


# **Equality and diversity in Milton Keynes.**

## **Part 1: Communities**



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# Contents

	Page
<b>1. Foreword</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. Context</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4. Milton Keynes Communities</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5. Communities and culture</b>	
African	11
Caribbean	21
Asian	25
European	48
Traveller	61
White British	65
<b>6. Religion and belief</b>	
Baha'i	68
Buddhism	70
Christianity	71
Hinduism	75
Humanism	80
Islam	82
Judaism	87
Sikhism	91
Religion and belief in schools	95
<b>7. Language backgrounds</b>	
Bengali and Sylheti,	96
Chinese	97
Gujarati	98
Japanese	99
Marathi	100
Punjabi	101
Somali	102
Swahili	103
Tagalog	104
Tamil	105
Telegu	106
Twi	107
Urdu	108
Translation and interpreter services	109
<b>8. Appendices</b>	
1. Further reading	110
2. EMA Network	115
3. Ethnicity and language charts	116
4. Events and organisations promoting community cohesion in Milton Keynes	117
<b>9. Glossary and acknowledgements</b>	<b>118</b>

# Foreword

Dear colleagues

I am very pleased to be able to write the foreword to the latest version of Equality and Diversity in Milton Keynes. I am proud of the inclusive, welcoming place that Milton Keynes is in 2024 – and the progress that has been made since this publication was first issued in 2002.

Of course, there is still more work to do. For example, continuing to enhance understanding of the diverse communities across our city and addressing the gaps that persist in critical areas like educational attainment and health outcomes. This comprehensive resource will help us to continue tackling these, and other issues, together. I am grateful to all the colleagues and community groups who have contributed to it.

**Michael Bracey Chief Executive  
Milton Keynes City Council**

# Introduction

An aim of this publication is to celebrate and help settings, schools and council colleagues to know more about the diverse communities that make up Milton Keynes. It promotes a positive attitude to difference and challenges stereotypes. The information has been written through collaboration with local people so that it truly represents their views.

The first edition of *Equality and Diversity in Milton Keynes* was published in 2002, in response to schools' recognition that the borough and its early years settings and schools had become increasingly diverse. Through continued updates it has provided accessible information about the local diverse Black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, their faith backgrounds and language heritages and has become the basis for many schools' understanding of cultural diversity in our borough. *Equality and Diversity* is now used as a training tool across the council acting as a quick reference guide for practitioners who seek to gain a deeper insight into the diverse communities in Milton Keynes. This fourth edition recognises that Milton Keynes is continuing to grow and diversify. Local community members have provided updated information so that this document is very much a shared record.

It is set out in two parts.

## **Part 1: Communities**

Background information on three key aspects of diversity: communities and culture, religion and belief, and language backgrounds

## **Part 2: Information and guidance for schools and settings in Milton Keynes**

Information and guidance relating to the inclusion of children and young people from diverse communities in Milton Keynes schools and settings. Available [here](#).

Apart from the introduction and context neither parts are intended to be read cover to cover but are a source of information as need arises. Over time readers will build up a deep understanding of our local communities and how to support them successfully.

There are clear, identified links between all aspects of background information, for example, between cultures and religion. Interplay between these aspects is complex; for instance, many practices of religious groups may sometimes be based on culture rather than doctrine and will vary from one community to another within the same religious background. Readers should be aware of this.

The information provided gives a brief introduction to our interestingly diverse local communities. Readers are challenged to read widely and find out more about the people who have moved to Milton Keynes from both within the UK and from overseas.

This is now their home. The information is not static. A diverse community leads to changes and as communities learn about each other customs, language, dress code, and dietary habits are likely to change. Changes may also lead to possible tensions between the 'old' and the 'new'. Not all third and fourth generation children from BME groups are likely to adhere rigidly to all their parents' cultural conventions.

Milton Keynes council is proud of the work its public services do to deliver and promote integrated and cohesive communities. We know and understand the importance of the council's commitment to rooting out inequality, challenging disadvantage and ensuring that all citizens have equality of opportunity.

This publication has been created by the Ethnic Minority Achievement (EMA) Network, which provides quality support to close attainment gaps for vulnerable and underperforming Black and minority ethnic (BME) children and young people across all maintained settings and as a traded offer with academies. This includes children and young people of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller origin.

EMA Network staff work in partnership with early years settings, primary and secondary schools, supplementary schools, local communities and agencies; not only to raise educational standards, but importantly to promote inclusion and community cohesion within schools and across communities. This is through advice and guidance, training, in-school support and maintenance of professional networks and the EMA Network website.

# Context

Milton Keynes has a rich, vibrant and varied community and thrives on its diversity. As the population of Milton Keynes has continued to grow, it has become increasingly diverse; an example of 'super-diversity'.

The proportion of the Black and minority ethnic (BME) school population has grown from 31% in 2010 to 45.51% in 2020 and to 51% in 2023, with proportionately higher growth of the BME communities compared to white British. The growth in the percentage of pupils learning English as an additional language (EAL) from 16.7% in 2010 to 26.08% in 2020 is well above the national averages of 21.3% in primary and 17.1% in secondary. Pupils learning EAL are at a wide range of stages of English language acquisition; from new arrivals, with limited English, to advanced learners who operate at a high level of English, at or above age-related academic expectations. The most recent secure estimate (2018) for the proportion of MK pupils at the early stages of English acquisition is 11.6% of primary aged pupils. Qualitative information indicates that these high numbers have been maintained in 2020, but there has been no national data collection since 2018<sup>1</sup>.

Local BME communities have changed from a few well-established Asian, Chinese, Italian and Black Caribbean groups to a diverse range of African, Eastern European, Middle Eastern and other Asian backgrounds. The 2021 census identified ten specific communities numbering over a 1000 in MK with Romanians the largest European group (6189), Ghanaians the largest African group (2017) and Indian the largest South Asian group (3443). The school census indicates that diversity in schools continues to grow, with 51% of pupils from minority ethnic groups in the 2023 school census.

The range of language backgrounds of pupils has grown from 87 spoken in 2008, 129 in 2010, 155 in 2020 to 184 in 2023. This presents huge opportunities and some challenges for integration and cohesion in schools and across the wider local community.

## Milton Keynes Council's equality commitment

Equality, diversity and cohesion lies at the very heart of everything the council does in employing people, providing services to people and in shaping the place they live and work. This is encapsulated in the Council's Equality Vision:

"Improve the way we engage, think, plan and act to deliver equality and accessibility for everyone, every day." (Equality policy 2019)

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<sup>1</sup> National language acquisition data no longer collected, 2018 school census last available data.

The council fulfils the Equality Act (2010), but always seeks to work beyond mere compliance and actively works with partners to remove barriers and create opportunities for all.

This publication supports the council's equality commitment to:

- Deliver equitable services
- Shape the development of the borough by -
  - understanding the needs and preferences of local people
  - advancing equality of opportunity for individuals and families
  - fostering good community relations, where everyone is treated with respect
- Build a diverse and competent workforce, volunteers and councillors.

The council's equality policy can be found at: <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/your-council-and-elections/council-information-and-accounts/equalities/creating-a-fairer-and-more-equal-mk>

There is a high level of commitment by our settings and schools to provide for diverse needs; with each establishment having a dedicated co-ordinator of ethnic minority achievement (EMACo).

# Milton Keynes Communities

In Milton Keynes, the concept of community is dynamic and fluid. This section celebrates our rich diversity and provides background information on the cultural, religion and beliefs, and languages dimensions of our BME communities.

We are aware that every community is made up of individuals; all exhibiting their own beliefs, customs and practices. Whilst this guidance provides commonly accepted generalisations about communities, it is not possible to give a complete representation of the diversity of belief and practices within each community. Where possible the guidance outlines key variations in belief, but within this, there will continue to be diverse practices and approaches. Every effort has been made to consult with different community groups and to produce information which best fits a majority view, whilst acknowledging some main differences. There is always more to learn about diversity and this guide should act as a starting point.

The contribution of diverse groups of people across both professional bodies and community groups is acknowledged. This is shared information, which has been collated by the EMA Network; however, it would not have been possible without the constant support and advice from community members, across all faiths and backgrounds. Our thanks are extended to all who are committed to celebrating our diversity and to making Milton Keynes, a richer and more interesting place to live and work in.



## Milton Keynes communities – overview

The following table uses the community information headings to provide a quick guide to Milton Keynes' largest BME communities.

Community (2023 MK pupil %)	Faith	Language
Afghan	Islam. Pashtun majority are Sunni Muslims, Hazara minority are Shia Muslims	Dari, Pashto, Pashtu and Uzbek. Afghan refugees arriving in Milton Keynes often had a basic understanding of Farsi and Urdu.
Bangladeshi (1.47%)	Islam	Sylheti is common in MK, also Bengali and English
Bulgarian	Christianity, mostly Orthodox	Bulgarian
Caribbean (2.57%)	Christianity	English, French, Spanish, Creole, Patois
Chinese (1.82%)	Christianity, Buddhism and traditional beliefs	Mandarin and Cantonese are most common – although there are over 40 dialects spoken.
Ghanaian	Christianity, Islam and traditional beliefs	Akan (embracing Fanti and Twi), Dagbani, Ewe, Ga, Xhosa and Nzema and English. Some Dutch, French, Norwegian, Swedish
Hong Kong	Christian, Buddhism.	Cantonese (mostly) and Mandarin. Cantonese and Mandarin are written in the same way, though Cantonese favours traditional Chinese characters rather than simplified versions in Mandarin. Mandarin has 4 tones. Cantonese has 9. Because of this difference, Mandarin and Cantonese are not mutually intelligible.
Indian (5.72%)	Hinduism is the majority faith, others include Sikhism, Islam, Christianity and Jainism	Gujarati, Hindi, Maharati, Malayalam and Urdu. Also, Punjabi in Gurmukhi script.
Italian	Christianity, mostly Roman Catholic	Italian
Lithuanian	Christianity, mostly Roman Catholic	Lithuanian
Kenya	Christianity and traditional beliefs	Kikuyu, Swahili

Community	Faith	Language
Middle Eastern	Islam, some Christian communities	Arabic
Pakistani (3.7%)	Islam. Also some minority Christian groups	A dialect of Punjabi is common in Milton Keynes. Miripuri Urdu is often understood and used.
Polish	Christianity, mostly Roman Catholic	Polish
Romanian	Christianity, mostly Orthodox	Romanian. The largest minority language is Hungarian- followed by Romani.
Somalian	Islam	Somali. May have a first language of Dutch, German or another European language. Some Somalis speak Swahili
Sri Lankan	Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam	Tamil is mostly used in Milton Keynes. Some Sinhalese is used.
Swahili speaking east-central Africa	Muslim, Christianity	Swahili (Kiswahili) is the national language of Tanzania and Kenya. It is widely spoken in Mozambique, Zambia, DRC, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda.
Ukrainian	Christian Orthodox	Ukrainian. Adults will usually speak Ukrainian and Russian.
Zimbabwean	Christianity and traditional beliefs	Shona and Ndebele are the main languages, with English remaining the language of the administration and generally in schools.

# Communities and culture

## African

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The 'Black African' group is one of the fastest growing local minority ethnic communities, including 5965 pupils in Milton Keynes schools at the time of the 2023 school census. A further 1870 pupils were reported in the 'Other Black African' category, reflecting the diversity of background. The 2021 Census identified Ghanaians as the largest group by nationality (2017) followed by Nigerians (1150), South Africans (638) and Zimbabwean (627). It is important to understand that there are many significantly differing African communities because Africa is a huge and varied continent.

The [African Diaspora Foundation](#) (ADF) is particularly active in Milton Keynes and perhaps most visible at its annual cultural celebration in Campbell Park. [Awake to Know Africa](#) is also active in Milton Keynes providing workshops for schools. Both are organisations that work with varied communities from African backgrounds to celebrate African culture and diversity.

## The Ghanaian Community

### Background

Ghana, formerly called the Gold Coast, is in the heart of a historical mining and metalworking area. Ghana has been a leading sub-Saharan African culture since the first millennium BC. The ancient kingdom of Ghana, 500 miles to the north of present-day Accra, flourished up to the 11th Century AD. It controlled the gold trade from the south and the Saharan trade routes to the north. It was also the focus for the export of Saharan copper and salt. With the coming of Europeans, in search of gold, there was a struggle for the profitable Gold Coast trade. In due course, slaves replaced gold as units of trade and whole regions were depopulated. By 1750, the numerous small states along the Gold Coast had merged into two: the Asante Empire and the Fante. The British colony of the Gold Coast was established in 1874.

Independence from colonial rule came on 6 March 1957, with Dr Kwame Nkrumah as its first Prime Minister. It was the first black African colony to gain independence. Following periods of military rule multi-party elections were held in 1992, leading to the establishment of its current constitutional parliamentary democracy. Population as reported in 2021 census was 30.8 million.

### Current situation

Ghanaians have been living in Milton Keynes since the new town was constructed. There was an early concentration of Ghanaians in the Bletchley area. Many Ghanaians were

attracted to Milton Keynes by the availability of employment and housing. It is difficult to describe a common culture because the country is made up of six main tribes and

these are in turn divided into many clans. The tribes are different linguistically and culturally. There are some common themes, such as in art, but the local style is dependent upon environmental influences. Many of the more long-standing local inhabitants belong to the Ghanaian Association.

### **Customs, traditions and social structure**

Ghanaian families follow an extended structure, not just by blood, but also by marriage and friendship. 'Cousin' is not part of the vocabulary; a cousin being referred to as a 'sibling'. This gives an indication of the strength of the extended family. Respect for the elderly is at the very core of Ghanaian culture.

Marriages are based on personal choice. Traditionally there may be some 'introductions', but this is not formalised. Marriage is conducted by a 'civil ceremony', but the traditional wedding and celebration is practiced as an 'engagement party'. This is a large celebration for family and friends.

'Out-dooring' is a universal practice throughout Ghana. A baby stays in the home until the seventh day after birth. Just before the sun rises, the baby is taken out as a symbol of welcoming the child into the community. Prayers and incantations are made. There are distinct words and ceremonies in the different tribes and clans.

Although death rites vary among the tribes, Ghanaians consider mourning their dead very important. Funerals tend to be elaborate and expensive, and apart from practising Muslims, it has not been unknown for funerals to take place five to six weeks after death. This delay allows family and friends from afar to arrange to attend the funeral. Arrangements for the funeral are the responsibility of the family elders and not the next of kin. The elders arrange family meetings to plan, organise and set the date for the burial. Where a death occurs in Milton Keynes, family elders in Ghana are consulted as part of this process, to decide whether the body should be returned to Ghana for burial. Elaborate receptions are held after the burial to celebrate the life of the deceased. At these receptions, donations are taken from the extended family, friends of the deceased and sympathisers to help defray funeral costs.

### **Festivals**

Ghanaian festivals include the traditional Christian and Muslim celebrations, but also an extensive range of local festivals reflecting the rich cultural heritage and diversity of the country. Christmas and Easter are national holidays in Ghana. Ghanaians celebrate an annual harvest festival called 'Homowo' during August or September. Many Ghanaians from Milton Keynes travel to London for this celebration.

### **Food**

In the southern part of Ghana, popular foods include cassava and plantain. In the northern part, foods including millet and sorghum are more common. Yam, maize and beans are used across Ghana as staple foods. Sweet potatoes and cocoyam are

traditional elements of Ghanaian cuisine, with cereals such as rice and wheat more recent mainstays of Ghanaian cooking. Banku is a traditional and popular Ghanaian dish created from a base of fermented corn and cassava dough.

### **Languages and script**

There are 56 Ghanaian dialects, of which there are six main language groups linked to the corresponding tribes. These are Akan (embracing Fanti and Twi), Dagbani, Ewe, Ga, Hausa and Nzema. The official language is English, which is used as a way of communication between the linguistic and cultural groups. All languages are written using Roman characters. Today, most Ghanaian children speak English as their first language at home. Many people in Britain speak a mixture of Ghanaian languages and English, readily transferring between them, even within a sentence.

### **Naming systems**

Naming systems vary between tribes. A name makes it possible to determine which tribe or clan someone comes from. Day names form part of the name throughout the country. These are dependent upon the day of birth. They are spelled and pronounced slightly differently for each tribe, but they are recognisably similar.

	Male	Female
Monday	Kojo	Ajua
Tuesday	Kobla	Abla
Wednesday	Kwekwu	Akua
Thursday	Yaw	Yaa
Friday	Kofi	Afua
Saturday	Kwami	Ama
Sunday	Kwesi	Esi/Akosua

Names are often given which show family genealogy. They are best described as ancestral names, rather than family names. The ancestral name is unique to the child and is not the same as the fathers. It will be chosen for several reasons and acts as a reminder of a close relative or to follow a tribal naming pattern. Among the Ga tribe, there may be a clan name which changes with the next generation and then reverts to the original name in the subsequent generation. Thus, there is a two-generation cycle.

For example:

Generation 1:

Odartey, Odartei, Odarkwei

Generation 2:

Lantey, Lantei, Lankwei

Generation 3:

Odartey, Odartei, Odarkwei

Children are also given circumstantial names. These may be created to signify something which has happened around the time of birth. An example of a created name is,

‘Nukunu’, which means ‘a miracle’. Among the Ashanti tribe there could be variations in the name order. Two examples are given below:

Personal name	Day name
Barima (one with courage)	Yaw (Thursday)

Day name	Personal name
Kwami (Saturday)	Bonsu (whale)

As a result of Western European influence on Ghanaian culture, most naming patterns now follow the European format. Thus, a first, second or third name is followed by the surname or family name which is handed down the generations. In some families, a Christian name is chosen as the first name followed by an indigenous Ghanaian name or names, then the family name. Hence:

George Kofi Sarpong  
Elizabeth Yaa Asantewa Sarpong

### **Religion**

Of the Ghanaian population 71% is Christian, 20% Muslim and 3% follow traditional beliefs<sup>2</sup>. The largest Ghanaian Christian group (24%) attends Pentecostal, evangelical or charismatic churches. All faiths refer to God as the base of creation. The majority of Ghanaians in Milton Keynes are Christian. There are five Ghanaian-led churches in the city. There are few Ghanaian Muslims. They usually follow the Muslim way of life, but do not always attend a mosque.

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<sup>2</sup> Census, Ghana 2021

## **The Nigerian Community**

### **Background**

Nigeria, officially the Federation of Nigeria, is made up of 36 states, and one Federal State, where Abuja is the capital. The country is located on the west coast of Africa at the inner corner of the Gulf of Guinea (part of the Atlantic Ocean). Its land area is comparable to twice the size of California. The name Nigeria is taken from the Niger River, which plays an important part in Nigerian lives. Nigeria achieved its independence in 1960. At this time, the need for more skills and higher levels of education was great. From the late 1960s, a mix of civil and political unrest in the country led to refugees arriving in the UK as well as skilled migrants. The population of Nigeria is 120 million people.

### **Current situation**

There are over 250 ethnic groups and four major tribes in Nigeria, of which the largest are Hausa and Fulani in the north, the Yoruba in the southwest and the Igbo in the southeast. The north of the country has a recent and on-going history of experiencing terrorist activity and armed disputes over land rights.

Nigerians in the UK primarily come from the Igbo or Yoruba community with each having its respective languages. There are many cultural groups and professional networks, which allow Nigerians to maintain their cultural heritage within a busy, modern society. The younger generation of British born Nigerians face the problem of living with 'one foot' in the UK and the other in Nigeria.

### **Customs, traditions and social structure**

The highest and smallest tier of Nigerian society is made up of politicians, business people, and the educated elite. A caste system known as "*Osu*" exists in some areas. Members of the community will often discourage personal, romantic, and business contact with any member of the *Osu* group, regardless of an individual's personal merits or characteristics. *Osu*s often lack political representation, access to basic educational or business opportunities, and general social interaction. This kind of caste system is also found among the Yoruba and the *Ibibios*.

Birth rites and death rites are dependent upon the religious affiliations of Nigerians and reflect Christian or Islamic beliefs and customs; however, traditional practices are often in evidence in relation to decision making and roles at the ceremonies. For example, it is a Yoruba custom for elders to influence the choice of name given to a child.

### **Festivals**

The Nigerian community celebrates a range of traditional festivals in addition to the traditional Islamic and Christian faith events. Popular traditional celebrations include Argungu "fishing" festival, Calabar carnival, the "Yam" festival and the Eyo, Osun and Ogun celebrations.



## **Food**

Nigeria has such a variety of people and cultures that it is difficult to pick one national dish. Each area has its own regional favourite that depends on customs, tradition and religion. The different foods available also depend on the season and the 'hungry season' is before the rains arrive in March. The 'season of surplus' follows the harvest in October and November. Fruits, however, are enjoyed year-round. A large part of Nigeria lies in the tropics, where many fruits are available. Some of the popular fruits are oranges, melons, grapefruits, limes, mangoes, bananas and pineapples.

People of the northern region (mostly Muslim, whose beliefs prohibit eating pork) have diets based on beans, sorghum (a type of grain), and brown rice. The Hausa people of this region also like to eat meat in the form of tsere or suya (kebabs, which are chunks of roasted, skewered meat). Muslims love to drink tea, making tea and coffee houses popular places to socialise.

The people from the eastern part of Nigeria, mostly Igbo/Ibo, eat gari (cassava powder) dumplings, pumpkins, and yams. Yams are usually eaten in place of potatoes and are an important part of the Nigerian diet; however, African yams are different from Western yams. They are pale and barely sweet. In general, Nigerian cooking uses a range of herbs and spices as well as palm oil or groundnut oil to develop rich flavours when making soups. These are mixed with chilli peppers to create varying levels of hotness.

## **Languages**

In Nigeria today about 520 languages are spoken. Some Nigerian languages are taught in primary and secondary schools, universities and even abroad, but most are not documented. The most common languages are Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Fulfulde or Kanuri, which are spoken by millions of first and second language speakers, but most Nigerian languages are minority languages with only a small number of speakers. Some Nigerian languages have developed orthographies and written traditions, but most have been pre-literate until now. The official language of Nigeria, English, was chosen to unite the people, both culturally and linguistically. French speaking countries close to the borders of Nigeria have had a direct influence and Nigerians may learn to speak French in some areas.

## **Religion**

There are roughly the same number of Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. Although most Nigeria's northern states are Muslim, there are many Christians living there as well. There are at least five churches in Milton Keynes that have a significant Nigerian community.

## **The Somali Community**

### **Background**

Somalis form one of the most homogeneous national populations in Africa and over 80% of people living in Somalia identify themselves as ethnic Somalis. However, in other ways they are divided. Despite their strong sense of linguistic and cultural unity, clan affiliation has proved to be a divisive factor, leading to continuing unrest. There are four major clan families, plus minority clans: the Dir, the Daarood, the Issaq and the Hawiye.

The Somalis migrated from the west into the Horn of Africa between 500BC and 1000AD and by the 10th century, Somali nomads had spread throughout the Horn of Africa. Between the 11th and 13th centuries, the entire Somali nation converted to Islam. During these centuries, the Somalis expanded into what is now eastern and central Ethiopia and northern Kenya, trading routes were set up that would last for centuries. Somali had a series of colonisers, including Italian, French and British. A newly named Somali Democratic Republic was established in 1969. Territorial and ethnic divisions led to the formation of the separate Republic of Somaliland in 1991 (previously British Somaliland) followed by the Puntland State of Somaliland in 1998, with devastating consequences for the economy. In 2012, a new government took over the running of the country, but it remains unsettled with counter-insurgency operations and terrorist activity on-going.

### **Somalis in the UK**

Somali refugees have been arriving in the UK since the mid-1980s; however, there have been Somali communities in the UK since the 19th century when Somali seamen began to settle in British ports such as Liverpool, East London and Cardiff.

There are families from different clans and regions within Milton Keynes. Due to political divisions in Somalia, it should not be assumed that they would find it easy to become friends and be supportive of each other; however, much work has been done to draw the community together, including a Somali community association, school initiatives and a supplementary school.

Milton Keynes' Somalis continue to celebrate their religious and cultural heritage. Due to Islamic prohibitions against interactions between adult men and women, Somali women have a strong preference to work with female interpreters and health care providers.

### **Customs, traditions and social structure**

Many social norms are derived from Islamic tradition and may be like those of other Islamic countries. The common way to greet is to say, 'Asalam Aleykum' and then 'Maxaa Shegte' (What's the news?). Men shake hands with other men and women tend to embrace and kiss each other on both cheeks. Due to Islamic traditions, men and women do not touch each other when greeting. The common phrase for goodbye is

Nabaad Gelyo (go in peace). The right hand is considered the clean and polite hand to use for daily tasks such as eating, greeting people and writing. If a child begins to show left-handed preference, the parents may actively train him or her to use the right hand.

Somali elders are respected in the community and the clan elders always solve conflicts. There are several main clans in Somalia and numerous sub-clans. In certain regions of the country a single sub-clan will predominate, but as the Somalis are largely nomadic, it is more common for several sub-clans to live intermixed in a given area. Membership of a clan is determined by parental lineage. When a woman marries a man of another clan, she retains connection with her family and its clan.

Traditionally, Somali families have a distinct division of labour between men and women. Today, women are primarily responsible for the care of children and household and make important decisions with their husbands. In Somali society women have the right to work, but it is not obligatory for women to work because traditionally men have been given the duty of providing for the family.

The usual Islamic marriage rites are followed in Somali society. The groom-to-be is expected to provide all the finances for the wedding and must agree on a 'Dowry' called 'Meheer'. This could be money or gold jewelry. The bride-to-be decides what her Meheer would be. The pride and honour of Somali families is considered to rest mainly on women. If a girl is well brought up and maintains her dignity, she reflects well on her family. Therefore, it is an honour for the family when daughters get married. Somali women never change their surnames after marriage because of their culture. Instead, they carry their father's name.

As prescribed by Islamic tradition, married women are expected to cover their bodies, including their hair. Traditionally, women wear long loose dresses called 'Dircaa' and a wrap scarf called 'Gaarbasar'. Men wear westernised clothes when they are out, but they are likely to wear the traditional 'Macaawiis,' a sarong, at home. Their head covering includes a turban or the *koofiyad*, an embroidered 'taqiyah', a skull cap worn mostly during the five times of daily prayers. Muslim men cover their heads because they believe that the prophet Muhammad kept his head covered. The taqiyah is known as 'kufis' in the UK and in the United States. Men will also wear '*khamis*', a long white garment known as 'Thawb' among Muslims.

The usual Islamic birth rites are followed in the Somali community. Expectant and new mothers' benefit from a strong network of women within the Somali culture.

