



Religious Studies and Philosophy Department Curriculum Statement

Intent: The Religious Studies and Philosophy Department seeks to enable all learners to acquire core knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of the religions and worldviews which not only shape their history and culture but which guide their own development. At the same time it intends to empower learners by enhancing their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development and encouraging them to embrace all four strands of the Fundamental British Values. Learners are encouraged to realise that spirituality is an intrinsic aspect of their humanity, and that an understanding of religion is intrinsic to community cohesion. Learners in all Key Stages are encouraged and assisted to engage in their own search for meaning and value for life as they learn both about and from religion. In so doing, they will be able to explore questions concerning value and meaning whilst skilfully examining different approaches to those questions from religious and non-religious stances. We understand the importance of providing a safe, respectful environment in which these questions can be explored and where each learner's voice can be heard.

Learners will examine current beliefs and attitudes of the major world faiths and of Humanists, and will understand how teachings affect moral outlooks and therefore practices. It is intended that learners will grow to engage with the world, in terms of gaining a greater social conscience and better understanding of those around them - in the workplace and wider society, besides also developing their own ability to think. The intention is that learners are able to empathise, produce reasoned responses which evaluate with reference to relevant evidence, consider different points of view, use logical chains of reason, distinguish between opinion, belief and fact, and make the association between belief and practice in the lives of religious adherents. At the heart of this desire to inspire learners lies our understanding of the importance for them to foster a positive attitude towards themselves and others, and awareness of both the needs of others and their individual liberty to hold beliefs different from their own. By actively teaching Religious Studies through rigorous academic study within every year group, we hope to demonstrate the progress learners make when investigating relevant questions, interpreting religious texts, reflecting thoughtfully on ultimate questions, and considering perspectives other than their own.

Implementation: In every Year group learners will encounter a range of religious teachings and practices that draw on the rich, diverse heritage of Britain. This will include to a larger extent Judaeo-Christian teachings but will also cover Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism and Humanism, and will thus provide learners with a developed understanding of a broad range of widely held beliefs. Learners will develop knowledge and understanding of the faiths surrounding them and so will be provided with an essential backcloth for future citizens of the world. This will include the exploration of teachings and practices plus philosophical and ethical studies, recognising the central importance of understanding others as well as celebrating diversity, encouraging tolerance, and accumulating knowledge that promotes cultural capital. Learners will also explore a range of religious teachings from the faiths studied, developing their analytical and evaluative skills to demonstrate in-depth understanding of how beliefs inform practices.

Equally important is the fostering of debating skills that accompany learners' sympathetic appreciation of the beliefs of others around them. We seek to create learners who are tolerant yet able to stand up for justice, plus confident with working with others whilst at the same time able to work independently with the strength to support their own beliefs. This is made possible by careful, consistent curation of a safe learning environment where learners can explore views on topics which they may otherwise have not wished to have brought to the fore. Learners are encouraged to maintain curiosity, interest and enjoyment in their study of religion through the stimulating teaching methods employed – such as open questions, opportunities to question and challenge opinions sensitively, modelling of thinking / writing skills, provision of opportunities to extend ideas and suggest hypotheses, use of a variety of resources and recognition of the learners' sense of personal and cultural identity.



Writing skills are an important part of Religious Studies, especially since they will be formally assessed through their written communication through the year, and also the summative assessment at the end of KS4 and KS5 will also be measured through the learners' written communication. Learners will be supported from word, through to sentence, paragraph and whole text level. Literacy will be developed through key terms glossaries and through spelling logs, and learners are encouraged to be courageous with utilising new terms. We build on the prior learning of learners to develop a firm knowledge and skill foundation in written communication. By utilising their expert subject knowledge, teachers intend to inspire learners not just to implement technical accuracy in their writing, but also to engender attitudes of fairness, respect, tolerance, self-awareness and enquiry in their articulation as they explore different beliefs and practices, and seek to evaluate them. Teaching methods intend to suit all learning styles and make full use of the rich cultural and social background of each learner, as such, learners can better understand the place of morality, spirituality and culture in their whole lives, as well as in their academic study. Learning in Religious Studies is sequential thus assisting students to commit their learning to their long-term memory. To achieve this teachers recap and revisit previous work where required. Planning of lessons builds upon previous knowledge and skills gained by students. Learning becomes progressively challenging and leads to student confidence and capability when facing regular checkpoint assessments and examinations to measure progress.

Each year group explores different ultimate questions that are both explicitly covered as topics and also embedded into sessions through careful planning. Topics at KS3 and in KS4 Statutory Religious Education make links to the 'Religious Questions' in the Shropshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2019, and at KS4 they are drawn from the GCSE specification and those at KS5 are drawn from the A Level specifications. The foundation programmes at KS3 cover content relevant to our students – taking into account issues that are of current interest and topics relating to the age / stage of the students and our location. Learning at KS3 prepares students with the terminology, key skills and relevant foundational knowledge for our statutory Religious Education programme and for their optional study of GCSE Religious Studies at KS4, and taking into account that their KS1 and KS2 learning will have differed greatly in different primary schools. Teaching serves to make learners confident when confronted with new concepts, equipping them with the positive mind-set and self-belief to use their newly discovered knowledge across their learning. Regular assessment of knowledge and skills identifies priorities for intervention or further focus, with Session 3 used for learners in need of supplementary support, or to encourage learners to further extend their learning, for example through Ethical Debating or through the Bar Mock Trial / mooted competitions. This ensures that learners possess a steady foundation on which to base their summative examinations in Religious Studies as well as to prepare them for life in modern Britain.

Teachers of Religious Studies access appropriate professional development and participate in lesson observations, learning walks, scrutiny of the students' books and conversations with students to ensure that they are successfully implementing the requirements of the Shropshire Agreed Syllabus and the specification.

Impact : Outcomes within the Religious Studies and Philosophy Department are among the best in the school, and stand out against national comparison in terms of both attainment and progress. Uptake on courses at GCSE and Sixth Form is pleasing, with some learners pursuing higher education studies in the field and related areas such as Law.

Enrichment groups have been established to cultivate a wider interest in the subject. The Bar Mock Trial competition in KS4 and KS5, and the Ethical Debating group in Sixth Form demonstrate that staff strive to provide the extra impetus for learners to pursue their passions and to maximise their progress. We also use visits to places of worship, museums and other areas of regional and national interest to contextualise and bring alive learning for learners. The empathy and tolerance of our learners is evidenced in their positive attitudes in class and around the School as well as in the voluntary work and charitable fundraising which many of them pursue.