

## Visit to Al Hidayah school: amongst the best of the best

**Tarek Chamkhi**



Al-Hidayah Islamic school in Bentley, Western

Australia, began as a grass roots project for and on behalf of the local Muslim community. It is now a beacon of Islamic education in Western Australia. The school was set up on the basis of transparency, fair use of public resources and aiming to be among the best of the best.

Recently, I spent a morning meeting the teaching staff, visiting classrooms, meeting the Principal as well as the school administrator and founder Umar Abdullah.

### Facilities

The atmosphere was quite interesting with its ease and simplicity. It is apparent that the school is not amongst the richest private schools around but despite this, the classrooms are well equipped and the students have access to resources including laptop computers and electronic white boards which have no doubt contributed to the improved student results in the latest academic year.

In response to our question about the laptops and electronic whiteboards, which are fitted in all classrooms, Umar Abdullah said that "Preliminary research indicated that this was the way to go. Schools already using this technology have noted an overall improvement in student performance, student/teacher motivation and engagement; punctuality and absenteeism also improved. The improvements in many cases were significant. The potential for improving the education process is almost immeasurable as more information becomes accessible and new software becomes available."

He added "We need to petition those Islamic organisations that currently produce multimedia software in Islamic studies to tailor new material specifically for this technology at all levels in consultation with Islamic schools". Such technology is likely to assist in improving overall School performance results over the next 2 to 3 years under the existing testing and evaluation processes such as NAPLAN and 'EasyMark'.

### Student Body

The maximum student capacity of the school is 240. Total current student enrolment is 232. Most classes in the lower and middle primary years have waiting lists for admission. The school grades run from kindergarten to Year 9. The school administration is currently investigating the possibility of extending the campus to allow for classes up to year 12 and duplicate classes for some grades.

"A high school has always been on the agenda, but there are no firm plans in the short term. To establish a high school

and make it viable and permanent in today's circumstances would require an initial investment of tens of millions of dollars" said Umar Abdullah, the school

### Akhlaq Flag

The school uses an "Akhlaq flag" [akhlaq loosely translates to good conduct - Ed]. The raising or lowering of the flag, which is



located in the central playground of the school, is used to indicate the level of akhlaq of the School on a weekly basis.

"At the beginning of this term the flag was going up and down barely more than half way up the pole, but as the idea is now sinking in, over the last few weeks we have seen the flag remain consistently near the top of the pole", said Umar Abdullah. The flag is just one of the strategies being used to improve the general manners and behavioral performance in the School.

### Multicultural Harmony

The teaching staff, enjoy workplace harmony and the benefits of multiculturalism. On the day I visited the school, staff were participating in a morning tea which gave them an opportunity to break up the routine and benefit from the very diverse range of

administrator. He added that a second primary school campus north of the river in the next 3 to 5 years is more feasible.

### Accelerated Learning Class

The primary function of the Accelerated Learning Class (ALC) is to get students



who are assessed as being normal range students but operating at a significantly lower standard than is routine for the Al-Hidayah Islamic School, up to speed so they can rejoin the mainstream educational programs of the School as soon as possible.

As a matter of policy, since the beginning of this year, no student who is assessed as being more than one year below the School's standard will be accepted for enrolment. Feedback from staff and students indicate that the ALC is proving to be highly successful in dealing with the disproportionate numbers of remedial students in the School and should become redundant in 2 to 3 years. This project costs the school around \$90,000 per year.

food experiences available due to their many different points of origin.

I asked why this type of experience is not extended to the students - the school has chosen not take up this option for health and safety reasons. Students are encouraged to eat what they bring from home, in keeping with School's No Junk Food policy, and not to share with others. This may seem a contradiction with the Akhlaq efforts but reflects the wishes of most parents.

The School has two fetes a year. They are run by the School Staff and are highly successful fund-raisers in addition to promoting good public relations with the Muslim Community of Perth.

\*Photos: Al Hidayah students in their classrooms. Courtesy: Crescent Times.

