



Ramadhan Guide for Schools and Parents/Carers



Introduction

This booklet is to be used in schools as guidance to support children who choose to fast during Ramadhan. It is designed to help schools and Muslim parents/carers to work together and gain clarity on some key areas of the Muslim fasting month so that Muslim children who fast are supported in the best way possible.

Ramadhan occurs once a year with the month and the day varying from year to year; this is because Muslims follow the lunar calendar. The difference in days between the lunar and the solar (Gregorian) calendar means that Ramadhan moves forward 10 days each year.

Muslims fast during daylight hours, this means when Ramadhan falls in summer Muslims will fast for up to 20 hours each day. During the winter months the fasting day will be a lot shorter.

Fasting is a challenging experience especially when the weather is hot and the days are long. In 2014 the Council for Mosques (Bradford, UK) and Nottingham's Karimia Institute advised that due to the extreme length of the fasting day during the summer months, primary aged children should be discouraged to fast. However, some younger children still want to fast and do so often for shorter periods of the day.

It is important to safeguard the fasting child's welfare and it is strongly advised for schools to work with parents/carers with compassion and understanding to ensure that proper arrangements are in place to support all children who choose to fast to have a safe and positive experience.

Fasting children are likely to be sleepy and tired as their physical and concentration levels are affected. Muslim parents/carers appreciate the great concerns schools express during Ramadhan and understand that these children cannot apply themselves in the same way as during the rest of the year; however many Muslim families feel considerable spiritual benefits are achieved during Ramadhan and are keen to hold onto this important aspect of fasting.

Schools and parents/carers are encouraged to work together to support children who wish to fast by being respectful and understanding.



Ramadhan

Ramadhan is the ninth month in the Muslim calendar and the fourth pillar of the five pillars of Islam. This is a very blessed month for Muslims as it is in this month that Muslims believe the Holy Quran was revealed to the prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him).

In Ramadhan Muslims all over the world fast during daylight hours for 30 days. Food, drink, any sexual activity and smoking is prohibited during the fasting period.

Ramadhan is a time of self-reflection and is also a time of spiritual cleansing of the soul through self-restraint. Muslims are encouraged to reflect on their lives and try to become better Muslims by focusing on prayer, reading the Quran as well as giving generously to the poor and supporting the needy.

Ramadhan reminds Muslims of those who are less fortunate than themselves.

Supporting Children who choose to Fast

Muslim children are not required to fast before puberty however many parents/carers encourage their children to fast at a younger age to get them accustomed to the fasting ritual.

The fasting day includes two main meals. The Suhoor meal is the light meal Muslims have before daylight (sunrise) to begin the fast. The Iftar is the meal eaten when the fast ends for the day at sunset.

It is important to know that who should fast and how long they should fast for is a question for parents/carers to consider. It is *their* responsibility to assess their child's ability to fast based on factors such as health, level of activity and tolerance to hunger.

It is everyone's responsibility to ensure the well-being of *all* children who fast whilst in their care.



Guidance for Teachers and Support Staff (including midday supervisors)

- ❖ Contact parents/carers prior to Ramadhan to discuss a Ramadhan plan. This will ensure that school is clear on any parental permission given to the child wanting to fast.
- ❖ Waking up before sunset to have the first meal will mean disturbed sleep for many, concentration levels will be low, so give fasting children regular breaks away from their desks.
- ❖ Keep fasting children occupied during lunchtime with activities. Perhaps set-up a Ramadhan club during the lunch hour.
- ❖ Provide space for older children who may want some quiet time for reflection or maybe to observe prayers.
- ❖ Cleanliness is an important aspect of Islam. Children wishing to observe prayer will need a washing area and a water vessel to perform an ablution. Endeavour to provide these.
- ❖ Children who wish to observe prayer can be asked to bring their own prayer mats, (they may also want to bring a water vessel).
- ❖ If children are wanting to observe prayer avoid giving areas where pictures of living creatures are depicted .
- ❖ On sunnier days aim to provide shaded areas during outdoor play.
- ❖ Encourage adequate sun protection.
- ❖ PE activities may need to be adjusted to suit the needs of pupils who are fasting.
- ❖ Talk to parents/carers and work with children who are fasting to see how best they can be supported.
- ❖ When planning any activities, after-school clubs, day-trips or any residentials during Ramadhan give consideration to how this will affect children who fast.
- ❖ Inform midday supervisors and other support staff so they can also support children who are fasting.
- ❖ It may be beneficial to talk to other students or peers in school about Ramadhan and discuss how the fasting month impacts children who will be fasting.



