



### What is Islam?

Islam is one of the world's major religions. It is followed by nearly two billion people around the world, including many pupils in UK schools. Understanding the basic beliefs and values of Islam can help teachers to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for pupils, particularly in subjects like PE, where modesty, physical exertion and gender interaction can raise specific considerations.

### Core beliefs

Muslims believe in one God, called Allah in Arabic. Islam teaches that Allah is merciful and compassionate. Muslims also believe in a line of prophets including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and, finally, Muhammad (peace be upon him) whom Muslims believe was the final messenger.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his teaching in Arabic – his Sunnah – are followed as role models of the teachings of the whole Islamic faith.

The core practices of Islam are known as the Five Pillars:

- **Shahadah – Faith:** Believing and declaring that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is His messenger.
- **Salah – Prayer:** Muslims pray five times a day.
- **Zakah – Charity:** Giving to the poor and those in need.
- **Sawm** – Fasting during the month of Ramadan.
- **Hajj** – Pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca (once in a lifetime if able).

### The character of a Muslim

A key part of Islam is character development. Islam places great emphasis on personal values such as honesty, kindness, self-control, humility and patience. These values influence how Muslim pupils should behave in school, how they interact with others and how they handle competition, teamwork and challenge.

Muslims are taught from a young age to:

- be respectful to teachers, parents and elders
- show kindness and mercy to others
- avoid bad language and gossip
- be fair and just, even when under pressure
- show gratitude and avoid arrogance.

We often use the term Adab to encapsulate these values. They align closely with core PE and sport values, such as respect, fair play, discipline and cooperation.





### Modesty

Modesty is one aspect of the conduct expected of Muslim men and women. For example, some Muslims may refrain from physical contact with the opposite sex (e.g., not shaking hands). When others are aware of and honour this personal choice, it sends a powerful message that everyone is respected and valued for who they are. This simple act of understanding creates a more inclusive and welcoming environment, empowering everyone to fully engage while remaining true to their beliefs.

The ways in which modesty is maintained vary but it may be a priority for some Muslim girls when participating in physical activity. For example, girls may prefer wearing modest clothing, behaving in a modest way and being in a safe environment. They still value the importance of personal choice whilst maintaining modesty.

### Key holidays and celebrations

- **Ramadan:** A month-long celebration of fasting and prayer in honour of Allah. It follows the lunar calendar so changes dates in each calendar year. Throughout this holy month, Muslims gather with their families and communities, and fast from dawn to sunset and recite the Qur'an.
- **Eid al-Fitr:** Celebrated at the end of Ramadan. A time for communal prayers, feasting and charity.
- **Eid al-Adha:** Commemorates the willingness of Prophet Abraham to sacrifice his son in obedience to God. Coincides with the Hajj pilgrimage.

### Key terms

- **Sunni and Shia:** The two main sects in Islam, differing mainly on issues of leadership succession after Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Within both sects in Islam, there are variations of the faith based on interpretations, so pupils may do things slightly differently, which is normal. For example, Eid may be celebrated on a different day or people may pray differently.
- **Mosque (Masjid):** Place of worship for Muslims.
- **Madrasah:** A type of educational institution associated with a mosque, often school-age children attend lessons after mainstream school.
- **Qur'an:** The sacred scripture of Islam, believed by Muslims to be a literal transcript of God's speech, revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).
- **Haram:** Anything expressly prohibited by the Qur'an.





# AN INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM AND ACTIVE SUNNAH

## Muslim Sports Foundation

### Active Sunnah

Active Sunnah refers to incorporating physical activity into daily life as part of living according to the Sunnah (the way and practices) of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). It emphasises that physical health, vitality and movement are not only beneficial but spiritually and religiously encouraged components of a Muslim's life.

- **Spiritual mandate:** Caring for the body is a religious duty as our bodies are a trust from Allah. Preserving life and intellect are central Islamic teachings.
- **Prophetic example:** Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was physically active despite his many responsibilities. His involvement in physical activities was divinely inspired and practical.
- **Health as worship:** Maintaining good health is linked to better worship and fulfilling life's obligations. Neglecting health is seen as neglecting a blessing from Allah.

### Examples of activities that reflect Active Sunnah:

- Archery
- Swimming
- Horse riding
- Wrestling
- Walking, hiking, running

### Importance of living actively in Islam:

- **Mental and physical wellbeing:** Linked to the preservation of intellect and emotional health and wellbeing.
- **Prevention of disease:** Active lifestyles can help to reduce issues like heart disease and diabetes, which are prevalent in some Muslim populations.
- **Spiritual accountability:** Muslims are accountable for how they care for their bodies and time as this is seen as a form of Amanah. Amanah refers to trust, responsibility and honesty in all aspects of life.
- **Strength to serve others:** A strong believer can contribute more to family, community and justice.

This illustrates the essence of Active Sunnah: to be spiritually and physically strong in service to Allah and society.

*Please note that, depending on their stage of Islamic learning, Muslim girls may not necessarily refer to these concepts in this way. They will, however, relate to them at a practical and emotional level through their personal experiences and beliefs.*



**MSF**