



MEND's Easy Read Guide
**Nurturing Muslim
Identities in Schools:**

Ramadan

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What is Ramadan?

All able Muslims around the world are required to fast from dawn to sunset during the holy month of Ramadan.

The month of Ramadan is an integral part of the Islamic faith because Muslims are encouraged to work on personal growth through increased acts of worship and consideration of their actions and behaviour in the world. Fasting acts as a reminder of God and our dependence upon Him, thereby encouraging gratitude and atonement for sins, as well as the development of self-control and remembrance of those in need.

Fasting means to abstain from consuming food, drink, swearing, and sexual intimacy from dawn to sunset. Muslims will consume a meal just before dawn known as Suhoor. They will then break their fast at sunset with a meal known as *Iftaar*.

Fasting during Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam and therefore is one of the five core fundamental practices that every mature Muslim must fulfil. When boys (after the age of 12) and girls (after the age of 9) show signs of puberty, they are considered *baligh* or mature.¹ This means the obligation to fast is applicable and a Muslim is only exempt from it under certain conditions, for example if they are elderly, pregnant, sick, or travelling.

The end of Ramadan is marked by the festival of Eid-UI-Fitr; the Festival of Breaking the Fast, during which time, Muslims traditionally spend the morning praying and the afternoon with family and close friends.

1. "[Q-ID0104] at What Age Is One Considered Mature (Baligh) in Islam? – SeekersPath." November 10, 2021, <https://www.seekerspath.co.uk/question-bank/children-upbringing/q-id0104-becoming-an-adult-baligh-in-islam/>



A young woman wearing a black hijab is shown in profile, focused on writing in a notebook with a silver pen. She is seated at a desk. In the background, other students are visible but out of focus, suggesting a classroom or study hall environment. The lighting is soft and natural.

**What does this
mean for Muslim
students?**



In the month of Ramadan, Muslim students may be fasting during school hours. It is important to know that some students may attempt to fast even though it is not required of them. It is a personal choice but it should be done in consideration of one's health.

Schools and its staff members may anticipate their students to have different levels of productivity throughout the day, may appear more fatigued, and may find it more difficult to concentrate or participate in energetic activities, such as sports.

Students may also wish to spend time during their breaks in prayer or reading the Qur'an, so they benefit from access to quiet spaces to contemplate and pray.

A woman wearing a black hijab, a white face mask, and large headphones is seated at a desk. She has her eyes closed and is resting her head on her right hand, which is holding a pen. The background is a classroom with a bulletin board displaying various papers and a blurred figure of another person in the foreground.

**Why is facilitating
Ramadan in schools
important?**

Facilitating Ramadan in schools is simple to achieve and has wide-reaching benefits for students and the school environment.


Supporting this practice allows Muslim students to develop their religious identities with confidence and feel secure in their positions as members of society. This is particularly important due to the Islamophobia that many Muslim students face throughout their lives.

Islamophobic and racist bullying in schools still remains an endemic problem. Following terror attacks in London and Manchester Arena in May 2017, Childline recorded a sharp increase in calls from children as young as nine, who reported being called terrorists and enduring abuse and threats of violence. Meanwhile, they also noted that girls who wear the hijab had frequently been victimised for their religious dress, with some expressing a desire to self-harm as a result of the cruel treatment they had received.²

2. “[Q-ID0104] at What Age Is One Considered Mature (Baligh) in Islam? – SeekersPath.” November 10, 2021, <https://www.seekerspath.co.uk/question-bank/children-upbringing/q-id0104-becoming-an-adult-baligh-in-islam/>



Encouraging and normalising expressions of religious identity within school environments counters the underlying misunderstanding that fuel racially and religiously motivated bullying. Supporting religious, cultural, and ethnic identities, therefore, nurtures understanding across the whole student body and prepares young people for life in a pluralistic society.

A photograph of a classroom setting, slightly blurred and dimmed. In the foreground, a wooden desk holds a stack of four books. A blue backpack is hanging on the back of a green metal chair. The background shows other desks and chairs, and a whiteboard on the wall.

What are the legal responsibilities of schools?

The Equality Act 2010 is designed to protect the rights of individuals and ensure equality of opportunity for everyone, thus promoting a fair and equal society.

The Act covers nine protected characteristics, one of which is 'religion or belief'.

