

Malek Fahd Islamic School Case Study

School Context

Malek Fahd Islamic School (MFIS), an independent co-educational

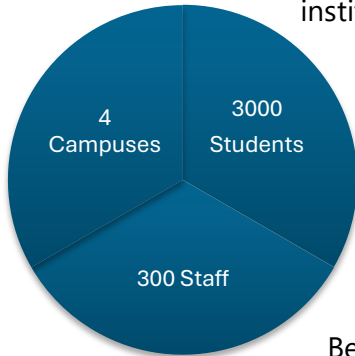
institution, operates multiple campuses

across Sydney, New South Wales.

Its primary hub is located in the vibrant south-western Sydney suburb of Greenacre, with additional campuses in Hoxton Park and Beaumont Hills.



MALEK FAHD
ISLAMIC SCHOOL



In 2020, a leadership change sparked spirited discussions among parents, educators, and board members about the school’s vision and mission, with a particular focus on the “Islamic” essence of MFIS. Concerns regarding the perceived sidelining of Islamic values and the apparent divide between academic and Islamic pursuits led to the formation of a dynamic, intensive 3-year partnership and subsequent Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MFIS and the Centre for Islamic Thought and Education (CITE).

Despite the challenges, the MFIS school community has remained resilient, embracing the shift as an opportunity to unite, reconnect, and reaffirm their commitment to integrating the Islamic worldview and Islamic pedagogy as the foundation for renewal toward distinction. This commitment aligns with their vision of providing “a faith-led education for every child” (MFIS Website, 2024).

At a Glance

School Name	Malek Fahd Islamic School
Established	1989
Orientation	Sunni
Student #	3000+
Streams	Greenacre Campuses (K-12): 6 Beaumont / Hoxton Park Campuses: 2
ICSEA (Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage)	
Teacher ratio Muslim / non-Muslim	240/16 93 % Muslim educators; 7 % educators outside of the faith
# of Educators in or completed the Graduate Certificate	32 (on-going – 30 new enrollees) Mandatory for all in leadership positions
# of Educators in or completed the Short Programs	148 – ongoing until every MFIS member has completed the foundational short course

The Niyyah Project Reinvigorating Islamic Identity at MFIS

Since October 2020, Malek Fahd Islamic School (MFIS) has embarked on an inspiring collaboration with the Centre for Islamic Thought and Education (CITE) to rejuvenate the school's Islamic ethos and embrace *tajdid* (renewal) towards a distinct form of excellence. This ambitious initiative, named the "Niyyah Project," draws inspiration from the Arabic word *niyyah*, meaning 'intention,' reflecting the project's foundational purpose and direction.

The Niyyah Project aims to deeply and holistically reconnect the school community with MFIS's vision, fostering a renewed sense of purpose and unity that resonates with the core values of Islamic education.

Pedagogical Challenges: Navigating Diverse Perspectives in Islamic Education

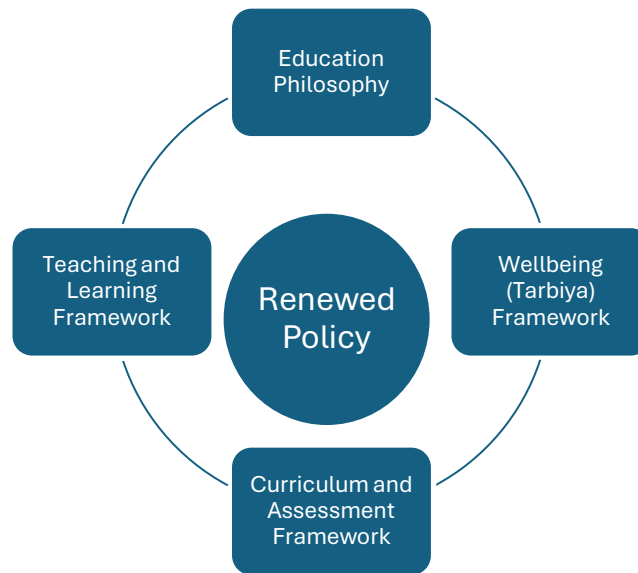
- **Clarifying Islamic Education:** One of the primary challenges is harmonising the various interpretations of what constitutes the "Islamic" among stakeholders. MFIS aims to move towards a shared, unified and clear understanding of Islamic Education.
- **Gaining Educators' Commitment:** Securing enthusiastic buy-in from educators is crucial for the successful implementation of educational initiatives. Their support and dedication are essential to driving meaningful change and specifically whole-school renewal.

