

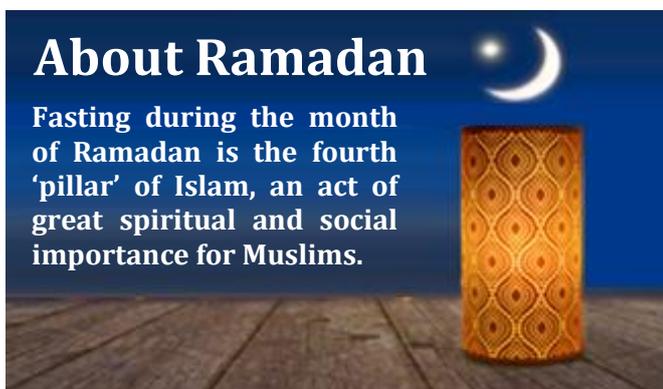
Ramadan Guidance for Schools



Bristol
SACRE

About Ramadan

Fasting during the month of Ramadan is the fourth 'pillar' of Islam, an act of great spiritual and social importance for Muslims.



FASTING: No eating or drinking (including any water) usually takes place from dawn to sunset for the whole month. Accidental consumption is not usually considered to invalidate fasting. Muslims are encouraged to engage in normal life during Ramadan and not to use it as an opportunity to avoid some aspects of daily life. Ramadan very much takes place in the context of 'business as usual'.

Further details:

- **STARTING AGE:** Puberty usually marks when young people are expected to start fasting. Some children will be encouraged to fast prior to the onset of puberty but not all. Good communication is key to ensure schools know what parents expect / encourage with regard to their children.
- **TIMING:** Gregorian dates of Ramadan will be slightly different every year but can easily be found online¹ or through local Muslim contacts. It lasts for one lunar month (29 or 30 days). Pupils may observe Ramadan and *Eid-ul-Fitr* (celebrated on day after Ramadan) on slightly different dates. Winter fast can be less than 12 hours, while summer fasts more than 21 hours.
- **EXCEPTIONS:** Illness, some pre-existent medical conditions (e.g. diabetes), on long journeys, pregnancy and duration of girl's/women's monthly period are times when fasting may be suspended.

Spiritual Aspect:

A key aspect for fasting Muslims is to control their speech and behaviour (e.g. avoid becoming 'hangry'). This can then help them control impulsive behaviour more generally in life (e.g. taking something without asking or blurting out answer before being asked in class).

GOOD PRACTICE: Schools should be mindful there are variances in practice and theology among Muslims. Discussion, with families in school's community and with representatives of different groups, is advisable.

Consider:

- **POLICY:** Develop a written policy (for requirements and implications of Ramadan for Muslim pupils).
- **CONSENT:** For young children expressing a wish to fast, schools may consider obtaining consent from parents, (e.g. via a letter / permission-slip that is appropriate for the school community).
- **MEDICATION:** Oral medication is not usually taken by those fasting. However, where deemed necessary (e.g. medical emergency), health should take priority and medicine administered. Those needing regular medication are usually exempt from fasting.
- **PHYSICAL EDUCATION:** Continue as usual with PE but avoid over-demanding exercise that may provoke dehydration in fasting children. Similarly, with play times, be mindful fasting children should not over-exert themselves and so be vulnerable to dehydration.
- **RELATIONSHIP AND SEX EDUCATION, SWIMMING, VACCINATIONS, PARENTS' EVENINGS:** If possible, avoid scheduling these sessions during Ramadan.
- **EXAMS:** Check exam schedule and try to avoid internal exams. Consult guidance³ for schools for when Ramadan coincides with public exam periods.
- **FACILITIES:** Consider any additional facilities required for Ramadan and provide accordingly e.g. there may be an increase in the number of students offering prayer/meditation and hence facilities will need to be provided and publicised.
- **ABSENCES:** Pupils are usually granted one day's authorised absence if *Eid-ul-Fitr* falls on a school day (register code R).
- **COERCION:** Some pupils may only be fasting due to peer-pressure/expectations. If believed to be the case, schools may want to discuss as appropriate.
- **INCLUDING NON-MUSLIM STUDENTS:** Take as an excellent time to teach whole school community about Muslim beliefs and practices. Use as an opportunity to invite guests from local Muslim community to lead collective worship and RE lessons⁴. Consider coordinating a community *Iftar* (the meal eaten at sunset to break the fast).

Resources:

¹ <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/uk/ramadan-begins>

² <https://mcb.org.uk/resources/ramadan/>

³ https://www.ascl.org.uk/ASCL/media/ASCL/Help%20and%20advice/Leadership%20and%20governance/Information-Paper-Ramadan_Feb-2020.pdf

⁴ <http://awarenessmysteryvalue.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2111-What-does-it-mean-to-belong-to-a-religion-Islam-BDE-v4.doc>