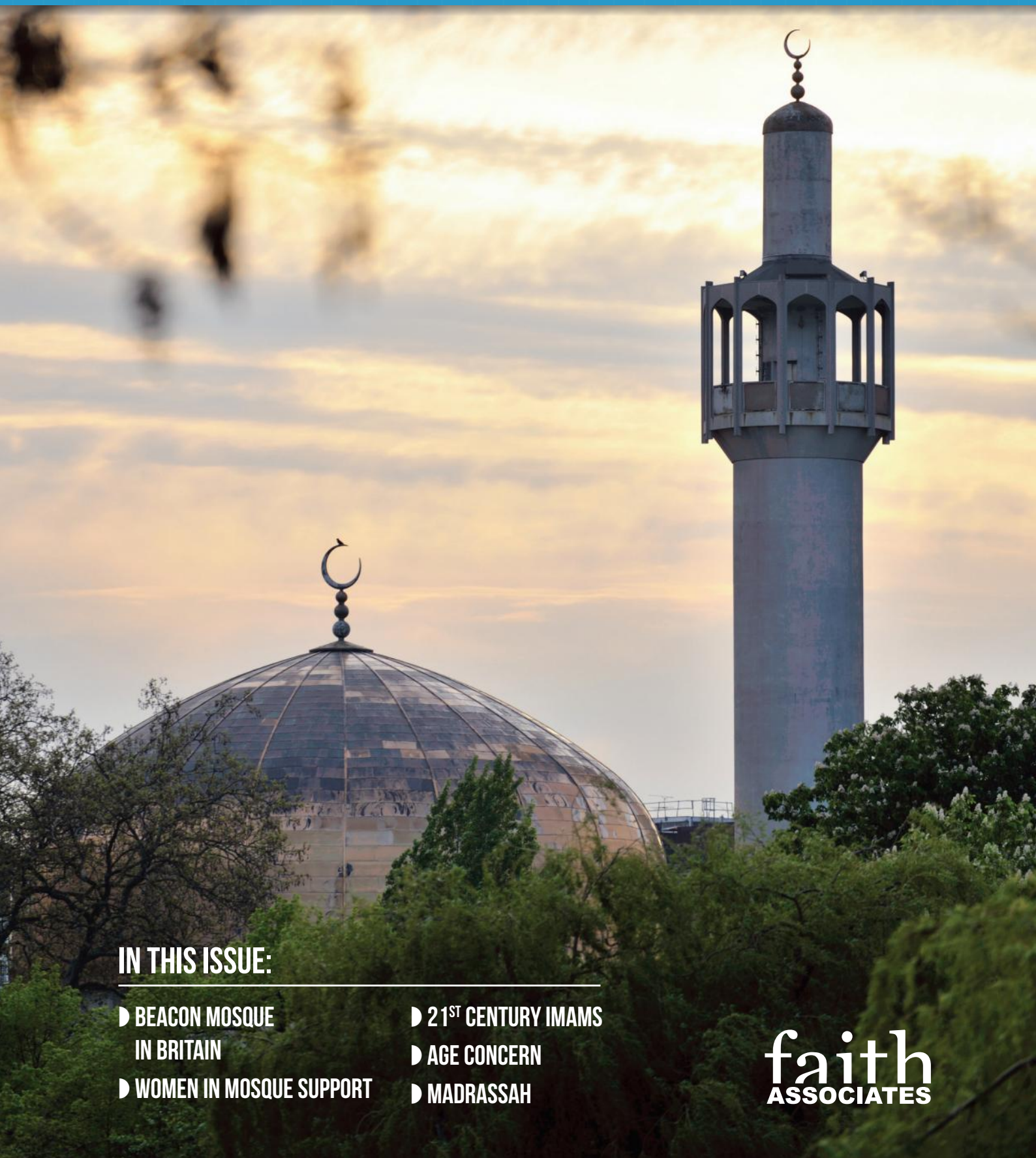


# MOSQUE AND MADRASSAH QUARTERLY

BUILDING STANDARDS, INSPIRING THE FUTURE | 2013 ISSUE 1 Q1



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**faith**  
ASSOCIATES



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The Mosque and Madrassah Quarterly was compiled by Faith Associates. The views expressed are those of the contributing editors and not of Faith Associates.