Newborn care includes warm water baths, sesame oil massages and passive stretching of the baby's limbs. A herb called 'malmal' is applied to the umbilicus for the first 7 days of life. When a child is born, the new mother and baby stay indoors at home for 40 days, a time period known as 'afaar taan bah'. Female relatives and friends visit the family and help take care of them. This includes preparing special foods such as soup, porridge and

special teas. During afaar taan bah incense (myrrh) is burned twice a day in order to protect the baby from the ordinary smells of the world, which are felt to have the potential to make him or her sick. At the end of the 40 days, there are celebrations at the home of a friend or relative. These mark the first time the mother or baby has left the home since delivery. Naming ceremonies have great significance and can be big family gatherings with lots of food, traditionally accompanied by the ritual killing of a goat and prayer.

Members of the Somali Community observe the Islamic practices associated with death.

### **Festivals**

Somalis observe several secular holidays. These include Memorial Day, Labour Day, Mothers' Day and Independence Day (commemorating the 1960 Independence). Since 1992, the self-declared Somaliland celebrates its own Independence Day on the 26 June.

### **Foods**

Somali people in Milton Keynes cook both traditional food and a wide variety of western dishes. Cuisine from around the world that has influenced traditional dishes include East African, Italian, Indian, Turkish and Arab. Meat is an important part of the diet, but it must be 'Halal' meat to comply with Islamic practice. Milk and millet are widely used, as are adaptations of Arabic and Mediterranean dishes. Well-known and popular dishes eaten in the UK include Sabayad or Kimis which is a type of flatbread eaten for breakfast or as part of dinner and is like paratha, an Indian bread. Other dishes include sambusa which is similar to samosas and xahwoa a dense sweet eaten in the Middle East.

### **Languages**

The universal language in Somalia is Somali, an Afro-Asiatic language that is closely related to Oromiffa and more distantly related to Swahili and the Semitic languages of Arabic, Hebrew and Amharic. As the majority of the population is Muslim Arabic is a common second language. A very small minority in southern Somalia speaks Swahili. Until the 1970s, education was delivered in the language of the colonial rule, thus older Somalis from northern Somalia are conversant in English and those from southern Somalia are conversant in Italian. Swahili is spoken with a distinct dialect (Bajun or Bravanese), different from the Swahili spoken in Tanzania and Kenya.

### **Naming systems**

Somalis choose Muslim names for their children but will also give them traditional Somali names such as Hibo and Decca. In Islam, Allah has 99 names that praise him and one of these will be chosen for a baby boy. There are many boys' names with the prefix 'Abdi', for example, Abdi Malik (Abdi literally means 'servant of'). Similarly, many boys' names have the prefix Mohammed before their personal name. It is incorrect to use the prefix only, but some boys are addressed as Abdi or Mohammed when they start school in the UK, and this becomes their chosen name. The family name is passed on to children from the father:

Father: Omar Elmi Dihoud

Son: Ali Omar Elmi

By the age of five, most children can recite the names of male family members in their father's line for up to 17 generations.

**Religion**

Virtually all Somalis are Sunni Muslims and attitudes, social customs and gender roles are primarily based on the Islamic tradition. Somali children living in Milton Keynes share the same religion and many attend Qur'an classes at various centres in Milton Keynes.

# The Caribbean

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The Caribbean Islands are located in the Caribbean Sea and include 26 independent countries and other territories.

## The Caribbean Community

### Background

The original inhabitants of the Caribbean were Caribs and the Arawaks. Today a small community of Caribs survives on the island of Dominica. The majority of the population of the Caribbean islands is African-Caribbean, descending from people brought to the region as slaves from West Africa. After the abolition of slavery in 1833, people from China and the Indian sub-continent went to the Caribbean as indentured labour. Businesspeople, including Syrians and Jews, came later. As a result, the population is multi-racial and multicultural. The Jamaican motto is 'Out of many, one people.'

During the Second World War, many people came to Britain from the Caribbean to help with the war effort. There were over 8,000 servicemen and women and many skilled technicians in the munitions factories. After the war many remained, although they were not always welcomed. In the late 1940s and 1950s the British Government encouraged more immigrants from the colonies in the Caribbean, Africa and elsewhere, to fill the shortage of workers. London Transport recruited workers from Barbados, Trinidad and Jamaica, and the National Health Service recruited nurses. Since the early 1970s, there has been very little immigration to Britain from the Caribbean, although recruitment of teachers has taken place recently.

### Current situation

Approximately 60 per cent of African Caribbean people who migrated to Britain came from Jamaica. Smaller numbers also came from Dominica, Barbados, Trinidad, St Lucia and St Vincent. The education system in the Caribbean is based on the British system; however, the Caribbean has had its own examinations for over 20 years, which replaced British based examinations. People of Caribbean origin sometimes refer to themselves as Caribbean or West Indian, but rarely African Caribbean. Children may refer to themselves as Black, British or Black British. It is best to find out from an individual or family how they identify themselves.

In Milton Keynes, a large proportion of the community is made up of second and third generation migrants who have moved to the area from London and other major cities. Most children and young people of Caribbean heritage are born in the UK and may not have visited their grandparents' or parents' homeland. They may not have experience of Caribbean cooking or other traditions. Do not assume, therefore, that these children will all have knowledge of their Caribbean culture. Regardless of when they arrive in the UK, Caribbean families tend to have high expectations for their children. Parents who have

migrated here particularly appreciate the education system and see the move as an opportunity for their children to better themselves. 1240 pupils of Caribbean heritage were identified in the 2020 census (404 'Black Caribbean' and 836 'White and Black Caribbean' pupils).

### **Customs, traditions and social structure**

There are cultural factors, which affect behaviour and perception of behaviour of African Caribbean people. Avoidance of eye-contact, emotionally and physically expressive behaviour in stressful situations and ways of dressing hair are identified as potential sources of misunderstanding and conflict in schools. They have been linked to high levels of exclusion. In many African Caribbean households, children are expected to unquestioningly obey parental directives and may find the contrast with school behaviour and discipline codes confusing. Parents do not like their children to address adults by their first name as they consider this practice disrespectful. Parents will expect their children to use a title, with close friends and relations 'aunty' or 'uncle' whether or not they are related.

Most people in the Caribbean community are Christians and follow traditional Christian birth practices.

When there is a death, families typically follow a traditional approach to hold a wake, known as nine-nights. It is customary for people within the Caribbean community to visit the bereaved family throughout the nine-nights and beyond. During this time, there is an abundant supply of food and drinks. Customarily, family members, friends and visitors within the community make voluntary contributions, either monetary or they will provide food and drinks. In many instances, it is likely that the family, if affiliated to a local church, will ask for a prayer meeting within the nine-nights. A church service provides an opportunity for friends and family members to pay their tributes. The internment is a time when all mourners say their goodbyes with the singing of Christian songs in rapid succession around the grave. Normally, friends and family members take on the responsibility of filling in the grave with the earth.

Marriage is traditionally held in high regard in African- Caribbean communities. From the Caribbean perspective, it should only be considered when both personal commitment and economic basis are secure. In Britain there have tended to be a higher number of formal marriages, possibly due to greater economic security.

### **Foods**

The food of the Caribbean reflects the many cultures that have settled there. All the islands have similarities in terms of diet, as well as differences. Most children of Caribbean descent would be familiar with ordinary British food as well as the traditional dishes of the West Indies. Immigrants from the Caribbean took their knowledge of herbs and spices, and their cooking/recipes with them. Rice-and-peas is a traditional dish similar to the bean meals eaten in parts of Africa. Meat and fish are traditionally

seasoned and spiced, then cooked over an open grill, much like a barbecue. Jerk pork is a spicy Jamaican dish cooked in this way. Caribbean cuisine is a rich mix of culinary influences from several countries, including West African jerk pork and Indian curry mutton.

Fish is eaten everywhere in the Caribbean and varieties such as swordfish and red snapper can be bought from specialist shops locally in Milton Keynes. Yam, okra, green bananas, plantains and cassava can also be bought in some supermarkets or from local shops and specialist stalls in the local market. Plantain fried in slices like chips, is popular with children.

The amount of traditional Caribbean food eaten by families in Milton Keynes varies. Children may only be eating it when visiting the more senior members of their families or on special occasions. Rastafarianism does not allow its followers to eat pork or fish without scales (biblical reference). Many Rastafarians are vegetarians or vegans and their diet is based around natural foods.

### **Festivals**

Within the Caribbean, festivals reflect the many different religions and cultures. Christian festivals are widely celebrated. Carnival began as a Christian festival, which was introduced by the French and took place just before Lent. Now it takes place at different times of the year on different islands. In Milton Keynes, the African Caribbean community celebrates the Christian festivals and carnival (see Religions and beliefs). In London, carnival takes place during the August Bank-holiday weekend.

Black History Month is a celebration that has emerged in the UK in the last 20 years or so. It takes place in October-November. Its aim was to promote African history as a form of Black cultural empowerment and emancipation. It is a growing celebration of black culture. In Milton Keynes Black History Month is celebrated across the city in October and includes many activities in schools.

### **Languages**

Most of the families who have migrated to the UK came from British Commonwealth islands and their first language is English. However, the languages of the Caribbean islands reflect the history and diverse populations of the settlers there. Many in the Caribbean are bilingual; that is, they speak both the European language of their country (Spanish, English or French) and a local patois that contains African words and grammar. The patois or Creole languages developed during the time of slavery when the African peoples' mother tongues were suppressed, and they were only permitted to use European vocabulary. Nowadays, usually the higher up in society the individuals are, the less likely they are able or willing to speak patois.

Creoles vary according to the European sources from which they grew. Jamaican Creole is derived from English and African, and in St. Lucia, Patios (Patwa) (French Creole) is



spoken. Migrants direct from Jamaica and other islands will still speak Creole in their own communities. Some children will be using Creole at home, especially with senior members of their families. Many children can selectively use 'Black Street English'. Rastafarians regard Creole as the language of the Africans and feel a great sense of commitment to it.

### **Naming systems**

As a result of the slave system and the influence of Christianity, most people of Caribbean descent follow the British naming pattern. Whilst in most cases the family name is passed from the husband to the children, in some cases the family name is inherited from the mother. Personal names are like English names and often reflect the colonisers, like Winston, George, Shirley; or the French influence, like Andre and Pierre. Biblical names are also used such as Moses and Esther. More recently there has been a tendency towards creating original names.

### **Religion**

In the Caribbean nearly all the main world religions exist, as so do some traditional African beliefs, including voodoo. Settlers from different parts of the world brought religious traditions with them and in all of the islands people are free to follow their own beliefs; however, most people are Christians, and Jamaica, for example, has more churches per square mile than any other country in the world. The European settlers brought Christianity to the islands. Roman Catholicism predominated in those islands formerly under Spanish or French influence and Protestantism prevailed elsewhere.

A newer religion is Rastafarianism, which began in Jamaica in the 1930s. This religion took its name from Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, 'Ras Tafari'. It is derived from a very detailed reading of the Christian Bible. Rastafarians believe in a simple, back-to-nature lifestyle and call on black people to be proud of their African ancestry. Rastafarians do not comb or cut their hair (according to a biblical reference) thus forming dreadlocks. Rastafarians often keep their heads covered.

Many young Caribbean Christians belong to the Pentecostal movement. Pentecostals enjoy their religion and express their faith in a lively way. Gospel choirs and gospel music play an important part in this. In Milton Keynes, there are some predominantly 'black' led churches, but people of Caribbean origin attend different churches across the city. Pentecostal church organisations tend to have close links with other Pentecostal groups. Those who were born and grew up here are not such strict churchgoers, but the older people would encourage the younger ones to attend on special occasions.

# Asia

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## The Bangladeshi Community

### Background

Before 1947, Bangladesh was part of India. Between 1947 and 1971 it was called East Pakistan. It gained independence in 1971, changing its name to Bangladesh and adopting Bengali as its official language. The name Bangladesh means 'land of Bangla speaking people'. Two hundred years ago, the area that is now Bangladesh used to be very wealthy, but today Bangladesh is the twelfth poorest country in the world. The country shares a border with the Indian state of West Bengal, whose people are also Bengalis. Bangladesh is less than half the size of the British Isles, but its population is nearly double.

### Current situation

The majority of Bangladeshis in Britain originate from one area of the country, namely the Sylhet district in the rural North East. Most Bangladeshi pupils in Milton Keynes are concentrated in Central Bletchley and they come from one area within Sylhet. Most school aged children are second or third generation.

### Customs, traditions and social structure

The Bangladeshi community is very close knit. Marriage forms the basis of relationships and follows Muslim tradition. Families live in extended groups, although some young couples no longer live with their parents because there is a lack of space; however, they still try to live nearby. Marriages are arranged by parents, with some girls marrying in Bangladesh. There have been changes in recent years, with more mutual agreement in marriage proposals. The marriage ceremony follows Muslim practice. Traditionally, Bangladeshi women have worked in the home, but an increasing number of young women are working, and they aspire to gain good qualifications and positions. Bangladeshi family and social life revolves around the home. Children usually play inside or near to the home.

Women's dress follows Muslim traditions, covering arms, legs and head. Bangladeshi women traditionally wear 'salwar' (trousers) and a 'kameez' (long shirt) with a scarf. Some Bangladeshi women also wear saris. Young girls will usually cover their legs and arms. They may not always wear a scarf until the onset of puberty. Men wear either 'salwar kameez' or western style clothes. They may wear a 'dhoti' in the home. The dhoti is usually five or six meters of white material which they wrap around the waist and draw between the legs. Men and boys wear a flat skull cap called a 'topi' for visits to the mosque.

The Bangladeshi community follows Muslim practices. There is usually a party when the baby's hair is shaved. In Bangladesh, an animal is sacrificed for the celebration.

It is a common practice to take people back to Bangladesh to be buried.

### **Food**

Bangladeshis follow Muslim dietary practice and eat only 'halal' meat. They will not eat pork products and neither is alcohol permitted. Most meals consist of a curried meat or fish dish and rice. For special occasions, Bangladeshis often have 'pilau', which is special fried rice and 'korma', which is a creamy curry. Fish is highly valued.

### **Languages**

Most people in Bangladesh speak Bengali (Bangla), the official language. Local Bangladeshis also speak Sylheti, as well as other languages and dialects. Most British Bangladeshis in Bletchley use Sylheti as their first language. Parents may inform schools that their children speak Bengali, whereas in reality they speak Sylheti. It can be confusing for young children if translations are made in Bengali rather than Sylheti. This has the same implications for the use of dual language stories and therefore, it is suggested that schools ask for more details if they are informed that a child speaks Bengali. Children living outside Bletchley are more likely to speak Bengali. As Bengali is the official language in Bangladesh, parents are increasingly sending their children to Bengali lessons at the weekend. Many parents want their children to be able to take Bengali GCSE.

### **Naming systems**

Muslim males usually have two or three names; for example, Mohammed Abdul Rahman or Ahmed Karim. Sometimes men also use a male title; for example, Miah or Khan (either at the beginning or at the end of their name). Girls or women have two-part names; a personal name, which always comes first and a second name which is either a female title, for example, Begum, Bi, Bibi or another personal name.

Traditionally Muslims have not used a family name; however, when they move overseas, they often choose an element of the father's name as a family name. A child could have two or three names and a personal name, i.e. the name by which the child should be addressed. It is important for the school to know which name to use. The children could have a different name at home and at school. This can be a deliberate choice on the part of parents. A family name is considered neither obligatory, nor is it universal practice to have one. This means that each member of a family may have entirely different names.

It is tempting to adopt the second part of a personal name as a family name, but this practice is incorrect. A wife may or may not take her husband's name after marriage, depending on the customs in the family. In Asian communities, children and adults are expected to behave respectfully towards older relatives, including older siblings. This can be done by using family title names. Children can show respect to older brothers and sisters by using titles, for example, Baisab or Affa (a respectful name for an older

brother and sister) rather than their personal name. The use of the title indicates the maternal or paternal relationship, particularly when referring to aunts and uncles, cousins, nephews and nieces.

**Religious practices**

Most Bangladeshis are Muslim and celebrate Islamic festivals. There are two mosques in Bletchley which serve the Bangladeshi community. Many men and boys from the community attend Friday prayers at the mosques. Most Bangladeshi children attend a madrasah to learn Arabic and to study the Qur'an each evening after school and at weekends. (See section on Religious Beliefs and Places of Worship). Many children also learn Bengali there and sometimes they receive extra support with their schoolwork and examinations.

## **The Chinese Community**

### **Background**

The Chinese first came to Britain in the late 1860s as seamen employed on British merchant ships. They began to settle in ports such as London, Liverpool, Cardiff and Bristol. They came from Hong Kong, mainland China, Malaysia, Vietnam and Singapore. By 1911, there were only about 500 Chinese people in Liverpool and 700 in London. Having little knowledge in English, the first generation of Chinese in the UK could only run laundries and lodging houses to serve the needs of the Chinese crews moving between British ports.

The second phase of migration began in 1948 when the British Nationality Act gave new Commonwealth citizens the right to live and work in Britain. This coincided with a period of land reforms and the collapse of the agricultural industry in Hong Kong. The result was the emigration of between 30,000 and 50,000 Chinese people to Britain in search of a new life during the 1950s.

Most of them worked in the Chinese catering industry and as the businesses grew, they found that it was cheaper to bring their family members over to work for their businesses. By 1980, statistics showed that more than three quarters of the Chinese community living in Britain were involved in catering.

The return of Hong Kong to China on 30 June 1997 led to a further migration of Chinese people to Britain. Some 50,000 families were granted British citizenship and many of them arrived in the UK in the mid-1990s. At that time, Milton Keynes was designated a new town and was heavily marketed as a modern city with excellent shopping, cultural and educational facilities. Being used to living in a metropolitan area, many people from Hong Kong made a positive choice to re-settle in Milton Keynes.

### **Current situation**

As a growing city, not only does Milton Keynes attract people from Hong Kong who have been granted British citizenship, but its job market also presents opportunities to Chinese people from other parts of China to come and work locally. People holding work permits can bring their family members with them. As there are much better educational facilities in the UK, many Chinese families also send their children to the UK to study.

In 2020, the UK government introduced new immigration rules in response to the extension of security laws to Hong Kong by China. Now, around 350,000 UK passport holders and 2.6 million others who are eligible will be able to come to the UK to settle. British Overseas Nationals and their dependents will have the right to remain in the UK, including the right to work and study, initially for five years. They will then be eligible to apply for settled status, and after a further year, seek citizenship.

### **Customs, traditions and social structure**

Family structure is much valued in the Chinese community, with the father as the head of the family. Historic marriage practices, including during different dynasties, convey a rich history of traditional values and customs. This include following the six traditional etiquettes which include the proposal, considering the bride-rates of the potential groom and bride, the engagement and wedding gifts, the wedding ceremony and the wedding banquet. There is variation across the country based on the many different cultures and languages of different ethnic groups that make up China. In a fast-changing interdependent world, attitudes to marriage have led to the Chinese adapting Westernised type weddings. Modern practices often maintain the tradition of the bride wearing a red dress, which traditionally symbolises 'happiness', as well as numerous photographs being taken in different outfits and locations.

Changes in the law in 1949/50 and 1980 led to an increase in divorce rate but when compared to Westerners, the Chinese divorce rate is much lower, partly to prevent loss of face.

There are no strict dress codes. The older generation may put on traditional Chinese clothing such as Cheung Sam in ceremonies and Chinese New Year.

Nowadays, when a baby is born to a Chinese couple the celebrations and events are not different to those of a white British birth. There are the usual greetings from relatives and friends, but the Chinese will also hold a celebration feast when the baby is one month old with invited guests bearing gifts for the baby.

Relatives who have passed away are worshipped as ancestors. Relatives and friends will pay their respects the night before and on the day of the funeral. It is believed that a proper burial will let the soul rest in eternal peace and cremation adds more suffering to the dead. However, this thinking is gradually changing. On the seventh night after the funeral, family members will gather at a temple and have monks and nuns praying, believing that this will lead to early reincarnation of the deceased. Chinese will usually place the shrines of their deceased parents or grandparents in their homes.

### **Festivals**

The Chinese community celebrates many festivals. The most important is Chinese New Year, which is on the first day of the first Moon on the Lunar Calendar. The exact date changes every year, but usually falls between late January and early February. This is similar to lunar date changes in other cultural and religious festivals across faiths, such as the Christian Easter and Eid among Muslims. The Chinese assign a mascot to every lunar year. 2024 is the year of the Dragon. The 12 year cycle continues with Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, Pig, Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, before returning to the dragon again in 2036.

During Chinese New Year there are lion and dragon dances in the community. On New Year's Eve, the entire family get together for a feast. On New Year's Day parents and relatives give 'red envelopes' containing money to younger members of the family, signifying luck for the coming year. During the first week of the new year the Chinese will visit their relatives, bringing with them fruits and sweets. This tradition is intended to bring relatives together after a hard-working year and to look forward to another prosperous year.

The next festival is Ching Ming (in the third Moon) when people go to their ancestors' graves to pay their respects. Later on in the year, around September, there is another festival called Chung Yeung, which is very similar. On both occasions, the whole family gathers in front of their ancestors' graves, tidies the graves and leaves some fresh flowers and food as offerings to the deceased.

In the middle of the year, there is a festival known as the Dragon Boat Festival. On this day there are dragon boat races and the traditional food is dumplings, which are sticky rice wrapped in lotus leaves. Willen Lake is often the venue for such races in Milton Keynes. The Moon Festival or Mid-Autumn Festival is on the 15th day of the eighth Moon. Moon cakes, made with lotus seed paste, pastry and preserved duck egg yolk, are the principle festive dessert. Children carrying lanterns join their family gatherings outdoors at night.

### **Food preferences**

Rice and noodles are the primary foods. Some believers in Buddhism are vegetarians. Casual vegetarians will have vegetarian meals on the first and fifteenth days of each month. For others, it depends on their personal principles and preferences.

### **Languages and script**

Mandarin or Putonghua is the official spoken and written language of China. All others are spoken dialects and are not used in writing. A large proportion of the Chinese community in Milton Keynes come from Hong Kong and they speak mainly Cantonese. The Chinese script is the same for Mandarin and Cantonese. There are more Chinese arriving in Milton Keynes from other parts of the world, and their children can speak Mandarin as well as other Chinese dialects.

Although many Chinese children can read and write in Mandarin script, Cantonese speakers may not be able to speak in Mandarin and vice versa. Many Chinese students in Milton Keynes attend Chinese Sunday School to prepare themselves for the GCSE and A-Level Chinese examinations.

### **Naming systems**

Unlike Westerners, Chinese put their surnames in front of their forenames; however, the younger generation in Milton Keynes has already accepted the western naming system. So, most of them will have their English names followed by their Chinese

surnames without even mentioning their Chinese forenames; such as John Chan. Those without English names may also write their names as Chi Keung CHAN instead of the Chinese way of CHAN Chi Keung.

Unlike western names, you never address the Chinese in their first name alone; you can call them the middle name or both the first and middle names. Take the above as an example: you can address Mr Chi Keung CHAN as Keung or Chi Keung, but never Chi. The surname is inherited from the father; forenames usually carry meanings, which convey the parents' wishes. Chi Keung means 'strong mind'.

### **Religious practices**

In Milton Keynes, those of the Chinese community who are religious are mainly Buddhists or Christians. Generally, the Chinese way of life is greatly influenced by Confucianism and Taoism. These are philosophies rather religions. Confucianism promotes the reverence of ancestors and family values and sets out the moral and social codes for society. Taoism preaches harmony and that men should not work against nature but live in peace and balance the universe.

Three Chinese supplementary schools currently operate in Milton Keynes with around 600 pupils attending over a weekend.



## **The Filipino Community**

### **Background**

The Philippines is a country made up of about 7,641 islands in the Pacific Ocean. The three main islands are Luzon, Visaya and Mindanao. The largest island is Luzon. The islands have three seasons – rainy from June to October, dry but cool from November to February and hot from March to May. The country was named after King Phillip 11th of Spain. The Philippines was controlled by the USA for the first half of the 20th Century and the country became independent in 1946 after three years of Japanese occupation. The 2022 census (PSI) recorded the population as 109,033,245.

### **Current situation**

Since the early 1970s, Filipinos have been hired to work in big hotels, hospitals, nursing homes and other establishments in London and neighbouring towns in the UK. The recent increase in the number of working immigrants was due to the shortage of nurses in Britain. We still have many Filipino nurses working at Milton Keynes Hospital. Some of them came directly from the Philippines; others came through different countries, such as Singapore or Europe. The Philippines has supplied professionals around the world to places like Saudi Arabia, USA and Europe. They are well recognised for their professional skills and ability to communicate in the English language.

### **Customs, traditions and social structure**

Some people and families have arranged marriages, but most choose their lifetime partner. Divorce is not very popular, for the sake of the children and in line with predominantly Catholic beliefs; however, parents will intervene if they see that their daughter needs to separate from her husband if the relationship does not work out.

In the Philippines and other parts of the world, Filipinos wear their national costume during weddings and other special occasions. In some parts of the country in the Philippines, the elderly prefer to wear their traditional clothes every day.

Birth is celebrated by christening or baptism in the parish church. A child wears a white, pink or blue christening gown. Godparents are chosen to look after the godchild in times of need. Presents are given to the family for the child and on every occasion such as birthday and Christmas a child receives presents from his/her godparents.

In the Philippines, Filipinos would not bury their dead immediately. Mourning must be discussed between family members. Each day, prayers must take place. Donations are given to the head of the family. The 40th day after the death, prayers are also offered, and a feast is arranged.

### **Festivals**

The Filipino community in Milton Keynes celebrates most Christian festivals, such as Christmas and Easter. In May, Filipinos celebrate with a street procession called Santa Cruzan, with the young and adults dressed up in national costume carrying crucifixes and other religious artefacts to show their acceptance of Christianity.

### **Foods**

Filipino cuisine covers a blend of culinary tastes from a range of countries, including Spain, Asia, America and China. Over time, Filipinos have used ingredients from these countries with their own food, spices and herbs to create their own distinctive dishes. Well known national dishes include paella (Spanish influence) and lumpia (spring roll with its origin in China). People from different towns cook and eat differently. There may be one town where people cook their food with coconut and chilli, whereas in others people eat Spanish cuisine. The main meal served in every household usually includes soup, salad, vegetables, seafood, various meats and rice. Pudding is usually served with fruit in season. Filipinos love to entertain people and they are hospitable. At every opportunity, they cook for the family and guests. A fiesta is a town celebration of their town's patron saint. People are welcome to go from one house to another to enjoy their special cuisine.

### **Languages**

Tagalog (formerly called Filipino) is the main language of communication among Filipinos in Milton Keynes. One can tell the region or town or even the 'class' of people by the way they speak; however, a family can usually speak and understand more than one Filipino language as they are closely related. English is widely spoken in the Philippines.

### **Naming system**

The family name is taken from the father. The Christian name of some children is taken from the Catholic calendar after the saints. Nowadays some parents will name their children using some native Pilipino words – for example, 'Mutya', lovely maiden. A married woman and man still keep their mother's maiden name as their middle name.

