

# AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

## PRESS RELEASE 528#

### SECTARIAN EDUCATION : UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

#### STATE WITHIN A STATE: SHARIA LAW?

When State Aid to sectarian schools was re-introduced in the 1960s in Australia, it was done to the tune of ‘Poor parish Catholic Schools.’”

It did not take long for the Protestant and all kinds of private religious groups to line up for taxpayer funds.

DOGS warned of religious division and the setting up of a State within a State. This has been most obvious in the growing political influence and power of the Roman Catholic church which has always believed that the Church has the right to dominate the State in moral matters.

But what happens when a religious group has a different religious and legal code altogether? What happens when the secular, democratic State funds religious schools which adhere ,not to the Rule of Law but Sharia Law?

This is happening in the UK with the privatising of public schools. The English are upset because teachers in Islamic schools are required to wear the Hijab. But this is already accepted practice in Australia. No hijab. No job. And this applies for student teachers. No Hijab. No teacher training.

The Abbott Government with Christopher Pyne as Minister for Education is interested in imitating the British experience. So what happens to the Rule of law and basic democratic freedoms when Islamic schools enter big time into the privatisation equation?

The following information can be discovered in this article by **Soeren Kern** October 3, 2013 at 5:00 am at **<http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3999/uk-education-sharia>**

# British Education: Creeping Sharia

Many Muslim groups...have been marketing themselves as "inter-faith" schools in an effort to qualify for [free school] government funding. More than 80 free schools -- at least a dozen of which are catering specifically to Muslim students -- are currently operating in Britain and another 200 are in the planning stage.

A taxpayer-funded Muslim school in England has inflamed public anger after it emerged that the institution is operating according to Islamic Sharia law.

Islamic fundamentalists running the Al-Madinah School in Derby, an industrial city in central England, have ordered all female teachers -- including those who are not Muslim -- to cover their heads and shoulders with a hijab, an Islamic scarf.

In addition to the strict dress code, pupils have been banned from singing songs, playing musical instruments, or reading fairy tales, activities deemed to be "un-Islamic," according to non-Muslim staff members at the school.

Girls as young as four are required to sit at the back of the classroom, behind the boys, regardless of whether they can properly see the chalkboard. Girls must also wait for all the boys to get their lunches before they can eat.

When teaching children the alphabet, staff are prohibited from associating the letter 'P' with the word "pig." Female staff are banned from wearing jewelry and are instructed to avoid shaking hands with male teachers to prevent "insult." Naturally, all non-halal food is outlawed at the school.

The revelations about the un-British goings-on at the Al-Madinah School -- some staffers have compared the working conditions at the school to "being in Pakistan" -- are fueling outrage over what some are describing as underhanded attempts to establish a parallel Islamic education system in Britain.

Critics say the school -- which originally marketed itself as an "inter-faith" school in order to qualify for taxpayer monies -- promised that at least 50% of its students would be non-Muslim. Now that it has obtained £1.4 million (€1.7 million; \$2.25 million) in government financing, however, the administrators of Al-Madinah are switching gears by operating the school according to Islamic law, apparently to ensure that the school will be 100% Muslim.

The Al-Madinah School opened in September 2012 as a so-called free school, which is similar to a private school in that it operates beyond the control of local authorities, but is different from a private school in that its operations are paid for by British taxpayers.

Free schools were introduced by the ruling Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2011 based on the argument that such schools would create more competition for public schools and thus drive up educational standards.

The new free school policy makes it possible for parents, teachers, charities and businesses to set up their own schools, along with the freedom to decide the length of school day and term, the curriculum, teacher pay and how budgets are spent.

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British Education Secretary Michael Gove has said that Muslim fundamentalists would not be allowed to set up free schools, and the [Department of Education](#) has established guidelines to discourage Muslim separatism. As a result, many Muslim groups seeking to establish free schools have been marketing themselves as "inter-faith" schools in an effort to qualify for government funding.

The Al-Madinah School, which caters to 240 students between the ages four and 16 (eventually, the school plans to have up to 1,100 pupils), appears to have employed just such a strategy.

The Muslims behind the Al-Madinah project initially hired a non-Muslim principal, Andrew Cutts-McKay, and a non-Muslim deputy principal, Suzanne Southerland, to run the school, apparently in an effort to assuage fears about Islamic fundamentalism.

In a May 2012 interview with the local newspaper *[This is Derbyshire](#)*, Cutts-McKay said: "We will honor all faiths and envisage a school where 50% of pupils are Islamic and the other half aren't. During the day, the timetable will be flexible with time for Islamic teaching but pupils will be able to opt out of this and there will be a chance to learn about other faiths."

After just over a year in their posts, however, both Cutts-McKay and Southerland have resigned. Both allege that they were "forced out" after being "bullied and sidelined" by the school's Muslim board members.

