

COMPLAINT: INQUIRY REVEALS SUNNIS GIVEN PRIORITY OVER SHIAS

Muslim school's admission policies are ruled 'unlawful'

Leicester's state Islamic school has been told its admissions criteria are "unlawful" because they discriminate against a Muslim group.

The Schools Adjudicator ruled that it was wrong Madani should give Sunni Muslims priority over Shias.

The school's policy also breaks the Sex Discrimination Act by turning away pupils to create the same number of boys and girls.

by IAN WISHART
EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

It is the second time in two years the Evington Valley Road school has been judged to have an unlawful admissions policy.

The adjudicator said it was possible Madani - which has dropped its commitment to having 10% non-Muslim pupils - would not have been approved if people thought it favoured one denomination.

The school's admissions policy says priority is given to Muslim children, and defines "Muslim" as four named groups, which are all Sunni.

Chairman of governors Hussein Suleman said there was never any intention to exclude any Muslim group, and the school was already consulting on a revised admissions policy. "This is creating divisions which don't exist," he said.

He said the school would comply with the ruling "without compromising our philosophy".

The investigation followed a complaint understood to have come from a Shia who believed the policy was discriminatory.

Sunnis and Shias are the two main sub-groups of Islam and differ in some beliefs and prac-

tices. Sunnis make up 85% of the global Muslim population.

Coun Suleman said there were Shias at Madani, and at the school's private primary, but he said he did not know whether any had been accepted at Madani since it became a state school.

Madani is allowed to give priority to Muslim children, just as Catholic schools give priority to Catholic pupils.

It was told to define "Muslim" when a complaint against its admissions criteria was upheld in 2008.

Coun Suleman said the school decided on its definition be-

cause it was the same as that contained in the deeds of the private Leicester Islamic Academy. Madani's predecessor, written 20 years ago.

But adjudicator Dr Elizabeth Passmore said she could not "find a document currently applying to the school that designates it as being for a particular group of Muslims".

She wrote: "It seems to me the school was expected to be a Muslim faith school, equally accessible to all Muslims."

Madani must alter its admissions for September 2011. Leicester City Council said it would help the school.

Arrests for assault on pensioner

ATTACK FROM FRONT PAGE

man, said: "It's cowardly and wicked. There are a lot of elderly people up here and people are feeling scared."

Tony Donovan, of Age Concern, condemned the attack.

Mr Donovan said: "Older people are exploited in different ways, more often than not it's the doorstep con. Attacks like this, thankfully, are rare.

"They can cause anxiety among older people in the community. Saffron Lane is a tightly-knit community and I would urge anyone who knows the people who carried out this attack to contact the police immediately before they do it to someone else."

WITNESSES

Police believe the attacker ran off towards nearby Babington Row, where he met another man.

Detectives released photographs of the man's injuries yesterday in an attempt to bring forward witnesses.

Detective Constable Joanna Brown, the investigating officer, said: "The assault left the victim with some nasty injuries and it is very sad to think that this man was targeted, even though he is elderly vulnerable and almost defenceless against a young man with a weapon.

"We have arrested three men, but we do not want witnesses to think that this means we no longer need them to come forward.

"Information about the incident is still as valuable to us now as it was before the arrests, so please call us if you think you know anything about the robbery or the people involved."

Three men - a 17-year-old and two aged 21 - have been arrested and released on police bail while officers continue their investigation.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Det Con Brown on 0116 222 2222.

Leopards new stars for zoo

TWO rare snow leopards are preparing to make their home in Leicestershire.