Key Aspirations Inspired by Islamic Pedagogy

The aspirations MFIS set out to achieve were encapsulated in their renewed Education Philosophy and Graduate Qualities. MFIS set out to articulate their educational philosophy through a set of statements that articulates the beliefs, values, and guiding principles of MFIS with respect to education anchored in the Islamic tradition. The educational philosophy in turn underpins everything that follows - a distinct approach to faith-based Islamic education utilised to nurture the desired qualities in MFIS graduates. These aspirations are to be achieved by the following:

- Gaining conceptual clarity on what the 'Islamic' means in an 'Islamic School.'
- Creating a collaborative and collegial supportive working environment around a renewed culture for practice.
- Centering Islam in the way MFIS operates: policies, guidelines, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and wellbeing.

Niyyah Project Outputs:



Collaboratively renewed policy resulting in a culture of distinct educational practice

Impact of the Project (thus far): Transforming Islamic Education at MFIS

- **Unified Language:** Establishment of a school-wide meta language defining what the 'Islamic' means at MFIS, fostering a shared language for practice and a shared understanding among all stakeholders.
- **Wholesome Environment:** progress toward a more holistic and faith enriching environment for learners and other members/stakeholders, where their educational experience is both nurturing and comprehensive.
- **Leadership Shifts:** Significant shifts in leadership have been made to champion the Niyyah project's aspirations, including the active involvement of board members and executive leaders.
- **New Role Established:** A new position, Director of Faith, was created to oversee and integrate faith-based strategic priorities and initiatives within the school.
- **Three-Year Vision:** The first three years focused on establishing a common language and vision, engaging with learners, and ensuring that everyone shares the same conceptual framework.
 - **Year 1:** Developed a behaviour education policy aligned with Islamic Pedagogy.
 - **Year 2:** Defined educational philosophy and outlined the qualities that the school aspire to see in their graduates.
 - **Year 3:** Codesign and collaboration around a draft inaugural local, indigenous (born within), Teaching & Learning Framework, as the basis for realising the renewed and shared vision for learning across the whole school for purpose, alignment, and coherence across curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment.

