

What do pupils get out of Alevism lessons in RE?

Alevism lessons provide a basic foundation of morales and allow students to think rationally. Alevism teaches that divinity exists within humanity, rather than above it. Lessons therefore, concentrate on focusing on the idea that human beings learn tolerance and the ability to value each other through rational and humanist thought. The lessons provide alternative and a wide diversity of thought, literature, art and music which pupils can benefit from via increase in general knowledge and culture.

Alevi pupils, like other minority communities report that sometimes they feel invisible in school because no one knows about their religion and/or ethnicity and this negatively affects their sense of identity and belonging. The Religion and Identity project began in 2010 when the negative identity of Alevi youth was causing concern in the community and they said that what would make a difference was if Alevism could be taught in RE lessons, where they learn about other religions but not their own.

The British Alevi Federation worked closely with two local schools and a university to introduce Alevi lessons into the RE curriculum and the Prince of Wales Primary School in Enfield became the first in the world to include Alevism as part of the core RE curriculum. At Highbury Grove Secondary School in Islington Alevi pupils helped to design and teach the Key Stage 3 Alevi lessons to Year 9 and Alevi youth from the BAF continue to support the lessons. The outcomes have been very positive for the pupils and schools, increasing Alevi pupils and parents' sense of belonging and involvement in the schools, raising achievement of Alevi pupils and creating better understanding between Alevi pupils and their teachers and peers. OFSTED has been very positive about the project and it won the British Educational Research Association prize for collaboration between schools and universities. This leaflet introduces the reasons why learning about Alevism (or any other minority religion) is important and schools with a significant proportion of Alevi pupils might want to introduce Alevi lessons as part of the RE curriculum and this leaflet is a guide to how this can be achieved....

Alevism is a lifelong journey where one learns how to be one with Hakk. Like other beliefs and ideas taught in RE, learning Alevism creates knowledge of love, equality, sharing, peace, respect for others and justice. The lessons aid pupils in learning the unique and unknown culture and beliefs of Alevis.



Alevism Lessons Artefacts

Artefacts provided free of charge upon request



Alevism Lessons Resources

Resources provided free of charge upon request



Britain's Alevi Federation is prepared to provide all necessary resources, including the curriculum for Alevism Lessons around the Country.

Contact details
 Britain Alevi Federation
 89 Ridley Road, Hackney, London, E8 2NH.
 Tel: 0044 (0) 207 241 6950
 Email: britanyaalevifederasyonu@gmail.com

**ALEVISM
 LESSONS
 IN
 SCHOOLS**



"With religion and religious issues frequently topping the news agenda, Religious Education has never been more relevant, engaging and challenging. Right from primary school, RE gives children valuable insight into the diverse beliefs, ethics and opinions of Britain today. It helps with their own personal development, supporting engagement with the spiritual, moral and social questions that will surface again and again in their lives and their communities."



'A path without knowledge, is a path of darkness'

- H. Bektas Veli



Learning about Alevism: guidance for SACREs and schools

One of the greatest strengths of the local arrangements for religious education in England is that it enables SACREs and schools to take account of the significant 'other' religions and worldviews in the local area. As diversification of the education system increases with the growth of the academisation agenda and Free Schools, the definition of 'local' can be very specific indeed.

Whether you are a SACRE seeking to provide options for your schools to meet localised contexts, of an individual Academy or Free School with a significant Alevi cohort, this pack provides you with a basis for planning learning about Alevism within your RE curriculum. For those who may just be looking for a different religion for their students to study, one which raises many questions and concepts about what we mean by 'religion', Alevism provides a stimulating and thought-provoking alternative with which to explore religion in the modern world.

Alevism is a collection of rich traditions and it is difficult to define it clearly and succinctly. Alevi people themselves have diverse interpretations, understandings and practices according to their geographical place of origin and level of awareness of aspects of the traditions. There are differences according to East and West Turkey, rural and urban, Anatolia and the European diaspora. This makes the study of Alevism a fascinating journey of discovery and enquiry, which in turn helps to enrich the religious education in any school, not just those with significant numbers of Alevi pupils. A brief introduction to Alevism can be found on the website of the London Cemevi <http://www.w.alevnet.org/> by clicking on the 'English' button at the top.

