pdf

Main Curriculum:

Tasheelul Ahadeeth :Tas heelul Akhlaaq Wal Aadaab :Tas heelul Fiqh

Tas heelul Aqaa-id : Quran

Within the framework of Islam we aim to provide them with access to materials and activities in a wide variety of areas.

English and Literacy in general.

***** has been reading since the age of 5 and he is interested in a variety of materials.

His current favourites are the Horrible History magazines, Jackie Chan magazines and fantasy books, (the worst witch, Harry Potter, etc.).

Once a week, or once every ten days, we visit the library and he chooses his own reading material: currently he is favouring the 'how to books' as he is interested in building motors and robots.

Written work takes many forms:

we sometimes make use of the CPG books to cover the basics, as well as the First Aid English books and a number of sites on the internet.

he is currently writing a comic style story, that is being transferred to the computer using Paint and Word programmes,

Islamic Studies requires a lot of reading, and then comprehension work. Included in this are basic research skills too. There is often a detour into history of the times and the geography of the areas concerned. Cultural influences, political influences etc. also come into the study, and are discussed openly, to aid a more balanced world view..

** learnt to read using 'Teach your child to read in 100 easy lessons'. He has been reading since the age of 4.

One of the reasons why we relaxed on full time structure is that although ***** learnt to read early he was not a willing reader. In fact he went through a phase where he did not enjoy reading at all, and the only way he has come back to it is by being left to his own devices, being read to when he has initiated the request, and having books there but not being 'forced' into 'working' with them.

His current favourites are Jackie Chan and other mutant hero magazines. As his reading ability cannot always cope with that level of vocabulary, we will often read them to him or, if he chooses, simply help him sound out the words.

He is also working his way through the levelled readers on the Reading a-z site, and we are also using ideas from the Click teaching site.

He has since about six months ago requested a 'proper' writing book in which he is making a journal type story about 'goodies' and 'baddies'.

Mathematics and Numeracy in general, plus I.T. skills

The base is familiarity with numbers, basic mathematical concepts and arithmetic. Initially, this will mean gaining a basic understanding of quantity and the symbolic representation of it (figures), learning to read and write figures and how to perform basic arithmetic. It is important through this process that children are allowed to learn these skills at their own pace. Again, there will be an overlap with the "Research Skills" component, as we would expect, for example, some degree of statistics to be covered in the general areas which the children will choose to pursue.

Extension beyond the basics as our children develop will depend on their expressed inclination.

In the case of ***** this has already been expressed around last May when he wanted to try Algebra. Following through on algebra has led him onto a National Extension College course of Intermediate level maths which, if he chooses, may lead to the GCSE this November.

His pace of work and level of interest are self initiated and as long as that continues we will continue to facilitate him by providing the materials and on occasion, a tutor.

***** is just covering the basics, enjoying the idea of numbers and what can be done with them.

He has learned to count in 2's and 5's recently and has surprised himself by being able to double up! Eg. $2+2=4$, $4+4=8$, $8+8=16$..etc.

The introduction of money has made shopping a lot more fun too.

***** enjoys workbooks and has been supplied with the Letts Magical books, the Learning Rewards workbooks and some CPG books.

We make use of manipulatives as and when needed.

***** is also very fond of the computer and regularly uses the Learning Land CD ROMs, and the Learning Ladder Year 1 and Year 2 discs.

We have also subscribed to a few internet sites, eg. Spark Island, which teach through games.

Both children have unlimited access to a P.C. with internet , and a laptop without. These items are solely for the children's use.

Research Skills

By Research Skills we mean the ability to seek out information, to carry out basic analysis and to communicate results when necessary / appropriate. This skill forms part of our four basic components because we see it as essential for all future learning be it in their chosen career or further academic study. Initially, it will involve us guiding our children through the research process but eventually will be controlled and directed by the children themselves. In both cases the results will be their own intellectual property to disseminate or not as they see fit.

Currently ***** is moving into the independent area by being able to use Dictionaries, Thesaurus, encyclopaedias , atlases etc. on his own, as well as becoming familiar with search engines on the internet.

***** is working on the idea of the parts of a book, and how he can get help from the contents and index.

History , Geography and Social Studies

Much of the content in this area is covered in the cross curricular units.

Occasionally we will pick up on one factor and focus on that, eg. Volcanoes was a topic on its own , with a lot of baking soda and vinegar to explore the 'largest eruption'.

