

RS Intent and Implementation Statements

Intent (KS3 and KS4)

The Religious Studies Department at Dorothy Stringer truly believes that the study of the religious aspect of humanity is essential in the understanding of humanity as a whole.

Religious Studies at Dorothy Stringer is concerned with the study from a phenomenological standpoint. It is therefore the function of the Department to help students understand and explore the phenomenon associated with religious belief and the practice and expression of that belief.

It is evident that most students who arrive at Dorothy Stringer in Year 7 have had limited exposure to Religious Education at their primary schools. With that in mind, we aim to lay a foundation early on for their comprehensive learning in Religious Studies throughout their time at Dorothy Stringer.

Religious Studies is guided by the Agreed Syllabus of Brighton and Hove, and the latest Syllabus was introduced into schools in March 2018. As such, the Department follows this syllabus to ensure that we “provide a high quality Religious Education curriculum that will make a significant contribution to the development of a cohesive and compassionate society” (Brighton & Hove City Council Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education, March 2018)

The Department is committed to developing the whole student to be a person with a range of skills and wholesome attitudes and therefore we provide students with the knowledge and understanding of other cultures, traditions, and ways of thinking. We endeavour to encourage all students to explore the big questions of life and existence in order to construct informed opinions and so that they are confident in articulating and expressing their own views. To that end, we create and promote opportunities for students to ask questions about the world and reflect on their own beliefs, values, and experiences. We are also skilled in nurturing young people who are confident in their own beliefs and values so that they can respect the religious and cultural traditions of others. It is not part of the Department’s function to lead the students towards or away from any one thought-system or towards or away from none at all, save that of encouraging the students to be open to and to question ideas and to develop understanding of why people believe and act in the way that they do.

Throughout their courses in Religious Studies at Dorothy Stringer, students will be utilising skills such as discussion, analysis, and evaluation; fostering attitudes including empathy, open-mindedness, responsibility, and respect for others; and cultivating their own ethics and moral principles.

The students are blessed with having an experienced and collaborative team of teachers to teach and guide them who, with their varying backgrounds and specialisms, can help the students to develop as a sense of identity and belonging through self-awareness and reflection and for students to explore this sense of identity as local, national and global citizens.

Implementation

Key Stage 3

The Department delivers 3 one-hour lessons a fortnight to all KS3 classes. In all three years of the Key Stage, we aim to expose students to a variety of religious and cultural ideas across the world. We also give a systematic approach (e.g. the study of Buddhism and Hinduism) as well as a thematic approach (e.g. festivals and the anthropological view of the rites of passage in religions and cultures) to the study of religions. We will scaffold learning so all students can access our content and use effective questioning to support this. We explore many social, moral, spiritual, and cultural themes and issues.

Across all topics and units of study, the Department supports the teaching of literacy by encouraging reading, the ability to interpret sacred texts and the use of subject specific vocabulary with increasing accuracy and fluency.

Year 7

Due to varying levels of delivery of Religious Studies at KS2, we begin KS3 with an exploration of the prehistory of religious belief and practice, followed by building a foundation of key religious beliefs and stories:

Unit 1: The History of Religion (e.g. Palaeolithic* and Neolithic* beliefs and practices)

Unit 2: Stories and Myths (creation stories from around the world, Biblical creation story and the story of Noah's Ark*)

Unit 3: The nature and use of the Bible (e.g. basic content of the Bible, referencing)

Unit 4: Patriarchs (e.g. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses*)

Unit 5: A study of Hinduism (e.g. beliefs, deities, practices)

Year 8

The content for this year takes a thematic approach and aims to consolidate and embed the knowledge and understanding established in Year 7:

Unit 1: The Rites of Passage* (birth, growing up and death)

Unit 2: Festivals* (Passover, Hanukkah and Advent and Christmas)

Unit 3: The Life of Jesus (birth, ministry*, parables, miracles, death, and resurrection of Jesus)

Unit 4: A study of the life and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr*

[**Unit 5: Sacred Places** (e.g. places of worship, pilgrimage), if time]

Year 9

In Year 9, the students start by looking at the nature of religion through a study of Smart's Seven Dimensions of Religion. Some aspects of these 7 Dimensions are then taken as themes across Year 9:

Unit 1: The Nature of Religion* (primary and secondary religion, Smart's 7 Dimensions)

Unit 2: Prayer and Worship (ritual, e.g. Salah*, aids to worship)

Unit 3: God and Humanity* (doctrine, e.g. beliefs about God, philosophical arguments about knowledge and for and against the existence of God)

Unit 4: Ethics* (e.g. ethical dilemmas and theories, abortion/euthanasia, animal rights)

Unit 5: Global Citizenship (global issues, e.g. environment, terrorism, human and child rights)

Unit 6: A study of the beliefs and practices of Buddhism (e.g. history of the Buddha, geographical spread of Buddhism, beliefs, practices, and Dalai Lama)

Throughout all units of work, we encourage students to question and challenge each other through debate and discussion in a safe and stimulating learning environment which allows them to express their views. We regularly provide immediate, verbal feedback and there are formal assessments at the end of most units (indicated above by *) which allow the students to have personal written feedback on strengths and be provided with areas for improvement. The formal assessments all incorporate knowledge, understanding and evaluation. Alongside the four formal assessments, each year also has two keyword tests to encourage progress in literacy and further enhance student knowledge. It is crucial to note that all the keywords are subject specific and many therefore are not in the English language (e.g. from Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit).