The materials have been developed by The Prince of Wales Primary School, Enfield and Highbury Grove High School, Islington and the local Alevi communities of North London and the Cemevi at Dalston. Resources, both general and specifically designed for schools, can be accessed on their website: http://www.alevnet.org/RP.aspx?pid=Alevism-Resorces_en-GB

In exploring Alevism, pupils are encouraged to learn:

- What the main beliefs and teachings are;
- The sources of wisdom that inspire and sustain Alevi life;
- How Alevi people live out and express their faith in different contexts in Turkey and the UK;
- What Alevism has to say about the nature of Reality and Truth underpinning life;
- What it means to be an Alevi and what it has to say about human identity, diversity and belonging;
- Core Alevi values and living in community.



Learning will be planned to suit the context and ethos of each school, in accordance with the appropriate agreed syllabus, Trust deeds or in the case of Academies and Free Schools, their Funding Agreement. The structure provided here is illustrative to support planning for appropriate knowledge, understanding and learning as pupils progress through their education. In planning pupils' learning, teachers may take the following into consideration:

- What can pupils learn about Alevism as a religion or world-view from an exploration of the beliefs, practices, structures and sources of the faith?
- How can we provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own experience and values through their exploration of Alevism?
- How can we help pupils make sense of what it means to be an Alevi through their exploration of Alevism as lived and practised in the UK and Anatolia/Turkey?
- Which central concepts in Alevism provide the richest opportunities for critical reflection and analysis?
- What insights can Alevism provide into what it means to be human, how we should live and the nature of Reality that might help pupils reflect on how they make sense of life?
- How might an exploration of Alevism contribute to a pupil's growing sense of self in relation to her/his world?

On behalf of the Alevi community, we hope you find the materials produced here useful to your SACRE, school and pupils

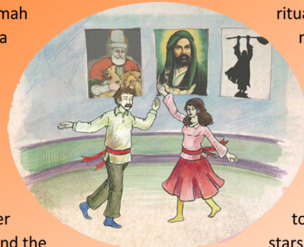
Contents of Alevism lessons

Alevism lessons include Alevi rules, music, poetry and Semah (dance) to express feelings, preparation for the Cem ceremony (a ritual of gathering based on everyday issues, mutual consent and harmony), conflict resolution and sharing with others.

Semah

Semahs can be described as a set of mystical and aesthetic body movements in rhythmic harmony. They constitute one of the twelve main services found in Cem rituals, religious practices performed

by the Alevi. Semahs are performed by 'semahçısı' (Semah dancers), accompanied by Zakirs (musicians) playing the saz, the long-necked lute. There are different forms of Semah, each with distinct musical characteristics and rhythmic structures. The ritual is performed by both men and women, side by side. Semah rituals are based on the concept of unity with God as part of a natural cycle: people come from God and return to God. Semahs are the most crucial means for the transmission of the Alevi-Bektaşî tradition. The different traditions are passed on orally, from generation to generation.



"Whirling on the wing of a clouds Turning from winter like the earth, the moon and the

bird around the sun or with the stars in the universe, putting Man at the centre. Making your hand a mirror. Loving, sharing, believing, and refining. Migrating to the, Eternal and Unknown like a crane rising to the sky, becoming the light in the dark, the light in the heart. Becoming a poem, a tune, a breath.....and spinning."

"Rage and hatred vanish in the exalted Semah"



Why study Alevism?

Like all other religions in R.E. Alevism plays as an important subject, not just because it links in current world affairs and questions surrounding ethics and morality, but because it links strongly into many other fields - music, poetry, history, dance and culture. For students with an Alevi background, Alevism lessons have evidently provided a greater sense of belonging and have linked to increases in sense of self confidence and interpersonal skills with fellows pupils. For all other students, the provisions of Alevism lessons provides relevant general knowledge and diversity in thought in regards to religions around the world.



Cem ceremony

**Consent
Sharing
Peace
Conflict resolution
Guidance
Enlightenment
Equality
Self reflection
Unity
Spiritual gathering
Solidarity
Spiritual music and dance**



- 12 Services**
1. Pir/Dede/Ana
 2. Guide
 3. Zakir/Musician
 4. Lightkeeper
 5. Doorkeeper
 6. Cem keeper
 7. Jug keeper
 8. Food server
 9. Fleece keeper
 10. Semah dancer
 11. Water server
 12. Sweeper

Alevi in the UK

Approximately 300.000 Alevi live in the United Kingdom. There are fifteen Alevi Cultural Centres and Cemevis serving people in the UK. Living in multicultural societies, British Alevi aim to promote basic social and cultural rights for all communities. Cemevis for instance, provide voluntary legal, advice and translation services; educational services; youth festivals and cultural events; rituals; funeral services; charity events; media and public relations services throughout the country.

