



Fasting During School Term and Examination/Revision Period

Information for students who are fasting:

The Islamic month of Ramadan this year started on the 12th April. During Ramadan, adult Muslims are required to fast from Dawn to Sunset. This may include students in year 10 and above. It is possible that due to prolonged periods of abstinence from eating and drinking during the day, and a lack of sleep due to nightly activities during the month, students' attendance and performance may be affected. While the School would not wish to dictate to students observing Ramadan how they should approach the month, this document will hopefully provide some guidance based upon advice gathered from our local Islamic Centre in Altrincham.

Effect of fasting on the body

While fasting does have recognised health benefits, such as cleansing the body of toxins, there are some adverse effects of prolonged periods of abstaining from food and water. If not approached correctly, fasting may cause hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar). An inadequate supply of glucose (sugar) to the brain can affect brain function, including concentration, memory, attention and other cognitive processes. These can directly affect studying, revision and performance during an examination.

Importance of Sawm and education in Islam

While sawm (fasting during Ramadan) and salah (daily prayers) have been made obligatory on all adult Muslims, great emphasis is also placed on education and acquisition of knowledge, as shown by this verse, "***O Lord, increase me in knowledge***" (***Qur'an 20:114***). It is therefore important for our students who are observing Ramadan to balance the obligation of fasting with the pursuit of education.

Attending school while fasting

The Department of Health has produced Healthy Ramadan, a guide to healthy fasting during Ramadan, (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/healthy-fasting-during-ramadan>) and warns about the need to drink enough water before fasting to avoid dehydration, which may be exacerbated by hot weather conditions. Dehydration can lead to disorientation, confusion or faintness, all of which may have a serious impact upon your performance at school and during an examination.

Advice to students attending school during Ramadan:

Some students are not adversely affected by fasting, and may decide not to take any particular steps, and to continue with their fast as usual. Other students may however struggle and may wish to follow the advice below: Sensible steps to follow

1. Between the hours of ***Iftar*** (meal at sunset) and ***Suhoor*** (pre-dawn meal), drink plenty of water and eat meals regularly in controlled amounts to keep your metabolic system active, and consume foods that that will keep your energy levels up during the day.
2. Have a wholesome pre-dawn meal.

3. Avoid fried foods, high sugar drinks (such as cola or lemonade), high energy drinks containing caffeine, sweets or high quantities of chocolate.
4. As you need to stay late for *Isha* (night) prayers and wake up for *Suhoor* before dawn, you will need to readjust your sleeping pattern. One possible way is to take a 2-3 hour nap after returning from school (making sure not to miss any obligatory prayers).
5. Ensure you are well rested overnight, and refrain during school days from attending optional *Taraweeh* prayers (nightly congregational prayers at the mosque).
6. Students are encouraged to consult their usual Imam or religious adviser to help make a decision about how to approach Ramadan during the examination period.
7. If a student becomes unwell and is unable to continue with the fast during their school attendance, the Qur'an gives concession to break the fast and observe the fast at a later date (Surah 2, Ayahs 184-5).

Missing school

It is vitally important that students should not miss school during Ramadan. Ramadan is the month of striving to better ourselves, and missing school defeats this purpose.