

A report on the situation regarding teaching music to Muslims in an inner-city school

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This research was carried out as part of an extensive investigation into why some music teachers were experiencing difficulties teaching music to Muslims in their classes. For some Muslims, music is pronounced haram and is forbidden in Islamic law due to its associations; it has frequently been linked with sex, drugs and alcohol and has been 'tarred with the same brush'. For many more Muslims it is seen as mubah, indifferent in relation to law, but for cultural reasons they would still prefer their children not to take part. Some forms of music are more acceptable than others, and some are acceptable under certain conditions, but of course most non-Muslim teachers are unaware of these. This article reports on observations of music lessons in a school with a high proportion of pupils from Muslim backgrounds. Interviews with pupils and several relevant adults are included. A report of the background to this research, and other aspects of it, can be found in the suggestions for further reading.

Context

Castle Community College is a large, mixed, 11–16s inner-city school with 950 pupils on its roll, of whom nearly 90 per cent are Muslims, mostly from Gujarat. It is a modern building on an attractive site, exuding an atmosphere of calm and stability. I spent eight Wednesdays during the autumn of 1999 as a participant observer in the music department. Also during the autumn and following spring I interviewed two local imams, an academic, and a governor of the school. In this way I built up a picture of the community based around Castle.

The head teacher responded warmly to my request to do participant observation in her school. She was well aware of the problems concerning music and had spent much time getting around the problem as best she could. Music has to be included in Key Stage 3 (ages 11–14) because it is compulsory in the National Curriculum, but the school does not attempt to run it at Key Stage 4 (ages 14–16). In spite of this, the school prospectus says that they hope to offer music at Key Stage 4 in the future.

In discussions with the Head about how I intended to carry out the participant observation it became apparent that there were serious methodological and ethical problems to be overcome. I would like to have gone into the school as a researcher rather than as a teacher. This would have meant being open about what I was doing, i.e. researching into the attitudes of Muslims to music, but this openness she unfortunately found unacceptable. The Head's attitude to music at Castle is that 'what people don't see or hear they won't know about'. She does not show visitors the music room, even though it is well equipped and the pupils work hard; governors are not allowed into school without

permission and what they see is strictly guarded. She says they have several militant governors from the mosque who would want to see music banned. I had a great deal of sympathy for her situation; she was trying to cover as much of the National Curriculum in music lessons as possible, whilst at the same time keeping music as low profile as she could. This was necessary because of the prevailing views in the community. I never at any time doubted her belief that music was important. She gave as an example of the difficulties she experienced with governors one who wanted her to prevent any black boys from speaking to Muslim girls. She didn't want me giving pupils the idea that there might be something wrong with music when they hadn't realised it before, and telling their parents about my questions. She also pointed out that in many cases it was not the parents who were objecting but the 'uneducated imams'. If I had come into the school with my avowed intention then it would have drawn attention to the fact that there was a problem with music and Muslims.

Method

As with many types of research into sensitive issues, it was obvious to me from the start that complete anonymity was essential if there was not to be a backlash from some members of the community. I needed to bear in mind the comment made by Sieber, who wrote:

culturally sensitive is learning to perceive risk factors from the perspective of the persons who will be affected . . . community-based researchers must stay in touch with current opinions that are circulating in the community. (Renzetti & Lee, 1993: 19)

Although it is perfectly acceptable to change names in order to protect confidentiality, in this case I also needed to cover some people's identities in other ways because they could still have been readily identifiable. In one case I felt that this made my data less valid, but my choice was whether to use the data in a limited way or not at all. It also meant that although the Muslim academic and the two imams were happy for me to use their names, I could not do so without it then being possible to identify the school.

