

# Provision for pupils during Ramadan: Trust Principles

A set of principles for all Trust schools

March 2024

Responsibility for this policy:	CEO
Responsibility for monitoring/evaluation:	Executive Headteacher/Headteacher/Head of School
Date of next review:	as required
Links to other Trust guidance:	Collective worship policy Religious education policy Safeguarding and child protection policy

*Creating futures through our shared values of excellence, partnership and perseverance*

*Oh you who believe!*

*Fasting has been prescribed to you as it prescribed to those before you so that you may attain God-consciousness*

*(Quran: Chapter 2, Verse 183)*

## 1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

- Ramadan is the fourth of the five pillars of Islam – the key tenets of belief – and occurs during the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar.
- It begins 10 or 11 days earlier each year in the Gregorian calendar.
- Fasting (and the limitation of other activities) takes place during the hours of daylight; i.e. from dawn to sunset. No food or water is allowed. Instead, there is encouragement to cleanse the whole self through prayer and reflection.
- When Ramadan occurs during the summer months, it contains some of the longest days of fasting.
- Fasting is obligatory for all Muslims once they attain puberty, although certain exemptions are given.
- A typical day during Ramadan includes the pre-dawn meal, prayer five times throughout the day, the breaking of the fast at sunset and the evening meal.
- Some pupils in our Trust schools will wish to fast during Ramadan. The purpose of this document is to identify a set of principles to support our schools in making the right provision for them, including good communications with parents/carers.
- The document also gives guidance on the broader acknowledgement of Ramadan, even where pupils are not fasting.

## 2 REFERENCE POINTS

These principles take account of:

- Guidance from Birmingham City Council to City schools
- Further guidance and best practice from education sources; e.g. DfE, other trusts, professional associations, etc.
- Guidance for schools published by local or national Islamic organisations

## 3 AIMS OF THIS POLICY

- To make good provision for pupils who are fasting, ensuring that arrangements are appropriate and safe
- To ensure good communications with parents/carers
- To ensure that all staff understand the rationale for these arrangements and put them into practice sensitively, respectfully and safely

## 4 OBJECTIVES OF THIS POLICY

- Specify the guidance so that schools in the Trust demonstrate a consistent approach and common expectations
- Ensure that parents/carers are fully aware and involved, especially where there may be differences of opinion or misunderstandings between the school, the pupil and/or the family
- Provide written evidence and confirmation of all actions
- Ensure that staff are fully trained in both the practicalities and the sensitivities required
- Recognise Ramadan as a key curriculum opportunity

## 5 OUR AGREED PRINCIPLES – REFLECTED IN OUR KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

### The Trust ensures that:

- Policy and guidance are in place for its schools, setting the tone for the basic provision, which schools can then adapt to particular circumstances.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 may fast during Ramadan if the school has written parental permission for each named day/date. Blanket permission for the whole month is not appropriate.
- Pupils' health, well-being and safeguarding take priority where any concerns arise.
- Requirements for pupils to attend school every day do not change.

### The school ensures that:

- Communication with parents/carers has the highest priority and is well-planned, diplomatic and respectful to family requests.
- Parents/carers who are considering that their younger children (year 4 or below) should fast, are advised strongly by the school that this is not part of Trust policy because pupils' physical stamina and concentration levels are affected. In these cases, parents/carers are advised to allow their children to fast at the weekends only.
- Operational planning takes account of pupils' needs and the potential impact of fasting (e.g. arrangements for catering, play and PE - including swimming) as well as sensitivity to pupils' feelings and provision for places of rest.
- It uses its discretion when modifying any teaching and learning activities, weighed against the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- Staff (including those from agencies) are provided with the appropriate training to assist understanding of the reasons for certain provision to be made and the potential impact of any changes on individual pupils or the school as a whole.
- A named senior member of staff takes responsibility for oversight of matters relating to Ramadan so that leadership is defined and there is a consistent message to staff, pupils and parents/carers.
- Pupils who are fasting are still entitled to a free school meal which would normally be boxed as a packed meal. The school should discuss the appropriate contents with the parents/carers and catering staff.

### The staff:

- Understand the school's approach to Ramadan and the arrangements being made.
- Understand the variations in approach between families and communities.
- Demonstrate personal confidence and a willingness to meet individual needs and make appropriate adaptations.
- Monitor individual pupils closely to ensure their health and safety and to maintain safeguarding as the overriding duty.

### The pupils:

- Understand (at the appropriate level) the provision that the school is making.
- Feel fully supported and are not asked to attend places where they might feel uncomfortable, such as the dining room.
- Know how to raise any concerns they may have about the provision.
- Are given opportunities to learn about Ramadan during the month, including sharing information with pupils from other faiths or none.

## 7 PUTTING OUR PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE

### Communication with parents

- The school must make contact with Muslim families before Ramadan, to set out its advice and guidance relating to, for example: the relevant age-groups; importance of parental permission and responsibility; organisation of lunchtimes; and any special arrangements being made for PE, etc., including the allocation and supervision of any rooms for rest.
- Parents/carers may request that their child goes home during the lunchtime period and the school can approve this

arrangement; however, the school cannot expect or request that pupils go home.

