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Curriculum Matters: Islamic Studies

Why Islamic Studies Matters

Islamic Studies and Quran are the bedrock of the curriculum at LNS. Quranic knowledge and Islamic principles pervade all of the subjects at LNS, not just 'Islamic' ones, as we believe that the Quran worldview provides the framework for all knowledge. We do not believe that there are 'Islamic' subjects and non-Islamic, or 'secular', subjects – we believe all subjects, whether from the Humanities or the Sciences are theological- are all 'Islamic'- in the sense that they are studied for and to know God. With the correct intention, studying these subjects is an act of worship if we know that God's signs (ayaat) pervade everything from the smallest gnat to the unfathomable black hole.

What we teach

We have created a bespoke Islamic Studies curriculum over several years' practical experience to meet the needs of secondary school Muslim children growing up in the cosmopolitan environment of 21st century Britain.

When teaching the curriculum, teachers are advised to always keep in mind the overall aims of the syllabus which are to:

- Instil a deep love of Allah and His Messenger in the hearts,
- foster a firm faith,
- encourage a life a piety and obedience to God, and
- focus aspiration towards the most important matter, the Next Life.

The curriculum is split into the following subject areas:

- Seerah – Biography of the life of the Prophet Muhammad and pious predecessors.
- Tajweed – Science of learning recitation of the Qur'an



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- Purification of the heart – Science of looking at the diseases of the heart
- Qur'an – Studying the Qur'an as a miracle from God and Qur'anic exegesis
- Hadith – Studying at the Prophetic traditions
- Jurisprudence – Studying the legal rulings in Islam
- Theology – Studying Islamic beliefs as well as evidences, theories and proofs for the existence God.
- Islamic History – Studying the history of Islam from the death of the Prophet through to the caliphates of the golden age.
- Eschatology – Studying the signs of the end of time and Prophetic traditions relating to it.
- Philosophy – Looking at epistemology and moral philosophy.

The Islamic Studies curriculum will enable students to acquire some of the following **core skills** over 5 years:

- Read the Quran fluently in Arabic and with *tajweed*
- Be able to read a wide range of religious texts
- Be able to analyse a wide range of religious texts
- Be able to interpret Quranic ayahs
- Be able to scrutinise authenticity and validity of sources
- Develop skills of critical thinking
- Know how to perform religious duties
- Ability to recall key events chronologically

Quran

At the crux of Islam, more so than any other religion, is a holy book. We have a collection of pages that not only inform us about our Lord, His prophets, the Day of Judgment, etc. but also provide us



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with a source of spiritual light and worship. As Muslims it is imperative that we connect ourselves to the Quran, embody its heavenly rhythms and its sublime meanings in every aspect of our daily lives. The reading and reciting of the Quran provide a cure for what ails us – whether that be spiritual or physical. It is our guiding light to good beginnings, good middles, good endings.

How we teach

In order to achieve the above objectives, the curriculum revolves around:

- The reading of passages and surahs of Quran in English
- Regular reading of hadiths particularly those of encouragements and warnings (as found in *Riyadh al Saliheen*)
- Study of the life of the Prophet Muhammad and his noble character
- Matters to do with self-purification and strengthening of one's faith
- A solid grounding in the *fardh 'ain* (personally obligatory) knowledge that each Muslim is required to study in theology and jurisprudence.

We also aim to connect the students to the Quran in a language that they understand. Each lesson starts with the students choosing a small passage of Qur'an to read in English to the rest of the class and explaining why they chose that verse. Through doing this we hope for pupils to gain familiarity, engage with the Quran and to establish a connection with the book of Allah in English.

The IS course is comprised of 10 separate subjects/areas of study which are divided into modules.

Each module will last between 8 to 12 lessons (one school term), and there is an end of module assessment. Modules within an area of study are built upon previous learning to ensure progression and further in-depth study. For example, the Seerah 2 module reviews and builds upon learning in the Seerah 1 module. The core skills are interweaved across all areas of study and modules.

The grades of the end of term assessments are recorded by the teacher on a central database and certificates awarded termly in the End of Term achievement assembly. Separate Islamic Studies and Quran reports are sent at the end of each term showing the grades and target levels achieved that



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term. Once all grades have been recorded for an academic year, we then use this as a basis to set targets for the forthcoming year in Islamic Studies.

The grading levels are:

Percentage	Grade	Level	Description
90 – 100	A *	9	DISTINCTION
80 – 89	A	8	DISTINCTION
70 – 79	A-	7	MERIT
60 – 69	B	6	MERIT
50 – 59	C	5	PASS
40 – 49	D	4	PASS
30 – 39	E	3	FAIL
20 – 29	F	2	FAIL
10 – 19	G	1	FAIL
0 – 9	U		

The curriculum is taught over five years at LNS. During years 7 – 9, students are taught four modules per term, (completing 12 modules per year) thus learning the significant portion of the syllabus. In years 10 - 11, the focus is shifted onto GCSE subjects, however, students will continue to have one module per term of Islamic Studies. At the end of the five years, upon successful completion, students will receive a **Diploma in Islamic Studies**. This certification demonstrates a strong basic knowledge of foundational Islamic Sciences and, if they wish to study Islamic Studies in future, they will be well on their way to becoming a fully-qualified Islamic Scholar.