I was concerned about the need to cover up the true nature of my research at Castle itself, although in the interviews with the governor, the academic and the imams I explained my purpose. I did not want to act in a clandestine way and therefore needed to change the direction of this part of the research. Unfortunately, the only way I could do this and still achieve the results I required was, I now accept, really just playing with semantics. Because I wanted it to 'look' like 'open autocratic research' (Scott & Usher, 1996: 68), I decided that I should say I was a music teacher doing some research into responses among pupils to the music in schools. Reluctantly I let it be believed that this was just one of several different schools that I would be visiting. (I justified this to myself on the grounds that I had visited other schools.)

As a participant observer I was to work in music classes alongside the music teacher and get to know some of the pupils and help them with their work. This did, in fact, work very well. However, I still saw myself far more as an observer who also happened to be participating in order to achieve the required ends. The problem was of a different nature when it came to talking to other staff. Here I had an ethical dilemma born of my one-time

insider status in a staff room. I did not feel happy talking about my research with the staff and omitting to mention the key ingredient – the Muslim aspect. Also, although none of the pupils thought to question why I was at their particular school, staff did enquire, and it would not have made much sense for me to be travelling the distance I was each week without a specific reason. I decided to be completely honest with the staff but to explain the reasons for not mentioning the Muslim aspect to the pupils.

The Music Department Handbook looks much like any you would expect to see in secondary schools, with a few exceptions. There is a section which touches on circumstances particularly relevant to Muslim pupils, mentioning that no singing is taught and that during Ramadan many pupils opt out. In all ways other than in relation to singing the Key Stage 3 schemes of work fulfil the National Curriculum requirements, but in practice these schemes are not adhered to. In my time at Castle I saw no instrumental work other than keyboards, no group work (unless you include sharing a keyboard because there were not enough for one each), and hardly any listening and appraising.

When it came to interviewing the pupils, I asked them questions of a general nature to do with music lessons: what they had done at junior school; what they would like to do in music; and what they did at home. If their answers led on to the Muslim aspect then I felt at liberty to follow this up, but in no interview was I the first person to mention religion. Although I had been introduced as a teacher, now doing some research, I was keen to play down the teacher aspect in the interviews. I began by assuring them that they would not be identified by their own names in the transcript and that nothing they said would get back to their teachers. It was interesting that they wanted some of their responses to be conveyed to staff. For example, one group wanted to have a lunch-time Asian dance class, and another wanted to start a band. Several pupils had learnt steel pans at junior school and they wanted me to tell the head of music that they would like to continue with this. In these situations I did pass on the requests. It would be nice to think that I might have given something back to my interviewees as well as gaining something for myself.

I worked with one class in Year 7, one in Year 8 and two in Year 9. The school keeps a list of all children, classified according to their ethnic description, their home language and their religion. The Year 7 classes had not yet been classified because they were too new to the school. This is the breakdown of the rest of the classes:

8E consisted of 24 pupils made up as follows:

- 10 India/Sri Lanka, 4 Bangladesh, 3 Pakistan, 2 East African, 3 UK (white), 1 Other Commonwealth, 1 Any Other Group
- 12 Gujerati, 4 Bengali, 3 Urdu, 4 English, 1 Other
- 21 Muslim, 3 Christian.

9D consisted of 30 pupils made up as follows:

- 20 India/Sri Lanka, 3 Pakistan, 2 UK (white), 2 Bangladesh, 1 East Africa, 1 Malaysia, 1 Other Commonwealth
- 18 Gujerati, 5 Punjabi, 3 English, 2 Bengali, 1 Other, 1 Not Known
- 26 Muslim, 2 Christian, 2 Hindu.

9F consisted of 27 pupils made up as follows:

- 18 India/Sri Lanka, 2 UK (white), 2 East Africa, 2 Bangladesh, 1 Pakistan, 1 West Indies, 1 Not Classified
- 19 Gujerati, 3 English, 2 Bengali, 1 Punjabi, 1 Other, 1 Not Classified
- 21 Muslim, 2 Christian, 1 Hindu, 1 Jewish, 1 Not Known, 1 Not Classified.

