

# **GUIDANCE TO SCHOOLS ON ARRANGEMENTS FOR MUSLIM PUPILS DURING THE MONTH OF RAMADAN**

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These guidelines are based on work undertaken by a working group representing Headteachers in Hounslow and School Governors representing Hounslow Jamia Masjid

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## **The practice of fasting**

Fasting (Saum) is part of the yearly life of a Muslim and **is a requirement on all those who have reached puberty and are healthy**. This may affect some children below the age of 12 in primary schools as well. Children below the age of 12 who are very enthusiastic may be encouraged by their parents to fast only on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Schools will wish to make suitable arrangements to support pupils in observing this requirement.

Fasting is not a requirement for pupils in lower age ranges and the local Imams are issuing guidance on this. This will be sent to schools when available. It is recognised that some younger children may wish to observe the fast and that family and peer group pressures may have a part to play in this. Schools may wish to discuss any problems with the child's family with reference to this guidance.

As fasting is a responsibility as well as an obligation in Islam it is important that pupils are supported while continuing with normal school life. It is equally important that pupils realise that Ramadan is not an opportunity to try to gain special individual rights within the school.

Schools will wish to recognise the importance of Ramadan to Muslim pupils through the curriculum, collective worship and other opportunities. New and supply staff may need to be made aware of the importance of Ramadan and the school's responsibilities.

All staff need to be aware of some of the effects of prolonged dawn to dusk fasting, for example sleepiness, mood swings and headaches. **A family's sleep time can alter dramatically**. Some pupils will need to reduce the physical exercise that they take during fasting while others will wish to continue as normal. Schools may wish to plan alternative activities in Physical Education which are less strenuous. Fasting is not regarded by Muslims as an opportunity to avoid aspects of life but rather to cope with normal life under different circumstances.

## **Prayer during Ramadan**

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, but running water must be available nearby.

The essential times of prayer are:

1. After first light and before sunrise ( Fajr )
2. Between the sun reaching its height and mid-afternoon ( Dhuhr )
3. Between mid-afternoon and sunset ( Asr )
4. After the sun has finished setting ( Maghrib )
5. In the dark of the night ( Isha )

If it is not possible to make the prayers at the appointed times they can be made as soon as possible afterwards. Schools can arrange their own timetable for prayers and a prayer room can be made available at the end of the school day.

Muslims do not require a leader to make the prayers, although normally there would be a leader in the mosque. Congregational prayers are preferred but not essential. Such prayers would not require the whole of the lunch break and where large numbers of pupils are involved it may be possible for a number of groups to pray over the period of the lunch break. It is usual for males and females to pray separately but if not convenient they may pray together but in separate groups. Senior pupils who are Muslim may be happy to help with the organisation of prayers in school at lunchtime. Schools may wish to involve parents or members of the local Muslim community in the supervision of pupils during their prayer times.

It is important that:

- Everyone in the school knows why prayer rooms are being made available and that non-Muslim member of staff and members of the support staff who are involved in supervision are fully briefed and know what is expected of them.
- Schools are advised that they can seek support from the local Muslim community which may be required in some circumstances. The contact details for Hounslow mosque are given at the end of this guidance.

### **Examinations during Ramadan**

Islam is based on the lunar calendar and, therefore, moves each year. It is inevitable that some examinations in secondary schools will take place during Ramadan. Staff need to be aware that some pupils may find the rigour of preparing for an examination while fasting difficult. Schools should consider rescheduling internal examinations. Forward planning is essential and schools will be issued with the dates for Ramadan for future years.

### **Parents' Evenings and School Functions during Ramadan**

Fasting is difficult for both adults and young people and the timing 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 morning. This makes it difficult for parents to attend meetings or other functions in the evenings during Ramadan. If it is possible to avoid parents meetings during Ramadan while continuing to provide close and effective home-school contact the benefits are considerable.

## **Attendance and religious observance**

Schools are reminded that pupils may be withdrawn from school for required religious observance and that such occasions are regarded as authorised absence for the purpose of registration. This might include, for example, Id-ul-Fitr (1-2 days) and Id-ul-Adha. Some pupils will attend school after observing prayer in the mosque.

### **Injections**

Any oral medicine or injection cannot be taken by a person who is fasting. Such medications or injections can be taken after the fast is over. Where conditions are more serious medical advice from one's GP should be obtained

### **Swimming**

Muslim girls can easily wear caps and long swimming leggings during Primary school swimming lessons. If water is inadvertently swallowed this does not mean the fast is broken, as the intention was not to drink.

## ***DATES OF RAMADAN - 2005\****

<b>FIRST DAY OF FASTING</b>	Tuesday October 4 <sup>th</sup> or Wednesday October 5 <sup>th</sup> (for confirmation visit <a href="http://www.ramadan.co.uk">www.ramadan.co.uk</a> )
<b>EID UL FITR</b>	Thursday November 3 <sup>rd</sup> or Friday November 4 <sup>th</sup> (for confirmation visit <a href="http://www.ramadan.co.uk">www.ramadan.co.uk</a> )

### ***Other important Islamic dates\****

Yaum ul Arafah – 10<sup>th</sup> January 2006  
Eid ul Adha – 11<sup>th</sup> January 2006  
Start of Muharram – 30<sup>th</sup> January 2006  
Yawm ul-'Ashura 10<sup>th</sup> Muharram – 8<sup>th</sup> February 2006

*\*subject to moon sighting - Source: Royal Observatory Greenwich*