

Halal meat on school menus?

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SPECIALLY butchered meat could be on school dinner menus for Bradford's Muslim children in the autumn. Opposition to the serving of Halal meat has come from different sources in Bradford because Islamic law forbids the pre-stunning of animals before they are slaughtered.

A report to the council's Education Services Special sub-committee on Thursday will recommend that Halal meat be served, if councillors back the plan.

But a decision to approve will not be enough to supply the specially prepared meat to more than 8,000 Muslim children.

The Council for Mosques says Muslims must be in the kitchens where the meat is prepared to check that the correct procedures are carried out.

Only six Muslims work in school kitchens now, and there are only 15 Asian applicants out of approximately 1,200 people on waiting lists for unskilled posts in the council.

The report says the small number is probably due to the fact that Muslims are forbidden to handle certain food, such as pork.

The suggestion that Muslims be brought into kitchens to supervise the cooking of Halal meat while having nothing to do with some other foods has met with a cool response from trade unions.

On April 26, a statement was issued at a meeting of the Officers' Joint Committee for Craft and Manual Workers.

Part of the statement said: "All jobs in the school meals service carry the requirement that school meals staff prepare and serve any meal or dish, as required.

"If, as part of any future policy, the employer decided that newly-appointed staff would be engaged on terms different from those currently prevailing, we feel obliged to point out the difficulties this would create among their existing employees."

The unions are not opposed to handling Halal meat.