Quran

For years 7 – 8: The students are given a base line assessment in *tajweed* and memorization when they first arrive at the school. The aim is to see what level they are at and to group them appropriately:



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Beginners Juz 'Amma class or Advanced Juz 'Amma class. In Years 7 and 8 the focus is on memorising because memorisation of the Quran is a virtuous action; 'A person who recites the Quran and memorises it will be with the noble scribes' [Hadith 4937, Bukhari].

Memorisation of Juz 'Amma is selected to start their memorisation journey because students are already familiar with some of the surahs. Additionally, as the juz contains many short chapters, these lend themselves to be recited daily during prayers. Each student has four lessons of Quran teaching weekly: two lessons on memorising, one lesson for assessment and review and one lesson for Quran reading (with *tajweed*).

Most of our Quran teachers have an *ijaza* (certification) in Quran which means they have read the whole Quran with excellent *tajweed* with a scholar and mastered the *tajweed* rules.

The **progression** of the Quran modules is seen by:

- Constant retrieval practise for memorisation through Years 7-11.
- Personalised targets for reading. As a student increases in fluency, their weekly reading target is increased.
- In Years 7 and 8 students study *tajweed* modules in Islamic Studies to reinforce their reading and application of rules (which they learn in Quran lessons).

Students are assessed weekly on their memorisation and sufficient time is given for review. The review is essential as we do not want students to forget previous learning. The process of review and assessment ensure verses are retained in the long-term memory.

During lessons, students recite the surah to the teacher and is given feedback verbally. In addition, they will have personalised targets set three times in the year for both memorisation and Quran reading and their progression towards these targets are sent home as part of the Islamic Studies and Quran report. Students are informed of their new targets at the beginning of each term.

In years 9-11, the focus shifts to reading the Quran with correct *tajweed*, as opposed to memorisation. This is because we aim for all students to be able to recite the Quran correctly by the time they leave LNS. Students continue to review previous learning in their review lessons. In Year 9 students spend two lessons per week on reading and one lesson for review and assessment of previous memorisation. For years 10 - 11, they have two lessons per week for reading.



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Key tests/resources used:

- The Quran (Arabic, Hafs, Uthmani script)
- Translation of the Quran (various versions:
 - [The Qur'an \(Oxford World's Classics – Abdel Haleem\)](#)
 - [The Koran Interpreted - Arberry](#)
 - [The Meaning of the Glorious Koran – Marmaduke](#)
 - [The Holy Quran – Yusuf Ali](#)
- [The Lives of Man](#) – Imam al-Hadaad
- [Muhammad: His life based on earliest sources](#) - Martin Lings
- [Riyadh al-Saaliheen](#) – Imam Nawawi
- Imam Nawawi's [al-Arabeen](#)
- Imam at-Tahawi's [al-Aqeeda](#)
- [The Purification of the Soul](#) – Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali
- [The Purification of the Heart](#) – Hamza Yusuf
- [The Man in the Red Underpants](#) – A.R Green
- [The Signs of the Day of Judgement](#) – Ibn Kathir

Homework is given on a weekly basis to assess the student's understanding in class. Homework is expected to be done to the best of one's ability and submitted on time.

Vocabulary

As with any discipline, Islamic Studies introduces the student to a wide range of subject-specific vocabulary. Much of the vocabulary is in Arabic, however there are a significant portion in English too. Thus, teachers ensure, through a range of activities, students are introduced to key words explicitly and these are repeated many times in one module as well as across modules. Retrieval activities like matching key words are used throughout modules to make learning stick.



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Beyond the classroom

We are developing a range of trips to complement the IS curriculum. These include:

- Oxford Centre for Islamic Sciences
- Cambridge Central Mosque – Europe’s first eco-friendly mosque
- Cambridge Muslim College
- Islamic Relief Clothes Warehouse, Birmingham

Its impact

At the end of the five years we aim for every student to achieve a Diploma in Islamic Studies. This provides a strong basis for an advanced Islamic Studies degree for those who wish too. Ha Meem College (www.hameem.org) in conjunction with al-Salam Institute in Oxford, is currently developing a program of further studies in Islamic Sciences which would be a two year course leading to a full Ālim/Ālimah (Islamic Scholar) qualification. This would be an option for any pupil who has completed the course of Islamic Studies at LNS to take up in the future should they choose to do so.

Additionally, students will have developed a deep understanding of their faith, based on original source material. They will be able to read and reflect on religious texts, including the Quran and critically challenge religious misinterpretation within their communities. Students may take their Quran studies further by pursuing a certification (*ijaza*) to become a qualified Quran teacher.

Ultimately, students will have moral and spiritual guidance so that they can fulfil their full potential as human beings to become true and sincere worshippers of God with a deep love for the final Prophet of God, Muhammad (Peace and Blessing be Upon Him) and follow his life and practice.