

## Shajarah Islamic Kindergarten One Year On

Eighteen months ago, looking for a new place to walk, I ventured up Underwood Rd from Logan Rd towards Rochedale South. Just across the bridge over the M1, there was an empty Kindergarten building. It had a large For Lease sign in the corner of the yard. It got me thinking...

Islamic Kindergarten, Muslim Preschool...? Having no prior experience in the industry some serious research ensued. There was also someone else already interested in the building but Allaahu `Alim, they decided against leasing the property.

We secured the property and embarked upon the mountain of regulation and paperwork required in order to become accepted as an approved provider of children's services as well as policies required in order to be able to open and renovations to the building in order to meet building regulations applicable to the Childcare sector.

Our intention in opening a Muslim Childcare Centre is to provide a previously unavailable service combining the usual, mainstream program of early education that many Muslims embrace but most importantly within an Islamic environment and inclusive of age-appropriate Islamic Program of Quran, Arabic, nasheeds, and with an emphasis on Islamic character and manners.

### Shajarah

The name 'Shajarah' means 'tree' in Arabic. It was chosen as the name for the Kindergarten as the tree is a symbol of knowledge and natural growth. The roots of the tree draw nourishment from the earth in which it stands in order to fuel the growth of the stem, branches, flowers and ultimately the fruit of the tree. Together with sunshine and rain and the will of Allaah from above, the tree will reach maturity.

### Islamic

It is also the right environment and intention that is essential for optimal learning and growth for children. As we cultivate our home lives to facilitate their development, we must also protect their entry into more formal education. As in one of my favourite quotes from the Quran, Allaah's emphasis on the importance of learning and education for Muslims is strong,

***And if all the trees on earth were pens and the sea were ink, with seven seas yet added to it, the words of God would not be exhausted for verily, God is Almighty, Wise.***

***{Luqman-31: 27}***

The Islamic intention is the main ingredient in our recipe for successful learning.

If we are able to impart the essentials of our Deen to the youngest members of our communities and have them understand the great importance of good manners and proper behaviour - as well as beginning to learn the particulars of practicing Islam such as wudu, salah, Arabic, du`aa, etc then we will be placing them in a position for success in this world and the next inshaAllaah as well as fulfilling our enormous responsibility to them.



Alhamdulillah we gained permission from the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care to open on October 29th 2012.

## Kindergarten

Our intention was initially and always to have a formal Islamic school-readiness and Approved Kindergarten Program. The only hurdle was to find a qualified Muslim sister who was willing and available to join us in this new experience. Alhamdulillah a Teacher-Qualified sister contacted us in June this year and was very enthusiastic to start right away in the next term. Children learn through play. The children participate in play-based learning experiences designed to encourage their physical, social, intellectual, language and emotional abilities. As the Kindergarten brochure states, under the guidance and care of a qualified early child-hood teacher, among other things, children will use language to communicate ideas, feelings and needs, make friends and learn how to cooperate with other children, become more independent and confident in their abilities, use their creativity and develop self-discipline.



## The Future inshaAllaah

We are planning to open Shajarah Islamic Family Day Care by February 2014. As we have many enquiries from people in the community whose children are under 3 years old, we hope it will be a good way to insha'Allaah include them by giving our educators training in implementation of an appropriate Islamic Program. If we were able to secure another suitable building we would like to provide more Long Day Care and Kindergarten places.

Choosing an Islamic Child Care and Kindergarten is an acknowledgement of the importance of Islamic principles and practices in your child's life and the great benefit of continuity between your home-life and your child's educational and care environment. InshaAllaah it can be the best of both worlds.

We are a family-owned and run service with qualified, experienced and caring staff. We established Shajarah in order to provide our community with a Child Care and Kindergarten service that was previously unavailable. As a new Childcare Service attempting a new type of service, we are still learning and we hope to receive feedback from the community as to what they/you/we want to see in an Islamic Kindergarten.

Khadijah Hurst.