

Don't force the hijab on young girls, says Muslim women's rights campaigner

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Shaista Gohir of the Muslim Women's Network has criticised Muslim parents who make their young daughters wear hijabs.

Her comments came after controversy over a Catholic faith school which said that a four-year old pupil could not wear a hijab to school because it breached the school's uniform policy.

Under the policy hats, scarves and large headbands are clearly prohibited, along with certain hair styles.

The St Clare's Catholic Primary School home-school agreement also requires parents to support the school in the application of the uniform policy.

Gohir said that making very young girls wear the hijab should not be normalised.

"The school is as entitled to tell children not to wear [a hijab] as they are to stop a child wearing trainers or even a Superman costume.

"Let them be children, they've got their whole life to wear a headscarf if they want to."

Gohir said in her view that there was "no Islamic requirement for a four-year-old to wear a headscarf."

"We challenge parents who spray tan or give pole dancing classes to seven-year-olds, so we should be challenging Muslim parents who make young children wear the hijab.

"I've seen girls of two wearing them. We should let children be children. I would personally not like to see it normalised for four and five-year-olds to be wearing headscarfs."

Gohir added that the purpose of the hijab is to "prevent unwanted male sexual attention" and she asked "what message" was being sent by making a four-year old wear it, arguing that it amounted to "sexualising a child".

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