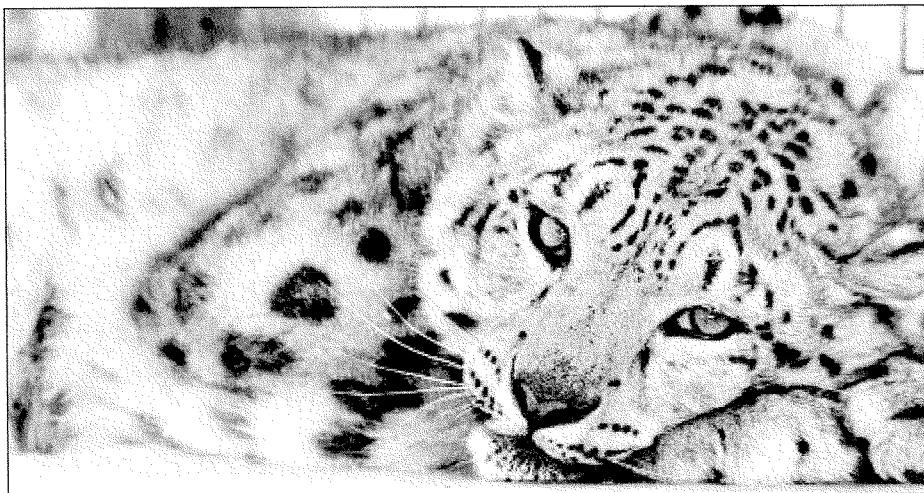
The pair are in quarantine but within a few weeks are set to become the stars of Twycross Zoo's new Himalaya exhibit.

They are Suou, a male from Tama Zoo, in Japan, and a female, Irma, from Sweden.

A zoo spokesman said they had settled in well to their quarantine quarters since arriving about 12 days ago.

Snow leopards are well adapted for life in the mountains, with features including short forelegs with large paws for walking on snow, long hind legs for leaping, long fur with only undergrowth and a long flexible tail.

Snow leopards are an endangered species.



PICTURE ALEX HANNAM / 206076/14

NEW ARRIVAL: This female snow leopard is in quarantine at the Twycross Zoo, but will move into her new home in two weeks

Press Complaints Commission adjudication on child's photo

A WOMAN complained to the Press Complaints Commission that an article headlined "Tender arm of the law", published in the Leicester Mercury on 12 December 2009, contained a photograph of her daughter which was published without consent in breach of Clause 6 (Children) of the Editors' Code of Practice.

The complaint was upheld. The article reported that a bus full of primary school children on a day trip had crashed into a low railway bridge.

The complainant objected to the inclusion in the coverage of a photograph of her daughter, together with numerous other

children, being comforted by a policeman at the scene of the accident.

Her daughter had been pictured in a clear state of distress and the complainant had not been asked for her consent for the photograph to appear. The child had been further upset by the publication of the image.

The newspaper said that this was a serious accident in which there was a legitimate public interest. The children depicted in the photograph had not been injured and were all safe from further harm.

The decision to publish the photograph had not been taken lightly. Its main concern was

the possible impact any use of the picture would have had on the children.

The photograph had been taken on the street and had been unaccompanied by any private details of the children involved.

It would also not have had an impact on the welfare of the children as it had appeared only in Leicester, outside their local area. It said that they would not have been embarrassed or distressed by the coverage.

Adjudication: Newspapers are entitled to publish stories and pictures of serious road ac-

cidents, which take place in public and often have wide-reaching consequences. In this case, it was not in doubt that the bus crash - which involved more than 50 schoolchildren - was a serious incident which raised important questions in regard to public health and safety.

The commission did not wish to interfere unnecessarily with the newspaper's right to report the matter, which it generally had done in a sensitive manner.

However, it was clear that the complainant had not given her consent for the newspaper to either take, or publish the photograph which showed her

daughter in a state of distress. The subject matter of the close-up photograph certainly related to her welfare.

There may be occasions where the scale and gravity of the circumstances can mean that pictures of children can be published in the public interest without consent. In the specific circumstances of this case, the commission did not consider that there was a sufficient public interest to justify the publication of the image.

It accepted that the newspaper had thought carefully about whether to use the photograph, but the commission considered that it was just the

wrong side of the line on this occasion. The complaint was therefore upheld.

Editor's footnote: I apologise to the family and our readers for this misjudgement and for any distress we may have caused. We did not intend to add to the upset of those involved in the accident and we are grateful that the commission recognised that we did not publish the photograph lightly.

However, we accept the commission's ruling that we got it wrong and that the publication of the picture "was just the wrong side of the line on this occasion."