

Agents for Change: Islamophobia

In Autumn 2017, EqualiTeach were awarded funding from the Hate Crime Communities Project Fund to deliver an 'Agents for Change' programme, raising awareness of and tackling Islamophobia. The programme ran in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and empowered 38 young people from primary and secondary schools to develop their understanding of Islamophobia, share their experiences and increase their confidence to educate others. The young 'Agents for Change' were encouraged to investigate the current issues in their schools and implement strategies to tackle Islamophobic bullying and ensure targets are well supported.



Overall how would you describe being part of this project (Secondary)?

"Amazing because it was fun and interesting."

"I liked it a lot, it was a great experience meeting people working together on Islamophobia."

"It was a fantastic opportunity to help make a change."

"I have made an impact and a difference."

Young people worked in three teams: Film Makers, who designed and created awareness raising films with our partners Origins of Motion; Educators, who worked with EqualiTeach to develop activities and lesson plans that can be used to educate young people about Islamophobia; and Ambassadors, who worked with teachers at their school to build on and improve current systems to challenge prejudice and provide support to targets of Islamophobic bullying.

Overall how would you describe being part of this project (Primary)?

“Very exciting and fun- always something to look forward to.”

“I enjoyed being part of a wonderful community.”

“Really happy and I think it was lots of fun.”

“Kind of amazing because it’s really hard and you get to make change when you are a child.”

The project was a huge success, generating two films, which have had over 2,000 views each, an extensive educational resource, which has been disseminated to all Local Authorities across England, and positive changes made in each of the participating schools.

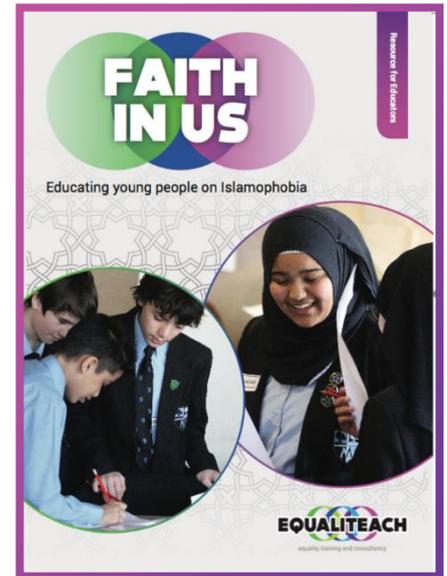
The end of the project was marked with an Awards Ceremony, hosted at RichMix in Shoreditch, where students made inspiring speeches, and collected trophies and certificates in front of an audience of proud families and invited guests.



Resource for Educators: Faith in Us

Developed in collaboration with the Educators team during our 'Agents for Change: Islamophobia' project, 'Faith in Us' is an extensive resource for educating young people on Islamophobia. The resource provides an introduction to the current context of Islamophobia, tackles some frequently raised topics and misconceptions, before providing a vast selection of lesson plans and activities that have been tried and tested with great success.

The resource can be downloaded in full, and by chapter, from our website: www.equaliteach.co.uk/faith-in-us where you'll also be able to view the excellent films created by the Film Makers teams. If you would like to order a printed copy of the resource, contact sarah@equaliteach.co.uk



Key Findings from the Project

Pupils' faith that their schools will respond effectively to Islamophobia and support victims

The percentage of participating pupils who were 'very confident' a teacher would help them if they were experiencing Islamophobia increased from **6%** to **36%** over the course of the project.

Many of the comments in the focus group and reports written by the young people show how the pupils' confidence in staff had increased due to the interactions that they had with staff and the changes that they were able to implement over the course of the project:

'My favourite bit was all of the interviews and meetings we went to ... we had to interview our head teacher and deputy head so we could get permission to do the stuff we had to do for the project (the worry box, the tree of kindness).' – **Globe Primary**

'When working on this project I had to take pictures of the posters in our school. It really gave me a chance to see how much our school does to prevent these things and keep people safe.' – **Green Spring Academy**

'We've helped make changes in how the school deals with things. When the project finishes I look forward to seeing how my work impacts the people.' – **Swanlea School**

In the wider pupil cohort, the pre-workshop questionnaires revealed that many pupils felt reluctant to report Islamophobia/identity-based bullying as the teachers would not be able to help or would make the problem worse.