### **Religion**

The majority faith is Christianity, with over 80 million recorded Roman Catholics – by far the largest group. Pope John Paul II visited the Philippines more than once. There is also a significant wider Christian community. The second largest faith group is Islam with over 6 million recorded. Most Muslims are concentrated in Mindanao. Some of the Muslim- Filipino people are believed to have Arab lineage. Other groups that have stayed in the Philippines and maintained their religions include Hindus, Jews, Buddhists and Bahai's among many other groups.\*

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\* Philippine Statistical Yearbook 2022

## **The Indian Community**

India is the largest country in South Asia and has a complex history and a rich diverse culture that includes many contrasts in the way people live. There are many differences in the appearance, language, food, customs and faith traditions of the Indian people.

### **Background**

India's past is deeply linked to the Indus River, being the origin of the country's name and the route by which people have moved within the country. These people include the:

- Dravidians, believed to be the indigenous Indian race
- Aryans, who brought in the Vedic period.

India gained its independence from the British in 1947.

### **Current situation**

Since independence, India has become a modern democracy with a full parliamentary system of government. India has nearly 17% of the world's population and is now the largest democracy in the world. The economy is rapidly developing, with modern electronic and ICT industries being expanded. The influx of international companies is growing significantly. The following are some recent facts that give a flavour of modern India:

- 325 languages spoken – 1,652 dialects
- 22 official languages recognized by the Indian Constitution
- 28 states, 7 union territories
- 1.3 billion population

The Indian community in Milton Keynes has also grown. Just over two decades ago, the community was very small, with less than a few households coming from different areas of the UK and other countries. There are currently more than a thousand Hindu households in Milton Keynes. The Sikh, Jain and Buddhist communities also share much with the Indian community in terms of their culture and traditions. The Indian community continues to be disparate; for example, with origins in Gujarat, the Punjab and East Africa. An increasing number of families have transferred to Milton Keynes as temporary employees of international companies, particularly in the ICT sector.

The Sikh and Hindu Community Associations are active in the life and work of Milton Keynes. They organise a wide variety of religious, social and cultural events. Although there are some small concentrations of Indian pupils in Springfield, Willen and Willen Park, most attend schools throughout Milton Keynes. The achievement of Indian pupils is relatively very high and the proportion going on to higher education is also markedly

higher than average. 2936 pupils were attending Milton Keynes' schools at the time of the 2023 school census.

### **Customs, traditions and social structure**

Parents and the elders in the family traditionally arrange Indian marriages; however, over the recent past there have been many changes to this process and today young people are almost always included in making the choice of their partner. Most Indian families are based on a patriarchal structure, but this does not automatically mean inequality for women. Women can marry much later and the historical tradition of dowry in marriage is now ceasing.

The moment of birth is marked with an astrological calendar and the child's horoscope is charted. After birth, the child is blessed with a name. The family gathers around and gives sweets to wish the child a sweet life. Every milestone is an occasion to celebrate. In orthodox Hindu groups, a boy may go through the Thread Ceremony, 'Upanayanam'. It symbolises a spiritual re-birth. Traditionally, Sikhs celebrate the birth of boys more than they do for girls. (See section on Religion and belief)

Hindus believe in re-incarnation, death being a stage in the cycle of re-birth. Surviving relatives perform last rites for their well-being to the next life. Hindus are always cremated, whereas Muslims and Christians are usually buried. For Hindu families it is common for mourning rituals to last over eleven days and may require sympathy and consideration for taking time away to participate.

### **Festivals**

The Indian community celebrates festivals according to relevant religious backgrounds. For example, the Hindu community celebrates Diwali each year, holding a large festival with music, dance, drama and prashadam (food offerings). Members of the wider Milton Keynes community are also invited to join in.

### **Foods**

As an expression of their respect for life in general and of 'Ahimsa' (non-violence), many Hindus prefer to be vegetarians. Hindus believe that vegetarianism is a way of life that causes the least hurt to other creatures. It is estimated that about 75% of the Indian population are strict vegetarians. Hindus do not eat beef, since the cow is considered to be sacred to their religion. Sikhs do not eat beef, but other meat products are not forbidden. However, those who have undertaken 'Amrit', a form of baptism, are strict vegetarians. Muslims only eat Halal meat and do not eat pork.

### **Languages**

Hindi is the national language of India and is most commonly used. English is the language of commerce and frequently of higher education. Many people speak or understand at least two languages. There are 28 states and seven union territories with 22 officially recognised languages, and hundreds of different dialects. Gujarati is the

main language within the Hindu community in Milton Keynes, whereas Sikhs mainly speak Punjabi. (See section on Languages and scripts)

### **Names and naming systems**

Understanding Asian names can be somewhat complicated. Family names may not be used, although it has become more common to use a family name in Britain. All names usually have a meaning; for example, Jeeven means 'life', Simran means 'meditation', Jamila means 'beautiful' and Saied means 'happy'. A name can give an indication of a person's religious and cultural background, and his/her gender; however, staff should be aware that some names can be common to Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus and some names are unisex.

The Hindu naming system has a basic pattern. There is a personal name (Krishan), a complimentary name (Kumar) and a family name (Shah). Sometimes titles are used, being Shri for a man and Shrimati for a woman. They are broadly equivalent to Mr and Mrs respectively. Sometimes other titles like Pandit or Ji may be used, before and after the name respectively. The priest or an elder chooses the first letter of a personal name, which is linked to the time and date of birth. Some common Hindu names include the following:

#### **Male Personal Names**

Vijay, Ramesh,  
Sanjeet

#### **Complimentary Names**

Chand, Kant,  
Kumar

#### **Family names:**

Mehta, Patel, Gandhi, Gupta

#### **Female Personal Names:**

Sita, Anita,  
Sarla

#### **Complimentary Names:**

Devi, Rani,  
Laxmi

Sikh names also have three elements: a personal name, a middle name and a family name. Male Sikhs all have the middle name of Singh (Lion) and female Sikhs are referred to as Kaur (Princess). When the Sikh religion was founded the use of family names was discontinued to avoid any associations with previous religions or castes to symbolise greater equality; however, over time and with migration, the use of family names has resumed.

Sikh names are unisex, but it is possible to identify whether the individual is male or female from the middle name. For example, Balbir Singh Atwal will be male; however, Balbir Kaur Atwal will be female. In some cases, Sikh families have adopted the family name of Singh and, therefore, it can be difficult to follow this rule. Some examples are given below:

<b>Personal Names</b>	<b>Family Names</b>
Amardeep	Dhillon
Harpreet	Mann
Sukhbir	Atwal
Gurmeet	Dhariwal
Rajinder	Grewal

Muslim names – see section on Islam.

### **Religion**

Religion plays an important part in most people's lives in India, with 83% percent belonging to the Hindu faith. Other important religions in India are Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism and Christianity.

It is important not to confuse culture and language with religion. Culture and language depend on the region of origin in India, such as Punjabi Sikhs and Punjabi Hindus who may share the same language and some aspects of cultural heritage, but not the same religion.

## **The Japanese Community**

### **Background**

A mountainous, island nation, Japan seems defined by nature. It sits on the Pacific “ring of fire”, so earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic activity, are common. The northern islands experience extremes of cold, whereas the southern islands are semi-tropical. The islands experience a typhoon season between May and November. The mountainous terrain has focused population into large metropolitan areas. The capital, Tokyo, is easily the biggest with over 14 million people living in the city. The country developed distinctive cultural practices defined by formal and stylised rituals.

### **Current situation**

Despite its size (similar to Norway), Japan is the eleventh most populous country, with the capital as the largest metropolitan area in the world. Japan is the third largest economy (gross domestic product - GDP) in the world. The system of government is similar to that in the UK; a democratic constitutional monarchy in which the Emperor is the Head of State and the Prime Minister is the Head of Government.

### **Milton Keynes context**

The Japanese community grew steadily until the turn of the century. Most Japanese families move to Milton Keynes to work in the many Japanese businesses in the city. At the peak, there were 50 such companies, but this has recently been reducing, due to the economic situation in Japan. When Japanese companies started coming to Milton Keynes, about 50% of the workforce was Japanese, but this has been reduced to a small number of senior managers. Most families stayed in Milton Keynes for periods of three to five years before returning to Japan.

For many years, there was a Japanese boarding school in Milton Keynes and Japanese children from all over Europe were enrolled there. This was demolished and the Willen Retirement complex built on its site.

### **Customs, traditions and social structure**

Japan has a family-orientated society. Traditionally the man is responsible for financial security, being the main provider and working long hours. The wife takes care of the household and the children. The wife’s main responsibility is the education of the children. She is the person who is in direct contact with the school, attending parents’ meetings and helping children with their homework. Many children go to evening classes as well as having a full school day.

Mothers set up the programme of study and take the children to classes. Children have very limited free time. Many fathers only see their children at weekends and they often

have to work for part of this time; for example, at team-building exercises or visiting a shrine to pray for the company. This culture is beginning to change.

Currently, very few women are professionals and managers. Marriage is very important in Japanese society. Traditionally marriages were through arrangement, but most people now choose their own partners. Arranged marriages today are usually in the upper classes. Most Japanese women used to be married by their mid-twenties, but for women that are more educated, marriage is now common between the age of 30 and 35 years. Men usually marry later, so that they can progress in their career. If women are not married, it is a taboo. Divorce used to be very rare, but with the growing economic independence of women the divorce rate among Japanese couples is gradually increasing.

Most people wear European clothing. Traditional kimonos are only worn on public holidays, such as New Year and Boys' and Girls' Days, and for weddings and birth ceremonies. Both men and women wear kimonos. Fashions are designed according to the seasons, for example, a winter kimono might be blue and white to represent snow and ice. Hair is traditionally styled on special occasions. Elderly people may wear kimonos all the time.

About thirty days after a baby is born, he/she is taken to a Shinto Shrine for the first visit. This occasion is called miyamairi. Miyamairi used to be an important event by which the child became a parishioner of a Shinto shrine. This is the first step towards becoming a member of society. Currently, it tends to be practised only formally. Japanese culture is male-orientated, although there have been some changes with westernisation of society. When a baby was born it was previously the role of the eldest member of the family to choose the name, but now the parents choose the name.

A typical funeral today is to have a priest to chant Buddhist sutras for the deceased. They hold a wake on the following day, bid farewell to the deceased in a farewell service, and after cremation, bury the remains in a cemetery.

### **Festivals**

There are countless local festivals or "Matsuri" in Japan as most shrines have their own celebration. Most festivals are held annually and celebrate the shrine's deity or a seasonal or historical event. Some festivals are held over several days.

The main celebration of the year is New Year's Day on 1 January. The Japanese people celebrate it for the first three days or the first week. Schools and businesses close for one to two weeks from the end of December, and many people return home to spend this time with their families.

Dolls' Festival/Girls' Day is on 3 March. It is an occasion to pray for young girls' growth and happiness. Most homes with girls display special dolls for the dolls' festival and



dedicate to them peach blossoms, white sake and special foods. Children's Day/Boys' Day occurs on 5 May. Originally, it was called Boys' Day and was for celebrating boys growing up, but it became a day to celebrate children in general. Families with boys set out dolls, which are patterned after warriors and heroes, and fly koi-fish (carps) streamers.

Bon festival is a Buddhist event occurring from the 13 -16 July or an ancestors' week commences on 9 August to hold a memorial service to the spirits of ancestors.

7-5-3 (shichi-go-san) is a gala day for children of three, five and seven years of age. This occurs on 15 November, when prayers are offered for children's growth. Odd numbers are auspicious in Japan, so odd numbered years are celebrated (the ages of three and five for boys, three and seven for girls). On this day, children dress up in kimono and go with their parents to a Shinto shrine to pay a visit to the tutelary deity. Most people in Japan, not only Christians, enjoy Christmas Eve by exchanging presents with family and loved ones and by eating together.

New Year's Eve on 31 December is called *ŷmisoka*. To welcome the new year with good feelings, a general house cleaning is completed; the flooring rush mats (*tatami*) are replaced and the sliding paper screens (*shoji*) are repapered by this date. Family reunions are held and the whole family brings in New Year with a sense of togetherness.

### **Food**

Traditional foods are white rice, both raw and cooked fish, vegetables and pickles, red beans, seaweed, raw egg, miso soup, udon and soba noodles, and sushi. Drinks may include green tea and rice wine (*saké*). For celebrations, rice cakes (*mochi*) are made. Rice is eaten at breakfast, lunch and dinner; however, western food is becoming more popular. The Japanese diet has changed significantly over recent decades. There are no specific food taboos. Some Buddhists may be vegetarian.

### **Language and script**

Japanese grammar is very simple, but different from English. The outstanding point is the word order in sentences; for example, "(I) Sunday on school to go don't" in Japanese is "I don't go to school on Sundays." in English. Verbs always come at the end of sentences in Japanese; therefore, the word order is completely the opposite way around from English. There are no articles like 'a', 'the', 'some' or 'any' in sentences. "There are three apples on the table" is expressed "table on apple three there is" in Japanese. It also indicates that the Japanese language does not have singular and plural forms.

Since there is no future tense in Japanese, the present tense is used with future words like tomorrow and next week to express futures. Modern Japanese consists of three kinds of scripts; the ideographic Chinese characters know as *kanji*, and the phonetic

characters known as hiragana and katakana. All three characters can be seen in a single sentence.

### **Naming system**

It is a common tradition in Japan to have the family name first, followed by a personal name. There are no middle names in Japan; however, most overseas Japanese adapt to the western practice of personal name followed by family name.

The Japanese use the male line to pass on the family name. Women change their family names on marriage. Japanese society is extremely polite. When you address someone, 'San' - an honorific word – is added behind the name as a sign of respect. For example, 'Michiko San' for Michiko, 'Yamamoto San' for Mr/Ms Yamamoto'. If a professional person such as a doctor, lawyer or teacher is addressed, 'Sensei' is added instead of 'San'. For example, 'Iwata Sensei' for Dr. Iwata.

	<b>Family Name</b>	<b>Personal Name</b>
Father	Yamamoto	Hitoshi
Mother	Yamamoto	Ryoko
Son	Yamamoto	Noboro
Daughter	Yamamoto	Haruka

### **Religious practices**

Religion in Japan is broadly divided into Shinto and Buddhism. Long ago in Japan Buddhism, which came from abroad, and Shinto, which is a folk religion, sometimes came together in a synthesis. Buddhism is not a theistic doctrine and Shinto principally worships nature, therefore there were no contradictions in synthesising them. In contemporary Japan both Shinto and Buddhism are becoming more like a deeply rooted 'custom' practised in daily life rather than objects of faith; as observed in the general practice of 'a wedding with Shinto rites and a funeral with Buddhist rites.' Japan has been receptive to western culture, so that young people now have weddings with Christian rites.

Shinto, literally meaning the way of the gods, is the Japanese religion from the ancient times, centring on the ideas of Japanese intimacy with nature and ancestor worship. Shintoism proclaims that the gods brought all things on earth to life and they rule over and exist throughout all nature. Mountains and trees often become objects of worship. Often, shrines are built as objects of worship in which a god or gods are believed to reside. Shinto constitutes the foundation of the sensibility of the Japanese people, but most present-day Japanese, rather than placing faith in Shinto, feel their cultural identity through it.

## **The Pakistani Community**

### **Background**

The partitioning of India in 1947 resulted in the creation of East and West Pakistan. In 1971, East Pakistan gained independence and the country of Bangladesh was born. West Pakistan then became what we know today as Pakistan. Pakistan means 'Land of the Pure'.

### **Current situation**

Pakistan is divided into four provinces: Baluchistan, Punjab, Sindh and the North Western Frontier Province. The capital city is Islamabad. Pakistan has a population of approximately 241 million people. Most Pakistanis living in Milton Keynes originate from the Azad Kashmir area and speak Punjabi, Mirpuri and Urdu. The Pakistani community in Milton Keynes is well dispersed, but there is a significant concentration in Wolverton, as it has large Victorian houses suitable for extended family life.

### **Customs, traditions and social structure**

Muslim family life is based upon marriage, with high status being given to marriage. Traditionally, Muslim marriages are arranged. The final decision rests with the girl. Sometime before the wedding, the two families will meet and exchange gifts, usually in the form of jewellery and other materials. The Muslim wedding can take place anywhere, although a registrar must be present. Some weddings are held in a local mosque or community centre, but most Muslim marriages will take place in the bride's home. In Islam, marriage is seen as a civil contract, as an agreement between two people before God. Muslim families are based on a patriarchal structure.

Often family life is extended, with grandparents and other close relatives living with or near to each other. Young newly married couples will usually live with the husband's family. Divorce is met with disapproval, although on grounds of adultery, incompatibility, impotence or wilful neglect to one's family it is accepted.

When a baby is born to a Muslim family, the Adhan and Iqamah birth rites are performed. When a Muslim baby is born, it is bathed and a prayer, 'Adhan', is whispered in the baby's right ear and Aquama in the left ear. (See section on Islam.)

The next ceremony which may take place is 'Tahneek', when the baby is brought home from hospital. A small amount of sugar or honey is placed in the mouth of the infant to symbolise the hope that the child will have a good life. After seven days, the baby is named, and its head is shaved as a symbol of cleanliness. Silver, equal to the weight of the hair is given to charity. The hair may be shaved several times during early infancy. All males are circumcised.

A dying Muslim should be turned to face Mecca. The body is taken to the mosque and washed ('Ghusal' – usually performed by trained volunteers) and covered with a white

sheet. They are buried as soon as possible. Muslim graves are raised between ten and thirty centimetres and Muslim sections are found in most municipal cemeteries.

### **Festivals**

The Pakistani community celebrates Islamic festivals. Celebrations are centred around the mosques, family and local community networks. Some families travel to be with relatives in other parts of the country to celebrate festivals. Basant is a festival with a long tradition. It is a historic kite flying event that takes place in the Punjab in late January or early February to mark the start of the spring.

### **Foods**

The Pakistani community follows Muslim food traditions, which means that only halal meat is eaten. This is butchered in a special way. Pork products are not eaten and indeed, it may be considered wrong for Muslim children to talk about or use pictures of pigs. Alcohol is prohibited in the Muslim faith. A typical family meal would consist of a meat dish, and/or a vegetarian 'daal' of lentils or other dried beans, with flat unleavened bread, named 'roti' or chapatti.

### **Language**

Urdu is the national language of Pakistan, with other languages such as Sindhi, Baluchi, Punjabi and Pushtu spoken in some parts of the country. Urdu is the main language spoken by Pakistani pupils in Milton Keynes. Punjabi is a language used in the Punjab region, which includes the northern part of India as well as part of Pakistan; therefore, in its spoken form it is a language, which some Indians and some Pakistanis have in common.

Many of the Pakistani community in Milton Keynes come from Azad Kashmir, which is quite close to Islamabad. This does not mean that they speak Kashmiri, which is a different language spoken further to the east of Kashmir. The mother tongue of people from the area around Kolti or Mirpur in Azad Kashmir is likely to be a dialect form of Punjabi. This dialect may be referred to as Mirpuri or Pahari. It is possible, therefore, that a family may use two languages in the home; a dialect form of Punjabi and Urdu.

Urdu is the language many parents from Pakistan wish their children to learn in both spoken and written forms. It is read from right to left and is derived from Arabic and Persian. Many bilingual pupils have some knowledge of Urdu by the time they are of secondary age. Community classes are taught after school.

It is unwise to make assumptions about the languages known by pupils in schools:

- Young Pakistani children may only know Punjabi (or a dialect form of Punjabi)
- Some young children may only know Urdu
- Older children may know both Punjabi and Urdu
- The extent of knowledge of these languages may vary considerably.

Many Muslim children go to classes at the mosque, in order to read and study the Quran: therefore, they may also have some understanding of Arabic. Some care may be needed to ascertain the linguistic knowledge of pupils from Pakistani families. These notes do not take account of other languages in Pakistan, or the subtleties of dialect forms; however, it should be clear that many children enter school with considerable skill in languages and that this is a positive strength.

### **Naming systems**

Pakistanis choose Muslim names for their children. There will be a personal name and a religious name, such as Mohammed. These names can be in either order; therefore, a child may be registered in school with a first name of Mohammed, but he may be known by his second name in the family. Most people will also have a hereditary family name, such as Qureshi. Children usually take their father's personal name as their family name. For example:

Grandfather: Mohammed Akram Iqbal

Father: Yusuf Ali Akram

Son: Mohammed Arif Yusuf

Daughter: Khalida Maryam Yusuf

### **Religion**

Ninety-seven percent of the population is Muslim and celebrates Islamic festivals. Religion plays an important part in the life of the Pakistani community. Pakistan is an Islamic state.

## **The Sri Lankan Community**

### **Background**

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (formerly known as Ceylon during British colonial rule), is a pear-shaped island 29 kilometres from the south-eastern coast of India. The island is approximately 65,000 square kilometres in size, with a population of over 22 million people. Citizens of Sri Lanka refer to themselves as Sri Lankan(s). Sri Lanka claims a democratic tradition matched by few other developing countries, and since its independence in 1948, successive governments have been freely elected. In recent years, however, there has been curtailment of the freedom of expression.

Sri Lanka's citizens enjoy long life expectancy, advanced health standards, and one of the highest literacy rates in the world, even though the country has one of the lowest per capita incomes.

The largest ethnic group on the island, representing 74% of the population, are the Sinhalese; who claim to have been the earliest colonisers of Sri Lanka, first settling in the country as early as 500 BC. Tamils constitute 18% of the population and are divided into Sri Lankan Tamils, who like the Sinhalese are natives of the island due to ancient lineage (having arrived on the island in about 300 BC), and the Indian Tamils, who were brought in as plantation labour by the British in the nineteenth century. Other groups include Burghers, Eurasians, Malay, and Veddha.

### **Current situation**

Many Sri Lankan migrant families, particularly of Tamil ethnic backgrounds, have fled their homeland due to the communal violence and ethnic war that have taken place on the island. The divide is between the majority Sinhalese, of which the majority government is formed, and the minority Tamils. Although the ethnic war has now ended, tension between the Sinhalese and Tamil communities continues as the reconciliation process has raised human rights concerns for Tamils.

### **Customs, traditions and social structure**

Traditionally children are expected to unquestioningly obey their parents and elders and are familiar with disciplined social and educational structures. Parents do not like their children to refer to adults, known or unknown, by their first names. Instead, titles such as 'aunty' or 'uncle' are used as prefixes as a mark of respect arising from seniority.

Traditional Sri Lankan families place significant importance on the value of education and academic qualifications. Generally, there is a preference towards science-based fields such as medicine, engineering, and to a lesser degree, accountancy, computing and law.

Dependent on religious backgrounds, birth and death rites follow Buddhist, Hindu, Christian or Islamic religious customs and belief systems. All Sri Lankan communities hold marriage in high regard.

### **Festivals**

Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Islamic festivals and religious events are celebrated by Sri Lankans of the respective faiths.

The Hindus and Buddhists in Sri Lanka celebrate their New Year (Avurudu) either on 13 or 14 April. The festival is when the two major ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese and the Tamils jointly celebrate, but in different styles according to their original traditions.

The largest Buddhist festival is Vesak, which is the celebration of the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha.

Hindus celebrate Deepavali, (Diwali), the festival of lights, which takes place in late October or early November.

### **Foods**

As most British-based Sri Lankan families are first- and second-generation migrants, the average Sri Lankan continues to eat traditional food at home. Rice and curry still comprise the main meal in almost every Sri Lankan household. Boiled rice with curried vegetable, fish and/or meat laced with Sri Lankan spices, is the typical Sri Lankan main meal. Rice as a staple food is eaten at least once a day.

Almost every dish used to be prepared in coconut milk, but on health grounds, dairy milk is now also used. Sri Lankans like their food to be spicy, and use a variety of spices such as turmeric, garlic, ginger, pepper and other Indian spices in their culinary preparations.

Traditional food plays a central role in Sri Lankan life daily, with the use of more elaborate preparations for family gatherings, social events, festivals and other special occasions.

Tamils who follow the Hindu religion would not eat beef, whilst some may be vegetarian or vegan.

### **Languages**

Within Sri Lanka, the official languages are Sinhalese and Tamil, with English spoken in government and educated circles by about 10% of the population.

The Sinhalese are distinguished primarily by their language, Sinhala, which is a member of the Indo-European linguistic group that includes Hindi and other north Indian native languages, as well as most of the languages of Europe.

The Tamils use the Tamil language as their native tongue. Tamil is one of the Dravidian languages found almost exclusively in peninsular India. Tamil is spoken by at least 60 million people in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu ('land of the Tamils'), and by millions more Tamil emigrants throughout the world.

### **Naming systems**

The Sinhalese community usually have two names. The first is called the 'GE' (pronounced 'gay', Sinhalese for House or Tribe) name, while the second is the actual name of the individual. The 'GE' name may indicate the place, from which the family originated, or the title or profession of the head of the family. Hence, a person may be called 'Muhandiramla GE Romesh,' which indicates that he hails from the 'House of Muhandiram' and his name is Romesh.

The Tamil community has a unique and different method of nomenclature. They usually, use two names, the first representing their father's name and the second representing their own. For example, Arumugam Ramanathan indicates that the individual's name is Ramanathan, and he is the son of Arumugam. Most Tamil names are similar to South Indian names.

The Burghers, who are direct descendants of colonial Europeans, conform to the western system of naming, and western names such as Mary, Victor and Anne, are freely used.

Due to the island being colonised by the Portuguese and Dutch, names such as De Silva, Fernando and other Portuguese or Dutch names still prevail as surnames within the Sinhalese and Burgher communities.

In all communities, it is traditional that on marriage, the wife takes her husband's surname, and the family name is passed from the husband to the children.

### **Religion**

Religious proportions are split into Buddhist 70%, Hindu 12%, Christian 7% and Muslim 9%. Sinhalese are generally Buddhist, Tamils Hindu; Burghers, Eurasians, and a minority of Sinhalese and Tamils profess Christianity, with Moors adherents of Islam.

The Buddhist religion reinforces the solidarity of the Sinhalese as an ethnic community. Ethnic Tamils are united by the Tamil language, culture and religious beliefs. Some 85% of the Sri Lankan Tamils are Hindus and worship the Hindu pantheon of gods.



## **European**

### **Introduction**

Whilst there is anecdotal evidence of people from many different European countries living in Milton Keynes, there is no detailed breakdown of numbers from different nationalities. In 2012, the Community Language Service provided translations for 15 European languages: Russian, Spanish, Polish, Italian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Portuguese, Czech, Lithuanian, Latvian, Croatian, Bosnian, Slovakian and Turkish. From 2022, the Homes for Ukraine scheme and the Ukraine Family scheme have brought a significant number of Ukrainian refugees to Milton Keynes.

