

Information sheet for pupils

What is Ramadan and fasting?

Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic calendar celebrated by the world's 1.5 billion Muslims. During this month, healthy Muslim adults fast. This involves refraining from all forms of food and drink from dawn to sunset. Children are also encouraged to take part in fasting for shorter periods.

Fasting helps Muslims develop a closer bond with Allah (God) and teaches them self-control, discipline and gratitude. It helps them remember and help those less fortunate than themselves. Fasting also involves Muslims reflecting on their behaviour, controlling their anger, speaking kindly to one another and helping each other. This helps develop a greater sense of community.

What does a typical day in the life of a Muslim in Ramadan entail?

While fasting, Muslims go about their normal daily routine. Adults go to work, children go to school. In addition they will also:

- Wake up just before the morning prayer and have an a pre-dawn snack/ early breakfast called suhoor.
- Break their fast at sunset. This is called iftar. It is common practice to break the fast with dates and water followed by some food. Muslims tend to break the fast with families and friends. They invite each other to their house or congregate in the mosque at iftar time. This helps to develop a greater sense of community.
- Perform extra prayers. Muslims pray to Allah (God) five times a day. In Ramadan they also perform a special night prayer called taraweeh either in the mosque or at home.

The Qur'an consists of 30 chapters, and each night one chapter is read during taraweeh. In this way the whole Qur'an is completed.

Muslims also spend more time during the day reading the Qur'an and reflecting on the words of Allah (God).

How do Muslims celebrate the end of Ramadan?

At the end of Ramadan, Muslims all over the world celebrate the holiday of Eid al-Fitr. The holiday begins with Muslims putting on their new clothes and going to the Eid congregation/prayer. Before the prayer Muslims give a certain charity called Zakat al-Fitr to help the poor so that everyone can enjoy the blessings of Eid. After the prayer, people greet each other with hugs and handshakes, saying Eid Mubarak (May you have a blessed Eid). The children receive gifts. After the congregation, Muslims visit each other at their homes and hold lunches or dinners for family and friends.