



# IMPROVING PE FOR MUSLIM GIRLS

## School case study 5

### Jack Hunt Academy

Jack Hunt Academy is a large comprehensive school in Peterborough. It is a culturally diverse school, with over 70 languages spoken by its pupils. Its proportion of Muslim pupils is 37 per cent, well above the national average for schools in England and Wales. Pupils celebrate their diversity and share their cultural experiences with pride. There is a strong ethos of hard work, integrity and kindness.

The school employs a female PE teacher who is a British Muslim. She is a great asset in engaging Muslim girls in PE as she has lived experience of many of the barriers they face, understands their values and concerns and, above all, is a positive role model. The girls appreciate having a teacher who reflects them and recognises their needs, such as stepping out of PE to adjust their hijabs or wearing 'skins' under their PE t-shirts, and they benefit from seeing a Muslim woman who is passionate about sport. This reinforces the importance of Muslim girls having representative role models and the school encourages them to consider PE and sport-related careers, via GCSE and A-levels, to become future role models themselves.

Providing leadership opportunities is a key part of this process. All pupils experience leadership through PE, including leading warm-ups in Years 7 and 8, experiencing Sport Education in Year 9, doing a Sports Leader Award in Year 10 and, potentially, being selected for the school sports council. PE staff ensure that these opportunities are fully inclusive of Muslim girls. For example, the girls are consulted about the activities used for Sport Education, are allowed to lead groups with whom they feel most comfortable (e.g., mixed-sex groups of primary-aged children or girls-only secondary-age peers) and select culturally appropriate music during dance. Crucially, this involves having conversations with the girls to gauge what will work.

Having a Muslim colleague helps staff to be aware of relevant issues but, more importantly, the department is committed to using pupil voice to shape provision. In addition to the sports council, which advises on topics like PE kit and suitable activities during Ramadan, every pupil is asked to complete a jot form. This is emailed to them every 6-12 months and asks questions about their PE experiences and suggestions. There are also ongoing and informal conversations during PE. This has created a culture in which Muslim girls feel comfortable to share their views because they know staff will listen, reflect and adapt.

Pupils' needs are embedded in the PE curriculum. It recognises that participation is often more relevant than performance to their lives and promotes everyday physical activity, not just sport. For example, the first half of a two-hour lesson might be high intensity, but the second half may be low intensity, with activities such as table tennis or rambling. The focus is on pupils having choice and autonomy and the social, emotional and mental health benefits of PE, all of which resonate with Muslim values.

Furthermore, the school reaches out to its local community, enabling it to build trust and support. For example, it used Opening School Facilities funding to establish a female-only badminton session. Participants feel that this is a culturally safe and sensitive space and 88 per cent of the participants are Muslim girls or women. It is a great example of how adopting an inclusive approach benefits everyone.

**Key factors:** Youth voice, leadership, confirmation, flexible delivery and participation, security, comfort.



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