THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
The Alwaleed Centre

Muslim Families' Educational Experiences

in England and Scotland

Final Report

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Acknowledgement

Contents

Foreword

At a time of increasing diversities in school pupil population, this report represents an important contribution to discussions of how schools can best support Muslim pupils to maximize their potential and aspirations. The report provides useful background to the statistics and literature available relating to Muslims in the UK and more particularly the attainment levels of Muslim young people. What this report also shows is that the term 'Muslim' represents a diversity of views, cultures and understandings and encompasses a range of nationalities and ethnicities.

A clear finding is that there is not one homogenous Muslim parent or pupil group. Muslim parental views about education and their aspirations for their children, just like any other parents, are shaped by their own experiences, their social class, their cultural, national and geographical context. A common myth often espoused by popular media and sometimes those within the education sector is that Muslim parents have higher aspirations for their sons but this report evidences that that is not the case as parents have equally high expectations of their daughters.

The report challenges us to rethink any stereotypes and assumptions about Muslim parents, pupils and communities. While living the values and principles of the Islamic faith are clearly important to Muslim parents, many parents also want schools with an inclusive and caring ethos, a robust academic reputation and schools committed to enabling all pupils to achieve to their best potential.

The report provides valuable reading for those who develop education policy, leaders of educational establishments and education practitioners. Faith plays a significant role in the lives of many Muslim families and is core to the identity of a Muslim parent or pupil. Educators as constructors of knowledge and transmitters of narratives need to consider how to integrate the values and thinking made available to us by living in a diverse multicultural and multireligious society so that we are genuinely trying to get it right for every child. Reflecting on and learning from the voices of Muslim parents and pupils contained in this report would be a useful start.

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a three-year project examining the educational experiences and outcomes of Muslim pupils in England and Scotland. The project was funded by the Alwaleed Centre at the University of Edinburgh. It aimed to explore the following:

- the school choices of Muslim parents in a range of geographical and social locations across the UK;
- the educational experiences and attainment levels of Muslim pupils in different types of school and geographical locations;
- and the relationship between home, school and community.

The research included:

- a review of the academic and policy literature on the education of Muslim pupils;
- an analysis of administrative data on academic achievement and labour market outcomes by ethnic group;
- and family case studies designed to illustrate the way in which Muslim parents negotiate school choice and the educational experiences and outcomes of their children.

Key Points: Background and context

There has been an increase in the number of Muslims in England, in 2001 they accounted for around 3%, this had increased to around 5% in 2011. In Scotland around 1% of the population identified as Muslims in 2001 (2011 census data is not yet available). There is considerable variation in the number of Muslims in the different regions in the UK. In London, they make up 14% of the total population and in the South West 1%. The main religion of the population is Christian; however, around a quarter of the population do not adhere to any religion and the numbers in this group in England increased over the last 10 years.

There is more variation in the types of schools in England but in both countries the majority (over 80%) of children attend secular schools and more than 90% attend state maintained schools. The employment rates of Pakistani and Bangladeshi people is lower than that of White UK people and it is particularly low among women of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin. In England people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage tend to be employed in lower status occupations; in Scotland where the population is very small there are larger proportions in higher status occupations.

Key Points: Muslim pupils' educational achievements and aspirations

Most of the parents in our case studies were ambitious for their children but they were also concerned with their overall well-being. They saw educational qualifications as the means of ensuring good job prospects and for some it was also a means of achieving social mobility. A number of parents commented on labour market changes and the demise of traditional employment in small shops. Whilst it was clear that parents communicated their high educational aspirations to their children and expected them to 'do their best', some parents emphasised the dangers of placing too much pressure on children to achieve academic success and to pursue a narrow range of socially acceptable occupations such as medicine, dentistry and accountancy. There was a strong sense amongst most parents that children needed to be given the freedom to make their own decisions about what they wanted to do. The importance of education in life was something stressed by all parents.

Key Points: Muslim parents and school choice

There are a range of factors that influenced the case study Muslim parents' attitudes to school choice. Parents with greater access to economic and social resources were able to negotiate their way around the education system more effectively than those who were living in socially disadvantaged circumstances or were recent arrivals. The section on achievement and aspiration noted that Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils were tending to improve their academic performance over time, and this is reflected in parents' ability to access information from a range of sources to make strategic school choices. Whilst the majority of parents wanted their children to attend schools with high levels of academic attainment, believing that they would do best there, it was also evident that other aspects of education were valued, including a warm and inclusive school ethos. Some of the more affluent parents, who might themselves have experienced private education in their home country, were seeking this type of education for their children as a means of achieving greater social mobility.

Key Points: Attitudes to faith schools and religious identity

There has been recent support for the expansion of faith schools in England, although there has only been a relatively small increase in their number and there are few Islamic state-funded schools.   In Scotland there are not Islamic schools and although there is debate about Catholic schools, there are no moves to alter their status. At the same time, there is no groundswell of opinion in favour of greater religious diversity within the state sector.

The case studies illustrate that Muslim parents have different views about Islamic schools. For the majority of Muslim parents, the academic reputation and attainment level of the school is the over-riding concern. Religious formation is seen as the responsibility of the family rather than the school, and this tends to be built into family routines and cultural practices. Some Muslim parents regard Islamic schools as potentially divisive and therefore are not in favour of their expansion. A minority of parents experience major tensions in bringing up their children amidst western secular values, and Islamic schools may be preferred by this group as a way of reinforcing Muslim identity. However, for these parents too, high academic standards are important because education is seen as the route to social mobility.

Key Points: Curriculum and home school relations

It was clear that even in this relatively small sample of parents there were different views about what was acceptable and congruent with Muslim values and the extent to which children and young people should engage fully with all aspects of the curriculum. All stressed the need to ensure that children were brought up with a set of values that were based on Islamic principles but many felt these values were not particular to Islam but were shared by other religions. Several parents noted the tensions that were apparent, or would emerge, during the teenage years. Parents who had been brought up in the UK commented on having to cope with these issues when they were teenagers and several said they were aware of these tensions for their own children. In many cases, the concerns and worries were similar to those of all parents, irrespective of ethnic or religious background. What stands out is that Islam and what it means to be a Muslim were interpreted in a number of different ways. Parents were influenced by their own cultural background and their childhood experiences. They were also affected by their immediate environment and, at times, the gender of the children. This implies that schools need to engage with individual parents and children in ensuring that the child has full access to the curriculum but in a culturally sensitive manner.

Conclusion

In summary, this research demonstrated that even within a small sample there is variation between individuals who identify as Muslims and that this variation is linked to context, culture and socio-economic status. In many respects, the choices they make and the concerns they have about their children's futures are similar to parents from other backgrounds. However, many are also concerned about helping their children develop a Muslim identity that allows them to retain their faith in a multicultural society. Problems with widening levels of inequality across OECD countries, accompanied by growing divergence in educational attainment according to social class, are a major

issue for Muslim pupils as for other groups. As noted by the OECD (2008), stemming the trend towards wider educational and economic inequality is vital to preserve social cohesion.

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Introduction

This report presents the findings of a three year project examining the educational experiences and outcomes of Muslim pupils in England and Scotland. The project was funded by the Alwaleed Centre at the University of Edinburgh.   It aimed to explore the following:

- the school choices of Muslim parents in a range of geographical and social locations across the UK;
- the educational experiences and attainment levels of Muslim pupils in different types of school and geographical locations;
- and the relationship between home, school and community.

The research took place in two Scottish cities, a city in the East of England, London and the North West of England. The intention was to cover different localities as well as diverse ethnic backgrounds. The research involved the following methods:

- A review of the academic and policy literature on the education of Muslim pupils
- Analysis of administrative data on academic achievement and labour market outcomes by ethnic group.
- Family case studies designed to illustrate the way in which Muslim parents negotiate school choice and the educational experiences and outcomes of their children.

The report starts with an overview of the background and context of the research before describing the methods in greater depth. It then presents the findings, focusing on key themes before concluding with a summary of emerging themes. When referring to terms used in relation to Islam we have aimed for consistency and used the preferred spelling (as advised by the Advisory Committee). The names used as pseudonyms were also identified through advice from the Advisory Committee.

The Muslim populations of England and Scotland

In the 2001 census most people in the UK identified as Christian (72% in England and 65% in Scotland) and around 15% in England and 28% in Scotland (table1.3) stated that they had no religion. Data from the 2011 census show a change in England (Scottish data are not available until summer 2013) with a diminishing percentage (59.4%) identifying as Christian. Almost a quarter of respondents (24.7%) said that they had no religion, a significant increase compared with the 2001 Census. There was also an increase in those identifying as Muslim, from 1.5 million (3% of the

population) in 2011 to over 2.6 million (5% of the population in 2011 (table 1.1). Interestingly, a recent report by the Centre for European Policy Studies had estimated that by 2010 the Muslim population of the UK would rise to 2.5 million (Choudhury, 2011).

In 2001 in Scotland the proportion of Muslims was lower at about 1% of the Scottish population. However, there is considerable variation between different areas with urban areas in the Central Belt having larger Muslim populations. Regional variation in the location of the Muslims is also in evidence in England. In Inner London, 14.4% of the population stated that they were Muslims. The corresponding figure for Outer London was 11.1% in 2011. In contrast, in the South East Muslims formed 2.3% of the population and in the South West, 1.0% (see figure1.1).

It is important to recognise that the Muslim population of the UK is not homogenous but is drawn from a range of different backgrounds, countries and cultures. The largest group trace their heritage to the Asian subcontinent and just under half (1,112,282) are likely to have an ancestral connection with Pakistan, as most Pakistanis self- identify as Muslim (Strand, 2007). Those of Bangladeshi origin are also likely to identify as Muslim and they account for around half a million of the British population (see table 1.2). As shown in table 1.2, there was a marked increase in the number of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in Britain between 1991 and 2001.

Table 1.1: Religious identification in England, 2001 and 2011

	2001		2011	
	Numbers (000s)	**%**	**Numbers (000s)**	**%**
Christian	35,250	71.7	31,479	59.4
Buddhist	139	0.3	238	0.5
Hindu	547	1.1	806	1.5
Jewish	258	0.5	261	0.5
Muslim	1,525	3.1	2,660	5.0
Sikh	327	0.7	420	0.8
Other religion	143	0.3	227	0.4
No religion	7,171	14.6	13,114	24.7
Religion not stated	3,777	7.7	3,804	7.2
Total	49,139	100	53,012	100

Source: Office for National Statistics, from 2001 and 2011 census

Figure 1.1: Muslims in England by region, 2011 census, percentage of population in region
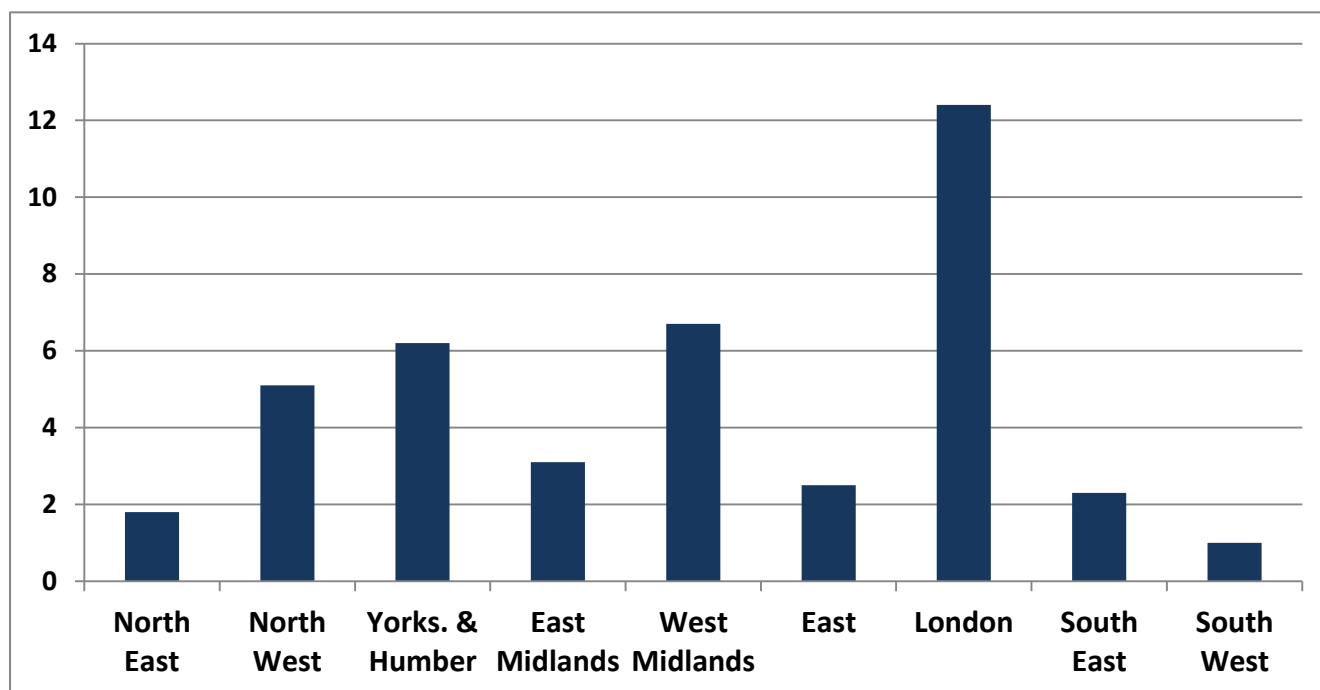
Source: Office for National Statistics, 2011 Census: KS209EW Religion, local authorities in England and Wales

Table 1.2: Ethnic groups in England, 2001 and 2011 census

Ethnic group	2001		2011		
	Number	%	Number	%	% of population
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	42,747,136	87	42,279,236	79.8	
White: Irish	624,115	1.3	517,001	1.0	
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller			54,895	0.1	
White: Other White	1,308,110	2.7	2,430,010	4.6	
					85.5
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Black Caribbean	231,420	0.5	415,616	0.8	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Black African	76,493	0.2	161,550	0.3	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Asian	184,012	0.4	332,708	0.6	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: Other Mixed	151,437	0.3	283,005	0.5	
					2.2
Asian/Asian British: Indian	1,028,547	2.1	1,395,702	2.6	
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	706,539	1.4	1,112,282	2.1	
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	275,389	0.6	436,514	0.8	
Asian/Asian British: Chinese			379,503	0.7	
Asian/Asian British: Other Asian	237,807	0.5	819,402	1.5	
Chinese or other ethnic group – Chinese[1]	220,680	0.5			
Chinese or other ethnic group – Other ethnic group[1]	214,619	0.4			
					7.7
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	475,935	1	977,741	1.8	
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	561,249	1.1	591,016	1.1	
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Other Black	95,325	0.2	277,857	0.5	
					3.4
Other ethnic group: Arab[2]			220,985	0.4	
Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group			327,433	0.6	
Total	**49,138,813**		**53,012,456**	**99.8**	

Sources: 2001 census, nomis at https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/asv2htm.aspx, accessed on 24/01/2013
ONS Census 2011, Table KS201EW, http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-286262; accessed on 24/01/2013

1. Category only in 2001 census
2. Category only in 2011 census

Table 1.3: Current religion in Scotland for the whole population

| Religion	Numbers (000s)	Percentage
Church of Scotland	2,146.3	42.4
Roman Catholic	803.7	15.88
Other Christian	344.6	6.81
All Christian	3,294.6	65.09
Buddhist	6.8	0.13
Hindu	5.6	0.11
Jewish	6.4	0.13
Muslim	42.6	0.84
Sikh	6.6	0.13
Another religion	27.0	0.53
All religions	3,389.5	66.96
No religion	1,394.5	27.55
Not answered	278.1	5.49
All no religion/not answered	1,672.5	33.04
Base	5,062.0	100.00

Source: Scottish Executive 2005

Figure 1.2 shows employment rates by ethnicity and gender in the four regions that were part of our study. The employment rate for the whole population is highest in the East of England (about 72%), followed by Scotland. London and the North West have similar employment rates. Employment rates for those of Indian origin and White people are the highest overall and those for Pakistani and Bangladeshi are well below average but considerably higher in Scotland than in the other three regions. This low average is strongly influenced by very low employment rates for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women. In Scotland the employment rate for Pakistani and Bangladeshi men is slightly above the overall average and; whilst the employment rate for Pakistani and Bangledeshi women is very low it is higher in Scotland than elsewhere. The overall Pakistani and Bangladeshi populations in Scotland are considerably smaller than in England and this should be to be taken into consideration when examining the data. Whilst the data has to be interpreted with caution there seem to be differences between the Pakistani and Bangladeshi population in Scotland and the other three regions. These differences are also apparent when examining occupational status of these two groups in England and Scotland. In Scotland, Pakistani/Bangladeshi people are considerably more likely to be in the highest occupational group (managers and senior officials) than are Whites in England and Scotland and Pakistani/Bangladeshi people in England (figure 1.3). A large proportion of this group are also in sales and consumer services. In England there are more Pakistani/Bangladeshi people in the lower occupational classes. As noted above, these figures have to be interpreted with caution as the numbers within the ethnic minority groups are very low. In Scotland the number of people employed as managers and senior officials was 227,300 out of a sample of 1,802,300; the equivalent figures for Pakistani/Bangladeshi people in Scotland are 2,800 out of a sample of 9,000. In addition there is considerable variation between ethnic groups in relation to self-employment. An analysis of ethnicity in the Scottish 2001 census shows a similar picture in relation to the occupation of those in employment but it also highlights that Pakistani

people are more likely to be self-employed than any other ethnic group (Scottish Executive, 2004). In 2001 32% of Pakistani, 23% of Chinese and 22% of Indian people were self-employed compared to 10% White Scottish.

Figure 1.2: Employment rates by ethnic group, gender in four British regions
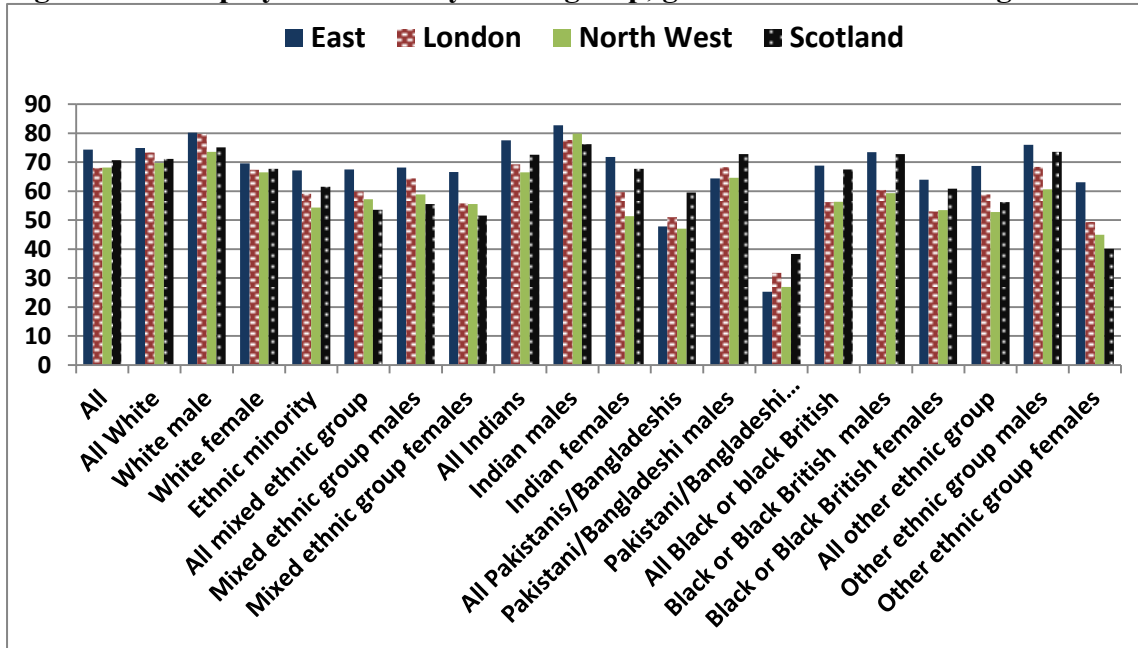
Source: Annual Labour Force Survey 2011-2012, accessed on www.nomisweb

Figure 1.3: A comparison of White and Pakistani/Bangladeshi people in employment by occupational status in England and Scotland, percentages
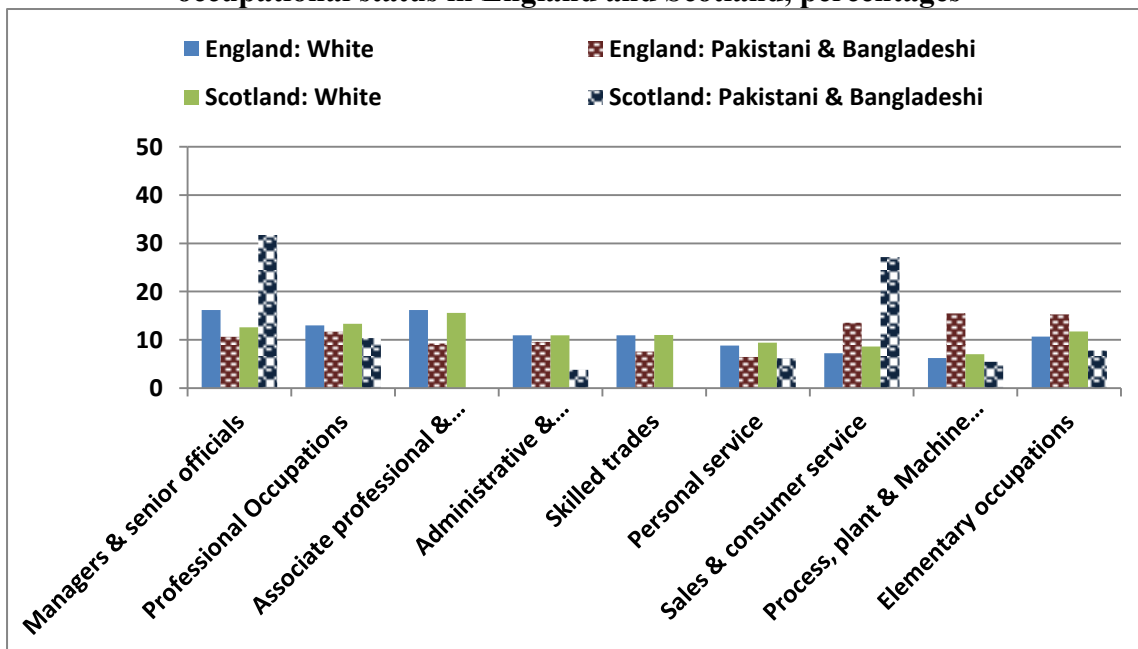
Source: Annual Labour Force Survey 2011- 2012, accessed on www.nomisweb

Education systems in England and Scotland

The education systems in England and Scotland have always differed as they grew out of local church provision in each country and developed their own systems based on different legislation. In

Scotland, the majority (around 86%) of schools are non-denominational but stem from the old Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) schools. Virtually all denominational schools are Roman Catholic and there are no Muslim faith schools (see table 1.6). The independent (fee-paying) sector caters for around 5% of the total pupil population. Normally children go to the school in their catchment area. Placing requests for attendance at an alternative school can be made and they are normally granted if the school is not oversubscribed (in 2008-09, more than 80% of placing requests were granted, Scottish Government, 2010). Virtually all state funded schools in Scotland are managed by the local authority.

