



Introducing religions

A Sikh school

Narrator:

Guru Nanak Sikh School in Southall, London was opened as an independent faith school in 1992. It was incorporated into the state sector in 1999. Originally the building houses a Roman Catholic school.

Panandeep Singh Sandhu (Head Boy):

The moral ethos in this school is quite strong. Apart from the rules and the regulations, walking on the left, not shouting and screaming and running in the corridors. You've got a good moral code if you like. And that's backed up by a religious aspect.

Narrator:

Every morning the students organise and run their own Sikh assemblies.

PSS:

I do believe because the Guru Granth Sahib to Sikh's isn't just a mere book. It is seen as the teachings in the book. We don't worship the book, the pages in the book. That's just paper. But the teachings in the book are what is eternal. And I believe it's that special power, that energy that helps us on a spiritual level. I think there's someone up there that looks on us and keeps his hand on our heads. And keeps us safe.

Narrator:

The school has a wide catchment area. And pupils are selected on their family's commitment to the Sikh faith. It educates children from 11 to 18 years of age.

Rajinder Singh Sandhu (Headmaster):

They're not only taught about Sikhism but also other religions. We feel it is very important for kids to learn about other religions. Because sometimes where you have ignorance that starts a sort of decline and the sort of abuse of other religions we see in many countries at the moment, where you've got all sorts of wars based on religion. And yet if you have knowledge about all other religions, there's a better understanding about others.

Narrator:

As well as learning about Sikh religion, the children also learn the Punjabi language.

RSS:

I think it's important for the Punjabi. Because they're reading from the holy book. It's very important that they're able to use their mother tongue. Because although you can get translations in English. Sometimes the meanings are lost. And I think it's very, very important. It's also important that they can communicate with their grandparents.

Narrator:

Alongside their studies in Sikhism and Punjabi, the children follow the national curriculum. And the school has become an academic success story.

RSS:

In 1997 took on 13 kids from other schools who had failed their GCSE's. Within two years, they passed their GCSE's and 'A' levels and 12 out of the 13 went to University. Now, they will add to society. So I think schools such as this, can do so much to help society.

And underpinning this, is the sewv, the humility, the simran. Which are the essentials of the principles of Sikhism. And I think where children take a pride in a sense, in a school, where they feel that the right thing to do is to be humble. Listen to adults and listen to their parents at home. It actually builds up in a school community.

PSS:

Because we have a community atmosphere here, a family atmosphere, everyone looks out for each other. Because you've got that sense of bonding, a sense of friendship. You've got more of a chance for kids to go on the right path, than go on the wrong path.

RSS:

Faith schools have been running for a long, long time. In this country anyway. And I think they just add to the diversity. That I think all of us at the back of our minds, and I'm no different. Would have concerns that faith schools in the wrong hands, could cause discomfort to the whole society. And I think all of us need to be aware of that and I think need to be quite open about it.

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