In Year 7 music forms part of a design rotation and operates in two blocks of ten weeks. During the ten weeks the pupils have one double and one single lesson a week. Because the head of music could not cover all these classes another design teacher, with an interest in music, was drafted in to help. Two Year 7 music groups had their single lessons at the same time on a Wednesday afternoon. This meant that only one class could be in the keyboard room at any one time and the other would be doing theory. These changed over each week but I tried to stay with the same group of children. The group in the keyboard room was learning how to use the keyboards and the group in the classroom was learning how to read music.

Findings

With Year 7 my plan was to interview them the week after they had finished their ten-week module. Unfortunately this would have been the first week in Ramadan and so not a good time to do it. I therefore interviewed them the lunchtime before they finished the music module. There were eight girls in the group, six of whom had enjoyed the module. The only reason given for enjoying it was using the keyboards. The two who had not enjoyed it said that it was because music at their junior school had been better. The main reason for this was that they had played in the steel band, as had two of the other six. With the steel pans they had also had the chance to perform out of school and this they had particularly liked. At the junior school they had performed in a mixed steel pans group but they said that their fathers would not let them do this now they were at secondary school. They believed it was definitely the playing with boys that was a problem, rather than the music, because they all felt that their fathers would allow them to carry on. The pity is that the school has a group of steel pans but no one to teach it.

It was obvious fairly soon that the girls who had come to talk to me were all keen on music, but only one played an instrument at home and that was the harmonium. Asked what they would play if they could choose anything, two said steel pans, two keyboard, two guitar, one piano and one violin. When asked whether their parents would let them play an instrument, all but one thought they would:

Sadia: It's not good [music]. My Dad said he wouldn't want music 'cos there's Muslims in the house and if people heard us it's not good. He doesn't like us having music but my sister's got cassettes.

Tasleem: My father doesn't like music because it's not using your time for something serious and you could be doing something for your religion.

DH: What about doing some sewing or watching television or playing with your friends, couldn't you be doing something for your religion instead of one of those?

Tasleem: If I did all my religion I could do those as well.

DH: So would music be alright if you did your religious duties first?

Tasleem: Yes.

When asked what sort of music they listened to at home they said Indian music, meaning Hindi musicals, and English pop music. They also liked Indian disco music.

The Year 8 interview was interesting because the Muslim aspect was hardly mentioned and then only in relation to dance. When asked if they enjoyed their music lessons at Castle there was a low mumble but no-one would actually say they didn't. When asked if they would like to play any musical instruments one girl answered as follows:

Riffat: I'd like to play the flute and my parents would let me. My grandfather loved music but I really only got to see him five times. There is a limit to dancing though.

DH: What do you mean by a limit?

Riffat: Well now I'm always dancing but when I grow older they won't want me to dance as much as I do now.

DH: What about at weddings and celebrations?

Riffat: There are circumstances you can occasionally. When you get older it is embarrassing because people are staring at you.

The theme of embarrassment ran right the way through this interview, which I think is mostly attributable to their age. However, it could well have been also because it was unacceptable for Muslims, but seeing Riffat did not mention this I did not bring it up. Asked if they would consider taking music, dance or drama for GCSE they were all in agreement that they would not, however much they had enjoyed it in Years 7–9.

Of the two Year 9 classes I only managed to interview one group. One group of four girls in 9D I felt I got to know very well. They often wanted me to help them, rather than the music teacher, and we had a good time together. They always looked to me to see how I was reacting whenever anything slightly different was happening. The head of music had not had a good time with this class in Year 8; they had been badly behaved and produced poor work. It was noticeable as an observer just how different the atmosphere was in this class from the other Year 9 groups. The girls were not very interested in music although they did get their work done. I had hoped that they would be among the group who came to talk to me but they did not seem keen when I approached them. In the end I did not ask any of the class because on the day I had intended to speak to them they were very badly behaved and it was not appropriate to speak to them about it then. The head of music told me about a boy in this class who wanted to opt out of music for religious reasons but had not gone through the official channels to do this. He did not appear to be a troublemaker but during one lesson he was doing as little as possible and the head of music kept him in to finish. I understand that you cannot make exceptions for particular pupils, but it must be a very difficult position for the boy if he feels guilty about doing music.