In England there is considerably more variation in school type and governance. School governing bodies have significant management responsibilities, and academies and free schools are funded by and responsible to the Secretary of State for education rather than the local authority. In the primary sector, 60% are non-denominational community schools, 37% are either voluntary aided or voluntary controlled and the majority of these are Church of England or Roman Catholic faith schools (6,029). Only six are Muslim faith schools. Foundation and Academy schools are mostly non-denominational but there are a small number of mainly Church of England schools. In the secondary sector community schools only account for 46% of maintained schools, 19% are voluntary aided or voluntary controlled and most of these are Christian faith schools (489). Five are Muslim schools. Foundation schools account for 25% of the schools and Academies/City Technology Colleges for 11% (DfE, 2011a) (see tables 1.4 and 1.5 below). A small number of secondary schools within the maintained sector are classed as grammar schools and these are selective schools that compete with other schools for the most able pupils. These schools do not exist in Scotland. Around 7% of all pupils in England attend independent schools. In principle, parents can choose the school they want their child to attend but in practice this is constrained by availability and access.

There are currently considerable changes in the English school system. The main school policy change made by Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition government that came into power in 2010 was to encourage local authority schools to become academies. More than 50% of secondary schools in London are now academies. Free Schools were also introduced, but so far there are only about 150 of such institutions. The latter are described as non-profit making, independent, state funded schools (DfE website, 2012). They respond directly to the Secretary of State for Education and are, according to Hatcher: 'outside local authority control; funded directly by the government; free from the national curriculum; their own admissions authorities; and not bound by national union agreements' (Hatcher, 2011: 485). Although these schools are described as in charge of their

own admissions, they are not, according to the Department for Education website, allowed to select according to ability (www.education.gov.uk).

Table1. 4: State maintained secondary schools by status and religion, 2005 and 2011, England

School type	Secular		Church of England		Roman Catholic		Other Christian		Other religious	
	2005[1]	2011[2]	2005[1]	2011[2]	2005[1]	2011[2]	2005[1]	2011[2]	2005[1]	2011[2]
Academy	10	289	1	31	0	4	3	31	0	16
Community Technology College (CTC)	14	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Foundation	416	799	7	8	1	1	0	3	0	0
Voluntary aided	27	36	107	120	331	323	10	26	15	16
Voluntary controlled	44	47	32	46	0	0	4	6	0	0
Community	1920	1505	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total % of total	2431 (83%)	2679 (81%)	147 (5%)	205 (6.2%)	332 (11.3%)	328 (10%)	17 (0.6%)	66 (2%)	15 (0.5%)	32 (1%)

1. Source: Allen and West, 2011
2. Source: Department for Education, 2011a

Table 1.5: State maintained secondary schools, non-Christian religions, 2011, England

	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	Other	Total
Academy	0	0	1	15	16
CTC	0	0	0	0	0
Foundation	0	0	0	0	0
Voluntary aided	10	5	0	1	16
Voluntary controlled	0	0	0	0	0
Community	0	0	0	0	0
Total	10	5	1	16	32

Source: Department for Education, 2011a

Table 1.6: State maintained primary and secondary schools by denomination, Scotland

Denomination	Primary				Secondary			
	2005		2012		2005		2012	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Non-denominational	1,854	84.5	1,748	84.7	327	84.9	312	85.5
Roman Catholic	336	15.3	312	15.1	58	15.1	53	14.5
Other denomination	4	0.2	4	0.2	-		-	
Total	2,194		2,064		385		365	

Source: Scottish Government, 2013

Note: In the Pupil Census denominational schools have been restricted to schools where a specific denomination is named. Multi- and inter-denominational schools have therefore been grouped with non-denominational schools.

Conclusion

In 2001 around 3% of the population in England were Muslims. This had increased to around 5% in 2011. In Scotland around 1% of the population identified as Muslims in 2001 (2011 census data is not yet available). There is considerable variation in the number of Muslims in the different regions in the UK. In London, they make up 14% of the total population and in the South West 1%.

The main religion of the population is Christian; however, around a quarter of the population do not adhere to any religion and the numbers in this group in England increased over the last 10 years.

The employment rates of Pakistani and Bangladeshi people is lower than that of White UK people and it is particularly low among women of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin. In England Pakistani and Bangladeshi people tend to be employed in lower status occupations; in Scotland where the population is very small there are larger proportions in higher status occupations. There is more variation in the types of schools in England but in both countries the majority (over 80%) of children attend secular schools and more than 90% attend state maintained schools.

SECTION 2: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As noted above, the following methods were used:

- A review of the academic and policy literature on the education of Muslim pupils in England and Scotland.
- Analysis of administrative and survey data on academic achievement and labour market outcomes by ethnic group.
- Family case studies designed to illustrate the way in which Muslim parents negotiate school choice and the educational experiences and outcomes of their children.

In the following paragraphs we briefly review the methods used in each part of the study.

Review of academic and policy literature

The main focus in the academic literature review was on school choice, achievement of ethnic minority pupils and faith schools. Searches were made based on the following key words: school choice; school choice and ethnic minority pupils; school choice and Muslim pupils; school choice and Pakistani pupils; achievement of ethnic minority pupils; faith schools and Islamic faith. In addition references were followed up in articles identified through the search. The searches showed that there was limited research on these topics in Scotland. The literature covering England was greater (and at times described as UK although only reporting on England).

The policy literature was reviewed to provide an overview of the education systems in Scotland and England. Two working papers were published on the project and these included sections on the management and funding of schools, the role of the school in the community, the curriculum (including religious education), assessment and achievement and a profile of the teacher workforce. Key elements from these papers have been included in the relevant section in this report. Data from Government education websites were used as well as from the Eurydice website provided by the EU (for further information see: http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/education/research/centres-groups/creid/projects/muslim-pupils-education).

Analysis of administrative and survey data on educational and labour market outcomes

In order to contextualise the case study findings, secondary analysis of statistical data was conducted relating to ethnic and/or religious background and education and employment outcomes. The following sources were consulted:

- National Equality Panel data on educational outcomes for pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds (Hills, et al, 2010)
- Department for Education website on school achievement and destinations by ethnic background for England
- Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (Strand, 2007 and DfE 2011b)
- Scottish Government statistics on school achievement and destinations by ethnic background in Scotland
- Census 2001 (Scotland and England) and Census 2011 (England) on population demographics in relation to ethnic background and religion
- Labour Force Survey data accessed on www.nomis for employment rates and occupation (SOC2010) by ethnicity

We also made use of school websites, mainly in relation to secondary schools and examined any data that was available on achievement, outcomes for pupils and pupils receiving free school meals (which is an indicator of socio-economic status of the pupils). Whilst every effort was made to find comparable data for England and Scotland the differences in data gathering and categories used, especially in relation to school statistics make it difficult to make direct comparisons.

Family case studies

Thirty eight family case studies were conducted in total, 13 in England and 25 in Scotland. The case studies were based on semi-structured interviews and observations made at the time of the interview and recorded in field notes. The sample was opportunistic and used a range of methods to contact Muslim families in a number of geographical areas in England and Scotland. These were deliberately chosen to reflect labour market diversity and patterns of settlement. In England, the family case studies were drawn from Central London, a city in the East of England and an area of industrial decline in the North West. In Scotland, interviewees lived in cities in the east and west of the country. Some participants were contacted through mosques, schools and universities and others were contacted via other interviewees. National backgrounds were diverse, with interviewees reporting ten different countries of origin. All of the adults who participated self-

identified as Muslim, and overall, a total of 98 interviews were conducted between June 2010 and May 2012.

The largest group of Muslims in the UK are of Pakistani origin, and this was also the case for the majority of our interviewees. Most of the interviews with parents took place in their home. A small number took place in a café or similar location (8) and nine were conducted in an office (either of the researcher or the participant). The interviews with the children also mostly took place in the participant's home, although seven were in a café and one in the mother's workplace. Just under half of the parents were first generation immigrants and some had lived in the UK for a long time. A slightly smaller number were second generation immigrants, 6 were refugees or had protected status and 5 were temporary residents, generally students, not intending to stay in the UK. A number of interviewees were contacted through a support organisation for refugees. Five sets of parents in the research came to Scotland seeking asylum and were later granted refugee status and then Indefinite Leave to Remain by the UK Government. One further interviewee was granted Indefinite Leave to Remain through the Iraq: Locally Engaged Staff Assistance Scheme.

In general, the adults we interviewed, most of whom were under 50, were highly qualified with only about a quarter of the adults interviewed not having a degree or equivalent. This does not reflect the level of qualifications amongst all Pakistani and Bangladeshi adults in the UK (Hills, et al, 2010), although adults aged 24 – 35 have much higher qualifications than older age groups. It is worth noting that many of the Pakistani participants mentioned that their parents were not educated to degree level and some described their parents as working class. This might suggest a certain degree of educational and social mobility among Pakistanis living in the UK.

Table 2.1: Number of interviews and backgrounds of participants

National[1] background	No. of interviews with parent(s)	No. of interviews with children/ young people	1st gen. immigrant[2]	2nd gen. immigrant[2]	Refugee/ Protected status[2]	'Temporary' residents[2]	No. of parents with degree equivalent qualification[3]
Pakistan	21	**33**	11	10			14
Bangladesh	5	**7**	2	3			3
India	4	**1**	2	2			3
Malaysia	3	**3**				3	3
Iran	1	**1**				1	1
UK	2	**4**	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2
Turkey	1					1	1
Iraq	6	**8**			6		5
Somalia	1				1		1
Afghanistan	1				1		1
Scotland	**30**	**41**					**21**
England	**15**	**16**					**13**
Total	**45**	**57**	**15**	**15**	**8**	**5**	**34**

1. In a small number of cases parent(s) had grown up in a different country; for those of Indian and Pakistani origin this was usually Kenya.
2. Refers to parent interviewed, in many families one partner was 2nd generation immigrant and the other was 1st generation. Immigration status was not known for 3 interviewees.
3. Refers to parents and includes degrees gained in other countries; a small number of parents had post-graduate degrees.

In order to ensure confidentiality, all participants were given pseudonyms as were the schools and locations. We refer to our participants according to parental role and country of origin; however, we recognise that this does not take into account the hybrid identities which are frequently adopted, for instance, a number of interviewees described themselves as British or Scottish Pakistani.

The questions in the interview schedule covered the following main areas:

- Family background
- Children's education and aspirations
- The curriculum
- The children's academic and social experiences
- School and home values
- Family and community life, including the role of Islam in family life

All participants were provided with an information leaflet about the project. This was always accompanied by a verbal explanation so that younger children were able to understand. There were separate interview schedules adapted for children and young people but they followed the same broad topic. Parents were asked to sign consent forms for themselves as well as for younger children. When older children were interviewed parents were asked for consent but the young person was also asked consent.

Thirty of the interviews with parents were with mothers only; 5 were with fathers only; 2 interviews were with both parents separately and 3 interviews were with both parents together. In 9 of the case studies the interviews with the children/young people parents were not present; in 5 out of these 9 case studies the interviews were conducted with each individual separately and in the remainder children/young people were interviewed together. In one case an older child was interviewed on her own and her younger siblings together.

In order to engage with the children, especially the younger ones, every effort was made to keep the interview as flexible as possible and also to give children time to respond. When children were interviewed together each child was addressed to ensure that everybody was provided with an opportunity to speak. Parent(s) were present during interviews of all young children and with the majority of the older children/young people.

The main source of information on socio-economic status is parental educational background and occupation; however, it was not always possible to ascertain the occupation of a spouse. In the interviews which took place in an interviewee's home it was possible to make a judgement about housing and neighbourhood; however, this information was not available when interviewees were interviewed at work or in a public place.

The data from the interviews were analysed and written up as case studies following the main themes of the interviews. These case studies included quotes from the interviews to illustrate key points made, e.g. in relation to school choice. The case studies were then circulated to the rest of the research team for comments and adjustments. All names of participants and places were anonymised at this stage. School websites were also consulted to examine a particular school's level of achievement and the socio-economic status of the pupils in the school.

In the following sections, we present case study findings under thematic headings, drawing on the wider literature and statistical analysis as appropriate.

SECTION 3: MUSLIM PUPILS' EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS AND ASPIRATIONS

Introduction

This section examines the findings from our research in relation to achievement and aspirations. There is limited statistical data available which examines school achievements according to religion. We therefore use ethnicity as a 'proxy' for religion for pupils of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin as most self-identify as Muslims (Strand, 2007). The school and examinations systems differ in England and Scotland so we present administrative data on achievement separately for the two countries.

England: Muslim pupils' patterns of educational achievement

Earlier analysis conducted for the National Equality Panel by Burgess, Wilson and Worth (see Hills et al, 2010) showed that, whilst Muslim pupils of Pakistani/Bangladeshi origin had low levels of achievement on entry to school, they caught up with average test results between the ages of 7 and 17. For all groups, the strongest factor associated with educational outcome is parents' social class background (Hills et al., 2010). Free school meal entitlement is a strong indicator of material disadvantage and is often used as a proxy measure of social class. It is interesting to note that the improvement in Muslim pupils' educational attainment relative to the average was particularly marked for pupils who were not entitled to free school meals, and particularly for girls within this group. The performance of Pakistani girls who were not entitled to free school meals was exactly the same as the average attainment level of white British girls at age 16, and the performance of Bangladeshi girls exceeded that of their White British counterparts (see figures 3.1 and 3.2). The performance of all pupils (irrespective of ethnicity) who receive free school meals is below average at age 16, apart from Chinese pupils and Indian and Bangladeshi girls.

However, in spite of catching up relative to average test scores, the achievement at Key Stage 4 for Pakistani and Bangladeshi boys, but not girls were below the median in England as can be seen in figures 3.3 and 3.4. The achievement of Bangladeshi girls was above that of White British girls but the achievement of Pakistani girls were below this group. More recent data on achievement at Key Stage 4 as measured by the achievement of GCES provide a slightly different picture. These data show that all Bangladeshi pupils have better achievement than White British pupils at key stage 4 and the gap between Pakistani pupils and White British does not appear to be as great as it was in 2008 (figure 3.5). It is important to note that the data in figures 3.3 and 3.4 includes the spread of achievement within each group and this is missing from figure 3.5. It is likely that the higher

average achievement of Bangladeshi pupils is accompanied by increasing variance. In addition, the numbers within each ethnic group vary, with White British pupils representing by far the largest group.

Figure 3.6 shows that by the age of 19, a higher proportion of Pakistani and Bangladeshi young people have a level 3 qualification (AS, A levels or NVQ 3) than White British youth. However, they are more likely to have achieved this at the age of 19 than at the age of 17. Figure 3.7 shows participation in higher education by religion. Fifty three per cent of Muslims are in higher education by age 19 and a further 4% have applied to start in 2010 or 2011. Data on ethnicity (table 3.2) show that nearly half the population of Pakistani (49%) and Bangladeshi (47%) 19 year olds are in higher education compared to White students with only 38% in higher education. They also show that about the same proportion of White and Bangladeshi/Pakistani students are in Russell group institutions, whilst students of Indian origin are more likely to attend such institutions. Afro-Caribbean students appear to be under-represented in Russell group institutions compared with other groups. The issues relating to these data will be discussed further in the summary of achievement in both countries.

Figure 3.1: Differences from average assessments, age 7-16; Children not on free school meals (FSM) (boys), England
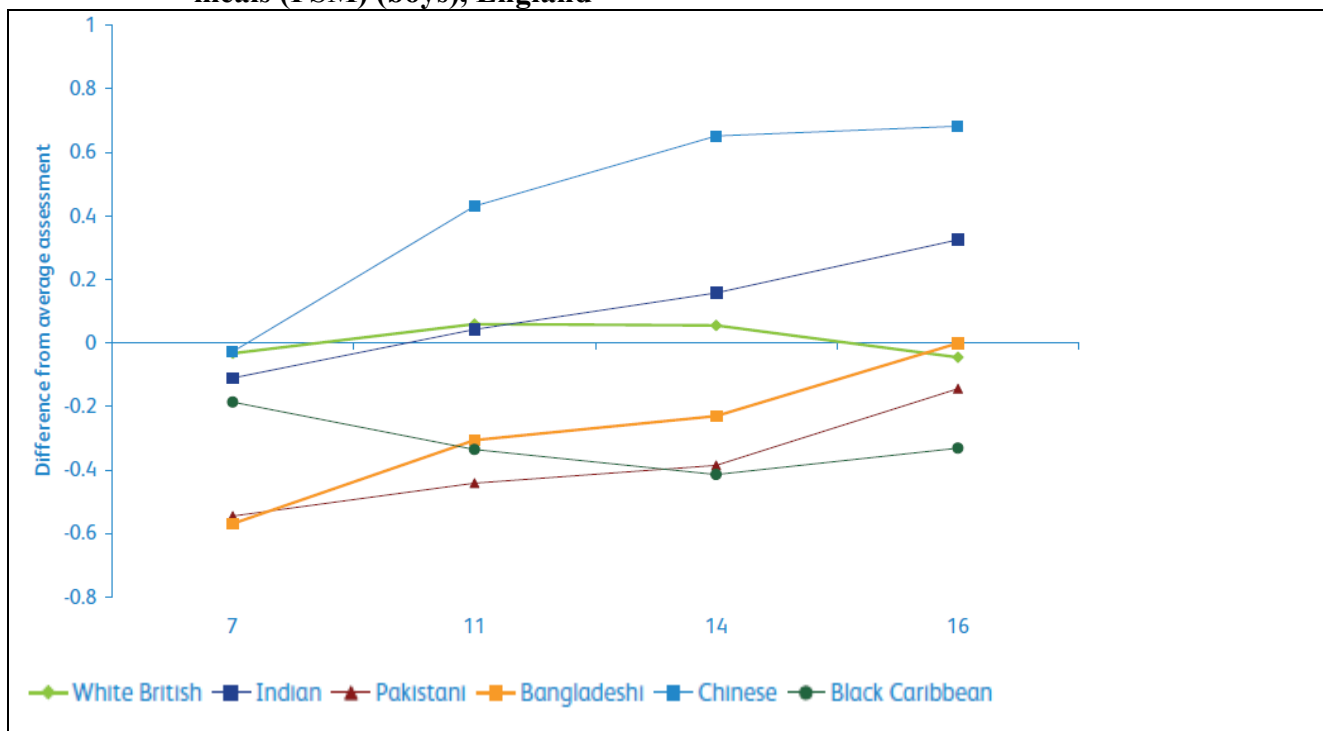
Source: Hills et al., 2010

Figure 3.2: Differences from average assessments, age 7-16; Children not on free school meals (FSM) (girls), England
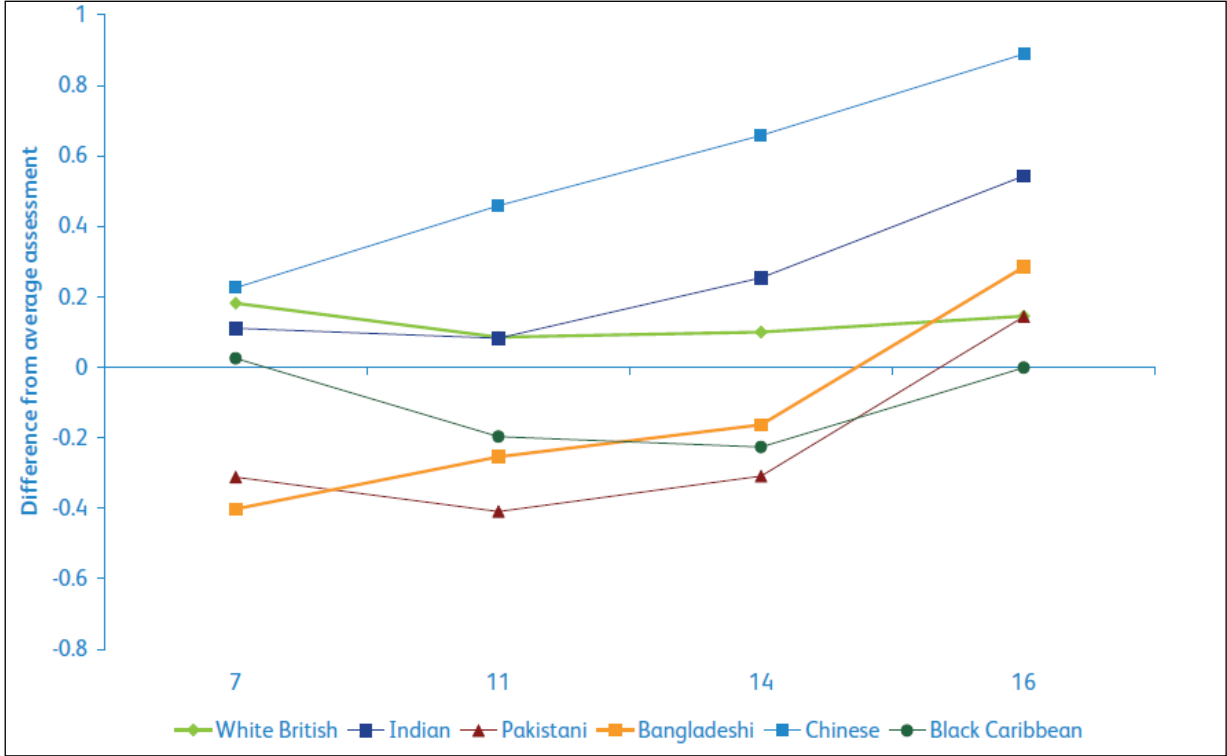
Source: Hills et al., 2010

