

Curriculum Ambition Statement – Religious Studies

Religious education encourages pupils to learn from different religions, beliefs and values and traditions while exploring their own beliefs and questions of meaning. Through religious education pupils are encouraged to develop their sense of identity and belonging. It enables them to flourish individually and within their communities and as citizens of a pluralistic society and global community. We want to challenge them to reflect on, consider, analyse, interpret and evaluate issues of faith, truth, belief and ethics and communicate their responses, which plays an important role in preparing them for adult life, employment and lifelong learning. We want to enable pupils to develop respect for and sensitivity towards others, particularly those whose faiths and beliefs are different from their own. This will help to promote the British values of tolerance and respect and enable pupils to combat prejudice where they may encounter it. It is our vision that the cognitive dissonance experienced by those whose dearly held beliefs and values are challenged and questioned is experienced by all pupils in a safe and supporting environment. The ability to question evidence and challenges one's own views in a world plagued by social media algorithms and confirmation bias news stories is of increasing importance and Religious Studies at Downlands aims to imbue pupils with the skills and resilience to challenge content that may be considered, bias, unkind or discriminatory.

Key Stage 3

At Key Stage 2 pupils follow the West Sussex agreed syllabus for RS, and our curriculum builds on and develops this. In KS3, year 7 begins with an introduction to world religions, as well as evaluating the reason for studying world faiths and the place of RS in the wider curriculum. Pupils are introduced to the six main world religions in chronological order of their development, beginning with Hinduism and culminating with a unit on Christianity at the end of the year. We have specifically chosen to teach all of the world religions, each of which has a major presence and impact in the UK, as our context lacks the diversity of religious affiliation represented in the rest of the UK and it is important pupils are aware of the rich religious diversity that characterises and befits British culture. This also builds upon the Key Stage 2 curriculum, and focuses on themes that directly relate to the knowledge and understanding required at GCSE, in paper 1 Christian Beliefs. In year 8, Spring term onwards, and year 9 there is a greater emphasis on ethical themes (for example: *Why is there so much poverty and inequality in the world? Why is there suffering in the world? Etc...*), particularly linking with paper 2 at GCSE. Pupils are given the opportunity to think about the nature of knowledge, existence, belonging and truth, ask philosophical questions, sharing and justifying their own beliefs and those of others, which contributes to the development of the pupils, spiritual, moral and cultural education. The curriculum is sensitive to and responsive

to the learning needs of all pupils and differentiation and scaffolding helps pupils to access content and build key learning skills. Religious education aims to improve pupil's communication skills and expose all pupils to lively debate and opportunities to both share and challenge. Literacy is also an important focus throughout the key stages, and at key stage 3 pupils are taught the key words and concepts needed at GCSE and beyond.

Key Stage 4

At key stage 4 we follow the AQA (A) syllabus. The themes build upon and develop those studied at Key Stage 3, which are: religion and life, religions and social justice; religion and war and religion and relationships. Although world religions are touched upon at GCSE (hence their introduction at Key Stage 3), Christianity and Judaism are the two chosen principle religions. These are chosen due to the close relationship between them (Abrahamic faiths share many themes in common) and because the demographic of the school is well cultured in the main practices, beliefs and traditions of the Christian faith.

Skills

1. Knowledge and Understanding

Pupils are taught about the six main world religions, with a specific focus on Christianity as the principle religion of the UK. Christianity and Judaism are studied as part of the AQA GCSE (syllabus A) and therefore the concepts taught at key stage 3 in these religions, prepares pupils for a deeper understanding and retrieval at Key Stage 4.

2. Application and Interpretation

The purpose of the KS3 curriculum is for pupils to build their enquiry skills and to be exposed to the challenges that the ultimate questions Religious Studies warrants, preparing them for the challenges of GCSE RS as well as for living in a society with a diverse faith and spiritual background. Pupils are offered the opportunity to immerse themselves in the knowledge of differing worldviews. Through studying key themes, pupils should be able to understand differing perspectives and interpretations, and as a result appreciate diversity and social cohesion.

Analysis and Evaluation

Pupils will deploy analysis and evaluative skills in exploring different belief systems, reflecting upon their own personal worldview. They may present their work in various ways, developing written skills in preparation for GCSE study and engaging with religious art, music, and artefacts to deepen their understanding and application.

Legacy

Religious Education has an important role in preparing pupils for curriculum demands of Key Stage 5 in a range of subjects including 'A' Levels in RS, Sociology, Psychology, Law, among others. The skills of evaluation and argumentative reasoning are transferable in many subjects pupils will transition on to college and beyond. These are also invaluable skills for life.

