

RE CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Intent

Subject specific knowledge and content

Our RE curriculum aims to develop students as curious, evaluative and empathetic thinkers who are able to live alongside people of a variety of faiths because they have a deep understanding of the multiplicity and complexity that exists within the concepts of God, religion, belief and practice. The knowledge and skills they will learn will equip them to become scholarly theologians.

Our KS3 RE curriculum aims to provide students with an in-depth theological understanding of the concept of God or enlightenment across the six major world religions. This focused and detailed curriculum provides the foundation for students to then progress at KS4 into examining the beliefs and practices of two major world religions (Christianity and Islam) and apply an understanding of these beliefs to a range of philosophical and ethical issues (marriage & the family, God & revelation, religion & life, peace & conflict, crime & punishment).

By initially focusing the curriculum on the concept of God or enlightenment, we challenge students to immediately see the diversity and complexity of understandings of God in the world around them and they encounter the discipline of theology in depth and in different contexts. By focusing on concepts across different faiths, they are exposed to diversity and complexity. As students begin the GCSE curriculum, we have then chosen to focus on the beliefs and practices of Islam and Christianity because: the choice reflects the demographic of the UK as they are the largest two religions practised in the UK; study of Christianity helps develop students' understanding of our foundations as a Church of England Trust; we believe it is important to accurately educate students about Islam so they are able to critically recognise the invalidity of many misconceptions about this religion that exist within society, particularly in the last decade.

Subject specific skills:

In RE, we teach a variety of subject-specific skills which are represented in the assessment objectives that run throughout our curriculum:

| Assessment Objective | Key Skills |
|---|--|
| AO1: Knowledge and understanding: - Influence and impact on individuals, communities and society | Explanation – giving reasons for beliefs/actions Explanation of influence – giving actions as a result of beliefs Application – giving examples of practices Empathy – considering impact |
| AO1: Knowledge and understanding: - Similarities and differences | Comparison – within and between religion Explanation – reasons for differences/similarities |
| AO1: Knowledge and understanding: - Sources of authority | Textual analysis (explanation) – explanation of meaning |
| AO2: Analysis and evaluation | Evaluation – considering divergent views and making judgements based on evidence/clear argument Critical enquiry/curiosity – discussion and debate provoked by analysis of content |

How do students 'get better' at RE?*

In all year groups, alongside the skills and knowledge gained when studying RE, students should develop empathy and curiosity towards individuals, communities and societies.

Year 7

A Year 7 student should have a deep knowledge of the concept of God in the Abrahamic Faiths, development of the concept through history and how this is revealed (primarily through scripture). Each student should have a secure ability to explain diverse beliefs about God both within and between these faith traditions, and begin to understand and interpret religious texts as a source of authority.

Year 8

A Year 8 student should have a deep knowledge of the concept of 'God' in Hinduism and Sikhism, the concept of enlightenment in Buddhism and the diversity of how these concepts are understood in life and death, including through scripture, history and tradition. They will be able to relate and contrast this to their learning of the concept of God in the Abrahamic faiths. Each student should have a secure ability to explain reasons for diverse beliefs, and gain confidence in understanding and interpreting religious texts as a source of authority.

Year 9

A Year 9 student should have a detailed knowledge of key beliefs in Christianity and Islam, including comparison between and within the two religions. Each student should have an advanced ability to explain reasons for beliefs, confidently referencing and interpreting scripture as a source of authority, draw out how beliefs influence the actions of religious believers and begin to evaluate a variety of religious beliefs by presenting different views.

Year 10

A Year 10 student should have a detailed knowledge of the application of key beliefs in the lives of Christians and Muslims, and how they manifest in their practices and attitudes to ethical issues. Each student should have an advanced ability to explain reasons for and compare religious practices and ethical attitudes, using a wide range of relevant evidence, as well as a secure ability to evaluate a variety of religious practices and attitudes.

Year 11

A Year 11 student should have a detailed knowledge of beliefs, practices and attitudes in Christianity and Islam. Each student have a developed ability to explain, compare, apply and evaluate their knowledge.