We are keen to build up our knowledge of all the communities in Milton Keynes, so please contact us if you would like to contribute information for the next update.

Europe's colonial history has led to several European languages being widely used in other parts of the world. Most of the Commonwealth Countries were British colonies and many use English as an official language, using it too as the medium for secondary education. In a similar way, French is spoken in parts of Africa and South East Asia; Spanish and Portuguese in South America and Africa; Italian in Eritrea and Dutch in Indonesia.

In some non-colonial countries, English is widely used in education and business for convenience, particularly when there are many different languages in one country.

Migration patterns are complex and many families in Milton Keynes have spent time in different countries en route to the UK. This means that a child born in Somalia whose mother tongue is Somali might have learned some Arabic at school before moving to Scandinavia and learning Swedish; when the parents move to the UK the child has to begin again with culture, language and friendships.

## French

### Background

French migration to the United Kingdom has a long history, most notably in 1066, when William the Conqueror invaded Britain. Successive waves of French migrants settled in Britain at various points in the history of both countries. For example, the French Huguenots fled to England in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries to escape religious persecution, other members of the French aristocracy also came to England during the Angevin Empire of the Plantagenet dynasty. Recent data estimates that over 400,000 French people live in the United Kingdom, mostly in London and the southeast of England; an increase from the 2011 census, which estimated around 120,000. Milton Keynes is now another region that has attracted and welcomed the French community as a place to be. In addition, research indicates that that three million British people are of French descent.<sup>5</sup> These include well-known celebrities such as Louis Theroux and Davina McCall, some well-known French celebrity chefs who are household names and have restaurants, include Michelle Roux Jnr, Monica Galetti–Mere, and Marco Pierre White.

The French community in Milton Keynes meets regularly to celebrate French traditions and provide the opportunity for adults and their children to develop their bilingual skills. There is a French cultural centre in Stony Stratford, the Alliance Française, which teaches French for adults and organises activities. The main cultural centre is the Institut Français in London.

The language school ‘Les Poussin’ operates from Oakgrove school. It is one of the oldest supplementary schools in Milton Keynes and celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020.

Although the community has the French language in common, it is extremely diverse: including French, Belgians, Moroccans, Cameroonians, Mauritians and families from the French-speaking Caribbean. The two centres also serve the French community in Bedford, Buckingham, Luton and Northampton.

### Customs, traditions and social structure

Family and food are traditionally essential elements of everyday life. Politics is also of great importance in France, where personal liberties are fiercely defended, and public protest is a significant and influential component of the politics of the country. The on-going ‘yellow jacket’ movement exemplifies the tradition of ‘people power’.

France is a secular state and the division between state and religion is clearly defined. It is perhaps most evident in the education system where the advocacy of personal faith is prohibited. Religion and education are kept separate, with implications for clothing and

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<sup>5</sup> Murray, Wardrop (12 April 2010), “Britons Can trace French ancestry after millions go on line,” The Daily Telegraph.

observances required by a pupil's religion. The subject continues to receive attention in France as its ethnic and cultural diversity continues to expand, but families arriving in the UK may be surprised to find that Muslim girls wearing head scarfs, for example, are common in British schools.

### **Festivals**

Key celebratory times are New Year, Easter, the end of the school year and Christmas. Gatherings often include shared meals. French families meet at Christmas, share the Epiphany 'galette' in January, make pancakes in February and eat chocolate eggs at Easter. An end of year picnic often takes place to celebrate the historic 'Bastille day' - a key moment during the French revolution leading to the establishment of a republic.

### **Food**

French cuisine has had a significant influence on cuisines in the Western World, such is the meticulous preparation and artistry and taste that in November 2010, UNESCO listed French gastronomy among the world's intangible cultural heritage. Several everyday and well-known foods grace the shops and tables daily. These include for example, croissants, quiche Lorraine, chocolate eclairs, baton, brioche, hors d'œuvres. Various pastries and wines are well known and enjoyed throughout the year.

### **Language**

The importance of the French language in the UK is evident, first, in the way in which French remains the top foreign language taught in schools, and second, the way the restaurant industry continues use terminologies from French cuisine every day (*Sous-chef de cuisine* (deputy head chef); *commis* (junior cook) *Pâtissier* (pastry cook) and many more). French is also used in symbols of the British monarchy: "Dieu et mon droit" and "Honni soit qui mal y pense".

### **Religion**

Most of the Milton Keynes' French community have a Catholic background, reflecting the dominant faith in France. Accordingly, worship and practices reflect French Catholic traditions.

## **Irish**

### **Background**

The choice identity of people who originate from Ireland is complex and matches the history of the Republic of Ireland as a separate country and Northern Ireland as part of Great Britain. In providing ethnicity information people from Northern Ireland with British passports may identify as Irish. This information is inclusive of all who identify as Irish. Many Irish people first made their homes in London and then moved to Milton Keynes in the 1950s and 1960s when housing and employment became available. The vast majority were unskilled. Irish people sought work in factories and in the building industry. Emigration from Ireland is now much less evident, but the young people who do come to live in Milton Keynes are highly educated. When Irish people came to the Milton Keynes area, 30 or 40 years ago, they stayed close together for comfort and support. There were Irish pubs and clubs, Irish sports were evident, and many were devout Catholics. Most sought out husbands and wives from their own community and once their children were born, they were sent to Catholic schools. Much has now changed, and young people of Irish families are completely integrated into contemporary British society and they do not seek out partners from similar families.

### **Customs, traditions and social structure**

Family is very important. Older members are held in great respect and they are looked after very carefully. Celebrations include all the family, from young to old. The structure of families is often extended, and it is usual for grandparents and parents to reside very near to their children as well as to other family members. Some young people continue to marry within their own regional community although marriages to members of the British community have also increased. Compared with first generation, families are more open, meet, and socialise with other communities especially through work. Marriage is seen to be the foundation of family life and a lifetime commitment. There are not many divorces in the Italian community.

Traditionally, a birth is celebrated with the giving of cards, gifts and flowers. Catholic believers, as with most other Christian faith groups, select godparents who are expected to provide spiritual advice but generally, they tend to have an overview of the child's personal development and well-being.

When death occurs a wake, a long-held tradition, takes place in order to remember the deceased and support the family. The wake takes place at the home of the deceased or at the home of a family member. Previously, a parlour would be used to keep the dead body; today, a room is used in the wake house. A window is left open to make sure that the spirit of the deceased can depart and within two hours, it is closed to make sure that the spirit does not return. The body is then prepared with washing and dressing before it is laid out with the Rosary beads wrapped around the hand and a cross is placed

around the neck. With the body laid out, candles are placed around the head of feet before family members begin to take turn to watch over the deceased. Traditionally, the clocks are turned off at the time of death, mirrors are covered, and the curtains are drawn to show a sign of respect.

Throughout the wake process, friends and family visit, take part in reciting the rosary and contribute to refreshments. Normally, the men tend to stand outside with their drinks. Death is a community affair and is not confined to the immediate family and close friends. The funeral service, which lasts for 45 minutes, includes tributes before the coffin is taken to the cemetery for burial. It is normal practise for the funeral procession to stop outside the deceased's home as a mark of respect.

The Irish kept a tradition known as keening which included women wailing over the body after it was laid out and not before so as not to invoke evil spirits. This tradition is no longer practised.

### **Food**

The crops grown due to the political history of the island as well as the temperate climate have all undoubtedly influenced Irish cuisine. Prior to the introduction of potato in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the rearing of cattle was the main source of wealth in the economy. Cattle were a prized possession and the main meats eaten were poultry and bacon rather than beef. Dishes such as the black pudding, eaten for breakfast, remains in the diet. Similarly, the mixing of milk with the blood of cattle and butter to make a drink similar to the Massai's dish was common practice. The inventiveness to create hearty and nutritious dishes using the ordinary potato, at a time when there was scarcely any food, resulted in well-known dishes such as the Irish stew, boxty (potato pancake); bacon and cabbage and colcannon (mashed potatoes with kale or cabbage). International culinary influence and increased wealth have led to the addition of more and varied dishes to the cuisine; for example, the country has a large number of cheese producers specialising in hand-made cheeses such as Gubbeen; a wide range of fish dishes such as 'Dublin lawyer' (lobster cooked in whiskey; blaa (a doughy white bread, linked specifically to Waterford) and drisheen, a blood pudding. In addition, of course, there is the famous Irish whiskey and its use as the basic ingredient for Baileys, cream liquors, and the Irish coffee. In addition, stout and Guinness are renowned as typically brewed in Ireland.

### **Festivals**

The Irish are very fond of music and dancing. A day of particular celebration is St. Patrick's Day (17 March). St. Patrick is credited with bringing Christianity to Ireland. On holy days of obligation mass is held in Catholic schools. Attendance at funerals is an important duty for Irish people. Such funerals are not private affairs, but occasions when friends and even distant acquaintances are expected to attend and pay their respects. Even those who no longer attend church see it as a duty to pray for those who have died. Those people who came directly from Ireland named their children after

senior members of the family, who in turn usually had the names of Christian saints or holy people. As with other things, this is changing, and people do not feel the need to adhere to this system.

### **Language**

The two languages spoken are Irish and English. The Irish language, also known as Gaelic and Manx, spans three distinct periods. The first, known as Old Irish from 6<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> century, Middle Irish from the 10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century and Early Modern Irish until 17<sup>th</sup> century. This language remained the main language for most people until the 19<sup>th</sup> century when there was a decline in speakers when the country was under British rule. Today, most Irish people speak English as the main language while a minority speak Irish. With fewer than 10% of the population speaking Irish outside of the education system, there is a move to revive the Irish language as the spoken language in the home. Investment in Gaeltacht, which are Irish-speaking regions, is a means of recognising that the Irish language is the main language of the home. Other approaches to reviving the language include teaching it in mainstream schools and developing a network of Irish speakers across both the Republic and Northern Ireland.

### **Religion**

The main religion in Ireland is Christianity with most people identifying themselves as Roman Catholic. Research has shown that the Irish state has seen an increased move towards secularisation. This is like other Catholic European states.

Many who are second generation Irish have much weaker ties with the Catholic Church, although they still value certain ceremonies and traditions; for example, they still have their children baptised. Baptism is a ceremony involving the pouring of water over a child's head that symbolises entry into the church. Many Irish people still cherish first Holy Communion day, when boys and girls of eight are dressed in special clothes and take the bread and wine of mass for the first time; however, many young Irish people no longer regard themselves as Catholic. The once strong connection is now weakened. The Irish have a strong grasp of their own history.

Many older Irish people are frustrated that a part of the island of Ireland belongs to Britain. Even though they have felt slightly on the outside of British society they are grateful for the opportunities that this country has given them.

## **Italian**

### **Background**

Italian people came to the Milton Keynes area as prisoners of war, at a camp in Drayton Parslow. The camp was partially open and the prisoners would form relationships with local people. Many stayed on after the Second World War finished. Others came from southern Italy in the 1950s and 1960s to take on hard, manual work in the brickfields of Bedford and Newton Longville. They spoke very little English. The dialects of southern Italy were spoken. They gathered socially and religiously, for support. Initially young men came to work, but they gradually married and brought their families to live in the borough.

### **Current situation**

Most young people of Italian origin in Milton Keynes are of the third and fourth generation since migration. There are new arrivals but no longer only through family links. They come from southern Italy as well as from other Italian communities in Great Britain. In Bletchley and Fenny Stratford there is a concentration of Italian population, especially from the area around Naples, although many younger families continue to move more widely around Milton Keynes.

### **Foods**

Traditional Italian cuisine continues to be maintained. The tradition of making fresh pasta from flour and egg continues in many households. Pork products are still a favourite of Italian people, such as prosciutto crudo (Parma ham), salami e salsiccie (sausages), which are also often home-made. There is a wide range of cheeses from different Italian regions, many of which are available in specialist Italian shops as well as in supermarkets. Home-made wines continue to be produced in this area, with grapes being specially imported from southern Italy. Shared meals are a very important part of family and social life.

### **Festivals**

The forty days prior to Easter (Pasqua) are called Quaresima (Lent) and are a time of penitence and prayer. Special occasions are marked with parties involving large numbers of the Italian community. Large family gatherings take place especially at Christmas time. Weddings are no longer likely to involve as large number of guests as they did in the past.

### **Languages**

Older people continue to speak the dialects of the southern Italian region where they were born. Most second-generation adults operate confidently in English, speak the same dialect and generally have only a limited knowledge of spoken and written standard Italian. Third and fourth generation children speak English as their first language and are exposed to dialects in the interaction with their grandparents. Italian families are interested in keeping their home language alive and very keen for their

children to attend the Italian classes provided by the Italian government. These classes are now offered to all pupils, not only those of Italian background.

### **Naming system**

Children continue to be given Italian personal names, although on some occasions they may be anglicised or used in their shortened form by younger people. The tradition of naming children after senior members within their family is not as strong as it used to be.

### **Religion**

Italian people are mostly Catholic. Their houses are usually adorned with religious icons and even though many do not attend church regularly, they come together for key religious festivals. Most Italian families have their children baptised. Baptism is a ceremony, involving pouring blessed water over a child's head, which symbolises new life and entry into the church. First Holy Communion Day is a time of celebration. Much money is spent on dressing the young children for a ceremony in which they take the bread and wine of mass for the first time. Children receive their first Holy Communion when they are eight. See Christianity section. Young people born in this country have not lost the strong connection with the Catholic religion.

## **Polish**

### **Background**

The Polish community in Britain is a significant minority community. Before 1939, the community was comprised mainly of Jews born in Poland. Following the Second World War, Britain became home to thousands of Polish people displaced by war. Approximately 135,000 Poles entered the UK as refugees or displaced persons. For many years, Polish people have come to the UK to work and study. Poland became a member of the European Union in 2004, giving Polish citizens the right to reside and work in the UK.

Polish people have travelled to England throughout the centuries for a number of different reasons. In the 1500s, Polish travellers came as traders and diplomats. In the 18th century, a small number of Polish Protestants arrived as religious refugees due to the Counter Reformation in Poland. In the 19th Century, because of the collapse of the November Uprising of 1831, many Polish soldiers entered Britain in search of sanctuary and again during the First and Second World Wars. Although a large proportion of the Poles were lawyers, judges and engineers, they were not acknowledged; it was the doctors and pharmacists who had their qualifications recognised. As a result, most Poles worked in building and construction, coal mining and other forms of manual labour as well as in the hospitality trades. However, the Poles were very entrepreneurial and set up a number of businesses such as clock, watch and shoe repairers - many of which we can still see today.



**Current situation**

In recent years, until Poland joined the EU, many new arrivals in schools were children from Polish Roma families who had left Poland and applied for asylum in the UK. Some 98% of the population is ethnic Pole. The largest minority groups are Ukrainians, Belarussians and Germans. Poland has a Roma population estimated at about 55,000, almost all of whom are settled. Roma in Poland are from several different cultural and linguistic groups. Most Polish Roma asylum seekers in the UK are Polish Lowland Roma. There are also small numbers of Polish Kalderash and Highland Roma living in the UK.

**Customs, traditions and social structure**

Roma girls of secondary school age may be actively discouraged from attending by parents and community elders. Some Roma children experience bullying and discrimination and this contributes to poor attendance.

**Foods**

Polish cuisine is a mixture of Slavic and foreign culinary traditions. The cuisine is a mixture of various culinary traditions, from various regions of Poland and surrounding cultures, it uses a large variety of ingredients. It is rich in meat of all kinds and with spices, which are used in different kinds of noodles and dumplings; the most notable of which are the pierogi. It is related to other Slavic cuisines in usage of kasza and other cereals, but was also under the heavy influence of Turkic, Germanic, Hungarian, Jewish, French or colonial cuisines of the past. Polish cuisine is rich in flavour, as it is substantial and relatively high in fat. Poles allow themselves a generous amount of time to dine in order to enjoy their meals. The national dish of Poland is bigos (sauerkraut with pieces of meat and sausage) or kotlet schabowy (breaded pork cutlet).

**Festivals**

Dozynki - Harvest festival is celebrated in Poland at the end of the harvest, which is traditionally on or around 15 August. Sobotka a celebration to mark Midsummer's Eve, is celebrated in Poland by lighting bonfires and tossing garlands of flowers into the rivers. It takes place around 23 and 24 June.

**Languages**

The official language of Poland is Polish (Polski). It is a Slavonic language, most closely related to Czech and Slovak, and is scripted in the Roman alphabet. There are about 40 million speakers in Poland, Lithuania and Belarus. There are also fairly large communities of Polish émigrés in the UK, USA and Canada. Polish is closely related to Kashubian, Lower Sorbian, Upper Sorbian, Czech and Slovak.

Some Polish Roma, particularly from rural areas, speak Romani as their first language, but many Roma families now speak Polish as their home language. In the UK, literate Roma parents use Polish as their first written language.

The most widely spoken second language is English, but the majority of people of German heritage, speak German. This reflects the changes in national boundaries in the twentieth century,

The Polish writing system is based on the Latin alphabet but has a total of 32 letters. Some letters within the alphabet are specific to Polish – the vowels: ą ę ó and the consonants: ć ń ś ź. These characters include an accent or graphical marked called a diacritic. There is no Q,V or X in the Polish alphabet. This is the complete alphabet: a ą b c ć d e ę f g h i j k l ł m n ń o ó p r s ś t u w y z ź ż

Wszyscy ludzie rodzą się wolni i równi pod względem swej godności i swych praw. Są oni obdarzeni rozumem i sumieniem i powinni postępować wobec innych w duchu braterstwa.

Translation: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. (Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

### **Naming system**

Some family names in Poland are expressed differently depending on which family member one is addressing. The masculine surname Kowalski changes to Kowalska for a woman and Kowalscy for the family.

### **Religion**

About 71% of Poles were recorded as Roman Catholic in the 2021 census (NSP). Although in cities many people do not regularly practice their religion, in general, Catholicism is important to Polish life. The Catholic church runs radio and TV programmes, hospitals and homes for the elderly and many educational institutions. There are also Eastern Orthodox and Protestant congregations.

Judaism, once strong in Poland, exists as a very small minority since the Second World War. Jews from all over the world annually visit concentration camps in Poland to remember those who died. The area of Bialystok in north-eastern Poland has a small Muslim population which is descended from Tartar settlers.

## **Romanian**

### **Background**

Romania is in South-eastern European country known for the forested region of Transylvania ringed by the Carpathian Mountains. Its preserved medieval towns include Sighisoara and there are many fortified churches and castles, notably Bran Castle, long associated with the Dracula legend. Bucharest is the country's capital located in South. Of the 19 million (2023) population of Romania, nearly 90% are ethnic Romanians and 6.6% ethnic Hungarian. The Roma community make up around 2.5% of the population.

On the 1 December 1918, the Great Union of Transylvania took place, creating the modern Romanian state. On this date Romanians celebrate Great Union Day. The communist leadership of Nicolae Ceausescu began in 1965 and marked a dark period in Romanian history as a huge national debt inflicted poverty and shortages. Dissent was brutally repressed and an uprising in 1989 led to the deposition and execution of Ceausescu and the end of communist rule. Romania aligned more with the west, subsequently joining the EU and NATO.

### **Current situation**

Romanians are now the second largest group of non-British nationals in the UK, following Poles. More than 400,000 Romanians live in the UK, more than double the number before 2014, when restrictions on the UK labour market lifted. According to data from the United Nations, 3.6 million Romanians live abroad, compared with about 19 million left in the country. Projections suggest that Romania may lose more than 15% of its population by 2050. The annual growth rate of its diaspora is among the world's highest.

Romanians and Poles make up a third of all EU nationals who have applied for settled status to remain in UK, accordingly to the Home Office. Romanians constitute the largest European group in Milton Keynes (6189) as recorded in the 2021 Census.

### **Culture, traditions and social structure**

Romania is a hierarchical society where age and position are respected. Older people are viewed as wise since they have earned life experience. Romanians expect the most senior person to make decisions that are in the best interest of the group.

Birth, death and marriage rites reflect the country's predominantly Orthodox Christian practice; however, significance is given to a child's christening ceremony which can take the whole day and involve hundreds of guests. A Romanian folk tradition holds that when a child is born, he or she will be visited by the Fate Fairies, or 'Ursitoarele' in Romanian, on the third day, after sunset. That is why it is customary to welcome the fairies with a selection of gifts, such as flour, salt, coins, wine, flowers and cakes.

Children can attend Kindergarden, but compulsory school starts at the age of six with a preparatory school year. This is mandatory and a requirement of entry to the first grade. School is compulsory until the tenth grade (English Year 11). The school educational cycle ends in the twelfth grade, when students complete the baccalaureate examination. State university is not compulsory but is free for the first degree. Students need to pass an admission examination to enter university. School attendance in rural areas is significantly lower than in the towns. It is estimated that 16% of children aged 7-10 and 25% of children aged 11-14 do not attend school in rural areas. Significantly fewer children from rural areas progress to the baccalaureate.

### **Festivals**

Easter is an important celebration. There are specific foods cooked for Easter, including eggs dyed in different colours in traditional Romanian style. There is also a special greeting used for the 40 days of Easter. Easter is spent with the family. It is an important holiday in the Romanian calendar and the majority Orthodox Christian Romanians place great significance on his holiday.

Christmas is also a family celebration, with specific foods and rituals. Romanians celebrate Christmas on the 25 December. Romanians keep up the tradition of eating pork for Christmas and drinking a Romanian plum brandy. For dessert, Romanians enjoy a traditional fluffy cake called cozonac. Romania has strong Christmas carolling traditions that reference Romanian folklore. The act of going through the village, or from house to house, singing carols dates to pre-Christian times and equates with the English “wassailing” tradition. Father Christmas visits children in person on Christmas Eve and receives songs, poems and promises for the presents he gives.

New Year is traditionally a time for celebration. Parties start late in the evening on New Year’s Eve and continue until the first morning of the New Year. It is said that the way you spend the crossing night is the way you spend the New Year, so people aim to be found by midnight holding a full glass of champagne and a purse full of money, wearing their best clothes and surrounded by their dearest friends and closest family.

Romanians also celebrate name days on the saint days marked in the religious calendar. On name days, the celebrated people receive congratulations and must be prepared to have unannounced guests.

Martisor is celebrated on the 1 March. This tradition welcomes springtime and Romanians offers each other amulets to show appreciation. The amulet can take the form of flower blossom, a heart, a shell or snowdrops.

Orthodox Romanians celebrate Saint Nicholas on 6 December. On the night of 5 December, boots are cleaned and polished to be put by the door to wait for St Nicholas’ visit. He is generous to adults as well as children, putting a little present in each boot –

usually sweets. In some areas a walnut branch is left as a warning that behaviour needs to improve.

### **Foods**

Romanian cuisine is a mixture of foreign culinary traditions. It is rich in meat of all kinds and with spices. Bread accompanies almost every dish. In the western part of the country, the Hungarian influences are quite strong, as the Russian cuisine influences the eastern Romania and the Turkish cuisine flavours the south-eastern parts. Generally, Romanian cuisine is rich, substantial and relatively high in fat. Romanians allow themselves a generous amount of time in order to enjoy their meals. Breakfast is not so important, but lunch is the main meal of the day, with light suppers.

### **Languages**

The official language of Romania is Romanian. It is a Latin language, most closely related to Portuguese. Romanian Roma speak Romani. The most widely spoken foreign language is English, which is studied in all schools.

### **Naming systems**

Traditionally, most people are given names from the Romanian Orthodox calendar of saints. Many common names have an identifiable English equivalent: *Andrei* (*Andrew*), *Ion/Ioan* (*John*), *Luca* (*Luke*). Slavic influence is also common: Bogdan, Vlad, Irina, Raisa; as well as names reflecting early Roman influences such as Trajan and Cornel(ia).

### **Religion**

About 74% of Romanians are Christian Orthodox (2021 census), closer to the Greek Orthodox rite rather than the Russian rite. Although in cities many people do not regularly practice their religion, religion is important to Romanian life. There is also a Catholic community who are concentrated more in the western part of the country.

## **Traveller communities**

### **Background**

Gypsy, Roma and Travellers of Irish heritage are recognised as ethnic minority groups and are protected under the Equality Act (2010). In Britain, there are several distinct groups of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) people:

- English Gypsies – Romanichal
- Welsh Gypsies – Kale
- Irish Travellers – Minciers
- Scottish Travellers – Nackens
- Roma - who have migrated from Europe, particularly Eastern Europe, to Britain during the last century.
- Bargees, circus people, and showmen
- New Travellers

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people, wherever they are found, retain a distinctive identity, separate from the rest of the community. They generally remain independent and segregate themselves, maintaining close family ties and in many cases prefer not to adopt the social structure, beliefs and attitudes of life held by the settled population. Those who wish to retain their independence linked to their nomadic lifestyle face many difficulties and experience direct and indirect discrimination in a modern world. Too often, most of the settled population refuses to acknowledge Gypsy, Roma or Travellers of Irish heritage as ethnic minority groups and fail to recognise them as groups with distinct and often unmet needs. All GRT families have inherited their ethnicity from long-established nomadic origins.

### **Gypsies**

Gypsies originated from North West India. During the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century, nomadic Indian tribes began to migrate, gradually moving across the Middle East and Europe before they arrived in Britain during the early 15<sup>th</sup> Century. At the time, it was widely believed that they had migrated from Egypt and were referred to as Egyptians. This is where the name 'Gypsy' derives from. However, later historians confirmed their origins to North West India through links with their language, Romany, and existing Indian dialects.

Today, almost every European country has a Gypsy population. Gypsies claim the nationality of the country in which they are born and speak its language as well as their own. The characteristics and appearance of Gypsies differ according to the country of their birth and the degree of inter-marriage they have experienced. The kind of occupations they engage in also varies, selecting those kinds most suited to their survival in any country.

### **Irish Travellers**

Travellers of Irish heritage have been in England since the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The earliest known Irish Travellers were believed to be wandering lords and poets. Numbers have increased over time, particularly after the potato famine, the post-war era and during the 1960s when there was a need for labour within the construction and road building industry in the UK.

### **Roma**

Roma also originated from India and through migration from 11<sup>th</sup> century mainly settled in Persia and then Europe by the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. The main language spoken is Romany, with the language of the country they originated from. Although now found throughout Europe most of the population reside in Slavic speaking lands and the Balkans. Roma retain wariness of education and health care based on previous experiences of discrimination and attempts to force them to assimilate into society. They often do not identify as Roma.

### **Bargees, Circus people, and showmen**

#### **Bargees**

This distinct group of Travellers live and work on barges. There are now very few Bargees in Britain, as canals are no longer used to carry freight in the same way as in the past.

#### **Circus People**

Circus families also have a seasonal pattern to their lives. Circus proprietors are regulated by the Showmen's Guild. Children who travel with the circus may be performers themselves or the children of performers. They will often attend a school for the duration of their stay in towns where Traveller education service staff provide educational support on specific local authority sites. In Milton Keynes this is supported by the EMA Network. Circuses are more likely than travelling fairs to cross national boundaries or possibly to winter in a country other than Britain. Performers in the circus may come from many different countries and their first language may not be English.