Figure 3.3: Key stage 4 results by ethnic group, England, 2008 (boys)
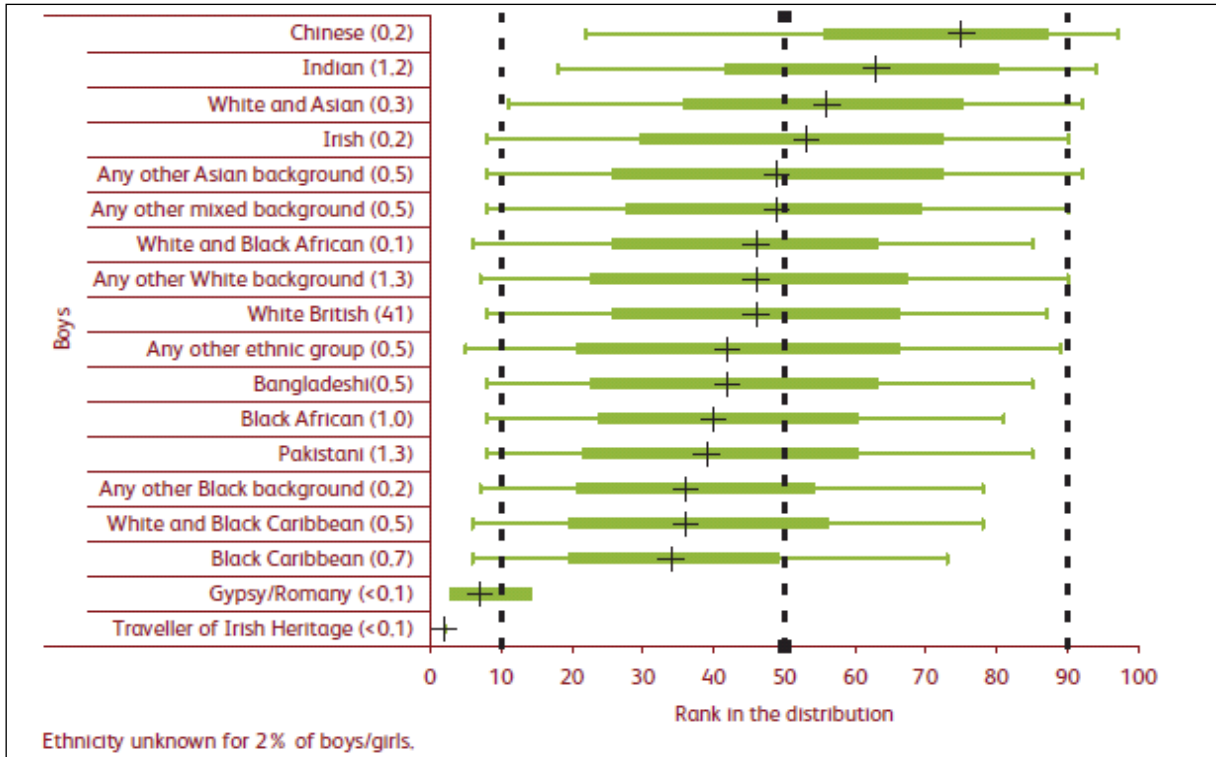
Source: Hills et al., 2010

Figure 3.4: Key stage 4 results by ethnic group, England, 2008 (girls)
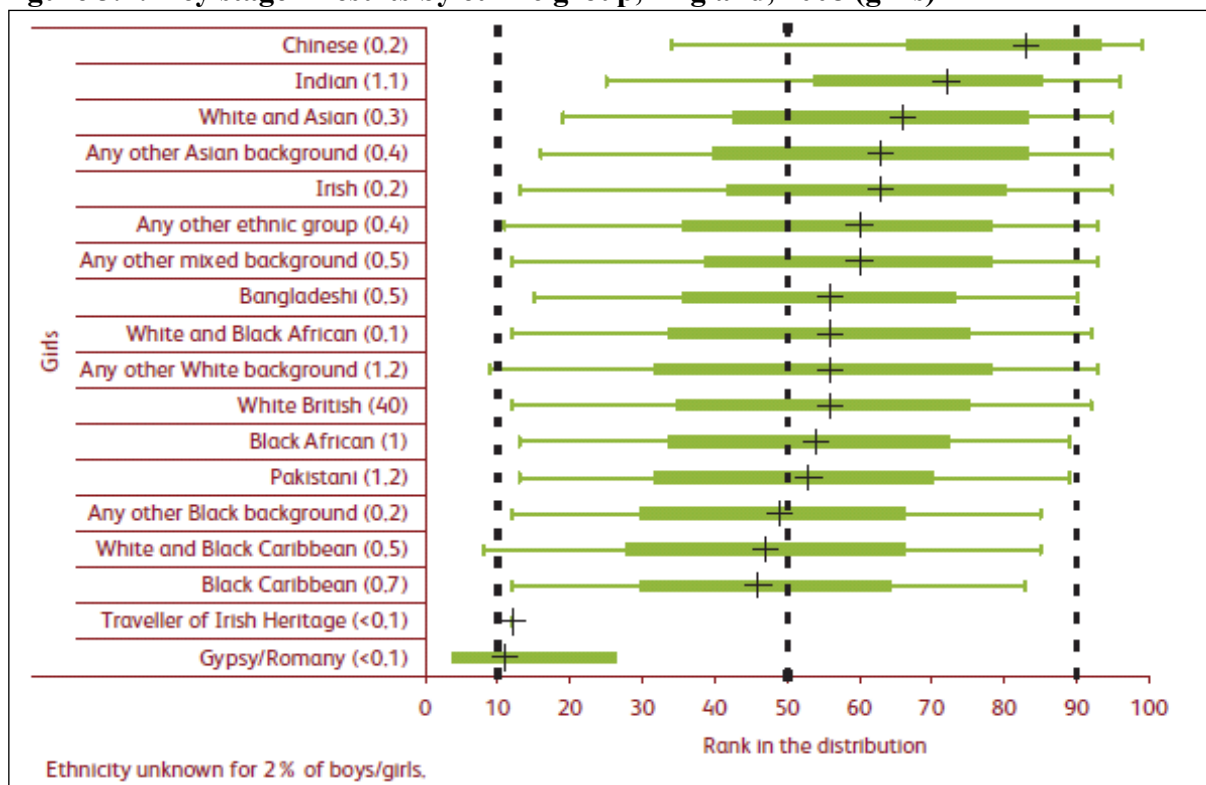
Source: Hills et al., 2010

Figure 3.5: Percentage achieving 5+ A*-C grades including English and mathematics GCSEs 2011-12, by gender and ethnicity, England (Key stage 4)
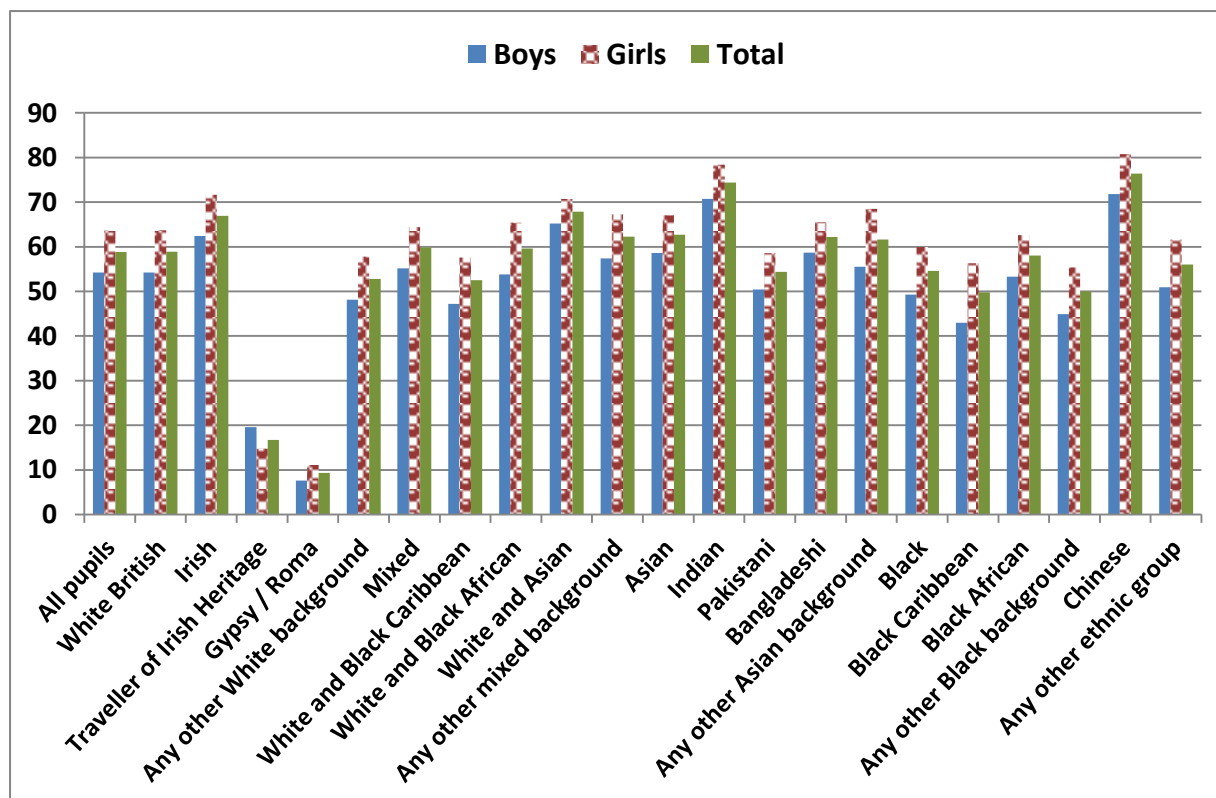
Source: Department for Education, 2013

Figure 3.6: Percentage of young people qualified to Level 3 by ethnicity and age in 2011 cohort, young people in state schools at academic age 15, England
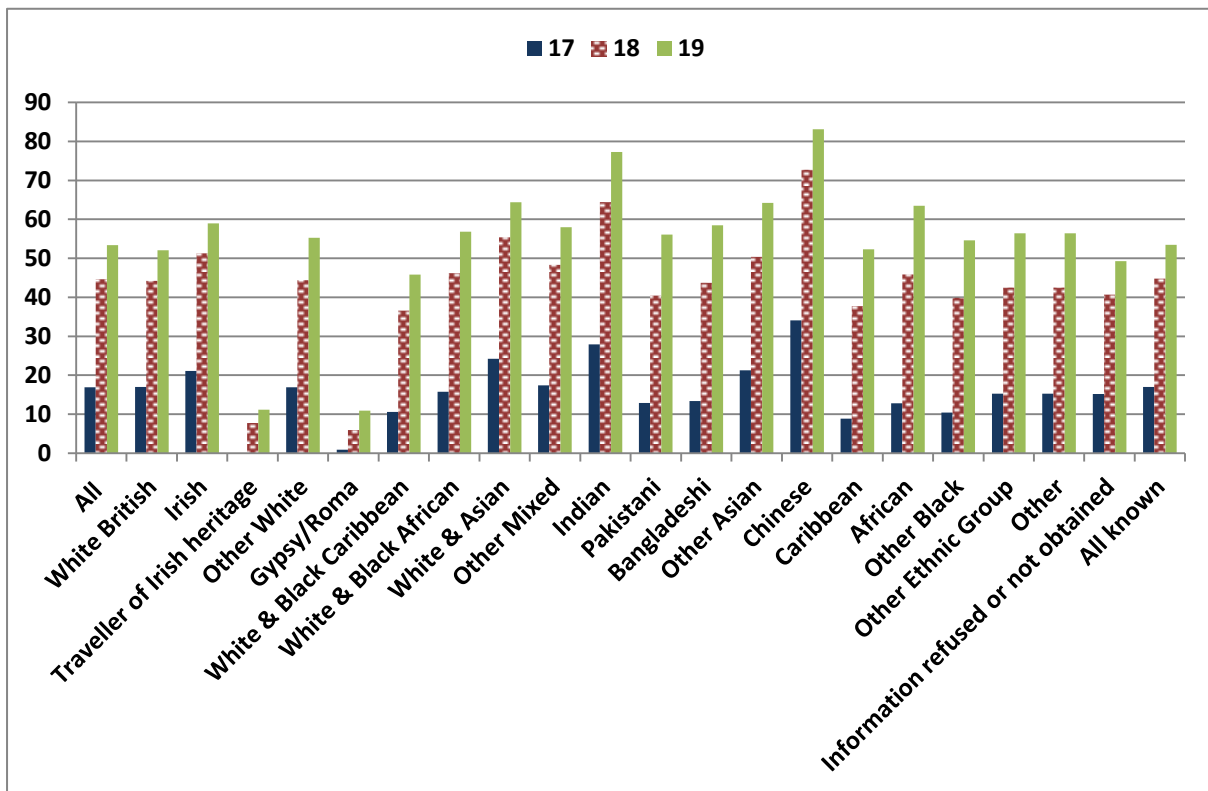
Source: Department for Education, available on:
http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001059/index.shtml, accessed 5/2/2013

Figure 3.7: Participation in higher education at age 19 by religion, 2010, England
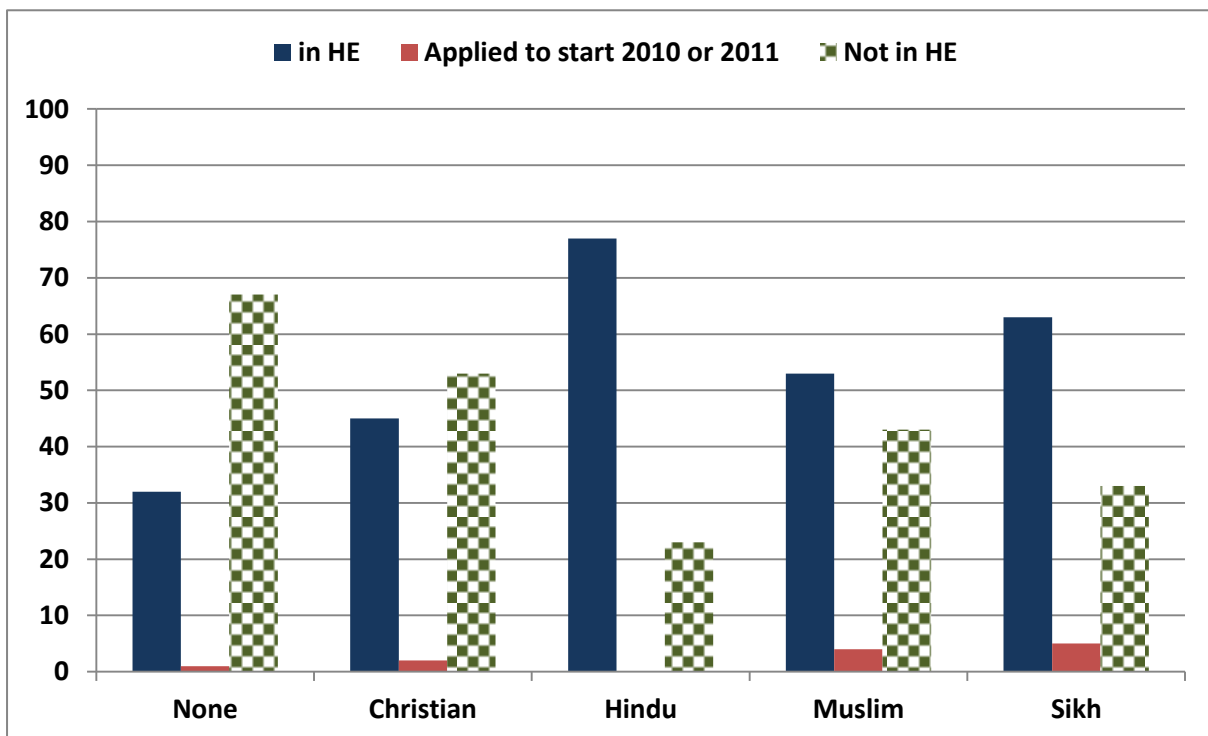
Source: Department for Education, 2011b

Table 3.2: Type of higher education institution attended by ethnicity at age 19, 2010, England, percentages within each ethnic group

Ethnic group	Oxbridge[1]	Russell Group[2] excl. Oxbridge	All other HEIs	Not in HE
White	1	8	28	62
Mixed	2	8	29	60
Indian	1	13	60	26
Pakistani	*[3]	7	43	49
Bangladeshi	*	8	44	47
Other Asian	*	21	49	27
Black African	*	7	59	34
Black Caribbean	*	4	37	59

Source: Department for Education, 2011b
1. University of Oxford and University of Cambridge
2. University of Birmingham, University of Bristol, Cardiff University, University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, Imperial College London, King's College London, University of Leeds, University of Liverpool, London School of Economics & Political Science, University of Manchester, Newcastle University, University of Nottingham, Queen's University, Belfast, University of Sheffield, University of Southampton, University College London, University of Warwick
3. Number suppressed due to small sample size

A more detailed study of factors influencing educational attainment of Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils was carried out drawing on data from the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE) (Strand, 2007). It allows for a more fine grained analysis of the social backgrounds of Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils in England. This particular element of the survey was conducted in 2004 and included a representative sample of 15,000 pupils aged 13 or 14. Interviews on educational experiences were conducted with pupils and their parents/guardians. With regard to parental occupation, the Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils had less socially advantaged backgrounds compared with their White counterparts. Fifteen per cent of Pakistani and 7% of Bangladeshi pupils came from social classes I and II compared to 41% of White British pupils. Muslim pupils were also more likely to be entitled to Free School Meals (59% of Bangladeshi and 38% of Pakistani pupils compared to 13% of White British pupils). In relation to parental expectations, Pakistani and Bangladeshi parents had higher aspirations for their children than White British parents. Around 94% in both groups expected their children to continue in full-time education post school. Their involvement with the school was slightly lower than that of White parents. The aspirations of the pupils themselves in relation to full-time tertiary education were also higher (over 90% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils hoped to progress to tertiary education, compared with 77% of White British). Pupils from these two ethnic minority backgrounds also had a more positive attitude to school than White British pupils and they were more likely to report completing homework than their White British counterparts. However, for Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils (as well as those of Mixed heritage and Indian backgrounds), attendance at religious classes seemed to impact negatively on their achievement and the suggestion made is that it reduced the time spent on homework. Bangladeshi pupils were marginally more likely to report having truanted at some stage during Key Stage 3 than White British but Pakistani pupils were less likely to state they had truanted. In contrast, Pakistani pupils were more likely to report absences for more than one month

in the year than White British. Bangladeshi pupils were least likely to report this of all groups surveyed.

Scotland: Muslim pupils' patterns of educational achievement

In Scotland, 86.3% of the school population is White Scottish and the overall White school population is 93%. Asian pupils account for 3.2% of the school population and the largest group is Pakistani (1.7%). Bangladeshi pupils account for only 0.1% of the population (Scottish Government, 2012). This is different from England where the overall White population is 76.9% in primary and 79.8% in secondary schools. The proportion of pupils of Asian origin is 10.3%. As a proportion of all pupils, 4.3% are of Pakistani origin and 1.7% are of Bangladeshi origin. In secondary schools, the overall White population is 79.8%; the Pakistani population is 3.3% and Bangladeshi 1.4% (Department for Education, 2012). As a result of these variations in population, different categories are used in the two countries. This should be taken into account when making any comparisons between the two countries and also when interpreting data where numbers are very small (as in the Bangladeshi population in Scotland). Figure 3.9 shows the average tariff scores achieved by Secondary 4 pupils ('equivalent' to Key Stage 4) in Scotland by ethnicity. Chinese pupils followed by Bangladeshi and Indian pupils achieved the highest scores. Pakistani pupils achieve above average tariff scores and perform better than White-UK pupils because of the high achievements of Pakistani girls. The scores of Pakistani boys are the same as for White UK boys. Those in the 'Not Known', 'All Other Categories' and 'Black Caribbean' categories have the lowest tariff scores. It is likely that those within the 'All Other Categories' group includes recent arrivals such as asylum seekers and refugees who may not be proficient in English. It is worth noting that at this level Pakistani boys perform as well as White UK boys and girls' scores are higher than those of White pupils. This is not the case in England. In all cases girls perform better than boys except for Black Caribbean pupils, however, it should be noted that the numbers in this category are very small (Scottish Government, 2013).

Figure 3.10 provides information about Highers and Advanced Highers, again showing that Chinese pupils outperform all other groups. The proportion of Pakistani pupils gaining 5 Highers was slightly higher than for White pupils; a smaller proportion gained 1-2 Advanced Highers but about the same achieved 3+ Advanced Highers. Overall Scottish Pakistani pupils perform above average, whereas in England their performance is slightly below average. This may be because the Pakistani community in Scotland has been settled for a longer period than is the case in England. It is not possible to comment on the achievements at this level of Bangladeshi pupils as the numbers are very small.

Figure 3.11 shows that in Scotland, Asian students, particularly those of Chinese origin, are more likely to go to university than their white counterparts, who are more likely to go straight into employment. This, of course, does not imply that White pupils in general are failing to get into higher education in Scotland, but simply the large variance in levels of achievement amongst the indigenous population, reflecting very large social class differences (OECD, 2007).

