

Religious Studies Statement of Practice



Our Christian Mission is:

“I am able to do all things through Christ
who strengthens me”

Philippians 4:13

Our Christian Values are: Wisdom,
Hope, Community and Dignity

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Introduction

This Statement of Practice outlines how our Religious Studies curriculum is central to our school vision and values. Our vision is based on the following piece of scripture:

I am able to do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13)

As an inclusive school we believe that our Christian mission is to ensure that we remove barriers to learning; ensuring that all students have the opportunity to achieve their potential. As a Church of England Academy Religious Studies is central to both our curriculum and mission. We strongly believe that students need to be given opportunities to grow in faith whilst learning about all faiths represented in our school community. God created abundance of life and diversity and Nottingham Emmanuel School we celebrate this throughout our Religious Studies curriculum.

The introduction of the National Curriculum has facilitated the need for all SACREs (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) and therefore Religious Education (RE) departments to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils, which promotes “their spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development and prepares them for adult life”.

This policy document is intended to outline how the Religious Studies department at The Nottingham Emmanuel School meets the requirements of SIAMS of being 2/3 focused on Christianity as well as meeting the aims of the Nottingham City Agreed Syllabus for Religious Studies. It seeks not only to give a rationale for development, but also to give clear and detailed guidelines for effective implementation of RE for all pupils. The Head of Religious Studies and all members of the department have the responsibility to implement the policies enshrined here to the best of their ability.

Related Policies, Statements of Practice and procedures

- SMSC
- Teaching and Learning

Statement of Practice

As a faith school, our intent is for students at The Nottingham Emmanuel School to value the centrality of belief and spirituality for a well-balanced life. As an inclusive academy we aim to provide varied and enriching lessons that engage all pupils. Our hope is that pupils develop an understanding of how beliefs inform practice and ways of living in a way that promotes mutual respect, tolerance and understanding across different cultures and communities. As a Christian foundation, the curriculum at KS3 is two thirds Christianity ensuring that all pupils have a grounding in the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Alongside this, pupils gain exposure to the diversity of faith and practice to effectively prepare our pupils for life in a culturally diverse modern world. The RS curriculum aims to give pupils a breadth of knowledge of a range of both religious and non-religious worldviews and to understand the diversity of interpretation within any one tradition. By engaging with the Bible and other sacred texts, pupils become highly literate in understanding how these teachings have been interpreted and give meaning to the lives of people of faith. Pupils also develop skills of analysis and evaluation to enable them to discuss religious and philosophical beliefs and concepts and to be able to critically evaluate different views. RS also plays an integral role in developing character in allowing pupils the space and time to reflect upon their own beliefs and spirituality and to explore moral issues using ethical theories and be able to articulate a personal response to these issues.

How Religious Studies is organised?

Our Religious Studies department is made up of a team of specialists. These are led by a Head of RS who is in turn line-managed by the Heads of Faculty for the EBACC Learning community.

All students at The Nottingham Emmanuel School study RS.

- At KS3, students have one hour per week to study a diverse and engaging curriculum (see below) which includes elements of theology, philosophy, ethics and sociology. We have used the 'Locally Agreed Syllabus: Religious Education for All (2021)' alongside the Church of England's 'Understanding Christianity' to inform and underpin our curriculum choices.
- At KS4, students have one hour per week and study GCSE RS - Edexcel (9-1) Spec. B. As part of the GCSE, students will explore: Christianity, Islam and Humanism, looking at these from theological, philosophical, sociological and ethical angles.
- At KS5, students have 5 hours per week to study A Level Philosophy, Ethics and RS (OCR) in Year 12 and 4 hours in Year 13. This delves deeper into philosophical thought, ethical theories and developments in Christian thought.

The Curriculum

A high-quality sequential religious education (RE) programme is essential...to teach a full curriculum that prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in modern Britain. Central to religious education in Church schools is the study of Christianity as a living and diverse faith, focused on the teaching of Jesus and the Church. There is a clear expectation that as inclusive communities, church schools provide sequenced learning about a range of religions and worldviews fostering respect for others.

(Religious Education in Church of England Schools; A Statement of Entitlement, 2019)

The RS Curriculum is carefully sequenced from Year 7 to Year 13 with a strong rationale for the teaching of each component in its place in the course. Students begin KS3 by learning about the fundamental beliefs of the Abrahamic religions, and build to a comparison between these and the dharmic faiths. This then leads to application of the beliefs and the study of how belief has an impact on the life of a believer. The GCSE course develops this knowledge by focusing on divergent beliefs within both Christianity and Islam, and how these beliefs impact the views of current ethical issues such as euthanasia, war and punishment.