#### **Showmen**

The men, women and children who live and work at travelling fairs are known as Showmen. Their lifestyle varies considerably according to the open season, which usually runs from Easter to October. During the closed season, the families will live in their winter quarters and the children will attend their base school. When travelling, the children complete distance learning materials, provided for by the base school. Traveller education service staff support them across the country while they are travelling. Developments within IT enable children to keep in touch with the base school via the use of laptops and email.

### **New Travellers**

New Traveller groups began to form in 1960s. Many New Travellers come from the settled community but decided to live a travelling way of life.

### **Current situation**

The accommodation status of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers fits into three categories:

- unauthorised encampments (roadside)
- permanent authorised sites
- housing

Many Gypsy, Roma and Travellers live on authorised encampments. Those following seasonal patterns of movement find it difficult as they have no allocated plots on permanent sites and often find themselves homeless. Life on the roadside is extremely hard. Tolerance towards unauthorised encampments varies between councils.

Permanent sites are either council or privately owned. In Milton Keynes there are two permanent sites in Willen and Calverton. Residents pay rent, council tax and amenity bills.

It is estimated that two-thirds of Gypsy, Roma and Travellers live in housing. Many feel trapped, almost caged in within such permanent structures. Those used to living among extended families may feel isolated within a community who openly show hostility against their culture. For this reason, many Gypsy, Roma and Travellers living in housing choose to hide their identity. Gypsy, Roma and Travellers living on permanent sites or in housing may still choose to travel for periods of the year.

### **Customs, traditions and social structure**

Gypsy, Roma and Travellers maintain their tradition of a lengthy mourning period, with the family wearing black for up to a year after the death of a close relative. The trailer and clothes of the dead person used to be burned as a sign of respect. Sometimes this still happens but it is not always practical.

Most Gypsy, Roma and Travellers are very careful about cleanliness and have certain rules they follow for washing clothes and food preparation.

There remains a tendency for the male children to follow the family trade and to begin their training before they finish education.



Life expectancy is low and infant mortality high, often due to a reluctance or inability to access health services. A report from National Health England suggested life expectancy was 28% lower than the national average<sup>6</sup>.

### **Festivals**

Fairs have traditionally been important meeting places for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers. Appleby Horse Fair in Westmorland is the largest traditional fair, which takes place in June each year. As well as buying and selling horses and domestic goods, Gypsy and Travellers come to meet their friends and family in a holiday atmosphere. Stow Horse Fair in Gloucestershire, Cambridge Fair and Epsom Races are also important annual venues.

### **Food**

The Roma population traditionally prefer more spicy food, however GRT communities now eat meals based on the affordability of the food available in the local area. Stews remain a popular meal that is filling and cheap with bread as a popular snack.

### **Language, dialect and accent**

Anglo-Romani is the name given to the dialect of English spoken by Romany Gypsies, which has been handed down orally over generations. The Romani language was first recorded in 1542 and in Britain, this has gradually become more anglicised. Knowledge and use of Anglo-Romani varies from family to family and the words in common use vary between regions. Many families consider that the language should be kept secret. Irish and Scottish Travellers use Cant, Gammon and Shelta languages, which appear to be formed by adapting Gaelic words.

### **Naming systems**

Names may differ from those in common use in the settled community. In the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups, traditional names are in frequent use, often associated with a grandparent or other important family member. Biblical names are often in common use. A feature of Irish Traveller groups is their use of maternal and paternal surnames interchangeably. Children may also have a baptismal name and a 'family' name. It is traditional to name first children after a grandparent, which can result in a large family with several cousins having the same name.

### **Religious affiliation**

Religious affiliation often has enormous significance in the life of Traveller families. In Britain, they will be Christian, and Irish Travellers are most often practising Roman Catholics and will request a Roman Catholic school for their children. In recent times,

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<sup>6</sup> Improving uptake and delivery of health services to reduce health inequalities experienced by Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller people. NHS England

the evangelical Gypsy church has become significant in the lives of many English Gypsy Travellers. Weddings, funerals and christenings are occasions for large family gatherings with much ceremony attached to them. Other events of importance in the religious calendar are of particular personal significance such as First Communion and grave praying may be reasons for extended family gatherings.

## **White British**

### **Background**

In its formation in 1967, Milton Keynes attracted a significant number of white British migrants re-housed under the London “over-spill” housing scheme, and the white British population has continued as the largest component of the Milton Keynes community and school population. The white British population was recorded as 78.9% at the 2011 census, reducing to 71.8% at the 2021 Census. However, the White UK pupil population has dropped by 15.81 percentage points to 46.79% compared to 10 years ago (2023 School census).

### **Disadvantage**

There has been a national concern about the underperformance of some white British pupils, and this is reflected locally.

“The underperformance of low-income white British pupils matters, particularly because they make up the majority—two-thirds—of such pupils. So, the lowest-performing group of poor children is also the largest. If we don’t crack the problem of low achievement by poor white British boys and girls, then we won’t solve the problem overall.” Sir Michael Wilshaw<sup>7</sup>.

From 2014 -2017 a joint research project was conducted in partnership between Milton Keynes’ schools and the local authority. This focussed on raising achievement of white British pupils from low income backgrounds. Case studies were produced after Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the project and these were shared with all MK schools.

The achievement of White British pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds has been a high a priority for Milton Keynes’ secondary schools engaged in the Creating Cohesive Secondary School Communities (CCSSC) programme (2018-2020) funded by the Ministry for Communities, Housing and Local Government (MHCLG). The EMA Network has produced a handbook ‘Tackling disadvantage and disaffection’ which includes a focus on White British learners. It is available from the EMA Network.

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<sup>7</sup> (Unseen children: access and achievement 20 years on Ofsted 2013)

### **Customs and traditions**

There is a wealth of white British customs and traditions, although they are often not verbalised or discussed. The majority derive from a Christian tradition and heritage, although many white British families do not actively follow the religion today; for example, Christmas is a secular festival for many White British families with limited acknowledgement that the festival marks the birth of Jesus, the Christian deity. Christian traditions in turn have built upon older customs. Some rituals are maintained and in recent years have been revived; such as orchard wassailing, reciting incantations and singing to trees to promote a good harvest in the next year. There is a strong interest in gardening, from a traditional cottage garden style to a more modern approach.

### **Festivals**

Most white British festivals follow the Christian calendar, with Christmas and Easter being the key celebrations. There has also been a restoration and resurgence of traditional country festivals, with increased participation and attendance at annual events; such as the pancake race at Olney and cheese rolling at Cooper's Hill in Gloucestershire. While there are no traditional events solely linked to Milton Keynes there is significant interest in long-established crafts and practices; such as events organised at the City Discovery Centre. Milton Keynes' diverse communities actively participate in these community events.

### **Food**

The traditional foods of Britain are also a reflection of its history, and its climate. As a small island with a seafaring and colonial heritage many foods which white British people customarily eat have been introduced by its diverse migrant communities over time; such as fish and chips brought in by Jewish settlers from eastern Europe and pickles and ketchup from India. Other foods were created and became staples because they grew well in the climate; such as breads, crumpets and Yorkshire puddings using wheat, and a variety of potato dishes. Foods were simple because many spices had to be imported and were expensive; so, the traditional 'meat, potato and two veg' became universal. This used all parts of the meat so that there was no wastage and many white British families still enjoy traditional meat dishes of this type such as brawn, black pudding, haslet and sausages. There are many sweet dishes which were devised in local areas, the nearest to Milton Keynes being Banbury cakes. Modern British cuisine is a mixture of influences, many developed from its diverse ethnic backgrounds. Chicken Tikka Masala is now the most popular take away dish among the white British population.

### **Languages and script**

English is the national language. Formal English is used in most official situations, but there is a big range of local and regional dialects and accents. Many dialects have been increasingly lost as young people are influenced by popular culture, mass communication and migration around Britain, but there is growing interest in

maintaining and at the least recording dialect. The local White British population has migrated from across Britain and has brought its dialects and accents with it, added to the Buckinghamshire ways of speaking. Much of English also reflects the role of migration historically, so that many English-speaking people are unaware that many of the words they use come from other languages; such as pyjamas and bungalow from Hindi. Languages constantly evolve and modern English includes many expressions from more recent migrations and young Black British street language.

### **Naming systems**

Traditionally white British names follow a pattern of a first name, often called a Christian name, followed by a surname. A surname is the family name passed down through the father's line. Historically the Christian name would have been biblical, but this is rarely the case today. One or more middle names may be given, which may be chosen because they remember a close relative or friend, or just because they are liked. As family structures have changed the family name may now be that of the mother or may be 'double barrelled' to combine both parents' surnames.

### **Religious practices**

Most white British people have historically been Christian. In the 2021 census, 112935 Milton Keynes residents (all ethnicities) identified as Christian with the No religion recorded at 108953.

Religious practices follow the usual range of Christian denominations found in Britain; such as Anglican, Baptist, Methodist and Free Churches.

# Religion and belief

## The Bahá'í Faith

### Background

Bahá'ism is a relatively new, worldwide religion. It is an independent religion, which originated in Persia (now Iran) in the middle of the 19th century. The central theme is the unity of humankind and is based on the principles of peace, justice, equality and human rights. Bahá'ís should work towards making this possible – service to humanity is seen as a form of worship.

The founder, Bahá'u'lláh (meaning 'Glory of God') is regarded as the latest in a long line of Messengers from God, which include Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus and Mohammed.

Two pivotal figures gave birth to the Bahá'í Faith, the Báb (Ali-Muhammad), and Bahá'u'lláh (Husayn-Ali).

Báb (pron. 'barb') - The Báb ('Gate/Door') arose to usher in the dawn of a new spiritual year for humanity. Born in 1819, Báb demonstrated such extraordinary abilities that his teacher, unable to teach the Báb anything, could only send him home. As a young merchant, the Báb demonstrated a profoundly spiritual and pure character, transforming the customs and manners of those around him. He proclaimed his calling in the year 1844 and, after several years of great activity and persecution, he was martyred in 1850. His twofold mission was to infuse the land with a new spiritual attraction, challenge the corruption of the land, and pave the way for the coming of Bahá'u'lláh.

Bahá'u'lláh (pron. 'bar-how-o-laah') - Bahá'u'lláh ('Glory of God') arose to bring about the new spiritual year promised by the Báb. Bahá'u'lláh was born in Tehran in 1817, and quickly became renowned as the 'Father of the Poor'. Soon after the Báb's martyrdom, almost all the Báb's followers had turned to Bahá'u'lláh, recognising Him as the One promised by the Báb. Despite a life full of persecution, he was globally triumphant and the centre of inspiration for innumerable individuals. Bahá'u'lláh's ascension took place in 29 May 1892.

Bahá'ís believe that there is only one God, although known by different names in different languages such as Allah, Jehovah, Khoda, God. There are no clergy and work in the service of humanity is regarded as worship. Each believer can pray in his or her own home, and there are no rituals. Fasting and obligatory prayer constitute the two pillars of the Bahá'í Faith but as each person's faith is regarded as a personal matter between

himself and God, fasting and prayer are considered as spiritual duties which cannot be forced upon the individual.

The spirit of those present, can make every place sacred; therefore, Bahá'ís worship whenever best arises; in homes, hired venues or Bahá'í Centres. In each continent there are houses of worship built wholly for the benefit of people of all spiritual paths, the most famous being The Lotus of Bahapur in India. All Temples have the unique feature of having nine entrances as a symbol for the followers of the world's major religions to join together and unite in prayer.

### **Birth, death and marriage**

Bahá'ís believe in an after-life. If the person has striven to follow spiritual teachings, then when their body dies their soul will be closer to God in the spiritual world. The body is treated with great respect and cremation is not permitted. Burial should be within an hour's journey of the place of death. At the funeral, an obligatory prayer for the dead person is recited.

Bahá'ís see marriage as a spiritual bond between two people, not just a physical one and as the most important source of love and unity in the world. It is a shelter for the well-being and happiness of several generations. Men and women should be equal within the marriage, with no one partner being dominant. Husband and wife should be faithful to each other under all circumstances. Divorce is permitted but strongly discouraged. Couples wishing to divorce must live separately for a year to give time to be reconciled.

### **Festivals**

The main festivals and Holy Days are:

- Náv-Rúz (21 March) – New Year's Day. End of a 19-day fast period.
- Ridván (21 April – 2 May): 12 day celebration of Bahá'ú'lláh's declaration as the new Messenger of God and of his mission. The 1st, 9th and 12th days are holy. Bahá'í communities elect their governing bodies on the 1st day.
- Declaration of the Báb (23 May)
- Ascension of Bahá'ú'lláh (23 May)
- Martyrdom of the Báb (9 July)
- Birthday of the Báb (20 October)
- Birthday of Bahá'ú'lláh (12 November)

### **Pilgrimage**

Wherever possible, Bahá'ís are encouraged to travel to the central sites of the faith in Haifa and Akka; the shrines, the gardens and the Universal House of Justice.

## **Sacred Texts**

The original writings of the major world faiths are all considered sacred and inspirational. Bahá'ís are encouraged to read books outside the faith. In English, pronouns ('He,' 'They') are capitalised for all agents of God's will to man, including the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and Abdu'l-Bahá, and the founders of the other religions.

Interpretation: No individual, group or body, including the highest international body, is permitted to interpret the faith. Individuals can have personal interpretations and share them in a friendly atmosphere, but it is forbidden to assert one's interpretation as right over another's. Whenever possible elected bodies apply a pragmatic implementation relevant to the understanding and needs of the times through consultation with others.

There about five million followers in the world, with an influence disproportionate to their numbers. Geographically, the Bahá'í Faith is the second most widespread religion after Christianity. The UK has 6000 Bahá'ís.

## **Buddhism**

### **Background**

Buddhism originated with the teaching of Siddhartha Gautama (also known as Shakyamuni Buddha) who lived in Northern India around 500 BC. He became known as The Buddha or enlightened one after he had achieved enlightenment or insight about the nature of suffering in the world.

### **Buddhism in Milton Keynes**

According to census information from 2021, 0.5% of the population of Milton Keynes describe themselves as Buddhist. The most visible Buddhist groups are the Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhists who attend the Peace Pagoda and Buddhist Temple at Willen Lake, and the Milton Keynes Buddhist Vihara in Willen.

The practices followed by Buddhists vary with the culture that they belong to.

### **Sacred texts**

Some of the most important Buddhist texts are the Tripitaka, also known as the Pali Canon, so called because it is written in the Pali language which comes from India, the Chinese Canon, written in an old form of Chinese and the Tibetan Canon.

### **Festivals and holy days**

There is no specific day of the week set aside for worship in Buddhism. Depending on their ethnic background, Buddhists may take time off work to celebrate certain festivals such as Wesak, the date of the Buddha's birth, which falls in May, Parinirvana Day on 15th. February (which commemorates the Buddha's passing) or New Year (which is celebrated on different dates in different countries). Individually, Buddhists may also

decide to withdraw from the world for a Retreat, during which time they meditate and pursue their spiritual development.

### **Birth, Death and Marriage**

No particular ceremonies are performed at birth, although monks may be invited into the home to chant, or the baby may be taken to a temple. Buddhist funerals vary a great deal between cultures. Buddhists see death as natural and inevitable, and this is the main theme of Buddhist funerals. The dead are most often cremated but may be buried. There is no specific Buddhist tradition for marriage.

### **Food preferences and taboos**

There are no forbidden foods for Buddhists, and diet varies between cultures. However, Buddhism emphasises the avoidance of intentional killing, so therefore many Buddhists are vegetarians, and some also do not eat eggs or may be vegan.

## **Christianity**

### **Background**

Christianity has an estimated 2.2 billion adherents and is the world's largest religion. Christianity is the state religion of many countries, including England.

Christianity is a monotheistic religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth as presented in the New Testament. It teaches that Jesus is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, and that in Him God became human. Because of this, Christians commonly refer to Jesus as Christ or Messiah.

The word 'Christianity' is the label that has been widely accepted by the secular and church-world to describe the practice of faith by the followers or disciples of Jesus Christ. The term 'Church,' describes any coming together to worship, but also serves as a term to refer to the worldwide body of Christians.

The three largest groups in the world of Christianity are the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox churches, and the various Protestant churches. The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox patriarchates split from one another in the East-West Schism of 1054 AD, and Protestantism began during the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, splitting from the Roman Catholic Church.

Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah, as prophesied in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament Bible. The foundation of Christian theology is expressed in the early Christian ecumenical creeds. These professions state that Jesus suffered, died, was buried, and was resurrected from the dead to open heaven to those who believe in Him and trust Him for the remission of their sins (salvation). Most denominations teach that Jesus will return to judge all humans, the living and dead, and



grant eternal life to his followers. He is considered the model of a virtuous life, and revealed as the physical incarnation of God. Christians call the message of Jesus Christ the Gospel (good news) and hence refer to the earliest written accounts of his life, death and resurrection as the Gospels.

Christianity regards the Bible, a collection of books written in two parts, the Old and the New Testament, as the authoritative Word of God. Notwithstanding debates over issues of inerrancy, Christians believe that under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, human authors wrote the Bible. Fundamental Christians therefore see the Word of God as infallible.

Most Christian groups assemble for communal worship on Sunday, although some, such as the Seventh Day Adventists, worship on a Saturday. Scripture readings are drawn from the Old and New Testaments, but especially the Gospels. Instruction is usually given based on these readings, called a sermon, or homily. There are a variety of congregational prayers, including thanksgiving and intercession, which occur throughout the service and take a variety of forms including recited, responsive, silent, or sung. The Lord's Prayer, or Our Father, is regularly prayed. The Eucharist (also called Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper) is the part of liturgical worship that consists of a consecrated meal of bread and wine.

Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Eastern Christians, and traditional Protestant communities frame worship around a liturgical calendar. This includes holy days, periods of fasting such as Lent, and other pious events such as commemorating saints. Christian groups that do not follow a liturgical tradition often retain certain celebrations, such as Christmas, celebrating the birth of Christ; Easter, celebrating the resurrection of Christ; and Pentecost, celebrating the coming of the Holy Spirit. A few churches do not use a liturgical calendar, for example, Pentecostals.

Most churches have long expressed ideals of being reconciled with each other, and the 20th century saw Christian ecumenism develop, inspired by a vision of unity as God's purpose not just for the church but for the whole world.

In Milton Keynes, at the time of planning and setting out the city, the then national leaders of the Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic and United Reformed Churches united to create ecumenical churches across the new city in which those five denominations shared. The Church of Christ the Cornerstone is the first such ecumenical city centre church in the United Kingdom. Today, ecumenical parishes exist in the north, south, east, west and centre of the city, and form part of a vibrant, and ethnically mixed church scene right across Milton Keynes.

Alongside this unusually strong ecumenical presence, there is a very wide range of other churches across the city amounting to about 150 worshipping communities. Although the larger churches gather people from all over the world, some churches are largely representative of a specific culture or language group reflecting the wide diversity of

nationalities in the city. New churches are continually being created, including innovative and experimental expressions such as Church Without Walls, St. Mark's and St. Joseph's.

The churches in Milton Keynes contribute significantly to the life of the city, not only through the provision of worship, but through various outreach programmes, often concerned with addressing social need and through individual Christians working out the implications of their faith in their daily lives. Some of this work can be seen in some of the well-known institutions in the city such as the YMCA or the Christian Foundation in Wolverton and is evident in the Foodbank, the Winter Night Shelter, the MK Storehouse and a host of smaller projects. The churches provide clergy, known as chaplains, in the local hospital and prison service amongst other places where they seek to serve the people in those institutions. In addition, the churches have a long history in education which continues to this day in the provision of Anglican and Roman Catholic schools in the city as well as the ecumenical Christ the Sower school and supplementary schools such as SIEVE MK.

Gathering in 'meeting houses' rather than churches, there is a strong Quaker presence in Milton Keynes. Although historically a Christian group, 'Quakers' have moved away from calling themselves Christian although Jesus is an important figure and influence in most Quaker Meetings. Quakers have no creed, no central religious dogma, and they welcome anyone, of any faith to join them in worship, without requiring them to relinquish their beliefs. In the UK their way of worship is to sit in a gathered, listening silence – there are no rituals and no religious leaders. During worship, which usually lasts an hour, anyone can stand and give a ministry.

### **Birth, death and marriage**

Christening is the traditional naming ceremony where a baby is anointed in holy water from a font in church. Family members or friends will be allocated as "Godparents" to the child with a responsibility for their upbringing in the ways and values of the church.

Baptism is the ritual act, with the use of water, by which a person is admitted to membership of the Church. Whilst it is not necessary to carry out any special ceremony soon after childbirth, christening is the traditional naming ceremony where a baby is anointed in holy water from a font in church. Family members or friends will be allocated as "Godparents" to the child with a responsibility for their upbringing in the ways and values of the church. Many Christians practice baptism on profession of faith during youth or adulthood. This is usually carried out by full immersion except where health or ability prevents this.

The Christian understanding of marriage is that it is God's gift in creation, common to all humanity. Traditionally it has three purposes or "goods": companionship, raising children and enjoying sex. When Christians marry, they may practice their faith in the home, such as praying together and celebrating Christian festivals in their family. For some Christians marriage is viewed as a sacrament, a means of divine blessing and an

unbreakable bond and their vows are made in the presence of God in a church service. Rings are exchanged, two witnesses must be present and sign in a register and the priest pronounces God's blessing of them. Other Christians view it as a matter of human agreement or covenant, but in which the Church has a duty to provide guidance, support and blessing. The couple might marry in a civil registration ceremony and then come to church for a blessing. Most churches recognise male-female marriage only whilst giving the partners equal status. However, a growing number of Christians accept same-sex marriage, and some may even be able to marry in church. Divorce is seen by some Christians as impossible, but others regard it as undesirable but sometimes a necessary if unfortunate course of action when a marriage has broken down without hope of being mended. Remarriage is possible under certain conditions in some churches but not all. Remaining unmarried (being celibate) is an equally legitimate and blessed way of life, especially if it is entered into as part of a calling to lead a religious life as a monk or nun. Roman Catholic priests are not allowed to marry. Christ himself never married but spoke about the sanctity of marriage. Some Christians marry people of other faiths and beliefs and Christian tradition varies about whether this is acceptable or not, although it is not forbidden in the Bible.

The Christian belief about death is that it is final, and reincarnation is not recognised in the Bible's teachings. Christians believe in the resurrection of the body (and with it also the soul or spirit) although the form the body will take is not physical. The point at which resurrection happens is not clear, either shortly after death, or when Christ returns to earth at the end of all things. The death of a Christian is viewed as a point of passing from this earthly life in the hope of life with God in what can be thought of as heaven, although this is never in a physical place. Usually a funeral service is held in which the life of the person is remembered with thanksgiving, those who are left are offered comfort from prayers, the Bible, and the support of the Christian community and the deceased person's soul is committed to God's keeping. This may be followed by either burial or cremation, sometimes in a churchyard, though this is not compulsory. If it is possible, devout Christians call a priest to say prayers shortly before a person dies, offering a final blessing. Anniversaries of death are sometimes observed and once a year on All Soul's Day (popularly known as Halloween) the beloved who have died are remembered in a special service when their names are read out and candles lit. Their names may also be kept in a special memorial book in the church.

### **Dress**

A tradition of dressing smartly ("Sunday best clothing") is sometimes maintained for church attendance, although there is no specific requirement for formal dress and in many churches dress is casual. Different denominations maintain their own traditions for the dress of priests and ministers.

### **Festivals**

Most Christians celebrate the birth of Christ at Christmas and his resurrection at Easter. "Saints' day" celebrations are also common, particularly with Anglican, Roman Catholic

and Orthodox worshippers. Other festivals include harvest thanksgiving, Remembrance Sunday, thanksgiving for deceased loved ones and New Year observances.

### **Food**

Bread and wine have special significance in the Christian faith representing the body and blood of Christ. The celebration of the sacrament is a ritual requiring the eating of a wafer/piece of bread and the drinking of wine (which may be non-alcoholic or fruit juice) from a cup to remember that Christ died for them.

Many Christians fast during the period known as “Lent”. Lent is the period of 40 days before Easter in the Christian calendar; it is a time of reflection for many Christians as they prepare to remember and celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The 40 days of Lent relates to the 40 days of fasting undertaken by Christ in the wilderness prior to taking up his ministry.

There are no foods which are forbidden in Christianity, although eating in moderation and responsibility for the environment influence many Christian’s personal diets

### **Pilgrimage**

Locations of Christian miracles and martyrdom are considered important centres of pilgrimage, particularly for Roman Catholics. Many travel to these sites in hope of cures for ill-health, while for others it is purely a spiritual journey. Many Catholics undertake a visit to Rome to see the Pope, the head of the Catholic church.

### **Sacred Texts**

The Bible is Christians’ authoritative sacred text and is divided into the Old and New Testaments. The New Testament, chronicling the life of Christ and the period after his death and resurrection, is of primary significance to the Christians, along with letters written to early Christian communities about the faith. The Old Testament is also revered as the word of God and a regular source of reference. The Old Testament chronicles God’s relationship with creation and the children of Israel, in the period before the Christ. It is made up of the Jewish Torah including law, prophets, wisdom and history. Some figures and stories in the Bible are accepted also by many Muslim believers.

## **Hinduism**

### **Background**

Hinduism is the name given to a family of religions and cultures, which began and still flourishes in India and throughout the world. Hinduism is a way of life, traditionally known as Vedic Dharma.

Hindu traditions are influenced by many factors and there are many central beliefs, practices and concepts, but there is no central dogma or uniform rules. Hinduism has no

founder and there is no single idea of God. It is believed that there is one God, but that a person can find him in different forms. Hence, Hindus believe that an individual can exercise his or her religion in several ways that will ultimately lead to the same spiritual end.

Despite the diversity of Hinduism, there are fundamental beliefs and values, which all devout Hindus acknowledge:

- the belief in one supreme spirit
- the immortal soul which exists in all living things
- reincarnation
- Karma; the natural cycle of reward and punishment for every act and thought
- non-violence (Ahimsa)
- supreme duty of seeing truth and giving forgiveness
- to live as virtuously as one can.

The soul (Atman) is immortal and the body is mortal. The goal of all life is to escape from the illusory world (Moksha) by worship and devotion so that the spirit can unite with the supreme spirit. Until this happens all living things are reborn repeatedly as part of the reincarnation cycle. The life form in the present cycle is related to the actions in the previous life.

Karma is the system of reward and punishment for all acts and thoughts. Good Karma takes one closer to final release from the cycle of rebirth and bad Karma pushes one down in the cycle. Hindus believe that humans cannot understand the full nature of the supreme spirit; therefore, they need to have an easier way to approach and worship it.

