

Unit 6B Worship and community: what is the role of the mosque?

ABOUT THE UNIT

In this unit children learn about the mosque and the role it plays in the Muslim community, reflecting on what is involved in belonging to a community. They develop their understanding of how religious beliefs are expressed in practice by studying how worship takes place in the mosque. They build on earlier work on religious experiences and expression, and on previous experiences of visiting religious buildings.

WHERE THE UNIT FITS IN

This unit builds on other units which have introduced children to faith communities and to places and styles of worship. It will help them develop their understanding of what worship means to a believer. There are links with previous work on signs and symbols. The material covered in unit 5A in year 5 on the significance of Muhammad ﷺ, and unit 5B in year 5 on belief and practice in Islam, provide important background information.

PRIOR LEARNING

It is helpful if children have:

- some background knowledge of Islam, eg *stories about the life of Muhammad ﷺ*
- some experience of visiting or studying religious buildings and interpreting their experience
- had experience of preparing questions for interviewing adults

VOCABULARY

In this unit children will have an opportunity to use words and phrases related to:

- Islam, eg *mosque, minaret, qiblah*
- Allah, Islam, Makkah
- religious beliefs, eg *respect, sacred*
- worship, eg *prayer*

RESOURCES

- pictures and posters
- world map
- artefacts, eg *a qiblah*
- videos
- visits
- people
- ICT software
- CD-ROM
- examples of Muslim decorative art

EXPECTATIONS

At the end of this unit

most children will:

describe, using correct terms, some of the key beliefs of Islam and show understanding of how these are expressed in worship and in the wider life of the community which centres on the mosque; show understanding of what is involved in belonging to Islam; show understanding of how religious beliefs can be expressed in a variety of ways, including art and architecture; identify aspects of their own experience of belonging to a community and make connections with religious communities

some children will not have made so much progress and will:

describe a mosque using some correct terms, and explain what it is used for; identify some aspects of their own experience of belonging to a community

some children will have progressed further and will:

identify some similarities between Islamic beliefs and practices, and those of other religions they have studied; show understanding of how beliefs affect the lives of individuals and communities

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

POINTS TO NOTE

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

WHAT IS A MOSQUE AND WHAT IS IT FOR?

- to use information from a wide range of sources to inform their inquiry about the key features of a mosque, its purpose and significance for Muslims
 - the meaning of the word 'sacred' and explore the idea that a building can be a 'sacred space'
- Introduce the word 'sacred'. *What do you think it means? When have you heard it used before?* Lead into the idea of a 'sacred space'. Explore this idea through discussion.
 - Show the children pictures and posters of mosques, showing the inside and outside. Ask the children to be detectives, looking at the pictures to identify features of the building which give clues about how it might be used, *eg shape, common features. Are there any signs or symbols? Are there any clues about how the building might be used? Do the buildings have anything in common with other buildings you've seen?* Record responses on a flip chart.
 - Show a short video of a mosque being used for worship. Ask the children to watch carefully and to note what's happening, *eg washing, shoes taken off, heads covered, people praying*. Encourage children to note down any questions they want to ask.
 - Ask the children what they think are the important things for Muslims in their place of worship.
 - Divide the children into small groups for a short, focused discussion on what they have discovered. Each group should focus on a different aspect, *eg describing the building, identifying words they are unfamiliar with, special clothes, what people were doing*. Ask all groups to list further questions they would like to ask. Ask each group to feed back to the class. Record what they say on a flip chart, which can be used as a starting point for the next lesson.

- explore their ideas about what makes somewhere a 'sacred space'
- identify the key features of a mosque and begin to explore the significance of the mosque for Muslims
- ask a range of questions about the identity and experience of Muslims in relation to the mosque
- interpret information from their research to help them to identify some of the key beliefs and ideas of Islam

- Choose from the wide range of picture and poster packs available. Laminate them so that they can be handled by the children.
- Choose video extracts that present the information clearly so that the children can focus on the task.
- Keep an ongoing log of questions which the children raise throughout this unit: some of them may be answered as they gain more information; some will be questions they will want to ask when they visit a mosque; some may have no easy or 'right' answers.

WHAT HAPPENS IN A MOSQUE AND WHY?