The tensions came to a head in August, after non-Muslim staff said they were told to [sign new contracts](#) which force them to wear the hijab. Not only that, but the [dress code](#) at the "inter-faith" school has been updated to state: "The design of the clothing must not display any symbols of other faiths [other than Islam]."

Around half a dozen teachers at Al-Madinah who face losing their jobs if they refuse to comply with the new rules are now seeking legal advice from the National Union of Teachers.

In an interview with the newspaper *[Derby Telegraph](#)*, a local representative National Union of Teachers, Nick Raine, said: "We are very worried about the school and the education of the 200 children there. There are worries over practices concerning the discrimination between male and female pupils in the school, with the girls being told to sit at the back of the class regardless of whether they can see the board properly."

"It's one thing to have a dress code which we can challenge and quite another to build it into a contract," he added. "The school is publicly accountable so there needs to be a greater level of transparency."

A spokeswoman for the Derby National Union of Teachers, [Sue Arguile](#), said: "This school was first launched as based on Muslim principles and not as a Muslim school. If the school is not sticking to the original reasons behind why it was set up, then it does call into question whether public money is being used properly and for its intended purpose."

The Al-Madinah School -- which is already being investigated by the government over alleged financial irregularities -- has been unapologetic. The school issued a [statement](#) saying: "Like all pioneers, we are on a journey, and as a new school open for just one year (and only a few days in our new, wonderful, secondary building) we simply ask for time to get going and grow into an excellent school."

The Al-Madinah controversy is not unique. In July, the Department for Education (DfE) blocked plans for the creation of the [Northern Lights Free School](#) in Halifax, a town in West Yorkshire, over alleged links to Muslim fundamentalists.

Organizers of the proposed school were dogged by allegations of extremism after a letter -- sent to scores of homes in Halifax -- warned parents to attend a meeting that was "more serious than death." Also known as the "Hell Leaflet," the letter stated: "There have been several incidents recently where children in various settings have been forced to do things against Islam."

The document was sent by Akeel Ayub, the director of the Sunniyy School, a Muslim school in Halifax with close links to the proposed Northern Lights Free School. Evidently, the letter was seeking to apply pressure on families to enroll their children in the new free school.

Many parents in Halifax were furious at receiving the leaflet and the DfE launched an investigation after receiving a letter from a local politician, David Whalley, who wrote: "The local authority is concerned that the rise in issues being reported regarding uniforms for Muslim pupils, Muslim pupils participating in musical activities in school, Muslim pupils participating in curriculum activities related to Christmas etc. have increased and schools have alleged that parents are being influenced by views espoused by the Sunniyy School."

"The local authority is led to believe that there are close links between the Sunniyy School and the proposed free school and therefore the potential risk of a negative impact on community relations within the area is high," Whalley added.

Other Muslim free schools that have generated controversy are the Tauheedul Islam Boys' School and the Tauheedul Islam Girls' School in Blackburn, a large town in Lancashire, England. Blackburn is an area where too many people live "parallel lives" and there is a need for integration rather than separation, according to the Lancashire Telegraph.

The official body for inspecting schools, known as Ofsted, has pledged to keep tabs on Muslim free schools. But Ofsted has long been accused of "whitewashing" hardline Islamic schools that are helping to radicalize a new generation of young British Muslims.

An opinion essay penned by Manzoor Moghal, a well-known writer and commentator on Islam and Muslim affairs in Britain, argues that Islamic schools that oppose the Western lifestyle are a breeding ground for potential social problems in the future.

The essay, "Veils, Segregated Schools and Why We Risk Sowing the Seeds of Islamic Terror in Britain," states:

For far too long, the British authorities have turned a blind eye -- out of misguided fear of being seen as racist -- to the creeping prevalence of militant Islam in our midst. We see this same fearful attitude in the official tolerance of informal Sharia courts in Muslim areas of urban Britain. Such tribunals should not be allowed to operate. Muslims do not need separate judicial institutions. Under the great English tradition of justice, we are all meant to be equal before the law, regardless of status, wealth or religion.

...

How can people ever integrate if the authorities allow separatist enclaves and customs to take root, as we now see all the time in places like Birmingham, Dewsbury in Yorkshire, or Leicester? ... My great worry is that, if the British authorities continue to allow the Islamic hardliners to have their way in the name of choice when it comes to segregating boys from girls in schools, or Sharia courts, or insisting that women should be allowed to wear veils in all circumstances, then those hardliners will feel they are pushing at an open door.

Moghal sums it up: "We must, sadly, accept that there are people in our midst who want to see a hardline Islamist caliphate in Britain. And while the security and intelligence services are nothing less than heroic in their fight against Islamic extremists, continuing to foil terror plots on a regular basis,

our civic institutions have in contrast been far too cowardly in their reluctance to challenge fundamentalism."

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