

# Ramadan School Guidance

Dear Teachers,

As Altrincham and Hale Muslim Association, we hope this Ramadan guidance will be useful for your school community.

Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic calendar when Muslims all over the world fast. It is one of the 5 pillars of Islam wherein Muslims abstain from food and drink in order to increase God consciousness, self discipline, gratitude, perform kind deeds, and acts of charity.

Sighting the new moon signifies the beginning of Ramadan. For this reason, there may be a few days variation within the Muslim community on the start day of Ramadan as well as the day of Eid. The start date of Ramadan this year will be 17th or 18th Feb and Eid will be 19th or 20th March.

Most Muslims will rise before dawn to have a meal or suhur. After fasting during daylight hours, the Iftar is the breaking of the fast at sunset.

Muslims follow the lunar calendar which is 11 days shorter than the solar calendar and so Ramadan begins 11 days earlier each year. For this reason, Ramadan can fall during long summer days and move to shorter winter days.

Ramadan ends with the festival of Eid ul Fitr, a joyous family and community occasion.

## **Ramadan School Policy**

We appreciate that schools operate on the value of respecting the backgrounds, including cultural and religious, of students and communities. When there are good relationships, education is enhanced.

A Ramadan School Policy drafted in consultation with the Muslim community would help teachers, students and parents navigate this month with ease and confidence. This may include consent forms for younger pupils and emergency advice.

## **Positive Affirmation**

Muslim pupils would be affirmed if Ramadan is treated as a positive within the school community, rather than as a disruption to the school routine. It is a time of spiritual growth, self discipline, acts of service, community and extra worship.

## **At what age are children expected to observe the fasts?**

Ramadan is obligatory on Muslims from the age of puberty and maturity. Some people are exempt from fasting e.g., those who are pregnant, sick, travelling, menstruating, elderly...

Students should try to consume wholesome foods at suhur, that release energy throughout the day, as well as paying attention to hydration. Many Muslims pray evening prayers at the mosque and should build rest into their routine.

### *What about primary school children?*

Although it is not a religious requirement to fast until puberty, younger children may excitedly want to emulate family members by fasting. Some may start by fasting at weekends and others may try half days by fasting up till lunchtime or after lunch till sunset.

Some children are physically able to fast at younger ages, whilst others are not.

The season of the year in which Ramadan falls will also impact decisions to fast.

Families will make different decisions about optional fasting at this age and will respect that children may start practising at different ages.

Schools should encourage parents to communicate as to whether their child is fasting and how to respond should the child feel unwell.

### **If a student becomes unwell while fasting**

Generic advice: Students with certain long term conditions should have consulted their doctor before fasting. Students who are unwell may be exempt from fasting.

Should a young child, for whom it is not a religious requirement to fast, feel unwell, they should break their fast with something to eat and drink.

For an older fasting student, there may be emergency situations where it becomes necessary to assess the student (as any sick student would be) and decide whether to encourage them to break their fast. They can make up their fast later.

In other cases, it would be appropriate for the teacher to consult with parents.

### **Ramadan and Exams**

Communication with Muslim families in advance of Ramadan about exam dates that may fall during this month, would be beneficial. If internal exams could be rescheduled without disruption, this would be very much appreciated although it is understood that this is not always possible.

In the case of external exams that fall during Ramadan, students are encouraged to consult their usual Imam or religious adviser to help make individual decisions.

### **PE and Sports**

Long summer days may result in fasting students having less energy, reduced concentration and the risk of dehydration.

Younger pupils may ask to sit out of sports sessions.

Some students may wish to continue with PE lessons and have no attention drawn towards them. Others may struggle with PE classes.

Some pupils may feel that they have less energy for certain activities such as long distance running, races, competitive matches and climbing.... This needs to be taken into consideration and weighed up against the educational value of the activity.

Although mistakes do not break the fast, some families may not be comfortable with their children swimming as they may inadvertently swallow water.

Planning Sports Day to work around Ramadan, especially in summer months, would be appreciated by Muslim students and families.

### **RSE Classes**

Ramadan is a time when Muslims try to develop their God consciousness. Muslim teachers and students who are fasting may be uncomfortable thinking about and discussing Relationships and Sex Education whilst fasting.

### **Lunchtime Arrangements**

Primary school children who are fasting may need to be accommodated separately during lunchtime. If the school does not have the capacity to supervise this, it might be necessary for parents to take their child home at lunchtime. As this would impact parents, ideally this would be negotiated in advance of Ramadan.

## **Other Provisions**

Schools may wish to consider:

- Facilitating a designated space for students to pray that aligns with the school timetable
- The impact of Ramadan on parent meetings
- Ensuring staff are trained and aware of Ramadan and the implications for the school community
- School assemblies dedicated to Ramadan to foster understanding and respect
- Explaining to Muslim parents the school policy about lunchtime arrangements, examinations, sports etc....
- Hosting a community Iftar/ breaking the fast meal. These are very appreciated celebrations
- The fast may break during school time or after-school activities during winter months

## **A Few Examples of Good Practice**

- Some schools invite parents and representatives from the mosque to speak about Ramadan to the whole school community
- Some schools provide a quiet room for contemplation and rest for fasting students
- Many schools host a community meal to break the fast
- A school allowed fasting students to sit in the shade when Sports Day fell on a hot summer day

Altrincham and Hale Mosque are happy to answer any queries you may have. Please do feel free to email [schools@altrinchammosque.org](mailto:schools@altrinchammosque.org)

We thank you for your dedication and commitment to all our children.

**Altrincham and Hale Muslim Association**