



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

# Ramadan

[www.mend.org.uk](http://www.mend.org.uk)

**mend**





# 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 and a white face mask is seated in a classroom. She is wearing large black headphones and has her right hand resting on her forehead, holding a pen. In the background, another student is visible, and a bulletin board with various papers is on the wall.

**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.<sup>2</sup>

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 with a desk and a blue backpack. On the desk, there is a stack of books. The background shows other desks and chairs in a classroom setting. The text "What are the legal responsibilities of schools?" is overlaid on the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

# 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'.

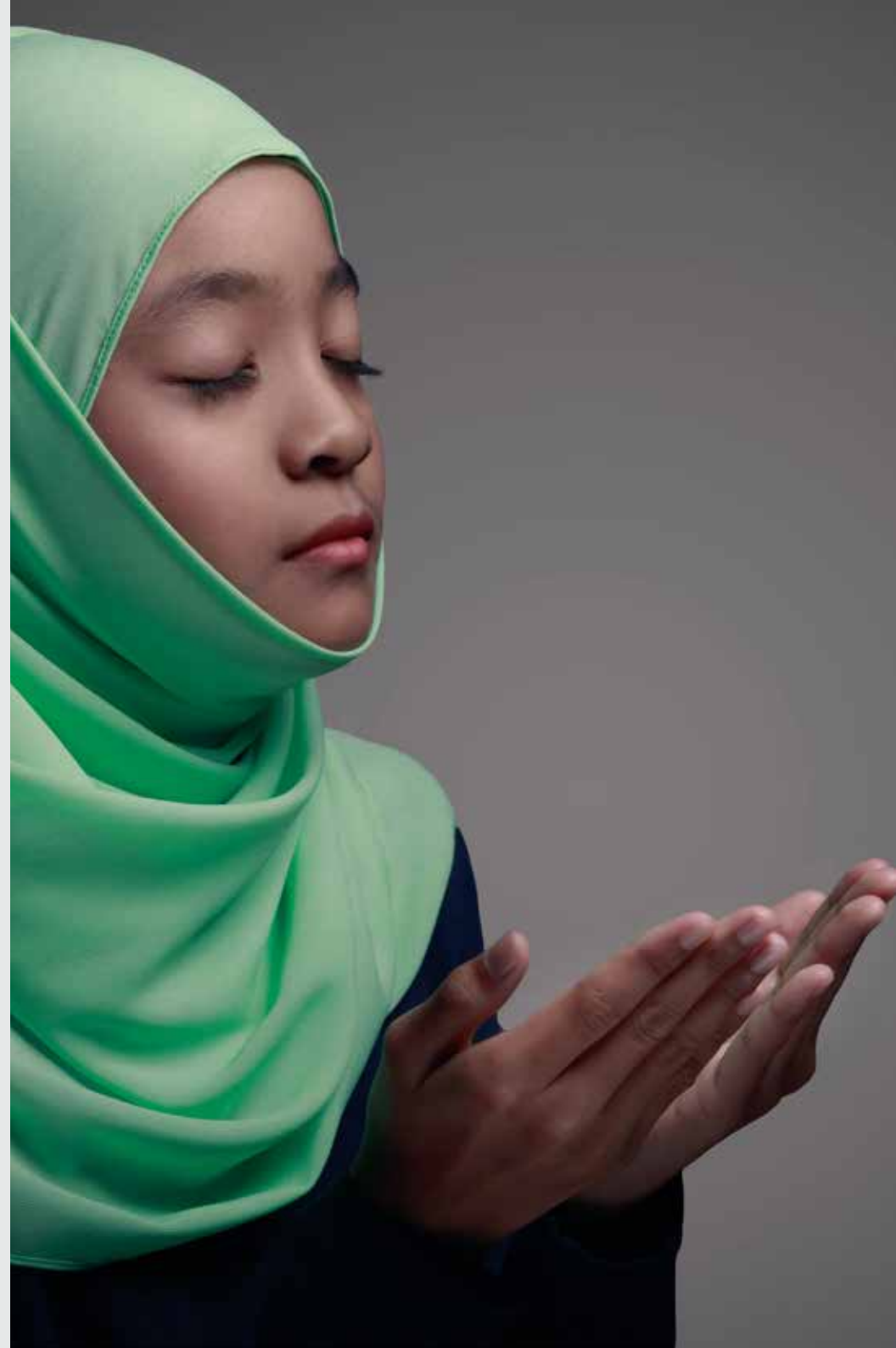
The Public Sector Equality Duty, created by Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, demands that public bodies (such as schools) must give due regard to the need to:

- 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.





A young girl wearing a light blue hijab is focused on writing in a notebook. She is in a classroom setting, with other students visible in the background, also working at their desks. The image has a soft, slightly blurred background, emphasizing the girl in the foreground.

**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”.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup>



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](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 the central figure. She is looking down at a dark-colored book she is holding with both hands. She has a slight smile on her face. In the background, two other students are visible but out of focus. One is a young man in a white hijab, and the other is a young woman with blonde hair. They appear to be in an outdoor setting with trees and foliage. The entire image has a semi-transparent dark blue overlay.


**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.



A photograph of two woven bowls filled with dates, one light brown and one dark brown, resting on a wooden surface. Several strands of prayer beads, including blue, white, and orange ones, are draped across the scene. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple rectangle.

**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 Islamophobia Response Unit (IRU), is a charity dedicated to supporting victims of Islamophobia. It was founded in response to rising anti-Muslim attacks, and the growing tide of anti-Muslim sentiment, across the United Kingdom. This service is for anyone who suffers or has suffered, an incident of hate crime or discrimination as a result of their Muslim faith (or perceived Muslim faith). The IRU offers a platform for victims of Islamophobic hate crime and discrimination to confidentially report and share their experiences and serves as a source for free legal assistance.



**IRU** | ISLAMOPHOBIA  
RESPONSE UNIT

Find out more and contact the IRU  
at [www.theiru.org.uk](http://www.theiru.org.uk)

0203 904 6555 | [info@theiru.org.uk](mailto:info@theiru.org.uk)



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