

RELIGIOUS STUDIES CURRICULUM MAP 2025 – 2026

Intent:

KS3

The Religious Studies curriculum at KS3 explores the six main world religions and non-religious belief systems through the study of beliefs, teachings and practices. Students work chronologically through the Abrahamic faiths before exploring Eastern traditions. By learning about the ways in which these beliefs and practices vary amongst communities and impact the lives of millions of people, students develop a broad understanding of how religion permeates life around the world, developing in them respect and tolerance for beliefs different to their own. Through learning about prominent historical figures and events as well as current affairs, students are exposed to the impact of religion in the modern world. Students develop skills in critical thinking and analysis through both discussion and extended writing, equipping them with a strong foundation of the knowledge and skills required for GCSE and beyond.

KS4

Religious Studies at KS4 seeks to deepen students' understanding of two religions: Christianity and Islam. Students explore the key beliefs, teachings and practices of both religions, before applying these beliefs to ethical issues faced in the modern world. Students consider the impact of religious beliefs on religious people both in the UK and around the world through scriptural analysis and discussing the impact of influential figures. Students learn to articulate their own beliefs in a coherent and convincing way, whilst also learning how to embrace difference in belief. The KS4 curriculum explores various SMSC and RSHE topics, providing students with space to ask questions about important issues in a safe and stimulating environment, whilst also developing an understanding of the variety of views held in society in Great Britain, preparing them to become thoughtful and successful members of society.

When students reach year 11 they have the opportunity to study towards an additional RS GCSE in Eastern Philosophy. This will allow students to revisit in more depth content on Hinduism and Buddhism that they studied in year 8. This will deepen pupils understanding of the diversity of beliefs and philosophical approaches around the world and prepare them for future study by enhancing their critical thinking skills.

Implementation:

Year	Half Term 1	Half Term 2	Half Term 3	Half Term 4	Half Term 5	Half Term 6
7	The Island Students explore religious themes such as symbols, rites of passage and festivals through the story of 'The Island'. This is a story about a fictional shipwreck which leads to the passengers being stranded on an island, needing to rebuild their community. Building upon the knowledge acquired at KS2, students explore some 'big' questions such as whether communities need to share values to	Judaism Students learn about the birth of Judaism through the stories of Abraham and Moses, and the Exodus from Egypt. This provides students with an understanding of monotheism and the start of Abrahamic traditions, prior to learning about Christianity and Islam in HT4/5. Students go on to learn about central traditions in Judaism, including Pesach, Shabbat and Kosher rules, as well as key Jewish beliefs and the use of the Torah in worship. Students then go on to learn about the historical experience of Jewish people, including the prominence of anti-Semitism throughout history, along with the Jewish experience of the Holocaust.		Christianity Students build upon their understanding of monotheism through the emergence of Christianity from Judaism. Students learn about the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth and his relationship with Jewish authorities. Students go on to learn about the significance of Jesus for Christians through the key events in his life, including discipleship, miracle work, the temptations in the desert,	Islam Students learn about the key beliefs and teachings of Islam through the story of the life of Prophet Muhammad and the impact of key beliefs and teachings in Islam such as tawhid. Students then learn about key practices in Islam through the Five Pillars and explore different ways in which these practices are carried out, and the significance of this for different communities. This unit	Expressing belief through creativity Students apply their knowledge of the Abrahamic faiths to understand different ways religious people express their beliefs through creativity. This is done primarily through engaging with different examples of creative religious practices. For example, students learn about the significance of the Islamic calligraphy tradition and how Sufi poets express their beliefs

