

GUIDANCE FROM THE MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN AND NHS England

Please ensure students are well prepared, ready and understand the likely effects on their bodies during fasting and that they manage these challenges well, by:

- Eating well, with a balanced meal (containing all food groups) when breaking the fast at the evening meal (iftar) and during the pre-dawn meal (suhur) and drinking plenty of re-hydrating fluids between iftar and suhur;
- Managing their sleep effectively;
- Getting plenty of rest between examinations;
- Avoiding over-exertion during the day, especially if the weather is particularly warm;
- Considering the possibility of following the dawn-to-sunset timings of Mecca and Medina (shorter, approximately 14, daylight hours) as opposed to following actual British dawn-to-sunset hours (longer, approximately, 19 daylight hours);

Planning ahead, in terms of organising their equipment and time, to avoid rushing around, and in terms of organising their revision processes, to fit around prayers and other Ramadan specific practices, such as the Tarawih prayer or I'tikaf, if these are likely to be performed.

If managed well, a student's health should not be at risk and can be of a health benefit, as described in the Department of Health guidance, Healthy Ramadan. If a student is feeling unwell or is ill, then they are permitted to break the fast. In Islamic teachings, health is regarded as more important. Please make your son/daughter aware of this. If there are any specific concerns or reasons due to ill health or medical conditions that a fasting student may need to break their fast, or whether they should fast at all, parents should consult a medically qualified person for advice. Please inform the school of any relevant outcome or if any medicine is to be administered in a different way during Ramadan. In our safeguarding duty, the school will apply judgement and common sense in "taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes" as outlined in the *Department for Education guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education*. For example, if a student is unwell and showing signs of dehydration/ exhaustion, they will be asked if they are fasting and advised to terminate the fast by drinking water, reassuring them that this is allowed in Islam and that the fast can be deferred to an alternative day.

Families should be aware that the Joint Council of Qualifications (JCQ), the body which oversees examinations nationally, has confirmed it has taken Ramadan into account, after consulting with relevant Muslim groups, when setting the external examinations timetable. This is why more large entry examinations have been timetabled before half-term and/ or are scheduled as morning examinations. Education is seen as a religious and moral duty for Muslim students and, like all students, they will want to do as well as they possibly can in their examinations. Grades attained at GCSE or A-level will impact directly on their future education and careers. This will be a legitimate consideration in how they decide to observe Ramadan this year, in terms of both the physical effects of fasting (tiredness, dehydration and associated cognitive performance) and in terms of time management (performing extra devotion/ prayers, such as tarawih or I'tikaf). Islam does not require them to put their futures in jeopardy and the advice suggests families should be aware that extra devotions in Ramadan are voluntary; whereas performing well in exams, given the potential consequences, is obligatory.

During the exam period, all our usual guidance and practices are in place; some may be of particular relevance to our Muslim cohort. This includes:

- Provision of water beforehand for during exams – for those students not fasting, or those who need to break their fast due to dehydration;
- Revision lessons before and after school – which may benefit students depending on how they are managing their time;
- Lunch and free school meals are still available for those wishing to take it and who are eligible; for example students may wish to take a cold lunch home;
- Invigilators are trained to keep a close eye on students and to recognise dehydration/ drowsiness and will deal sensitively regarding advice around breaking a fast with water

On behalf of all staff at Woodkirk Academy, we wish our students the very best during the examination period. Should there be any queries with the above guidance, please contact Mr Cook, Vice Principal.