Figure 3.9:   Three year average tariff[1] score of Secondary 4 pupils by ethnic background, Scotland, 2008-09 to 2010-11
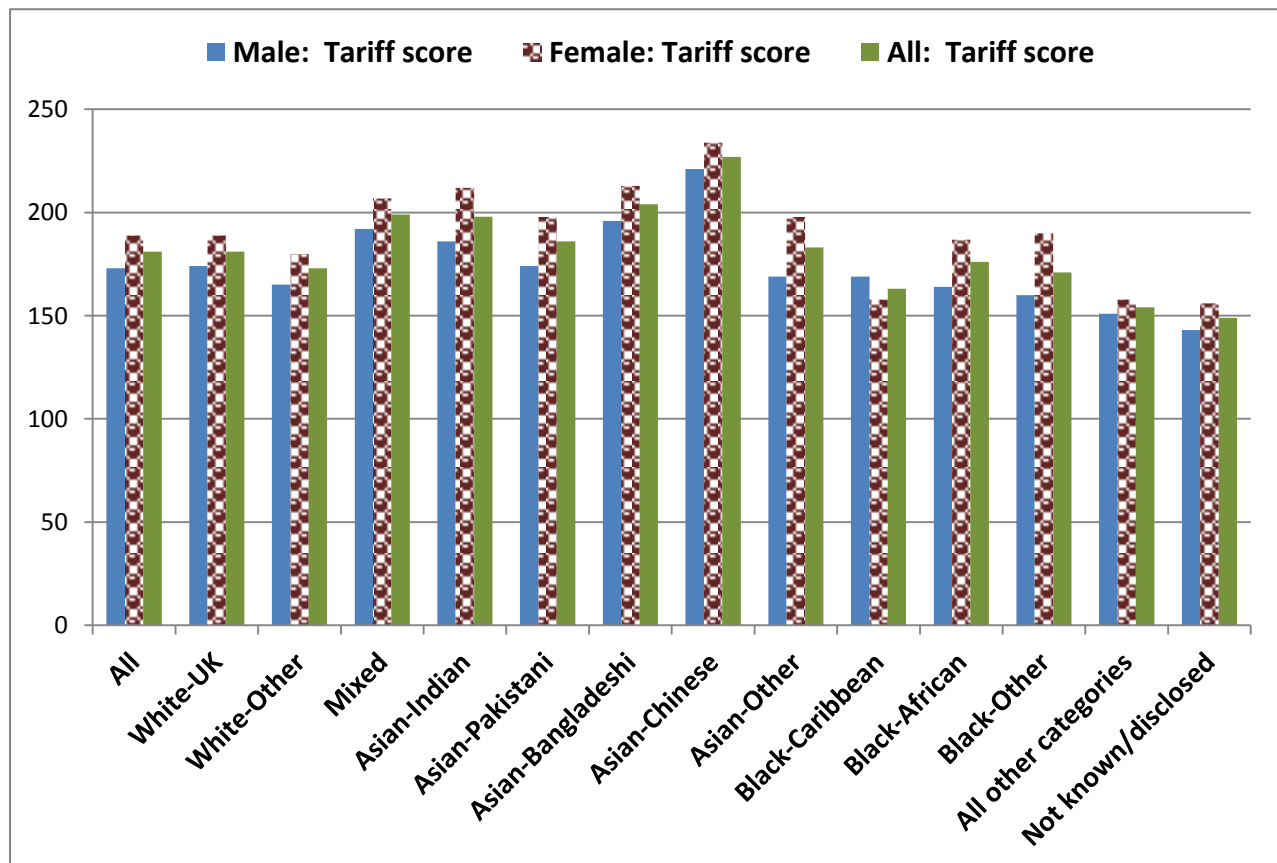
Source: Scottish Government, 2012
1.   'The Unified Points Score Scale is an extended version of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) Scottish Tariff points system. … The tariff score of a pupil is calculated by simply adding together all the tariff points accumulated from all the different course levels and awards he/she attains' (Scottish Government, 2012)

Figure 3.10: **Highest qualifications attained by Scottish leavers by ethnic background, level 6[1] and level 7[1] only, percentages[2]**
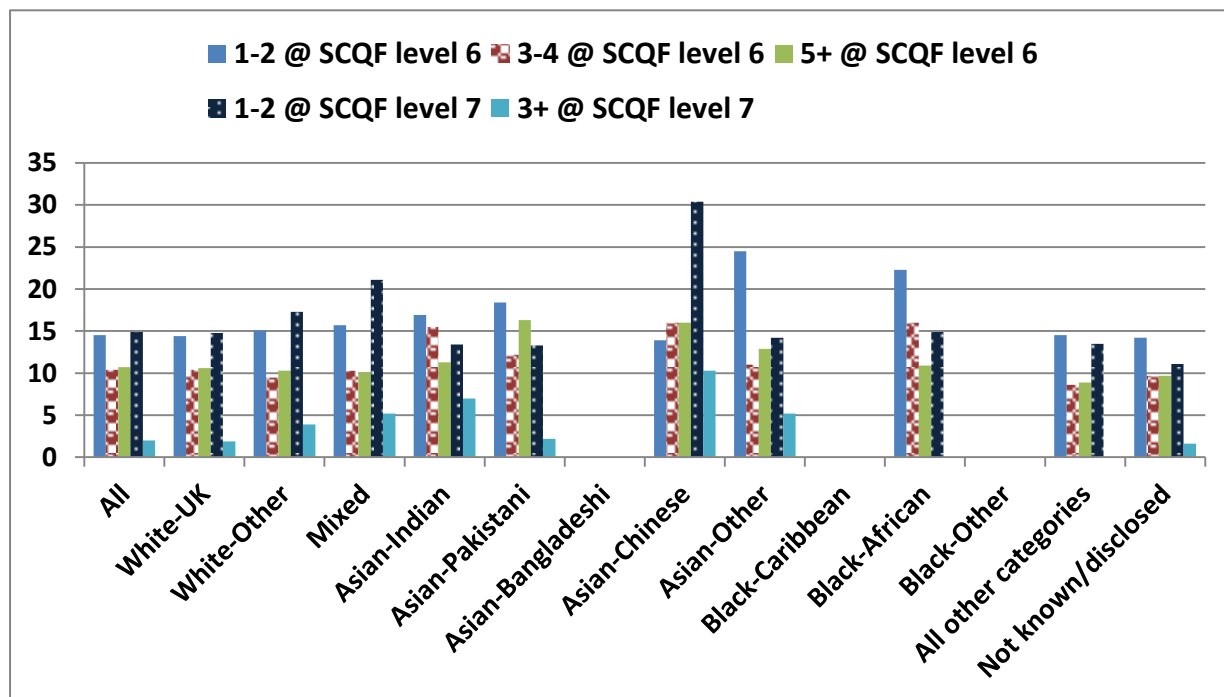
Source: Scottish Government, 2012
1. Level 6 is Higher qualifications; level 7 is Advanced Higher. Level 6 qualifications or above are required for university entrance; the most prestigious universities require a minimum of 5 Highers
2. Based on total population within ethnic group

Note that:
- All other categories consists of: Black-Other, Asian-Bangladeshi, Black-Caribbean, Occupational traveller, Gypsy traveller, Other traveller and Other
- Numbers below 5 are not included in publicly available data due to confidentiality issues

Figure 3.11: Initial destinations of Scottish school leavers, 2010-11
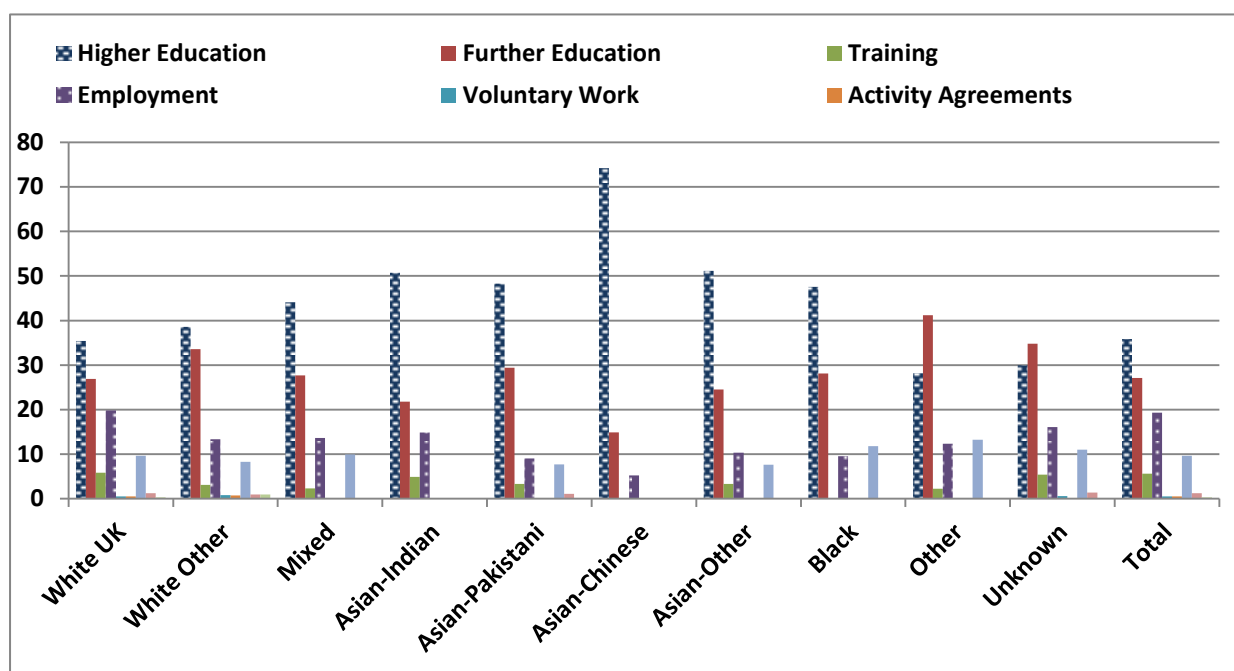
Source: Scottish Government, 2011
Note: that for some ethnic groups the numbers in certain categories, e.g. activity agreements and voluntary work numbers are disclosable (below 5) and these have not been included.

Overall then, Asian young people, including a large proportion of Muslim pupils, are more likely on average to go to university than White pupils, but they have been more likely to attend less prestigious universities. The data in table 3.2 seems to suggest that this might be changing.

Data on the post-school experiences of Muslims in Britain, which relate to older age groups, point to less positive outcomes. As can be seen from figure 1.2, Muslim women are less likely to be in employment compared with other groups, and the employment rate for Bangladeshi and Pakistani men is lower than that of White UK males. According to data from the National Equality Panel, Bangladeshi and Pakistani men experience a pay penalty, indicating that they are paid less than other groups when previous educational qualifications are taken into account (Hills, 2010). These data probably explain why Muslim parents have high educational aspirations for their children. Education is seen as an important route to social mobility as noted by other researchers (see Shah et al, 2010).

Discussion of statistical data on educational attainment

A key point made by Strand (2007) is that 'it is important not to over-generalise from group mean scores to all members of any ethnic group' (Strand, 2007: 103). It is clear that focusing on ethnic background and treating these groups as homogeneous entities is problematic. Analysis of achievement of White UK pupils consistently shows a very wide spread in attainment reflecting the strong influence of social class. This was highlighted, for example, in an OECD report on the achievement of Scottish pupils (OECD, 2007). English data using free school meal entitlement (FSM) indicated a smaller impact of social class on some ethnic groups (e.g. Bangladeshi pupils) but a higher impact on Pakistani pupils (Archer and Francis, 2007). These researchers also stress the need to recognise the interrelationship between social class, ethnicity and gender and that analysis which only looks at average performance of specific ethnic groups masks the differences within these categories. Using Bourdieu's concepts of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital, they suggest that within each ethnic group some parents are able to draw on privileged forms of capital to access the 'best' education for their children.

Shah et al. (2010) explored educational achievements and outcomes focusing specifically on British Pakistani pupils. They were particularly interested in why some Pakistani young men from working-class backgrounds were more likely than White working-class to continue to further and higher education. To account for this they proposed the addition of 'ethnic capital' drawing on Zhou's concept of 'ethnic social capital'. This refers to 'familial or ethnic shared norms and values as contributing to educational achievement among immigrant groups' (Shah, et al: 2010: 1110). In their study of a group of 64 16-26 year old Pakistanis in Slough, they found that whilst social class

influenced the educational outcomes of middle-class Pakistanis, ethnic capital accounted for the higher than anticipated achievements of some working class Pakistani boys. They also noted it was necessary to include gender in the analysis:

> … gender identities, constructed in relation to family expectations and peer influences, were a key factor in influencing their orientation towards education and career. (Shah et al, 2010: 1119)

These researchers commented on shifting cultural values, with Pakistani families increasingly having high educational and labour market aspirations for their daughters as well as their sons. In contrast, they noted different effects on some working class young men of Pakistani origin, where a peer culture emphasising non-conformity and negative attitudes towards school affected some detrimentally. However, this did not apply to all working-class Pakistani boys. Shah et al (2010) argued that the role and nature of ethnic capital mitigated the impact of class and peer group cultures and this explains why a greater proportion of Pakistani working-class boys attend higher education. They also noted the impact of religion on working class men's participation in higher education. Those who identified their religion as highly important and practised regularly were likely to have higher levels of education than those who did not. Overall, empirical research suggests that it is not feasible to examine parents' aspirations purely through the lens of ethnicity or religion. Rather, it is necessary to consider the impact of social class and gender as well.

Parents' educational aspirations: findings from case studies

It is against this backdrop that we consider the aspirations of the parents that we interviewed. It was clear that most of the parents had high hopes that their children would progress into higher education and many stressed this in relation to making school choices, especially at secondary level (see next section). A smaller number of parents also put emphasis on the status of the higher education institution that they wished their children to attend. Many parents recognised the increasing importance of academic credentials in a labour market that they perceived as changing and increasingly competitive. A small number of parents were concerned about the difficulties that their children may face because of their religion when going into higher education. This meant that some of the young people studied at universities close to home so that they could continue living at home or arrangements were made to ensure that they were not in the traditional types of student accommodation. In other cases, parental aspirations were high but not realised because of lack of resources. Whilst most parents were hoping that their children would study further, there were a small number who stressed that the most important thing for their children was their emotional and social well-being.

Higher education as a means to a good career

The first two cases studies are presented to illustrate the importance that many parents attached to gaining good qualifications in order to ensure access to good quality jobs. They also show this is in part linked to their positions within their societies where they are part of an ethnic minority that can potentially face discrimination.

Case study 34

The family were from Malaysia and were currently living in Eastville, England. Both parents were highly educated and the father (Khalid) had studied in the UK and the children had attended local but carefully chosen state schools at that time. They had then moved to Singapore but returned on a temporary basis for the children to complete their A-levels at private school in Eastville because they felt Singapore did not have well-developed and academically excellent A-level provision. Jala, the mother had her own business which meant she could work from home using the internet and live with the children in England whilst Khalid worked in Singapore. They intended to return to Singapore but wanted to ensure that their children achieved high academic qualifications. This was necessary, according to the parents as they were part of an Arab ethnic minority in Singapore where the majority are ethnic Chinese:

> We are Muslims and we are Arabs … we belong to 2% of the nation. In Singapore, if you're not mainstream ethnically it's twice as difficult … It's difficult to get good jobs, to be treated as equal, you have to be twice as good. (Jala, mother)

They were hoping and aiming for high status universities and for that reason were not restricting the children's choices to British universities:

> I mean of course … our preference is for them to do their university here, but Abbeylands School had a talk that they're not just in British universities but in American universities and I told the children, my daughter was in sixth form, you have choice to go anywhere, even if it's an American university you can. Of course it's condition if it's Ivy League really only, otherwise don't waste time. (Jala, mother)

The aspirations of the parents were reflected in their daughter's choice of career as she was applying to study medicine at a Russell group university.

> Well I'm intending to do medicine, I'm in the process of completing my UCAS form, I'm actually applying to the University of Edinburgh and all the UL universities, like King's, Queen's and UCL. I

want to be a paediatrician practising here hopefully and then after in the future I hope to go to countries where I can help less fortunate people in medical care. (Leena, daughter)

For this family, the need to ensure that the children were well educated in order to access a good career was a strong theme in the interviews and in the choice of Leena's career. The increasing importance of higher education in securing a good career was also in evidence in another case study but the reason related more to the changing opportunities for the Pakistani population in the labour market in the UK. Participants in Shah et al's (2010) study of young British Pakistanis commented on changing labour markets for the Pakistani population and that parents had viewed education as a means to social mobility. Nuzhat (who is described in more detail in section 5, case study 33) was of this view:

> The other generation were mostly in the business in the shops so they didn't get much [education]…There are not many corner shops round now, there's supermarkets. Now all those men who had shops, they really want their children to do well in studies academically. It's improving in this generation. Because this is the third generation like I think our children will be the fourth generation here. (Nuzhat, mother)

Her eldest son had just started a degree in Computing Science and Mathematics at a Russell group institution in a different city and her daughter was applying to do medicine. There seemed to be no problems with the children moving away from home to study although Nuzhat expressed some concerns about her son coping.

Higher education whilst living with the family
The emphasis on higher education and professional careers was also evident in the case below; however, in this case the family felt it unsuitable for their children to live away from home without parental support. This case study illustrates the tensions that exist for many parents between Western culture and their own home culture and religious values. This family had dealt with it by one of the parents relocating to look after the children whilst they were studying.

Case Study 22
The family were refugees from Afghanistan and both parents were well educated (Marid, the father had a PhD from a UK university). They had 3 children who were aged 23, 20 and 17. Their eldest, a daughter was currently studying medicine, their son was studying engineering and the younger daughter was in 6th year at school. Education was highly valued by the family and they were in favour of co-educational schools; however, it was not considered acceptable for their children to

live in traditional student accommodation. For that reason Marid was living in River City and working as a private tutor at the time of the interview. His wife was in rented accommodation in another Scottish city to be with her children as they completed their studies. Marid explained that this was because in their culture it was not acceptable for the children to live on their own.

This case study illustrates some of the tensions that arise for both parents and young people when they come to the end of their compulsory education. There were some further examples of the young people continuing to live at home whist studying but also others where parents were trying to encourage their children to move away from home but the children preferring to study locally and live at home. This highlights the diversity within the Muslim population and the dangers of assuming that there is one 'Muslim' view.

Post-school education and social class

The families above had high aspirations and they had sufficient resources to support their children to move into higher education as was the case for a large proportion of our families. However, it was not the case for all as can be seen in case study 6.

Case study 6

This family, of Pakistani origin was living in an area consisting predominantly of social housing in Sea City. It was an area where the schools had to deal with the problems associated with social deprivation. The accommodation was an upstairs flat with limited space. Ramsha, the mother came to the UK when she got married but her husband had lived most of his life in the UK. There were 4 children in the family aged 18 (boy), 12 (girl), 10 (boy) and 8 (girl). Her eldest son had experienced difficulties in school which his mother ascribed to being bullied. He had not wanted to attend school and had fallen behind with his education. After he left school he had started a college course. He subsequently dropped out and was, at the time of the interview, working in a factory:

> I still wish he were back to the study. At the moment he's saying he will go back but I'm not 100% sure about it. (Ramsha, mother)

Ramsha's eldest daughter was in the first year of secondary school and spoke of wanting to go to college when she left school but was aware of her father's desire that she went to university:

> I want to go to college but my dad said – no go to uni. I want to do a beauty course in college … I'll go to college and then I'll go to uni. (Roshini, daughter)

Whilst the parents' aspirations for the children were high, it seemed that, at least for the eldest son there were problems in realising these aspirations. The first three case studies indicate that the families possessed sufficient social and economic capital to ensure that their children would progress into higher education. Ramsha's family, on the other hand did not and there seemed to be little evidence of 'ethnic capital' as conceptualised by Shah et al (2010) mitigating the lack of other capital in terms of Ramsha's eldest son.

Post school aspirations and emotional and social wellbeing
It was quite clear that many of the parents were using strategies that would enable their children to access high status education to enhance their labour market outcomes. There were some concerns among several of the parents about not pressuring children into specific occupations. In addition there were some parents who felt that the children should do something they liked and also that their emotional and social well-being was as important as gaining high academic credentials. This is illustrated in the case studies below.

Case study 28
The parents, Aaquil (father) and Saila (mother) were of Pakistani origin but had grown up in the UK. They lived in Hilltown in the North West of England. Saila had a degree in biological sciences, was a science teacher and had worked until her eldest child was born. Aaquil had left school to run his father's shop when his father had a heart attack. His older brother, who died a few years ago, had gone to university and then become a vice-principal of a further education college. They had 3 children aged 8 (a girl), 5 (a boy) and 20 months (a boy). They were adamant that they would like the children to continue into education because this was important for them and very important within the Asian community as already expressed by Nuzhat in case study 3:

> I hope that I can give my kids the balance, because education … as Muslims … we have a real desire to succeed in education because we feel that's in one way out of doing the traditional jobs that ethnic minority people do, and I understand that … You know the Asian community in this country I can only speak for the community that's round here, they see education as a gateway to anything they want, women see it as a gateway. (Aaquil, father)

However, Aaquil explained that he had been put under pressure from his parents to become a doctor and had not gained the relevant qualifications. He did not want his children to experience the same pressures so whilst it was important to him as well as to his wife that the children did their best in education his main emphasis was on hard work and doing their best:

I would like them to be happy, I want them to do something different, I don't want them to live, I would love it if my little boy or little girl said to me dad I want to work in Malaysia, I want to work in America, I've got a job in France, I just want them to be happy, if my little boy said to me dad I'm going to be a doctor I would say good for you. Every day, my brother used to say to me if you want to be a taxi driver be the best taxi driver, whatever they want to do as long as they do it to be the best of their ability and to do it with respect, … My three kids that I've got I want them to develop as people [whose] minds are open, I don't want them to be just in Hilltown, how big's the world it's not just Hilltown. I want them to learn another foreign language other than Punjabi and English. (Aaquil, father)

This emphasis on affective needs and choice was also evident in the following case study.

