

Ramadan Briefing for North Yorkshire Schools, 2024

The Islamic calendar is lunar and has 354 or 355 days. Therefore, precise dates cannot be forecast as they depend on the sighting of the moon. **This year, 2024, Ramadan is expected to begin on Monday 11th March 2024. Ramadan will end on Tuesday, April 9th, 2024, and Eid Al-Fitr (the festival marking the end of Ramadan) will fall on Wednesday 10th April 2024.** Schools will be aware that pupils observing the fast will have consumed their last food and drink before dawn, Breaking the fast for the day at sunset.

It is very important for many Muslim families that their children should begin participating in the practice of fasting at an early age. Most pupils of secondary school age, as they are considered adult members of their communities, will be expected to fast and many primary school pupils will be fasting as well, with younger pupils fasting possibly for part of Ramadan, or only on certain days of each week.

Teachers therefore need to bear in mind that the routine of Muslim families is entirely different during Ramadan. The whole household will be awake much earlier in the morning to have some light food and to pray and will not be eating again until night. Young children may become more tired or excitable in school during this time, even if they are not fasting themselves. Those pupils who are fasting may become very tired and thirsty during the school day.

Practical advice for schools during fasting:

- Inform pupils of the allowances Islam gives for them to break the fast and make it up later if they feel fasting will in any way jeopardise their performance.
- Fasting pupils will not be in the canteen and will have plenty of spare time to pass during the lunch hour. It would be desirable to provide them with a supervised, quiet space to rest.
- Those on free school meals are still entitled to a meal. Schools should consider putting a bag together for pupils to take home.
- Any Muslim pupils not fasting for any reason should be provided with a space or area to eat where they feel comfortable.
- Consider granting exemptions from PE and sports to pupils who are fasting.
- School and college leaders will also want to consider the possible impact fasting and late night prayers during Ramadan may have on Muslim pupils when setting dates for other activities.
- Provide a room, where appropriate, for prayers.
- Whilst the timing of this year's Ramadan will make issues with hot weather unlikely, please be mindful of the impact of hot weather for pupils fasting.
- If pupils are partaking in tests or exams (e.g., mock exams), please ensure all invigilators are aware of the guidance above as well as the additional guidance below and consider what further measures may be helpful to support fasting pupils during their examinations.

When relevant – Tests and Exams

- Invigilators are advised to refrain from suggesting to pupils to have a ‘tiny sip of water’ for those fasting. This is not allowed unless there is concern that they may be suffering from dehydration.
- If possible, provide a quiet room for pupils to use between exams.
- If pupils are normally allowed to take food and drink into an exam room, it would be considerate where possible to allocate a separate exam room for fasting pupils, so they are not distracted by others who might have water bottles or snacks on their desks.
- If a pupil taking an exam is showing any signs that they may be dehydrated, such as a headache or drowsiness, they should be advised to terminate the fast and drink some water. They can be reassured that in this situation Islamic rulings allow them to break and make it up later. Schools may want to make this clear in their examinations policy and to consult with Muslim parents and pupils before the examination period to ensure all are in agreement with this policy.

Communication with parents

It is recommended that schools set out their policy for holidays for religious observance in their school prospectus and arrangements for Ramadan to parents in advance

North Yorkshire SACRE can provide advice to schools on catering for the needs of their Muslim pupils during Ramadan, so that pupils are able to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Guidance documents:

Information and resources from the Muslim Council of Britain
<https://mcb.org.uk/resources/ramadan/>

For further information:

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