Worship is focused on the creations of the universe and they are often personified as deities or gods and goddesses. Whichever god provides the focus, the worship is towards the 'Ultimate Reality' (supreme spirit). The three main personifications are:

- Brahma – the Creator
- Vishnu – the Preserver
- Shiva – the Destroyer

There are various forms of incarnation of these gods; for example, Rama and Krishna are incarnations of Vishnu.

Three more gods and goddesses are associated with Hindus:

- Ganesh – the son of Shiva whose blessing is sought when a new venture is started; for example, a business, a course of study or a wedding. He is symbolised as an elephant head.
- Hanuman – is represented as a monkey and symbolises devoted friendship and loyalty
- Lakshmi – the goddess of prosperity and wealth. Puja (worship) is essentially an

individual responsibility. Most Hindu homes contain a small shrine where the family can worship. The shrine will have a deity (Murti) of the god or goddess. There is no set time for Puja.

As well as praying at home most Hindus go to the Temple (Mandir). Everyone removes their shoes before entering and women cover their heads. In the Mandir there is a shrine and, as a mark of reverence, everyone entering bows or kneels to the shrine. The Pandit (Brahmin Priest) performs the religious ceremonies, along with Bhajans (the singing of hymns).

Some Hindus use a mala (a string of beads) to recite their prayers. The mala must be touched with clean hands and treated with reverence. Many Sikhs would also use a mala in reciting prayers.

Traditionally, Hinduism is divided into hundreds of interdependent “castes” based on a number of factors including social status, occupation, geographical area and religious beliefs. The origin of the Hindu caste system dates back many thousands of years, with the belief that caste represents the level of spiritual gain, all related to karma. Some castes and sub-castes developed rigid structures whereby religious belief, worship and social life were all strongly defined by the caste to which the person belonged. A Hindu would abide by his caste structure and its rules; however, the caste system is beginning to change.

### **Birth, death and marriage**

In Hinduism, customs and ceremonies related to birth and childhood vary between families and communities. In some communities, after the birth of a baby a member of the family writes ‘Ohm’ (the sign representing the Supreme Spirit) on the baby’s tongue with ghee (clarified butter) or honey. This ceremony usually takes place when the baby arrives home from the hospital. On the sixth day after the birth, the women of the family gather to give thanks, to congratulate the mother and to give presents to the child. Traditionally, Hindus regard the sixth day as the day that a child’s fate is written.

After the birth, the parents would usually wish to have the child’s horoscope read by a priest (Pandit) or an astrologer. Hindus believe that astrological influences have a major impact on each child’s character, personality and future.

In some Hindu sects, the child’s head is shaved at a family celebration. The timing of this event varies from six weeks to a year or even later. Some families delay this until the child makes a pilgrimage to a special shrine.

It is important for a devout Hindu who is very ill or is dying to receive spiritual comfort from the holy scripts, especially the Bhagavad Gita. The Pandit, the Hindu priest, performs the reciting of these holy rites.

Some devout Hindu patients may wish to die at home. This has religious significance. The dying person and family members could experience unnecessary distress if death

occurs in hospital. The eldest son is usually in charge of the funeral arrangements. Post-mortems are acceptable, but it is very important that the body is released for cremation as soon as possible.

Hindus cremate the bodies of all adults. Conversely, young children and babies are buried. Cremation or burial should take place as soon as possible. In the sub-continent, it is within twenty-four hours. Until the cremation, close members of the family fast. The eldest son has the sacred responsibility of lighting the funeral pyre. During the cremation, prayers are recited, and hymns read. Afterwards, the ashes are collected and scattered in a river. After the funeral ceremony, everyone attending returns home in a state of mourning and most people will take a shower. During the days following the death, relatives and friends unite and share in grief; giving the family comfort, company and support. Women wear white after the death to signify mourning. Some Hindu families may hold a reading of one of the holy books.

Marriage in Hinduism is regarded as a sacrament as well as a major social change. It is usually seen as the bringing together of two families as well as the two individuals. Traditionally, families of a young couple always arranged the marriage, but these days the young people themselves play an important part in choosing their partner.

In some castes a dowry is given to daughters on their wedding. Traditionally wedding ceremonies, along with the celebrations, continue for several days. The actual wedding ceremony lasts for a few hours and is held in a hall in front of a large congregation made up of relatives and friends. The bride and groom are seated in front of a small fire alongside the Pandit who recites the marriage prayers. This recital symbolises purity.

Divorce goes against Karma, thus breaking the tradition. Divorce in Hinduism is slowly surfacing, but it is still regarded as shameful and a disgrace to the family name and honour and will only take place when the marital situation is desperate.

### **Dress**

Hindu men and women should be modest about their own bodies and to some Hindus any exposure is found offensive. Hindu women should cover the whole of the body. The common traditional dress is the sari, blouse and underskirt. Traditional dress varies depending upon which part of the sub-continent a person comes from. A Punjabi Hindu would wear a salwar and kameez. Hindu women in Britain often wear western clothes, trousers or a long skirt so that the legs are covered. Hindu men mainly wear western clothes. To some Hindus, nudity in the presence of other men may be offensive.

The traditional costume for men is a kameez, a long loose shirt and a dhoti. The dhoti is usually five or six metres of white material wrapped around the waist and drawn between the legs. Some Hindu men wear a sacred thread called jannoi, which is worn both day and night. Older boys receive a jannoi when they are about to enter adulthood and take on adult and religious responsibilities

## **Family**

Traditionally, a large family is regarded as prosperity, survival and a blessing to the marriage. In Hinduism, religion and culture stress the importance of the value of having a family. Children are seen as the purpose of the marriage and motherhood is the woman's fulfilment. It is also important that families have at least one son so that he can light the funeral pyre at his father's cremation. Without the son to perform this crucial rite, the father will suffer in his next life. There is no religious prohibition against family planning, but couples are now beginning to restrict the size of their family. Abortion is strongly disapproved and is only considered if the pregnancy is problematic.

## **Festivals**

Diwali (Deepavali or Divali) is the Indian festival of lights, usually lasting five days and celebrated sometime between mid-October and mid-November. Diwali symbolizes the spiritual victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance. It is also celebrated by Sikhs and Jains.

Navratri – The festival of nine nights is one of the most prominent festivals of Hinduism dedicated to chiefly Mother Durga an incarnation of Goddess Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva. It is celebrated all over India from Bombay to Tamil Nadu. It coincides with the harvest season. This is the most pious and pure time in the complete Hindu calendar. These nine nights are dedicated to the three main goddesses of Hinduism – Parvati, Lakshmi and Sarasvati.

A particularly colourful and exuberant festival is Holi, the festival of colour/spring/love that celebrates the victory of good over evil.

## **Food**

Hindus believe in Karma (that all forms of life are sacred) hence, many do not eat meat, fish, eggs or any food that is made from these ingredients. The cow is regarded as a sacred animal; therefore, beef is strictly prohibited.

By not having a common authoritative set of regulations within the ideal of vegetarianism, individuals, families, sects and castes can make their own decisions on the diet. Alcohol is not permitted, but many Hindus consume alcohol. Tobacco is regarded as a harmful narcotic and most devout Hindu sects do not smoke.

Fasting plays a major role in Hinduism and women mostly carry out a fast, the length of which varies from one day to several days.

## **Naming conventions**

The child's name is usually chosen on the tenth day after birth. Normally the Pandit decides the first letter, but the Astrologer could also make this decision. The oldest member of the family, usually a grandparent, chooses the name beginning with that letter.



In the case of Hindu boys, the first element is the father's personal name, the second element is the child's personal name.

	Family Name	Personal Name
Grandfather:	Suppiah	Arumugam
Father:	Arumugan	Ponnambalam
Son:	Ponnambalam	Rajaratham
Daughter:	Haridevi	Ponnambalam

Christian boys may follow one of the several naming systems, including the western pattern of personal name and family name e.g. Andrew da Silva, and the Tamil Hindu pattern e.g. Selvadurai Andrew. Both Hindu and Christian girls follow the western pattern of personal name and father's family name e.g. Haridevi Selvadurai.

### **Pilgrimage**

Many Hindus go on a pilgrimage to receive blessings from illness and for sick members of the family, as well as receive religious rites. A particularly holy place of pilgrimage is Varanasi on the sacred River Ganga (The Ganges).

### **Sacred texts**

Vedas are the accumulated treasure of Spiritual Laws or guiding scriptures discovered by different holy men, prophets or messengers (Rishi) at various times in history. The most well-known scripture is the Bhagavad Gita. The Vedas are written in Sanskrit and have been dated back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE.

## **Humanism**

### **Background**

From the time of the ancient Greeks and throughout history, there have been individuals who have rejected the religious beliefs of their own time in favour of humanistic philosophy. Some, like Socrates of Athens, have paid with their lives for their independence of thought. Others, like Voltaire, fled persecution. But Humanism as a movement and a viable way of life really developed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in several different countries in Europe and North America, where there already existed several small "Ethical Societies." "The Conway Place Ethical Society", founded in 1787 by a group of freethinkers, who believed it was possible to live a moral life without religion, still meets today in Red Lion Square, Camden, London.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Humanism became international, with each country forming its own organisation and following its own programme of activities but adhering to the same basic principles. Humanism does not evangelise but attracts a wide range of followers by

its philosophy of life, which respects and shares the moral values of the world's major religions.

However, it differs from these in its core belief, that we have just the one precious life we know, and it is our duty to make it a good one. Humanists' faith is in humanity rather than any higher power considering that each of person must take responsibility for their own behaviour and its consequences, without reference to any deity. Some Humanists are atheists and others are agnostics but they all accept that there is no scientific evidence for life after death.

### **Current Situation**

The British Humanist Association was founded in 1896 and changed its name in 2017 to Humanists UK. The President is Professor Alice Roberts and the Vice-President is Jim al-Khalili. The Humanist Society of Scotland is a separate organisation with similar principles. Humanists UK has two lines of action: community services and campaigns.

#### **Community Services:**

- An All-Party Parliamentary Humanist Group, currently chaired by Tommy Sheppard and co-chaired by Baroness Bakewell.
- Affiliated humanist groups meet monthly in most towns. MK has its own group, as does Bedford. These are primarily discussion-groups, sometimes with a visiting speaker. Members often undertake charitable activities related to Humanism, such as speaking in schools, supporting the local food bank, or hospital visiting. MK Group meetings are open to all. The group has its own website.
- A network of 485 professional Humanist celebrants providing non-religious ceremonies for funerals, memorials, weddings and namings
- 249 pastoral carers for hospitals and prisons
- Three public lectures per year by important speakers on contentious issues. In 2020 Chris Packham spoke on conservation, Francesca Stavrakopoulos on sexism, and Robert Peston on Humanism in politics.
- Website with general information about all aspects of Humanism in the UK, and a specialist area for teachers, with courses, resources and material for assemblies
- A presence and the laying of a wreath at Remembrance Day ceremonies
- Specialist interest groups including LGBT Humanists, Young Humanists, and Humanist Students.

#### **Campaigns:**

- To raise awareness of issues that affect all everyone's' lives, and to influence public policy to reflect Humanist values. Humanists UK works to alleviate what it sees as injustices in society. The two longest ongoing campaigns are: The legalisation of Humanist marriage in England (legal in Scotland since 1985, now more popular than religious marriage and the legalisation of assisted dying for the terminally ill.

- Raising awareness of Humanists suffering persecution in intolerant countries where any alternative to the state religion is considered blasphemy, for which the penalty is death. The President of The Nigerian Humanist Association, Mubarak Bala, is in prison awaiting trial.
- Faith to Faithless which supports formerly religious people who have chosen to become apostate and may be in danger.

### **Customs and Traditions**

Humanism has no sacred book, no rituals and no place of worship. But it commemorates specific dates in the calendar by sponsoring lectures, including:

- Charles Darwin's birthday – 11 February
- International Women's Day (March) remembering Rosalind Franklin.

### **Humanist Ceremonies**

Humanists are completely free to choose their own setting and wording for the three key moments in life that are marked by ceremonies. Their celebrant works with them to evolve a ceremony that is true to who they are, whether it be a funeral, marriage or naming occasion. Under English law, couples wanting humanist weddings must register their marriage for it to have legal recognition. Their real emotional commitment will be made later in their Humanist ceremony.

In Humanist namings, the role of Guide Parents is very important and they make detailed personal commitments offering the child lifelong guidance and moral support.

Every funeral ceremony is different and personal in choice of music, readings and acts of remembrance. The celebrant is the conduit through which flow the family's wishes. The aim is to give them back a sense of control at a time when they feel only their loss. A Humanist funeral is a positive experience, its main purpose being to help the mourners come to terms with their bereavement.

## **Islam**

### **Background**

Islam is an Arabic word meaning peace and submission; therefore, all Muslims should believe in non-violence. A Muslim is someone who submits to God's will, as expressed in the Qur'an, the holy book of Muslims. 'Allah' is the personal name God has chosen. Islam is the second largest religion in the world. It is based on the revelations given by arch-angel Gabriel to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him - pbuh) in Arabia during the 7th Century C.E. Muhammad (pbuh) is the last and final Prophet of Allah and the Qur'an is the final book to be sent by God. Some Muslim beliefs are similar to those of Jews and Christians. They believe, for example, that there is heaven and hell. They share a common historical root, as reflected in the story of Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Isaac). Muslims respect Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus) as great

prophets. This is celebrated in the festival of Eid ul Adha (Big Eid) Islam emphasises two elements – faith and practice.

Muslims believe that when all people submit to Allah's will and live by the Qur'an, peace will come to everyone. The Muslim greeting is "Assalaamu Alaikum", which means "peace be upon you". The response is "Wa Alaikumus Salaam".

There are six articles of faith (Imaan):

- Belief in one God (Allah)
- Belief in all of God's angels
- Belief in all of God's books
- Belief in all of God's prophets
- Belief in the Day of Judgement
- Belief in the decrees of God (submission to His will)

Five duties are accepted. They are known as the 'Five Pillars:'

- Shahaadah – confess belief (there is no god but Allah, Muhammad is the messenger of Allah)
- Salaah– pray five times a day
- Zakaah– give obligatory charity for the needy
- Sawm – fast in the month of Ramadan
- Hajj - pilgrimage to Makkah.

Muslims also believe in Jihaad, which means 'to strive and struggle'. The Lesser Jihaad is to fight the enemy (in self-defence) who is attacking the Muslims or their interests. The Greater Jihaad is to strive to overcome carnal desires and evil inclinations and thus become a better person.

There are a number of Islamic religious denominations, each of which have significant theological and legal differences from each other but possess similar essential beliefs. The major schools of thought are Sunni and Shi'a. Despite religious and often political differences, Shi'a and Sunni Muslims share the main articles of Islamic belief and are considered by most to be brethren in faith. According to most sources, present estimates indicate that approximately 85% of the world's Muslims are Sunni and approximately 15% are Shi'a.

The most recent denomination is the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. The movement was formed in 1889 by Hadrat Mirza Ghulam-Ahmad (AS) and its advocates practice in Milton Keynes. The movement seeks to re-establish the caliphate, however, they are not recognised by the rest of the Muslim world. The Government of Pakistan has officially declared them as Non-Muslims.

The Muslim era is based on the Hijrah (emigration) of the prophet Mohammed (pbuh) from Makkah to Medina in the year 622 C.E. This year was later adopted as the first in the Muslim Era. The year 2024 C.E. is 1445 AH (after Hijrah).

### **Birth, death and marriage**

When a Muslim baby is born, the birth rite is performed. It is bathed and the Adhan (birth rite) is said softly into its right ear. The Iqamah (minor adhan) is then said into the left ear. Thus, the first words the baby hears are those which will be so important to him/her throughout life. The selection of the right and proper name is very important in Islam and advice is often sought from an older relative. A boy's name may be chosen from one of the 99 names of Allah. If this is the case, respect must be shown for this name and a prefix is put in front of it. The prefix 'Abd' means 'servant of', thus the name Abdullah means, 'servant of God,' which will then be followed by other names. Other names are chosen from great Muslims in the past, so many boys are called Muhammad in honour of the Prophet (pbuh).

The child's head is also shaved within the first week. This symbolises the removal of the uncleanness associated with the act of birth and the purity of the baby. The weight of the hair in silver is then given in charity, but most people will give many times that to the poor. In some cultures, sweets (mithai) are shared among friends and families to celebrate the birth of the new-born child.

The circumcision of the male child usually takes place during the first month. It is an important ceremony of initiation into the faith. Muslims, like Jews believe that God commanded Ibrahim (Prophet Abraham) to circumcise all males in his household.

A dying Muslim's face should be turned towards his right. After death the body is washed and covered with a white sheet, then buried as soon as possible with the face facing Makkah. In some traditions, continuous prayers are recited for 40 days at the home of the deceased and family and friends visit during this period. On the 40<sup>th</sup> day, a gathering is held to remember the deceased. There is a dedicated area for Muslim burials in several cemeteries in Milton Keynes.

In Islam, marriage is seen as uniting not only a man and a woman, but also their families. The majority of Muslim parents will arrange the marriage of a son or daughter. Sons and daughters are allowed to refuse their parents' choice, but usually have complete faith in their parents' ability to choose the right partner. Although Islam forbids any relationship before marriage, parents allow the bride and groom to meet beforehand in the presence of both families and thereafter usually on several supervised occasions to get to know each other. Consent of the bride and groom is a legal requirement. Forced marriages are forbidden in Islam.

A Muslim wedding can take place anywhere, in a hired hall, a local mosque or often in the bride's home. Where it takes place and what is worn depends, on which country the

family originates from. The wedding ceremony itself is a very simple one lasting only a few minutes and Muslims do not require anyone to officiate. However, the local Imam (religious leader) is usually asked to conduct the ceremony, which is a civil contract.

In the UK, the couple either has a registrar present, or register their marriage at a registry office, usually beforehand. At no point during the ceremony do the bride and groom meet. The bride stays in one room with the female guests while the groom remains with the male guests in another. Traditionally, the size and lavishness of the feast which follows will depend upon the means of the bride's parents who will have saved up for many months or years to pay for the reception for their daughter. However, modern Islamic marriages mean that both the bride and groom pay the costs.

Divorce (Talaq) is not approved, though it is acceptable on grounds of adultery, impotence or wilful neglect to maintain one's family. The only official reason a Muslim man can divorce his wife is because her behaviour is immoral. If a couple reaches a situation where they believe their marriage is not working, they must first try to sort it out with the assistance of their families. For similar reasons, a wife can also ask for divorce and this is known as 'Khulah'. If the husband refuses to divorce her, then she can take the matter to the Qadi (judge) who can annul the marriage on the wife's request, but this is not readily available.

### **Family**

Muslim families are traditionally extended or joint families living together or in close proximity to each other. Within Islam, men and women are treated as equals. Traditionally the man of the house has a responsibility to provide financially. However, in modern times this responsibility is shared. Muslim women are allowed the right to education and a career. Additionally, they have the right to independent ownership of property and income and none of these rights change with marriage.

### **Festivals**

There are two main 'Eid' festivals in the Muslim calendar. All Muslims celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr at the end of Ramadan the month of fasting, and Eid-ul-Adha, which celebrates the end of the Hajj. Children are entitled to a day off school for each.

Muslims would also celebrate other special occasions, for example Lailat-ul-Qadr, (the Night of Power), Lailat-ul-Bara'ah (the Night of Absolution of sins) and Lailat-ul-Mi'raaj (the Night of Ascension). The Islamic year is based upon the lunar calendar and therefore the festivals occur earlier each calendar year.

Shia Muslims celebrate an additional three Eids in the Islamic calendar, although a day off is not required:

- Eid ul Ghadeer
- Eid ul Zahra
- Eid ul mubahila

Shia Muslims commemorate the tragedy of Kerabla (a town in Iraq) in which the grandson of the Prophet pbuh, Imam Hussein (a.s.) and his household were martyred. Children and young people will be expected to take a day off school on the day of 'Ashura' to attend religious prayers in remembrance of this event in the mosque. In addition, they observe the 40<sup>th</sup> day after the event of Ashura and children will also be expected to take a day off school. During this Islamic month, known as Muharram, birthdays and special occasions will not be celebrated. Ashura falls on the 10th day of Muharram.

### **Food**

There are some religious restrictions on which food can be eaten. Foods which are not allowed to be eaten are called 'haram' (forbidden). All meat must be slaughtered using 'halal' (permissible) methods, with a recited dedication (shahada). Pork and its products, shellfish and gelatine from non-halal animals are not permissible. Apart from these restrictions foods eaten by Muslims reflect their cultural context and traditions.

Muslims fast during the daytime in the month of Ramadan. This has implications for schools as pupils may be listless or lacking their normal energy to participate in activities such as PE.

### **Pilgrimage**

Pilgrimage is in two parts. One part can be performed at any time of the year and is called the Umra. The other can only be done on specific days once a year. This is called the Hajj.

The Hajj is Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, the holiest city for Muslims. Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam it is mandatory religious duty for Muslims that Hajj must be carried out at least once in their lifetime. The Hajj takes place on the last month of the Islamic calendar (Dhu al-Hijjah). After the rites of Hajj have been performed Eid al-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice) is celebrated.

Apart from the social and spiritual benefit of Hajj to the individual, it is here that Muslims from all over the globe meet and interact. It links the whole of the Muslim world where all abandon personal desires in pursuit of knowledge and closeness to God. Any person who has been for Hajj is addressed as 'Haaji'.

### **Places of worship**

The place of worship for Muslims is a mosque. Muslims prefer to call it in its Arabic name 'Masjid' meaning a place of prostration. In Milton Keynes, there are Sunni mosques in Wolverton, New Bradwell, and Bletchley, and a Shia mosque in Granby. Apart from the Granby mosque, which is in traditional style with dome and minaret, the others are in buildings converted from other uses.

When entering a mosque, visitors should take off their shoes and worshippers must undergo ritual cleansing (wudu). The whole body must be covered. Men will cover their

head with a topi (cap) and women will wear a hijab (full body covered with loose clothing including head cover).

Friday is a holy day for Muslims and the prayer just after midday in congregation is obligatory. In Arabic, the word for Friday means 'day of assembly'. Men are expected to pray in congregation and a special act of worship takes place. Muslim women often prefer to pray in the comfort of their own homes. Wherever they are praying, Muslims face Makkah and use a prayer mat. Mosques have a separate place for women to pray. In other parts of the country and the world, women do attend mosques more regularly and are allocated a separate area. Traditionally, women have often carried out a teaching role within the home, but the majority of teaching now usually takes place at the mosque or madrassa.

### **Sacred texts**

The 'Qur'an' is the central sacred text in Islam. Muslims believe that the Quran was orally revealed by God to the final prophet, Muhammad, through the archangel Gabriel (Jibril). The text is written in ancient Arabic and children learn the Qur'an from an early age at Islamic schools called madrassas. Whilst, the recitation and memorization of the Arabic text are essential, the Qur'an was sent as essential guidance for a human being to reach his/her full potential. The five daily prayers are recited in Arabic. The Qur'an is broken into 30 equal sections, each chapter highlights parts of the past historical events from the Abrahamic faiths. The text describes commonalities between Christians and Muslims, but is clear that Jesus is a prophet, not the son God. Muslims see Allah as the only one true God. The 'Hadith' is a collection of the sayings or utterances of the Prophet Muhammad taken from the Quran. The 'Sunnah' set outs the traditions and practices of the Prophet Mohammad that Muslims seek to apply in their daily lives.

There are currently 22 Madrassas (Islamic supplementary schools) operating in Milton Keynes.

## **Judaism**

### **Background**

Judaism is best understood in terms of four essential aspects: *God, Torah, Shabbat and Israel*. Jews believe in one God whose name, rendered by the characters YHVH, which are never pronounced. Instead Jews refer to God during worship by the Hebrew word 'Adonai' ('Lord'). In Orthodox Jewish tradition, God is regarded as the creator of heaven and earth, a God who oversees the world and the affairs of humankind. He is holy, awesome and righteous, yet compassionate, a personal God who understands our human weaknesses, and to whom we can directly pray, without the need for a priest or minister. It is customary for Jews to cover their heads when in prayer to God as this is regarded as a sign of respect.



The Torah is the sacred scroll on which the five books of Moses are written. They are also known as the Pentateuch and are made up of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus Numbers and Deuteronomy. These books form the basis of all Jewish law and practice. A Torah scroll is a parchment scroll on which all five books have been inscribed by a specially trained calligrapher. Torah scrolls are typically kept in synagogues, in a special cabinet called an ark. On the Sabbath, the Torah scroll is removed from the ark, paraded around the synagogue, and then a portion of the Torah is chanted aloud for the whole community. In Judaism, Torah scrolls are considered the holiest objects and are handled with extreme affection and care.

The Torah is part of Jewish scriptures which also includes the writings commonly known as the Old Testament. Also important to Judaism is the Talmud, which is a collection of writings on law and custom. The Talmud arises from the traditional belief that God gave to Moses an oral law as well as a written law. This oral law was intended to explain how the written law (Torah) should be interpreted and was developed and recorded over several centuries in the Talmud, a compendium of discussions by rabbis on Jewish Law and custom which runs to many volumes.

In the 12th century the great scholar, Maimonides set out Thirteen Principles of the Jewish faith:

- Faith in God as Creator
- God is a unity
- He has no form
- He is the first and the last
- It is right to pray to him alone
- All the words of the prophets are true
- Moses was the first and foremost of the prophets
- The whole Law is the same that was given to Moses
- This Law will not be changed and there will never be another
- The Creator knows every thought and deed of humankind
- God rewards those who keep his commandments and punishes those who do not
- The Messiah will come
- There will be resurrection of the dead.

The third major aspect of Judaism is Israel, a word which denotes both a country, the State of Israel, but also the Jewish people as a whole. Jewish identity includes both the religion of Judaism and the membership of the people of Israel.

There are three main groups in Judaism. The Orthodox, strive to observe the law and custom as written in the Torah and Talmud. In their prayer and ritual, they use only Hebrew. Progressive Jews of the Reform or Liberal movements, attempt to bring traditional Judaism more into conformity with the modern world, using both Hebrew and the vernacular language in their prayer. Between the Progressives and the strictly

Orthodox are the Conservative (in the USA) or Masorti (in the UK).

The fourth major aspect of Judaism is Shabbat, the Sabbath. It starts at sunset on Friday evening with the lighting of candles and blessings over wine and bread. In all branches of Judaism, Shabbat is a special day of rest, for attending synagogue and family meals. For Orthodox Jews, Shabbat is a day of total rest. They do not do any form of work, such as driving or using electronic equipment. Shabbat is considered one of the factors in maintaining the integrity of Jewish families and Jewish communities. Shabbat concludes at sundown on Saturday.

