



Outcomes Focused, Child Centred

Northern Education Trust Ramadan Guidance

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Ramadan Guidance

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document aims to provide guidance to all NET academies, especially those with Muslim students and/or employees. Ramadan provides a good opportunity to develop closer links with Muslim parents and communities by displaying a sound and supportive understanding of the meaning and importance of the fasting month. Academies that work in this way often reap the rewards of greater participation and support for students' learning throughout the year. Observing Ramadan is regarded as one of the five pillars of Islam.

The Joys of Fasting

- 1.2 Ramadan, the 9th month in the Islamic calendar, begins at sunset and 29-30 days later the feast of Eid-ul-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan. For the next three years Ramadan is predicted for:

6 May – 4 June 2019
24 April – 23 May 2020
13 April – 12 May 2021

The dates are provisional and subject to sighting of the new moon and local announcements.

- 1.3 Fasting entails abstinence from food, drink, smoking and marital relationships between dawn and sunset each day during the month of Ramadan.
- 1.4 It is important to understand the positive aspects of this month for Muslims – both children and adults. Ramadan is anticipated with enormous excitement, and the experience enjoyed by young and old. The month provides encouragement to uphold good character, to refrain from anti-social behaviour (including being unkind to other people by telling lies, swearing etc.) and to strengthen spiritual development and one's relationship with God (Allah). It is also a time for increased social responsibility, for empathy with, and giving to the poor and needy.

Abstinence

- 1.5 During Ramadan, adult Muslims are required to fast during the hours of daylight, though there are some permitted exceptions. This involves abstaining from food, drink (including water), smoking and sexual activity. Fasting is an act of worship. It is a special opportunity for Muslims to reinvigorate their faith by making extra efforts towards piety and Taqwa (God-consciousness) – “to recharge their spiritual batteries”. Muslims, **who have reached puberty**, are required to fast during the month of Ramadan. However, parents of younger children may also wish them to observe partial fasting. The spiritual and moral dimension of fasting is considered to be of far greater importance than the physical one. The fast lasts 29 or 30 days, depending on the sighting of the moon at the end of the fasting period.

Eid-ul-Fitr

- 1.6 Eid-ul-Fitr is the festival at the end of Ramadan, and celebrates the ending of the month of fasting. This is a significant religious festival for Muslims across the world. Muslims celebrate by dressing in their finest clothes, gathering for a special congregational Eid prayer, and greet each other with the greeting “Eid Mubarak”, (“Eid

blessings"). During Eid, they will also visit their relatives, share meals and give gifts. It is a special occasion for children who will be treated with new clothes and gifts.

2. Considerations relating to Muslim students

- 2.1 Fasting becomes obligatory for Muslims as they approach adolescence, though many younger students, some as young as seven years old, will wish to participate and will try to keep at least some or part of the days as fasts. **Parents should discuss this with the academy since the fasting day during the summer months will be very long, and younger students undertaking the fast must have parental support.**
- 2.2 The Arabic for fasting is *Sawm*, but most local Muslim students will use the Urdu language term *Roza*. Students involved in the fast will neither eat nor drink from dawn to sunset.

Prayer during Ramadan

- 2.3 During the month of Ramadan students may wish to focus on additional worship and God-consciousness and the number of students offering prayer is likely to increase, therefore consideration might be given to providing additional prayer facilities if practicable.
- 2.4 Before praying Muslims are required to wash (ablutions) as a physical preparation. The washroom should be separate from the room used for prayer. It is not necessary for shower rooms to be provided as Wudu (ablution) applies only to prescribed parts of the body, including the feet. Running water must be available.
- 2.5 The essential times of prayer are:
 - After first light and before sunrise (Fajr)
 - Between the sun reaching its height and mid-afternoon (Zuhr)
 - Between mid-afternoon and sunset (Asr)
 - After the sun has finished setting (Maghrib)
 - In the dark of the night (Isha).
- 2.6 The evening before the 27th fast is especially important as it is believed to be the very first day the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh). Many Muslims, including children, will stay up very late saying prayers.
- 2.7 Where it is not possible to make the prayers at the appointed times it is permissible for observance to be made as soon as possible afterwards. Therefore, academies may arrange their own timetable for prayers and a prayer room may be made available at the end of the academy day. Principals are not expected to agree to release students or staff from lessons or scheduled activities if it is likely to have a detrimental impact on students or educational delivery more generally.
- 2.8 It is important that everyone in the academy knows why prayer rooms are being made available and that non-Muslim employees and members of the support staff who are involved in supervision are fully briefed and know what is expected of them.
- 2.9 Students who are fasting must not be treated differently from other students, unless it is clear that there is an objective and reasonable justification for different treatment. Students who are fasting should not be excluded from clubs or activities or be sent home or out of academy at lunchtime. Every effort should be made to provide students

who are fasting access to rooms set aside for prayers or a quiet area away from the dining room to rest if they wish. Students may prefer a range of options to choose from e.g. reading prayers, engaging activities – e.g. puzzles, quizzes, board games.