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## Beacon Mosque in Britain

Muslim Community and Education Centre, Palmers Green Mosque - London Mosque providing educational and social facilities

This publication will highlight in every issue a beacon center from the UK or Europe and beyond. Showcasing establishments which are really trying to contribute to the society they conduct themselves in.

Muslim Community and Education Centre, (MCEC) Palmers Green Mosque is one just centre. It is a nonprofit Charity Trust. The Trust's primary aim is to provide a place of worship, educational and social facilities for the local Muslim community in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

The Trust also aims to provide a range of culturally sensitive services for the wider communities of North London, drawing upon its Islamic values, with a view to improving quality of life and enhancing community cohesion."

They offer congregational prayers with equal facilities for men & women. A Crèche for children along with a special nursing room for mothers are added facilities in the women prayer section.

Staff & volunteers on a rota are used on a daily basis to manage the large numbers attending, to ensure worshippers can peacefully and safely perform their prayers. Nearly 2,000 people attend on Fridays for Jumaa prayers.

Ramadan; with the challenges of managing crowds of attendees, not

only to ensure peaceful space for their prayer, also making lots of efforts avoiding any form of disturbance for neighbours.

### Parking Facility

Although MCEC's parking space could be considered amongst the finest car park of Masjid, yet because of the great numbers of attendees, in particularly during Ramadan & Eid, they have face difficulties in accommodating all.

In order to manage the facility professionally they had to adopt some criteria for allowing Musallees to use the facility fairly, i.e. cars with minimum of three on board and with disability badges will be given priority. First come first served in consideration of above was another criteria. Most of

the Musallees welcomed this traffic management decision, as this helps build up the closeness & ties between the users of the centre by car sharing. This also contributes towards a healthy environment where users are also encouraged to use alternate means of transport, i.e cycling for which MCEC provides specific cycle racks as well as walking or public transport.

### Jummaa

The Juma khutbas are organized on a rota based to keep in breadth of religious opinion, thus different scholars and guest speakers are invited to deliver the Juma Khutbahs on variety of subjects. Case in point; a special talk was delivered by Mirza Sarajkić the advisor to the grand Mufti of Bosnia, on the Love of Allah and how it should manifest/Positive Action in Adversity. All the talks and Khutbas are made available to the community via their website.



### MCEC Objectives are:

- Focus on the needs of the diverse Muslim community, by the provision of a place of worship and education, whilst ensuring these services are open to all.
- Provide Muslims and non-Muslims with the opportunity to learn and understand Islam, through dialogue, discussion and social interaction and to dispel the common misconceptions of Islam.

- Meet the needs of the community by promoting spiritual, health, education and social enhancement, through policy, strategic development and services.

### A service delivery approach

The MCEC is focused in supporting the needs of the community; they have a diverse range of services delivered by paid staff as well as volunteers such

- :: Pre-Nakah counseling, :: School visits, :: Interfaith dialogue, :: hiring of its facilities, :: Funeral service, :: Madrassah, :: after school clubs, :: Marriage Match making, Counseling

### MCEC

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## Women in supporting Mosques

Many people believe that female leadership in mosques and Islamic centres is a new phenomenon, one that is brought on by women finally being able to establish and consolidate their authority in the wide spread Muslim community due to persistence and greater access. However, a simple look at mosques in the UK shows that only 100 have been deemed 'women friendly'. Personally I used to be under the impression that this figure is much higher than this, maybe because I have been fortunate enough to experience positive involvement in the centre I am associated with.