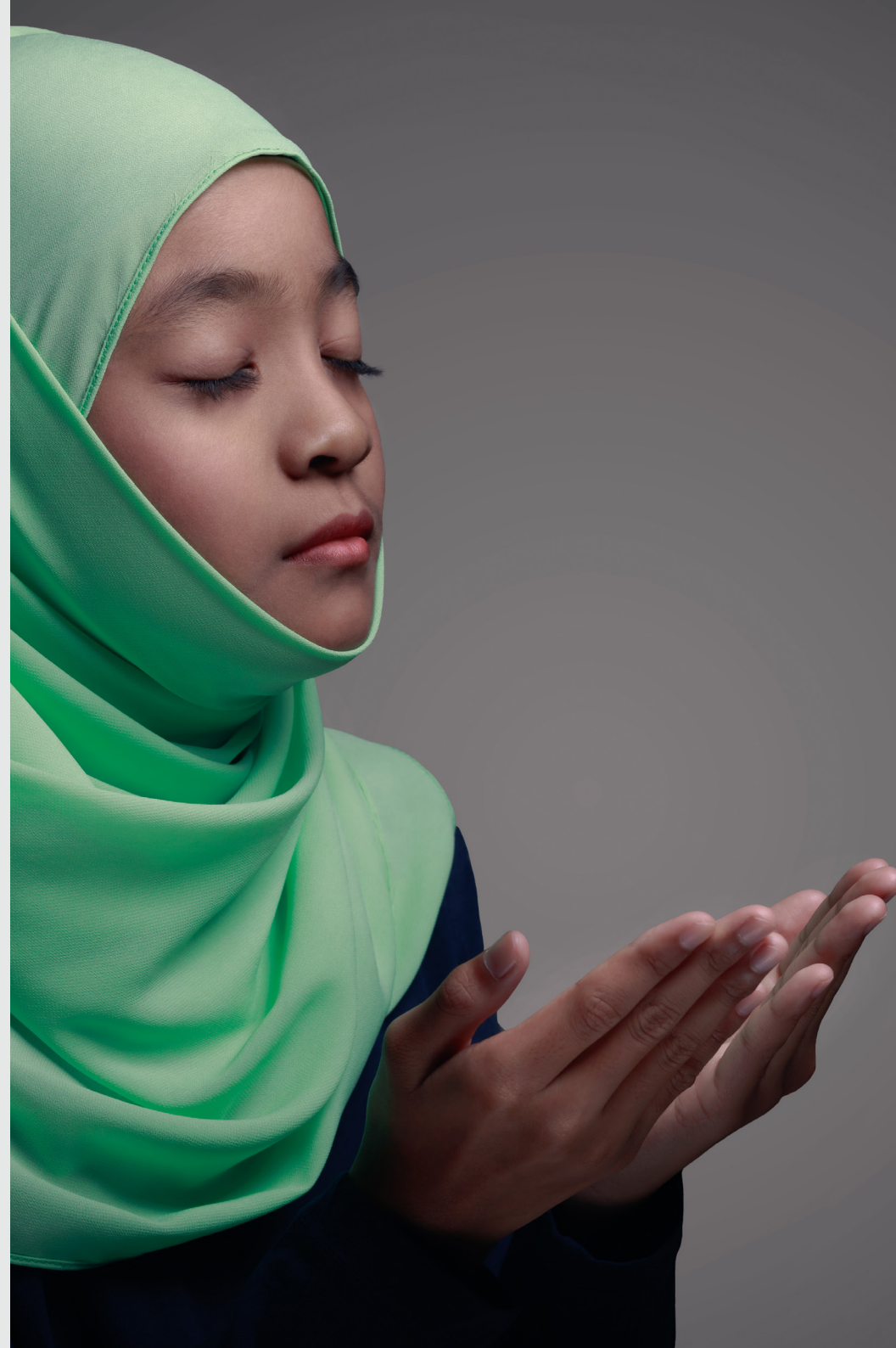
The Public Sector Equality Duty, created by Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, demands that public bodies (such as schools) must give due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and any other unlawful conduct in the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

At the same time, Article 9 of the Human Rights Act 1998 (freedom of thought, belief and religion) protects the right to put your thoughts and beliefs into action, including:

- The right to wear religious clothing,
- And the right to take part in religious worship.

As public bodies, schools must respect and protect these human rights.





**What does this
mean for schools?**

In other words, schools must always consider how their policies or decisions impact people who are protected under the Equality Act.

