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A schoolgirl who yesterday won the right to wear the Islamic shoulder-to-toe dress in school said the landmark ruling would “give hope and strength to other Muslim women”. In an exclusive interview with the Guardian, Shabina Begum, 16, described the court of appeal verdict against Denbigh high school in Luton as a victory for all Muslims “who wish to preserve their identity and values despite prejudice and bigotry”. After a two-year campaign by Shabina, Lord Justice Brooke found her former school had acted against her right to express her religion by excluding her because she insisted on wearing the jilbab. The ruling, overturning a high court decision which dismissed her application for a judicial review last year, will affect every school in the country. **Almost a year after the French government banned “conspicuous” religious symbols, including the hijab, in schools, the judge called on the Department for Education to give British schools more guidance on how to comply with their obligations under the Human Rights Act.** “I really feel like screaming out of happiness,” said Shabina, who was represented at the court of appeal by Cherie Booth QC. “I don’t regret wearing the jilbab at all. I’m happy that I did this. I feel that I have given hope and strength to other Muslim women.

“I also feel a bit sad when I think why couldn’t this judgment have been made two years ago? In the end it’s my loss. No one else has lost anything.”

**Shabina had worn the shalwar kameez [trousers and tunic] from when she entered the school at the age of 12 until September 2002, when she decided it was against the tenets of her religion.** When Denbigh refused her request to wear the jilbab, she was excluded, becoming the reluctant poster girl of a campaign that has been reported in 137 countries.



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पुत्रं तु नहितं शरुत्वा इरावन्तं धनंजयः दुःखेन महतावष्टि नः श्वसन  
पन्नगो यथा अब्रवीत् समरे राजन वासुदेवम इदं वचः इदं नूनं महाप्राज्ञो  
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