My contribution to the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre started from a young age. As my mother taught young children Arabic and Islamic Studies, I busied myself by volunteering in the reception of the centre answering phone calls and taking weekend enquiries. As I grew older, I continued to volunteer, utilising the skills I had acquired over the years for the benefit of the centre. Even at a young age, my perception of a mosque or Islamic centre was one where women were heavily involved in many aspects of the mosques' activities rather than just merely users of what was on offer. Why wouldn't they be? If mosques are supposed to be at the heart of spiritual and social development of the community then women, who are an integral and critical part of that community, should and need to be at the forefront.

It was not until I was invited to join the trustee

board five years ago that I realised female leadership in mosques is an alien concept to some of our centres. I have worked with many mosques, sharing my experiences with them so that they too can build opportunities for female board members and recognise that the limitations of accessibility need to be challenged.

Through this column, I look forward to contributing my personal thoughts and experiences on topics relating to female empowerment and leadership. I also wish to share your view points and concerns and hope you'll get in touch to voice your opinions. I see the role for women in mosques as continually developing, this is an exciting time for both our centres and our communities and I hope this is one way in which we can all share in this positive change.



**Since 2007, Sahar Zahid has been a trustee at the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre, an influential mosque and community centre in West London. While her role focuses on youth, education and women's projects, she is a former chairperson of the board. She has also worked extensively with other mosques in the South East to encourage women's involvement in their management.**



## Change is coming – Editors Note

Islam by its very nature has contributed to progression and constructive enlightenment where ever it has spread and the mosque as an Islamic institution has maintained its relevancy and status for every period of time and within every culture Islam has spread within. Having frequented many mosques around the world for the best period of three decades in the capacity as a worshiper, a devotee, a manager, a teacher and advisor I feel that it is time the this

important institution and supporting services has its own publication hence the launch of the Mosque and Madrassah Quarterly.

The current status quo in many mosques cannot be allowed to remain. The necessity to service the multiple needs of diverse communities and different generations has reached critical levels. The Mosque is uniquely positioned in all societies to offer solutions to real problems in many areas where Muslims live. In areas where there is

deprivation and

underachievement it is the mosque which is the only credible and sizable institution that can really engage the community, if administrated and projected coherently. The mosque could and should tackle some of the social exclusion and integration issues currently plaguing the very communities the mosques were established for. The purpose of this quarterly publication is to help foster better governance and to start

the process of encouraging a greater insight to what the future mosque could potentially look like. The need for a paradigm shift in thinking from the current and future mosque leadership is essential if the integrity and relevancy of the mosque is to be maintained.

**Shaukat Warraich (Editor)** Email [shaukatw@faithassociates.co.uk](mailto:shaukatw@faithassociates.co.uk) – He is currently the CEO of Faith Associates and the author of number of publications on Mosques and Madrassah.

## A British Imam in 21st century

**Qari Muhammad Asim**  
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For many years there have been discussions within the British Muslim communities about the role of British Imams, the skills required and services offered by them. An Imam is an invaluable resource for a community. Imams have always provided a variety of inter-connected spiritual and civic services, and it is often the messages from

Imams that has significantly contributed to the revival of the Muslim community. Imams have been the cornerstone of the spiritual development of the British Muslim community.

However, the expectations of the British Muslim community about Imams are constantly rising due to the changing circumstances of British Muslims and the challenges that are faced by them. As British Muslim communities

are increasingly looking to employ well educated (in both religious and modern sciences), English speaking professional Imams, who will be able to 'connect' with Muslim youth and offer a true voice of Islam to others, the role of Imams is becoming increasingly important.

Given these circumstance, in the Faith Associates Quarterly newsletter, I hope to cover the views of Imams and the Muslim Youth

regarding the role of Imams in the 21st century, the service they should provide and the skills that Imams should possess.

The role of a British Imam, leading his community in the digital age of the 21st century is very different to the role of an Imam in the 1970s and 1980s. The generation gap that exists in our homes is also evident in our mosques and other community institutions.



British Muslim youths expect that British Imams should not only lead the ritual prayers, but that they should also lead their community, by example, to become active citizens who contribute to all aspects of the society.