- Parents must give written permission for their child to fast, via completion of a weekly permission slip which identifies each day of the week. (See [Appendix 2](#))
- If a pupil informs the school that s/he is fasting but written parental permission has not been received, the school must telephone the parent/carer for verbal clarification and should subsequently set that decision out in a confirmatory letter or email to the parents/carers. In these cases, the pupil should also be able to speak directly to the parent/carer to hear the outcome of the decision and not have to rely on a message from a member of staff.
- In extreme cases, if the pupil is insisting on fasting and the parent/carer has said no, the pupil must not be pressurised to eat. Instead, the parent/carer should be asked to speak on the phone to their child or attend the school if possible. Again, the final action should be confirmed via letter or email as well as by phone.
- Parents/carers are also informed that if a pupil who is fasting makes a request for food because s/he is hungry or thirsty, the school will not ignore the request and will want to ensure that a meal is provided; however, the school will make every effort to contact the parents/carers first.
- Parents/carers are also informed that if a pupil who is fasting appears to be unwell as a result of fasting (e.g. demonstrating dizziness, nausea or distress), s/he may need to be offered food or drink but the school will make every effort to contact the parents/carers first. A medical emergency will always take precedence over any decision by the pupil to fast.
- Staff should be aware that some pupils may not understand the full expectations about what they can or can't do during Ramadan; e.g. they may believe they can't use an asthma inhaler or take medication. In all cases, it is essential that the parent/carer is involved in explaining to the pupil.

### Operational planning

- There may need to be alternative arrangements for Ramadan, depending on the number of pupils involved.
- In general terms, the school should consider how the school day functions and whether there are any required adjustments; such as, the level of physical activity, the provision of quiet places to rest, the avoidance of attendance in the dining room, etc.
- The school may have to make special supervisory arrangements. Muslim members of staff may offer to join pupils in a rest room but there should not be an expectation that they will provide the supervision.
- The school will consider Ramadan before making decisions to hold certain activities during that month; e.g. educational visits, after school clubs or parents' evenings.
- Operational plans involve more than simple organisation, they should consider the feelings and sensitivities of pupils who may not want others to know they are fasting or who may struggle when the smell and sight of food are nearby.
- Ramadan is an excellent time to develop aspects of Religious Education and/or Collective Worship, both in terms of the study of Islam and also comparative religious themes: – equality, humility, fasting, giving, reflecting, sacrifice and spirituality. The Trust expects that all pupils (Muslim, of other faiths or of none) should learn about the importance of Ramadan as well as, of course, the celebration of Eid-ul-Fitr to follow.

### Staff training

- Staff training should take place prior to Ramadan. It should be refreshed each year, especially where there are new employees or agency staff.
- It is crucially important that all staff understand the importance of Ramadan to our Muslim families and are trained in the use of appropriate language. Pupils must never feel that they are being criticised for taking part in fasting, even where staff may have some individual concerns. At all times, staff are expected to be diplomatic and respectful.
- Staff training should help non-Muslim staff to understand that families and communities are different and that the school cannot always expect a standard response from all families; e.g. some may believe that their children should fast regularly while others may not. The school can set out its broad parameters but needs to be able to respond flexibly where required.
- One senior member of staff should take overall responsibility for the coordination of activities throughout Ramadan. This will ensure a consistent approach and will minimise the risk of different decisions being taken at different levels.
- Some of the most important resources in making provision for Ramadan, are already in the school, in the form of our own Muslim staff. Their contribution is highly valued in helping the school to achieve best quality provision and a specific insight into the school's community attitudes. They may also have differing views and customs so consultation on, and adherence to this policy is necessary.



The Executive Headteacher/Headteacher/Head of School (EHT/HT/HoS) is responsible for the monitoring of this policy at school level and reports to the CEO and the Board as necessary.

The policy is revisited annually prior to Ramadan.

The formal review is planned for two years but can be undertaken at any time before that, particularly if there is new national guidance or if there are urgent matters to address.

## APPENDIX 1

### Example of letter to parents

*The school adapts this letter to its own circumstances.*

Dear parents and carers

#### RAMADAN

The Holy Month of Ramadan is nearly upon us. Create Partnership Trust has made a strong commitment to supporting its communities and families in their contribution to this fourth pillar of Islam and has ensured that good arrangements are in place in each school.

We have taken advice from a range of sources (Government, Local Authority and various Islamic organisations) and recognise that children under the age of 10 years are not required to fast but that parents/carers may request that their child in Year 5 or Year 6 or girls who have started to menstruate earlier may wish to take part in some fasting.

The school is happy to provide support for Year 5/6 pupils but needs to make clear its responsibilities, together with those of the parents/carers. Ultimately this is a home/school partnership approach which places the child at the centre.

The school has set out a series of actions to support a child in Year 5 or Year 6 who is fasting:

- A published document ***Provision for pupils during Ramadan***, which can be found on the School websites. A hard copy can be provided for any parent/carer on request. This document sets out the detail of our approach which is, broadly, positive support for the children (including arrangements to be made for the lunchtime break, etc) but with close monitoring to ensure their safeguarding, health and wellbeing. All parents/carers who give permission for their child to fast are urged to read this document.
- Parents are asked to complete a ***Fasting request form*** during each week of Ramadan. This is a permission slip which identifies the day and date that the parent/carer is requesting that the child fasts. It must be signed by the parent and returned to the school each Monday for the week ahead.

**Mrs Holder and Mrs Shahnawaz are the named contacts for any queries relating to fasting.**

We all hope that Ramadan goes well for our families and communities. Please do contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

***Ramadan Mubarak*** from everyone at the school and Create Partnership Trust!

Sincerely,



Ms Yasmin

Headteacher