

Parkfield Community School: Working with faith communities

In October 2015 Parkfield Community School began working with CoEd Foundation. The project was funded by BRAG (Birmingham Bullying Reduction Action Group), Birmingham Pride Community Trust and Parkfield Community School.

The project worked with children in Year 5, delivering workshops over four weeks to explore compassion in Islamic teachings. The workshops explored and celebrated how Muslims are required to be respectful, compassionate, tolerant, forgiving, patient, loving and understanding towards fellow humans. The aim was to promote the No Outsiders ethos and community cohesion with a focus on how faith can support all equalities.

At this time Parkfield Community School purchased 14 beautiful A3 size photo prints of a pilgrim's journey to Mecca and Medina, by local photographer Rabiya K. Latif. We held exhibitions in our school hall at the end of the school day to share the prints with our parent community. The exhibition brought a huge number of parents in to school and enabled conversations around Islamic faith and experiences. Our parents appreciated our efforts to show respect and support for their faith. This in turn reduced tension around later conversations with parents around LGBT equality and No Outsiders because the exhibition was one way of demonstrating our commitment to ensuring the ethos also included promoting different faith.

At the end of the Co Ed Foundation project we asked the children to consider what they learned, what compassion means to them and how they were going to put compassion in to action. The statements, written by the children, make us very proud of Parkfield Community School, and hopeful for all our futures.

The full list of children's responses can be found on the school website. These represent a small number:

What did you learn in this project?

Responses received have included:

- I have learnt that, no matter what religion you are or what you believe in, you are always equal
- I have learnt that if you are gay or lesbian we are all equal
- I learned that there are bystanders in bullying
- I learned that people from all religions can work together

- I have learnt that if you are gay or lesbian it doesn't matter and so you are equal
- No matter what skin colour you are, it does not matter. If you are a black lesbian it does not matter because there are no outsiders
- I learned that it is okay to be different. You could have different skin, hair, eyes, everything – difference is special and it's great to have different features and people.
- I learned that no matter if you are a boy, girl, gay, lesbian, short, tall, black, white, we don't care – you are equal
- I learned that you should believe in your faith no matter what people think
- I learned that people who were born as a boy or girl can change, and this is called 'transgender'
- That Islam means peace and sending mean emails to each other is cyber bullying
- What acts of compassion are, and the morals of compassion

What does COMPASSION mean to you?

- Compassion means when you show an act of kindness to someone
- I think compassion means speaking up
- It means kindness, helping people and equality
- Helping or caring for someone, and you're all insiders no matter who you are
- Respecting others no matter what – gay, religion, transgender, short, tall
- It means you can get along with everyone even if you have a different faith
- It's helping other bullies to turn their behaviour around
- Compassion means to treat others equally, for example if they are Somalian or Christian
- Being kind and helpful; it doesn't matter where somebody came from
- I think it means when you are talking about prophet and Islam
- Compassion means no matter what your religion is or no matter where you come from, we are all equal
- To me, compassion means to understand that there are lots of religions and respect them

How do you express COMPASSION in ACTION?

- To express compassion I would be truthful and be faithful, no matter what religion
- You look at someone, they might have a different religion and faith – just smile, and then they feel welcome
- You could be playing with different people like Christians, Sikhs
- You can play with anyone without judging them
- I would help anyone no matter if they are a different religion, gay, lesbian, or if they are a different culture
- If someone is saying "you can't join in because you're gay" and you say "let her play" even if they're gay