- 2.10 Where the religious observance at Eid-ul-Fitr and at Eid-ul-Adha require time away from the academy, this must be requested in the normal way. If parents make such a request or request further days, Principals are asked to consider them on an individual basis. The Principal may wish to consider academy closure for these days but this must be approved by the Trust. Employee requests for time off will be considered in line with the Academy Religious Observance Policy.

Academy Functions during Ramadan

- 2.11 Fasting is difficult for both adults and young people and the time of the fast, from dawn to dusk, means that all food preparation and consumption must take place over a few hours every evening and very early each morning. Muslims are encouraged to share food and invite others for opening the fast and also to perform special additional prayers (Taraweeh) in the mosque every evening. This makes it difficult for parents, or employees, to attend meetings or other functions in the evenings during Ramadan. Similarly, student attendance during the week of Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha may be unpredictable, as different communities may celebrate Eid on different days. Therefore, it is advisable to arrange important events for students, parents or employees e.g. career interviews, parents' or open evenings, employee training days, at another time if practicable.
- 2.12 Consideration should be given to students who are not able to reach home in time to break their fast due to academy activities or after-academy detentions. In such circumstances, allowing students to drink water is sufficient to enable them to break their fast.
- 2.13 There is an opportunity for the wider academy community to support during Ramadan through raised awareness, holding community events and also through fund raising.

Examinations during Ramadan

- 2.14 Islam is based on the lunar calendar and, therefore, Ramadan moves each year. As the Ramadan generally moves by approximately 10 days every year, external national exams may be affected, particularly when it falls during the summer term. The long daylight hours of summer will make abstaining from food and drink between dawn and sunset very challenging, particularly if it coincides with hot weather. Students observing the fast will have their last food and drink before dawn and then be expected to undertake exams during the day.
- 2.15 Students' exams are no excuse for breaking one's fast during Ramadan, for those Students' whose fasting is obligatory, and it is not permissible to obey one's parents in breaking the fast because of having exams, because "there is no obedience to any created being if it involves disobedience to the Creator". (*Fataawa al-Lajnah al-Daa'imah*, 10/241). **However, in the event of any sickness that makes people feel unwell, a person is allowed not to fast, and if fasting will cause unconsciousness, the student should break his/her fast and make up the fast at another time.**
- 2.16 Employees will also need to be aware that some students may find the rigour of preparing for an examination difficult whilst fasting, and be sensitive to the fact that other students sitting exams and studying will be able to eat and drink during this time.

Students who are observing the fast should be told of the importance of healthy eating and good hydration during Ramadan so that they function as well as they can.

Swimming during Ramadan

- 2.17 It is recommended that swimming be avoided during the month of Ramadan so that no water is swallowed accidentally causing the fast to break; however, it is not forbidden. If swimming lessons are scheduled and cannot be avoided, it would be a good idea to speak to Muslim parents of primary children to find out if their children are fasting. If they are not fasting, it is permissible for the children to swim.

Physical Education during Ramadan

- 2.18 Physical education is not prohibited during Ramadan and most students who are fasting are able to take part in most activities without adversely affecting their health. Depending on the time of year, matches, competitions, assessed coursework etc., academies may consider planning less strenuous activities for fasting students to avoid dehydration, particularly during the summer months or un-seasonally warm weather.

Sex and Relationship Education

- 2.19 During Ramadan Muslims are expected to avoid sexual thoughts and discourse and taking this into account academies may decide to avoid scheduling the teaching of this subject during that month or allow Muslim students to undertake alternative studies at that time.

Exemptions from Fasting

- 2.20 There are certain circumstances when students or employees are exempt from fasting, for example during menstruation and pregnancy, for the very old and the very young and for those with a medical condition such as diabetes. Those travelling on long journeys may also be exempt if fasting is likely to cause undue hardship.
- 2.21 Oral medication for anyone not exempt from fasting is not permitted. Medication can be taken once the fast has been broken. However, during emergencies, where a child's life is at risk or when severe illness is diagnosed then medication should be administered as necessary.

3. Good Practice

- 3.1 Consult, where appropriate, with parents before the start of Ramadan.
- 3.2 Meet parents and invite the local community representatives – be positive and supportive.
- 3.3 As a whole academy, decide on the arrangements for Muslim employees/students and ensure that all employees, students, parents and governors understand them.
- 3.4 Discuss the issues with governors and the Trust.
- 3.5 Provide information on religious observance for all in academy and ensure that the information is inclusive by relating this not only to Ramadan and Eid but to observance relating to other religious festivals.

