

## **The ACT Building Resilience Project**

**Case Study: Misconceptions and extremism**

**School: Heanor Gate Science College, Derbyshire**

Heanor Gate is a specialist science college and part of the Spencer Academy Trust, taking 1300 pupils aged 11-18. The students are predominately white British.

### **Aims**

- To enable pupils to explore misconceptions on Islam
- To enable pupils to explore right wing political ideologies and reflect on them
- To bring pupils into contact with experts in the Islamic community to break down myths and preconceptions
- To consider different examples of Islamophobia and right wing extremism using national and international case studies

### **Actions**

The project took place over 5 lessons with classes of Year 7 students. The work began with a baseline lesson looking at pupils' perceptions of Islam, where they shared their opinions and views. They then met with members of the Islamic community and critically reflected on perceptions of Islam and Muslim peoples. Pupils considered right wing attitudes to Islam and examined cases studies of right wing extremism, both current and historical. The work concluded with pupils exploring misconceptions of Islam, both in media and in their community, and considering how to challenge these peacefully and successfully.

### **Impact**

The pupils' Citizenship knowledge was reinforced by the project. They benefitted greatly from exploring deeply their own preconceptions of Islam. The visit to the multi faith community centre as part of the project had a major impact, evidenced by the way students engaged with the activity and the nature of the questions they raised with community representatives. Pupils reflected deeply on the experience provided by the visit and subsequently demonstrated a capacity to challenge their own and others' misconceptions.

### **Next steps**

The teacher felt that the success of the lesson activities far exceeded their expectations. This was especially true in respect of the pupils' appetite for such work and their desire to gain the skills, knowledge and understanding to be able to challenge successfully extremist narratives about Muslims and others. The work is to be embedded in Year 7 next year. Furthermore, the community partnership activity with the multi faith centre was especially impactful and this has prompted the school to consider how it can develop this partnership further.