



Religion, Philosophy and Ethics Curriculum

Intent

Curriculum Vision

The Religion, Philosophy and Ethics course is about asking questions about Philosophy, Ethics and the Development in Christian thought. Students will have the opportunity to encounter a wide range of religious and non-religious Philosophers, Ethicists and Theologians from the past 2500 years and critically evaluate their varied responses to the essential questions of life.

These questions are important because they help society function, determine a person's values and reflect on the fundamentals on what being human is about. It is often said that Science helps us live longer, whereas Philosophy helps us live better.

Along with their breadth of knowledge, students will develop a range of skills from KS4 including understanding complex issues, identifying arguments for or against certain ideas, selecting relevant information, identifying inconsistencies in arguments, prioritising information and identifying problems. No subject trains these skills of critical evaluation, critical thinking, analysis and sound argument better than Religion, Philosophy and Ethics due to the wide scope of its inquiry. The highly transferable skills that students gain will not only support them to thrive at university but are also highly transferable in numerous occupations including Education, Law, Journalism and Business.

Concepts and Skills

The overarching concepts for Religion, Philosophy and Ethics are:

Philosophy

Philosophical Language and Thought

The Existence of God

God and the World

Theological and Philosophical Development

Religious Language: Negative, Analogical or Symbolic

Religious Language: Twentieth Century Perspectives

Ethics

Normative Ethical Theories: Religious Approaches

Normative Ethical Theories: Secular Approaches

Applied Ethics

Ethical Language: Meta-ethic

Significant Ideas on Religious and Moral Thought

Developments in Ethical Thought

Development in Christian Thought

Human Nature

Knowledge of God

Christian Morality

Religious Pluralism

Gender

Challenge of Secularism

The overarching concepts for Religion, Philosophy and Ethics are:

- Analysis: Students will develop the skill of distinguishing between opinion, belief and fact, recognising bias and fallacies within arguments.
- Evaluation: Students will debate issues of Philosophy, Ethics and Theology concerning evidence, argument, opinion and statements of faith, weighing the respective claims of self-interest, consideration for others, religious teaching and individual conscience.
- Critical thinking: Students will begin the process of actively applying, analysing and synthesising information gathered from their research and from information acquired through guided practice. They will raise vital questions, assess and suggest well-reasoned conclusions.
- Justification: Using skills of analysis, evaluation and critical thinking, students will express a well-reasoned conclusion on topical content within the disciplines of Philosophy, Ethics and Theology. This justification will be demonstrated in a strong line of argument in their academic writing.
- Written communication: As students develop their academic writing they will follow an established structure that helps them to express their ideas with clarity and the reader to follow the thread of their argument.

Disciplinary Literacy

Disciplinary approach

In Religion, Philosophy and Ethics (RPE) we support the development of disciplinary vocabulary and the students' ability to read, write and communicate at an academic level so that they master the nuances of the curriculum. At Key Stage 5 the level of scholarship and requirement for written clarity greatly increases. Students are supported to flourish on the RPE course and their disciplinary literacy is developed in the following ways:

- Explicit teaching focus on vocabulary and the etymology of key terms through use of the Frayer model. Students are also supported with their use of tier two vocabulary so they have the language of in-depth analysis and evaluation. This is achieved through the initial use of writing frames, provision of evaluative vocabulary and modelling of how this language can be used.
- We introduce students to structured reading methods to approach academic text and model close reading techniques in lesson. This further supports students' vocabulary acquisition and comprehension, and empowers them to effectively study independently, supporting a broader development of vocabulary and ideas.
- With the introduction of reading academic texts closely, students demonstrate comprehension of what they have read through discussion and debate, developing verbal reasoning. Students also implement tier two and tier three vocabulary through developing written responses to academic texts, using similar discourse to write in an academic way utilising key skills of the course.

Interdisciplinary approach

To understand the depth of Religion, Philosophy and Ethics it is vital to explore the organic connection to other disciplines and the impact Philosophical, Ethical and Theological ideas have had on society.

This is evident through synoptic concepts and skills shared between subjects such as History, Psychology, Sociology and English.

A few examples of this include the impact that Ethical theories have had in Politics through the ideological spectrum and subsequently systems of government and policy making.

- Religion has a significant impact on society and shares a number of concepts with Sociology. Cross-curricular links include the study of Feminism, Marxism, Functions of Religion and the impact of Christian beliefs and religious pluralism.
- Psychology offers insight into ideas of conscience and freewill and determinism as well as into questions surrounding human nature.
- Many of the themes studied in English Literature refer to concepts covered in RPE, for example from texts such as Owen Sheers' *Skirrid Hill*. These themes include the meaning of language, human nature and death and afterlife. Shared skills between the subjects include: interpretation, evaluation and making judgements.
- Links between RPE and History include how attitudes on religious pluralism have been demonstrated through Elizabeth I's religious settlement and the concept of Marxism. The skills shared between the subjects include analysis, evaluation, interpretation and making judgements.

Intellectual autonomy

In order to develop intellectual autonomy and confidence, we foster the willingness and ability of students in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics to comprehend challenging texts, assimilate key concepts and synthesise them with prior learning. Students are equipped to think critically and apply strategies independently so that they can form their own cohesive conclusions and be able to express that in writing.

