

Boy at centre of Wakefield Koran row forced to leave his home due to arson threat

An exclusive from [The Mail on Sunday](#)

Last week, a 14-year-old British boy was forced to flee his home and go into hiding, fearing for his life. Not because he swindled a county lines drugs crook, say, or was the sole witness of a heinous murder. Nothing so dramatic.

...as a forfeit for losing a video game, the boy was asked by his friends to buy a copy of the Koran and bring it to school, Kettlethorpe High in Wakefield, West Yorkshire. To what end, remains unclear. There was no malicious intent involved, but even for an impulsive adolescent it was obviously foolhardy, particularly given that the holy book, once inside school, became accidentally damaged, though only 'slightly' and not by the boy's hands.

In his defence, he is autistic and, says his mother, 'doesn't always realise what is appropriate and what is not appropriate'. *Note that the Mail has to explain the background, because they are the only newspaper to carry the story from the beginning; other newspapers only picked it up in the middle as "Home Secretary concerned because someone has done something"*

He was suspended along with three other pupils; police began investigating and recorded a 'hate' incident; a Labour councillor stoked tensions by falsely claiming on social media that the book was desecrated; and his mother found herself pleading for forgiveness at the local mosque after his life was threatened.

The matter reached the desk of Home Secretary Suella

Braverman, who yesterday declared herself 'deeply concerned' by the case and the way it has been handled.

The Mail on Sunday has learned that at the height of the intimidation the family received an arson threat to their home and the boy –described as 'absolutely petrified' – was forced to move to a secret location. After initially contacting West Yorkshire Constabulary, his mother later urged officers not to prosecute to avoid further inflaming the situation.

One parent, herself a teacher, said it 'feels like a medieval witch-hunt'

The school stands at the bottom of a hill in a quiet residential area, less than ten miles from Batley Grammar School where parents protested in 2021 after a teacher, later suspended, showed pupils an image of the prophet Mohammed.



In Batley, Muslims make up more than 33 per cent of the population. In Wakefield, a cathedral (left) city famous for its coal-mining heritage, they account for only three per cent. Religious

tensions that occasionally surface in Batley and elsewhere in West Yorkshire are far less noticeable here.

Ten days ago the 14-year-old bought a copy of the Bible and was teased after mentioning his purchase to his friends. They were playing the Call Of Duty video game and when the boy lost, it was agreed he should buy a copy of the Koran and bring it to school as a dare.

He bought it on Amazon and handed it over to one of his friends the next day. There his involvement ended. His

friends, though, began reading aloud from the book in the playground. Later it was knocked out of somebody's hands and fell to the ground where it sustained slight damage. When the incident came to light, the school examined CCTV footage and conducted more than 30 one-on-one interviews before deciding to suspend the 14-year-old and three others for a week. Yet the head teacher, Tudor Griffiths, said there was 'no ill intent' on the part of the pupils.

Even so, within hours rumours had spread with lightning speed on social media that the book was variously spat on, torn apart, burned. None of this was true as everyone, including the local imam, who has urged calm, now accepts. The next day the pupils were suspended and, for reasons that are still unclear, the school decided to call the police, an action met with widespread disbelief from parents.

...the imam appealed for calm, urging Muslims, for instance, not to protest outside the school.

Another meeting was arranged, at the mosque on a Friday, when the boy's mother – sitting before an all-male crowd – pleaded for forgiveness. Mr Griffiths, the school's head, also told the audience – repeatedly – of his sorrow.

No one mentioned the death threats, however.

It was left, then, to the mother, sitting with her hands clasped together, to talk about the threats. She did so almost by way of an apology. In fact what followed – filmed and put on social media – turned into an exercise in public humiliation resembling something from Maoist China.

None of the many parents *The Mail* on Sunday spoke to last week believed the police or the school acted fairly, and there were reports that some had kept their children at home in protest.

According to [BBC West Yorkshire](#)

Police said they had investigated a report of a “malicious communications offence”. A force spokesperson added: “A suspect was identified, who was also a child, and they were given **words of advice** by an officer.”

The force added they recorded the damage done to the religious text as a “hate incident” but officers were satisfied “no criminal offences were committed”. Officers were conducting additional reassurance patrols in the area of the school, police said. *But reassuring who? The threatened boy(s) or permanently outraged Muslims?*

The school declined to answer questions from the MoS about the case, which the Home Secretary is determined should never be repeated.

‘Schools answer to pupils and parents,’ she said. ‘They do not have to answer to self-appointed community activists.’