



Religious Studies Curriculum

September
2019

Intent

Religious Studies at Chosen Hill intends to develop in students three key things:

- excellent skills in independent, analytical thinking;
- an appreciation of philosophical and ethical thinking;
- an appreciation of the broad religious and cultural traditions that help shape society.

“Religion is a major source of inspiration, meaning, and controversy in human culture, informing history, politics, economics, art, and literature. It rivals trade as a major trans-national force across the globe.”

Religious Studies plays a unique role in placing students learning within a broad cultural context.

Students encounter a rich and challenging curriculum which places a significant emphasis on the development of key transferable skills as well as giving students a fascinating overview of religious and non-religious beliefs and ideas that engage students of any faith or of none. The way religions and cultures intertwine to help create the complex social world in which we live can best be understood through exploring the development of this complex web of beliefs and ideas.

Through studying Religious Studies students come to better understand the world in which we live, developing the ability to approach complex issues such as Climate Change through a broad religious and cultural understanding as well as a reasoned application of analytical thinking. Developing a sensitivity and understanding of different people and their different beliefs ideas and opinions allows students to engage with complex practical and philosophical issues.

Implementation

The Religious Studies curriculum is planned over two years in the Foundation phase, with a progression of skills and knowledge forming the central core of the curriculum. Over the course of the two year phase, the students cover eight topics, with four covered each year. RS is timetabled for two lessons a fortnight. Each Unit has a Scheme of Learning that identifies the key learning objectives of the unit, including the key skills developed through the lessons. The Schemes of Learning link to the Locally Agreed Syllabus in Religious Education for Gloucestershire.

Each unit of work is broken down into individual lessons that focus on key knowledge and skills. Students undertake a range of activities with a clear outcome for the lesson, with support in place to allow all students to reach the same goal, regardless of individual starting positions. The themes and topics studied in Year 7 and 8 link to key elements of our GCSE Religious Studies course.

At GCSE we follow the OCR Religious Studies course that comprises of areas of study. Paper 1 consists of a detailed study of Christianity, focusing on the key areas of Beliefs, Teachings and Practices. The influence and impact of Christianity on cultural, historical and political history in the UK is a theme throughout. Students study a second faith group for Paper 2 focusing on the same key areas and influences. Paper 1 and 2 make up 50% of the GCSE. Paper 3 has as its focus ‘Religion, Philosophy and Ethics in the modern world’. There are 4 themes in Paper 3: Relationships and Families; the existence of God; Religion, peace and Conflict; dialogue between religious and non-religious beliefs and attitudes. Paper 3 makes up 50% of the overall GCSE. The Religious Studies GCSE allows

students to develop a knowledge and understanding of both religious and non-religious beliefs and teachings, linking these to the experience of life in a modern pluralistic society and global community. It also allows students to develop more advanced skills in the construction of and examination of lines of argument.

At A Level we offer AQA Philosophy. We are one of the only local schools to offer this challenging and intriguing A level. The A level is designed to give students a thorough grounding in key concepts and methods in philosophy. It is a secular (non-religious) A level course, but still picks up on key ideas from the Foundation and Pathways curriculums, including the study of Ethics and of religious concepts. The study of epistemology and philosophy of mind offers fascinating opportunities for students to challenge their thinking, engaging with some of the best minds from the long history of philosophy. Throughout the course students develop advanced skills to help them into higher education or into work.

Assessment

In Years 7 and 8 in Religious Studies, students are given regular feedback on their progress, including progress targets to help in the development of key skills. Each unit of work is formally assessed with grades given and areas for further improvement. Students are also assessed on their home learning. These assessment points provide key data for curriculum monitoring. Within lessons students also get the opportunity to assess their own progress and set themselves targets for improvement, alongside a more formal self-assessment after each unit of work. Students also have regular opportunities to assess other students' work. Students have clear grade targets for the Foundation phase and formal assessments ensure students know what progress they are making towards these targets and how to continue that progression.

At GCSE and A Level students have regular assessments that make use of exam or exam style questions, thus helping students to develop their skills and preparedness for external exams. With regular feedback on exam questions, students are given the opportunity to make improvements following the guidance given. Regular testing also ensures students are retaining key knowledge for exams. Students have regular, more detailed assessment, including mock exams each year. Time is given to allow for detailed responses to feedback and detailed analyses of formal internal examination points. The GCSE and A level courses are formally examined with external exams at the end of the course (after three years at GCSE and after two years at A level). There is no coursework element to these formal external exams at either level.

Home Learning

Home learning is an essential element of Religious Studies. At the Foundation phase students may be working on extended projects that develop areas of study from lessons, as well as helping students with research and presentation skills. They may also have shorter tasks specifically to reinforce learning from lessons. The same principle applies at GCSE, with a clearer focus on regular testing of knowledge and understanding rather than extended project or report work. At GCSE home learning will often be about consolidating learning. A level home learning focuses more on wider reading and preparation for lessons, along with essay practice allowing students to develop their skills while broadening their knowledge and understanding. In general, Foundation lessons will have the equivalent of 30 minutes a week, GCSE lessons 1 hour a week, and A Level lessons 3 hours a week in addition to Directed Study tasks in school. All tasks will be set and monitored through satchel:one (previously called Show My Homework), and where possible will be clearly differentiated to provide meaningful and accessible activities for students. As an additional layer of support, Humanities Faculty staff are available until 4pm on Wednesday afternoons if there are any queries about work that students are struggling to complete at home.

