

Nishkam School Trust  
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26<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Dear Mr Hunt

We write to acknowledge and thank you for the correspondence via email dated 1<sup>st</sup> March 2013. We hope that you will find the following outline notes: "Consultation Terms of Reference" and "The Timeline for the Consultation" given below are helpful.

The consultation process is defined in the Academies Act, 2010. The Act requires a formal consultation exercise to determine whether the Proposer of the School should enter into a Funding Agreement with the Department for Education. We could only respond to questions relevant to the consultation process and the proposed school. We hope that you will understand that we were not in a position to undertake the following: engage in a debate around difference of views not relevant to the School, respond to people's strongly held opinions on matters outside the question of the Consultation or proposals for the School, or provide detailed information which is not known at the time.

Please note that the consultation started on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2012 and was concluded on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2012.

The answers to your questions have been detailed below. As suggested previously, we would welcome you to come and visit our school in Birmingham.

Yours sincerely,

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I. K. Mahon  
Project Supervisor  
Nishkam School Trust

### **Consultation Terms of Reference**

Consultation was undertaken in accordance with Section 10 of the Academies Act 2010. The consultation asked: "For the Nishkam School West London to open on 1st September 2013, NST will need to enter into a legally binding funding agreement with the Secretary of State. Do you agree that NST should make this commitment?"

### **Timeline for the consultation**

- 1.1 The consultation started on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> November with the creation of the Nishkam School West London consultation webpage ([www.nishkamschooltrust.org](http://www.nishkamschooltrust.org)).
- 1.2 Consultation letters and accompanying consultation documents were distributed to 277 stakeholders by the Nishkam School Trust in the week commencing the 5<sup>th</sup> November. The stakeholders included primary schools, secondary schools, universities, MP's, Councillors, local faith organisations, and local businesses.

- 1.3 A print advert was placed in the Hounslow Chronicle newspaper on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> November.
- 1.4 Consultation posters were sent to 10 local libraries and 12 GP Doctors Surgeries on the 15th November 2012.
- 1.5 A public consultation event took place on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> December at the St Francis of Assisi Church, Hounslow.
- 1.6 The consultation closed on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December.

**Please see below a response to your specific questions:**

**[Q.1]** Can the Trust supply reliable figures, and indicate how they were obtained?

**Full demand figures and collection methods are supplied through the formal application process to the Department for Education for their assessment.**

**[Q.2a]** How does the trust define "spirituality"? (My *Oxford English Dictionary* is decidedly nebulous.) **[Q.2b]** How will the school assess each pupil's spirituality, and on the basis of what evidence? **[Q.2c]** What developmental milestones are expected? **[Q.2d]** And what remedial efforts will be undertaken when development is considered inadequate? -- Inability to substantiate these claims of the spiritual flourishing and development of pupils might be construed as evidence of contravention of legal, decent, and honest advertising.

**We would disagree that the Oxford English Dictionary definition is nebulous. Our aim is not to measure spirituality. No remedial action is intended for those who are of a faith or no faith.**

Page 7 of the Brochure ("More than a school") mentions "*guiding institutions*":

**[Q.3a]** what are these?

**Universities and Institutions of educational research, and guidelines.**

**[Q.3b]** will staff and others having contact with pupils all be CRB checked?

**The normal national legal requirements for contact with children are followed.**

It mentions "*direct experience of civic institutions*":

**[Q.3c]** please can you give examples?

**Children participating in activities organized by the local Authority and educational institutions including educational visits to museums and art galleries, mentoring schemes, youth clubs etc.**

**Professionals speaking at careers events and organised by professional bodies and local community or civic organisations.**

**[Q.4a]** Can the Trust give examples of how pupils will be taught appropriate humility? **[Q.4b]** Does this differ in any way between the sexes? Page 8 of the Brochure ("Visionary Curriculum") includes: "*Respect and revere all faiths*".

**Humility is taught through examples in history. Our ethos is not gender specific.**

**[Q.5a]** What constitutes a faith? **[Q.5b]** Does it include Scientology? (In February 2012 a French court confirmed a fine of 600,000 Euros for fraud: and in Dec. 2012 charges of fraud, illegal medicine,

breaches of privacy and extortion were laid in Belgium. In Germany, the "Church" is monitored by Government intelligence.) [Q.5c] How much respect and reverence should be accorded to Roman Catholicism? "Benedict XVI", (now resigned as pope), had two sets of charges for "crimes against humanity" laid against him in 2011; Keith O'Brien (the most senior cardinal in Britain) has also just resigned following allegations that he abused young priests; several other cardinals have received much publicity in recent weeks for concealing child abuse; the Vatican Bank ("Institute for Works of Religion") is under investigation for money laundering; and in Feb. 2011 a legal ruling in Germany determined that the catholic church can LEGALLY be called the *Child-F\*cking Sect*, (seeming to indicate NO requirement for any respect or reverence). --

[www.lawblog.de/index.php/archives/2012/02/11/katholische-kirche-darf-kinderficker-sekte-genannt-werden/](http://www.lawblog.de/index.php/archives/2012/02/11/katholische-kirche-darf-kinderficker-sekte-genannt-werden/)

**The Trust does not define the constitution of faiths, however does teach common values; respect is not limited, and includes those of religious beliefs and those of none.**

[Q.6] What does the Trust believe, and what will pupils be taught about the origin of the universe and about evolution?