### **Birth, death and marriage**

The circumcision of boys takes place when they are eight days old. This ceremony is known as Brit Mila and a Mohel carries it out. A Mohel is specially trained for this operation and will often be medically qualified. There is no practice of female circumcision in Judaism. Confirmation rituals take place for boys when they reach the age of thirteen, called Bar Mitzvah (son of the commandment) and for girls at the age of twelve (or 13 in progressive communities), when they become Bat Mitzvah (daughter of the commandment). Completion of these rites lead to them becoming full members of the Jewish community and are expected to maintain the traditions of Jewish life.

Jews are buried in a cemetery consecrated for Jewish burial. This will often be an area of a municipal cemetery. Jewish funerals normally take place as soon as possible after death unless this is a Sabbath or other holy day. Jews do not normally cremate the dead. Jews observe a period of mourning of about a week during which the community offers prayers and support. This mourning period is called “Shiva”, which means “sitting” because the mourners and community sit together to pray.

Marriage is central to family life. Among the Orthodox, it is important that children be born within marriage. Jews see marriage to another Jew as very important, especially for women. This is because the maternal line carries Jewish ethnicity. For orthodox Jews, the child of a Jewish man who is married to a non-Jewish woman would not be considered as Jewish. Weddings are led by the Rabbi and take place underneath a ceremonial canopy, called a ‘huppa’. This is usually within a synagogue. The bridegroom gives the bride a ring, which must be a complete circle. The Jewish marriage contract is called a “Ketubah”. These documents are very beautiful, decorated and written using calligraphy. The bride wears a traditional western white or ivory wedding dress. After the marriage, the couple share a glass of wine and the groom stamps on the wineglass to break it. Although the origin of this custom is unclear it is performed to remember the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. In an otherwise joyous occasion, it's a ritual that tempers that happiness and allows for a moment of reflection.

### **Holy Days**

There are seven main annual holy days:

- Rosh Hashana is the Jewish New Year and takes place in September or October.

It celebrates the birthday of the world

- Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) follows ten days later and is a whole day fast when Jews think about their failings in the past year and seek forgiveness from God and from their fellow men and women
- Passover (Pesach) reminds Jews of the exodus from slavery in Egypt 3500 years ago. In the home, a special Seder ('order') service, incorporating a meal, symbolises this event.
- Shavuot (festival of weeks) is a harvest festival which commemorates the giving of the Torah to the Israelites
- Sukkot is a week-long autumn festival which reminds Jews that their ancestors lived in tents as they wandered in the desert in their escape from Egypt to Israel. It is also a harvest festival. Shelters (sukkot) are built and meals are taken in them.
- Hanukkah ('dedication') is a winter festival of lights which celebrates the recovery and re-dedication of the temple in Jerusalem from invaders about 2100 years ago. It lasts for eight days and a candle is lit on a special Hanukka Menorah each day.
- The Ninth of Av (Av is a Hebrew month in the summer) is a solemn fast day that commemorates the destruction of the Jewish Temple.

### **Food**

Jewish dietary laws strictly regulate which foods may be eaten and how they may be eaten. These laws come from the Torah with further refinements from the Talmud. The Torah lists which animals are "kosher" (allowed) such as beef, poultry and lamb and which are not kosher, such as pork and shellfish. Kosher animals must be slaughtered in a ritual manner and once the meat is ready to cook it cannot be cooked with milk. Orthodox Jews in particular observe these rules strictly, practicing a total separation of milk and meat. They keep separate sets of dishes and utensils for meat and milk meals and only buy meat from a butcher licensed as kosher or in packages that has a kosher stamp on it.

### **Pilgrimage**

Jerusalem has long been considered the spiritual centre for Jews. In Biblical times, there were three periods of pilgrimage to Jerusalem, called the pilgrimage festivals. These were festivals when the Israelites brought offerings to the Temple in Jerusalem and would participate in worship there. After the temple was destroyed in 70 CE, this practice stopped. Jerusalem remains an important place of pilgrimage for modern Jews because of its association with the Temple and other places mentioned in the Torah. The only remaining part of the Temple is the Western Wall, or "Kotel". It is an important place of pilgrimage and Jews from all over the world come to visit it and say prayers there.

Many Jews visit Auschwitz or other Nazi concentration camps as a form of pilgrimage.

## **Places of worship**

Jewish prayer services can take place at any location and can be led by any Jew with sufficient knowledge. Most services, however, are held in a synagogue and are conducted by a rabbi. The word 'rabbi' means 'my teacher'. The word 'synagogue' means 'a place of meeting'. As with all ecclesiastical buildings, synagogue design varies greatly across the Jewish world, but all synagogues have a cupboard (the 'ark') where the Torah scrolls are kept, a lectern (bimah) from where the service leader reads the service, and seats for the congregation. In Orthodox synagogues, women are separated from men, sometimes in an upstairs gallery. In Reform and Liberal synagogues, families may sit together. Most synagogues incorporate the six-pointed Star of David and the seven-branched Menorah in their decoration.

Services contain prayers, praise (songs) and the reading of the Law from the Torah. There may be a sermon (talk) by the Rabbi. Although the synagogue is the centre for Jewish worship and community events, the home is considered as the focus of Jewish practice, with many rituals taking place in the home, such as the Sabbath and food rituals.

## **Sikhism**

### **Background**

Sikhism originated in the Punjab (land of five rivers) in the north of India, just over 500 years ago. Nowadays, Sikhs live all over the world. Guru Nanak was the first guru of Sikhs. 'Guru' means 'teacher'. 'Sikh' means 'follower of the Guru'. Punjabi is the language of the Sikhs. It is also referred to as 'Gurmukhi' meaning proceeding from the mouth of the Guru.

In 1947 when the partition between India and Pakistan split the Indian sub-continent, almost all the Sikhs emigrated to the Indian Punjab from the Pakistani Punjab. There are about 12-13 million Sikhs of which nine million live in the state of Punjab and the rest are well dispersed in many other states of Northern India and abroad.

Sikhs believe that there is only one God and that he is the creator of all life. As God made everyone, all are equal. When Guru Nanak died, other Gurus carried on his teachings. Just before his death, Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, granted the status of Guru to the holy scriptures Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (also known as the Adi Granth) and ordered all the Sikhs to follow the teachings therein. These are the first holy scriptures in the world written by the Gurus during their lifetime. Guru Granth Sahib Ji is used in all the services. On many occasions, it is recited from the beginning to the end without a break. This takes 48 hours and is called an Akhand Path. In 1699, Guru Gobind Singh created the 'Khalsa Panth' (Sikh Brotherhood). He introduced a unique form of baptism 'Amrit' for the Sikhs. Those who take 'Amrit' are known as 'Amritdhar' (practicing/baptised) Sikhs. He asked that they observe the five Ks as a matter of Sikh

discipline or uniform.

The five K's are:

- Kes - Uncut, long hair
- Kanga – A small wooden comb, to clean the hair. Keeping clean is part of the faith
- Kirpan – A steel sword symbolising power and freedom of spirit, with a duty to fight evil
- Kara – A steel bracelet to show that God is one, as a never-ending circle and to show belonging to Sikhism and universal brotherhood of humankind
- Kachha – A pair of under-shorts symbolising high moral character and readiness for action.

The message of Guru Nanak is 'Kirat karo, naam japo, wand chhako' meaning earn your living by honest labour, meditate on God's name and share your fortunes with the needy. An important Sikh value is Seva (Service) for the welfare of others, equality of human beings, equality between men and women, respect and tolerance for others are vital. The fundamental values of Sikhism mean that the principles of citizenship are seen as essential for peaceful co-existence in today's pluralistic and modern society.

### **Birth, death and marriage**

As soon as a baby is born Mool Mantar is recited. Mool Mantar is the first verse of Guru Granth Sahib Ji and highlights the most important Sikh beliefs. A new-born baby's first visit outside the home is to the Gurudwara. Traditional gifts are presented and hymns sung. The baby is given a name starting with the first letter of a hymn on the page at which Guru Granth Sahib Ji opens. This naming ceremony takes place when the baby is a few weeks old.

After death, relatives of the same gender take the body, which they wash, dress and wrap in a white sheet of cloth. The ceremony in the Gurudwara is very simple, with no memorials allowed and a deliberate outward show of grief is forbidden. Burial takes place as soon as possible after death. Members of the family and friends go to the crematorium if instead of burial the ashes are being taken back to the Punjab, or if they are being scattered over flowing water.

Arranged marriages are still common and are seen to be ideally based on persons being from a similar background. Any Sikh person, selected by the families, can perform the religious ceremony, which is generally held in the Gurudwara. The highlight of the wedding is the four verses recited and sung as the bride and groom walk four times around the Guru Granth Sahib Ji in a clockwise direction. The groom walks in front of the bride. When they have completed four circles, they are considered married. Marriage is regarded as a sacrament though divorce is accepted. Divorcees can re-marry in the Gurudwara.

### **Dress**

Most Sikh men wear a turban, as do some Sikh women; however, all turban wearers are not Sikh. Sikh women may wear salwar kameez (long-shirt and trousers) and a chinni/dupatta (scarf).

When boys are old enough to wear a turban, a turban ceremony is held in the Gurudwara or at home, in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

Practising Sikhs do not cut their hair. Young boys tie their hair in a knot on top of their head, which they sometimes cover in a Patka (small turban) or a handkerchief. Women plait their hair or tie it up in a bun. Amritdhari women sometimes wear a turban known as 'Keski'.

### **Festivals**

Sikhs celebrate Diwali, usually at the end of October, by setting off fireworks and lighting lamps and clay divas. Sikhs celebrate the release from the prison of their sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind. Along with his own release, he negotiated the release of 52 Hindu kings who were also in the same prison at the same time. The other major festival celebrated by the Sikhs is Vaisakhi. This is the New Year festival in the Sikh calendar. It marks the establishment of Khalsa (Sikh Brotherhood). This is always in April, when traditionally a new 'Nishan Sahib' – the Sikh flag – replaces the previous flag. Sikhs arehold processions and fairs.

In addition, Sikhs celebrate Avtar Divas (birthdays) of all Gurus, first Parkash Utsav (first recital) of Guru Granth Sahib Ji and Gurugadi Divas (the day of giving status of Guru) of Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Shahidi Divas (martyrdom) of fifth Guru, ninth Guru and four sons of tenth Guru (Guru Gobind Singh Ji). They also memorialise historic days in various forms.

### **Food**

All 'amritdhari' (baptised) Sikhs and most other Sikhs are vegetarian. Those who are not vegetarians do not eat beef, 'halal' or 'kosher' meat. Gurdwara services are traditionally followed by the distribution of 'karah prasad', a sacramental food that consists of equal parts of coarsely refined wheat flour, clarified butter, and raw sugar.

### **Naming systems**

Male and female names can be the same. Gender is differentiated by using 'Singh' (meaning lion) for males and 'Kaur' (meaning princess) for females after the first names e.g.

Amrit Singh (male)

Amrit Kaur (female)

### **Pilgrimage**

Pilgrimage is not a requirement but visiting holy sites in India and the Punjab is a tradition observed by many Sikhs. Advocates believe that pilgrimage brings a range of benefits:

- It strengthens Sikhs' faith
- It allows time to be dedicated to spiritual reflection

- It enables Sikhs to learn more about the history of Sikhism, the Gurus and their work
- It helps Sikhs to better understand the principles of Sikhism.

Amritsar, a city in the Punjab, is the centre of Sikhism. Amritsar was founded by Guru Ram Das in AD1577. He ordered a sacred pool or lake to be dug. This is called the Amrita Saras ('Pool of Nectar') and it is from this pool that the city gets its name. The Harmander Sahib was built in the centre of the lake and completed in AD1604 by Guru Arjan. Many Sikhs make a pilgrimage to the Harmander Sahib. 'Harmander' means 'the temple of God' and 'Sahib' is a sign of respect. This is the most famous place of worship for Sikhs.

The Harmander Sahib is surrounded by a pool of clear water. This pool is sacred to Sikhs. The sacred water is believed to have healing powers. The temple is built on the level of the water, which people cross via a causeway. This shows that everyone comes to God as equals; however, worshippers have to step down into the temple, which is seen as a symbol of humility before God.

### **Place of worship**

The place where Sikhs worship is called a Gurdwara (Guru's house). Gurdwaras have a saffron coloured flagpole called 'Nishan Sahib' outside to indicate that it is a place of religious worship. In Milton Keynes, there is a Gurdwara near Central Milton Keynes. Another Gurudwara is in Kiln Farm. The main day for congregation is usually Sunday. Worshippers and visitors take off their shoes and wash their hands before entering the prayer hall. Both men and women dress modestly in long trousers and have their heads covered. Women wear a scarf called a 'chunni' and men wear a turban or handkerchief. The Gurdwara also provides a vegetarian 'lungr' (free kitchen), on service days for all attendees. Gurdwara's often hold Punjabi language, scripture recital and 'Kirtan' (religious music) classes for children and adults. Smoking, alcohol, intoxicants, drugs and non-vegetarian foods are forbidden within the premises of the Gurudwaras.

While the Harmandir Sahib, or Golden Temple, represents Sikh spiritual guidance, the Akal Takht symbolizes the dispensing of justice and temporal activity. Akal Takht means 'Throne of the Timeless One'. It is the most important political building for Sikhs. It is the centre of religious government. Here, decisions about religious and spiritual importance are made, as well as decisions concerning more practical matters relating to the Sikh. The first and the most important Takht was established by Guru Hargobind in 1609 and stands close to the Harmandir Sahib Temple in Amritsar.

### **Sacred Texts**

The collected works of the early Gurus are known as Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji or Adi Granth. Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is used in all the services. On many occasions, it is recited from the beginning to the end without a break. This takes 48 hours and is called an Akhand Path. While the Guru Granth Sahib is the unquestioned scripture of Sikhism, another religious text important to many Sikhs is the Dasam Granth.

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## Religion and belief in the school - SACRE

SACRE, the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education is an advisory body. Its main aim is to advise the Local Authority on matters related to Religious Education and Collective Worship, such as syllabus, teaching methods, materials and teacher training. The Milton Keynes SACRE group represents the main belief systems and maintains an informative page, which includes an agreed local syllabus for RE, on the MKC website: <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/schools-and-lifelong-learning/information-for-schools/sacre>

The SACRE bases its equality and diversity approach on the Milton Keynes Council policy. The key points are to:

- promote a positive attitude to difference
- challenge stereotypes
- communicate directly with local people.

SACRE aims to help schools to develop their successful approaches further in including all children and young people and their communities. Some examples of good practice are listed below:

- Opportunities are taken across the curriculum to promote shared values; respect difference; address sensitive and controversial issues; and challenge prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping
- Curriculum based activities to enrich and deepen understanding, such as: visits to places of worship; meetings with community groups and leaders; community drama and music performances
- Assemblies which involve members of the local and wider communities; promoting shared understanding and developing the ethos and values of the school.



# Language backgrounds

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## Bengali and Sylheti

### Language

Bengali is the official language of Bangladesh and the state language of the West Bengal state in India. Other languages and dialects are also spoken within Bangladesh, including Sylheti, which is used by most Bangladeshi settlers in the UK. Sylheti, however, does not have a well-developed written tradition and Bengali is the medium of instruction both in schools in Bangladesh and in community run language classes overseas. Qur'anic Arabic is used for religious purposes and is widely taught in Islamic schools both in Bangladesh and in Bengali communities overseas.

### The writing system

The Bengali writing system has developed from the Devanagari writing system used for Hindi. It runs from left to right and hangs down from rather than resting on the line. Bengali letters represent syllables rather than individual sounds.

বাড়ি ফেরার পথে, সাইকা তার  
আম্বাকে বললো পানি দিয়ে  
সাফিনের সাথে খেলতে তার কেমন  
মজা লেগেছে।

# Chinese

## Language

Chinese has eight main varieties, none of which can be understood by speakers of others. Of these, the three most commonly spoken by overseas Chinese are Cantonese, Hokkien and Mandarin. In China, Mandarin is found in the northern, western and central regions and is used as the standard language for the country as a whole. It is also used in Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore. Cantonese is spoken in the south of China and in Hong Kong. One of the largest overseas groups of Chinese people come from Hong Kong. Many refugees from Vietnam are ethnic Chinese who either speak Cantonese or use it as the language of wider communication in the Chinese community. Over time there have been increasing numbers of Mandarin speakers in Milton Keynes.

## The writing system

The different varieties of Chinese share a common writing system built around thousands of characters which have no relation to the spoken word; for example, the numeral 5 is 'cinq' in French, 'cinco' in Spanish and 'five' in English, but the same Chinese characters are pronounced quite differently in varied parts of China.

Characters are written in a notional square. Children are taught how to write the kinds of strokes as lines, sweeps, angles and hooks; and the basic sequence is left to right, top to bottom. In the People's Republic of China, characters have been simplified by reducing the number of strokes.

Attempts have also been made to introduce a simplified romanised writing system known as pinyin. Outside the People's Republic, however, the original characters are still used, but some countries are gradually changing over to the simplified set. Traditionally, characters descended from the top right-hand corner of the page. Today there is increasing use of left to right directionality.

虎年人仕有领袖才能，性强  
硬而又勇战。正义和有气度，  
愿意帮助别人，不计较小节。  
但由於性情火烈，和反叛性  
格，有倾向固执的一面。

# Gujarati

## Language

Gujarati is the language of the Indian state of Gujarat. It has a rich oral culture and a literary tradition which dates back to the tenth century. Most Gujarati speakers are Hindu, but there are also large Shia Muslim minorities who also speak Gujarati.

Some Gujaratis use Kachchi as the language of home; however, because Gujarati is the language of state government and education, Kachchi has tended to be considered a dialect of Gujarati, rather than a language in its own right. Gujarati Muslims usually have some familiarity with Urdu and Qur`anic Arabic.

## The writing system

Gujarati uses a syllabic writing system which goes from left to right and hangs from the line rather than resting on it. It is closely related to Hindi and Punjabi scripts, but without the continuous horizontal line running along the top.

નસીબજોગે અમે લાંબી બપોરો વૃક્ષોની  
વચ્ચે ગાળી હોવાથી, ઝાડ પર  
ચડવાની કળામાં અમે પારંગત  
બન્યાં હતાં, પરંતુ આ અનુભવ  
અમારા માટે સાવ જુદો હતો.

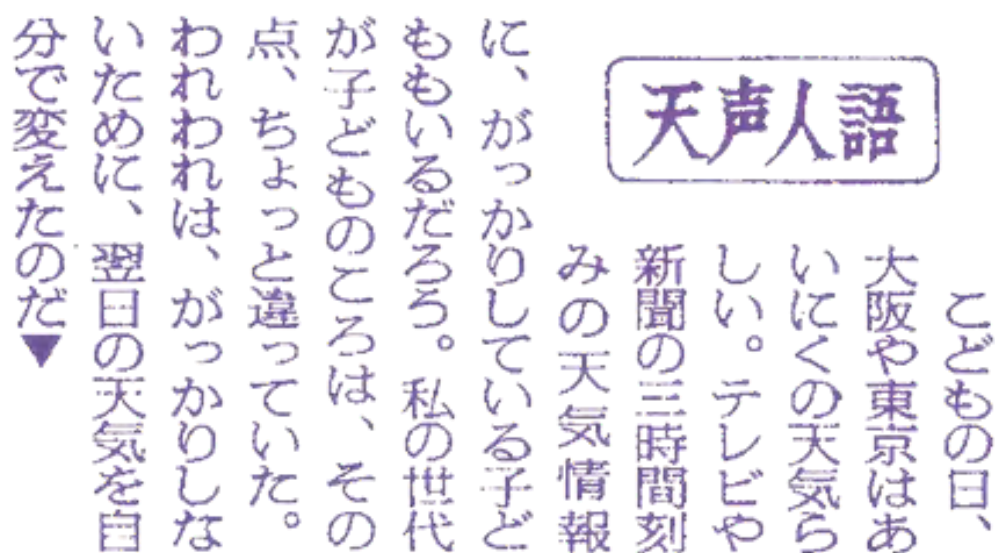
# Japanese

## Language

Japanese is sometimes classed as a member of the Altaic family, but its exact relationship with other languages remains to be determined. One of its most striking features is the use of 'honorifics', different words and grammatical constructions which show varying degrees of politeness and familiarity. See Japanese Community.

## The writing system

Japanese writing is extremely complex. It makes use of two syllabic systems, hiragana and katakana, as well as kanji, a logo-graphic system derived from Chinese characters. The main content words are often written in kanji whilst additional grammatical information is given in the hiragana script. Katakana is used extensively for representing English or any foreign words other than those of Chinese origin. In newspapers and magazines, Japanese is usually written from top to bottom in columns which run from right to left; however, the print in many textbooks runs horizontally from left to right.



# Marathi

## Language

Marathi (Maraṭhi) is an Indo-Aryan language spoken by the Maharashtrian people of western India. It serves as the official language of the state of Maharashtra and to a good extent in the neighbouring states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Recent estimations show that there are 90 million fluent speakers worldwide. Marathi is at least 1,000 years old and derives its grammar and syntax from the older Sanskrit. The Marathi language is also known as Maharashtrai, Maharathi, Malhatee or Marthi.

Most Marathi people are Hindus, although there are sizeable minorities of Muslims and Neo-Buddhists. Many Marathi speaking people have migrated to other countries and settled there. Significant numbers of Marathis have settled in the United Kingdom, United States of America, Mauritius, Israel and Switzerland.

## The writing system

Marathi is written in the Devanagari script, an alpha syllabary writing system where letters represent syllables rather than individual sounds. It consists of 16 vowel letters and 36 consonant letters making a total of 52 letters. It is written from left to right and hangs down from rather than resting on the line. The most common sentence structure is Subject Object Verb: subject=kartaa, object=karma and verb=kriyaapad.



# Punjabi

## Language

Punjabi speakers came originally from the Punjab, or land of five rivers. The same geographical area was traditionally occupied by Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. However, following the partition of India in 1947, the Punjab was divided between India and Pakistan. It is estimated that 70% of Punjabi speakers are currently resident in Pakistan and the remaining 30% live in India. The overwhelming majority of Punjabi speakers in Pakistan are Muslim and look to Urdu as the language of religion and high culture. Most Punjabis have come directly from India and Pakistan. Some have arrived via East Africa where they settled as traders earlier in the century.

## The writing system

Punjabi is generally written in a script called Gurmukhi (meaning 'proceeding from the mouth of the guru') devised by the second of the ten great teachers of Sikhism. Gurmukhi is a syllabic writing system, characterised by an almost continuous horizontal line running along the top. Like most other Indian languages, it runs from left to right and hangs from, rather than resting on, the line.

Muslims write Punjabi in the same Perso-Arabic script, which is used for Urdu. Punjabi which is used in the Mirpur area of Pakistan is often spoken rather than written and is called Mirpuri. Many people of Pakistani origin in Milton Keynes speak Mirpuri, but Urdu is often the choice for written text.

ਬੱਚੇ ਨਾਸ਼ਤਾ ਕਰ ਰਹੇ ਸਨ।  
ਇਹ ਨਜ਼ਾਰਾ ਚੰਗਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ।

# Somali

## Language

The official language of Somalia is Somali. The nomadic nature of much of the population means that Somali is also spoken in parts of Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia. It is the vehicle of a rich oral culture, including storytelling, poetry and riddles. Arabic is also spoken as the majority of Somalis are Muslim. Some Somalis from the south of the country speak Swahili.

Somali pupils in Milton Keynes may also speak additional European languages as many families have come to the UK via other countries.

## The writing system

Somali is based on an oral tradition. Since 1972, Somali has been written using the Roman alphabet, but with the letters following the same order as in Arabic. Sounds peculiar to Somali are represented by two letter combinations or by assigning new values to existing letters.

Waxaan jeclaan lahaa inaan sida  
salamadhlaha u qurux badnaan lahaa!

Waxaan jeclaan lahaa inaan sida  
kaluunka u dabaalan lahaa!

Waxaan jeclaan lahaa inaan sida  
geriga meel fog wax ka arki lahaa!

# Swahili

## Language

Swahili (Kiswahili) is originally the language of the East African coast. Standard Swahili is based on Kiunguja, the dialect of Zanzibar, which spread deep inland with European trade and missionary activities. It belongs to the Bantu group of languages. About one hundred million people in East, Central and Southern Africa speak Swahili, but there are various 'Kiswahili' dialects. Swahili is the national language of Tanzania and Kenya. The Roman alphabet is used, but the pronunciation is different. Once this is learnt, it is possible for teachers to decode dual language texts. Examples are given below.

## Vowels

a apa 'take oath' a in 'father'

e tembea 'walk' e in 'self'

i ita 'call' i in 'pin'

o ona 'see' o in 'off'

u ua 'flower' u in 'put'

## Consonants

b baba 'father' b in 'bad'

p pata 'get' p in 'pet'

f futa 'rub' f in 'fair'

v vuta 'pull' v in 'vote'

t taka 'want' t in 'time'

d doa 'spot' d in 'day'

th thamani 'value' th in 'thing'

dh dhahabu 'gold' th in 'then'



# Tagalog

## Language

Tagalog is now the common name for the official Filipino language. There are also some 70 native languages spoken in the Philippines, which is divided into 72 provinces and 61 chartered cities. Overseas groups of Filipino people in the UK come from Luzon, Samar, Negros, Leyte, Cebu, Bohol, Palawan, Panay, Mindoro, Masbate and Mindanao.

## Writing system

Tagalog is a syllabic alphabet in which each consonant has an inherent /a/ vowel. Other vowels are indicated either by separate letters or dots; for example, a dot over a consonant changes the vowel sound to an /i/ or an /e/, while a dot under a consonant changes the vowel sound to /o/ or /u/. The Spanish introduced a /+/- sign underneath a consonant to indicate a muted inherent vowel. The alphabet was also extended to accommodate new Spanish sounds.

Writing is from left to right in a horizontal line.



A a	B b	K k	D d	E e	G g	H h	I i	L l	M m
a	bah	kah	dah	eh	gah	hah	ih	lah	mah
N n	Ng ng	O o	P p	R r	S s	T t	U u	W w	Y y
nah	ngah	oh	pah	rah	sah	tah	u	wah	yah

## Pronunciation

### Vowels & Diphthongs

a	e	i	o	u	ay	oy	uy	iw	aw	ey
[a]	[e]	[i]	[o]	[u]	[ai]	[oi]	[ui]	[iə]	[aə]	[ei]

### Consonants

b	k	d	f	g	h	l	ly	m	n
[b]	[k]	[d]	[f]	[g]	[h]	[l]	[ʎ]	[m]	[n]
ny	ng	p	r	s	t	ts	w	y	z
[ɲ]	[ŋ]	[p]	[r]	[s]	[t]	[ʈ]	[w]	[j]	[z]

# Tamil

## Language

Tamil is the most important of the Dravidian languages of southern India. It has two main forms, a 'high' variety used in formal situations and in literature and a 'low' variety used in informal speech. Differences in the two varieties can be substantial.

