

Intellectual Disability and Muslim Students:

What Teachers and Wellbeing Staff Need to Know

What is intellectual disability (ID)?

A condition affecting intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour. It may present as slower development in language, reasoning, problem-solving, and social skills.

Islamic principle

The Prophet ﷺ treated individuals with intellectual disability with dignity and respect. A woman with ID once took his hand and he listened attentively to her concerns in public (Bukhari)

Teaching approaches

- Focus on life skills, spiritual inclusion, and dignity
- Repeat instructions using concrete examples
- Use multisensory learning: picture books, tasbih counters, physical movement

Example

Ahmed, a Year 9 student with mild intellectual disability, cannot fast during Ramadan. The school encourages him to give charity or offer water to students at iftar events, promoting participation in the spirit of the month.

Respectful behaviour

- Always speak directly to the student, not about them
- Never infantilise or overly praise – be age-appropriate and sincere