Dear

Following our discussion the other day concerning your child’s participation in music classes I am writing to confirm our conversation and to pass on to you the stance on this issue taken by the local authority.

Parents do not have the legal right to remove their child from music, as this subject is part of the national curriculum. The Ealing Music Service (EMS) provides musical opportunities over and above the national curriculum provision. Parents may opt to take advantage or not of what the EMS provides, as it is an extra provision and not part of the statutory curriculum.

As you know I have offered you the opportunity to observe a music lesson so that you can be reassured about the content, but you have declined this offer. I also arranged for a Muslim parent governor to speak with you in order to try and reassure you, as well as offering you an opportunity to talk with a Muslim member of staff.

As a compromise, we agreed that your child need not participate in dance modules but that (he/she) must participate in all other PE sessions. They must change for PE, and can be covered completely.

Within music lessons the children study rhythm, pitch, how music works and so on. It is educational and would not lead your child to any thought or activity that would be against your faith. Music is sometimes played for morning ‘health hussles’ as a guide to movements. The children need to participate, as this is physical exercise to start the day’s learning.

As you know we have many Muslim parents and families here and no other family opts out of any part of the curriculum, including music, dance and PE. It is important to us that all children are included in our curriculum, which is why we have made every effort to do so with your child(ren).

The local authority supports us in this:

I can confirm that the local authority does not support the withdrawal of children from statutory national curriculum subjects, including music. Ealing Music Service provides access to additional music tuition for key stage 2 pupils and parents may choose not to participate in this extended provision if they wish.

*Any withdrawal from national curriculum programmes of study will be categorised as unauthorised absence.*

*We understand that you have created every opportunity for parents to observe music lessons and any other provision where they may feel the need for reassurance about the content.*

*Parents have clear choices on whether to send their children to faith-based schools, private schools or maintained state schools. The national curriculum subjects are not optional in maintained schools.* (Julie Lewis, assistant director, school effectiveness)

As I hope you understand I want your child(ren) to be included fully in school and would be happy to meet again if you feel it would be useful. However if you continue to exclude them, we have been advised by the local authority to mark them as having an unauthorised absence for any music, PE or ‘health hussles’ they miss. The education social worker that deals with poor attendance may follow this up.

If you wish to speak with the local authority directly, please contact Julie Lewis (assistant director, school effectiveness, jlewis@ealing.gov.uk) or Nora Leonard (SACRE consultant, nleonard@ealing.gov.uk).

I hope that we can resolve this as quickly as possible so that your child enjoys and achieves during their time with us.

Yours sincerely