

# What is the role of faith schools in the IB community?

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## *Introductions.....*

### Aims of session

- Diversity of faith schools
- Positive contribution
- Possible areas of concern
- The challenge for the IB community



# What is a faith school?

One which is set up, nominally at least, to educate children within the guiding principles of a religious faith



# Diversity

- Christian
- Islamic

and many more



# A wide spectrum

From

strict adherence to specific rules about

- Curriculum
- Behaviour
- Dress

to

- a moral compass “teaching you to live the right way”



# The IB Mission Statement

.....(The IB) “programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners **who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right**”



## The Learner Profile

*IB learners strive to be:*

**Inquirers**

**Open-minded**

**Knowledgeable**

**Caring**

**Thinkers**

**Risk-takers**

**Communicators**

**Balanced**

**Principled**

**Reflective**

# What can faith schools bring to the IB community?

- Moral values
- Accepted code of behaviour
- Mutual support
- Identity and cohesion
- Personal integrity
- Serious attitudes to study
- Respect for teachers and education in general
- International links – positive cooperation





# Ethos

“Ethos is the ghost in the machine in education. Everyone recognises it when they see it; parents want it; politicians regard it with awe, but how do you produce it? Most would agree that it's the result of a common set of values articulated by the head and shared by staff, governors, pupils and parents. Get that communal consensus motivated around high aspirations, mutual respect and self-discipline, and you have a successful, well-ordered school...

Both the secular and sacred “languages” underpinning the values of self-discipline and responsibility have been badly eroded. Secular humanism has not found a popular ethical narrative to replace faith.” (Madeleine Bunting in Guardian 8/9/08)



# Possible areas of concern

- Restrictions on extent of enquiry permissible (science, TOK)
- Insistence on one correct line of thought
- Reluctance to accept uncertainty
- Exclusiveness; attitudes to non-believers
- Fear of offending teachers or parents
- Divergence of mission from IBO's



# TOK?

“It is the nature of faith-based schools to assume that the religion they are teaching is right”

“ Our people are perfectly ready to accept that everyone has different views and has the right to practise their religion in peace but may have difficulty teaching the children that other views may be correct”



# Widening participation

for example:

- The Aga Khan Academies
- Middle Eastern schools
- Public schools in Muslim countries



# Quote from the Aga Khan

“I would (also) like to quote an infinitely more powerful statement about the unity of mankind, because it comes directly from the Holy Quran, and which I would ask you to think about. The Holy Quran addresses itself not only to Muslims, but to the entirety of the human race, when it says:

“O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord Who created you from one single soul and from it created its mate and from them twain hath spread abroad a multitude of men and women.”

(Peterson lecture 2008)



# The IB and Muslim schools

- Set up as deliberately non-religious, a-political organisation, in Western humanist tradition
- Yet aim of intercultural understanding
- Recognition that 2/3 of world's population take their values from their religion
- Practical steps: information and collaboration (Aga Khan Foundation, governments, individual schools)
- History syllabus : Route 1 replaces History of Islamic World
- Intercultural exchange as part of CAS
- No exams on Friday afternoons

# A 21<sup>st</sup> century version of faith schools in the UK

- Academies: some sponsored by wealthy individuals with a strong faith background , claiming to reintroduce moral values to school life.

But one sponsor, Oasis, claims to offer: “membership of a global movement, working to transform communities, based on a vision which is person-centred, inclusive, servant-minded...we believe that every person matters” (Steve Chalke, chairman of Oasis).



# Challenges to the IB community

- Welcoming students whose faith shapes their world
- Acknowledging divergence of opinion, while retaining respect for freedom of expression and human rights
- Encouraging dialogue
- Fostering a spirit of enquiry and open-mindedness
- Travelling wisely





# Sharing our humanity

And finally, from the most recent Peterson Lecture, given by the Aga Khan:

“I would turn to those words from my Grandfather which were quoted in two earlier Peterson Lectures. He included them in a speech he gave as President of the League of Nations in Geneva some 70 years ago. They come originally from the Persian poet, Sadi, who wrote:

“The children of Adam, created of the self-same clay, are members of one body. When one member suffers, all members suffer, likewise. O Thou, who art indifferent to the suffering of the fellow, thou art unworthy to be called a man.”