



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE DIRECTORATE

NORTH YORKSHIRE STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Ramadan Briefing for North Yorkshire Schools, 2022

This year, 2022, Ramadan is expected to begin on April 2nd. Eid Al-Fitr (the festival marking the end of Ramadan) will fall on 1st May. 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. 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 important that schools liaise with Muslim families in their population to understand their priorities and needs. The observance of Ramadan will be important for every Muslim family, but the observance of Ramadan may differ in practice and this diversity of practice should be accommodated as far as possible.

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.

Ramadan is a core principle but observance will vary from family to family. Therefore, schools are strongly encouraged to work in partnership with Muslim Communities and families to help them observe Ramadan.

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.

All teachers should endeavour to ensure that Muslim pupils remain part of the whole school community during this time and recognise that their wellbeing is paramount.

It is important to work in partnership with Muslim families. The following bullet points may be helpful as 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 might not be in the canteen so 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.
- 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.
- Good Examination Room management during hot weather will benefit all candidates; ensure that Examination Rooms are shaded and fans are available. If possible, provide an outside shaded area and/or a cool, quiet room for pupils to use between exams.
- If pupils are normally allowed to take food and drink into an Examination Room, it would be considerate, where possible, to allocate a separate Examination 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.

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:

ASCL: Ramadan: Tests 2022 information for schools and colleges

<https://www.ascl.org.uk/Help-and-Advice/Inclusion/Diversity/Ramadan-Tests-2021>

(Note at time of publication of this guidance ASCL has not revised its information for 2022)

Information and resources from the Muslim Council of Britain

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

For further information:

schoolimprovementservice@northyorks.gov.uk