Case study 1
This family was also of Pakistani origin but lived on the outskirts of Sea City in their own house in a comfortable but not affluent suburb. Adifaah, the mother had grown up in the city, been educated at a private single-sex school and gained a degree in biological sciences. Like Aaquil she had been under pressure to study medicine. She had met her husband when travelling in Pakistan, he moved to the UK and they now had 3 daughters aged 11, 6 and 5. The eldest was just about to start secondary school. Adifaah felt that children needed emotional and social confidence as much as good grades in order to succeed in the labour market and that the children should choose their future occupation:

I think I'd want them to feel confident first of all, happy in who they are, because I really believe if you don't know who you are then you just spend your whole life trying to figure out who you are. I want them to be passionate about something, it could be anything, it could be something academic, could be something outside school that they love, something like that. I want them to feel mentally and socially secure and what that means is having emotional confidence that's really number one for me, so they're not going to get emotional confidence if you go 'OK you've got your five grades whatever As grades you're perfect', that's not how to measure it. It's things like they understand what's happening, they know how to do things without feeling worried about stuff, they feel that they can communicate, they've got enough friends, they can identify contacts around them who to go to for stuff or they basically feel secure emotionally. (Adifaah, mother)

Adifaah, like Aaquil and Saila spoke of wanting her children to travel and see the world. It was clear that most parents did not want to put pressures on their children to make particular subject or career choices; however, in many of the other case studies gaining high academic qualifications was emphasised to a greater extent than in these two case studies.

Post-school education and intergenerational change

Shah et al (2012) noted the need to explore gender in relation to aspirations of Pakistani parents because traditional values emphasised different roles for men and women. According to traditional values women were seen as home-makers and not requiring higher education. There was no evidence that these values were held by any of our participants. However, the case study below shows evidence of intergenerational change and there were some mothers who spoke of not having been allowed to continue into further education after school. This is shown in the following case study.

Case study 26

Saima was a woman in her 20s who had married young and gone to live with her husband's family. She had grown up in the UK and lived most of her life in the North West of England. At the time of the interview she was living with her own family in Hilltown, apart from her husband. The family owned their house but it was in an area which was strongly segregated by ethnicity. She was one of 7 children and had a large extended family. She had 2 young children, aged 5 and 1 who were living with her. She had not been allowed to leave home to study but had managed to do an Open University degree which she had just completed.

> I've never worked, I was married at 18. The family I got married into was not too heavy on women going out in the house so I never worked. I did manage to study. I did the Open University … a psychology degree from home, again because they weren't too keen on women going out to study. They have opened up since which was a bit crap for me I must say because I wanted to do it when I got married at 18 but at that time it was a big no, they wouldn't allow it, so I had to do it from home. I didn't want to just completely stop and be the sad old housewife, not because there's anything wrong with that. It is time-consuming but I just need that extra motivation, that extra stimulation. (Saima, mother)

It was clear that Saima felt that education and gaining qualifications were important as they would help her children to get a good job. However, like Aaquil and Adifaah she did not feel it was right to push children into something that they were not able to do. Her son was very young and just at the beginning of his school career and she felt that it was important to pay attention to the needs and abilities of the child:

> Hopefully he gets through his GCSEs, get to college, gets a good career, anything that they enjoy. I want him to give the education system a chance at least ... if I knew what level he was at then maybe in my head I could say 'OK well he's bright then he could go in for pharmacy or medicine, if he's not

so bright may be something else, something on his level, I wouldn't want to push him on something he can't do. I don't think that's fair for either of them, I want them to try their best. (Saima, mother)

These case studies illustrate that the girls in our study did not face any restrictions on entering further or higher education. However, there was some evidence of concerns in relation to the pressures that the children might face when entering higher education and some families dealt with this by ensuring that girls were appropriately supervised either by living at home or with a 'chaperone'. However, there was also evidence of parents encouraging their children to move away from home and to travel. One mother spoke of encouraging her daughters to apply to universities away from home but had not managed to persuade her two eldest daughters to move away from home.

Conclusion

It was evident that most parents in our sample were ambitious for their children but they were also concerned with their overall well-being. They saw educational qualifications as the means of ensuring good job prospects and for some it was also a means of achieving social mobility. A number of parents commented on labour market changes and the demise of traditional employment in small shops. Whilst it was clear that parents communicated their high educational aspirations to their children and expected them to 'do their best', some parents emphasised the dangers of placing too much pressure on children to achieve academic success and to pursue a narrow range of socially acceptable occupations such as medicine, dentistry and accountancy. There was a strong sense amongst most parents that children needed to be given the freedom to make their own decisions about what they wanted to do. The importance of education in life was something stressed by all parents and well expressed by a father of two daughters:

And for us, as most Muslims and our particular type of Muslim community, the pursuit of education, it's very important. And it gets drummed into you from a very, very young age that if there's ever an opportunity to pursue quality education then you take it. … Because that's the one thing you can actually take with you. (Fadil, father)

SECTION 4: MUSLIM PARENTS AND SCHOOL CHOICE

Introduction

Since the early 1980s in both England and Scotland, there has been a strong emphasis on parental choice of school (Adler, 1997). Underpinning these policies is the belief that improvement in public services is driven by the creation of a market. Within education, market theory suggests that parental choice should create the conditions in which 'good' schools increase their intake and flourish and 'bad' schools wither and eventually close. There is much evidence to suggest, however, that markets operate imperfectly in education. As noted by Coldron et al. (2010), most children attend their local schools, and admissions policies almost always give priority to those within a specified catchment area. Particularly in London, but in other major cities too, schools in affluent areas tend to be over-subscribed and therefore unable to accept placing requests from children who live outside the catchment area. Schools in poorer areas with falling rolls rarely close, but tend to offer an increasingly restricted curriculum to their pupils. Politicians appear to accept that school choice policies since the 1980s have failed to drive up standards sufficiently, and in England this has led to the creation of new types of school, for example, academies, free schools and studio schools, in which schools have much greater control over their admissions policy. In such cases, it is often the school that is selecting its customers in order to boost its performance in league tables rather than the other way round. The growing emphasis on performativity in schools incentivises the recruitment of pupils from socially advantaged neighbourhoods and disincentivises the recruitment of pupils from poorer backgrounds, particularly if they have some form of additional support needs. This section of the report considers how Muslim parents in England and Scotland negotiate the education market. First, however, we provide a brief overview of the literature on a range of social factors affecting school choice, including social class and ethnicity.

Social class and school choice

School choice policies have often been justified on the grounds that they open up opportunities for children in poorer areas to attend schools in more affluent areas, thus extending the educational opportunities on offer. Rational choice theory suggests that individuals are motivated largely by individual self-interest and economic gain, and so will make use of the choices on offer to achieve upward social mobility or avoid downward mobility. When working class parents fail to choose schools in more affluent areas, the assumption is made that they lack motivation or information. Exley (2013) studied the operation of a school choice advisers' scheme in London, noting that the advisers' efforts were focussed on encouraging working class parents and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, to behave in the same way as white middle class parents. The programme

tended to ignore the specific social and economic factors influencing the lives of poorer parents, which meant that, even with input from the advisers, they lacked the social and economic resources to adopt the role of critical consumers in the same way as the middle class parents they were encouraged to emulate.

As noted by Vincent et al. (2010), parents often have a strong loyalty to their local school, even when it may receive poor inspection reports. Based on a study of parents of pre-school children in London, Vincent et al. argue that:

> ... choice is not straightforwardly the enactment of individual or familial self-interest. .... 'Choices' are framed by norms, of community and religion and family; webs of social relationships continue to be of importance when seeking to do the 'right thing' for children, where doing 'the right thing' is located in concrete circumstances and social contexts (Vincent et al, 2010: 294)

According to this view, in order to make sense of the choices that parents make, it is essential to move away from an understanding of choice as logical and rational and to recognise the non-economic factors that come into play. Harris and Ranson (2005) also note that school choice policies may be justified on the grounds that they open up opportunities to children from poorer backgrounds, however their overall effect is to increase rather than diminish social segregation:

> … while the policies of choice and diversity appear to champion and reinforce equal opportunities, in practice they are simultaneously and actively reducing the scope for forms of collective action most likely to address the structural predicament of class and educational opportunity. (Harris and Ranson, 2005: 572-3)

Research by Vincent and colleagues compared choices made by working class and middle class parents in relation to child care and primary schools. They identified distinct differences between working class and middle class parents in relation to attitudes to and choice of child care. However, when examining working class attitudes to primary school choice they argued that the differences were not as great as between care choice. They identified three distinct types of choosers: willing choosers, default choosers and community choosers. The **willing choosers**, who were most likely to be middle class, gathered information, selected a school and considered whether this was a realistic choice. The **default choosers** were also actively engaged in the process but viewed schools generally as able to provide an adequate education for their child and therefore it was not necessary to go further afield. Finally, the **community choosers** were those who went for the local option, often because a family member or friend had been educated at the school. Another factor

for the community choosers was that there were 'others like them' at the school, for example, pupils from the same ethnic group or of the same faith (Vincent et al, 2010). Butler et al. (2007) analysed the post codes of pupils in high performing schools in an urban area and found that such schools tended to attract children from more socially advantaged neighbourhoods. This, the authors suggest, is because the parents of these children 'are able to negotiate the minefield of constraints that hems in educational choice' (Butler, et al, 2007, p. 26). Overall, it is clear that middle class parents tend to have knowledge and networks that assist them in gaining a place in their chosen school whilst this is not always the case for parents from less socially advantaged backgrounds.

School choice and race/ethnicity

Vincent et al. (2012) examined the strategies used by black middle class parents to ensure maximum benefits from the education system for their children. They used an intersectional approach to analyse the interaction of social class, race and gender in influencing parents' negotiation of school choice. Differences within their sample of Black middle class parents were examined and classified along a continuum, with 'determined to get the best' at one end and 'hoping for the best' at the other end. In between they identified two further categories: 'being watchful and circumspect; and 'a fighting chance'. They argued that the parents used their cultural capital based on middle class values in order to gain the best for their child, but that they experienced racism in doing so and that this at times thwarted their efforts:

> The Black middle class utilize their class resources to attempt to mediate and protect their children against the consequences of being educated in a society marked by racial inequalities. However, their experiences reveal that, despite the relative advantages of their class position, racism continues to be a considerable threat and concern for this group. (Vincent, et al, 2012: 351)

Byrne and Tona (2012) examined the experiences of migrant parents in England and noted that the parents in their sample were proactive in choosing schools for their children and placed a great emphasis on education as a route to social mobility. However, they had inadequate knowledge of the education system and faced barriers relating to social class, race and gender. Although these parents were not categorised according to social class, the description of the sample suggests that some would be considered working class in terms of a classification based on occupation. Several of the women were full-time home-makers (Byrne and Tona, 2012).

It is clear then that there is a complex interrelationship between social class and race/ethnicity which impacts on parents' school choice and also that there is no research which examines Muslim parents' attitudes to school choice and their experiences of choosing schools.

Table 5:   Main factors in primary school choice

Type of school	Academic achievement	Ethos ('multi-cultural'/ethnic mix and/or 'caring')	Ethos (religious)	Locality (close to home)	'Good reputation'
State maintained: local	**3**, 6, 12, **33**, 36[j], **12**	**6**, 8, **38**,13[e], **32[i]**, 37		**1**, **2**, 4, **5[a]**, **8**, 9[a], 13[e], **15**, 16[f], 19, 21, 22, 25, **26**, 29(?), **30**, **37**	1, 15,
State maintained: locality chosen because of school	**18**, **24**				
State maintained: not local	**10[c]**, **11[d]**, 16	**13[e]**, **16[f]**, **20**		**28[h]**	
Catholic faith school	28	28	**7[b]**	**28[h]**	
Islamic faith school			11[d]		
Islamic independent faith school			36[J]	**26[g]**	
Independent	**14**				
Independent single sex	**11[d]**	11		32[i]	
Home educated	13[e]				

a. would have liked Catholic faith school if had known about it
b. not local Catholic school, required placing request
c. placing request to primary school in order to ensure access to non-local secondary school of choice after being dissatisfied with local primary school
d. oldest child went to Muslim faith school in London; family moved; sons in independent schools; daughter in state primary
e. eldest daughter went to state primary in London with large multi-ethnic population; when they moved she was home educated until they found a suitable school; younger children went to that school too
f. local initially but then moved (placing request) due to child being bullied but school also better academically
g. when she moved
h. for one child who was not offered place at Catholic school
i. 2 older children, youngest was at independent single sex school throughout
j. Started in Islamic faith school but moved to state primary due to lack of challenging curriculum

Table 6:   Main factors in secondary school choice

Type of school	Academic achievement	Ethos ('multi-cultural'/ ethnic mix)	Ethos (religious)	Locality (close to home)	'Good reputation'
State maintained: local				**1**, 4, **6**, **8**, **15**, 21, 22, **29**(?), **30**,	15, 22,
State maintained single sex: local	**36**				
State maintained: local foundation	**37**[g]				
State maintained: local but moved house to get into school	38, **2**				
State maintained: not local	**3**[a], **10**, 13, 35	10, **13**, **20**[d]		**15**[b]	
Catholic faith school	**32**[f], **33**, **18**[c]		7, 24	**24**	
Islamic faith school					
Islamic independent faith school	29[e]		**29**[e]		
Independent	**11**, **14**, **34**, 35	11			
Independent single sex	**12**, **32**[f]				
Home educated					

a. placing request
b. family lived on catchment boundary; youngest daughter wanted to go to same school as friends, parents made a placing request
c. planning to make placing request for daughter about to start secondary
d. family moved to catchment area
e. one daughter in state school; 2 in different independent Muslim schools
f. eldest daughter moved from single sex independent school to Catholic school for A-levels
g. moved house to get access to school

In both tables:

- numbers shown are those of the case study families; 5 families are not included as the children were too young for school and although parents spoke of choice it was in very general terms

- case study numbers shown in black and bold indicate first reason for choice; in some cases parents added further reasons, these are shown in red; where parents did not seem to exercise choice (e.g. new arrivals who did not know the system) then the reason given is shown in black but not bold

- some case study numbers appear in several columns when there were different choices for different children within the family

- the term 'multi-cultural' was used by a number of parents and in general this meant that there children from a range of different cultures; equally the ethnic mix was referred to in relation to minority ethnic pupil population of school

- the term 'good reputation' was used by a small number of parents and it was not clear what it referred to as it did not necessarily indicate an academically high achieving school

Factors influencing school choice

The literature demonstrates a complex interrelationship between a range of factors influencing school choice. This was also reflected in our sample as can be seen from tables 5 and 6. There was more of a tendency to choose a primary school on the basis of it being close to home and/or its ethos and a secondary school because of its academic achievement. Religion played a relatively minor role in school choice though it was important for a small number of parents. Some parents chose faith schools for this reason but religion also played a part in that a few parents selected single sex schools because of religious beliefs. Others selected single sex schools because they felt these schools led to higher achievements (especially for girls). Eight brief case studies are presented below to illustrate the reasons given by different parents for selecting or accepting schools for their children.

The local school

The first case study illustrates the importance attached to proximity to the family home by many parents, particularly if the local school was judged to be good or adequate.

Case study 15

The family lived in their own home on the outskirts of the city in a quiet cul-de-sac of two storey terraced houses. The parents were first generation immigrants from Pakistan but had lived in the city for 25 years. They had three daughters, the eldest of whom was in second year at university studying law (but was, in her own words, 'struggling'). The second daughter was in sixth year and the youngest in fourth year at high school. Adeena, the mother, was currently working part-time. Her husband was out of work as the grocery store he had run had closed and two eldest girls had part-time jobs. Adeena explained that the decision to send her children to the local school had been made independently, without consulting others. However, she had heard from her local (Pakistani) contacts that it was a 'good school':

> That was…a catchment area, a catchment school. But it's a good school. I should send them there. And then they were saying Hillend secondary is a good school. (Adeena, mother)

She did not qualify what she meant by a 'good school' and the secondary school is not one of the schools in the city known for high academic achievement. Adeena's eldest daughter thought that proximity was the reason for the choice of schools:

> I'm guessing it (primary school) was really near as well [and the secondary school] that's just ten minutes down the road as well. So it's very near. (Hayed, Adeena's eldest daughter)

The eldest daughter added as an afterthought that the teachers were good. Proximity governed choice but it was also clear that the children had a say. The family lived on a catchment boundary for secondary schools, with the children across the road attending a different school. The youngest daughter, Mahnoor, wanted to attend the same school as her friends and this had led to a placing request which was successful just after the school term had started in her first year. Although Adeena felt that the schools were similar academically, published data show that the school attended by the younger child had a far higher staying on rate at age 16 than the school attended by the older children and a much better reputation for academic achievement.

Another Pakistani family (8), also in Sea City, had chosen the local primary because it was the nearest but in addition because it was 'multi-cultural'. Firas, the father of the family, explained that the head teacher's knowledge of other cultures and an understanding of Islam came from having taught in the Middle East and this led to a better understanding of Muslim culture, for example, in relation to wearing the hijab.

School ethos and multiculturalism

Ethos and being 'multi-cultural' was the main reason for choosing schools for some parents as shown in the case study below. The term multi-cultural seemed to be used mainly to describe the pupil population (pupils from a range of national/cultural backgrounds) and teachers' understanding of differences between cultures, for example, in relation to religious practice.

Case study 20

The family lived in a large detached house in a leafy suburb of River City. Anam, the mother, was a second generation immigrant from Pakistan and her husband was first generation. Anam, who had grown up in the city, was highly qualified, had professional qualifications and was working in the field of education. She had three daughters, Ayesha (in the sixth year of secondary school), Aanya (in the second year of secondary school) and Aneka (in primary 4). Anam felt that teachers had been lacking in knowledge and insensitive in their treatment of children from other cultures when she was at school. This had informed her decision in choosing a school for her eldest daughter. She had made a placing request for her to attend a school outside the local area because:

> [I] wanted my daughter to go into a school where there were lots of minority ethnic children ….
> recently I have friends who were teaching in that school and the school was very good with dealing
> with different linguistics, different faiths, and it was really like one big family, they had assemblies,
> and I was really attracted to it because I thought I want my daughter to grow up in a school where

she's not just feeling 'do I have to fit in, am I different' so she got a great experience, so it worked out absolutely, it was great, in fact she's probably out of my children the most confident. (Anam, mother)

She had also made a placing request in relation to her eldest daughter's secondary school. The family subsequently moved to a house within the school's catchment area because they wanted the younger children to go to the same secondary school. It was not clear whether the choice of secondary was governed by the ethos of the school to the same extent.

Academic reputation

Some research on school choice has shown that parents sometimes switch from focusing on ethos in primary school to focusing on the curriculum and achievement when selecting a secondary school. This is shown in the case study that follows.

Case Study 38

The family had come to England from Pakistan around eight years ago. Both parents were highly qualified and in professional jobs. The initial reason for coming to the UK had been for Sakinah, the mother, to pursue a post-graduate degree. Both parents found work and had decided to stay. They had a daughter who was eleven who had just moved into secondary education and a younger child who was two. They had lived in a medium sized town at first and then moved to London, where their eldest daughter had started school. Although Sakinah was not familiar with the English school system when she arrived in the UK, she had gained information from contacts at her institution and had become well aware of the system of judging schools in England. She explained that the school closest to them was not considered a 'good' school but the one slightly further away was deemed 'good'. Her daughter Manno was offered a place at the 'good' school but Sakinah declined the offer and instead chose the local school which she believed had a more welcoming atmosphere, even though it had worse inspection reports:

> It wasn't even a good school. OFSTED has four criteria, outstanding, good, satisfactory and unsatisfactory. So it was just satisfactory. You know, just above unsatisfactory status. And that was the school which was nearest to our home. And as I walked into that school you would feel a sense of community, a sense of belonging. And I had never seen a single child crying in that school. Whereas Manno was offered an admission to a school just slightly far away from our home, maybe five more minutes of walking. And that was outstanding. And as I walked into that school I did have that feeling … you know, slightly cool atmosphere. And then at that time I made this decision, 'not for my child…', and she was only four at that time and I said, 'it's better for her to be in a school where she feels more comfortable, secure and happy rather than being in a school which is good on OFSTED but you don't feel warm there'. (Sakinah, mother)

However, when it came to choosing a secondary school the emphasis had been far more on it being a 'good' school – 'at that time the academic state of a school becomes more important'. They had applied to several grammar schools but had not been successful, so moved house to be in the catchment area of a secondary school with slightly higher educational attainment, where Manno gained a place:

> That's our [referring to her husband] main desire, that our children go to the best school. So we're really preparing Manno to go to grammar school but the competition is very high. And unfortunately she couldn't get in to any of the grammar schools that she applied. Although she's still on the waiting list and she's quite close from the waiting list of many. But she couldn't eventually get into it. And we knew that might happen. … But when the time came of making applications to secondary school, we thought it would be a good idea to be close to Northside also … So we just moved to this flat a few months before the time of making application. And, and it was, I think that we made a good decision. (Sakinah, mother)

Sakinah went on to explain that there were a number of grammar schools in their area but admission to the school was based on a test and not on living in the catchment area. Manno was on the grammar school waiting lists, and if awarded a place in one of these selective schools would trade her place in the non-selective school. Sakinah was aware that the school her daughter attended was not the highest achieving in the area and attributed this to relatively high levels of deprivation in parts of the community. However, the school was very good at teaching, had an outstanding Ofsted report as well as providing excellent teaching which allowed the pupils to make considerable progress from entry to exit at the school:

> But then I know that the reason [for low academic achievement] is that it is surrounded by…communities [with high levels of deprivation] and children who come there, they … don't come with very strong educational backgrounds. Whereas the grammar schools, for example, they are very good because they select the cream of the children. So they're obviously going to have better results. There is something called index, GI index or, I'm just forgetting the exact term … that index actually measures the level when children enter the school and then the level that they achieve when they leave the school. So that index I think is a good criterion of the school. And for Northside that was very high. (Sakinah, mother)

This case study highlights the complexity of accessing an academically high achieving school in London and demonstrates that choice is considerably more limited than the policy rhetoric suggests. It also illustrates parents' understanding that schools should not be judged only on raw results, but also on the progress they help children to make whilst at school.

A similar account of attempting to access good quality secondary education was provided by a father of Indian origin. Like Sakinah's family, they had come to the UK around ten years ago and their daughter had attended a primary school with high levels of educational attainment. They made several attempts to gain entry to a state school with high academic achievement, including using the appeals process to challenge placing request decisions. In the end, they opted for a single sex private school. The father described his frustration:

> It was a very difficult experience and we thought that it's quite terrible that, you know, you come to a, supposedly a first world country and basic good schooling in secondary schools is not available. (Fadil, father)

As illustrated above, academic excellence was an important aspect of secondary school choice and in some cases parents made strategic placing requests to particular primary schools to access a secondary school of their choice. For some parents, it was important that academic excellence was combined with a positive school ethos, as illustrated in the case study below.