The study of Roman was made real with the interactive workshop at Reading Museum, as well as by the CD ROM and book by the Aztec group.

We are also making use of the Story of the World by S Wise Bauer told chronologically and full of interesting tales about great men and women,

it covers the history of the world-including all continents and major people groups.

Art and Self-expression

Self-expression is the ability to communicate, verbally, in writing or through the creative arts. This will involve becoming fully self-aware, developing good self-esteem and self-respect. This forms part of our basic components because irrespective of how much knowledge we have, we believe, our future depends very much on our ability to communicate.

***** has found that he has a flair for art, hence our weekly art lessons every Tuesday with a qualified teacher. He has also taught himself how to work programmes such as the movie maker on the P.C. where a set of single images can be rolled together to create a film. His first 'film' was 20 seconds long.

****enjoys art, but is more cautious in what he will try, We feel with the correct teacher he will improve in confidence and so come to be a bit bolder and more daring, so bringing his many ideas to life.

Music and Singing

Islamic nasheeds, (songs) and stories set to the beat of Duffs are an important part of the children's day. Many basic ideas about Islam have been taught to them through their songs and they often follow these sessions up by producing crafts or art work reflecting what they have listened to.

For example from the tape series The Pillars of Islam, **** creates a 5 pillared doorway to a mosque, using the inside of kitchen rolls.

***** used old bits of cloth and an A3 sized paper to draw up Noah's ark.

Arts and Crafts

The boys have attended potter classes in the past, and can do so again if they wish, and we also have self drying clay at home. They have made insects, bowls, plates and names in clay.

We are also members of a local scrap store and the boys have a variety of materials from which to make what they please. Recent creations have included robots and spiders.

Arabic

Already mentioned

Sports and activities

See below and activities sheet

Outings and camps

See below and activities sheet

ASSESSMENT

As our children are with us 24 hours a day, seven days a week, we are acutely aware of their potential, strengths and weaknesses.

Living and working so closely with our children, we have an intimate knowledge of their goals and their achievements. We are usually with them for their learning experiences and we can see the progress they are making from one experience to the next. As their parents, we have a strong personal interest in their development beyond that of a regular teacher. It is our habit to observe our children regularly without interfering in their activities and to use the information we gain from that to aid our understanding of them, and use it to move them along their learning route.

Educational opportunities are endless and their teachers are on hand at all times.

EXAMPLES OF TRIPS AND CAMPS was given on a separate page

Also planned trips and camps

2nd year UPDATE FOR DS1

In this past year DS1 has continued to grow in confidence and maturity as well as academic and physical abilities.

He has accomplished a few of his personal goals. For example he has been:

**caving in the Mendips with the Education in the Environment Caving Club

**obtained his Brown stripe belt for Seiki Judo Karate

**gained a Grade B in his GCSE mathematics

**completed one major woodwork project, the making of a treasure chest from selecting wood, taking measurements, using various tools and putting it all together. (He has since

also worked on a robotic arm, and completed another box, working entirely by himself).

In English and Science DS1 is continuing with the CGP books for his ability level.

Some science experiments are from the Discovery series programmes, eg. when he watched the Romans and how they used water plus levels to move machinery and clocks, DS1 re-created the experiments at home.

In English he has continued to write his own fictional style stories, as well as having to write essay style answers to the work we are doing for Muslim Civilization and History.

He continues to read widely, for pleasure and to increase his knowledge of subjects he is interested in: examples of his recent reading have included:

How to build series: eg. How to build a robot

The Horrible Histories series (magazines arrive in the post on a monthly basis)

The Horrible Science series (new magazine begun January 2004)

The Fly: Islamic science

Calvin and Hobbes by B Waterson

Frankenstein by M Shelly

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix by J Rowling

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire by J Rowling

Tell me about Islamic History by L Nagy

Islam the D-I-Y guide by R Maqsood

Animals by L Ames

Levers technology by M Gordon

The boy from Mecca by S Omar

The Sleepers in the cave by J Iqbal

books such as Vikings , Volcanoes, Genetics at Work at Level Z from the a-z Reading site

Mathematics has come to a close for the time being, since November 2004, as he has sat his Intermediate Level GCSE and gained an excellent pass of a Grade B.

He may choose to take the subject up again in the future but for the moment he is focusing on other activities and subjects.

