

2025 Summary advice for schools on Ramadan

Adapted by B&D SACRE from an original document from Newham SACRE

The following advice is taken from 'A briefing paper on Ramadan' Published October 2025

- In Barking and Dagenham (B&D) we have four main denominations/groups of Muslim people – Sunni, Shi'a, Ismaili and Ahmadiyya. The vast majority of Muslim pupils in our schools are Sunni. All groups of Muslims use the same Qur'an, but there are differences in the way they practice their religion. In B&D where we have Muslim people from a variety of continents and countries these differences are cultural as well as scriptural/doctrinal, at times. Knowing a Muslim family's heritage can help a school understand differences in the ways in which individuals practice their religion, and understand that not all Muslims will all do exactly the same thing.
- Fasting (sawm) during the twenty-nine or thirty days of Ramadan is one of the basic duties of Islam for all Muslim people. For Sunni Muslims these duties are known as the 'pillars' that support and strengthen a Muslim's spiritual life like how pillars support a building. The other pillars for Sunni Muslims are: the declaration of faith, prayer/worship five times daily, paying a portion of wealth to charitable causes and making the pilgrimage to Makkah, once in your lifetime. Fasting is the fourth pillar and is seen as an act of worship. For Shi'a and Ahmadiyya Muslims also consider fasting during Ramadan to be a religious obligation.
- In 2026 Ramadan will run between 17/18th February to 18/19th March, depending on moon sightings.
- During Ramadan, adult Muslims fast from dawn to sunset, refraining from eating, drinking (including water) and sexual activity. It is a time when they try to be even more aware of *Allah* (Arabic word for 'One God'). Muslims also try to live a better life generally during Ramadan – by avoiding negative behaviour, such as harmful speech or thoughts, in order to cultivate self-discipline.
- There are variations in timing of Ramadan due to geographical location and often in B&D depending on which country's timings Muslim people follow. Timetables showing when daylight begins and ends during each day of Ramadan are published by Muslim communities and can be found on-line.
- Fasting during Ramadan binds the Muslim community (Ummah) together, both locally and world-wide

What does the Qur'an say?

"Fasting is prescribed for you as it was for those before you, so that you may be conscious of Allah." (2:183)
"But he who is ill or on a journey shall fast a similar number of days later on. Allah desires your well-being, not your discomfort." (2:185) "Ramadan is the month in which the Qur'an was sent down, as a guide to mankind. So, any [one] of you who is present (in his home) during that month should spend it in fasting." (2:185) "Eat and drink until the white thread of dawn appears to you distinct from the black thread, then complete your fast until the night appears." (2:187)

At what age are children expected to start observing the Ramadan fast?

Shari'ah (Islamic law, based on the Qur'an and the practice of the Prophet) states that fasting during Ramadan is only obligatory from the age of puberty. It is natural, however, that Muslim children will wish to emulate their elders and so, from an early age, Muslim children will often fast for one, two or more days

during Ramadan. They will be proud of this and their elders will express pleasure. A competitive spirit will often develop between children in that they will compare the number of days on which they have fasted with others, and this is something that elders will educate them against. The level of observance among children, of course, will depend upon the particular individual, family or community. **Muslim parents are very mindful about the impact of fasting on younger children and would normally encourage weekend fasting at home, when they can rest and perform prayers with their wider family.**

What is the responsibility of a school if a pupil becomes ill or suffers as a result of fasting while at school?

The responsibility which a school should exercise towards fasting pupils is no different to that applying to any pupil in the school. A school will obviously want to be sensitive towards pupils who are fasting, but Muslim scriptures are clear that if you are not able to operate normally (at school or work), you are not well enough or old enough to be fasting. Fasting is something that no-one should really know about – it should not affect your normal daily life.

Given that the obligation to fast does not override health considerations, a pupil who faints can be offered water if judged appropriate by a suitably qualified first-aider or if the pupil requests it. In the same way if a pupil cannot concentrate or becomes listless at school, a drink and food can be given. Before any fasting starts, the school should ask parents to take responsibility to inform school if the child is fasting and the school can use that opportunity to inform parents that appropriate action will be taken if a child becomes unwell or lethargic while fasting. It is helpful to reassure pupils that if they begin the fast with intention but need to break it due to illness or fatigue, the day is still spiritually meaningful.

Are there any other parts of the curriculum for which Ramadan has implications?

As well as the month of Ramadan being a time of fasting, it is also a period when Muslims try to be even more conscious of God and to lead better lives. Undoubtedly, the Muslim community would appreciate and respect a sympathetic and understanding stance by schools during the month of Ramadan. In turn, most schools would have as one of their underlying values respect for the family backgrounds from which children come.

Schools should consider the needs of any Muslim teachers who might be required to teach any sex education elements of the curriculum at a time when their religion asks them not to think about such matters. Even pupils who are not fasting may feel uncomfortable discussing topics such as sexual health during Ramadan, or parents may find it difficult to talk through issues with their children or come to a school meeting about these lessons, so please bear this in mind.

Should a school make special provision during Ramadan?

This is a matter for a school's discretion but the following may be considered:

- Be mindful when scheduling meetings for parents (in that Muslim parents may find attendance at such meetings difficult because of involvement in practices associated with Ramadan)
- Dedicating specific assemblies to Ramadan so that the whole school community can learn about its place in Muslim life; as well as considering fasting in different religions
- Arrange meetings with Muslim parents before Ramadan to discuss practical matters such as lunchtime arrangements, examinations or sporting activities
- Send a letter home prior to Ramadan to invite parents to inform the school if their child is fasting, and to encourage preparation through a nutritious pre-dawn meal (suhoor)

For more information, please refer to SACRE's full document or email

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