



Religious Studies Curriculum Intent

Curriculum Vision

At The Bishop of Winchester Academy, Religious Studies is taught as a core academic subject, central to our Christian vision and our commitment to enabling students to "live life to the full." Rooted in our ethos and aligned with the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) agreed syllabus, Religious Studies at the Academy supports high academic expectations, personal development, and a deep understanding of religion and worldviews in the 21st century.

Our curriculum equips students to engage with complex and diverse religious and non-religious worldviews by developing religious literacy, promoting empathy and respect, and encouraging students to explore how belief shapes lives, communities, and global perspectives. Through an enquiry-based approach and a balance of disciplinary lenses, our students learn to approach religion and belief with academic integrity and open-mindedness.

We achieve this vision by developing three interconnected strands of knowledge:

1. Substantive Knowledge

Students gain a broad and deep understanding of a range of religions and worldviews, as outlined in the BCP locally agreed syllabus. This includes the beliefs, practices, and lived experiences of religious and non-religious communities. Through this, students explore how worldviews function as ways of seeing and making sense of the world—both for individuals and societies—promoting understanding, empathy, and respectful engagement.

2. Disciplinary Knowledge

Religious Studies is approached through multiple academic disciplines—such as theology, philosophy, and the human and social sciences—to ensure a rich and well-rounded understanding of religion and belief. Students learn to investigate religion using a range of 'ways of knowing,' recognising that the study of worldviews is complex, dynamic, and shaped by cultural, historical, and interpretative contexts. This helps prevent biased perspectives and equips students to make academically informed judgements on significant and challenging questions.

3. Personal Knowledge

Religious Studies uniquely contributes to students' personal and spiritual development. In exploring a

variety of worldviews, students are encouraged to reflect on their own beliefs and values. This includes the development of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) understanding, British Values, and awareness of their own personal worldview. Our curriculum supports students in becoming discerning, reflective, and respectful individuals who can navigate the complexities of belief and identity in today's world.

Concepts and Skills

Concepts are essential in Religious Studies because they provide the central ideas that help pupils make sense of, interpret, and connect the knowledge they encounter. Without a secure understanding of key concepts, students' experience of Religious Studies risks becoming little more than the accumulation of disconnected facts.

At The Bishop of Winchester Academy, we have identified concepts that underpin the entire RS curriculum. These concepts provide a consistent framework through which students explore religions and worldviews, helping them to build deeper understanding over time and across different units of study. Students at the Academy also develop key skills through three disciplinary approaches: theology, philosophy, and social sciences. These enable them to think critically, explore diverse perspectives, and make informed judgements about religion and belief today.

- Theological skills – e.g. interpreting sacred texts, comparing religious teachings, understanding concepts like God or salvation.
- Philosophical skills – e.g. analysing ethical dilemmas, debating moral issues, asking deep questions about truth, existence, and meaning.
- Social science skills – e.g. examining how religion influences culture, identity, and community, using real-life case studies or data.

In developing these, students also grow in personal knowledge, reflecting on their own beliefs and values, and learning to engage respectfully with those of others.

Vocabulary

Specialist terminology is taught gradually to students from glossaries and word lists which are revisited as new learning is taught. See below for a selection of key terms.

Year 7	Year 9	KS4 (Years 10–11)
Dukkha	'Seven I am statements'	Trinity
Asceticism	Beatitudes	Nicene Creed
Enlightenment	Pharisees	Creation
Eightfold Path	Sadducees	Creator
Sangha	Liberator	Benevolent
Wesak	Hypostatic Union	Omnipotent
Reincarnation	Homousious	Eternal
Funeral rite	Word	Dominion
Karma	Messiah	Stewardship
Moksha	Jewish Messiah	Incarnation
Samsara	Prophet	Divine Word
The Wheel of Life	Religious experience	Paschal Mystery
Immortality	Mecca	Resurrection
Old and New Testament	Medina	Redemption
Omnipotent	Jibril	Salvation
Omnibenevolent	Angel	Grace
The Fall	Hajira	Judgment
Exile	Night of Power	Heaven
Messiah	Battle of Badr	Hell
	Miracle	Purgatory
Year 8	Allah	Original Sin
Original Sin	Kabba	Free Will

Resurrection	Monotheism	Moral Evil
Incarnation	Polytheism	Natural Evil
Utilitarianism	Missio dei	Marriage
Situation Ethics	Blasphemy	Divorce
Genetic Engineering	Covenant	Remarriage
Guru Nanak	Haggadah	Family Planning
Guru	Mezuzah	Gender Prejudice
Guru Gobind Singh	Mitzvot	Equality within the family
The Khalsa	Orthodox Jews	The Family
Kaur	Pesach	Concepts of family life
Vaisakhi	Promised Land	Worship (types of worship)
The 5 k's	Reform Jews	Sacraments (Baptism, Eucharist)
Kesh	Seder Plate	Prayer
Kangha	Shema	Pilgrimage
Kara	Tallit	Celebrations (e.g., Christmas, Easter)
Kachera	Tefillin	Festivals
Kirpan	10 Commandments	Role of the church in local/global community
Seva	Tzitzit	Growth of the church
Langar	Monotheism	Abortion
Gurdwara	Synagogue	Euthanasia
Guru Granth Sahib		

Homework

The intent of homework in Religious Studies is to draw relevance and application of important matters of religion and belief. Students will use the tools from the disciplinary methods to learn about religion when engaging with their homework. Links made to faith communities such as projects on Spirited Arts or places of worship in the community encourage students to recognise local faith communities.