- the meaning of key words relating to a mosque
 - to locate Makkah and the United Kingdom on a world map
 - that what Muslims believe to be important is reflected in the way the mosque is designed
 - to give meanings for symbols and symbolic actions using the correct terms
- Use a card model of a mosque or a good, clear illustration to recap on the new words introduced in the previous lesson.
 - Identify the main features of the mosque; illustrating them with additional pictures, artefacts and video clips.
 - Ask the children to work in groups to produce a display for the classroom that focuses on a large plan of a mosque. Using a wide variety of resources, ask the children to identify and explain the main features of a mosque using their own words and pictures. Make sure that information about why things are done is included. *Why do Muslims prepare for prayer by washing? Why do Muslims remove their shoes before praying? Why is it important to face Makkah?* Keep a record of any questions they ask.
 - Include the artefacts, pictures and posters used in the lessons for a classroom display. Ask the children to write captions explaining what the display is about.

- recognise the main features of Muslim worship in the mosque
- ask appropriate and relevant questions about Muslim belief and practice
- explain how Muslim beliefs and ideas can be expressed in a variety of forms
- explain the meaning of symbolic actions

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BELONG TO A COMMUNITY?

- what is included in belonging to a community
 - about the importance of the mosque as a centre for the life of the Muslim community
- Ask the children to give examples of communities they are familiar with. Explore what is involved in belonging to a community through discussion and questioning.
 - Set group tasks to identify the kinds of things people do together that help them to feel part of a community. *What are the rights, benefits and responsibilities which come with belonging to a community?*
 - Link this to the way the mosque works as a community: a place of worship, an Islamic school or college, a community centre.
 - Explore collective and individual ways of worshipping.
 - Ask the children to work in groups to design posters or leaflets informing the community about the different activities which go on at a mosque, their school, a local church or in any other community group.
 - As an extension task children could compare and contrast other religious groups they've studied that have a role in the community. *What does this tell you about their beliefs?*

- draw on their own experience to identify what it means to belong to a community
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of what is involved in belonging to a community, including a religious one
- ask and answer a range of questions about the experience and responsibilities of being involved in a community, including a religious community
- compare and contrast some religious beliefs and ideas, and explain how these impact on practice

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

POINTS TO NOTE

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

PREPARING TO VISIT THE MOSQUE

- to consider their own beliefs and values in relation to expectations about attitudes and behaviour when they visit the mosque
 - to develop attitudes of respect towards different beliefs and lifestyles
 - about the benefits and responsibilities which are linked with belonging to a community
- Build on children's prior experiences of visiting religious buildings. Questions could include: *Have you been to other religious buildings before? Draw out what they can remember. What do you expect to see at the mosque? How do you think you will feel?*
 - With the children, prepare a list of questions to ask when they visit the mosque. This will help them to come to an understanding of what the mosque is, and why it is important to the people who use it.
 - Ask the children to think carefully about what they think the people who use the mosque will expect from the class when they visit. This could be done as a brainstorming session.
 - Ask the children to work in groups to write a checklist for schools preparing to visit a mosque. Alternatively, this could be generic – to be used for religious buildings or school visits generally – with different briefs for each group. Once completed, they can compare their lists. *How should you behave in a mosque? What must you do before entering? What rules should you observe there? Focus on the idea of respect, and explore why respect is important using questions. Should we do as others do when we visit their special places, eg remove shoes? Does it matter? What messages would it give if we chose not to do it?*
 - Prepare them to be observant on the visit, noting the new sights, sounds and feelings they experience.

CHILDREN

- apply previous knowledge and understanding of religious buildings and their place in the life of the faith community
 - identify appropriate questions which will contribute to understanding the significance of the mosque for the Muslim community
 - explore their own values and commitments and relate them to those of others, showing that they understand why it is important to show respect for the beliefs and lifestyles of others
- Most major towns have a mosque, although these will rarely be purpose built. Teachers will need to decide between visiting a major, purpose built mosque, which may be some distance away, and a mosque in an adapted building which may not have all the features exactly as the children will be expecting. This may be an important teaching point – that an 'ordinary', secular building can be used for worship. There are links with the teaching activities on what makes a place 'special'.
 - It is important for the teacher responsible for the visit to go to the mosque beforehand and prepare for the visit with members of the Muslim community.
 - The purpose of the visit should be made clear to the children and any other adults accompanying them. Expectations about behaviour and respect should be clearly established.
 - Make sure that parents understand the purpose of the visit and what the children will be doing. Make it clear that they will not be taking part in any acts of worship.
 - When preparing questions with the children, avoid questions such as *How long did it take to build?* Instead, encourage them to ask questions that will help them to gain an understanding of the religious significance of the mosque for the faith community, eg *what it means to worship there, how the building is cared for.*