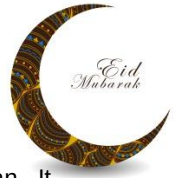
Guidance for Parents/Carers

- ❖ Parents/carers have a responsibility to inform school if their child is fasting. It is advisable to put this in writing.
- ❖ As parents/carers you are responsible for assessing your child's ability to fast according to their health, level of activity and tolerance to hunger. **Do not** allow your child to fast if you are unsure of their fasting ability.
- ❖ Always include your child when deciding to fast.
- ❖ Ensure that you are clear on healthy options during fasting.
- ❖ Prepare children BEFORE Ramadhan by getting them accustomed to eating less during the day GRADUALLY before the month begins.
- ❖ Monitor your child's intake closely. It is important that the calorie and fluid requirements are met during non-fasting hours by giving them foods full of nutrients that provide necessary energy and ensuring that they drink lots of fluids to remain hydrated. If unsure consult your GP or visit the websites given at the end of this booklet.
- ❖ The Suhoor meal is very important, ensure to include a mixture of fibre rich foods, good source protein and dairy products to stay fuller for longer. Further advice on healthy eating during Ramadhan can be accessed via the website links given at the end of this booklet.
- ❖ Ensure your child is given adequate rest breaks at certain times of the day i.e. after school.
- ❖ Discourage any high intensity exercise/activity.
- ❖ Parents/carers of children with medical conditions **MUST** seek advice from their GP before allowing them to fast.

Further Guidance

- ❖ Many scholars have differing opinions on using an asthma inhaler, some permit their use during fasting others do not. However a general rule is that if a fasting child has poor control of their asthma then they **MUST NOT** be allowed to fast. Parents/carers must consider this point.
- ❖ According to many Islamic scholars it is permissible for fasting children to swim as long as water is not swallowed as this will break the fast.





Eid Ul-Fitr

Eid Ul-Fitr is the 3 day celebration after the month of Ramadhan. It does not celebrate the end of fasting but Muslims thank Allah (SWT) for the help and strength given throughout Ramadhan to help practice self-control. Special services are conducted in mosques and out of doors.

The celebration begins when the first sighting of the moon is seen. Muslims dress in their finest clothes, children are given gifts and time is spent with friends and family where a special celebratory meal is eaten.

Eid is also a time for forgiveness and making amends. On Eid day Muslims are obliged to give a set amount of money to charity to be used to help those who are less fortunate to buy new clothes and food so they can celebrate too.

Eid Ul-Adha

Eid Ul-Adha is the festival of sacrifice, the Greater Eid and the second most important festival in the Muslim Calendar. It remembers prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son when ordered by Allah (SWT). When Ibrahim was about to kill his son, he was stopped by Allah (SWT) and was given a lamb to sacrifice instead.

Today Muslims all over the world sacrifice a sheep as a reminder of Ibrahim's obedience to Allah (SWT). The meat is shared amongst family and friends, leaving a third to go to the poor.

Absence from Schools for Religious Holidays

Muslims cannot be specific in advance of the information being given by the appropriate Islamic authorities regarding Eid; this is largely dependent on whether one follows the moon sighting in the UK or local announcements based on the moon sighting in Saudi Arabia.

It is advised that schools follow their guidance on holidays for religious and cultural needs and at the same time give consideration to those parents/carers who request further days.

This booklet is a guide to support all children who choose to fast during Ramadhan. It provides clarity on some key issues faced in schools during Ramadhan. Ramadhan is an opportunity for schools to develop closer links with Muslim parents/carers and families. Working in partnership increases respect and understanding as well as ensuring the wellbeing of all children.

For further dietary advice or advice on health during Ramadhan please consult your GP, alternately visit the websites below.

Both the Karimia Institute and the Beeston Muslim Centre can also be contacted for further guidance.

Beeston Muslim Centre
0115 9258576
bmcnotts@gmail.com

Karimia Institute
0115 841 5806
www.Karimia.com

Ramadan Health and Spirituality Guide, (Department of Health)
<http://www.etn.leeds.ac.uk/document/resources/RamadanHealthandSpiritualityGuide1.pdf>

Guide to healthy fasting during Ramadan – Live Well NHS Choices
<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Healthyramadan/Pages/healthyfasting.aspx>

NHS Ramadan Health Guide – A guide to healthy fasting – York Hospitals
www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/document.php?o=8

Ramadhan Guidance for Schools 2014
<https://bso.bradford.gov.uk/userfiles/file/DiversityandCohesion/RamadhanGuidanceForSchools2014final.pdf>

Ramadhan Health FAQs
NHS Choices, Your Health Your Choices
<http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/healthyramadan/pages/faqs.aspx>



