

St Stephen's in Newham bans hijabs for girls under 8

From the [Daily Mail](#) and the [The Sunday Times](#): "We did not ban fasting altogether but we encouraged them to fast in holidays, at weekends and not on the school campus. Here we are responsible for their health and safety if they pass out on campus...it is not fair to us."

A campaign led by Amina Lone , of the Social Action and Research Foundation, is fighting for young Muslim girls not to have to wear the hijab in primary schools.

The Department for Education said: 'It is a matter for individual schools to decide how to accommodate children observing Ramadan, and to set uniform policies. We issue clear guidance on uniform and to help schools understand their legal duties under the Equality Act.'

Mr Qawi claimed some students were fasting when they were as young as eight years old, despite Muslim clerics typically advising they not start until they have reached puberty. The school had to deal with a "backlash" from parents, especially after it outlawed fasting, a ritual that lasts about 18 hours a day in the summer, on school premises.

He said that, although some parents had been critical of the new rules, it had received broad approval from many Muslim parents.

The headmistress, Neena Lall, said the school had made the changes to help pupils integrate into modern British society. "A couple of years ago I asked the children to put their hands up if they thought they were British," she said. "Very few children put their hands up."

Qawi said that despite the criticism from a few families, some

parents were thrilled at the school's stance on fasting.

He said he had met some mothers with children at the school: "I could not see their faces because they were fully veiled. But I could see their eyes – which were sparkling. They were pleased we had taken it out of their hands.

"I always ask, 'Do you want your daughter to grow up to be like you or like Neena?' They say, 'Like Neena.' When I hear that I think we have done our job."