KS5 - In RE A Level we seek to establish in the student an enquiring, critical and reflective approach to the study of religion and worldviews; in order to develop systematic knowledge and understanding of religious and philosophical thought and its contribution to individuals, communities and societies.

Legal and national framework for RE:

Religious Education is a statutory subject for all pupils aged between 5-19 years and we have a duty to provide RE in line with the National Curriculum requirement to offer a balanced and broadly-based curriculum. As an academy, we are not compelled to use the locally agreed syllabus (LAS) for RE however as a Trust we still engage with our borough schools to consult on the LAS and are aware of its content when planning our own curriculum. (See LAS [here](#)).

RE's place in the wider school curriculum

The RE curriculum has an important role within the wider school curriculum. As a Church of England Trust, the RE curriculum links to the wider school ethos and structures. In particular, RE has a large role to play in the school SMSC policy as it provides students with understanding of many of our trust practices (e.g. assemblies and tutor times), provides opportunities for spiritual reflection by evaluating philosophical questions (e.g. is there a life after death), provides students with understanding of a range of cultures, develops students into human beings able to live and be tolerant in a diverse society. The RE departments work closely with other Humanities departments in acknowledgement of the cross-curricular skills we share and therefore use joined up techniques to develop these e.g. evaluation. As with all subjects across the Trust, the RE curriculum has an important part to play in developing students' literacy skills, and therefore we include whole school strategies in our curriculum.

At Ealing Fields and Ada Lovelace, the RE curriculum at KS3 is taught alongside an Ethics curriculum (another 100 minutes a week). This has been uniquely developed to develop students into critical thinkers and active moral citizens and is particularly beneficial for their knowledge and skills development in RE. See Ethics curriculum overview for more details.

Implementation

Key principles of unit planning

Knowledge sequencing:

In year 7, we teach students the concept of God in the Abrahamic faiths in chronological order (although continually returning to prior learning throughout) to support a solid understanding of how these monotheistic faiths developed over time and to consolidate concepts that are common to all three religions. In year 8, we group the teaching of the Dharmic Faiths to reinforce students' understanding of these religions and their common concepts and geographical roots.

Rather than provide students with a broader and shallower teaching of many beliefs and practices of these religions, we teach an in-depth understanding of the concept of God, revelation and eschatology. We have chosen this focus to give time for students to grasp the complexity and diversity both within and between these religions, as well as the different ways these beliefs have evolved and originated in scripture, tradition and history. Therefore, we aim to present multiple perspectives of beliefs within each religion and introduce new beliefs by comparing and contrasting with those already learnt. We also examine scriptural passages and stories with students so they can have a detailed foundational understanding of scripture and revelation to approach a broader study of two religions later in the curriculum.

In year 9, we begin by teaching students the beliefs topics (Christianity and Islam) and introduce the influences of beliefs, as these provide an important grounding and foundation for the GCSE units they learn in year 10 and 11. At year 9, our curriculum goes beyond the GCSE syllabus requirements for these beliefs topics to prevent misconceptions or generalisations forming in students' understanding of these religions e.g. the teaching of denominations and the Bible (commonly misunderstood). In these two years of KS4, we then interleave and alternate between themes and practices topics to allow students to apply their knowledge learnt in the first two topics of key beliefs to new ethical issues and religious practices, as well as including retrieval practice of the first two topics as we advance through new topics.

Skills sequencing:

As outlined in our 'how do students get better at RE' section above, we do not adopt a hierarchy of command words linked to steps of progress, in each year we develop students subject-specific skills to both support and challenge students appropriately to be equipped with the scholarly skills to become theologians. This is due to our recognition that skills are not discrete entities that are simply 'mastered' in each year, rather, we understand such skills overlap and continually support each other throughout the curriculum. To become an able theologians, students need to be able to explain key beliefs with references to the scriptural sources they have been interpreted from. As their knowledge of these beliefs grow, their ability to compare beliefs both within and between religions will also develop and by requiring comparison with previously learnt concepts, we are supporting students' memory using retrieval practice. In time, students are then able to explain the links and reasoning between 'what someone believes' and 'what they are influenced to do'. Having developed this substantive knowledge of core beliefs and concepts, students are then best able to apply, make judgements and evaluate the impacts, values and importance of these beliefs and concepts as they progress through the curriculum as scholars of RE.