Combining academic excellence and cultural ethos

Case Study 10

The parents were second generation immigrants from Pakistan. They lived in an owner-occupied modern house on the outskirts of Sea City in Scotland. The parents were highly qualified and worked in professional jobs. They had three children, the eldest in first year of secondary school and the second in Primary 5. The youngest was not yet at school. The children had started their education in the local primary school but Ruksha, the mother, wanted to ensure that they got a good academic secondary education in a setting that was culturally diverse. The local secondary school was described as good academically but as very 'mono-cultural'. Ruksha had put in a placing request for her eldest child to attend the primary school closest to the chosen secondary school. This request was successful and he was automatically offered a place at the secondary school as he was in a 'feeder' primary. His sister had followed in his footsteps and was, following a placing request, in that primary school. Ruksha had gone to a private school but this was not an option for the family:

> I went to private school myself and I couldn't afford private for my children so I wanted to get them the best education that I could without having to pay for private. I felt Hillside Secondary is a good school but one of the main reasons is because it is multi-cultural … [I know it's good] because the league tables, always check school league tables and it's either one or two, it's always in the top three

and I think in the past it's been quite a well-known school in [the city], it's probably the best known state school. (Ruksha, mother)

Ruksha spoke at length about league tables and academic achievement and this was clearly important in the choice of school for the children. However, the multi-cultural aspect was also important and in part this was to ensure that the children felt comfortable with themselves and that there were others like them at the school. She contrasted this with her own school experience at a private girls' school:

When I was at school not many Asian parents sent their children to private school and I felt really isolated, I was the only Muslim girl that I knew and I never felt that I fitted in or just felt like I couldn't be who I was. So I wanted my children to go somewhere where there were other Muslim children, not so that they hang around in little ghettos of Muslim children but because I wanted them to feel comfortable, that there are other people like themselves who have the same festivals, the same restrictions about dating and alcohol. So I decided I wanted them to go to this school in town because it's more multi-cultural. (Ruksha, mother)

Choosing private education

As noted in the report of the National Equality Panel (Hills et al., 2010), whilst economic differences *between* ethnic groups in the UK have narrowed over time, economic differences *within* ethnic groups have widened. One of the mechanisms for the growing economic divide within ethnic groups is likely to be the growing use of private schools by parents from minority ethnic backgrounds. A recent study of the economic benefits of private schools (Green et al., 2010) concluded that:

The average net return to investment in a private school education in 1980 was 7% for boarders and 13% for day students. Since these pecuniary estimates exclude hard-to-measure consumption benefits during and after schooling, they should be regarded as likely to be underestimates. … However, since selection into the schools, despite some bursaries and the Assisted Places Scheme, is primarily based on families' ability to pay, it is hard to escape the conclusion that private schools during the period under examination also served to reproduce inequalities in British society.

The case study below illustrates the factors underlying parents' decision to choose private schooling for their children.

Case Study 14

The family were of Pakistani origin and Fozia (mother) grew up in a Pakistan but her husband was born and brought up in Scotland. Fozia went to a private school in Pakistan and had a degree and her husband was running his own clothing business. They had three children, and the two eldest, aged twelve and nine, attended a private school in the city which catered for children from 3 to 18. The youngest was currently in the nursery at the same school. They lived on the southern side of the city in a comfortable modern house. They considered the local non-denominational catchment area school when their eldest son was due to start school but were not satisfied with it:

> So when he (the eldest son) was five, we looked around the area and asked, but the schools were not very good … So I said to my husband, 'I don't want to send him to a school where I am always getting worried' … And so we decided to send him privately. (Fozia, mother)

Fozia was not familiar with the education system and found that there was a waiting list for some of the private schools and therefore opted for a particular school because it offered their son a place immediately. At that time it was a single sex school but it later became co-educational. Fozia also chose to send her daughter to this school, despite the fact that it mainly catered for boys at the time:

> And I thought rather than putting her into a girls' only school, it's better to put her in the boys' school although the people coming from our community don't do that. They normally think, 'Oh girls should be only with girls'. They don't want to encourage interaction with the boys. But I thought [it was OK], because I've been studying with the boys, as well. And I asked my mum and everybody else. And they agreed with that as well. The sooner the better … She needs to mix with the boys so why not from the start. (Fozia, mother)

Whilst Fozia choose a private school because she felt it offered a better education than the local primary school, she did not select it because it was single sex. There were a small number of parents who opted for private education in order to ensure that their children (boys as well as girls) were in single sex schools. In addition to providing them with a more academic education it was seen as offering them an environment where the values were more congruent with Islamic teaching. It was described by one mother as:

> That from P5, there's already a lot of, 'oh she fancies him' going on … She's the blonde girl in the class. So everybody fancies her. And the whole emphasis was not on education. The whole emphasis was on who are you going to go out with tonight. (Siddra, mother)

Little or no choice of school

As noted in the earlier discussion of the academic literature on school choice, policy in both England and Scotland is premised on the assumption that individuals are motivated by economic concerns and that everyone is able to operate as a critical consumer in the market place. However, as illustrated by the case studies below, individuals' ability to negotiate the educational market place is likely to be influenced by their access to economic, social and cultural resources. Some individuals from minority ethnic groups, particularly those who have recently arrived in the UK as refugees and asylum seekers, are likely to be highly disadvantaged and in effect have very limited choice.

Case study 21 involved a family of Somalian origin. They had arrived in the UK as asylum seekers but now had refugee status. The mother, Hodan, explained that they were given very little information about schools initially and said there were no opportunities to choose a school: *'You are given a place in a school'*. It was evident that asylum seekers and refugees faced particular issues in relation to their children's education. They are normally housed in poorer areas in social housing and have little knowledge of the education system in the country as indicated by the experiences of Hodan. Alya (case study 19) had moved to Scotland from Iraq and also suggested that her family had no choice in either housing or education. Her family was living in local authority housing in a locality with high levels of social deprivation and the children went to the local school.

Choice was also constrained for parents who came to live in the country on a temporary basis, for example, as university students. However, their circumstances and experiences were very different from those of the asylum seeker/refugee group. Most Muslim students were being supported by parents or sponsored by their government or company, and they had access to networks of other academics as well as friends. Rashad, an Iranian student, commented:

> The first time we came here we didn't have any information, the first priority for us was finding a home near our university and we didn't have to travel, and there was these two primary schools nearby, … so we had just these two options. Because Greenhill primary had a place for my son we had to choose that one. (Rashad, mother)

It was also evident that networks of students from particular countries such as Malaysia shared knowledge with each other about areas with affordable housing and reasonable schools. Because many were only likely to be in the country for a relatively short period of time, they regarded their

time in the UK as an opportunity for the children to improve their English and gain experience of a different education system, which would be useful for them when they returned home.

The accounts above show the complexity of choosing a school as well as the constraints on choice. They also demonstrate a range of choices which were affected by a number of factors highlighting as Vincent et al stressed that:

> ... choice is not straightforwardly the enactment of individual or familial self-interest. .... 'Choices' are framed by norms, of community and religion and family; webs of social relationships continue to be of importance when seeking to do the 'right thing' for children, where doing 'the right thing' is located in concrete circumstances and social contexts. (Vincent et al, 2010: 294)

Conclusion

As illustrated in the discussion above, a range of factors influenced Muslim parents' attitudes to school choice. Parents with greater access to economic and social resources were able to negotiate their way around the education system more effectively than those who were living in socially disadvantaged circumstances or were recent arrivals. The section on achievement and aspiration noted that Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils were tending to improve their academic performance over time, and this is reflected in parents' ability to access information from a range of sources to make strategic school choices. Whilst the majority of parents wanted their children to attend schools with high levels of academic attainment, believing that they would do best there, it was also evident that other aspects of education were valued, including a warm and inclusive school ethos. More affluent parents, who might themselves have experienced private education in Pakistan, were seeking this type of education for their children as a means of achieving greater social mobility. In the following section, we consider Muslim parents' attitudes to faith schools, which is also an important factor for some in relation to the type of school they wish their child to attend.

SECTION 5: ATTITUDES TO FAITH SCHOOLS AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

Provision of faith schools in England and Scotland

England and Scotland differ in relation to the provision of faith schools, with greater diversity in England (see section 1 for further discussion). However, in both countries more than 80% of schools are non-denominational. In Scotland, almost all faith schools are Roman Catholic and there are no Church of Scotland faith schools and no Muslim ones. In England, there is a greater variety of faith schools, most of which are Church of England and Roman Catholic. A small number are Muslim, Jewish or associated with other minority religions or smaller Christian sects.

In Scotland, there is on-going debate about the status of Catholic schools, where the Church retains considerable power over the curriculum and employment practices. This is justified on the grounds that the provision of separate Catholic schools has been necessary to protect a historically disadvantaged community. Debates about the nature and extent of sectarian discrimination in Scotland persist (Bruce et al., 2004) and the Scottish Government has set up an expert group which will publish a report on this issue in 2013. Roman Catholic schools are likely to continue in their present form in Scotland, but expansion of faith schools is not on the political agenda. There was recently some discussion about establishing a Muslim primary school in Glasgow. The plan was not to form a new school, but to change the religious affiliation of a Catholic school in which the majority of pupils were Muslim. Whilst some members of the local community favoured the establishment of a Muslim school, the plan did not go ahead for a range of reasons, including concerns about the availability of suitably qualified Muslim teachers and concerns about racial segregation.

In England, there has been a slight increase in the proportion and diversity of faith school over the past two decades. According to Walford (2008), former Prime Minister Tony Blair was committed to the expansion of faith schools, believing that their ethos was conducive to academic excellence and moral development. The present Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government at Westminster has encouraged further diversification of the English school system. There has been a major expansion of the academies programme and the introduction of free schools which may be sponsored by faith groups. As Walford (2001) has noted, an uncomfortable feature for religious schools in the state sector is the need to comply with state regulation in order to continue to receive state funding. Academies and free schools are not obliged to follow the national curriculum and have considerable freedom on admissions policy. However, free schools run by faith groups have attracted controversy on issues such as the teaching of creationism in science. In November 2012,

following challenges by the British Humanist Society, the Government announced that it would in the future require free schools to teach evolution.

There have been concerns about the extent to which faith schools use their power over admissions to select pupils from more socially advantaged backgrounds in order to improve their position in league tables. Allen and West (2011) demonstrated that in London the pupil population of faith schools tended to be more socially advantaged compared with the neighbourhoods within which the schools were based. Whilst academies and free schools are not permitted to select on grounds of academic ability, many such schools interview parents and children before admission and there are concerns that such interviews may operate as covert forms of social selection.

The extent to which faith schools may increase ethnic tension has also been discussed. In Scotland, such concerns focus on sectarian tensions between Roman Catholic and Presbyterian communities particularly in the west of Scotland. In England, there has been discussion about the impact of Islamic schools in contributing to 'home grown' terrorism. Meer (2007) argues that governments have been reluctant to approve state funded Islamic faith schools and points out that this contrasts with state funding for Christian faith schools (Meer, 2007). Whilst there are very few state-funded Islamic schools, there are a number of private institutions. The Association of Muslim Schools (AMS) listed 170 Muslim schools on its website (http://directory.ams-uk.org/), the majority of which were independent. They differ from the majority of private schools in Britain in that they tend to charge modest fees, rely on community support and have modest resources (Hewer, 2001). These schools therefore offer an option to Muslim parents which is not as costly as sending a child to a 'mainstream' independent school.

In the following sections, we summarise data from the case studies to illustrate Muslim parents' varying attitudes towards faith schools.

Muslim faith school as a preferred option

As illustrated by case study 29, a small number of parents chose private faith schools for their children because of the religious and academic ethos of the school.

Case Study 29

The family was Bangladeshi in origin but Tumi, the mother, had lived in England for most of her life. Tumi had a professional job and was educated to degree level. There were four children in the family, the eldest of whom had attended local schools, gained a degree at a local university and found employment following graduation. The other children all attended the same state primary

school and the youngest daughter was still at that school. It appeared that Tumi was satisfied with the schools her children attended, but had chosen a slightly different route for her second daughter, Badra. Having stayed in state education until she had done her GCSEs, Badra then asked to attend a private Islamic boarding school. Tumi searched for a suitable school, which had to be one of good academic standing, and eventually enrolled her daughter in a boarding school in the north of England. Because it was a long way from the family home, Badra only returned during the summer holidays but her mother was content that her daughter was happy and was being well educated.

Tumi's third daughter, Nasima, was staying with a relative in London and studying at a private Islamic girls' school. The reason for this was explained as:

> It's just because we are Muslim and our children need to know some Muslim things, but going to English school 24/7, meeting children there, English friends, and then they are not interested in anything else. [I decided to] send her [to the Islamic school] and see how it goes. … They [her daughters] would have lost our religion, they won't know much about it, but when they grow up I explain to them. [They say], 'OK mum OK', but they weren't very interested. But they study the Qur'an now so they know what Muslim is about, what Mum's talking about. They always study the Qur'an. (Tumi, mother)

It was evident that Nasima enjoyed school, although she had initially found it difficult to adjust to living in another family:

> I do enjoy classes because it's totally different to a normal school, you know like a normal school. You have extra rules there, because it's girls it's more easy, and it's Islamic, so I know like when I'm in that school I have time to pray … it's like they have six times [during the day]. It's OK if you're fasting, everything works out there. (Nasima, Tumi's daughter).

Inter-generational differences in attitudes to Islamic education

There were sometimes inter-generational differences in attitudes to faith schools, as illustrated by case study 33.

Case study 33

Preeti was in her late thirties and was born in India. She came to Britain in the late 1990s with her husband and first lived in Scotland before moving to a city in East Anglia. Preeti had two children, a daughter aged 18 and a son aged 10. She was divorced from her husband, who worked as a

doctor. In India, Preeti worked in a nursery school and in England she was employed as a teaching assistant. At home, the languages used were English and Urdu, and Preeti also spoke Hindi.

Preeti's daughter attended a private school but, following the divorce, moved to a Roman Catholic state secondary school. There were evident tensions between mother and daughter and Preeti was concerned that that her daughter was not studying hard enough:

> When she was little she was motivated but when I was divorced four years ago she stopped studying, and she was into everything else except her school, I think in Indian culture there's lots of emphasis on education but there's too much pressure as well. I don't know what to do, I tried everything, I just didn't know what to do, but I think children learn. Something happened last year, she didn't do as well at all as she hoped, so she seems to be working harder this year. (Preeti, mother)

Using her knowledge of the system, Preeti had moved her son from one primary school where she felt there were discipline problems to another where the general level of achievement was higher:

> It was because I found because I was working in the other school as well so I knew the children, I knew everyone, I knew all the staff, I knew everyone was doing their best but they couldn't … help the children as much because they had constant issues with discipline. Coming here, because the children are high-achieving, they've got children who are at level 4 in year 3. It made him work much harder because he wants to stay with the children who are on the top and his attitude has completely changed as he came into the school. (Preeti, mother)

Religion was clearly important to Preeti and she would have liked both her children to attend an Islamic faith school. She felt that this would help them develop Islamic values and that they would not experience the conflict of values that she felt they were experiencing in the state school system. Preeti described the difficulties she had experienced bringing up her daughter:

> I've had tremendous tensions, like last year she was coming back at 11 o'clock at night and that is unacceptable to me, but apparently all the girls in her class do that. We would not have that, why would you be out until 11 for goodness sake? So all these things. (Preeti, mother)

She felt that attending an Islamic school would allow her daughter to be British but also to retain her Muslim identity:

> It's hard when you have children, like my daughter who has different values, she's quite confused often, often she's confused. I would want her to wear clothes that are with modesty but that's just

something they don't understand. If she was in a school with that environment she would be British but she would have more Muslim values. (Preeti, mother)

She also felt it would be better for her son to attend an Islamic school:

Yes because today it is not an issue but I'm sure as he grows up he will be confused. Everybody drinks, now it's OK for me somehow they accept a woman isn't drinking but I think for men it could be awkward, you go to the pub and ask for a coke. So I don't know how it will be but I don't know how it is, for my son who has said he is unsocial so it doesn't matter at all. … They can all go out in the evening for a drink and he won't go so it's OK, but I think if you were social it's tough and I don't know how he works around it. (Preeti, mother)

Preference for non-denominational education

In contrast with the families described above, the majority of families in our sample felt that their religion was important, but that the formation of religious identity should take place in the family rather than at school, and faith schools were therefore unnecessary. This is illustrated in case study 3.

Case study 3

Nuzhat was born and brought up in Pakistan and moved to Scotland when she married twenty years earlier. She taught Urdu as well as providing educational support for children who had English as an additional language. Her husband, who had come to Scotland from Kenya in the 1970s, had worked for an insurance company and was undertaking part-time study at a local university. The family had three children, Umar, aged 18, Shabeela, aged 17 and Faisal, aged 12, all of whom attended local schools with high levels of academic achievement. Nuzhat was clearly able to use her professional knowledge of the school system to ensure that her children were receiving a good education, and Umar had just moved to a neighbouring city to take up a place in a Russell Group university.

The family had close connections with Muslim friends and family, and religion formed an important part of the family's life. They attended the mosque in another part of the city every Thursday as a family and the children were taught to read the Qur'an. Muslim cultural practices such as not drinking alcohol and avoiding non-halal meat were strictly observed. The parents expected their children to participate in fasting at Ramadan but not until they were older. The family was seen as the main transmitter of the faith:

The children see their parents praying five times a day or open the Qur'an and in everyday life they know they can't have that because it's got animal fat in it. So because they are grown up in it, it will be automatically embedded in them. (Nuzhat, mother)

In spite of their strong adherence to the religion, both Nuzhat and Shabeela did not feel that the establishment of separate Islamic faith schools in Scotland was a good idea as it would increase segregation and possibly make it more difficult for Muslim children in later life:

I'd rather they mix up … as they grow up … You can't have separate workplaces later on so if they grow up having separate education then when it comes to working in business they have to learn, it would be difficult for them to communicate then later on. (Nhuzat, mother)

Conclusion

For the past twenty years, there has been support for the expansion of faith schools in England, although there has only been a relatively small increase in their number. In Scotland, although there is debate about Catholic faith schools, there are no moves to alter their status. At the same time, there is no groundswell of opinion in favour of greater religious diversity within the state sector. As illustrated by the case studies presented above, Muslim parents have different views about Islamic schools. For the majority of Muslim parents, the academic reputation and attainment level of the school is the over-riding concern. Religious formation is seen as the responsibility of the family rather than the school, and this tends to be built into family routines and cultural practices. Some Muslim parents regard Islamic schools as potentially divisive and therefore are not in favour of their expansion. A minority of parents experience major tensions in bringing up their children amidst western secular values, and Islamic schools may be preferred by this group as a way of reinforcing Muslim identity. However, for these parents too, high academic standards are important because, as noted in earlier sections, education is seen as the route to social mobility.

SECTION 6: CURRICULUM AND SCHOOL HOME RELATIONS

Introduction

The 2011 census reveals growing ethnic and religious diversity within Britain, particularly in London. Forty five per cent of Londoners described themselves as white British, a marked decrease from 58% in 2001. Thirty seven per cent of London residents were born outside the UK and 24% were non-UK nationals. Within Scotland and many parts of England, there is far less ethnic diversity. Nonetheless, in both Scotland and England the increase in ethnic and religious diversity provides challenges for schools in delivering a curriculum which encapsulates common British values, such as the principles of gender equality enshrined in legislation, whilst at the same time reflecting cultural diversity. In relation to Muslim pupils, curriculum and everyday practices in schools can conflict with parents' culture and values. As well as religious education, areas of cultural sensitivity may include dress codes, participation in sex education, going on school trips and the food available in the school (Ipgrave, 2010). Schools are not only obliged to respect cultural diversity, but also to be aware of within-groups differences, so that Muslims are not treated as a homogeneous group. In this section, we begin by reviewing approaches to religious education in Scotland and England before providing some examples of Muslim parents' views of the curriculum and everyday practices in school.

Religious education in Scotland

Religious education has a statutory position in Scotland and is governed by the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. This Act states that Councils 'shall be at liberty' (Section 8, sub-section 1) to include religious education in the school curriculum, subject to what is known as the 'Conscience Clause' (Section 9). This gives parents the right to withdraw their children from 'religious instruction' and religious observance. This clause does not make exceptions, for example, for pupils in denominational schools.

Within the new Curriculum for Excellence framework, the teaching of religious education continues to have an 'essential' place: 'Religious and moral education includes learning about Christianity and other world religions, and supports the development of beliefs and values. It also includes aspects of philosophical enquiry'.
(http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/rme/index.asp.) There is a continued emphasis on Christianity, justified in terms of its historical and continuing influence on Scottish society. The guidelines note the need to take account of viewpoints which are independent of

religious belief and for teachers to lead learning about other world religions, taking account of 'local circumstances and community expectations' and the need 'to involve parents in decision making'. Attention is drawn to the need for sensitivity towards other religions, for example, the fact that Islam does not allow the use of images and music in connection with matters of faith. However, the guidance is very general and teachers are advised to consult 'local faith representatives'. The previous 5-14 curriculum recommended that a minimum 10% of time be spent on RME in primary schools (C6/91) and this arrangement is expected to continue.

Religious education in England

All local authority maintained schools have to adhere to the National Curriculum and provide religious education by adopting the locally agreed syllabus. Local authorities are responsible for establishing a standing advisory council on religious education (SACRE) and to set up four committees with representatives from each of the following four groups:

- Christian denominations and those from other religious groups which reflect local religious traditions
- Church of England
- Teacher associations
- The local authority

The syllabus has to be reviewed every five years. Schools with no religious character are required to use the locally developed RE syllabus. Foundation and voluntary controlled schools are also expected to teach this syllabus. However, parents can demand RE in accordance with the trust deed in these types of schools and the school must provide it for up to two periods per week unless it is deemed 'unreasonable' to do so. In voluntary aided schools, the RE syllabus is determined by the governors in accordance with trust deeds where these exist. In these schools, parents can demand that the locally agreed syllabus be taught unless this demand is considered 'unreasonable'. Although academies and free schools are not obliged to follow the national curriculum (although they are subject to OFSTED inspections), they are required to teach religious education. Those not of a religious character follow the locally agreed syllabus or, where the school is of a religious character, a syllabus according to the denomination of the school (DCFS, 2010). There has been controversy with regard to whether free schools run by faith groups should be able to teach creationism. Schools have to abide by equalities legislation in terms of offering equal opportunities to girls and boys, but there have also been concerns with regard to gender equality in faith-orientated free schools.