The Tamil language and people originated in the southern state of Tamil Nadu but has subsequently spread to many parts of the world. Many Tamils migrated as indentured labourers in the 19th Century to destinations which included Mauritius, South Africa, Fiji, Trinidad, Guyana, Malaysia and Sri Lanka.

## The writing system

The Tamil writing system is derived from a north Indian script with south Indian influences and is believed to be about 1500 years old. It is a syllabic system with 30 different letters and runs from left to right.

தமிழ் ஒரு மொழி. தனித் தமிழ் ஒரு  
முயற்சி. தனித் தமிழே தமிழ் மொழியல்ல.  
இந்தத் தெளிவு எனக்குப்பதால்  
தனித்தமிழ் மீது எனக்கு வெறுப்பில்லை.  
இந்தத் தெளிவு இல்லாததினால் தனித்தமிழ்ப்  
பிரியார்கள் தம்மை அறியாமலேயே தமிழை  
வெறுத்து வருகிறார்கள்.

# Telugu

## Language

Telugu is a Dravidian language. It has the third largest number of mother tongue speakers in India (96 million speakers reported in the 2011 census) and is 15th of most-spoken languages worldwide. Telugu is known as the 'Italian of the East' since almost every word in Italian and Telugu ends with a vowel.

It is the official language of Andhra Pradesh, one of the largest states of India and is also spoken in neighbouring states. Telugu script is derived from Bhattiprolu script, which is itself a variant of Brahmi script. The vocabulary has been influenced from Sanskrit, Prakrit and Urdu.

## The Writing System

తెలుగు

Telugu script is written from left to right and consists of sequences of simple and/or complex characters. The basic units of writing are syllables. Consonant clusters take shapes that are very different from the shapes individual consonants take elsewhere. It is traditional to write and read consonants with an implied 'a' vowel sound. When consonants combine with other vowel signs, the vowel part is indicated using signs known as vowel 'maatras'. The shapes of vowel 'maatras' are also very different from the shapes of the corresponding vowels.

The overall pattern consists of sixty symbols, of which 16 are vowels, three vowel modifiers, and forty-one consonants. Spaces are used between words as word separators.

The sentence ends with either a single bar | or a double bar ||. Traditionally, Telugu words were not separated by spaces. Modern punctuation was introduced with the advent of print.

There is a set of symbols for although Arabic numbers are typically used.

# Twi

## Language

Twi (pronounced 'Tch-wee') is a language spoken in Ghana by about seven million people. It is one of the three dialects of the Akan language, the others being Akuapem Twi and Fante, which in turn belong to the Kwa language family. Within Ghana, Twi is spoken in the Ashanti Region and in parts of the Eastern, Western, Central, Volta and Brong Ahafo Regions. English is the official language of Ghana.

Twi is a language very rich in proverbs, the use of which is taken to be a sign of wisdom.

## The writing system

Most African languages with a writing system use a modification of the Roman alphabet; the systems were often the invention of Christian missionaries, though some have been devised by government commissions since decolonisation. The 'authors' of these new writing systems usually aimed to make spellings logical and consistent by providing a written sign for each consonant or vowel sound in the language, and this often led to the adoption of newly-created letterforms. Twi is one of these languages. Like some other West African languages, Twi has a relativistic system of three tones (tone terracing) but no tone markers are used in the writing system.

Handa de nuaba a èyè dè ason agu kèntèn mu  
dek\_ma n'adamfo Akeyo.

Translation: Handa put seven delicious fruits in a basket for her friend, Akeyo.  
Handa's Surprise, Eileen Browne, 1994, Walker Books Ltd.

# Urdu

## Language

Urdu is the official language of Pakistan and the first or second language of over 30 million Muslims in India. Many Urdu speakers overseas use a variety of Punjabi as the language of the home and Urdu as the second language. For religious and cultural reasons, however, they usually describe themselves as Urdu speakers. Urdu comes from the Persian zaban-e-urdu-e-mu'alla, language of the Imperial court, which gives important clues to its history. It is the language of a lot of poetry.

## The writing system

Urdu is written in the Nastaliq script, which differs in small, but important respects from the Naskh script used for Arabic. It is a consonantal system in which vowels are indicated by marks above and below the letters. Letters also change according to their position, initial, medial, final or isolated in the word. Writing progresses from the right side of the page to the left.

ٲھر ہارونہ کو ایک مُشکل پیش آئی۔ وہ بولی۔ سکول کے  
کمرے میں ایک شیر ہے اور اُستاد صاحب ڈر کے مارے  
الماری کے اُپر بیٹھے ہوئے ہیں اور بچے نہیں آسکتے۔ جو بچے  
سکول کے میدان میں تھے انکو پتہ تھا کہ کیا کرنا چاہیئے۔ وہ  
جلدی بول لُٹھے

# Translation and interpreting services

Schools and settings are encouraged to establish contact with an approved translation service provider to support initial first language communication and assessment. Examples currently in use across Milton Keynes settings include Language is Everything, AA Global and Clear Voice.

Some Milton Keynes supplementary schools have been able to offer translation and interpreter services: for more information contact the [EMA Network](#).

Schools are encouraged to regularly audit their own first language staff assets and make links with other schools to share first language proficiency.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Further reading relating to minority ethnic communities living in Milton Keynes**

#### **General reading on migration to the United Kingdom**

1. An Immigration History of Modern Britain: Multicultural Racism Since 1800, Panikos Panayi, 2010
2. Black Britain: A Photographic History, Paul Gilroy, 2007
3. Black British History: New Perspectives from Roman Times to the Present Day  
Blackness in Britain, Hakim Adi, 2019
4. Black Settlers in Britain, 1555-1958, Nigel File and Chris Power, 1981
5. Britain's Black Population. The Runnymede Trust and Radical Statistics Race Group, 1980
6. Brit(ish): On Race, Identity and Belonging, Afua Hirsch, 2018
7. British Immigration Policy Since 1939: The Making of Multi-racial Britain, Ian R.G. Spencer, 1997
8. Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain: The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Nation, Randall Hansen, 2000
9. Demography, State and Society: Irish Migration to Britain, 1921-1971, Enda Delaney 2000
10. Familiar Stranger: A Life between Two Islands, Stuart Hall, 2018
11. Lovers and Strangers: An Immigrant History of Post-War Britain, Clair Wills, 2018
12. Natives: Race and Class in the Ruins of Empire, Akala, 2018
13. Never Look Back: The Jewish Refugee Children in Great Britain, 1938-1945, Judith Tydor Baumel-Shwartz, 2012
14. Partition Voices: Untold British Stories, Kavita Puri, 2019
15. Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain, Peter Fryer, 2018
16. The Lightless Sky: An Afghan Refugee Boy's Journey of Escape to A New Life in Britain Hardcover, Gulwali Passarlay & Nadene Ghouri, 2015
17. Windrush: The Irresistible Rise Of Multi-Racial Britain, Mike Phillips
18. Working with Asylum Seekers and Refugees: What to Do, What Not to Do, and How to Help, Sarah Crowther, 2019

#### **Africa**

1. Afrian Cooking, Olalohore, 1980

#### **Ghanaians**

1. Culture Smart! The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture, Ian Utley, 2010
2. Zoe's Ghana Kitchen, Zoe Adjonyoh, 2017
3. The Ghana Cookbook , Fran Osseo-Asare and Barbara Baëta, 2015

#### **Kenyans**

1. Karibu: Welcome to the Cooking of Kenya, Ann Gardner, 1993
2. Kenyan: Webster's Timeline History, 1790 - 2007, 2010

### **Nigerians**

1. History, The Historian and The Nation. The Voice of a Nigerian Historian, Obaro Ikime, 2006
2. Power, Culture and Modernity in Nigeria: Beyond The Colony (Routledge Studies in the Modern History of Africa), Oluwatoyin Oduntan, 2018
3. Nigerian History and Culture, Richard Olaniyan, 1985
4. 50 Delicious Nigerian Food Recipes (cookbook) Chy P Anegbu, 2013
5. Ultimate Nigerian Cookbook: Best Cookbook for making Nigerian Food, Chy P Anegbu and David Anegbu, 2015

### **Somalis**

1. Somalia: The Untold History 1941-19, Isa Trunji, Mohamed, 2015
2. An introduction to Somali history from 5000 years B.C. down to the present, Mohamed Jama, 1962
3. Somali Cookbook: Blank Recipe Book, Michael B. McHugh, 2019

### **Zimbabweans**

1. A History of Zimbabwe, Alois S. Mlambo, 2014
2. Culture and Customs of Zimbabwe (Culture & Customs of Africa) (Cultures and Customs of the World), Oyekan Owomoyela, 2002
3. A History of Zimbabwe, 1890-2000 and Postscript, Zimbabwe, 2001-2008, Chengetai J. M. Zvobgo, 2009
4. The Bulawayo Cookery Book: Zimbabwe's Original 1909 Cookery Book, David Saffery and N. H. Chataway, 2006

### **Asia**

1. India Pakistan Bangladesh: History, culture, people (Regional studies series), Milton Jay Belasco, 1980
2. Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy, Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, 2003
3. Perspectives on Modern South Asia: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation, Global Perspectives, 2011

### **Bangladeshis**

1. Bangladesh - Culture Smart: The Essential Guide to Customs & Cult, Urmi Rahman, 2014
2. The Bengalis: The People, Their History and Culture, S.N. Das, 2005
3. Nadiya's Kitchen, Nadiya Hussain, 2016
4. My Bangladesh Kitchen: Recipes and food memories from a family table, Saira Hamilton, 2019



### **Indians**

1. India: A History, John Keay, 2000
2. A Short History of India, Gordon Kerr, 2017
3. The History of India in 50 Events, Stephen Weaver, 2015
4. Indian Kitchen: Secrets of Indian home cooking, Maunika Gowardhan, 2016
5. Masala: Indian Cooking for Modern Living: Real Indian Cooking for Modern Living, Mallika Basu, 2018
6. Hamlyn All Colour Cookery: 200 Easy Indian Dishes, Sunil Vijayakar, 2016

### **Pakistanis**

1. Pakistan - Culture Smart!: The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture, Safia Haleem, 2013
2. Asian Voices: First Generation Migrants, Nafhesa Ali, 2011
3. Get Familiar with Pakistani Cooking: The Complete Guide to Pakistani Dishes for Beginners, 2019
4. The Food and Cooking of Pakistan: Traditional Dishes from the Home Kitchen, Shehzad Husain, 2016

### **Sri Lankans**

1. Sri Lanka: The Fractured Island, Mohan Ram, 1990
2. Sri Lanka - Essential Guide to Customs & Culture, Emma Boyle, 2019
3. Sri Lanka: The Cookbook, Prakash K Sivanathan and Niranjala M Ellawala, 2017
4. Sri Lankan Cookbook: Traditional Sri Lankan Recipes Made Easy, 2018

### **Sikhs**

1. Sikh Religion, Culture and Arvind-Pal S. Mandair, Christopher Shackle, et al, 2000
2. Exploring Sikhism: Aspects of Sikh Identity, Culture, and Thought, McLeod, 2004
3. The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition, Harjot Oberoi, 1994
4. Menus & Memories from Punjab: 10th Anniversary Edition: Meals to Nourish Body and Soul, Veronica Sidhu, 2019

### **Caribbean**

1. The People Who Came Book 1, Norman and Kamau Braithwaite, 1987
2. From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean, 1492-1969, Eric Eustace Williams, 1987
3. The Caribbean: A History of the Region and Its Peoples, Stephan Palmié and Francisco A. Scarano, 2011
4. Empire's Crossroads: A New History of the Caribbean, Carrie Gibson, 2015
5. Caribbean Cookery Secrets: How to Cook 100 of the Most Popular West Indian, Cajun and Creole Dishes, David Daley and Gwendolyn Daley, 2013
6. Nyammings: 88 authentic Caribbean recipes, Sian Rose, 2014

## **Europeans**

### **French**

1. History of Modern France, Jonathan Fenby, 2016
2. A Brief History of France Revised and Updated (Brief Histories), Cecil Jenkins, 2017.
3. France - Culture Smart: The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture, Barry Tomalin 2013
4. French Cuisine Cookbook: 50 Easy and Delicious French Recipes, Patrick Smith, 2014
5. Simple French Cookery, Raymond Blanc, 2005
6. The Essence of French Cooking, Michel Roux, 2014

### **Irish**

1. A History of Ireland in 250 Episodes – Everything You’ve Ever Wanted to Know About Irish History: Fascinating Snippets of Irish History from the Ice Age to the Peace Process, Jonathan Bardon, 2008
2. The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750-1939, Donald MacRaild, 2010
3. Story of Ireland, Neil Hegarty and Fergal Keane.
4. Migration in Irish History 1607-2007, P. Fitzgerald and B. Lambkin, 2008
5. Irish Traditional Cooking, Darina Allen, 2012
6. Irish Pantry: Traditional Breads, Preserves, and Goodies to Feed the Ones You Love, Lynn Marie Hulsman and Noel McMeel, 2013
7. The Best of Irish Home Cooking Cookbook, Caroline Gray, 2016

### **Italian**

1. The Cambridge Companion to Modern Italian, Zygmunt G. Baranski, 2001
2. Rome: A Cultural, Visual, and Personal History, Robert Hughes, 2012
3. 500 Italian Recipes: Easy-to-Cook Classic Italian Dishes, from Rustic and Regional to Cool and Contemporary, Jeni Wright, 2015
4. Gino's Healthy Italian for Less: 100 feel good family recipes for under £5, Gino D'Acampo, 2017

### **Polish**

1. The Polish Way: A Thousand Year History of the Poles and Their Culture, Adam Zamoyski, 1993
2. The Holocaust Object in Polish and Polish-Jewish Culture, Bozena Shallcross, 2011
3. Polska: New Polish Cooking, Zuza Zak, 2016
4. Polish Cooking, Revised, Marianna Olszewska Heberle, 2005

### **Romanian**

1. Romania - Culture Smart! The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture, Debbie Stowe, 2017
2. Culture and society: Structures, interferences, analogies in the modern Romanian History, 1985

3. Taste of Romania: Its Cookery and Glimpses of Its History, Folklore, Art, Literature, and Poetry, Nicolae Klepper, 1997

### **Gypsies, Roma and Travellers**

1. Gypsies & Travellers: A Teacher's Guide, Steven Horne, 2019
2. Gypsies: An English History, David Cressy, 2018
3. Another Darkness, Another Dawn: A History of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, Becky Taylor, 2014
4. Favourite Romany Recipes, Keziah Cooper, 2005
5. Gypsy Feast: Recipes and Culinary Traditions of the Romany People, Carol Wilson, 2004

### **Middle East**

#### **Israel**

1. Jewish Culture and Customs: A Sampler of Jewish Life, Steve Herzig, 1997
2. Israel - Culture Smart: The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture, Jeffrey Geri, Marian Lebor, 2018
3. Israel - The People, Debbie Smith, 2008
4. Modern Jewish Cooking: Recipes & Customs for Today's Kitchen, Leah Koenig, 2015
5. Best-Ever Book of Jewish Cooking: Authentic recipes from a classic culinary heritage, Marlena Spieler, 2019

#### **Syria**

1. The Early History of Syria and Palestine, Lewis Bayles Paton, 1901
2. Legacy in Stone: Syria Before War, Kevin Bubriski, 2019
3. Cooking a Home: A collection of the recipes and stories of Syrian refugee, Pilar Puig Cortada, 2015
4. The Aleppo Cookbook: Celebrating the Legendary Cuisine of Syria, Marlene Matar, 2017
5. Our Syria: Recipes from Home, Dina Mousawi and Itab Azzam, 2017

## Appendix 2

### The Ethnic Minority Achievement Network (EMA Network)

#### Guidance

The EMA Network staff are experienced in supporting pupils of Black and minority ethnic (BME) heritage, including those who are learning English as an additional language (EAL), who are newly arrived, asylum seekers or refugees, as well as pupils of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller origin. EMA Network staff have up-to-date skills and knowledge to act as experts for settings and schools. They draw on the expertise of multiple providers in addressing schools' needs. The team interprets and shares local and national initiatives which are aimed at closing attainment gaps.

Areas of focus include:

- Achievement and attainment
- Assessment
- Equality and diversity
- Community and integration
- Faith and Cultural awareness
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC)
- Safeguarding

#### Resources

The EMA Network resource centre, aims to support the learning of pupils from all backgrounds across all key stages.

It hosts a wealth of religious, cultural and language based resources, including religious and cultural artefacts, dual language books, bilingual dictionaries (visual and talking), DVDs, games, fiction and non-fiction books reflecting the diverse backgrounds and community languages represented within Milton Keynes and the wider world. There are also many resources which explore and address identity and equalities.

These resources are available to all schools and pre-school settings as well as childminders, foster cares and other settings.

For up-to-date information, please contact the EMA Network: [ema@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:ema@milton-keynes.gov.uk) or visit the [EMA Network page](#) on the MKC website.

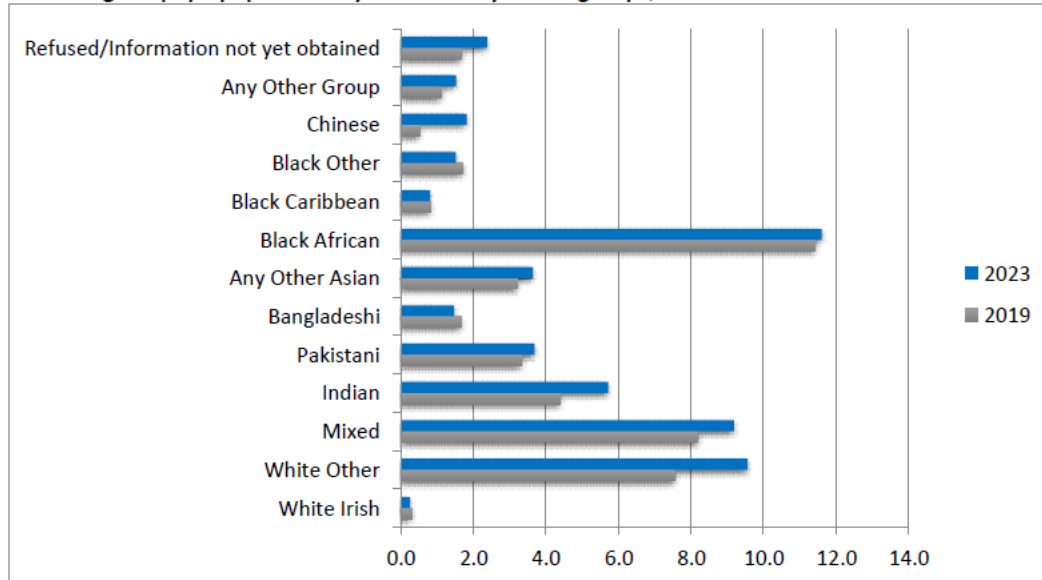
In addition to the resources in this resource centre, Central Milton Keynes, Wolverton and Bletchley libraries also hold a range of dual language books and a wide selection of DVDs. For further information, please contact the Milton Keynes Library website: [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/libraries)

## Appendix 3

### Ethnicity in schools in Milton Keynes

(Source: Vital Signs MK)

Percentage of pupil population by the minority ethnic groups, 2019 and 2023



The graph above outlines the change in the proportions of pupils recorded in each minority ethnic group between 2019 and 2023. The White-Other Group has the largest number of extra pupils (1308 extra pupils), followed by Indian (841 extra pupils). White-British (-1774) experienced a decline. Chinese pupils have had the largest % increase (245 pupils in 2019 to 932 in 2023, 280% increase).

### Languages spoken in schools in Milton Keynes – 2023 school census (100 pupils+)

English	36317
Polish	1204
Romanian	958
Urdu	941
Tamil	918
Akan/Twi-Fante	598
Chinese (Cantonese)	545
Chinese	469
Bengali	453
Telugu	424
Hindi	318
Spanish	298
Arabic	285
Italian	275
French	273
Lithuanian	265

Yoruba	251
Portuguese	230
Akan (Twi/Asante)	224
Somali	213
Russian	211
Panjabi	206
Gujarati	187
Swahili/Kiswahili	186
Shona	181
Turkish	169
Malayalam	165
Persian/Farsi	157
Hungarian	131
Igbo	125
Bulgarian	118
Swahili (Any Other)	113
Albanian/Shqip	110

## Appendix 4

Events and organisations that are promoting social cohesion in MK

The [MK Futures 2050](#) Commission was set up 2015 as a way of thinking about the future of the city and helping to create a long-term vision for the way MK should grow and prosper.

[African Diaspora Foundation](#) and [Awake to Know Africa](#) support local schools and settings to celebrate diversity and foster aspiration and understanding.

[Milton Keynes Islamic Arts and Culture](#) (MKIAC) works in a diverse range of locations across the city including, community centres, schools, galleries, libraries and museums. MKIAC deliver arts workshops, seminars and events inspired by Islamic arts and heritage.

[Milton Keynes Community Foundation](#) is an independent charity working to connect people and resources to projects and ideas to create positive impacts and enduring solutions for different communities.

[Community Action: MK](#) co-ordinates volunteer activity including support for refugees, women's groups and vulnerable groups generally.

[Vital Signs MK](#) is an annual publication designed to round up the most current research on the communities of Milton Keynes and present it in an easy-to-read format. The 2024 research focus is on environment, poverty and disadvantage, education, health and well-being.

The Milton Keynes LGBTQ+ schools partnership forum is coordinated by [Q:alliance](#). This local group supports schools and organisations with information, and in addressing gender conversations and issues

[Milton Keynes International Festival](#) (IF) was honoured with the prestigious EFFE Label 2017-2018 (Europe's quality stamp for remarkable arts festivals). This festival brings about a series of events that are relevant to international issues and embraces innovative artistic talent and engagement that brings all members of the community together.

The [Parks Trust](#) collaborates with a range of local organisations to celebrate music, dance and cultures of the world.

[The Arts and heritage alliance MK](#) support a range of project supporting communities and schools across Milton Keynes and leads and manages [Milton Keynes Arts Education](#) (MAKE).

# Glossary

## **African Asian**

People of the Asian Diaspora, whose families migrated to work in Africa (mostly Eastern) during British colonialism and have since migrated to Britain and may still have family links with Africa.

## **African Caribbean**

This is used to refer to the people whose origins are from Africa and who have migrated to Britain from the Caribbean islands. This group of people should not be called Afro-Caribbean. Some of the older generations refer to themselves as West Indian, as they have migrated from the Caribbean West Indies. Most people do not relate to the term and sometimes prefer to be referred to as **Black Caribbean**.

## **Asian**

Mainly used in this document to refer to people from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, although there is a distinction between five different regions: of Central Asia, South Asia, East Asia, Southeast Asia and Western Asia

## **Black**

Used to refer to people of African, African Caribbean and Asian origin, who have a unity of experience as minority ethnic groups

## **Black British**

Some minority ethnic people who were born and live in Britain prefer to be identified as Black British. They are black, but identify with their British heritage.

## **Coloured**

This is no longer an acceptable term. By definition all people have colour, but if used to describe minority ethnic people it is offensive and insulting. A recent term which is accepted by many is '**people of colour**' and has been used in association with the Black Lives Matter agenda.

## **Culture**

Refers to the system of beliefs, assumptions, sentiments, language, history, art, clothing, food, architecture, kinship and perspectives which members of a group have in common. Culture is learnt and not biologically inherited.

## **Diaspora**

People scattered from their original homeland. This can refer to any group. Examples of significant diaspora are: African, Indian and Jewish.

**Equality**

Concept that all people are of equal value and should receive equality of opportunity, equal access and equal treatment.

**EAL**

English as an additional language.

**ESOL**

English for Speakers Of another Language – usually found in the context of Adult English learning courses. **EFL** refers to the use of English as a Foreign Language and again may be used regarding English language courses.

**Ethnic Group**

This has a legal definition, which refers to a distinct group of people who share a history and a cultural tradition. This may include religion or language. People who are classed by the same ethnic origin may speak different languages. Outside of the legal definition they may consider themselves to be of different ethnic background.

**Ethnicity**

Refers to ethnic origin. This is very personal. It may refer to country of origin or genetic features. For the purpose of monitoring, to overview equality issues, a limited range of ethnic origins are used. These are devised in consultation with communities. On a personal level, individuals may have a wider definition of ethnic origin.

**Family name**

The name shared by all or some family members. It should not be termed the 'Christian' name, or the 'surname', as the family name may not be at the end of the name.

**Institutional racism**

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.

**Language**

Terms such as first language, home language, community language or heritage language are commonly used to mean the main language spoken at home



**Minority ethnic**

This refers to minority groups in UK society. All groups, including the white majority population are from an ethnic group; therefore, it is offensive to describe people from a minority group as 'ethnic'.

**MASH**

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

**Personal Name**

The special name by which a person is usually called. The personal name may not be written at the beginning of the full name; hence, it should not be termed the 'first name'.

**Prejudice**

To pre-judge. A prejudiced person is one who holds views about an individual or group, which are not based on knowledge. It is often associated with discrimination against the nine protected characteristics of the Equality Act (2010).

**Racism**

Discrimination against a group or individual on account of their cultural or ethnic background

**Racist Incident**

Any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person

**SACRE**

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

**Supplementary school**

A community, faith and language schools operating outside of mainstream school hours. Sometimes referred to as complementary schools

**South East Asian**

Generally used to describe people whose origin is from the 'Far East', such as China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and Vietnam

**White**

Used to refer to people of West European origin, including migrants to North and South America, Australia and parts of Africa.

# Acknowledgements

Our thanks are extended to the members of the communities, who have shared their personal insight into the diverse cultural experiences of children in our schools. With their contribution this document has become a reflection of some of the richness of Milton Keynes' society.

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African Caribbean Community: The African and African Caribbean Parents Group and the African Diaspora Foundation(ADF)

Asylum Seeker and Refugee Partnership

Bangladeshi Community

Chinese Community - Buddhism

Christianity: Ecumenical Mission and MK SACRE

Ghanaian Community: The Ghanaian Association,

Indian Community - Hinduism and Sikhism

Irish Community

Italian Community

Japanese Community

Les Poussin French supplementary school

Jewish community representative

Pakistani Community

Spanish Community: Nuestra Escuela Veo Leo

Somali Community: The Somali Association and LearnMK

Traveller Community

Ukrainian community: Sunflower school

## ***The EMA Network Data Protection Privacy Notice***

*We collect and use information about you so that we can provide you with consultancy, training, information and support services. Full details about how we use this data and the rights you have around this can be found at [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/privacy](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/privacy). If you have any data protection queries, please contact the Data Protection Officer at [data.protection@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:data.protection@milton-keynes.gov.uk).*



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