Here, we set out a snapshot of some of the activities that a British Imam leading his community in the Digital Age is typically involved in. Part of being a British Imam involves being aware of all the current issues in the media affecting not only Muslims but the society in which the community lives. An Imam could get a call at any time from local electronic or print media asking for the local Muslim community's reaction on the issue of the day. An Imam would be expected to update the Mosques' website or his personal website/ facebook page to set out the local Muslims' response to a particular issue affecting the community.

On some mornings, the Imam may be invited to local schools to take assemblies, talking about Islam's perspective on a particular issue.

On any typical evening or at weekends, an Imam I holds "Imam's surgeries" involving one or possibly two or even three of the following:

- holding study circles and classes;
- giving advice relating to general fiqh issues or the meaning of a particular verse or hadith; or
- marriage counseling or family disputes, which involves listening to both

sides and trying to reconcile their hearts; or

- visiting a sick person in the community, or consoling a family that has suffered a bereavement and attending a gathering of du'a; or
- inspiring someone who may be suffering from depression or is under the influence of black magic; or
- writing character references; or
- providing 'careers' advice or mentoring an individual; or
- giving an interview to media, or to a non-Muslim student who may be writing a thesis about British Muslims; or
- showing non-Muslims who might be visiting for the first time around the Mosque.

The Imam may either give a lecture or hold live Islamic Q&A session at the mosque, on a local Asian/Muslim radio or on one of the bespoke Muslim channels. Further, from time to time, he may write articles for youth magazines giving the Islamic viewpoint on issues affecting British Muslims, ranging from mental health issues to crime, guidance on marital issues or identity crisis.

A 21st century Imam would be expected to be passionate about raising the aspiration of the youth, motivating young people to follow their faith, doing well in their studies/work as well as undertaking their acts of worship (e.g establishing prayer), inspiring them to be active citizens who aspire to become the most beneficial persons to others.



It would be expected of an Imam that he would have working relationship with many local agencies and agents of change. Consequently, during the course of the week, he may have meetings with community workers, youth workers, faith leaders, local councilors, law enforcements agencies and various local stakeholders working on the local issues affecting the wider community and providing guidance on how Muslims can play a part in it.

Currently, there is also a real need and a corresponding expectation that Imams will set up and then lead the mosque's steering group, made up of men and women who will be working on a number of positive projects to make mosques more accessible to youth, women and people of other faiths, as well doing out-reach work and more importantly helping Muslims understand their important role in this country.

This is an ambitious and aspiring sketch of the role of a British Imam and there are many challenges that the British Muslim community has to be overcome before we can see this role being fully practiced in our mosques.

These challenges include a change in the attitude of the community; their willingness to invest in people as well as bricks and mortar, Imams being trained in religious sciences, soft skills, and issues affecting their society. Constant and continuous professional development will be part of their development plan. Such Imam's contribution must be recognised by the community and he must be supported by the committee members and the community and financially rewarded accordingly. In the coming editions, we will discuss some of these challenges and provide suggestions to overcome them.

**"Co-operative's core value of serving the communities that they serve are shared by Leeds Makkah Mosque and Woodsley Community Centre and we are therefore pleased to be working with them. The Inspiring Young People programme is one of Co-op's programme is shared by us and we hope that gets people working together to benefit their community".**



## Age Concerns – Supporting and Sustaining the elderly in our community

**By Rashid Laher**

Email: [rai.laher@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:rai.laher@blueyonder.co.uk)

As someone who retired from a career of over 30 years but was still fully fit and wanting to take on more responsibilities. I got involved with my local Mosque, becoming its elected Chairman and serving in various roles. One of the roles Mosques can play and which is becoming increasingly important is the support of the needs of the Elderly. Age needs respect. It needs kindness. Sometimes it needs help. I have come across many supporting organizations that help the

elderly. Over the course of these contribution I will be introducing organsaions, ideas and practical approaches to help your Mosque or community centre support the need of the Elderly. "Age UK" is one such orgnsaition I have come across which deserves your attention and there are there for everyone in later life. Age UK works to improve later life for everyone by providing life-enhancing services and vital support.