Parents' views of the schools and the general curriculum

In our interviews with parents we discussed their views on the school, the curriculum and other school activities. Parents were generally satisfied with the schools and many valued the child-centred ethos. Parents who had recently arrived from other countries, such as a student from Malaysia, commented on the friendliness of teachers towards their students which was not something they had experienced in their own country. However, those educated abroad commented on the fact that schools did not 'push' children to achieve and there was a lack of subject specific teaching in primary schools.

Most parents were satisfied with the general curriculum. A small number mentioned that there was limited recognition of the cultural heritage of Islam and it was simply treated as a religion. One parent felt that there was too much focus on Scottish, rather than world, history:

> History … if that was covered in a different way in terms of not just a Scottish view. But then again, they're getting an education from Scotland so that really starts from Nursery when they're learning about Scottish culture. But I think other stuff could be added to that to cover the Eastern stuff [to] make children understand about different cultures, not just about Scotland. (Adifaah, mother, case study 1)

However, there was also an acceptance that schools would focus mainly on the UK in the context of the West an understanding that children needed to learn about the place where they were now living:

> But at the moment I think it is more Scottish. But it is important, I think they're still quite young and they need to know where they're living for. ... he's doing one on the mountains and the rivers … in the whole of England or Scotland. But they are obviously talking about things around the world and comparing those things. (Fozia, mother, case study 14)

Religious education and religious observance

Most parents were in favour of religious education in schools and wanted their children to learn about other religions. For some, religious education provided children with an awareness of a spiritual dimension in life as well as providing them with an understanding of other religions which was important when you lived in a diverse society. A few were critical of the way RE was taught as it failed to teach children how to be religious. One parent likened the teaching to a market place for different religions:

So far you see I understand it's OK that they are getting education, information rather, information about various religions so not actually teaching them religion. What I have found, they are not teaching, they are just giving information, OK what Hindus do, what Muslims do, what Christians do, what Jews do, so this is the information. You see what I believe is teaching something different, where you come to … the point when you teach principles of a religion, why we believe in God, why believe in unity of God, what is prophethood and what is the prophethood, why do we do this, this is … teaching what I understand, so far it is not teaching of religion but just informing them OK what is available in the market for everyone. (Nazar, father, case study 9)

Others, such as Ruksha, were critical because teachers lacked knowledge of some of religions and there was an inclination to blur boundaries between culture and religion. She was particularly critical of teaching arranged marriages as part of Islam:

Well they go through the procedure of teaching all the religions, they say we're doing Judaism, doing this, doing that, but I have heard from a few people when Islam is being taught, things are being taught that are not accurate. Even just as a really silly example, my daughter was doing Islam at her school and for some reason they'd tied that into a look at arranged marriages, which are absolutely nothing to do with Islam … at all, it's a culture, it's nothing to do with religion but they're teaching them about Islam and then they said to them 'Come up with a list of what you would look for in a potential husband or a wife', which is a bit silly … In lots of countries Muslims do have that practice but it isn't part of the religion, So I think there's confusion obviously about what they're teaching. (Ruksha, mother, case study 10)

Related to this view was that teachers' knowledge and understanding of Islam was limited focusing on the Five Pillars of Islam and prayers:

… they do a couple of weeks of lessons on Islam but I think the teachers aren't very knowledgeable as we are, I think they do try their best … they talk about prayers every day and the five pillars of Islam (Maryam, daughter, case study 7)

Another criticism was that the teaching did not recognise variation within Islam and tended to focus on Sunni Islam.

I think they touch on all the religions … I don't like the way they touch on Islamic education although having said that it's, the education, Islamic education is the one that's known. It's the Sunni version of the [religion] as I mentioned before. So our version is not taught at all. (Sabrina, mother, case study 37)

A number of parents and children spoke of having been asked to speak about their religion to the class which had generally been welcomed because it made children feel that their religion was valued and respected:

> Yes I was [happy about the religious education teaching], also again another time when teachers would almost kind of use the child as a resource in the classroom and say, 'You're the expert on this, correct me if I'm wrong when I'm saying …' and then really including them as part of the resource base or the expertise on Islam, so in that way they would feel like they are being valued for what they believe and who they are. (Nazneen, mother, case study 32)

There was a plea from Tariq, one of the young people, for more religious education to help everybody understand Islam better and to counter the stereotypical image of Muslims which is apparent in some of the media:

> I would love to see more because at the moment in society it's more like people are very judgemental of Islam in that, especially now, Islam is frowned upon, Islam only teaches, well, should only teach peace, but people will exploit that and take it too far … In school I think if they teach Islam a bit more people would understand and they'd be more equipped [with] knowledge that people who are Muslim or from that background are not bad people. (Tariq, son, case study 7)

All parents allowed their children to take part in the teaching of religion and only a small number withdrew their children from activities related to Christianity, e.g. attending church at Christmas or Easter and taking part in nativity plays. Another young person in our study, Umar, explained that his parents had encouraged him to participate. His parents were keen for him to go to a mainstream school and learning to mix with those from other cultures was considered important:

> I took part in all the activities, it wasn't like, because it's not like a thing you have to be a Christian to do [it], you can still go along and see how the people celebrate their festivals and everything … my parents encouraged it. (Umar, son, case study 3)

His sister Shabeela also mentioned that going to church had made her note the similarities between Judaism, Christianity and Islam:

> I think I know a bit, like when I've been to church and I see what they do, I actually think that Judaism, Muslim and Christianity are all the same stories that are told by different people, because it is pretty much the same that there is a Jesus, there is a Jesus in Muslim and there is also Moses in Muslim, like somebody from Egypt would have written a book about that, so I know a bit, like what I

see from watching movies in primary four about it and I know all the stuff. (Shabeela, daughter, case study 3)

Whilst the academic part of the curriculum, including RE, attracted relatively little criticism and comment, parents had greater concerns about issues relating to dress, aspects of PE and swimming, sex education, food availability and awareness of food requirements and issues relating to religious education and religious observance. Each of these is explored below.

Dress

Most parents were in favour of school uniforms. However, beyond that there were differences among the parents in terms of the way they expected their children to dress. This included whether they wanted or expected daughters to wear the hijab. Some parents insisted on it:

> When she'll be nine she'll have to wear hijab, she is going to be a woman. At the age of nine in Islam you have to wear hijab. She won't be wearing skirts or shorts for PE ... The philosophy behind that is that girls are supposed to be guarding their modesty from nine upwards. We instil that value in them from that stage, then obviously later on it is natural for them. (Firas, father, case study 8)

In contrast, Adifaah did not expect her children to adhere strictly to dress codes and they were not expected to wear the hijab. She considered these dress codes cultural and not religious noted that some aspects were imposed on women by men:

> [I] think there's four, five things written about women in the Quran and I think one of them is it's nice to have modesty and say something about the length of your dress but when I went to Egypt one time with my dad we'd see some of the women covering their hair, skirts up to their knees, legs bare. I thought, 'That's their interpretation of it…that's fine'. Islam actually is to do with your interpretation of it because you've got a lot of male interpretation of Islam, that's where we get the power thing going on, they want to control the women, men do want to. (Adifaah, mother, case study 1)

Adifaah and Firas were both second generation Pakistani immigrants who had grown up in Pakistan. They were living in the same city but clearly had different opinions. Firas described himself as a Shi'a Muslim whilst Adifaah identified herself as Muslim but did not want to make any further distinctions. Most parents fall in between these two views. The majority emphasised modesty and that girls should cover their body when outside the house, however, girls were not necessarily expected to wear the hijab. Some of the mothers wore the hijab and others did not. In the view of Nuzhat, a first generation immigrant, the hijab attracted unnecessary attention and

although she was not against it she choose not to wear it and did not encourage her daughter to do so:

> It's nice if you cover your head, it's nice, but I think sometimes it gets too much when you cover up from top to bottom, it encourages people more to look. (Nuzhat, mother, case study 3)

Overall, there was an emphasis on modest dress for girls, and no discussion about dress codes for boys. Parents strongly supported school uniforms but opinion was divided in relation to wearing the hijab and several allowed their daughters to choose whether they wanted to wear it or not.

PE and swimming

Most parents stressed the importance of girls covering the body when taking part in PE. Schools generally allowed girls to wear leggings, although some parents spoke of having to put their request in writing repeatedly and felt that schools and the local council should have greater awareness of the needs of Muslim pupils:

> … when Ayesha had first started that was five, six years ago I wrote, we were requested to write a letter about jogging bottoms which I found that's ridiculous they should know that Muslim girls will not wear shorts but I still had to put in a letter. So I put a letter in, that was fine, I forgot all about it. Aanya starts school five years later [at the same] high school and again I'm requested to write a letter, so I phoned up at this point and said, 'Excuse me, is it compulsory that I write in a letter here?' I said, 'Should it not be understood that this girl's a Muslim girl, you've had five years of parents writing letters, my daughter, I wrote one five years ago for her, surely the school has moved on in five years … (Anam, mother, case study 20)

It was common for parents to withdraw their daughters from swimming especially at secondary level unless it was in single sex groups. Shabeela, Nuzhat's daughter (case study 3), mentioned that the only thing she had not participated in was swimming if it was in mixed groups:

> Nothing [that I can't take part in] except like swimming and PE for girls if it's mixed then you don't … If it's all girls then you'd go usually, like I went swimming when it was all girls but if it was boys I didn't go, joined in with the other class whatever they were doing. (Shabeela, daughter, case study 3)

Another mother explained that swimming was not an issue for younger children and she also explained that there were now Muslim swimsuits: 'It's called a tankini. It's not quite the burkini … sleeves are up to here and it's got sort of leggings with it that go up to there'. However, she did not consider mixed swimming acceptable for older girls. A small number of parents, including

Adifaah quoted above, felt that children should be allowed to take part in mixed swimming. In Adifaah's case this was because she felt it would make them more confident about their bodies and also allow families to go swimming together.

A few parents spoke of their concerns in relation to changing rooms used for PE and swimming and that it could be problematic for girls to observe modesty. An issue that had come up for another parent was that the lifeguard was male when swimming was girls only.

Sex education

Sex education led to considerable discussion and many parents felt uneasy about their children taking part. However, only two parents spoke of having withdrawn their children from sex education in primary school. Several parents felt that it was not congruent with Islamic values and that it was being taught too early. However, they did not want their children to feel excluded and there were also concerns about getting information 'second-hand' from their peers:

> They do a movie or something at year four … And then they do an in-depth thing, in year five. And just recently he brought a whole thing about puberty and like really horrible images and all that stuff. So I just looked at it and I said, 'Just keep it there, I don't want to see all this stuff' … I haven't withdrawn him but I do tell him that, 'Tell me everything that the teacher said so I can tell you the Islamic point of view. So I don't want you to like not know what's going on and not know what your friends know because then that's horrible'. Because then I'm thinking, they talk about it in school as well so… (Sabrina, mother, case study 37)

Sara, who had grown up in the UK, recalled her own family difficulties over sex education and felt that children should be taught at school with their peers. Her account illustrates the tensions between different cultures and the pressures that families are under when they are trying to reconcile different perspectives:

> Their father is from Pakistan and …we got a letter prior to them knowing that they were going to have it. His father and I had discussed it and he was mortified and he said 'No, he's too young', and we had spoken and I had said to him, 'I would rather my son get taught in a class together than him being taught away outside and then be fed this playground tittle tattle' … I said 'OK I'll take him out of school that day but you will have to explain' … His father, he nearly died, 'I'm not going to talk about that to my son', and I said, 'Well meet me half way, what do you want to do?' Because I was schooled here and everything, my parents had no idea that we had sex education at school, I had it in school, never breathed a word of it to my parents. But when I became a parent, our school did inform us before the class took place. We knew before the children knew that they were going to get it

because they sent out consent forms, and it was more difficult trying to get A's father to get his mind around because in our culture it's not the done thing. But I thought it was important, because I know my kids are going to go out[into the world]. They know their values and they know my expectations for them … (Sara, mother, case study 7)

A small number of parents felt that sex education was important because children had to learn about these things in order to be able to cope with life in the society where they were now living. This was clearly expressed by Fadil, a father, who saw the family's role as providing children with a set of fundamental values and principles that they could use as adults to guide them in their life:

I mean even in terms of sex education and stuff like that … we don't live in a bubble. She needs to learn what's around her. She needs to, I mean eventually she'll, you know, she's going to make her own decisions about things. And the only thing you can do is to provide them with the resources and the things to enable them to make the right decision. And then they need to make them. So that's really been the sort of guiding principle for us. You know … to be fundamentally good and, you know, do unto others … (Fadil, father, case study 12)

Sex education is clearly a sensitive topic and likely to remain so. However, schools seem to deal with it sensitively by discussing it with parents beforehand and allowing parents to withdraw their children. It still leaves parents with a dilemma in terms of their children feeling excluded if withdrawn and also in a position where they are likely to get information second hand from their peers.

Food and an understanding of food requirements

Issues relating to food were in evidence and these were mainly related to food being halal. There were also concerns about providing space for children at lunchtime during Ramadan. Children were generally restricted to vegetarian options as halal food was not provided. The range of vegetarian options was often limited and the quality of the food was not always good:

I wish at schools that they would provide halal food but I know it's a lack of resources and they can't do that for a minority but it's a shame because the children are restricted in terms of what they can eat at school. The vegetarian meals tend to be quorn which is nice but it's very processed, so it would be nice if they could get a wider range of food at school dinners. (Ruksha, mother, case study 10)

A small number of schools provided halal meat:

I just thought why don't I try and ask chef if they would cater for halal food and it turns out that they were more than happy to, when everybody's having chicken something or other, they would do a chicken portion for my daughter with halal chicken just so that she doesn't feel excluded. (Nazneen, mother, case study 32, referring to private secondary school)

Some of the young people and parents spoke of lack of understanding of dietary requirements of Muslims. This included, in some cases, not knowing that Muslims do not eat pork (and that ham is pork) and that some foods that contain gelatine and animal fat are not allowed. Malak was concerned about the food at school lunches and explained that there was not always a vegetarian option available;

Yeah it's pork and ham and we're not allowed pork and ham, and bacon and stuff like that, they sometimes have an option where it's like pork or tuna. (Malak, daughter, case study 18)

Umar felt that school could do more in that area especially in understanding issues around halal meat:

They could do more, especially with the food, because that's quite, like we've got to say we're vegetarian, then we bring a chicken sandwich or something, and they're like, 'I thought you didn't eat chicken'. I told all my friends at school how it worked, they all know. (Umar, case study 3)

Shabeela, Umar's sister mentioned that the school did not realise that ham was not allowed. Another parent felt it was sometimes difficult for the children to deal with the halal requirements and that it required vigilance on the part of parents as well as the children:

And obviously the kids feel when they do something different and something, they don't want to share because obviously everybody eats the different foods … And sometimes they are too shy to even say that we can't eat it because it's not halal or sometimes they say it's not just [what we can eat]. Sometimes there is not that much awareness in school as well because sometimes they serve ice-cream with some raspberry swirls in it but that contains gelatine and they cannot have it. (Fozia, mother, case study 14)

A number of parents dealt with the issues relating to food by sending their children to school with lunch boxes. It is clear that there were varying levels of awareness about halal food in schools and that information for school staff on this issue might be useful. The extent to which schools could be expected always to provide halal meat is perhaps open to debate. In Scotland, Muslim pupils form less than 2% of the total school population. However, there is a considerable variation between

schools and in areas where Muslim pupils constitute a large proportion of a particular school's population, the expectation of halal food might not be unreasonable.

School trips and other social events

A number of parents were concerned about children, particularly girls, taking part in school trips because they were normally mixed sex. The topic had not been discussed with a number of parents of younger children as it was not pertinent. However, in those cases where it was discussed, only three parents mentioned that they had not allowed their children to participate, and only one parent felt that single sex trips should be provided. The following dialogue between Razia and Tasnim, her 15-year old daughter, illustrates the generational differences, although in this case both had grown up in the UK. Tasnim had not been allowed to go on trips, however, she doubted whether schools would organise single sex events:

Mother: What about making just girls' trips, just one thing, they can't go to trips because it's mixed.

Daughter: The school?

Mother: Mixed like boys and girls.

Daughter: It's always like that though.

Mother: They do that, I'm suggesting they do [change it to single sex].

Daughter: They do that in PE and stuff, it's quite good, they have girl classes.

When asked further about having separate single sex classes or events, Tasnim questioned the idea:

Daughter: I don't know, I just think for mosque I'd say separate because the mosque is all about religion but school's not really, everyone's different and I don't think they would ever come across separating because…

Mother: No but for instance, the London trip for instance, it was mixed….

Daughter: The school's school, not everyone's got a religion.

There were a small number of parents who did not allow their children to take part in activities involving dancing (e.g. as part of PE). Music was another topic that came up and Manar, a mother of Pakistani origin, spoke of having been brought up by 'liberal' parents who allowed her to play music. She had learnt more about her faith since becoming an adult and felt that she now needed to adhere to rules that she had learnt later in life and would therefore not allow her own children to play music.

Children were generally allowed to take part in after school activities. However, staying out late or overnight with friends was often not allowed. In some cases, parents actively encouraged their children to engage with extra-curricular activities. Preeti, a mother of Indian origin, encouraged her son to take part in clubs and activities after school. She had some success but described him as being anti-social like his father:

> I try to push him to do it but he's so unsocial he's like his Dad, he's a bit unsocial, he used to do, like for swimming, I've paid twice for him to go but he wouldn't go for that, but yesterday he played for his school, he went for a chess tournament, so he likes chess. He used to play the drums, he's stopped it now, and he used to go for Scouts, again he's not keen, on and off he becomes off it but I think he's not doing enough as he ought to be doing. (Preeti, mother, case study 33)

Conclusion

It is clear that even in this relatively small sample of parents there were different views about what was acceptable and congruent with Muslim values and the extent to which children and young people should engage fully with all aspects of the curriculum. All stressed the need to ensure that children were brought up with a set of values that were based on Islamic principles but many felt these values were not particular to Islam but were shared by other religions. Many noted the tensions that were apparent, or would emerge, during the teenage years. Parents who had been brought up in the UK commented on having to cope with these issues when they were teenagers and several said they were aware of these tensions for their own children. In many cases, the concerns and worries were similar to those of all parents, irrespective of ethnic or religious background. What stands out is that Islam and what it means to be a Muslim were interpreted in a number of different ways. Parents were influenced by their own cultural background and their childhood experiences. They were also affected by their immediate environment and, at times, the gender of the children. This implies that schools need to engage with individual parents and children in ensuring that the child has full access to the curriculum but in a culturally sensitive manner.

SECTION 7: CONCLUSION

The aim of the project was to examine school choices of Muslim parents, the experiences and attainment levels of Muslim pupils and the relationship between home, school and community. The findings in sections 3 to 6 have explored these areas drawing on official statistics, policy analysis and the views of the participants in our study. In this section we summarise what has emerged under the following headings:

- Demographic changes and the challenges of multiculturalism
- Pupil achievements, parental aspirations and labour market outcomes
- School choice, social class and access to knowledge and information
- Religion and its role in family and school life
- Intergenerational tensions

Demographic changes and the challenges of multiculturalism

Findings from the 2011 Census point to significant changes in the UK population, with much greater ethnic and religious diversity. With regard to religious diversity, it is clear that the Muslim population has increased, but so too has the group reporting that they do not identify with any religion. In England, the proportion of Muslims overall has grown to around 5% of the total population. However, there is considerable regional variation, with London and the North West having particularly high Muslim populations. In Scotland, the overall ethnic minority population is smaller. However, the same geographical variation exists with the majority of the ethnic minority population living in urban areas close to the central belt. It is clear that schools in different regions face specific challenges in dealing with religious and cultural diversity, and there may be particular difficulties for schools with a small number of Muslim pupils and little experience in accommodating pupil diversity.

Achievement, aspirations and labour market outcomes

A number of researchers have noted high aspirations among immigrant communities. However, there have also been concerns about underachievement among some ethnic minority groups, in particular Black Caribbean boys and Pakistani boys. The secondary data gathered reflected the poorer achievement levels, compared to the average, of Black Caribbean boys and to some extent Pakistani boys in England. However, recent data in Scotland showed Asian Pakistani boys achieving at the same levels as White UK boys and girls outperforming White girls at Key Stage 4/Secondary 4. There seems to be an improvement in the overall performance of Pakistani pupils, suggesting high levels of parental encouragement, but also good educational support within schools.

At the same time, within each ethnic group there is wide variance in achievement associated with social class and, to a lesser extent, gender.

It was clear from the qualitative data that the majority of the parents had high aspirations for their children, reflecting changes in the labour market and the reduction in the number of low-skilled jobs. In the past, many immigrants found work in factories or had been shopkeepers and several of our interviewees referred to their parents having been in these occupations. Supermarkets have changed the nature of shopping in society leaving fewer opportunities for small shops and there is less work in manufacturing. High status, portable educational qualifications were seen as essential by many. However, although all wanted their children to achieve to the best of their ability, there were a small number of parents who downplayed the importance of qualifications and emphasised the importance of soft skills for personal development and successful integration into the labour market. In addition, parents with access to economic, social and cultural capital were in a much better position to support their children's achievement compared with parents living in socially disadvantaged circumstances. Many parents believed that children should choose their post-school destination and occupation independently. A number of parents spoke of 'others in their community' putting pressure on their children to go into high status occupations such as medicine and had experienced such pressure themselves. There was no evidence that girls were being denied further or higher education and many stressed that education was highly valued in Islam and as important (some said more important) for girls as it was for boys.