Legal requirements:

The law requires that agreed syllabuses (although as academies we are not bound to follow the Ealing LAS) must 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian while taking account of the teaching and practice of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain.' This requirement is reflected in our curriculum choice to teach all six major world faiths (all of which are represented in the UK and London) as well as our choice to study Christianity as one of the two religions required in the AQA GCSE syllabus.

The government outlines a school's duty to 'actively promote' the fundamental British Values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and acceptance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Our RE curriculum carries out this duty across many topics: teaching each of the six major world religions to encourage understanding and acceptance of those with many different faiths and beliefs; teaching of the UK law in regards to sexuality, marriage and the family; international law and regulations in relation to war and conflict; individual liberty and respect for the law in crime and punishment. In addition, we cover some topics required by the statutory Relationships and Sex Education, such as different types of family and attitudes to sex and marriage.

Sequencing of RE lessons

RE lessons vary according to their place within the scheme of learning and in order to meet the assessment objectives. However, we often include the following elements in the structure of our lessons, often strategies supported by cognitive science to support students' long-term memories:

- Retrieval practice to recap prior learning at the start of the lesson
- Introduce new content and information
- Application/analysis/evaluation of new content (in context of prior learning)
- AfL throughout, often using MWB and traffic light cards to ensure assessment on the whole class to inform next steps
- Exam practice (at KS4)
- Self assessment of low stakes testing in prep booklets

We support students' literacy using many of the following strategies:

- Toolkits (to aid writing, reading and oracy)
- Key word glossaries and knowledge organisers

- Structured talk
- Class reading and text dependent questions
- Writing frames and sentence parameters
- Modelling and part-modelling answers
- Literacy marking code
- Teacher modelling of tier two and tier three vocabulary

To support the delivery of the curriculum, we update regularly our lessons on COPIA, curriculum overviews by year group, unit planners (outlining assessment objectives) and an assessment planner.

Impact

Key assessment principles

In class, we regularly use low stakes testing to aid students' long term memory. This is largely through recap quizzes as starter tasks, retrieval quizzes in GCSE prep booklets, true and false quizzes, exam question practice in timed condition. For prep, we sometimes use forms quizzes which are self-marking and allow for repeated low-stakes questions and retrieval practice across the curriculum.

At Q2 and Q4, we assess students on cumulative and *substantive** knowledge across each key stage to facilitate recall and develop students' long term memory and learning. We assess students on the skills in line with the key stage they are in (see skills description above). At Q1 and Q3 we use a lighter-touch approach to assess students' knowledge and skills from recent lessons, particularly lighter-touch at KS3 in proportion to our curriculum time.

Summative assessments support students in developing their skills and knowledge because we test them on carefully selected knowledge and skills and we provide students with detailed individual and class feedback based on their WWWs and EBIs. We then create tasks and lessons following this feedback which requires students to redraft and respond to this feedback to ensure they make progress as a result of the assessment. The assessments are taken under exam conditions and so the process of attempting recall supports the transfer of information into the semantic long term memory, and this is reinforced in the feedback lessons which recall the same information following the assessment. The revision booklets, lessons and tasks prior to the assessment also support this consistent recall of information to strengthen students' long term memory. At KS4, our assessments use AQA GCSE exam style questions. At KS3 have used the assessment objectives to design our own exam questions to scaffold and support skill and knowledge acquisition.

Formative assessment is used throughout the curriculum to inform next steps for students and our future curriculum design. This is done by low stakes testing in class which informs the next task and teaching in class, as well as feeding into revision and review lessons in preparation for quarterly assessments. Heads of Department across the Trust also collaboratively review the curriculum following assessment points to adapt and refine the curriculum, target future assessments accurately and identify necessary interventions for sub-groups and classes where necessary. All classroom teachers also perform their own data analysis at quarterly assessment points to identify interventions for individual students, tweak their lessons according to weakness and common areas of misconceptions.

*Language used in reference to Ofsted's 2021 report into research in RE: [Research review series: religious education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/research-review-series-religious-education)