DS1 has also discovered Home Economics, and developed a good level of food preparation skills. He has covered the basics of nutrition and has learnt to make many simple dishes such as rice, roast chicken, leg of lamb, pasta, scrambled eggs, fruit tarts, cakes and biscuits etc.

DS1 is using the Lifepac series in History and Geography following the landforms, population traits and History and Geography of the world by continents.

He has also taken part in online classes with other home educators on Earth Science. The most recent class was on cave features and erosion, its types and causes as well a focus on prevention and possible effects of man on his environment.

Currently DS1 is considering following a course in GCSE Islamic Studies, and perhaps starting an OU science course. He has the books available, and access to a tutor, while he makes his choice as to which subject he wants to try next.

We continue to offer him a range of activities and subjects, and we are continuing his education in exactly the same mode as described in the Educational Philosophy and Implementation document you have.

The online Arabic has now been replaced by Saturday morning school at XX but in all other subjects we are proceeding as before.

We are very pleased with his progress in Quran reading, memorization and pronunciation.

His use of daily Arabic, spoken and written is steadily improving.

His recent exam and sports success bears out that our method of home education is proving to be effective and fulfilling for DS1.

UPDATE FOR DS2

DS2 also continues to grow in confidence and is enjoying his sporting activities. He has moved up to Water Skills¹ in swimming and continues as a red belt in Karate.

He is a keen reader, reading for pleasure and on topics he has interest in. His recent books have been related to Cats as his new pet has generated a lot of enthusiasm and has spun off into project work on the Cat family.

Other examples of his recent reading have included:

I Wonder Why series (Castles had Moats, Pyramids were built etc.)

The Vegetarian Troll by Ralph Wright

The Book of Beasts by E Nesbit

Tell me about Hajj by S khan

Garfield books by J Davis

The poor woman and the bread by s Salim

The Horrible Histories series, (magazines arrive in the post on a monthly basis)

The Horrible Science series, (new magazine begun January 2004)

Quranic stories for children

Usborne Young reader series, eg. Dragon in the Cupboard

He has used the CGP workbooks to follow Spelling, Literacy Strategy and comprehension. He continues to write stories focused around his interests, (spiderman, good fighting bad, etc.).

DS2 is also working through the M.E.P. site for mathematics, <http://www.ex.ac.uk/cimt/mep/>.

The primary material includes a full Mathematics scheme of work for pupils in years 1 to 5 (ages 5-10).

He is also continuing with the Letts Maths skills booklets that he enjoys.

DS2 is using the Grade 4 Lifepac series in History and Geography following Map work and Exploration of the Earth. He has also taken part in online classes with other home educators on Earth Science. The most recent class was on stalagmites and stalactites' plus other cave features and erosion.

He has also discovered woodwork and has completed a major project in the building of a 'cat station' for his new pet. He was involved in designing a play area for the cat, selecting wood, measuring and cutting wood and putting the station together.

Science work has been from the <http://www.primaryschoolscience.com/> site, and experiments have been from books such as the Big Book of Experiments, by B Watson.

His Arabic and Quran are progressing very well and we are extremely pleased with his achievements.

He is memorising Juz Amma, and is he has also enrolled in the Saturday morning school at XX for everyday Arabic.

His educational plan continues as described in the Educational Philosophy and Implementation document you have, and again his success and progression shows this style of home education is appropriate for his ability and level.

His art work has picked up pace as his confidence increases and he has made a model village for his small toy men. Measurements, art and maths were heavily a part of this.

RESOURCES

What follows is a list of some of the resources we will have access to , it is by no means exhaustive and the sub-points are by way of example only.

At Home...

Art materials

Paint (tempera, acrylic, oil), Crayons, Paper, Scissors, Glue, Glitter, Collage materials (leaves, shells, coloured paper), Fingerpaint, Pastels, Clay

Craft materials and machinery

Sewing machine, Fabric, Paper-making kit, Clay, Wool, knitting needles , and patterns, Cross stitch pattern work ,scrap materials from the Staines scrap store bought on a regular basis

Maths and manipulative equipment

Puzzles, Scales, Beads, Counters, Calculator, Ruler, compass, protractor etc. graph paper, isometric paper, tracing paper, polar co-ordinates paper.