9F was a very bright class and its members produced excellent work. They had worked well in Year 8 and the head of music had an excellent relationship with them. Consequently, the lessons were far more relaxed than with 9D. When it came to the

assessments at the end of the module this class did much better than any other Year 9 class. In this class I seemed to get on better with the boys than the girls. Perhaps it was that the boys responded much better to my help because they were most interested in their work. It became obvious when I asked for people to interview one lunchtime and three boys, all of whom were involved in music at home, came along. One of the boys began by telling me that they were a Muslim, a Hindu and a Christian. This was interesting because I thought that they might be saying that their religions made a difference to their music, and I hoped that this might give me some interesting comparisons. This, however, was not the case and religion did not come up subsequently. I think perhaps the point the boy was making was that even though they were from different religions they all got on together. They were all allowed to do whatever music they liked. They had come to see me because they wanted more music in school and they thought that I was going to be a new music teacher. One had learned the violin in primary school but was unable to continue because there was not a teacher at Castle. Two played electric guitars and wanted to start a band. They thought that if there was another music teacher it might be possible to arrange some practical music for them.

I was expecting to go into Castle for ten weeks but in the event this got shortened to eight because of Ramadan. During this month of the Muslim calendar the Qur'an was originally revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, and Muslims have fasted during the daylight hours of Ramadan ever since. Some Muslims believe that during this month they should not take part in any music, and I know many schools treat this belief sensitively. In 1998 Fortland City Council sent a letter to all schools telling them that they should allow pupils to opt out of music during Ramadan. I had not heard before of an authority having a policy of this kind. It is difficult to see the reasoning behind this move. Hard-line Muslims I have talked to are against music at all times, whether during Ramadan or not. It appears that this may be a way that those imams who are against music can at least get children out of music for part of the year.

The head of music originally suggested that I speak to some of the pupils who opted out of music during Ramadan and ask them why they had withdrawn from classes. I wasn't sure that ethically I could do this and I spoke to the head teacher about it. She agreed that it wouldn't be right, but not only for the reasons I had expected. She felt that most of the pupils really wanted to do music and they were only opting out because their parents wanted them to. She also thought that many of them would not understand the reasons for opting out and so my questions would put the children under pressure. I suspect that many of the parents would also not understand the reasons because many had been told that music was bad without understanding why. The breakdown of the figures for pupils opting out of music during Ramadan is interesting.

The number of boys opting out of music in each year group is higher than the number of girls. This suggests that either the boys are persuading their parents to write a letter or that parents are more concerned about boys as regards religious observance. The percentage of Year 7 opting out decreased considerably in 1999, which could be a sign of more tolerance, but against that more pupils in Year 7 opted out when they were in Year 8 and the same happened as Year 8 moved to Year 9. Because music is not taught in Years 10 and 11 it is impossible to know whether this trend would have continued.

Abbas Khatun had been a governor at Castle for some time. He was involved in other

Table 1 *Pupils opting out of music during Ramadan*

1998		1999	
Year 7 total	90	Year 7 total	97
Girls opting out	19 21%	Girls opting out	13 13%
Boys opting out	26 29%	Boys opting out	22 23%
Total	50%	Total	36%
Year 8 total	195	Year 8 total	179
Girls opting out	35 18%	Girls opting out	43 24%
Boys opting out	46 24%	Boys opting out	52 29%
Total	42%	Total	53%
Year 9 total	191	Year 9 total	208
Girls opting out	40 21%	Girls opting out	61 29%
Boys opting out	51 27%	Boys opting out	68 33%
Total	48%	Total	62%
KS3 TOTAL	46%	KS3 TOTAL	54%

schools in Fortland and also did some teaching. He was also very keen on music, having played in a rock group in his youth, and has allowed his own children a great deal of freedom. However, he has always remained committed to Islam. Khatun has an excellent knowledge of aspects of music and Islam and is familiar with the work of al-Ghazali, the eleventh-century writer on music, and the modern writings of al-Faruqi. Much of the early part of our conversation centred upon theoretical issues, but I did try to take it to the practical level of music in the National Curriculum and, even more specifically, music at Castle.

