**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.alevinet.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.alevinet.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.

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| **Aims** | **Key Stage 1 pupils** | **Lower Key Stage 2 pupils** | **Upper Key Stage 2 pupils** | **Key Stage 3 pupils** |
|  | *Who are the Alevi and what do they believe?* | *How are Alevi beliefs and values expressed in their worship and practice?* | *How does Alevi tradition influence the lives of Alevi communities and families?* | *To what extent does Alevism provide good guidance through life?* |
| To understand the nature, role and influence of religion in the world | Pupils will learn about basic Alevi beliefs, practices and values, including Hakk, self-control, the Cem ceremony, the importance of music and conflict resolution. | Pupils will learn about the importance of rituals, hymns, prayers and practices of the Cem ceremony as expressions of core Alevi beliefs about Hakk, humanity and how people should live together. | Pupils will learn about key Alevi figures (Ali, Haci Bektash Veli) and their teachings. They will learn about Alevi life and rituals (including birth, marriage, ‘musahiplik’ and death), the beliefs they express and how these influence the lives of individuals and communities in Anatolia and Britain. | Pupils will re-visit (or learn about) the rituals, beliefs and sources of Alevism and different interpretations of these within Alevi communities, and explore how these relate to questions of identity, meaning, purpose and value. They will learn about Alevi attitudes to other religions and beliefs. |
| To pursue personal quest for meaning, purpose and value | Pupils will consider how Alevi values, including conflict resolution compare with their own and the school’s experience. | Pupils will reflect on and explain how what they have learnt about Alevism compares with their own beliefs and lifestyles and the way they see things. | Pupils will relate Alevi beliefs about living in community to their own and other religious views, explaining how they are similar and different. | Pupils engage with and respond to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural values, issues and questions which they encounter in their study of Alevism, comparing Alevi responses to these issues and questions with their own and those of other religions. |
| To formulate reasoned opinion/ argument | Pupils will use their learning about Alevi beliefs and practice to give informed reasons why the Cem ceremony is important. | Pupils will compare their own beliefs and practices with those of the Alevi and give informed reasons and evidence for their opinions. | Pupils evaluate their differing views on Alevi teachings about community as they apply to modern Britain and rural Anatolia. | Pupils evaluate the influence of the sources, traditions, beliefs and practices of Alevism and critically consider different interpretations of what Alevism is and its place alongside other religions and beliefs. |
| To promote understanding of and respect for different beliefs & life-styles. | Pupils respond positively and with curiosity to what is different about Alevism and make connections with shared values and beliefs. | Pupils identify different Alevi beliefs and practices and how these can express shared human ideas, feelings and life-experiences such as family. | Pupils respond to the importance of equality and respect for others in Alevism and compare this to different attitudes that they encounter in modern Britain. | In responding critically to Alevi teachings about tolerance and respect, pupils consider how different religions can live together. |

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| **Pupils will learn:**  About the Cem ceremony, its practices and traditions and how it affects those who attend. Some lines of hymns that express some of the teachings of Alevism.  The core belief in God as ‘Hakk’ (Truth) and what this might mean.  How Alevi beliefs are expressed in music, dance, imagery and worship.  Alevi values expressed in basic teaching (‘Being the master of your own hand, tongue and body’) and some poetry. |  | **Through open exploration of Key Questions…**   1. Who are the Alevi and what do they believe? 2. What is the Cem ceremony? 3. How do Alevi prepare for the Cem ceremony? 4. What happens in a Cem ceremony? 5. Why are music and dance so important in the Cem ceremony and in Alevi life? 6. What beliefs and values are expressed in the Cem ceremony?   **…and key concepts**  **Beliefs and values**: Hakk (God/Truth); conflict resolution; Cemevi  **Cem ceremony**: Saz; dede; semah; 12 services; lokma; asure  **Key figures**: Haji Bektash Veli; Yunus Emre; Pir Sultan  ***(Including the pupils’ own experiences and questions)*** |  | **With the outcome that pupils**  Pupils can describe the Cem ceremony and say why it is important to Alevi children.  They express views about the teachings in the rituals and poetry and relate these to aspects of their own lives  Pupils can describe the Cem ceremony and how it expresses beliefs and values. They are able to say how this helps Alevi to become better people and say how it would make a difference in their lives. |