Want to know what Age UK is up to? Listen to their weekly podcast called Agenda. Visit the Age UK website: [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

~ Age UK aims to improve later life for everyone through their information, advice, services, campaigns, products, training and research. Local Age Concerns provide vital direct services to people in later life ~ providing specialist information, advice and advocacy services; day centres and lunch clubs; home help and 'handyperson' schemes; IT and other training. Look them up through your Council/Library.

Muslim Community Leaders and Imams should establish contact with their local Age

UK/Age Concerns to ensure Muslim Elders in their congregation get the best possible care and support they need, when they need it ~ and which is tailored to their individual needs.

Suggestions for future reporting, comments/ feedback, questions are most welcome. Please email using the central email address shown in this newsletter.


**RashidAli Laher**  
Trustee/  
Director Age Concern

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## Tips Section

### Contact details:

Let us know your views, ideas, success stories, challenges. Contact us at  
info@faithassociates.co.uk | www.faithassociates.co.uk |  Faith Associates

## Madrassah

### Do seating arrangements affect pupils' behaviour?

Classroom seating arrangements have an effect on pupil motivation, participation, behaviour and the quality of learning. The subject of seating arrangements has been widely covered by educationalists and these are dependent upon the requirements of task, behaviour, ability and group size.

The shape and the size of the classroom generally influences how classroom seating is organised.

Typical examples of seating arrangement are square, U-shaped, clusters/groups, variations of rows (theatre style, fishbone, runaway), semicircle or circle, etc and are shown below. The most common seating arrangement for

primary schools is the row or cluster/group for small groups of pupils whilst secondary schools employ U shape or semi-circle for group discussions.

In Madrassahs the typical seating for pupils is the traditional row and rectangular arrangement:

- 'horseshoe' or a 'U-shape' formation allows for eye contact with
- the teacher in charge. Children of mixed ability and different age
- can sit side by side
- Rows facing the teacher. Again pupils have an eye contact with
- the teacher in charge.

Some Madrassah have a mixture of tables with chairs and low-level workbenches where pupils sit on the floor.

In some Madrassahs the practicalities of manipulating seating arrangements can cause difficulties. However, this should not deter Madrassahs who have multiple classrooms in a single room from trying out new seating arrangements to ascertain if a new arrangement improves the quality of learning. Teachers

should vary the seating arrangements to suit the task but they will also need to have the freedom to move without restraint in the classroom to monitor pupils' progress.

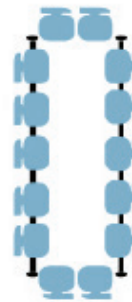
Due to the Islamic etiquettes, senior boys and girls are normally segregated during the lessons. However, there may be mixed-sex seating for younger children. Different types of seating arrangements for boys and girls could be used to see if

they make any difference or improvement to the pupils' behaviour. The seating arrangements could be:

- To sit pupils of the same age group on one table
- To sit pupils of different ages but same ability on one table
- To sit girls in small groups and boys in rows in segregated class
- To sit boys in small groups and girls in rows in segregated class.



(a) U-shape

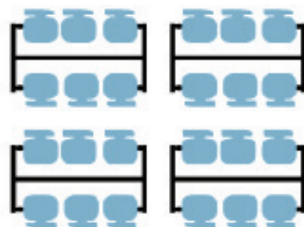


(b) Square

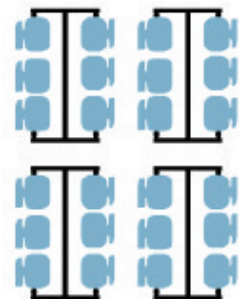
#### How engaged is the class?

Check the:

- Noise level
- Graffiti on the reading benches
- Number of pupils at the start of the class
- How many put their hands up when asked questions



(c) Groups/Clusters – Type 1  
(some pupils facing backwards)



(d) Groups/Clusters – Type 2  
(pupils have their side towards the teachers)

**The bottom line is that a good classroom seating arrangement is the cheapest form of classroom management. It's discipline for free.**  
**Classroom management expert Fred Jones, author of Tools for Teaching**