

Department of Children’s Services

**Aiming High for Children**

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# Guidance for Schools on Eid-Ul-Fitr 2016

### Introduction

Muslims in the UK began fasting in the month of Ramdhan on either Monday 6th or Tuesday 7th June this year. This means Muslim families across the country may celebrate Eid on different days to mark the end of the month of Ramadhan. It is likely that families will celebrate on Wednesday 6th and Thursday 7th July 2016. The exact date for Eid will not be announced officially until the night before, once a siting of the new moon has occurred.

Some schools have already made their own arrangements through consulting parents and/or allocating occasional day/s to acknowledge this Muslim festival. However, those schools that have not made any arrangements may find the following guidance useful.

**Guidance**

1. **General.** Bradford Council is keen to ensure children and adults from different faith backgrounds are able to celebrate religious festivals at the appropriate time they occur throughout the school year. Some schools with a majority of Muslim children have already acknowledged this through planning their occasional days to coincide with its local community needs. It’s useful if schools can apply some degree of flexibility to setting these dates, as it is difficult to pinpoint the exact day people will celebrate Eid until nearer the actual date. Planning and decisions like these, taken by the school’s governing body and through consultation with parents, have meant that both Muslim children and adults are able to celebrate this important event with minimum disruption to children’s education during the school year.
2. **Children.** As part of their educational entitlement children have a total of 190 days in the school year. Bradford Council has been successful in working with schools to improve attendance levels and raise levels of attainment which we must together sustain. Where time-off for a child is not planned properly, additional days can be lost causing disruption to the school and reducing their entitlement to education. This can also have a further detrimental impact on attendance and attainment levels.
3. **Staff.** In Bradford, teachers can request time off to celebrate a religious festival. Teachers may take up to three days’ paid leave in a year for such purposes. Bradford Council policy is that all staff employed by governing bodies based in school on term time contracts should be afforded the same opportunity. All such requests must be made through the Head teacher

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1. **Schools.** In those schools where the School's Governing Body is not the actual employer, the Governing Body exercises staffing responsibilities and is required to make the day to day decisions in the context of its school and local school community. In the case of voluntary aided and foundation schools as well as Academies and Free Schools, the planning of the school year, occasional and training days are all decisions for the Governing Body to take along with the Head teacher in consultation with staff and parents. The Council is responsible for fixing dates of terms and holidays for all other categories of schools but permits their governing bodies to determine their own school training and occasional days.
2. **Legal.** Relevant legislation in this area are namely the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010. Employers need to be mindful that they attach the appropriate level of importance to an employee’s request for consideration of their religious beliefs or practices. All schools have different circumstances and therefore must use their discretion to make informed decisions about the needs of their children and staff.

### Bradford Council’s Recommendations:

1. That Head teachers and governing bodies are sympathetic to the needs of children and staff from different religious and faith backgrounds and take seriously their responsibilities in ensuring equality of opportunity in employment and service delivery.

2. That Head teachers and governing bodies, when planning the school holidays and training days, consider the religious and cultural needs of their children, staff and local school community.

3. That, with of Eid Ul-Fitr falling around 6th July 2016 Schools gives serious consideration to any requests for time off. It is therefore recommended that any request made by parents for their children’s absence should be treated as an authorised absence for religious or cultural observance.

**N.B. Bradford Council recommends that all children, regardless of their faith are afforded up to 3 days authorised absence per academic year for religious and cultural observance.**

4. Any requests for leave by staff should be made directly to the Head teacher and consideration given with regard to their conditions of service.

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### Eid Ul-Fitr Background

The month of Ramadhan ends with the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr. The month begins with the sighting of the new moon and Eid celebrations commence with the sighting of the next new moon one month later. Attempts to sight the new moon are observed all over the world and the exact date for the festival depends upon whether one follows local moon sighting in the UK or local announcements based on moon sighting in Saudi Arabia. This is the reason why Muslim communities in West Yorkshire are not always able to agree in advance on one date for Eid.