DH: So if we take it to a practical level, as to what sort of things are acceptable in the National Curriculum music statement . . .

AK: I would say that where music for Muslims has become problematic, the cultural misunderstanding arises on the standing, nature, the context, the content and the general situation where we find music is located . . . music has different meaning for different people but you have to realise that the people you are dealing with have not come from a culture of music. That's very important in your study, the people that you find will not understand what music is, they will adopt a kind of a pseudo, anti-Islamic position . . .

DH: So how, in a classroom situation, can we offer this opportunity to all Muslim pupils?

AK: Within this neighbourhood the highest point is to be a *hafis*, to be learned in the Qur'anic exposition. That is what is valued. You know why I have currency? Not because I'm a governor but because of that little time I spent in the mosque teaching those kids. In those two hours I became a mullah, somebody who can articulate in English, who is educated but that is the icing on the cake, this guy's OK because he can teach our children in the mosque.

At this point Abbas talked at length about his personal experiences, and when I tried to return to music at Castle he reiterated the point that music had no meaning for the pupils

there and resumed his thoughts about what music meant to him. He said he did not feel less of a Muslim for having musical skills and he wouldn't try to hide it when talking to anyone. He believed that music gives you a wide view because it is universal and links people together. He felt that music gives you confidence and helps you mature, and being good at it has a currency in Western culture. I felt that as a musician himself, and as chair of the governors, he was in a perfect position to encourage music amongst Muslims. He said that he would not play in school because of his image. He didn't think it was appropriate and it would be misunderstood. As a musician the Muslims in the community would look down on him and think that he was trying to influence their children in a bad way. Looking at this from the point of view of the school, it seemed to be regrettable because of the potential for encouraging Muslims to be interested in music. Part of the problem was undoubtedly the fact that he was a bass guitar player and would be performing music of a pop/rock nature.

One of the reasons he said that parents think music is a waste of time is that as Muslims their children would not be able to be professional musicians. He said that even as a music teacher you would not take money if you were a good Muslim. Music was also incompatible with being a *hafis*, a reciter of the Qur'an, because it has a sound system of its own which doesn't mix with other types of music. Since in nearly all countries only boys are allowed to become *hafis* I asked if this meant it would be easier for girls to be musicians. He replied:

AK: I think girls do things very differently in a way. They tend to be more active in the house. It would be very extraordinary, unless the girl was from a middle-class family or whatever, not from this neighbourhood, it would be very difficult to imagine them doing anything very significant in music. I can't imagine it, I could be wrong. I don't say there is a problem with girls experimenting with music here. But I think outside of here they wouldn't.

Imam Munir lives and teaches in the area of Fortland where most of the pupils from Castle live. He follows the Deobandi path which is one of the most devout of Sunni Muslims. He does not accept the use of any musical instruments and listens to no music at home. For him, music is always linked with other matters which are *haram*, such as fornication, alcohol and drugs. He believes that within Islam it is necessary to do everything possible to avoid circumstances which require you to listen to music. There are times, for example in a shopping precinct, when you have no choice but to be where there is music. However, he is a very tolerant person and believes people are entitled to their own views and religious ideas whether they are Muslim or not. He is a governor of a local junior school and attends multi-faith assemblies where music is played. Music for him refers to secular songs and instrumental music. He believes religious singing is not only acceptable but to be encouraged and would be happy to help with music in this form in any school which asked him. He has two sons who attend the local junior school. They take part in all lessons, including music, because he does not want them treated differently from the other children. However, when one asked to join the steel band he would not allow it because it did not fit in with the way he wants to bring up his children. When they reach secondary age he intends to educate them in a single-sex Muslim school which does not have music classes.