**KS1 Who are the Alevi and what do they believe?**

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| **Aims** | **Key Stage 1** | *Who are the Alevi and what do they believe?* |
| To understand the nature, role and influence of religion in the world | Pupils will learn about basic Alevi beliefs, practices and values, including Hakk, self-control, the Cem ceremony, the importance of music and conflict resolution | Alevism originally from Anatolia, Turkey, but now there are many Alevis in the UK and Europe. Do you think they will all live in the same way in Turkey as they do in the UK? Maybe share some pictures to help children explore this.  The Alevi believe in God whom they call Hakk (Truth) and that Hakk is in everyone and everything. You may ask them what they think ‘God’ is, if anything, and also possibly explore what they think ‘truth’ is. Is truth always just factual (right/wrong) or can it be to do with feelings and behaviour as well? What is a ‘true friend’?  The Cem ceremony is a special occasion when Alevi families gather in the Cemevi to worship and meet together.  The Cem ceremony is as much a social event as a ritual one and will begin with consent being given and any disputes will be resolved (conflict resolution) and this can be related to how they resolve conflicts with their friends in school and beyond. You can discuss why it is important to resolve conflicts and again link this to how they might feel is they are learning in a lesson, but all they can think about is the argument with their friend, so they cannot concentrate on the learning.  There are 12 Services and children may have the opportunity to act these out (see Cem Booklet). What do some of these mean? (Eg light, cleaning, sharing, dancing etc.) Children can use hot seating to explore how they felt performing services for others. Is it important to serve others or should we just help ourselves? How do you feel while you are helping and afterwards? How do you feel if no-one helps you?  It is good to give pupils the opportunity to listen to the saz, either live or on video, and to look at some words from basic hymns composed by the key figures. How important are songs to people? Why? How do songs get a message across? What does dancing add to music? How might Alevis feel when performing Semah? Again, as much hands on experience and links with Alevi followers will help pupils understand and experience something that might be very strange for them. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_YTMbJbeH38> )  Why is the Cem ceremony important to Alevi people? What do they get from it? How do you think it might make them feel? What do you think they might say if you asked them why it is important? If you get the chance to invite an Alevi into school, or to visit a Cemevi, this could be a good opportunity to get the children to ask their own questions. Get the children to think about their own feelings and ideas about what is and isn’t important, and to use this to come up with reason(s) why the Cem ceremony is important in Alevism. Also, maybe ask them whether some of what they are learning about could be important for people who are not Alevis.  At this level, the main Alevi values to explore are related to ‘Being master of your hands, tongue and body (loins) and children can think about what this means, how we can use our hands, tongue and body it good ways and bad ways and relate this to their own ideas and the school rules. Why do we need rules? Where do we learn how to behave? What makes something good or bad?  What have the pupils found interesting, fascinating, intriguing, strange, different about what they have learnt? Why? What have they found similar, familiar, shared in common? What have they learnt about the Alevis? How is the Alevi way of life different from their own and how is it similar? Is there anything in Alevism that they think would make their own life better? |
| To pursue personal quest for meaning, purpose and value | Pupils will consider how Alevi values, including conflict resolution compare with their own and the school’s experience. |
| To formulate reasoned opinion/  argument | Pupils will use their learning about Alevi beliefs and practice to give informed reasons why the Cem ceremony is important. |
| To promote understanding of and respect for different beliefs & life-styles. | Pupils respond positively and with curiosity to what is different about Alevism and make connections with shared values and beliefs. |

