

Refer them to us

Successful supplementary schools are giving mainstream schools a hand

Afghan Association Paiwand started in 2005 and has gone from strength to strength. It offers supplementary education and a wide variety of other services to help the Afghan refugee community of north west London. Paiwand's director, Farid Mall, talks to *the Bulletin's* Adam Zulawski about how their arrangement with Whitefield School in Barnet has benefited both parties.

AZ: Can you give us a brief history of Paiwand school?

FM: The school started as a Saturday school at Whitefield School in January 2005. We had a partnership agreement which gave us access to their classrooms free of charge. In return, we provided the school with bilingual support for two weekdays every week. At the time, the school had a large number of Afghan students, especially new arrivals who were in need of extra language support during school time.

We had access to a number of classrooms, the gym, the dining area and, later on, the drama area. A number of students from Whitefield School itself were attending our maths and science classes on Saturdays, and some of them went to our language classes too. But the majority of students were from the local primary schools, which are feeders to Whitefield. We now have nine paid staff and 22 volunteers working with 126 pupils at the supplementary school we have based in Whitefield; we have also started a second supplementary school at London Academy.

AZ: How has the partnership with Whitefield School developed recently?

FM: At the end of last year, we revisited our target group and the young people attending our classes, and we found that a large number of Afghans and non-Afghans at Whitefield School who were in need of extra support were not attending our supplementary classes on Saturdays.

We decided to work more closely with the English and maths departments at Whitefield and had a few meetings with the directors of learning for both subjects. We found out that 72 students at Whitefield

were of Afghan background. They were the least-achieving students in English and most of them had low achievement in maths and science too.

We decided to pilot a closer partner referral system. The school would identify Key Stage 4 students of any background who were in need of extra support in English and maths, especially those who were new to this country, and refer them to us.

A total of 70 students, from Year 11, were referred to the pilot. In January 2012 we started delivering the classes to 33 of those students, and now all of these attend revision classes with Paiwand. They are our immediate target for support as they are near their GCSE exams, but we're hoping to secure funding so that we

can also work with Key Stage 3 students. The revision classes run from 1pm until 3pm on Saturday afternoons.

AZ: Tell us about the teachers.

FM: The teachers are not UK-qualified but they do have teaching qualifications and experience from the countries they are from. To support these teachers, our new partnership agreement gives them access to shared learning. So far they've had three training sessions, one held by the deputy head specifically on behaviour management and special educational needs (SEN).

Whitefield also shares information about the attainment levels of the young people they refer to us.

If there are training opportunities at the school, our teachers are able to have them too. There are also opportunities for our teachers to come and shadow the school's maths and English teachers during their weekday classes. Our teachers also have secondary access to their learning resources, and we can use some of the equipment, like the interactive whiteboards.

We can also provide immediate feedback on Monday morning to the school about the referred students' participation, attendance and behaviour, as well as how they are doing with their revision. This way, we can all figure out which areas we need to concentrate more on and which areas we are doing well in.

AZ: It's an interesting partnership.

FM: Yes. I look forward to this partnership project being successful. The exams will show the impact and level of importance of it, and we very much hope to extend it to local feeder schools, as well as expanding to Key Stage 3.



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We're planning to begin work in September with a number of local primary schools, such as The Hyde, Claremont Primary and Childs Hill. We'll have Key Stage 2 referrals from them and be able to prepare these children for coming to Whitefield.

So yes, that's a very exciting project and both Whitefield and Paiwand are passionate about making this a success.

AZ: What would your advice be to other supplementary schools who want to develop these types of partnerships?

FM: Well, Adam, partnerships are very important for supplementary schools in terms of the long term and sustainability.

Funds are coming to, well I can't say an end, but they're very difficult to secure and there's less and less of them. Payments for classrooms are huge, almost impossible, and training costs for capacity building can also be high.

So, establishing that kind of partnership is crucial. They need to show not only passion and enthusiasm, but also that they're working towards quality.

Our supplementary school at Whitefield School achieved Special Distinction in the NRC Quality Framework, and we're also now aiming for QiSS – to apply and achieve that. They help create a type of testing environment to keep you improving.

Paiwand and Whitefield have worked together for seven years so we know each other and share many goals.

I think it's very important for all voluntary organisations to come and talk with schools and put it on the table that we do share and we do work with the same agenda and want to reach the goals that schools have.

For Whitefield School, as with all other schools, the improvement of children's attainment is most important. If we can work together and do that – by combining our cultural activities and home languages, for example, with properly structured maths and

science classes for referred children – then I think all schools would be interested in such an arrangement. We save money for the school, as well as saving money ourselves with regard to paying for the venue.

A venue can cost between £15,000 and even £30,000, depending on the number of classes you use during your hours. On average where it's up to, say, eight to ten classes, it will probably be between £15,000 and £20,000 per year. The London Academy demands from Paiwand £43,000 a year to use the classes!

AZ: But a partnership can save that amount of money?

FM: Yes, and on top of that, with our teachers having access to school CPD and shadowing the classes of mainstream UK teachers, this means that after a year they can become very experienced. Those are huge advantages, really.

At London Academy, it's very high-tech but you can't touch any computers or interactive whiteboards, but at Whitefield School, because of our deeper partnership, all the Paiwand teachers can use them and have learned how to. That's an advantage and shows trust as well.

So yes, clear benefits to our organisation and the school, but the final winners are children and young people, and that's the goal for both Paiwand and the schools themselves.

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