



Blue Coat Church of England Academy

Birmingham Street,
Walsall,
West Midlands,
WS1 2ND
Tel: 01922 720558
Email: postbox@bluecoatacademy.org
Website: www.bluecoatacademy.org

Principal: Mr D Smith

15th May 2019

Dear Parents/Carers,

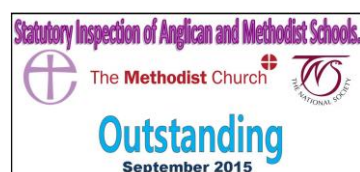
For some members of our community, the religious observance of Ramadan has just begun. Ramadan is the ninth month in the Islamic calendar and lasts between 29-30 days. It is a period of prayer, self-control, charity-giving and goodwill to others. Part of Ramadan is fasting, which is one of the Five Pillars (fundamental religious duties) of Islam.

We are aware that it can be difficult for school students who are fasting, particularly as Ramadan this year falls in the examination period of May and June and at the time of year when we have longest daylight hours. Over the last couple of years, concerns have been raised across the educational and religious communities about fasting during Ramadan and the potential impact this can have on examination performance and young people's futures. For Muslim students and parents, this may well lead to difficult decisions as they come to terms with balancing their obligations of pursuing education and a religious and moral duty, with fasting.

We are aware within our own local community of the wide range and diversity of opinions on how to observe Ramadan and this range and diversity is reflected nationally. Whilst the period of fasting provides possible benefits such as feeling closer to God and establishing a healthier life style and better habits, there can be less desirable consequences for some people. These may include tiredness, low energy, dehydration, reduced focus, and memory and concentration issues. It is worth noting that these do not only pertain to Muslim students but to all students where the balance is out of kilter.

From the school's perspective, we welcome the work and advice of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) in conjunction with a number of Imams, Islamic scholars, experts and Muslim chaplains working with the educational sector, published in March 2019. Following that very helpful advice, I have listed below some of the comments and recommendations which we would request parents and students consider in their approach to managing the demands of external examinations and our curriculum, with those of observing Ramadan. Where appropriate, the comments/advice are quoted directly.

- Safeguarding issues – We have an overriding safeguarding duty which applies to all students as does the promotion of the welfare of students; these are defined in DfE statutory guidance, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. Therefore, if the School notices signs of dehydration and/or exhaustion or other medical condition, which gives cause for concern, then the School will ask the child whether they are fasting and advise them to terminate the fast immediately by drinking some water. This action is accommodated by Islamic rulings around fasting. Additionally, the parents of the students will be contacted and advised of the School's actions.
- "For Muslims, the ultimate is to seek God through knowledge, including learning how to deal effectively and knowledgably with this world. Muslim students, like all students, will want to do as well as they possibly can in their examinations"



- “Grades attained at GCSE and A Level are critical to the further education and career prospects of young people”
- “Students who have important exams should be advised not to spend all night praying to avoid tiredness”. ASCL guidance document.
- “Some Muslim jurists allow students who are experiencing hardship to break their fast during Ramadan (and make up the dates later), if it affects their ability to revise and study for important examinations. The Imams, Islamic scholars, experts, chaplains and leaders consulted advised that the sitting of important examinations can be an exemption from fasting if a student fears fasting will affect his/her performance adversely.” ASCL.

We would ask parents and students to give this advice careful consideration, while recognising that they know their child best.

It is essential that pupils complete all elements of their external examinations. The full examination timetable is available to view on the school website <https://www.bluecoatacademy.org/parents-carers/examination-arrangements>. It is important to note that failure to complete any examination or examination component will result in no overall grade being awarded. If Eid falls on a day where an examination is scheduled, we would of course allow pupils to leave after completing that examination, to participate in celebrations.

As a Church of England school, Blue Coat has always been inclusive, embracing all aspects of the diversity of the community it serves. Our whole ethos revolves around our school values, including respect and our ultimate aim is to support pupils to achieve the best possible examination results while developing resilient character. **We want all of our students to achieve the best they possibly can in all aspects of their work and this includes external examinations.**

For other students, they will face internal tests and exams and there is the pressure and demand of their normal, everyday curriculum. All students need to take part in every aspect of the curriculum, just as they would normally do. This includes subjects such as P.E., although the P.E. department do make the necessary allowances if a child is struggling and appears ill. In all other circumstances P.E. lessons occur as normal in full P.E. kit although the activities may be less strenuous to support pupils that may be fasting.

Over the course of the next month we will also be engaging in fundraising activities. The money raised will be divided between purchasing new books to support a literacy project at Blue Coat Junior School and making a donation to the work of Muslim Global Relief. We would also welcome donations of books for the literacy project, suitable titles can be found at: <https://schoolreadinglist.co.uk/category/reading-lists-for-ks2-school-pupils/>

We hope parents will consider the points raised in this letter and continue to work in partnership with the school as we support our young people through this challenging time, for what we all hope will be very successful outcomes for all of our students across the school at whatever level.

Yours faithfully,



D. Smith
Principal