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| **Pupils will learn:**  How the rituals, hymns, symbols and practices of the Cem ceremony express beliefs about God, what it means to be a person and how we should live together |  | **Through open exploration of Key Questions…**   1. What are the main symbols of Alevism and what do they mean? 2. Which aspects of the Cem ceremony   **…and key concepts**  Lokma  ***(Including the pupils’ own experiences and questions)*** |  | **With the outcome that pupils** |

**LKS2 How are Alevi beliefs and values expressed in their worship and practice?**

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| **Aims** | **Lower Key Stage 2** | *How are Alevi beliefs and values expressed in their worship and practice?* |
| To understand the nature, role and influence of religion in the world | Pupils will learn about the importance of rituals, hymns, prayers and practices of the Cem ceremony as expressions of core Alevi beliefs about Hakk, humanity and how people should live together. |  |
| To pursue personal quest for meaning, purpose and value | Pupils will reflect on and explain how what they have learnt about Alevism compares with their own beliefs and lifestyles and the way they see things. |
| To formulate reasoned opinion/  argument | Pupils will compare their own beliefs and practices with those of the Alevi and give informed reasons and evidence for their opinions. |
| To promote understanding of and respect for different beliefs & life-styles. | Pupils identify different Alevi beliefs and practices and how these can express shared human ideas, feelings and life-experiences such as family. |

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| **Pupils will learn:** |  | **Through open exploration of Key Questions…**  **…and key concepts**  ***(Including the pupils’ own experiences and questions)*** |  | **With the outcome that pupils** |

**UKS2 How does Alevi tradition influence the lives of Alevi communities and families?**

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| **Aims** | **Upper Key Stage 2** | *How does Alevi tradition influence the lives of Alevi communities and families* |
| To understand the nature, role and influence of religion in the world | Pupils will learn about key Alevi figures (Ali, Haci Bektash Veli) and their teachings. They will learn about Alevi life and rituals (including birth, marriage, ‘musahiplik’ and death), the beliefs they express and how these influence the lives of individuals and communities in Anatolia and Britain. |  |
| To pursue personal quest for meaning, purpose and value | Pupils will relate Alevi beliefs about living in community to their own and other religious views, explaining how they are similar and different. |
| To formulate reasoned opinion/  argument | Pupils evaluate their differing views on Alevi teachings about community as they apply to modern Britain and rural Anatolia. |
| To promote understanding of and respect for different beliefs & life-styles. | Pupils respond to the importance of equality and respect for others in Alevism and compare this to different attitudes that they encounter in modern Britain. |

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| Pupils will learn about:  The development of Alevism and the impact of belief and practice on individual and communal life  The spiritual and moral beliefs about reality, humanity and the good life as expressed in Cem ceremonies and traditional hymns and poems and how these compare with other beliefs and values in modern Britain  How Alevi belief and practice sustain people through persecution and migration and the value, challenges and tensions of belonging to a faith community in modern Britain  Different understandings amongst Alevi about what Alevism is, arriving at their own conclusion about the nature of Alevism in relation to other faiths and worldviews. |  | **Through open exploration of Key Questions…**   1. Why are there different ways of understanding what Alevism is? 2. What are the key Alevi beliefs? 3. Where does Alevism come from? 4. What is the significance of the Cem ceremony for Alevis? 5. Is it possible to live the demanding life of Alevi principles? 6. How does Alevism promote respect for and understanding of others? 7. What is Alevism and how does it influence individuals and communities here and in Anatolia?   **…and key concepts**  **God and Reality:** Hakk; la-mekan (without place); Allah-Muhammad-Ali; embodied soul; can; Ene’l Hakk;insan-I kamil (enlightened);  **Worship and ritual:** Cem; Dede; Saz; 12 services; semah; surrender; muhabbet; musahiplic; gorgu cemi (interrogation); duskunluk meydani (resolution); ikrar (admission); deyis;lokma  **Ethical living:** sanctity of life; equality; reason; humanism; sharing; collaboration; social justice; tarab (humility); service; duskun; musatub (brotherhood)  **Other**: pir; kapi; buyruks (collection of spiritual books); identity  ***(Including the pupils’ own experiences and questions)*** |  | **With the outcome that pupils**  can explain differing Alevi beliefs about God, humanity and the world and relate them to the development and practice of Alevism in Anatolia and beyond. They can explain the links between Alevi spiritual understanding and the moral values that arise from this, relating them to their own understanding of God, humanity and the world. They draw links between Alevi values and those of other faiths and worldviews, assessing whether faith and belief can help young people to make sense of the world and their place in it. On the basis of the evidence they have collated, they arrive at a justified view about the nature of Alevism. |