The units of work throughout the Key Stage embed and build upon prior knowledge and we often make links about overarching concepts in the subject. The Religious Studies Department naturally works well with the other Humanities subjects and there are elements in our curriculum which cause us to make links with the historical and geographical backgrounds of religion and culture. Additionally, there are some areas which couple with PSHE.

Key Stage 4

At Key Stage 4, the department now offers the Religious Studies GCSE as an Option subject. This is now in its third year. Previously, it was a compulsory full course GCSE for all KS4 students and the Option subject had been GCE AS Level in Religious Studies, which included components in Philosophy of Religion, Ethics and Buddhism. All students at Key Stage 4 now follow the non-examined Core Ethical and Religious Studies programme.

GCSE Option

We study the AQA Specification A in Religious Studies in which we cover the beliefs and practices of 2 religions, Christianity, and Buddhism, for one paper and four religious, philosophical, and ethical themes for a second examination. This is delivered in five one-hour lessons a fortnight.

The structure is designed to establish the foundation of knowledge and understanding by studying the beliefs of both religions from the outset, followed by two themes (currently Peace and Conflict and Crime and Punishment) in Year 10. At the end of the year and the start of Year 11, we consolidate and build on students' knowledge and understanding about the beliefs by studying the practices of the 2 religions and finishing the course with the final two themes (currently Human Rights and Social Justice and Religion and Life).

Unit 1: Beliefs in Buddhism (e.g. the life and teachings of the Buddha, human destiny and Pure Land)

Unit 2: Beliefs in Christianity (e.g. beliefs about God, creation, Jesus, and the afterlife)

Unit 3: Theme D: Peace and Conflict (e.g. causes of war, religious attitudes to war, pacifism, WMD, protest and terrorism)

Unit 4: Theme E: Crime and Punishment (e.g. laws and justice, types of punishment, theories of punishment, death penalty)

Unit 5: Practices in Buddhism (e.g. temples and shrines, puja, meditation, funeral rituals, festivals and Buddhist ethics)

Unit 6: Practices in Christianity (e.g. types of prayer and worship, sacraments, festivals, Christianity in the world)

Unit 7: Theme F: Human Rights and Social Justice (e.g. Human rights, wealth and poverty, racial and gender inequality)

Unit 8: Theme B: Religion and Life (e.g. environment and animal rights, abortion, and euthanasia)

During the course, we encourage students to question and challenge each other through debate and discussion and use effective and high order questioning to support this. Using the skills founded in Key Stage 3, we will further promote evaluation, reflection, scrutiny, and analysis throughout the GCSE course. We aim to scaffold learning so all students can access our content and carry out regular recap activities to support recall and retention. We model high quality writing to support maximum progress in literacy skills for examination writing and employ a wide range of differentiated resources and activities and stimuli (e.g. group tasks, documentaries, artwork).

We assess formally with regular end of unit tests in order to assess the learning and reflect on student progress. The assessments are always based on the rubric of the examinations so that the students are prepared for their final and external assessments. Subsequently, we use this data to shape intervention and give students personal feedback on strengths and next steps towards their progress. Throughout the courses, we also help to develop the use of specialist vocabulary (English and Sanskrit/Pali), and the ability to interpret sacred texts. Social, moral, spiritual, and cultural issues are explored in depth.

Additional skills, such as investigation, empathy, and the development of good listening skills as part of effective communication, are all highly beneficial for most courses at higher education and a good number of students go onto to study compatible subjects at colleges (e.g. philosophy, critical thinking, classics, sociology, psychology and where available, religious studies).

Core Curriculum (Ethical and Religious Studies) from September 2020

The Department also provides all Key Stage 4 students at Dorothy Stringer with a Core Ethical and Religious Studies programme. This is a non-examined course and is delivered in 2 one-hour lessons a fortnight. We have designed and created the topics for this course, which will cover many varied ethical and religious studies over two years. During the programme, we encourage and instil students' skills in investigation, empathy, debate, evaluation, and leadership.

Despite this not being an examined course, the Department is excited about this new area of our curriculum and eager to continue providing a focused and structured study in ethical and religious studies. Each unit of work is designed to fit in each half termly period of study.

Year 10

Unit 1: Social Justice and Human Rights

Unit 2: Wealth and Poverty

Unit 3: Crime and Punishment

Unit 4: Technology and Ethics

Unit 5: War and Peace

Unit 6: Inspirational People

Year 11

Unit 1: Politics and the Media

Unit 2: Life and Death

Unit 3: New Religions

Unit 4: We are looking at doing a final unit on Environmental Issues addressing the climate and biodiversity crisis and to help to develop climate literacy.