The percentage of pupils in the wider pupil cohort at Globe Primary who knew what the school would do if they experienced bullying because of their religion increased from **49%** to **59%** over the course of the project and those who felt that if someone treated them badly because of their religion telling someone in school would make things better increased from **56%** to **62%**. Though there is still a way to go, this change shows that the work done by the Agents for Change is already having an impact in the wider school community.

The comments were more positive in the post-project survey with pupils having tangible things that they felt that the teachers would do.

Participants' self-esteem and confidence in their ability to effect positive change

Prior to the project most pupils were either 'not sure' about whether they can make a difference to the way things are done outside school or thought they could make no difference at all.

'I'm not sure for outside of school because you don't know strangers.' – **Primary Pupil**

'The outside world is very big [...] we aren't able to change everything'; – **Secondary Pupil**



*'In school you can talk to a teacher to help, outside of school people will not listen and it may lead to violence' – **Secondary Pupil***

This was not the only perspective on offer, but it was clearly a sentiment shared by many pupils.

A barrier to effecting positive change for primary students was shyness and for secondary students was confidence:

'I know a lot about Islamophobia but I am not very confident about teaching it'

'I like to teach but not in front of a big group'

'I don't really like public speaking on a huge matter like Islamophobia'

One of the questions that a secondary pupil wrote on their questionnaire was:

'Why are people so racist and how can such people being [sic] so heartless? How can we stop that? In what ways can we help stop Islamophobia from getting worse?'

This perhaps demonstrates a pre-project despair in the face of prejudice, and an accompanying lack of confidence.

There was a notable change in participants confidence and positivity after the project:

*'I didn't think what we were doing would impact people and make a difference, but it did and I had a lot of fun doing it' – **Post-project report Morpeth Secondary School***

*'When I started, I didn't know what I was going to do and I was very nervous. I'm very shy. But talking to people from other schools helped me to interact with other people. I learnt a lot of things, I learnt to present an assembly by making it exciting...' **Post-project report Green Spring Academy***

*'EqualiTeach have helped me to be less shy'; 'With this project I have done speeches in front of my year group which has improved my confidence'. **Secondary questionnaire***

*'It was a fantastic opportunity to help make a change' **Secondary Focus Group***

*'I feel that I have made an impact and a difference'. **Secondary questionnaire***

*"When working on this project I absolutely couldn't wait to see how it would turn out. I feel confident to change the world." **Post-project report Morpeth Secondary School***

"When working on the project I became more and more confident." **Secondary Focus Group**

"I think that kids have the potential to do whatever they want! Kids could rule the world if they wanted to. We're leaders!" – **Primary questionnaire**

"[Being involved in the project was] kind of amazing [...] you get to make change when you are a child" – **Primary questionnaire**

'When I started on this project I was very nervous as I did not have much confidence but throughout the project we have been doing little activities which has been boosting my confidence up.' – **Post-project report London Islamic School**

Teachers' confidence and ability to educate pupils about Islamophobia

Over 800 people have accessed the Faith in Us resources online, and everyone who attended the Awards Ceremony also received a copy. All of the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Below are some comments from people who attended the Awards Ceremony:

'The resource itself also looks excellent and particularly useful for educational professionals.' **Jake Butterworth, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham**

MPs Layla Moran and Caroline Lucas congratulated EqualiTeach on the production of a useful resource and Mayor of London. Sadiq Khan invited EqualiTeach to come and meet with his team at City Hall on the back of the resource. We were also invited to give evidence at the APPG for British Muslims enquiry into a definition of Islamophobia, after we sent a copy of the resource. Our response to the enquiry is on our website: www.equaliteach.co.uk