Science equipment

Containers, Chemicals, Compass, Electrical circuits, Magnifying Glass, House hold food supplies (baking soda, vinegar), Balloons, A selection of metal samples,

Magnets and iron filings, Young scientist kits, yearly supply, Environmental kits, Motors, Solar panel

Personal library (we have an estimated 2000 books on a wide range of subjects including World history, Science, Evolution, Islamic culture, Islamic history, Religion, Geography of the world, countries of the world, cultures of the world, cooking, Children's picture books, Sports, Arab culture/world, Islamic schools of thought, Classic literature (Dickens, Tolkien, Shakespeare, Hemmingway, Alcott), Children's factual and reference books eg. Encyclopaedias, atlases etc. and the entire Usbourne collection for schools. There are also a large number of children's fictional reading books.)

Sports equipment

Balls, Cricket set. Kite, Tennis rackets, Cycles, swimming ring, floats etc, skateboards, Roller skates, Table tennis

Musical equipment

Drums, Children's cassettes, Classical Islamic nasheeds CDs

Family Play Equipment

Dolls, Dress-ups, Tea sets, Play food, Playdough, cooking pots, play food, ovens, ironing table, vacuum cleaner

Television : eg. History channel , Discovery Channel, Kids mechanics programme, BBC schools programmes, videos, such as 'The Blue Planet'

Board games

Chess, Ludo, Scrabble, Monopoly, Cards etc.

Computers and internet

1 P.C. with internet access and a laptop for the children's use

CD roms from PCCD for Maths Skills, English Skills, Spelling, Science, Mental maths, Junior topics, from Learning Ladder for years 1 to 6, from Times for GCSE

syllabuses in maths, English and science

A range of CD's offering 3D science - body world and the systems of the body, encyclopaedias, world atlases

A range of CD's for games such as chess , (logical thinking and strategy)

Mind mapping software, (teaching ideas of summarization and spider diagrams for events, articles read etc.)

ACTIVITIES

Pottery, at home or at the **** on a Monday

Swimming, evening classes once a week, at *****

Karate, evening classes, twice a week, at *****School sports centre,

Art and Science workshop, at *****. on a Tuesday

Science at the science museum, when something appealing comes up for either child. Eg. Last visit was to the IMAX for BUGS, insect world

R.I. In London for the Science lectures, again when something appeals to the children, we attend

Once ever fortnight we have a social gather in Hanwell with other home educating families, during the warmer weather in a park for picnics.

Third Wednesday of every month we hold 'open house' for all homeschoolers we are in contact with

First Friday of every month we meet other homeschoolers from the Chiswick end at the *****club: (games such as war hammer etc.)

We have a family membership of the Barbican in London , which allows us to attend films and theatre productions eg. One booked is Cat in the Hat with KS1 information

We are also members of the National Trust and use this as a base for many educational opportunities., Gardens, history and heritage

We are members of the Woodland Trust and use this as a base for plant studies, and environmental issues.

Public libraries and inter-loan

Museums

Art galleries

Local experts/ tutors/ trainers

Local parks and reserves

Community classes

Our programme is also one where field trips can predominate:

Eg. From May to August last year, 2003, the children enjoyed a range of camping trips, from the homeschoolers camping festival at HESFES, to the peace and quite of Studland Bay and relaxed canoeing sessions. We also attended the Living Islam festival / camping experience in Lincoln.

Socialization amongst peers and non peers is a very natural result.

Skills, valuable in themselves, are also learnt, eg. Managing a camp fire, putting up a tent, disposing of waste in an environmentally friendly way, awareness of energy resources etc.

Educational opportunities are to be found everywhere.

Our children mix with a wide variety of people across the age spectrum, across levels of education and across the religious spectrum, which we believe is an ideal situation.

We take our children everywhere we go, to friends, to the mosque, to visit family, shopping, outings and holidays, and we include them in our social interactions at home.

As the children have grown they have developed friendships from the clubs they attend as well as with the children of our friends. They have also learnt to interact with everyone, from babies to adults.

We trust this provides you with sufficient information as to the progression of our home education.

To further demonstrate that our home education is efficient and suitable, we are enclosing nine letters of support from families and professionals we are in contact with.

We hope that the above will prove satisfactory, and expect that if there are any issues you will specify them in a detailed report, along with a response to our letter of the 13th January 2005. We do hope you will confirm that there is no reason to believe a suitable education is not taking place, and that we can move forward into a more positive and constructive relationship with the LA.