

## **Ramadan Guidance**

Dear Parents or Carers

Please read the advice and guidance provided to schools by national organisations, such as the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) and regional organisations. These organisations, including the Muslim Council of Britain.

### **External Examinations 2018**

External examinations will start in early May and continue until the end of June. The common timetabling of GCSE's is collectively coordinated through their representative body the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). Each year the exam timetable is finalised a year ahead after consultation with schools and colleges, exam boards and other stakeholders. The summer 2018 timetable was finalised in May 2017 following such consultation.

The window in which GCSE's are to be taken is at the same time in the academic calendar as it was in 2017. A range of issues are taken into account to ensure the timetable is fair to all pupils.

### **Ramadan and Examinations**

You will be aware the holy month of Ramadan is due to commence from around the 17<sup>th</sup> May until Eid al-Fitr on the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> June 2018. Ramadan is a time to self-reflection, increased religious devotion and self-control over the need to eat and drink during daylight hours. Ramadan coincides with the Summer solstice, the longest hours of daylight in Britain, and also the national public KS4 and KS5 Summer examinations. This letter is written to advise and inform both parents and students about the considerations needed in observing fasting during Ramadan for this length of day and the issues this may present to health and the pressures on our students for best performance in these examinations. It also serves to inform you about the procedures the school has to help at this time and to open a dialogue about these issues with families and the school. In so doing, the information presented draws on advice and guidance provided by national organisations, such as the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) and regional organisations. These organisations, including the Muslim Council of Britain. As such, they have tried to accommodate the wide and varied range of interpretations of Islamic practice and law and this letter does not intend to endorse any particular interpretation. As always, it will be a decision for families, parents and individual students whether they are of an age to fast, for how long they will fast and if they are legitimately exempt from fasting. Equally, the degree of observance during Ramadan will necessarily be a decision for them. There is, however, a need to balance the benefits to individuals, and our Muslim communities, of observing Ramadan and the challenges and potential temporary hardship this may cause. Individual benefits may involve a greater feeling of spirituality, better relationships/habits, better health and self-control whereas, the challenges will be through hunger and lack of fluids during fasting and likely fatigue due to long days and disturbed sleep. This temporary hardship may impact on physical wellbeing and particularly cognitive performance during these important examinations and revision

time. Individual students will need to balance their usual observance and fasting for Ramadan, with their studies, the importance of these examinations to their future and their religious and moral duty in the pursuit of education. In reaching a decision of whether to fast, for example on examination days, families and students should be aware of the flexibility that exists within Islamic practices for students to delay to alternative days of the year or exempt themselves from fasting and/or late night prayers if it is believed performance in examinations could be adversely affected. 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 your fast at the end of the day;
- Avoid caffeine;
- drinking plenty water between sunset and sunrise
- Managing their sleep effectively;
- Getting plenty of rest between examinations;
- Avoiding over-exertion during the day, especially if the weather is particularly warm;
- Planning your day ahead – Prepare everything the night before, to make sure you get your equipment ready, to avoid rushing around on the day of your exam.
- Organise your revision to fit around prayers and other Ramadan specific practices.

If your child 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 child 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/carers 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.