Comments on the Faith in Us resource from teachers:

Congratulations! It's an immense piece of work

I think this is a great resource, I can see myself delivering the in the classroom (or maybe even youth leaders in a youth service) and enjoying the lessons. I can imagine the learners being totally engaged and developing critical skills

I think it is excellent, particularly the classroom activities and resources. These all look extremely valuable to me, as well as being accessible and well-explained

Buckinghamshire County Council ordered 50 copies for their teachers and a member of their education team left the following feedback:

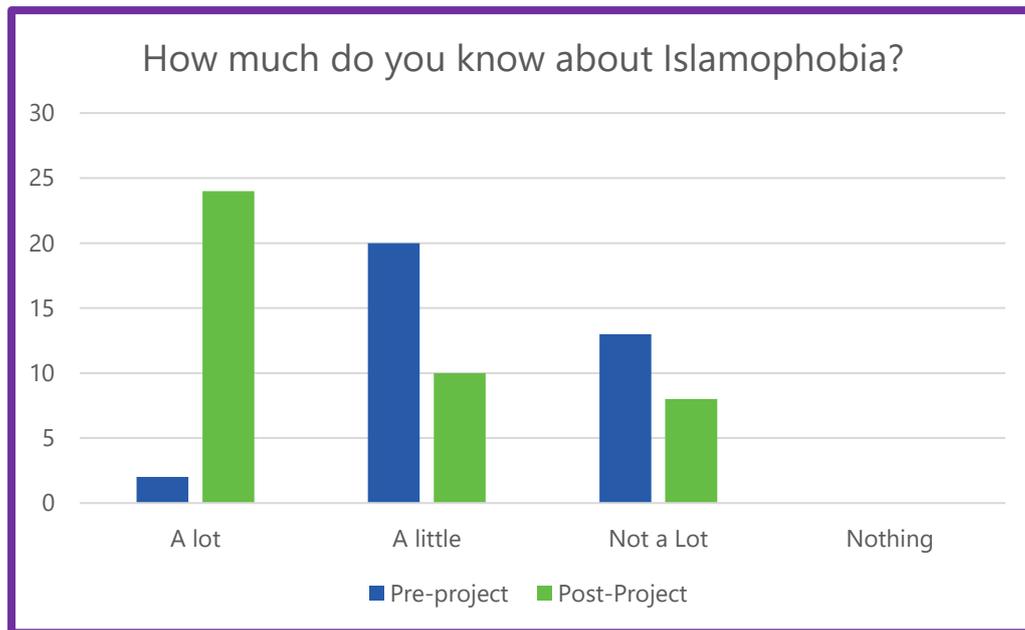
"I like the way the primary and secondary video clips feature only school children so the pupils watching the clips, across the country and indeed worldwide, will be able to associate with the children featured in the video. It is a very simple but effective concept: children speaking to children. They are empowered to do this directly without having to go through an adult. In this way, the communication is more powerful and is more likely to be more memorable for them in years to come. It is fantastic to be provided with this free audio-visual resource, which will have a long-term impact and a wide range of uses across a number of age-groups, subjects and contexts. I hope to see the Government funding more such free educational anti-hate resources in the future, particularly against the current and worrying back-drop of the 'mainstreaming' of extreme right-wing beliefs. Thank you, Equaliteach!"

