



Religious Studies Department Curriculum Statement

Intent

The Religious Studies Department curriculum is challenging and knowledge rich because we seek to empower all learners to acquire knowledge of world faiths, and develop their understanding and awareness of the beliefs, values and traditions of individuals, communities and cultures and consider how these events have shaped the lives of the people and communities in which we live.

Our curriculum is creative and engaging because we enable students to explore ultimate questions about life and human existence and have the opportunity to reflect on the awe and wonder of the world in which we live.

Our curriculum is meaningful and purposeful because we equip students with the skills that allows them to develop respect and tolerance of others irrespective of the differences in beliefs, values, and culture so that they can take their place in the world with confidence and success. We aim to inspire and motivate students to make a positive difference in the lives of those around them by giving learners confidence to be courageous advocates for those who suffer injustice and discrimination.

Implementation

Across all key stages, lessons are planned and delivered in a variety of ways ensuring that all learners can access and participate in lessons. Interactive, practical activities encourage learners to discuss their ideas and extend their understanding of difficult concepts and challenging questions. Lessons are well- sequenced to give learners the knowledge needed to understand new topics.

Topics at KS3 and in KS4 Statutory RE make links to the 'Religious Questions' in the Shropshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2019. The GCSE group at KS4 follow the AQA full course and complete an in-depth study of Christianity and Judaism for paper one and four topics for our Thematic elements of the course for paper two.

At KS5, learners follow the OCR A Level in Religious Studies (H573) component. Through the development of knowledge and understanding learners are equipped with the skills appropriate to a specialist study of religion. In delivering the three components for the course, Philosophy of Religion, Religion and Ethics and Development in Christian Thought, lessons are planned to develop an understanding and appreciation of religious thought and its contribution to individuals, communities, and societies.

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. 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 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. We also use visiting speakers from groups and organisations as well as visits to places of worship, museums, and other areas of regional and national interest to contextualise and bring learning alive 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.

Impact of COVID-19

The onset and continuation of the global Covid-19 pandemic presented some peculiar challenges and significant opportunities to adapt the approaches to teaching and learning in the Religious Studies department. During the first lockdown remote learning strategies were quickly implemented to address the initial learning needs of the students. Booklets and handouts were created and made electronically available for easy access to all students. Staff underwent CPD in the use of some new learning technologies, including developing their skills in using pre-recorded and live material for lessons.

When students returned to school on full time basis, assessments were carried out and parts of the curriculum revisited to consolidate the learning which had taken place during lockdown in addition to addressing the misconceptions and knowledge gaps identified to ensure coverage was not superficial.

By the second lockdown, in January, staff had gained confidence in the use of remote learning technologies and this allowed the department the opportunity to have a blended approach to learning. The RS and Philosophy department adapted and restructured its curriculum plan in specific year groups to ensure that topics that were covered could best be delivered without face-to-face teaching. For example, teaching a topic over two sessions instead of one. Using this approach allowed students in KS3 in particular to gain a deeper understanding, not just of the content but also of the breath of the topic. Other learning technologies such as Kahoot, Seneca and Goggle forms for short sharp quizzes to check student understanding and progress were used to inform planning for subsequent lessons.

At KS4 and KS5, students had an online lesson every week and opportunities to get further support in addition to the online lessons were also made available to students.

In dealing with the longer-term challenges posed by the pandemic, the RS department endeavours to pursue opportunities to support students in line with the Thomas Telford's 'Roadmap to recovery'. We will continue to explore opportunities, avenues and strategies to support students to boost students' experiences through a diverse and winsome curriculum and create positive opportunities for students to talk about and share their experiences and feelings.

Teaching will address the numerous PHSE priorities of the school, and will provide situations for students to re-establish peer relationships, developing confidence and a renewed sense of belonging in the school.

With the importance of academic and personal development at the heart of teaching RS, the department will play its vital role in promoting social cohesion and the virtues of respect and empathy, which are important in our diverse society and especially after the significant period disruption we have had.