	thrive; why rites of passage are important; whether or not there is life after death. Students explore themes that are shared amongst many of the world's main religions, which equips them with an understanding of religious terminology before studying individual religions in more depth.			as well as his death and resurrection. This unit provides students with a secure understanding of the origins of Christianity and the significance of the figure of Jesus, which equips them for their study of Christianity as part of the GCSE curriculum.	provides students with a secure understanding of the origins of Islam and the key beliefs and practices of the religion, which equips them for their study of Islam as part of the GCSE curriculum.	through metaphorical language. Furthermore, students learn about the importance of creativity as a means of expressing belief. Students discuss strengths and weaknesses of creative practices and reflect on how they express their own religious or non-religious beliefs.
Opportunities for challenge and enrichment	Homework is used to broaden understanding of religious concepts through independent research tasks, which look beyond that which is covered in the lessons. E.g. students research the significance of Aqiqah in Islam when learning about rites of passage.	Discussion activities in lessons use relevant current affairs stories to enable students to apply their understanding of key concepts to relevant and current issues. This enhances their understanding of concepts such as anti-Semitism, by considering for example the vandalism of an Anne Frank statue in USA (2021). This can be used to encourage students to think about the continued impact of anti-Semitism on the Jewish community today, beyond the example of the Holocaust (Shoah).		Discussion activities in lessons are built around 'real life' stories to encourage students to apply their understanding to the lives of 'real' people, which deepens their understanding of concepts such as forgiveness. The story of Anthony Walker is a poignant example that helps students to empathise with the experience of showing forgiveness.	Homework tasks are used to extend students understanding of Islam through creative tasks e.g. creating a leaflet for a mosque. By applying their understanding through activities such as these, students develop a deeper understanding of key beliefs and practices.	Learning about the Israel-Palestine conflict equips students with an understanding of a complex part of ongoing history, which strengthens their cultural capital. Their understanding of the relationship between the Abrahamic faiths is enriched throughout this topic through discussion and engaging with the experience of young people affected by the conflict.
8	Hinduism Students begin their exploration of Eastern worldviews with the study of Hinduism. Students learn about and discuss key beliefs about Brahman, atman, and life after death, before considering the impact of these beliefs on Hindus today, and the impact of Mahatma Gandhi. This unit equips students with religious terminology needed for the next two units.	Buddhism Students learn about central Buddhist teachings such as the three marks of existence, the four noble truths and the noble eightfold path, analysing the relevance of these teachings for life in modern society. Students learn about the figure of Siddhartha Gautama and divergent views about his significance for Buddhists today.	Sikhism Students continue their study of Eastern worldviews with Sikhism, learning about the ten gurus and the life of Guru Nanak specifically. Students learn about the establishment of the khalsa, and consider what it means for Sikhs to be part of the khalsa today, including the implications of carrying the five Ks. Students learn about the importance of sewa and langar.	Philosophy Students explore non-theistic worldviews, including Humanism, as well as philosophical approaches to cosmological and metaphysical questions, including the teleological argument, as well as the problem of evil and theodicies offered by Christian theology. Students learn to communicate their own views clearly and concisely.	GCSE: Islam beliefs and teachings Students learn about the key beliefs and teachings of Islam, including tawhid, prophethood, angels, beliefs about life after death, the Qur'an; students analyse scripture in reference to these beliefs. Students consider the influence of these beliefs on religious communities, and analyse the important of religious beliefs for believers today.	GCSE: Islam practices Students learn about a range of Islamic practices including the Five Pillars of Islam, jihad, and festivals. Students explore the divergent ways these practices are carried out by different religious communities, as well as their significance for Muslims today.

