

## **Theology and Ethics Curriculum Statement**

There is a legal requirement for all schools to provide Religious Education and we have developed a programme of study that is rich in opportunities for individual spiritual and moral development and academic progress. Theology and Ethics is taught to all lower school students, all of which are entered in for the full course G.C.S.E examinations at the end of the three years of study. We also offer the study of Religious Studies as an option for sixth form students. The school has historically always valued the study of Theology and Ethics and continues to recognise the positive impact that Religious Education has on the holistic development of the student. Through the study and exploration of Theology students gain a wider understanding of how the religions of Christianity and Buddhism can impact and influence the lives of those who follow one and can better understand different cultures and in addition, how societies have been shaped by these religions. Students can better understand contemporary literature through contextualising them with the influence of Bible and other sources of authority. This can develop their literacy and oracy skills when interpreting texts and discussing abstract concepts. Study of religion promotes critical thinking and inquisitiveness within the student and requires the discipline of evaluation, interpretation, analysis, explanation and application to moral issues. These are transferable skills which are useful throughout their life.

Furthermore, students benefit from the opportunity to explore a number of contemporary moral dilemmas and issues that affect them, considering them from a local, national and global perspective. Theology and Ethics provides a safe environment to express and develop their own opinions on these issues, whilst learning to listen, understand and respect approaches and viewpoints that are different to their own. The thematic studies paper has some overlap with statutory PSHCE requirements and so the two disciplines work together in providing ample opportunity for development of the individual student and their spiritual and moral awareness. The primary benefit for the student is that they develop theological literacy, a sense of morality, spirituality, an awareness of their rights and responsibilities within a local, national and global world. The study of religion provides a context for religious beliefs regarding society and allows students a safe space to explore sensitive, metaphysical, theological, ethical and philosophical questions. The intent is inclusive and to develop students who have respect, empathy, acceptance of different cultures, ideals and viewpoints. It is to encourage students to be aware of contemporary moral issues and to learn to discuss these in a calm and rational manner. We aim to develop critical thinkers who engage with their world, are inquisitive and questioning in a respectful manner, and who recognise the strength in differences in people's cultures, attitudes and opinions in a diverse world. We aim to develop individuals who want to work towards developing a cohesive community and who challenge things that are unjust and result in inequalities.

In order to achieve this, we have chosen to study AQA Religious Studies A specification. This offers the opportunity to study Christianity along with another of the main six world religions of our choosing; we teach Buddhism as our second religion. The specification, as with all of the G.C.S.E specifications, requires the study of Christianity as recognition that we are a Christian country and this enables students to see how our society, culture and laws are linked with this. We have chosen Buddhism as the second religion as it offers a fascinating, comparative alternative that is rich in culture and diversity from eastern philosophy and religion. This develops on the education that students receive in key stage three, where they study Hinduism and the basics of Buddhism. It also provides a foundation knowledge for the study of Philosophy, Ethics and a choice of the development of Christian or Buddhist thought at A Level, should students wish to continue their study of religion to this level.

The AQA specification has 6 themes of which students are examined on four. We have chosen: Religion, Relationships and Families, Religion, Peace and Conflict, Religion Crime and Punishment, and Religion and Life. We have chosen these themes as we believe they are the most relevant to our students, offer a wider scope of study and exploration of different topical issues.

Year 9 – Buddhist Ethics, Christian Beliefs and Teachings, Christian Practices and Religion Peace and Conflict.

Year 10 – Buddhist Beliefs, Buddhist Practices and Religion Relationships and Family life. Religion and Life Part 1: The origins of life and the universe and animal rights.

Year 11 – Religion and Life part 2: Medical ethics, Religion Crime and Punishment.

We teach in this order, so that we embed the theological knowledge of applying Christian and Buddhist teachings to the thematic studies overtime. The themes are taught in this order as the level of maturity required to properly engage with the more complex and sensitive themes. We further enrich our programme of study with guest speakers from different faiths and organisations and plan national and international trips linked to our study. We do not restrict student learning to the exam board specification but use this as a framework for core knowledge, skills and develop learning and thinking beyond this.

RE is compulsory for all pupils in academies and free schools as set out by law and the content delivered reflects the fact that the traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking into account the teaching and practices of other principal religions. We are inclusive and respect the religious backgrounds of all pupils and teach about more than one religion and non- religious worldviews too, to enable students to understand world views and be prepared for their future role in society.

In England, parents and carers have the right to withdraw their children from RE or parts of RE and can do so without giving any explanation. This right of withdrawal exists for all pupils in all types of schools. Whilst parents or carers have a right to withdraw children from RE, it should be noted that students may also encounter religions and beliefs and wider aspects of faith in other areas of the curriculum from which there is no right of withdrawal.

If pupils are withdrawn from RE, schools have a duty to supervise them, though not to provide additional teaching.

If you are considering withdrawing your child from RE, or parts of RE, please contact the Headteacher to arrange a discussion