Policy Statement Regarding Pupil Fasting

For a variety of reasons, at certain times some individuals or communities may choose to have a period of fasting. Within our school community, this is predominantly during the month of Ramadan. At Southfield we value our diverse community and respect the religious and cultural practices and expectations of all groups and individuals. We promote the British value of tolerance and respect for the beliefs of others and deepen this through our values education programme where we explore the concept of respect further and celebrate the diversity of our community working in harmony together.

It is understood that in Islam fasting becomes obligatory during Ramadan when a healthy and able Muslim reaches the age of puberty. No meal or drink is allowed during the fasting period from dawn to dusk. We recognise that it is very important for many Muslim families that their children begin participating in the practice of fasting at an early age.

As fasting is a requirement on all Muslims who have reached puberty and are healthy, it is understood that some primary school age children will be fasting. In Islam, fasting is not obligatory for children. In some families, children may not fast for the full month, or for full days. Some children fast only on weekends. We are also aware that younger children who are not fasting will still be experiencing very different family routines and may well become more tired or excitable in school during this time. Those pupils who are fasting may become very tired and thirsty during the school day.

At Southfield we feel strongly that children who have not yet reached puberty but want to experience fasting should do so at weekends or during the holidays. The school day places considerable mental and physical demands on children. If children are able to experience fasting when they are not at school all day, they will be able to have appropriate rest and support.

With rights come responsibilities, so when parents make a decision to allow their child to fast during the school day, it is the responsibility of the parents to ensure that the health and well-being of their child is protected by ensuring an adequate rest period during the lunch break. With this in mind, for those older children who have already reached puberty and want to fast as a result, we ask that the below guidance is followed so we can ensure the health and safety and the well-being of the fasting child.

Aims and Objectives:
- To provide a safe environment for children who wish to fast.
- To ensure proper care of children is maintained and keep parents informed if their child is unwell.
- To further develop understanding of the different beliefs held by the school population.

**Process:**
- All parents must inform the school in writing if they wish their child to fast.
- All children who are fasting will be expected to go home at lunchtimes, collected by an authorised adult. (Please note: We are not able to provide a separate room or separate supervision for children who are fasting so this measure ensures that children are able to have a rest period during the lunchtime rather than being outside in potentially hot weather without any refreshment, or having to go into the dinner hall with their classmates in the event of rain.)
- If a child says that they are fasting, but the school has not received a permission slip from their parent, they will be dealt with in a respectful manner; however the child will not be allowed to miss lunch.
- Children who are fasting should avoid over-exerting themselves physically.
- Children will be expected to continue participating in PE lessons but we will monitor them closely and ensure they do not over-exert themselves.
- If fasting occurs during school testing periods (i.e. SATs), care will be taken to ensure that any fasting children take their tests as soon as possible in the mornings so that children are at their most alert. We would encourage children not fast during test periods.
- As an integral part of the curriculum in the school, RE lessons, values lessons and assemblies will be held during the school year to create an understanding of different faiths and beliefs.
- All children that fast should bring an emergency snack with them to school daily. This should be something healthy in accordance with our Food Policy.
- In the rare circumstances of a child becoming distressed or unwell when he or she is fasting, the school will encourage the child to break their fast by eating their emergency snack or by providing them with a snack from school and having a drink of water. The school will also contact the emergency contact provided by their parent or carer.
- If a child has a medical condition that would be complicated by fasting, e.g. diabetes, the child will not be permitted to fast at school as we cannot ensure their safety and wellbeing.

**Health and Safety**
- Parents must inform the school in writing if their child is fasting and to inform school of the arrangements for collection at lunchtime.
- The school will inform parents immediately if their child becomes unwell.
- Children who fast should conserve their energy and avoid over-exerting themselves.

**Inclusion**
- There is mutual co-operation between the parents of children who are fasting and the school.
- All children in the school are encouraged to feel positive about their family, their culture and their faith.
- The school will actively communicate with the school community regarding Ramadan and its importance in the Islamic calendar.
- A whole school celebration of Eid will be planned into the school calendar so that all pupils may share in this important celebration with their friends.