



27th April 2018

Re: External Examinations and Ramadan

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are about to enter the crucial period of examinations. We know this is a highly pressured period and it is particularly so this year as students will be sitting longer examinations than they have previously done, some up to 3 hours in duration. It is essential we do all we can to prepare them and support them over the coming months not just academically but in caring for their physical, mental and emotional well-being.

Over the weeks leading up to the examinations, students will receive advice on how to best cope with the pressures to which they will undoubtedly be subjected. This will include revision strategies, advice on healthy eating and getting the balance between study and relaxation.

For some members of our community who are Muslims, there is the additional pressure of managing the month of Ramadan which falls during the exam period. This is because part of Ramadan is fasting, the third of Five Pillars (fundamental religious duties) of Islam.

Over the last couple of years, concerns have been raised across the educational and religious communities about fasting during Ramadan and examination performance and the potential impact on young people in terms of their 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 as 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, establishing a healthier life style and better habits, there can be less desirable consequences for some people. The consequences may be tiredness, low energy, dehydration, reduced focus, memory and concentration issues. It is worth noting that these do not only pertain to Muslim students but to all students where the balances are out of kilter.

Kings Norton Girls' School welcomes the work and advice of the Association of School and College Leaders in conjunction with a number of Imams, Islamic scholars, experts and Muslim chaplains working with the educational sector published in April 2016. This is available on our web site and we have taken account of this in the advice below.

As a school we will ensure the following:

- Safeguarding – Kings Norton Girls' School has 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 we will ask the child whether they are fasting and advise them to terminate the fast immediately by drinking some water; this action is accommodated with Islamic rulings around fasting. Additionally, the parents of the students will be contacted and advised of the School's actions.
- For those doing exams we will provide, in non-contact time, a quiet place to rest / work and have their lunch.

Opening a World of Opportunities



As parents/carers, in coming to a decision about how to balance the duties of Ramadan with study we ask that you give careful consideration to the following:

You and your child might consider exercising this flexibility which 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 affected.

Ensuring your child is well prepared, ready and understands the likely effects on their bodies during fasting and that they manage these challenges well, by:

- Eating well, with a balanced meal (plenty of slow release energy foods) when breaking the fast and during the pre-dawn meal. Consider the potential impact of family gatherings for evening meals on nights prior to examinations.
- Managing sleep effectively;
- Getting plenty of rest between examinations;
- Avoiding over-exertion during the day, especially if the weather is particularly warm;
- Planning ahead, in terms of organising their equipment and time, to avoid rushing around

If managed well, a student's health should not be at risk due to fasting, rather, it can be of a health benefit, as described in the Department of Health guidance, "Healthy Ramadan". We understand that that if a student is feeling unwell or is ill they are permitted to break the fast.

If your child will be fasting during Ramadan, could you please notify the tutor by Friday 4th May so that we can take this into account in our plans to support them. This can be done via the planner, word of mouth, or a short note.

Kings Norton Girls' School is an inclusive school, embracing all aspects of the diversity of the community it serves. The wellbeing of our students is paramount and at the same time we want them to achieve the best they possibly can in all aspects of their work including external examinations.

We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with the parents at this crucial and challenging time so we can best support our students to gain the best possible outcomes for their future success.

Yours sincerely,

Ms G. Fox
Headteacher