Imam Beg also has influence over the religious teaching of the pupils in this area. He

seemed to be less sure about his ideas of music and was to some extent swayed by the older imams in the area. He was born and educated in this country and has a better understanding of some Western ideas. Although he believes that musical instruments are bad, and that the pop/rock scene is damaging the morals of young people, whether Muslim or not, he does believe that the next generation of Muslims will be more accepting of many Western concepts. His teaching is guided by the older imams in the area at the moment but he believes things will change when they cease to be active. This was interesting, and a view which I have heard frequently. However, it will not necessarily be the case because Imam Munir is the same generation as him.

Ahmed Hassan is an academic who lives in Fortland and has connections with the school. He agreed to let me interview him and provided an extremely interesting theory about the state of Islam and why there are problems in many countries, particularly in the West. He said:

There are capitalist interpretations of Islam, there are all sorts of interpretations of Islam, therefore our younger generations are asking 'What is Islam?' It comes back to this question. If after 15 centuries of Islam no one knows what it is there is something wrong somewhere. So if you are talking about disinformation or misinformation in the host country, I am making the assertion that the Muslims themselves in this country are so confused, given the situation of modernity and secularism, and the structure of this civilisation, that they are not portraying a picture of Islam which is decreasing that disinformation, if anything they are increasing it.

He called the Muslims who look to the past *taqli* Muslims (*taqli* literally means imitation), and said that the best thing they could do for Islam was to go back to the country they originated from. He continued:

You have got to know the schisms that are going on. One Muslim might say, 'This music is allowed, this is not', but you have to remember that at this point in time the whole Muslim world is in a state of turmoil. There are problems in the Muslim community and the newspapers can bear witness. There are 4,000 Muslims in jail versus 300 Hindus and a few more than 300 Sikhs. Now the question I ask is, if all the mosques and the biggest community being Muslims and all the *madrassas* operating every day teaching from 3.00 or 4.00 'til 7.00, and you are producing 4,000 people in the prisons, there is something definitely wrong in the manner of the teaching.

I then asked him about the importance of education and whether it is equally important for both sexes:

... men and women, that's right, and not only that, you should seek knowledge from the cradle 'til the grave and go to far-off places to seek knowledge. So if you look at the medieval state of Islam you will find a whole Islamic state where textiles were created, rockets were created, songs were created, all sorts of things all created by Muslims in an Islamic state. Where have they all gone now? They're totally finished, this is the biggest question.

He then mentioned a Muslim conference that he was speaking at when a woman stood up and asked:

Why is it that those who do not believe in a God, who are totally secular, can produce great things and we cannot? Is something wrong with us? And if there is something wrong with us and we claim to be Muslims, is there something wrong in Islam?

Hassan's answer to me was that 'Yes, there is something wrong with Islam at the moment,

and that one of the things which is wrong is all the Muslims who refuse to look ahead and learn to live in a Western world'.

Six months after I finished my participant observation at Castle, the head of music there resigned. He agreed to let me interview him about his experiences teaching music to Muslims at Castle. I began by asking him about his previous teaching experiences and whether he anticipated there might be difficulties. Although he had not taught Muslims previously he had expected that having been part of a working party dealing with multicultural music aids he would have been able to anticipate problems. In fact it had not dealt in any way with religious matters. He now believes that all prospective music teachers should be given some idea about the situation regarding some Muslims and music in case they have Muslims in their classes.

I next asked him about his first reactions:

DH: Can you remember your reactions when you were first faced with a predominantly Muslim class with a limited response to music?

CP: To start with I didn't realise that their religion was going to cause a problem ... It was a gradual drip-feed really until I realised [there] was a religious problem. They never really were quite clear themselves what the problem was.

DH: Do you remember anything specifically which you thought was a bit odd?