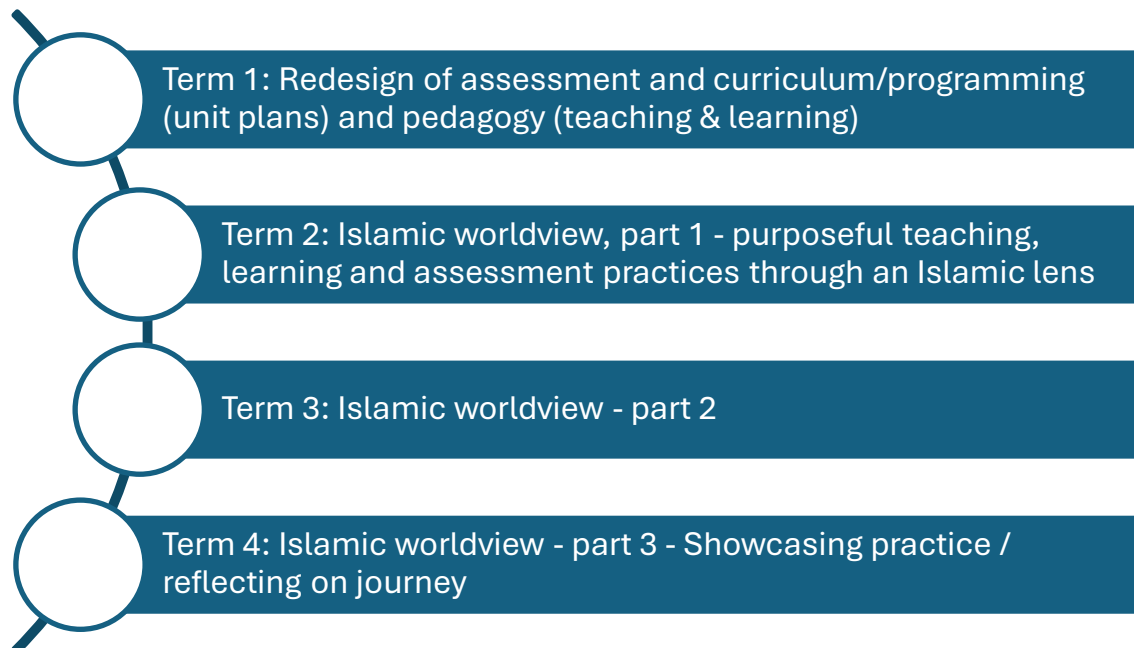
The Niyyah Project (Next Phase) (2023-2025)

2024-5 Priority: Launch of the MFIS Teaching and Learning Framework (TLF) 1.0

In 2025, MFIS will continue to focus on the rollout of the inaugural MFIS Teaching and Learning Framework (TLF) version 1.0. This framework will become the cornerstone of the school's educational practice, aligning with the school's compass (vision, mission, education philosophy, statement of faith, graduate qualities) to drive a unified vision, clear success measures, and a coherent education philosophy.

The TLF will streamline professional learning, connecting seamlessly with new Performance and Development Policy. From 2025 onwards, all professional development / learning will be structured around the TLF's key components, ensuring clarity and purpose.

Professional Learning Program of the Niyyah Project:



Reflections on Impact on School Message Systems (Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment)

After three years, this project has provided pivotal insights into the progress and outcomes of MFIS:

- **Central Role of Educators:** Educators play an essential role in embodying and imparting the "Islamic" in a faith-centred Islamic education.

- **Unified Language:** it is imperative to utilise a common language to foster a shared understanding and approach of the 'Islamic' in Islamic education.
- **Deepening Understanding:** A growing deeper conceptualisation of what it means to be an Islamic school that goes beyond the superficial, emphasising educators and leaders' role in nurturing faith.
- **Leadership through Niyah Subcommittees:** Educator-led whole-school renewal - Educators are taking the lead by actively participating in and driving the whole-school effort within Niyah subcommittees.
- **Enhanced Commitment and Efficacy:** This shift has led to increased educator commitment and improved efficacy in their roles.

The Way Forward

To further enhance the impact of the Niyah Project, MFIS recognises the importance of involving all community members, particularly parents. As the project transitions into the MOU/Group of 8 School-University Partnership following its initial three years, MFIS has committed to placing greater emphasis on the "Community of Learners" concept outlined in their new MFIS TLF Version 1.0. This approach specifically focuses on strengthening engagement with both students and parents.

Data from various MFIS annual school reviews show that students generally hold positive views about the Niyah Project. They reported experiencing improved relationships with their teachers and felt that their voices were heard more. Notably, students also appreciated the strengthening of their Islamic identity.

Next steps:

1. Developing a purposeful student engagement strategy.
2. Developing a robust parental engagement strategy.

To facilitate this new phase, the following projects are proposed:

- Virtual parent café
- Introduction of a 'Family Educator' role

The CITE-MFIS partnership will continue with monthly drop-in sessions to support the TLF, along with annual forums in collaboration with the Group of 8 schools.