**The School adheres to the National Curriculum.**

[Q.7] What does the Trust believe, and what will pupils be taught about personal relationships, including the status of women, same-sex relationships, arranged marriage, marriage between partners of different castes, and "honour killings"?

the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail* reported that, although *Department of Health* statistics relating to "illegal sex specific terminations" have not been released, this is known to occur within the Sikh community. A *UPI* report on aborting female foetuses on 4th March stated: "*In India, this preference for boy babies is most marked among the Sikh and Muslim population rather than among Hindus*".

**The examples given are not related to the Sikh faith. The faith encompasses diversity and respect for all, and does not condone violence or hatred.**

[Q.8] What does the Trust believe, and what will pupils be taught about reincarnation after death, and the donation of blood, organs, and other body tissues?

**The school teaches national curriculum. In particular in RE, pupils will be taught schemes of work as defined by the national curriculum.**

[Q.9] What does the Trust believe, and what will pupils be taught about theocracy and the desirability of a Sikh state or Sikh government?

**The Trust has no political affiliations and teaching is aligned with the national curriculum.**

[Q.10a] How much time will be spent on worship, indoctrination, and preparing for and celebrating festivals (e.g. melas and gurpurbs)? [Q.10b] Will non-Sikh pupils be excused from these and, if so, what alternative provision will be made for them during these periods?

**The school is a faith school and as such celebrates faith festivals; time for these activities is not at the expense of the National Curriculum. Collective worship remains non-compulsory. Alternate provision time is offered to those who wish not to partake. The content of this is dependent on the skill mix of the current teaching staff.**

In 2004 there were protests in Birmingham about a play, *Behzti*, which reportedly included a scene with rape and murder in a Sikh temple. (English history famously includes the murder in Canterbury Cathedral of Archbishop Thomas à Becket: the subject of a play by T.S. Eliot.) *Behzti* was cancelled, following death threats: just weeks after the assassination by a religious fanatic of film-maker Theo

van Gogh. I make no apologies for either the play (which I haven't seen) or the playwright, but suggest that murder and death threats are widely considered in British society a totally inappropriate and uncivilised response.

**[Q.11]** Will pupils be taught to respect the legal right to free speech, (whether or not some may consider it offensive or "blasphemous"), while noting that this does NOT include inciting violence?

**We believe you may have a misunderstanding of the Sikh ethos. Free speech is a fundamental human right, in addition carrying with it a responsibility not to incite violence, hatred or intolerance of others.**

I understand there has been an incredibly high incidence of alcoholism amongst British Sikhs, reportedly accounting for 80% of cases amongst Asian males: and also leading to a violent backlash in May 2011 when police "from all over the West Midlands", including a police helicopter, had to attend as 200 Sikhs "trashed" their own community centre.

**[Q.12]** Is a Sikh ethos really desirable?

**We believe you may have a misunderstanding of the Sikh ethos. The Sikh ethos does not permit alcohol intake.**

Just hours after my email of 10th March, the BBC reported that "*Sikh weddings are regularly disrupted by protesters opposed to mixed-faith marriages in gurdwaras*", ( [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-21721519](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-21721519) ). Please can you address this as part of your response to Q.7?

Today *The International News* (an English-language newspaper in Pakistan) carries as its "top story" an article about the teaching of history in schools, ( [www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-21644-Questions-about-national-curriculum](http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-21644-Questions-about-national-curriculum) ). They quote a 1300-word article ( [www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/indo-pak-partition2.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/indo-pak-partition2.htm) ) from *GlobalSecurity.org*, (apparently a nonsectarian information service sometimes cited by the BBC and *The Times*). Although this admits that "*Sikh groups were far from alone in engaging in acts of violence, massacre, rape, and abduction*", it states:

*"The Sikhs, their leading political organization, the Akali Dal, and its leaders ... have come in for a very great share of the blame for the mass migrations and violence that occurred in the Punjab. The Sikh[s] started systematic attacks on Muslims in various parts of Punjab."*

I have no wish to attempt to apportion blame for 1947 brutalities, but am deeply concerned that in 2013 London and the Home Counties have a much more diverse mixture of cultures than the Punjab had in 1947. I do not see how perpetuating sectarian beliefs from bygone centuries will promote cohesion, integration, and peaceful coexistence. The history of hatred in Northern Ireland and in the Punjab has been mirrored in violent riots at West Thames College between Sikhs and Muslims; *Sunrise Radio* in Southall banned the epithet "Asian" because of continuing animosity between sects; and in July 2012 the *Guardian* reported that "*more than a hundred angry Sikhs surrounded a police station in Luton*" because of sectarian rivalry going back hundreds of years, ( [www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2012/jul/03/edl-sikh-men-women](http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2012/jul/03/edl-sikh-men-women) ). -- Please can you address this as part of your response to Q.12?

**The Trust fervently condemns hatred or violence.**