- 3.6 Ask parents to inform the academy if their child will be fasting and taking no lunch.
- 3.7 Have high expectations of students during Ramadan.
- 3.8 Identify and discuss possible effects on young students with employees and or parents. Ensure that members of employees know the implications.
- 3.9 Ensure that parents of KS1 and 2 children take responsibility for informing the academy when their child is fasting.
- 3.10 Students in Key Stages 3 and 4 should be encouraged to inform the academy when they are fasting. This will avoid making assumptions, and will help you to provide support during exams.
- 3.11 Provide support/supervision for students withdrawn from activities.
- 3.12 Ensure that catering services are aware of the numbers of students who will not require their usual lunch. For students on FSM check out if students would prefer to take a sandwich home.
- 3.13 If students are fasting, provide opportunities for them to stay in academy. Where appropriate, offer activities to engage their interests.
- 3.14 Do provide general support and celebrate what the students are doing.
- 3.15 Be supportive if a student has to break the fast.

4. Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the month of Ramadan?

A: The Islamic lunar month of fasting, during which Muslims are encouraged to cope with normal life under a different set of guidelines.

Q: Why is this month important for Muslims?

A: It is believed by Muslims to be the month in which the first verses of the Qur'an were revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Q: What does fasting mean?

A: To abstain from food and drink (including water), smoking and sexual activity during the daylight hours, between dawn and sunset each day during the month of Ramadan. It is also a time when Muslims focus on additional worship and God-consciousness to improve themselves in all aspects of their lives and dealings with others including their character, respect for others, kindness, forgiveness, mannerisms, avoidance of bad language and poor behaviour.

Q: At what times can you eat during Ramadan?

A: Before dawn, and after sunset. Dawn is about two hours before the sun rises, during which people need to eat and pray

Q: Can you go swimming during Ramadan if you are fasting?

A: Yes, you can, but this is not advisable in case you swallow the water. (It is advisable to seek clarification from parental wishes.)

Q: Can Muslims listen to music or watch television during Ramadan?

A: No, although educational television maybe acceptable.

Q: What sort of gifts do children receive at Eid?

A: New clothes, money, sweets, trips etc.

Q: At what age does fasting become a requirement for Muslims?

A: At puberty, although younger children may decide to observe Ramadan voluntarily.

Q: What do the terms Roza, Sehri and Iftari mean?

A: Roza refers to fasting, Sehri refers to the start of the fast and Iftari refers to the end of the daily fast. People can eat before Sehri and after Iftari. The times of Sehri and Iftari will vary during the month and depending on the time of the year when Ramadan falls.

Q: What are the benefits of fasting?

A: To feel compassion for the poor and underprivileged, to build a sense of self-control, and to purify the body and the soul.

Q: What marks the end of Ramadan?

A: Eid ul-Fitr

5. Further Information and Advice

5.1 Websites

(if link does not work please copy and paste address into your browser)

FAQs – NHS Choices

<https://www.nhs.uk/video/Pages/healthy-ramadan.aspx>

Another useful resource is the BBC website for Ramadan which can be found on:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02v0397>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/topics/zpdt/bk/resources/2>

For up to date information on exams during Ramadan see the following link:

https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/EDI-and-you/Religion-and-belief/Supporting-students-and-staff-during-Ramadan?from_serp=1

The following letters are for guidance only and should be adapted to your local needs and situation.

Model Draft - Letter to Parents 1

Dear Parents/Carers

Ramadan Mubarak

The month of Ramadan is expected to start on [insert date] this year and I want to take this opportunity to wish you Ramadan Mubarak and best wishes in all your preparations. I know this will be a very special time for many of you and your children.

As you are aware the fasts this year will be very long and can be difficult for some children. I know that you will have thought carefully about whether your child fasts.

Obviously at the academy we would like to make appropriate arrangements for children who are fasting to be supported in their efforts. It would be helpful if you could tell us whether your child will be fasting by [insert date] so that we can ensure that appropriate supervision and support is in place. I understand that this can change from day to day and would ask that you simply keep in touch and let us know.

Once again I wish you all a happy and productive month and wish you well in all your devotions.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Name

Job Title

Model Draft - Letter to Parents 2

Dear Parents,

Ramadan

As many of you will be well aware, Ramadan is likely to begin on [insert date] this year.

At the academy we very much appreciate that Ramadan is an extremely important month for Muslims and we wish to work with parents to ensure that we support your children's experience during this time.

Due to the increasing length of the day for fasting this year, parents are advised that primary aged students are not encouraged to fast. Fasting is not obligatory for those below the age of puberty, but we do understand that some families may intend for their younger children to take part in the fast for some or all of the daily period.

It is vital that parents inform us if their children intend to fast whilst at the academy. We are happy to support your decision and to make arrangements for the children to be supervised at the time when they would normally be having their lunch, but I trust that you understand it is very difficult for us to make a decision not to feed children without express guidance from a parent.

Parents should note that if a child states that they wish to fast **without parental consent** we could not agree to that.

If you are participating in the observance of Ramadan, may I wish you ***Ramadan Al-Mubarak***.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss any issues further.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Name
Job Title

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Employees are also encouraged to contact their Trade Union representative for advice and support where appropriate.