VISIT TO THE MOSQUE

- how Muslim beliefs and values are expressed through worship
 - to reflect on the experience of visiting the mosque and discuss their responses
 - why Muslims use Arabesque, geometric designs and calligraphy
 - that beliefs and values can be expressed through art
- The purpose of the visit is to reinforce what has been learnt in the classroom and to provide a stimulus for further work. The emphasis should be on ensuring the children experience something of the significance of the place of worship for the faith community.
 - When the children arrive and enter the prayer hall, give them some time and space to be still and experience the atmosphere. Refer back to the discussion on sacred spaces in the first lesson. *What words would you use to describe the atmosphere?* Give them time to reflect on their thoughts and feelings. It is important that children are given the opportunity to discuss their feelings and responses during the visit rather than waiting until they are back in school. Adults working with groups can record responses.
 - Give the children a clear focus for asking questions and recording their experiences, eg *note down something that surprised them and something they particularly liked.* Let them choose how to record what they see, eg *by writing notes, drawing.* Spending time on a careful observational drawing will help them to engage with what the feature or artefact is for, and why it is there.
 - Draw attention to the decorations in the mosque. *Why are there no representations of people or animals?* Note how Arabesque, geometric patterns and calligraphy are used. Remind the children about why this is. Encourage the children to note colours and patterns for later work in school.
 - Prepare one or two children to thank any community members or leaders before you leave the mosque.
- discuss and reflect on the experience of visiting the mosque, raising questions about aspects which they find puzzling and suggesting answers
 - discuss why the mosque is important for the Muslim community
 - record their feelings and questions
 - describe how Muslim beliefs and values are expressed through art
 - examine and record Islamic use of colours and patterns
- Tasks should enable the children to respond to the building and the people, recording their responses so that they can refer to them later. Emphasise that they don't have to rush around and draw everything in sight.
 - This activity makes a significant contribution to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 - The majority of Muslims avoid representing humans or living creatures in pictures, as only Allah is viewed as the creator. It is also offensive for anyone to attempt to make anything that is flawless, for only Allah can create perfection. For this reason it is said that a Muslim artist or craftsman will always make a deliberate mistake.
 - If a visit proves too difficult adapt the unit to focus on a 'virtual visit' to a mosque, using appropriate software.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

POSSIBLE TEACHING ACTIVITIES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

POINTS TO NOTE

CHILDREN SHOULD LEARN

CHILDREN

FOLLOW-UP TO MOSQUE VISIT: WHAT MAKES A PLACE SPECIAL?

- about some of the features which make a place special
 - about the idea that a special place can be anywhere
 - to develop the skills of evaluation and reflection
 - to identify the range of functions which a mosque fulfils for Muslims
 - to synthesise information from a range of sources
- Build on the experience of visiting the mosque by exploring questions about what makes a place 'special'. *Why do people go to special places? Why do you go to your own special place?* Remind them that, although the mosque is a special place where Muslims worship, Muhammad ﷺ taught that 'the world is a mosque'. Muslims can pray using their prayer mat wherever they are. A mosque is 'anywhere'. Some mosques and other religious buildings are not purpose built, and could just be an ordinary room. Discuss using questions: *Is it necessary to have somewhere special to worship God? Can 'anywhere' be 'a sacred space'?* Ask the children to work in pairs to prepare a response to the question, *'If Muhammad ﷺ said 'the world is a mosque', why do we need a building?'*
 - Prepare 10–15 statements on 'why Muslims use the mosque', eg *learning to read Arabic, learning about the Muslim faith, worshipping Allah, celebrating, community and friendship*. Ask the groups to justify what they have done, and compare their responses with other groups. Return to the original question and summarise a whole class response.
 - Ask the children to design a room in the school where people can go when they need time to think quietly. *What will the room be like? How will you arrange and decorate it? What will you call it?*
 - Ask the children to engage in an evaluation, identifying what they have learnt from books and other sources in the classroom, and what they have learnt from actually going to the mosque and seeing it and meeting and talking with members of the faith community.
 - Other follow-up work could include: exploring Islamic decorations; preparing a presentation or an assembly on the visit for another class; writing a letter to the mosque thanking them for the visit and saying what they learnt.
- talk about their own experiences of special places, and the mosque as a special place for Muslims
 - talk about what makes a place a holy place for Muslims, and relate this to their own experience
 - evaluate their own learning experiences
 - classify the range of functions which a mosque has for Muslims
 - communicate, through a design activity, their understanding that a special place for reflection can be important to some people
 - evaluate what they have learnt about the role and importance of the mosque to Muslims

FUTURE LEARNING

Children could go on to:

- study the beliefs and practices of Islam in greater depth

OUT-OF-SCHOOL LEARNING

Children could:

- use ICT to research information about mosques in Britain and around the world
- find out more about Islamic decorative art