The Department for Education released advice for school leaders, school staff, governing bodies, and local authorities on how best to fulfil the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Specifically, they state that one of the ways to advance ‘equality of opportunity’ is to meet the needs of people who have a particular characteristic, for example “enabling Muslim pupils to pray at prescribed times”.³

Simple accommodations, such as providing Halal meat, are therefore important steps in fulfilling this Public Sector Equality Duty as they support students to fully engage with public life through encouraging confidence in their identity and sense of belonging.

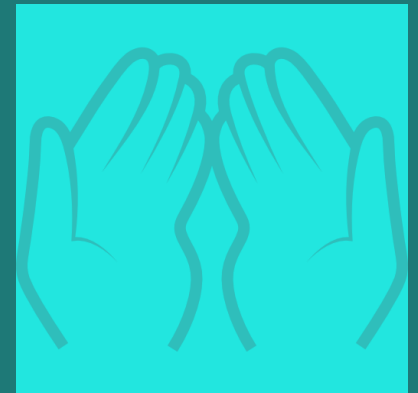
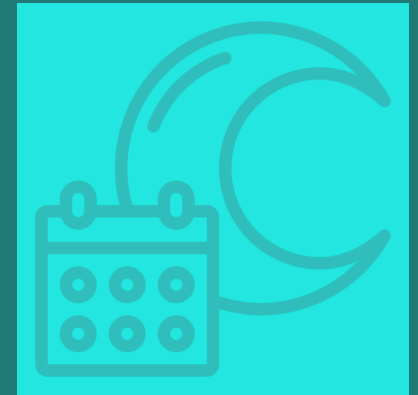
3. Department for Education, “Equality Act 2010: Advice for Schools,” GOV.UK, June 28, 2018, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>



**How do we put
this into practice?**

Schools and staff should anticipate varying levels of concentration and productivity throughout the day. A few reasonable steps will help accommodate Muslim students in the month of Ramadan and will have a long-lasting impact on their self-development:

- **Prayer:** Muslim students may seek a space to perform their daily and Friday congregational prayers or read the Qur'an during their breaks. Providing a multi-faith space for students of all faiths benefits students not only during Ramadan, but all year round. For more information on the benefits and logistics of providing prayer spaces read MEND's Easy Read Guide on Prayer [here](#).
- **Recognising strenuous activities:** Due to levels of fatigue, consider providing adjustments to encourage less active sessions throughout the day. For example, giving students the option of working on theory during PE lessons instead of sports participation.



- **Avoiding activities late in the evenings:** Keeping students after school may collide with prescribed prayer or with the time of breaking their fast. Schools should consider excusing students from taking part in after-school activities during this time.
- **Allowing students time to break their fast:** When Ramadan occurs during winter months, the days are much shorter and the time for students to break their fast may occur during school hours. Thus, schools should encourage students to consume a small snack and drink to break their fast and replenish themselves as soon as they can.
- **Eid celebrations:** To mark the end of Ramadan, Muslim pupils may seek a day off from school to celebrate Eid with family and friends. According to Government guidelines, schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance.⁴



4. Department of Education, "School attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities", Gov.uk, November 15, 2021, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1039223/School_attendance_guidance_for_2021_to_2022_academic_year.pdf


A young woman wearing a light-colored hijab and a matching long-sleeved top is looking down at a dark book she is holding. She has a focused expression. In the background, two other students are visible but out of focus: one wearing a dark hijab and sunglasses, and another with blonde hair. The entire image has a blue tint.

**My school doesn't
accommodate students
fasting. What can I do?**

- Read the school's policies, procedures, and guidelines which are usually published on the governance section of their website.
- Speak to the headteacher.

Discuss with them:

- The benefits of Ramadan,
- Why it is important to you/ your child,
- What the law says,
- What their current policies and procedures state,
- How they can facilitate Muslim students during Ramadan.

The image features two glass bowls filled with dates. The bowl on the left contains light brown, dried dates, while the bowl on the right contains dark purple, pitted dates. In the foreground, several strands of prayer beads (tasbeeh) are visible, including a blue one and a white one. The background is a solid, deep purple color.

I have spoken to my school, but they haven't agreed to support fasting and religious observance during Ramadan. What can I do?

At any time during the process, you can contact the **Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU)**.

The IRU was founded in response to rising anti-Muslim attacks across Europe and a growing tide of anti-Muslim sentiment. The IRU offers a platform to report and share their experiences and serves as a source of free advice, support, and referral services.

The IRU serves three main functions:

1. Data collection and monitoring,
2. The provision of free legal support and police liaison,
3. The provision of basic emotional support and signposting to further professional sources of emotional support if required.

Find out more and contact the IRU at **www.theiru.org.uk**

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