This is facilitated by structured reading methods to engage with academic text and modelling close reading techniques in lesson. This supports comprehension and empowers students to effectively study independently. Students have access to a range of academic texts and resources including undergraduate podcasts, source books, debates and journal articles related to Philosophy, Ethics and Theology. Flip learning and research tasks are set and students demonstrate their understanding in subsequent lessons.

In addition, students have access to the Key Stage 5 resources held centrally in our library. These include a range of source books on Philosophy, Ethics and Theology such as *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics* and *Philosophy of Religion: A Sourcebook (Volumes 1 & 2)*. Students also have access to texts written by authors who feature on the course such as Peter Singer, Peter Vardy, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Alister McGrath and Michael Palmer.

Application of Mathematics

The curriculum recognises the need for students to be able to apply mathematics effectively. Both Philosophy and Mathematics are recognised as two of the most fundamental and widely applicable intellectual skills. Masters of both disciplines include Pythagoras, Rene Descartes, Bertrand Russell, John Lennox and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz.

In Religion, Philosophy and Ethics students use and develop their logic and reasoning. Students analyse issues, question received assumptions, identifying inconsistencies, and clearly articulate understanding. These skills are utilised in Mathematics when tackling simple and complex problems.

Independent Study

In Religion, Philosophy and Ethics students undertake both directed and self-directed independent learning activities that support the strengthening of long-term memory and retrieval. Independent study helps our students achieve mastery in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics and prepares them to work at an undergraduate level.

Directed independent learning tasks set in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics can include background reading to build knowledge and deeper connections to the existing frame of learning, or responding to interlocking questions on a given topic across more than one text source. Self-directed independent

study in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics involves retrieval practice which is a crucial component of mastery. As students encounter challenges and learn to wrestle with demanding concepts and texts, they develop not only their knowledge and understanding but also resilience through perseverance.

Instead of revision being perceived as something that is crammed into a few weeks, independent study supports spaced practice throughout the curriculum. By repeatedly returning to content covered, students' knowledge has time to 'rest and be refreshed'.

We recognise that not all students process material at the same rate. Students who need extra support to achieve mastery are supported by targeted intervention in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics where a staged or 'scaffolded' process is used to enable students to move from being dependent learners to autonomous ones.

All students have access to our Academy library where a wide range of academic texts, journals and other resources are available.

Implementation

Overview Statement

The curriculum in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics is sequenced coherently so that knowledge, concepts and skills are rigorously developed over time. This supports all students, including the most disadvantaged, and those with high levels of need, especially SEND. Planning is informed by Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction and Cognitive Theory which support students in building secure schemas.

Interdisciplinary links and the application of mathematics are explicitly referenced and exploited in order to deepen understanding. Vocabulary is developed in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics using the principles outlined in the Frayer Model and students are equipped to be able to read, write and speak like a Philosopher, Ethicist or Theologian. This is done through dedicated time supporting students in developing academic skills to construct coherent arguments utilising academic vocabulary. Once students have understood concepts through guided practice and independent study they will discuss and articulate their understanding and express their line of thought on different topics. Students will combine both subject knowledge and disciplinary literacy to construct coherent arguments.

Through the use of independent study resources in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics, students learn at greater depth so that they can become masters in Philosophy, Ethics or Theology, and in the skills required to be intellectually autonomous. This is implemented by having access to and engaging with academic works and a range of activities set for students to develop core study skills. These skills are modelled in lessons to support students in being effective independent learners through the rest of their lives. Students will then be required to demonstrate and implement their learning in the classroom through discussion and verbal reasoning of contentious points.

Regular retrieval-based activities strengthen long-term memory and aid fluency, as do our cumulative mid-term and end-of-year assessments. Students are also required to present independent and group learning to the class to support the development of important presentation skills and clarity of thought on subject knowledge.

Technology is employed through online quizzes, podcasts and a range of digital resources to strengthen learning such as Stanford online encyclopaedia. Students also use a variety of technology to present work, such as PowerPoint and Prezi.

Learning character is developed through six learning applications that underpin teaching practice across the school. Students are encouraged to show *resilience* when completing student responses. Students are reminded of the importance of the process when learning and value to feedback to progress. The learning applications are embedded in the lessons including *empathy, awareness, collaboration, creativity and independence* to draw attention to the importance of character development.

Impact

The Key Stage 5 curriculum builds upon students' initial understanding, extending their knowledge in the areas of Christian and Muslim beliefs and practices as well as Ethical and Philosophical ideas applied to Relationships and Families, Crime and Punishments, Human Rights and Social Justice, and Peace and Conflict. Through developing their knowledge of Philosophy, Ethics and Theology, students are able to critically evaluate ideas of the world's greatest thinkers and articulate with clarity of thought their own ideas on the most important questions of life. Students also develop an understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of their studies and this is supported through explicit cross-curricular links in English, History, Sociology and Psychology.

Students use their knowledge of cognitive theory to recognise and use the most impactful methods of revision and retrieval practice.

Academic progress in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics is recognised through the OCR A-level Religious Studies (H573) qualification, which acts as a benchmark of mastery; this provides students with the national currency needed for access to higher education and apprenticeship courses, and prepares them for a career in any workplace.