**KS 3 To what extent does Alevism provide good guidance through life?**

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| **Aims** | **Key Stage 3** | *To what extent does Alevism provide good guidance through life?* |
| To understand the nature, role and influence of religion in the world | Pupils will re-visit (or learn about) the rituals, beliefs and sources of Alevism and different interpretations of these within Alevi communities, and explore how these relate to questions of identity, meaning, purpose and value. They will learn about Alevi attitudes to other religions and beliefs. | Using images, video, poems and artefacts, engage pupils in an explorative discussion about what they think Alevism is all about. This could be paired or group work with a few different stimuli, with ideas shared afterwards to gain a fuller picture, or each going round the full selection of stimuli, gradually building up their impressions.  Explore through reflective approaches the significance and depth of the spiritual and ethical aspects of Alevism, the symbolic meanings as responses to deeply held convictions and visions of reality and humanity, including some Alevi mystical cosmology. Approaches such as silent debates, stilling activities and conceptual creativity to build bridges between the pupils’ worldview and the Alevi material will help elicit rich responses, both cognitive and affective, which they can draw on in response to the main question and their views on the nature of Alevism itself.  Effective use of sources through music and poetry, as well as images, video and direct encounter with Alevi people will help to bring this enquiry to life. It is important that this does remain an open enquiry and that different views are able to be aired. It may be a good idea to rehearse ground-rules and to discuss explicitly issues of dialogue, tolerance and respect. Alevi beliefs, values, ethical teachings and attitudes to different beliefs can be helpful here.  It is most important that this is an investigation into living faith and ‘worldview’, not simply a passing on of academic theory. Diversity enriches the study and if time, exploring Anatolian and UK Alevism raises interesting questions and broadens perspectives. Asking what Alevism is in an open way, allowing puzzlement and enquiry, using classroom techniques that focus on learning are all part of the joy of this material. Alevi self-understanding is diverse and dynamic, so there is no one right view. What does Alevism hold in common with ‘other faiths’? In what ways is it distinctive? How does the history of Alevism in Anatolia/Turkey and in Europe affect notions of self-identity and social cohesion?  Does Alevism demand too much? Is it possible for different faiths to live peacefully together? Could Alevi teachings, if taken seriously, provide a way forward for everyone? There are so many approaches teachers can adopt to explore these issues through the open content that is Alevi faith and practice.  The lesson materials provide some ideas, but be flexible and excite and engage the students in the immediacy of an ancient worldview that may be re-asserting its identity – possibly even reshaping it! |
| To pursue personal quest for meaning, purpose and value | Pupils engage with and respond to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural values, issues and questions which they encounter in their study of Alevism, comparing Alevi responses to these issues and questions with their own and those of other religions. |
| To formulate reasoned opinion/  argument | Pupils evaluate the influence of the sources, traditions, beliefs and practices of Alevism and critically consider different interpretations of what Alevism is and its place alongside other religions and beliefs. |
| To promote understanding of and respect for different beliefs & life-styles. | In responding critically to Alevi teachings about tolerance and respect, pupils consider how different religions can live together. |