Research projects and access to videos and podcasts supports the development of scholarly skills within units of work such as 'A guide to Hajj' and 'Gurdwaras for beginners'. SENECA learning software is used for low stake retrieval to identify misconceptions and build long term memory. Revision materials and a systematic revision schedule gives students the independence to consolidate and further develop their knowledge promoting mastery.

All students in years 7-9 have Knowledge Organisers as part of their homework in RS. The Knowledge Organiser content is in line with the sequencing of the curriculum. Self-quizzing supports the retrieval and embedding of knowledge in long-term memory. Our low stakes Do Nows at the beginning of each lesson test cumulative knowledge of previous topics, giving students the opportunity to strengthen memory through retrieval practice. This is supplemented by our cumulative multiple choice Knowledge Organiser test at the end of each term. Instead of revision being perceived as something which is crammed into a few weeks, our homework programme supports spaced practice throughout each academic year. By repeatedly returning to content covered, students' knowledge has had time to 'rest and be refreshed'.

Students in year 9-11 also have additional homework in RS. Flipped learning tasks are set and students are asked to research case studies to support learning and bring independent ideas to subsequent lessons. SENECA learning software is used as a tool for low stake retrieval to identify misconceptions and support memory retention. Students in year are also provided with revision materials and a systematic revision schedule to give students the independence to consolidate their learning to achieve mastery. Homework helps our students achieve mastery in RS. Students who need extra support to achieve mastery are supported by our 10:10 programme in RS and all have access to our daily Homework Club.

Implementation

Overview Statement

The curriculum in RS is sequenced coherently so that concepts and skills are developed over time. Skills are introduced appropriately within the curriculum to ensure students fully achieve both attainment objectives and learn both about religion and from religion. Students develop literacy and written clarity in all key stages demonstrating the importance of academic precision. This supports students of all abilities, especially SEN students and identifying the links between beliefs and practices. Planning is informed by Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction and Cognitive Theory. Cross curricular links are explicitly referenced and exploited in order to deepen understanding. Concepts are identified throughout the RS curriculum and taught discretely as an interpretive framework. The core concepts are visible on curriculum maps, in classrooms, and in lessons to highlights key similarities and differences, which can form the basis of dialogue between religions studied. Homework, daily retrieval-based 'Do Nows' and termly low stakes knowledge organiser quizzes strengthen memory as do mid-term and end-of-year assessments which are cumulative. Learning is also embedded through themed units which draws on the faiths that we have studied requiring students to apply their knowledge to ethical topics.

Vocabulary is developed in RS through the Frayer Model and students are taught to read, write and speak like theologians and philosophers. Technology is employed through the use of laptop apps, interactive whiteboards and visualisers in class to strengthen learning. Learning character is developed each lesson through the use of the six Learning Applications (LApps).

Impact

Key Stage Three

Through studying the Key Stage Three curriculum, students will be able to use interpretive, analytical and evaluative skills to understand sacred texts and enhance religious literacy. Students will apply the narrative and ideas of Buddhism and Sikhism and investigate how these are expressed in practices. Using the skill of synthesis, students will identify key similarities and differences between concepts. They will have developed a deep knowledge of beliefs and teachings, practices and ways of life, expressions



of meaning and truth claims. Students will be able to apply this knowledge to thematic topics at the end of each year including Environment and Animals, Medical ethics, life after death and engaging with the community. Students develop all the Lapps but especially their Empathy and Awareness through understanding different world faiths and reflecting on their ideas and beliefs. Students are exposed to the disciplinary literacy required to be able to communicate as subject experts using appropriate religious literacy, and all opportunities to develop numeracy are fully exploited in context, such as using statistics to understand changes in religious demographics. Cognitive Theory is interleaved throughout the curriculum so that students gain a knowledge of how they learn and manage their cognitive load.

Key Stage Four

The Key Stage Four curriculum builds upon students' initial understanding, extending their knowledge in the areas of beliefs, practices, and teachings, expressions of faith and truth claims in Christianity and Islam through different faith traditions. Through developing their knowledge of Christianity and Islam, they are able to investigate the practices of these religions in local communities and the wider world. Students will further their synthesis, application, and evaluation of religion to thematic studies and will use non-religious and a variety of normative ethical approaches to bring depth and breadth when expressing their evaluation and judgements of ethical situations.

Students also develop an understanding of the entwined nature of their studies, though explicit cross-curricular links and inter-disciplinary study. All students in Key Stage 4 work towards a GCSE qualification in Religious Studies, which acts as a benchmark of their mastery and provides them with the national currency needed for access to further education and employment. Students use their knowledge of cognitive theory to recognise and use the most impactful methods of revision and retrieval practice.