Opportunities for challenge and enrichment	Homework tasks extend students' knowledge of Hinduism beyond the coverage in lessons, through independent research tasks e.g. understanding the life of Mahatma Gandhi through the Salt March.	Students' understanding of Buddhism is enriched by learning about the experience of Buddhists in the modern world, for example learning about life as a Buddhist monk today. Students build on this through independent research tasks in homework.	Discussion activities in lessons are built around real-life stories to encourage students to apply their understanding to the lives of 'real' people, which deepens their understanding of concepts such as discrimination. The story of a Sikh taxi driver as a victim of discrimination enables students to apply their understanding of Sikhism to a discussion about religious freedom.	Students' understanding of religious attitudes is deepened throughout this topic as students compare Humanist and religious views. This skill extends students understanding of religions within their own framework, encouraging them to make links between various belief systems.	Homework encourages students to engage with scriptural teachings beyond that which is required by the GCSE specification. Students analyse these teachings independently, encouraging independent thought, and their ideas are then used as a basis for discussion in subsequent lessons.
9	GCSE: Islam practices Students continue with a study of Islamic practices as per Y8 summer term 2, with opportunities embedded into the half term to revisit learning from Y8 to consolidate and deepen understanding.	GCSE: Christianity beliefs and teachings Students learn about key beliefs and teachings of Christianity, including the trinity, beliefs about God, life after death, and the death and resurrection of Jesus. Students explore the influence of these beliefs on believers, and their significance for religious communities today.	GCSE: Christianity practices Students learn about a range of Christian practices including prayer and worship, sacraments, festivals, the role of the Church, and persecution. Students explore the divergent ways these practices are carried out by different religious communities, as well as their significance for Christians today.	GCSE: Crime and Punishment Students begin to apply their understanding of Christian and Muslim beliefs and teachings to the ethical issues surrounding crime and punishment, including causes of crime, types and aims of punishment, and forgiveness. Students explore a range of religious attitudes towards these issues, and analyse their significance for religious believers in modern British society.	GCSE: Religion and Life Students apply their understanding of Christian and Muslim beliefs and teachings to the topics of creation, animal rights, environmentalism, abortion and euthanasia. Students explore a range of religious attitudes towards these issues, and analyse their significance for religious believers in modern British society.
Opportunities for challenge and enrichment	Homework encourages students to engage with scriptural teachings beyond that which is required by the GCSE specification. Students analyse these teachings independently, encouraging independent thought, and their ideas are then used as a basis for discussion in subsequent lessons.		Discussion activities in lessons are built around 'real life' stories to encourage students to apply their understanding to the lives of real people, which deepens their understanding of concepts such as charity and agape in Christianity. Considering the experience of missionaries in the modern world extends students understanding of a key Christian concept beyond the requirements of the specification.	Students explore issues relating to crime and punishment through a range of case studies, enhancing students' understanding of the topic by encouraging them to apply their theoretical understanding to 'real life' examples of crime and punishment in the UK.	Students explore issues relating to religion and life through engaging with relevant current affairs stories, strengthening cultural capital. For example, students discuss their views on the changing laws on abortion in Northern Ireland. This reaches beyond the requirements of the GCSE specification, enhancing students' understanding of the topic.

10	<p>GCSE: Relationships and Families</p> <p>Students apply their understanding of Christian and Muslim beliefs and teachings to issues surrounding family life, different types of relationships, and gender equality. Students explore a wide range of religious attitudes towards these issues, and analyse their significance for religious believers in modern British society.</p>	<p>GCSE: Revisiting paper 1</p> <p>Students deepen their understanding of the key beliefs, teachings and practices of Islam and Christianity. Students will apply their knowledge in analysing more complex issues, and will demonstrate their understanding of these areas through verbal and written discussion and critical analysis.</p>	<p>GCSE: Human Rights and Social Justice</p> <p>Students apply their understanding of Christian and Muslim beliefs and teachings to issues surrounding human rights including religious freedom, equality, poverty and social justice, and the exploitation of the poor. Students explore a wide range of religious attitudes towards these issues, and analyse their significance for religious believers in modern British society.</p>	<p>Revisiting paper 1 and 2</p> <p>Students revisit their learning from the GCSE curriculum in order to deepen and extend their understanding of these topics. Students will analyse more complex issues, and will demonstrate their understanding of these areas through verbal and written discussion, as well as critical analysis. Students will develop clarity of communication, and independent thought, which will equip them with the skills they need to excel at A Level.</p>	<p>Citizenship</p> <p>Students build upon their existing Citizenship knowledge, in learning about the nature of democracy in the UK in contrast with dictatorships around the world. Students gain an understanding of the political and legal structures in the UK through designing their own political campaigns and in creating laws for society. Students also reflect on what it means to be a valued citizen in society and how individuals can contribute to their community and bring about meaningful change. Students will explore the significance of these features of British society by engaging with relevant case studies, and structured discussion and debate.</p>
Opportunities for challenge and enrichment	<p>Lessons within this unit extend beyond the specification by exploring important topics which overlap with elements of the RSHE curriculum (a statutory requirement for schools).</p>		<p>Students explore issues relating to human rights and social justice through a range of case studies, enhancing students' understanding of the topic by encouraging them to apply their theoretical understanding to 'real life' examples, such as the Rana Plaza disaster.</p>		<p>Students develop a deeper understanding of citizenship, which strengthens cultural capital, and extends their existing understanding of British Values and SMSC development. This unit enhances students' understanding of key concepts by encouraging them to apply their theoretical understanding to 'real life' examples surrounding democracy and the rule of law in the UK.</p>