Participants' ability to share their knowledge of Islamophobia and hate crime to educate others

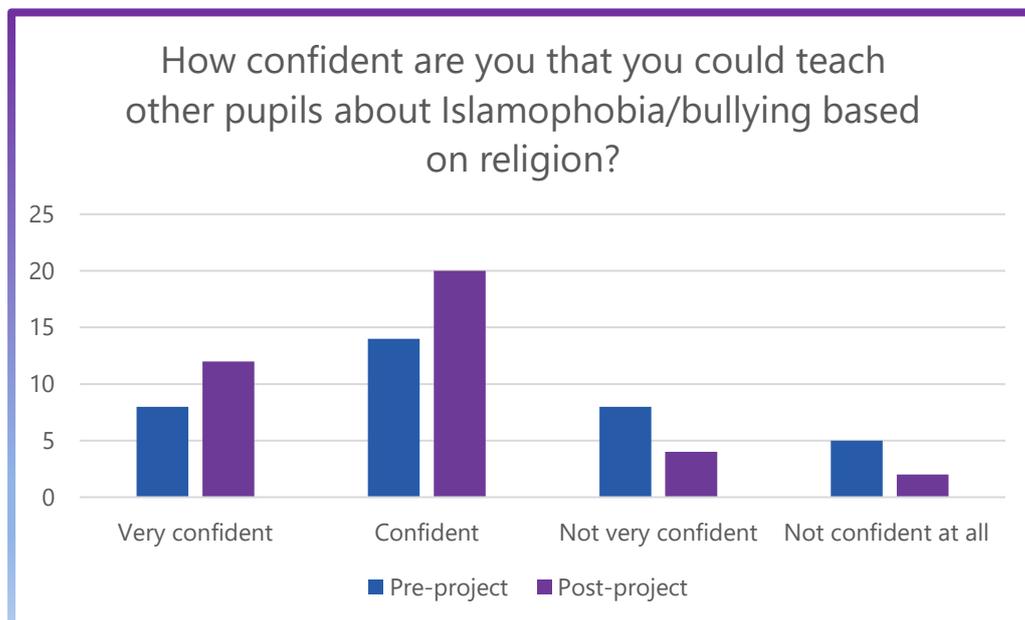
Amongst the participating pupils, the majority of both primary and secondary pupils stated that they only knew 'a little' or 'not a lot' about Islamophobia in the pre-project questionnaires (See graph). One pupil who did know about Islamophobia commented: 'I know a lot but I wouldn't want to talk about it.'

Post-project, there was a big shift in participants' opinions of how much they knew about Islamophobia with 63% of participants feeling that they know knew a lot about Islamophobia.

'we researched a lot and we did presentations on Islamophobia which increased our knowledge'.



Both primary and secondary participants' confidence in their ability to educate others improved over the project:



This outcome has also been evidenced through the activities that the young people have undertaken as part of the project.

Creating and starring in the two films showed the young people putting their learning into action.

Participants from all the primary schools and all of the secondary schools apart from Green Spring Academy have already delivered assemblies on Islamophobia to the rest of their school cohort.

Participants from Globe Primary, Swanlea, Green Spring and Morpeth all gave presentations at the Awards Ceremony and you can watch the presentations from Globe Primary School here:

<https://twitter.com/GlobeSchool/status/992716850634031106> and here: <https://twitter.com/GlobeSchool/status/992719046993989632>



'The young people were fantastic and so confident in delivering their speeches!' –
Menara Ahmed, London Borough of Tower Hamlets

The lead teachers survey backed up these findings with **100%** of respondents stating that the project had improved young people's confidence and their ability to educate others.

Very encouragingly, out of the reports written by the pupils at the end of the project over half (20) pupils mention how they hope to continue the work after the project has finished:

"We'll be able to educate other people and tell people if we do see an act of Islamophobia, and we can tell them what to do and we can stop it ourselves." -

"My hopes for the future are that we go to different schools outside of Tower Hamlets and raise awareness of Islamophobia."

'I want to carry on making our school better, adding a few things to improve the school and educate misled and ignorant people'

'I want to continue with this project, not only with the EqualiTeach members, but to persuade other people to come and join and prevent Islamophobia, racism and bullying'

'I will tell people in the community about Islamophobia, try speaking to them and tell them that Islamophobia is wrong and shouldn't happen'

'I want to become a social worker/paramedic or even a member of the Hate Crime Team!'