## WA: Donations required for temporary prayer facility



The Muslim Charity Community of WA (MCCWA) has received approval from

the City of Gosnells to build a temporary prayer room on the grounds of the future proposed Community Centre and Masjid Alrahman. Once the Community Centre and Masjid are built, the temporary prayer room will be used as a teaching facility, specifically for free teaching of Arabic and Quran to children and adults.

MCCWA is requesting support for the building of the temporary prayer room along with an extension and 24 bays (car park). The following resources are required:

- 24 steel G150 60-3 mm channels, 6 metres in length for the floor
- 72 square metres of hard wood to cover the steel channels
- 72 square metres of carpet
- 22 batts of insulation,
- 52 hardy flex

- 8 windows
- 2 split system air conditioners
- lighting,
- plumbing.

To build the extension, the following resources are required:

- Room 6 by 5 Meter = 30 sqm, 2 toilets - and one for disabled access, 4 taps for ablution, shelves for shoes.

If you are able to donate any of the above resources please contact Hajj Amer Hawchar on email: hajjamer@hotmail.com

If you are able to donate money towards the building of the prayer room, please send a cheque any amount big or small to: PO Box 683, Gosnells WA 6990 :Under the name of MCCWA.

Or deposit your donation to the following bank account: CWB Account Name: Muslim Charity Community of Western Australia, Inc. Account Number: 06 6162 10398315

If you would like a receipt for your donation please email your name, address and amount donated to Hajj Amer Hawchar on the above email address.

## DENTAL CARE

### Cleft palate

**Yasser Khan\***

Cleft palate, an opening in the roof of the mouth, and cleft lip, an opening in the lip, develop in the early stages of pregnancy. Repairing a cleft lip and palate can be done within an infant's first year, but the timing depends on the baby's health and other considerations. Typically, a team of specialists is required to repair a cleft lip and palate: a dentist, to evaluate any special dental needs; an orthodontist, to monitor jaw growth and bite problems; an oral surgeon, to perform tooth extractions, restorations and reconstruction; a prosthodontist, to develop oral appliances; and a pathologist, to help with speech. In this section, you'll find informative resources on cleft lip palate causes, care and repair.

### CLEFT PALATE FAQS

Q: Is cleft palate genetic?

A: Cleft lip and palate are the most common birth defects associated with the head and neck. While doctors aren't certain yet what causes cleft lip/palate, an infant may be more likely to be born with the condition if a mother uses certain medications, drinks alcohol or takes illegal drugs, smokes, or is exposed to radiation during the pregnancy. A family history of cleft palate can also play a role.

Q: Can cleft lip and palate be detected early?

A: In some cases, yes. With a fetal ultrasound, a cleft lip and palate may be detectable as early as 14-16 weeks into the pregnancy. This is most successful if the cleft lip or cleft palate is severe. Because an ultrasound is not always a dependable way to detect a cleft lip palate, doctors don't rely on it for diagnosis.

Q: What's involved in cleft lip/palate repair?

A: Cleft palate surgery is required to repair clefting in the lip, palate or both. Treatment plans for complete cleft lip and palate repair typically include multiple surgeries, starting at 3-6 months and continuing until age 18. The first surgery involves creating a functional palate; other surgeries may be required to close a cleft lip, improve appearance, improve breathing and stabilize the jaw. Professionals ranging from plastic surgeons and oral surgeons to an orthodontist and prosthodontist may be involved in cleft lip/palate repair. After surgery, the help of a speech pathologist and audiologist are often necessary to help with speech and hearing problems.

Q: Will my child have problems learning to speak after cleft lip/palate surgery?

A: A child who has cleft lip repair should have few, if any, problems learning how to speak. A child with a cleft palate, however, may need the help of a speech therapist or pathologist. Keep in mind that cleft palate and cleft lip repair can take several years to complete, during which time a variety of specialists will help your child address problems as they arise.

\* Yasser Khan is a general dentist with special interest in cosmetic and aesthetic dentistry. He has been actively involved with various organisations locally and abroad in promoting the awareness and importance of oral hygiene care. He works mainly in Mansfield north east of Melbourne and part time in Pascoe Vale South.