The KS3 curriculum is 2/3 Christianity as required by SIAMS. Concepts and resources from the Understanding Christianity initiative are embedded throughout the Year 7 units to ensure a deeper understanding of the fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith. The other units are designed to meet the requirements of the Nottingham City Agreed Syllabus. Throughout these, students gain knowledge of the key beliefs of Islam and Christianity and are given opportunities to develop skills of knowledge, understanding, analysis and evaluation in preparation for GCSE.

Year 7

Understanding Christianity – to support transition, the first lesson considers what it means to be part of a Church of England Academy. The rest of the unit focuses on the belief in the Trinity, the nature of God, and creation, laying foundations for the GCSE Belief in God unit.

Judaism – this unit studies the basic beliefs and practices of Judaism, which lays foundations for considering this within the context of it being the religion of Jesus, as well as the common link between all three Abrahamic faiths. This unit helps students to develop a much deeper understanding of many of the concepts studied at GCSE – for example atonement and sacrifice.

The Life of Jesus – Using key questions and works of art, this unit looks at the key events in Jesus’ life, how these inform key Christian beliefs such as incarnation and salvation and how these events may be interpreted in different ways. It considers the different ways that Jesus was viewed in his life, as well as today, and echoes some of the concepts studied in the A-Level unit on Jesus –the Son of God, a moral teacher, and/or a liberator. This unit also lays important foundations for the study of Christian beliefs and practices at GCSE.

Is There A God? – In this unit students are encouraged to begin to evaluate belief in a God. This builds on the basic beliefs in a Christian God that are studied at the start of the year – e.g. through the study of the omni-characteristics of God. Different arguments both for and against the belief in a God are studied through the lens of Christianity; the problem of evil (e.g. through the story of The Fall), responses to evil (e.g. through the story of Job), as well as considering miracles, religious experiences, theodicies and the cosmological and teleological arguments for the existence of God. Many of these concepts are picked up again in GCSE, and then later within the A-Level course.

Dharmic Religions– the final unit of Y7 considers many of the topics looked at earlier in the year, but from a different view point – dharmic faiths. We consider again the nature of God, but this time within Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism, and use this as an opportunity to compare to the Abrahamic view.

Year 8

Islam – Having studied the foundational beliefs of Christianity and Judaism, in Year 8 we begin by examining some of the same concepts within Islam. We highlight the links between the Abrahamic faiths through a study of belief in prophets and concepts of God. We then look at the life of the prophet Muhammad including the Night of Power and Hijrah. This is built upon in GCSE units on Belief in Allah, and Islamic Practices.

Inspirational People of Faith - using the lives of inspirational people such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Oscar Romero, and Malala Yousafzai and considers how they have used their faith to inspire others and bring about social justice. As part of this unit students consider how specific religious teachings have led to particular actions in preparation for GCSE when they need to make links between belief and action.

Spirited Arts- An exploration of what spirituality is and how it can be conveyed in art before students have the opportunity to create their own piece of art on a spiritual theme, the best of which are entered into a national competition (NATRE Spirited Arts). This unit brings together all of the ideas studied in Y7 and 8 and encourages students to reflect on their own beliefs and how this impacts their own actions.

Image of God – our final unit explores what it means to be “made in the image of God”, and considers themes of human dignity, justice, and sanctity of life. This unit draws on knowledge built over KS3 (such as creation and salvation) and asks students to then apply these to current issues such as gender discrimination and racism. This unit is designed to have consistent themes, but also be reactive and adaptable to important issues and conversations in the world at the time. There is a focus on skills on evaluation and discussion which are key to success at GCSE.

GCSE

**Exam Board: Edexcel B Paper 1B Religion and Ethics: Christianity: (1hour 45 mins 50%)
Paper 2C: Religion, Peace and Justice: Islam (1 hour 45 mins 50%)**

GCSE requires study of two religious traditions, Christianity and Islam are studied to reflect the demographic of the Academy. The teaching of topics for GCSE alternates between Christianity and Islam. This interleaving helps us to embed and revisit key knowledge as well as being able to make points of comparison between the two faiths. As well as being a requirement of the specification, these enables the emphasis of the similarities between the two faiths both in terms of beliefs and practice

Year 9

Students build on their knowledge through an in depth study of the main theological beliefs of both Christianity and Islam before exploring the impact of beliefs on ethical issues.

Belief in God – this unit explores the fundamental beliefs of Christianity as found in the Nicene Creed – God as Creator, Trinity, Incarnation and Salvation. It also includes an opportunity to engage with different Christian responses towards Eschatology (Life after Death) and Theodicy (solutions to the Problem of Evil)

Belief in Allah unit looks at both the Sunni 6 Beliefs and the 5 Shi'a Roots, including Tawheed (Belief in the oneness of God), Divine Justice and attitudes towards predestination, judgement and life after death. The 2nd part of Year 9 looks and ethical issues from the perspective of these faiths as well as considering non-religious responses.

