

Dear Year 5 and 6 Parents,

Observing Ramadan

I am aware that Ramadan is expected to commence on or around Thursday 23rd April this year and that this has implications for a large number of our families. For Muslim families in our community Ramadan represents an important part of the year.

Guidance from the Association of School and College Leaders, issued via the Muslim Council of Britain:

Observing Ramadan may bring many benefits to individuals and communities but also has the potential to cause the individual temporary hardship through hunger and lack of liquids during fasting hours which may impact on physical wellbeing and cognitive performance.

- *Young Muslims and families, particularly those sitting exams this summer, will need to balance their obligations as Muslims with their studies and the importance of examinations for their future, noting that the pursuit of education is also a religious and moral duty for Muslims of both genders. This is also alongside any other relevant factors when deciding how to observe Ramadan this year.*
- *No child under the age of puberty is obliged or expected to fast. Younger children may do a partial fast but this should be in consultation with and under the supervision of parents, carers and schools.*
- *Fasting is only obligatory under Islamic tradition when a child becomes an adult. However, jurists differ over when this is. It is recommended for children to practise shorter and partial fasts in order to train them for the full fasting when they become adults.*
- *Parents and carers should be made aware of the following points of view to facilitate their decision-making:*
 - a) *The 'biological maturity' view: children become adults when they reach physical or biological maturity, that is, puberty. According to this view, children are expected to fast at the age of 15, possibly earlier.*
 - b) *The 'intellectual maturity' view: children become adults upon attaining intellectual maturity in addition to biological maturity. According to this view, the expectation to fast will occur at some point between the ages of 16-19.*

Observing Ramadan during school term

We know from previous years that only a very small number of parents choose for their children to fast in Year 5 or Year 6. No families have ever chosen for their children to fast during the SATs period, week of 4th May is final preparation week and the tests commence week of 11th May. Some families may therefore choose for their children to commence a fast from Friday 15th May for the rest of Ramadan after the SATs testing is completed.

In terms of what period of fasting is done, as Year 5 and 6 pupils are not yet adults, some families have suggested that a shorter fast would also be appropriate for their pupils of this age, so that they can experience fasting for a shorter period. This would mean fasting in the morning (not having snack or fruit in the morning) and then ending the fast and eating lunch. Below, in your choices, this is referred to as "half day fast".

It is very important that the school knows exactly which pupils will be fasting so that we can support them and so that our kitchen staff can prepare the correct number of meals during the period of Ramadan. Please fill out the reply slip attached to this letter stating whether or not your child will be fasting.

If you do not indicate that your child is fasting we will assume that your child will be eating school meals as normal. You will be charged the usual rate unless your child is entitled to Free School Meals.

If, for any reason, the information on the reply slip needs to change for a short period parents must inform Ms. Kumar in writing on the morning of the change or earlier if possible.

Managing concerns about fasting

I appreciate that fasting is a challenge for many pupils, especially younger children. Where pupils appear to not be able to learn due to fasting it is likely that Mr. Howlett (Year 5) or Mr Holmes (Year 6) or Mr. Young or Ms. Kumar will invite their parent to meet with them to discuss if continuing to fast during Ramadan is appropriate for that child.

If it is felt that a child's health is severely at risk due to their decision to fast, the school has a duty to care for the child by offering them some food or water. If it is felt that a decision for a child to fast, or to continue fasting, is dangerous, this will be treated as a safeguarding matter.

Thank you for your continued support of your child's education. Please complete the attached reply slip. Your child will need to return this to their teacher by Thursday 19th March.

Yours sincerely,

Mr M. Haimendorf

Principal

Reply Slip for Ramadan

Child's Name _____

Child's Class _____

Parent Signature _____

Please tick one of the following:

My child **will not** be fasting during Ramadan at school

Fasting options

Half day Full day

(no snack) *(no snack or lunch)*

1. My child **will** begin fasting after the SATs week, starting fast on 15thth May

2. My child **will** be fasting at school during Ramadan beginning on 23rd April