School choice, social class and access to knowledge and information

The aspirations of the parents were apparent in the way they approached selecting a school for their child(ren). The emphasis on academic excellence was apparent, especially in relation to secondary school choice. However, it is clear that were a number of other factors that also influenced Muslim parents' attitudes to school choice. Parents with greater access to economic and social resources were able to negotiate their way around the education system more effectively than those who were living in socially disadvantaged circumstances or recent immigrants. The section on achievement and aspiration noted that Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils were tending to improve their academic performance over time, and this is reflected in parents' ability to access information from a range of sources to make strategic school choices. Whilst the majority of parents wanted their children to attend schools with high levels of academic attainment, believing that they would do best there, it was also evident that other aspects of education were valued, including a warm and inclusive school ethos. More affluent parents, who might themselves have experienced private education in Pakistan, were seeking this type of education for their children as a means of achieving greater social mobility. Parents who had grown up in the UK were also influenced by their experiences and

a number of parents spoke of wanting their children to be in a school where they felt comfortable and were not the only one from an ethnic minority.

What was also in evidence in a small number of cases was that parents who had few social and economic resources faced a disadvantage and were not in a position to select schools to their children's advantage. In most cases this was because they were restricted to the local schools. Our sample was skewed towards the more educated and those of higher socio-economic status and this was reflected in school choice.

Religion, its role in family and school life

For the past twenty years, there has been support for the expansion of faith schools in England, although there has only been a relatively small increase in their number. In Scotland, although there is debate about Catholic faith schools, there are no moves to alter their status. At the same time, there is no groundswell of opinion in favour of greater religious diversity within the state sector. As illustrated by the case studies presented above, Muslim parents have different views about Islamic schools. For the majority of Muslim parents, the academic reputation and attainment level of the school is the over-riding concern. Religious formation is seen as the responsibility of the family rather than the school, and this tends to be built into family routines and cultural practices. Some Muslim parents regard Islamic schools as potentially divisive and therefore are not in favour of their expansion. A minority of parents experience major tensions in bringing up their children amidst western secular values, and Islamic schools may be preferred by this group as a way of reinforcing Muslim identity. However, for these parents too, high academic standards are important because, as noted in earlier sections, education is seen as the route to social mobility.

It is clear that even in this relatively small sample of parents there were different views about what was acceptable and congruent with Muslim values and the extent to which children and young people should engage fully with all aspects of the curriculum. All stressed the need to ensure that children were brought up with a set of values that were based on Islamic principles but many felt these values were not particular to Islam but were shared by other religions. Many noted the tensions that were apparent, or would emerge, during the teenage years. Parents who had been brought up in the UK commented on having to cope with these issues when they were teenagers and several said they were aware of these tensions for their own children. In many cases, the concerns and worries were similar to those of all parents, irrespective of ethnic or religious background. What stands out is that Islam and what it means to be a Muslim were interpreted in a number of different ways. Parents were influenced by their own cultural background and their childhood experiences. They were also affected by their immediate environment and, at times, the gender of

the children. This implies that schools need to engage with individual parents and children in ensuring that the child has full access to the curriculum but in a culturally sensitive manner.

Intergenerational tensions/changes

Although the focus of our research was not on intergenerational change or tensions between generations, it was something that cropped up in discussion with the interviewees. There was evidence of changing attitudes towards the importance of education for girls, particularly among the Pakistani population. A small number of mothers spoke of not being allowed to continue into post-school education at an earlier point in their lives, but were now in the process of studying. Many of the mothers we spoke to had worked (and stopped or worked part-time to bring up the family) or were working, which suggests that the very low employment rate for Pakistani women may change in the future. In relation to religious practice, some parents had become less observant over time, whilst a small minority had become more devout.

In summary, this research has demonstrated that even within a small sample there is variation between individuals who identify as Muslims and that this variation is linked to context, culture and socio-economic status. In many respects, the choices they make and the concerns they have about their children's futures are similar to parents from other backgrounds. However, many are also concerned about helping their children develop a Muslim identity that allows them to retain their faith in a multicultural society. Problems with widening levels of inequality across OECD countries, accompanied by growing divergence in educational attainment according to social class, are a major issue for Muslim pupils as for other groups. As noted by the OECD (2008), stemming the trend towards wider educational and economic inequality is vital to preserve social cohesion.

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Appendix: Key characteristics of sample

No	Family members	Background of family	Child(ren)'s education	School choice
1	Parents. Three daughters aged 11; 6; 5.	Pakistani, Adifaah (mother) was born in UK. Her husband grew up in Pakistan. The family lives on outskirts of Sea City in a suburban area and they are owner occupiers. Adifaah has a science degree. Her husband is a taxi driver.	Children are in nursery, Primary 2 and Primary 7. Eldest child due to start secondary school. Mother knowledgeable about school system.	Non-denominational. Local school chosen because of proximity and reasonable academic reputation.
2	Parents. Three sons aged 20, 13, 10. One daughter aged 15.	Bangladeshi. Razia (mother) was born in the UK. Husband came to Scotland when he got married. The family live on outskirts of Sea City in comfortable bungalow close to a high performing secondary school. Razia works as a school nurse. Owner occupiers.	Eldest at post-92 university. Daughter in fifth year. Middle son in Secondary 2. Third son in Primary 6. Mother knowledgeable about school system.	Non-denominational. Eldest son went to different secondary school from the younger two. Family moved to be in catchment area of current secondary school.
3	Parents. Two sons aged 17, 12. One daughter aged 16.	Pakistani. Nuzhat came to Scotland when she got married. Husband grew up in Scotland. Family lives on outskirts of Sea City in large comfortable, newly built owner occupied house. Nuzhat is a teacher. Husband works in finance but also studying part-time.	Eldest son starting Computer Science & Maths at elite university. Daughter in 6th year applying to medical schools. Youngest son in first year of secondary school. Knowledgeable about school system.	Non-denominational, primary school in catchment area. Made placing request for out of catchment secondary school because of academic reputation.
4	Parents. One daughter aged 13. Two sons aged 7 and 4.	Malaysian. Jared was studying in Scotland and had brought his family to Sea City for the duration of his studies. PhD sponsored by major oil company. No family other members in city but access to other post-graduate students. Family lives in modern rented flat in south west of city in socially mixed area.	Daughter in second year of local secondary school. Son in P 4; youngest not at school.	Non-denominational local schools. Schools chosen according to advice from contacts within the community but choice constrained by limited family housing budget and short stay. Family planned to return to Malysia following PhD completion.
5	Parents. One son aged 8.	Iranian. Interviewed mother (Rashad). Both parents PhD students in Sea City. Live in rented accommodation close to the university. Have been in the country for 3 years Both parents highly educated.	Son in P 4	Non-denominational local school. Choice restricted by availability of places.
6	Parents. Two sons aged 18 and 10. Two daughters (12 and 8).	Pakistani. Ramsha came to Scotland when she got married. Husband spent most of his life in Scotland. Live in social housing. Ramsha had worked as teaching assistant and in factory but was not working at time of interview.	Eldest son left school and went to college. Left college without qualification and now working in factory. Eldest daughter in first year of high school. Younger son in Primary 6. Younger daughter in Primary 4.	Non-denominational local schools. Primary school seen as more 'multi-cultural'

No	Family members	Background of family	Child(ren)'s education	School choice
7	Parents. Two sons aged 19 and 13. One daughter aged 17.	Pakistani; Sarah grew up in UK but Parents from Kenya. Husband came from Pakistan when he got married. Live in Sea City in old tenement flat close to city centre. Occupations of parents not known.	Eldest son at post-92 university after year at college. Studying psychology. Daughter in sixth year and accepted on HND course in make-up. Youngest son in second year at high school.	Placing request to Roman Catholic primary and secondary schools outside catchment area.
8	Large extended family. Grand-mother, daughter with three children, daughter in law.	Pakistani. Grandmother and husband emigrated to UK in 1970s. Children grew up in UK. Daughter-in-law came to UK from Pakistan when she got married. Family live in Sea City in a large comfortable house shared by grandparents and eldest son and family. Owner-occupiers. Daughter lives nearby. Grandparents previously owned grocer's store in the city. Eldest son works in finance. Youngest son is a surgeon. Daughter has degree in Biological science but works in local department store. Daughter in law does not work.	Eldest son's children: eldest son in secondary 5; younger children in primary 4 and primary 5. Daughter's eldest child in Primary 7; middle child in Primary 4; youngest child not yet at school. Knowledgeable about school system in the city	Non-denominational local school for son's children. Daughter selected it because she felt staff were 'culturally aware'.
9	Parents. Two sons aged 11 and 18 months).	Pakistani. Both parents Nazar (father) and Nuryn (mother) were born and brought up in Pakistan.Live in Sea City in a small basement flat. Both parents degree educated and Nazar has post-graduate qualification. He works in security but was on sick leave at the time of the interview.	Eldest son was in Primary 7.Youngest child was not at school or nursery. Limited knowledge of school system initially.	Non-denominational catchment area school. Plan to make placing request for Catholic secondary school. Wanted youngest son to go to Catholic school
10	Parents. One son aged 13. Two daughters aged 9 and 4.	Pakistani. Ruksha and her husband are second generation immigrants. Owner occupiers living in suburban area of Sea City. Ruksha's parents have a shop. Ruksha has a post-graduate degree and is working part-time. Husband has Physics degree and works in computing.	Son in Secondary 1 in academically high achieving state school. Eldest daughter in feeder primary school. Parents knowledgeable about school system.	Non-denominational. School chosen because of academic achievement and multi-cultural ethos. Parents made placing request to out of catchment area primary school to be eligible for secondary school.
11	Parents; 3 sons (15; 11; 4); 1 daughter (10).	Siddra (mother) Indian; husband Pakistani; both 2nd generation immigrants, grew up in London; lived in Sea City; both parents wore medics; Siddra went to comprehensive school in London and was the first person from the school to go to medical school; owner occupiers.	Eldest son in 4th year secondary; second son in 1st/2nd year – private single sex school; daughter in primary 5; youngest son at state nursery. Parents initially had limited knowledge of Scottish education system.	Eldest son went to Islamic school in London then local primary in Sea City. Then moved to prestigious boys' school. Daughter in non-catchment area primary school in city centre with stronger academic record than local primary.

No	Family members	Background of family	Child(ren)'s education	School choice
12	Parents. Two daughters aged 16 and 4.	Fadil (father) Indian origin but grew up in Kenya. Moved to London and then to Scotland. Wife from Iran. Live in centre of Sea City. Both parents were highly educated	Elder daughter in sixth year of private girls' school. Younger in nursery. Parents were well informed of school system in London.	State primary followed by private girls' secondary in London and in Sea City. Younger child in nursery.
13	Parents. Three daughters aged 16, 10 and 8. One son aged 7.	Both parents are British converts to Islam. Mother grew up in London; father Scottish. Lived in social housing on arrival in Sea City. Now live close to city centre. Mother has degree and works. Knowledgeable about school system in Scotland.	Eldest daughter had just left school. Attended Islamic nursery followed by state primary in London. Home educated initially in Sea City, then state primary outwith catchment area. Attended high achieving state secondary school. Younger children in Primary 3, Primary 4 and Primary 5.	In London, chose schools according to religion and ethos. Placing request to 'well-run' Islamic school not successful. Home education until familiar with Scottish school system. Subsequently choice based on cultural ethos and creative curriculum.
14	Parents. Two sons aged 12 and 9. One daughter aged 4.	Pakistani. Fozia (mother) moved to UK when she got married. Husband grew up in Scotland. Lived in suburb of Sea City in comfortable large modern house. Fozia has degree from university in Pakistan. Not currently working but hoping to return when youngest child at school. Husband has own textiles business.	Elder boy in private secondary school. Younger in junior school. Daughter at private school nursery. Limited knowledge of school system initially.	Son went to private school from Primary 1 and the other children followed him to that school.
15	Parents. Three daughters aged 19, 17, 15.	Pakistani. Adeena (mother) and her husband grew up in Pakistan. Moved to Scotland to join members of husband's family. Family live in small estate on outskirts of Sea City. Owner occupiers in mixed area. Adeena works part-time in retail. Husband had run grocery store but it had closed. Currently out of work. Two eldest girls had part-time jobs.	Eldest in second year of Law degree. Commuting to university in another city. Second eldest in sixth year. Applying to local universities. Youngest in fourth year of secondary school. Parents lacked knowledge about school system.	Children attended non-denominational local primary. Eldest two at closest secondary. Youngest at high achieving secondary following placing request. Keen to join primary school friends and moved when place available.
16	Parents. One daughter aged 11. One son in twenties.	Turkish. The family had come to Sea City recently. Both parents educated to degree level. Suna (mother) was an academic. Her husband was not working.	Son was doing Master's degree. Daughter in Primary 6 in school outwith catchment area. Colleagues provided information about schools.	Non-denominational. Initially local school Experienced bullying. Following a placing request, daughter moved to another school
17	Parents. One son aged 3. New baby due.	Pakistani. Manar (mother) and husband born in London. Recently moved to Sea City and were living in university accommodation. Both parents had degrees and professional jobs.	Son had not yet started school. Parents considering Montessori nurseries. Unfamiliar with Scottish education system	

No	Family members	Background of family	Child(ren)'s education	School choice
18	Parents. Daughter aged 11); son aged 9.	Iraqi refugees. Live in River City in area of social housing and less expensive private houses. Hanifa (mother) educated to degree level in Iraq; husband's occupation not know.	Daughter in Primary 7; son in primary 5. Obtained advice on schools from an Iraqi family friend.	Local non-denominational. Moved to area because the school was 'good'. Intended to make placing request to local Catholic secondary.
19	Parents; daughter (8); son (6).	Iraqi, Alya (mother) and husband were refugees living in tenement flat in River City. Both parents professional and degree educated.	Daughter was in Primary 4 and son in Primary 1. Limited knowledge of school system.	Nondenominational local primary school. Family had no choice.
20	Parents. Three daughters aged 18; 13; 8.	Pakistani. Anam grew up in River City. Husband born in Pakistan. Owner occupiers living in large detached Victorian house in leafy suburb. Anam has a degree and a professional occupation.	Eldest daughter in sixth year of secondary school. Middle daughter in second year of secondary school. Youngest daughter in Primary 4. Extensive knowledge of Scottish education system	Non-denominational. Placing request made to primary school attended by eldest daughter and younger siblings followed her. Placing request made to secondary school and then family moved to catchment area.
21	Mother. Three daughters aged 18; 15; 10. One son aged 22.	Somalian refugees. Hodan (mother); lived in local authority housing in a town close to River City. Mother had educational qualifications from Somalia and was studying in Scotland.	Son was at local college studying business. Eldest daughter studying for HND at college. Third daughter at high school and fourth daughter in primary school. Limited knowledge of school system.	Local school as family unaware of how to choose school. Wanted school which was close to home.
22	Parents. Two daughters aged 23 and 17. One son aged 20.	Afghanistani refugees. Marid (father) lives in River City. Wife lives in flat in other city with children whilst they are at university and school. Both parents have university degrees. Marid currently works as a private tutor; his wife is not working.	Elder daughter in fourth year of Medicine. Son in fourth year of Engineering degree. Younger daughter final year of secondary school applying to do Medicine.	School choice governed by where family had been housed – but children extremely successful academically.
23	Parents. Two sons aged 2 and 3 months.	Iraqi. Hafid (father) lived in local authority housing in River City. Hafid was English teacher in Iraq; wife was primary teacher. Neither currently working.	The children had not yet started school.	
24	Parents. One son aged 10. One daughter aged 15.	Iraqi. Hala (mother) lived in own semi-detached house in residential area of town close to River City. Hala was degree educated (Iraq and Scotland). Husband worked as HGV driver.	Daughter in third year of Catholic high school. Son in Primary 6 in non-denominational local primary school. Hala was well informed about education system.	Primary school was local but they had bought the house because of the school. Made placing request for daughter to attend Catholic high school because of proximity, ethos and achievement.

No	Family members	Background of family	Child(ren)'s education	School choice
25	Parents. Two daughters aged 8 and 5.	Iraqi refugees. Live in social housing in River City. Both parents educated to degree level and had worked in professional jobs in their own country.	Elder daughter in primary 4. Younger in Primary 1. Limited knowledge of Scottish education system	Local and close to where they lived. School allocated rather than chosen.
26	Mother. One son aged 5; One daughter aged 1.	Pakistani. Saima (mother) and husband were born in UK. Saima living with parents in northern post-industrial city with large immigrant population. Saima had a degree. Her husband worked in the family business and was doing a nursing degree.	Son had started local state primary. Then attended private Islamic faith school. Saima was knowledgeable about the school system.	Initially choice of school based on proximity and location. Later chose Islamic faith school.
27	Parents. One son (nearly 3).	Pakistani. Sairah (mother) and her husband were born in the UK. Currently living in in northern post-industrial city. Sairah had degree and professional job. Her husband worked as recruitment consultant.	Considering home schooling. Extensive knowledge of home-schooling network and education system.	
28	Parents. Two sons aged 5 and 2. Daughter aged 8.	Pakistani. Saila (mother) and Aaquil (father) were born in the UK. Currently living in northern post-industrial city. In traditional terraced house. Aaquil had worked in family business but was now a lecturer at a local college and studying for a Masters degree. Saila had a degree and teaching qualification. She had worked as a teacher.	Daughter was in Catholic primary school. Son in a non-denominational primary school. Initial knowledge about daughter's school from family network.	Daughter's school chosen because of reputation and proximity. Son did not get a place there. Offered place in other school but not 'good' so appealed and was offered a third school which was acceptable .
29	Parents. Four daughters aged 22, 19, 15, 10.	Bangladeshi. Tumi was born in Bangladesh but grew up in England. The family lives in a modern semi-detached house in a quiet suburb in the East of England. Tumi is a teacher and her husband owns a restaurant.	Eldest daughter had completed a degree, second daughter finished A levels at Islamic boarding school. Returning home to do OU degree. Third daughter at Islamic private girls' school in London, living with family. Fourth daughter was at local primary school. Initially limited knowledge about education system.	Local schools for eldest daughter. Islamic secondary schools chosen for (and by) children because Islamic religious ethos was important.
30	Mother. One daughter aged 22. Four sons aged 20; 16; 11; 10.	Bangladeshi. Afiya came to UK when she got married. She is now separated. The family live in social housing on outskirts of East of England city. Afiya is a housewife. Her husband owns his own restaurant.	State school education. Second son in year 12 at secondary school. Third son in first year of secondary. Fourth son in upper primary. Some knowledge of the education system.	Choice governed by proximity. Afiya moved the younger children to the local school when they moved.

No	Family members	Background of family	Child(ren)'s education	School choice
31	Parents. One son aged 18 months.	Afrah (mother) was UK convert to Islam. Husband Tunisian. Family lives in a semi-detached house in the suburbs of East of England city. Describe themselves as not affluent but 'comfortable'. Both parents have degrees and Afrah was employed.	Son was too young for school but Afrah spoke of home schooling due to lack of confidence in education system.	
32	Parents. Two daughters (17; 12); One son (16)	Bangladeshi. Nazneen (mother) was born in London. Family lives in East of England city. Nazneen has degree and professional job. Her husband has businesses in the city. Family is middle-class.	Elder daughter and son were doing A levels at local state Catholic school. Elder daughter attended girls' private secondary school after state primary. Younger daughter just started at that school. Knowledgeable about education system.	Choice of secondary school based on single sex and academic excellence. Primary school was local, multi-cultural and 'good'. The children started at an Islamic school but moved to state school because of concerns about academic achievement.
33	Mother. One daughter aged 18. One son (10).	Indian origin. Preeti (mother) born and brought up in India. Divorced. Had lived in East of England city for 12 years. Both parents were well educated and husband was a doctor.	Daughter in Catholic state school and son in local primary school. Prior to parents' divorce, daughter in private education. Parents knowledgeable about school system.	Choice made mainly on academic grounds. Preeti's son had been moved from one primary school to another because it had better discipline and was considered a better school.
34	Parents. One daughter aged 17. One son aged 15.	Malaysian. Jala (mother) and Khalid (father) had lived in the UK on several occasions. Khalid had moved to the UK to study. Family live in East of England city. Both parents had degrees and professional jobs.	Both son and daughter in private school. Daughter in year 13 doing A-levels. Son in year 12 at the same school. Children had attended school in Singapore and in the UK.	School choice based on perceptions of academic excellence. Family had returned to the UK for the children to complete A-levels because the provision was better than in Singapore.
35	Parents. One son (29). Two daughters (26, 21).	Bangladeshi. Both parents were born and brought up in Bangladesh. Family lives in East of England city in house formerly owned by local authority. Nazreen (mother) had a degree and professional occupation. Husband owned restaurants.	Younger daughter at university in London. Second daughter had attended private girls' school. Son attended state school. Younger daughter had gone to a private school to do A-levels.	Private schools chosen for daughters because believed to have higher academic standards than state schools. Single sex preferred but religion not an issue.

No	Family members	Background of family	Child(ren)'s education	School choice
36	Parents. One daughter aged 11.	Asian. Hasna (mother) was born in the north of England. Met her husband in India but most of his family were in London. Hasna divorced, remarried and was living in London. Hasna had a degree and owned and ran her own nursery.	Daughter was in first year of girls' academy in area with high minority ethnic population. School had outstanding Ofsted report. Daughter had started attending Islamic faith school at age 5. Moved to state primary with more challenging curriculum. Hasna was well informed about the education system.	School choice based on achievement and a curriculum which focused on creativity. Single sex education also important.
37	Parents. Three sons (13, 11, 5).	Asian. Sabrina (mother) was born and grew up in Kenya; husband had family in London. Family had lived in Kenya and UK, now living in London. Sabrina left school with few qualification but was currently studying for a degree. Worked as deputy head of Islamic nursery.	Eldest son in year 9 at comprehensive, foundation school. Second son in year 6 of primary. Youngest son in reception class. Sabrina was knowledgeable about the education system.	Moved to access better secondary schools. The school attended by eldest son was second choice. Chose school on basis of academic achievement. Had wanted a single sex secondary school. Primary school chosen for proximity and for having children from 'their' community.
38	Parents. Two daughters (11 and 2).	Pakistani. Sakinah (mother) and her husband grew up in Pakistan. Came to UK to study and lived in a town in the south of England. Moved to London. Both parents educated to post-graduate level and both were working in professional jobs.	Elder daughter in first year at 'converter' Academy with good Ofsted report in area with high minority ethnic population. Little knowledge of education system initially but now very well informed.	Primary school had been chosen for 'emotional' ethos. Secondary school for academic excellence as well as ethos and understanding of Muslim pupils' needs.