CP: I think when they started to say things like, 'We don't listen to music at home'. I would say, 'Well, you must hear music around you, what do you like?' and they would say, 'We just don't listen to it', and that started the alarm bells going.

It was only when it came to Ramadan that he realised the full extent of the problems facing him and decided that he would have to change his expectations of what was achievable. The biggest problem that he found was in group work, which they seemed very reluctant to do. He was also led to believe that they could not do singing, and was very surprised when I said that for most Muslims this was less of a problem.

What I decided to do was to set up the keyboard lab so that they worked either individually or in pairs, and had headphones. I wasn't giving them all the experiences that they should have been getting under the National Curriculum – huge chunks were missed out. I made it clear to the management of the school, just to cover my own back basically, but they appreciated what I was doing and just said to do as much as I could. When I told them there was a problem they were very supportive of me, they didn't just tell me to go and sort it out.

The head of music did manage to get some percussion work from a Year 7 group which he'd had without any boys the previous year. They asked to do percussion work as a change from keyboards. This was the only time that he considered they did any composing and he put this down to a lack of creativity among Muslims generally. I wondered how he saw the future at the school:

DH: In the light of all these problems, what were your hopes for the future of music or performing arts? Could you see any way of going forward, either as a discrete subject of music or in combination with dance and drama?

CP: I knew that there was no way performing arts could develop in the school because that would have given it too high an image in the community. I think it would be easier to do it with

the kids if they had the backing from their parents and the mosques. I think the parents need to be educated as to what happens in schools; I think the mosques have their own political agenda; they don't need educating, they're clever people and they know what they are doing.

He noticed a difference generally in the attitudes of the girls and the boys:

CP: The thing that became very obvious was the big divide between girls and boys. The girls did pay attention, and work in classes, and the boys didn't. This isn't just in music but in other subjects, and the girls would read copious amounts . . . I think it was because they [the boys] had preconceptions about what they would be doing when they left school and it wasn't really important to get a good education. They could either go into the family business or they might well be doing something with the mosque.

When it came to an OFSTED (government) inspection it was apparent very quickly that the National Curriculum requirements for Key Stage 3 were not being adhered to. After he had seen the head of music teach two Year 9 classes the music inspector said that if he were faced with teaching these classes he would not know where to begin. The head of music continued:

He thought I was doing a good job. The other thing he said to me was that you don't knock something when it is working. So he could see that the way I was doing things would be problematic because of the National Curriculum requirements, but as it was working for these kids he wouldn't knock it.

What came out in the report was that not all the curriculum could be taught because of cultural problems; the question of religious problems was not mentioned. The inspectors were very aware of the situation at Castle, and in a meeting with the head teacher about what was going in the final report she persuaded them to tone down their remarks about music because she did not want it made too public in the community.

Conclusion

This small case study served to confirm what I was already aware of: schools with a large number of Muslim pupils are experiencing difficult situations in their music classrooms. The effect of this is that those pupils who want to participate fully in all parts of National Curriculum music are not able to do so. Where extra-curricular activities are concerned it is equally difficult to establish musical activities. Although the head teacher at Castle was keen to see music flourish, she knew it was impossible while there were problems with the community in accepting music in school. An interesting point which came out of all my research into the situation of music and Muslims in music classes is the number of influential Muslims who would like to see music in schools and in their community. What is stopping them making their views known is the fear of being misunderstood by the Muslim community and thus being thought of as bad Muslims. Having now talked to many Muslims who have expressed this view, it seems particularly poignant that ethics prevent me from bringing them together. I can tell each one that there are many others who feel the same way but without mentioning names they cannot respond as a group. In May 2002 I am organising a conference at the School of Oriental and Asian Studies in London, with the backing of the Association of Muslim Researchers, for Muslims to get a better understanding of what actually happens in music classrooms, and for non-Muslims in

education to better understand the concerns of Muslims. Hopefully this will take us all a step nearer to resolving this issue.

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