11	OCR GCSE: Buddhism beliefs, teachings and practices Students explore the life of Siddhartha Gautama and his journey to enlightenment. They engage with some of the central teachings in Buddhism and compare views for the Theravada and Mahayana tradition. Students consider how these beliefs manifest themselves into practices that vary around the world.	OCR GCSE: Hinduism beliefs, teachings and practices Students engage with key beliefs and scripture in Hinduism to gain a deeper understanding of the philosophy of the religion. Students develop their hermeneutical skills further by engaging with a selection of the rich texts found in Hindu traditions. They see how Hinduism is practiced and how different communities engage with Hinduism today.	OCR GCSE: Philosophical themes – Ultimate Reality, and Relationships and Families Students apply their knowledge and understanding of Buddhism to a range of philosophical and ethical themes. The Ultimate Reality concerns questions around the existence of God and the universe and students are able to debate a range of view. Relationships and Families builds on some knowledge in year 10 but allows students to engage with the ethical frameworks found in Buddhist tradition.	OCR GCSE: Philosophical themes – Peace and Conflict, Religious Dialogue, Revision Students continue their study of Buddhist philosophy by exploring differing view of issues around peace and conflict. Students will look at case studies to explore how humans respond in some of the most desperate situations and consider the ethics around conflict. Religious dialogue allows students to explore the relationship between religion and science and think about the similar questions both areas of knowledge explore.	
Opportunities for challenge and enrichment	Students engage with case studies and make links between what they are studying and the local community.				

Enrichment Opportunities:

Students' religious studies education is enriched through discussion in lessons which use current affairs, modern influential figures, and contentious issues to engage students and encourage the application of their knowledge to topics beyond the curriculum requirement. Teachers also use specific, probing questioning within lessons to extend students' knowledge beyond the core curriculum content. Homework is designed to continue this outside the classroom. In turn, students' cultural capital is strengthened, and there are opportunities for cross-curricular learning, for example with RSHE and Citizenship.

Impact:

Formative assessment is an integral part of our approach to Teaching and Learning. Over the course of their study, we will use weekly/fortnightly cumulative formative diagnostic assessments (in class or for homework) to ensure that students are consistently retrieving their knowledge of different components. The purpose of this is to ensure all knowledge is retained (and any gaps are identified and addressed promptly) and also to inform teachers' planning. Using this style of assessment, we will make use of the advantages of spaced practice as well as allowing pupils to be able to apply their knowledge to a wide variety of contexts.

Students will also sit a summative assessment every term. This assessment will be cumulative and will assess not only what the students have learned over the previous term, but also their understanding of all relevant material previously taught. Staff are supported to mark these accurately and post assessment moderation also takes place to ensure the validity of the data. All data is analysed centrally (not by teachers) and each Subject Leader is given a report outlining the areas of strength and weakness. This is used to inform future planning, support with additional interventions and set changes.