Marriage and Family -Christian attitudes toward marriage and family life are explored as well as issues around gender equality both in the home, the church and the world of work.

Crime and Punishment - Within the Islam unit, beliefs towards crime, punishment and forgiveness are studied as well as differing Muslim attitudes towards Capital Punishment.

Year 10

Having studied the key theological beliefs of Christianity and Islam in Year 9, students then focus on how these beliefs are demonstrated through Worship and Practice.

Living the Christian Life explores contemporary worship and prayer, the centrality of the Eucharist, the role of the local and worldwide church as well as considering contrasting Christian views on evangelism and missionary work.

Living the Muslim Life - The Islam unit focuses on how Muslim beliefs are lived out through the 5 Pillars of Sunni and the 10 Obligatory Acts of Shi'a Islam. This includes an exploration of the actual meaning of Jihad. This is then followed by the study of further ethical issues.

Life and Death – This unit focus on the moral and philosophical issues around life and death – the meaning of the sanctity of life, abortion, euthanasia and considers Christian and Humanists responses. As well as studying the differing views of both science and faith to the origins of the universe and humanity.

Year 11

Peace and Conflict - This Islam unit explores issues around Justice, Peace and conflict including a consideration of Just War and Holy War and how these beliefs can be applied in a world that has nuclear weapons and terrorist attacks.

The rest of the focus of Year 11 is on consolidation of knowledge and exam technique, The GCSE exam content is revisited with a particular focus on the ability to use this to answer exam questions. Students learn skills so that they are able to write essays that are able to discuss and evaluate a range of beliefs, attitudes and practises. Students develop how to appraise evidence, being able to explain differing interpretations of the same teachings and then consider which is more cohesive with their understanding of the faith tradition.

Approaches to Teaching RS

Our RS curriculum is taught through the NES Teaching and Learning Framework. (See our 'NES Teaching and Learning Framework' on our school website). We believe that RS should teach students about the beliefs of the people around them and in the wider world, as well as providing a safe space for personal exploration of spirituality. The RS Curriculum, and RS lessons, are designed to encourage students to be inquisitive, accepting of challenge, thoughtful, respectful, analytical and imaginative.

Feedback, Assessment and Recording of RS

Effective feedback is essential to support all students to develop their knowledge and skills in RS. The RS department follows the whole school marking and feedback policy (See Feedback statement of practice)

In order to ensure that the assessment and feedback cycle is robust regular focus is given in lesson to the development of Transfer Skills, and to accurate self and peer assessment.

KS3 and 4

- An average of two marked transfer tasks per term will be undertaken by students and marked in purple pen by teachers.
- Marks will be given, as well as clear WWW and Next steps. Time will be taken in lesson for students to review and respond.
- A number of other transfer tasks will be completed (as homework or in class) which will be carefully peer / self-assessed, in green pen.

KS5

- At least one full 40 mark essay task will be marked per fortnight
- All essays will be annotated by staff, as well as a cover sheet with AO1 and AO2 marks awarded separately, and WWW and Next steps clearly given.
- Students are given time to review in lesson, and in some cases will be expected to re-write based on feedback.

Monitoring Standards of RS

As part of a rigorous quality assurance schedule, school leaders and Heads of Faculty along with the Head of RS, are responsible for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning taking place in this subject. The analysis of assessment data, lesson visits, departmental walks, student voice and work scrutiny is central to this process in order to ensure that all students can achieve their full potential in this subject.

The Head of RS is responsible for contributing to our whole school, SIAMS Self Evaluation document. This is an ongoing reflection that happens alongside our departmental improvement plan and ongoing dialogue with school leaders.

As well as this, all staff engage in regular professional development through a CPL program at both a school and Trust level and keep up-to-date with pedagogical research, diocesan meetings and exam board training through Trust collaborative meetings. Members of our team have previously been exam markers, and regular meetings with departments from across the Trust draws on the expertise of current markers when setting assessments and moderating.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

The development of a broad understanding of spirituality in Religious Studies is a key aim. Lessons, activities and visits provides opportunities for pupils to:

- Develop an awareness of the human quest to make sense of the world and the human predicament and to seek an ultimate meaning and purpose;
- Become aware of ultimate questions and learn about and be challenged by different questions offered by Christianity and other religions to these questions;
- Learn about beliefs and values and different understandings of the spiritual life, spiritual development and practices in religious and other traditions;
- Evaluate for themselves the truth claims made by religious and spiritual traditions;
- Encourage an understanding and respect for those who hold views different from their own;
- Develop their own beliefs and values;
- Respond to religious stories, artefacts and places of worship.