

GCSE RS Curriculum overview

Year 9

This is taught to ALL students as part of the Key Stage 3 curriculum. It starts in January of year 9 at the start of the Spring term.

Relationships and families

Religion and life

Year 10

Religion, peace and conflict

Religion, human rights and social justice

Buddhism beliefs

Year 11

Buddhism practices

Christianity beliefs

Christianity practices

Summary of reasoning behind and sequencing of the curriculum

Year 9

The sheer amount of content in the new GCSEs makes students studying content from the GCSE in year 9 desirable (although I have delayed the start of the course until Christmas in order to spend longer on racism than the GCSE does) but we feel strongly that the two modules (Relationships and families and Religion and Life) are ones all students should study (and they do) because they deal with such vital issues. These include in the relationships module issues such as the role and purpose of families, sex and sexuality, contraception, marriage and divorce and gender prejudice. Religion and life includes the two controversial and important issues of abortion and euthanasia. We feel that the end of year 9 is an excellent time to look at these key issues in preparation for adult life and is part of our overall contribution in RS to the PHSE, citizenship and SMSC provision in the school.

Year 10

The basic order of the curriculum is determined by the GCSE specification although I have made some changes where I feel the learning of the students will be improved. This is particularly the case with year 10. Religion and life is done in year 9 as it contains so many Christian teachings that will be valuable to the students throughout the course and in so many modules such as "God gives and takes life" and "We are all made in the image of God". You can clearly see how these would benefit students when studying the first module of year 10 which is Religion, peace and conflict. They also have clear links with the second module which is Religion, human rights and social justice. The quotes above emphasise the equality before God of all people, for example. The module builds on the study of racism in year 9. The links between the roles of men and women study in the Relationships and families module and the Sexism aspect of the Human rights and social justice module are emphasised. The module is also excellent in a citizenship sense because it allows students to think about the morals of charging interest on loans which is very relevant as they are

almost bound to borrow money in their life and it is vital that they do this responsibly. The students then move on to the Buddhism beliefs module. I have put the Buddhism modules before the Christianity ones because the background knowledge and understanding of Buddhism will be less than Christianity and if they are done first it allows greater time for consolidation. There is an additional consolidation resource in Buddhism. This takes the form of summary completion sentences for each topic. Students read them aloud to each other and then to the whole class so they familiarise themselves with the key terms and language in Buddhism on a regular basis. They present the same opportunities for differentiated and “bounce on” questioning that the summary sheets and 10 questions do. This initiative was started to address the fact that students were achieving less well in Buddhism than Christianity (that is also why the sequencing was changed) and they have been received very positively by the students who say it has really improved their confidence in Buddhism. In the results for the 2018-19 GCSE the students performed slightly better in Buddhism than Christianity for the first time. I chose Buddhism because it is so different to the other mainstream religions and its emphasis on reflection and thinking can be very valuable when students think about how they will live their own lives.

Year 11

Year 11 begins with the Buddhism practices module. It makes sense to complete the beliefs module first because then students can see the logic behind the practices themselves and their connection to the beliefs of Buddhism. The same logic applies to the Christianity modules that come next in year 11. The main issue with teaching the course in one lesson a week is the lack of time for revision. This is why students learn new content almost right up to the end of the course. Revision starts in the second lesson of the whole course and happens in every lesson right up until the end. The order this is done in varies according each group and its strengths and weaknesses. The modules covered in the mock exam may also change because of this so that students practice their weaknesses and occasionally reinforce their strengths rather than the other way around. The amount of time in each lesson for revision gradually grows throughout the course and the amount of time spend on new work decreases. At the start of the course students spend about 15 minutes of each lesson on revision and 40 on new work. New work ends only about 3 weeks before the students take their final examinations and by then the ratio will be exactly the other way around with revision taking up 40 minutes and the final pieces of new work 15.

Overall summary

The provision of GCSE RS varies from year to year depending on what the Head Teacher and I think is best for the particular year group. We have taken an opted group through with 20 students and although they did not get their GCSE results because of the coronavirus they would have done exceptionally well based on the assessment data. This is very reliable because in the year 2018-19 the difference between predicted grades and the overall scores of the cohort of 92 students was 0! In other year groups we have taken larger cohorts through in one lesson a week. The students achieve less well, of course, but their residual (the difference between their scores in RS and their scores in other subjects) is still positive. This is the curriculum model for RS at GCSE that we are currently using. One of the reasons for this is that more students benefit from the clear PHSE, citizenship and SMSC curriculum content within the course. However, as the only specialist teacher of RS there is clearly a limit on the number of students I can take through. I take as many as I can.

Consolidation of key knowledge, understanding and skills as well as ensuring that students can revise effectively in the minimum amount of time with the subject being taught in one lesson a week are key priorities. This is achieved through summary sheets and 10 question quizzes that the students have in a poly-pocket at the back of their books. The summary sheets allow the students to quickly sum up the main areas of each topic and also model because + example sentences. The 10 questions then allow a deeper knowledge and understanding. These resources are used at the beginning of each lesson in an environment of high challenge/low threat. They are also used as an opportunity to “bounce on” question allowing the skills of understanding and evaluation (discussion) to be developed. Differentiated questioning is a key strategy in these starters. These resources are also the main base for homework tasks each week.

Assessment takes the following forms. Books are marked according to the Humanities faculty policy. All work is checked for completion. Homeworks are marked using a skill letter and ticks system that runs right through the Humanities faculty from year 7. At least one target in the subject language is given using the GCSE Marking and Target Sheet. Practice examinations are marked in detail and targets are set. The students then complete a feedback lesson where they build data about how they have done such as how they did in each skill and how close they were to the next grade. They then complete a personal response based on the data they have built up and the teacher’s feedback and comments. These feedback lessons are already familiar to students when they start the course as they are very similar to those used from the beginning of KS3 when examinations are completed. The students complete a mock examination around Christmas time in year 11.

Key knowledge, understanding, evaluation/discussion themes and concepts for each module

Year 9

Relationships and families

Key knowledge

Key Christian and Buddhist views about sex and sexuality, contraception and family planning, marriage, divorce and gender equality. Key evidence about what people do in modern Britain concerning these issues.

Key understanding

Explain two different religious beliefs about sexuality. Explain two different religious views about the use of contraception. Explain two different religious views about whether people should get married. Explain two different religious views about whether divorce is right. Explain two different

Key evaluation/discussion

“Marriage is for life”

Key concepts

Adultery. Annulment. Celibacy. Chastity. Gender prejudice. Traditional views vs. Modern views.

Religion and life

Key knowledge

Key Christian and Buddhist views about what scientific and religious truth are. Bible creation story. Big Bang. Evolution. Key Catholic and Church of England views about abortion. Key Christian and

Buddhist views about euthanasia. What a hospice is. Christian and Buddhist views about the environment and how it should be treated. Key Christian views about the treatment of animals.

Key understanding

Explain two different religious views about creation. Explain two different religious views about abortion. Explain two different religious views about euthanasia. Explain two different religious views about how humans should treat the environment. Explain two different religious views about the treatment of animals.

Key evaluation/discussion

“Only God should give and take life”

Key concepts

Creation. Resurrection. Heaven. Hell. Reincarnation. Sanctity. Rights. Stewardship. Dominion.

Year 10

Religion, peace and human conflict

Key knowledge

Key Christian and Buddhist views about violent protest and terrorism. Reasons for war such as greed, retaliation and self-defence. Bible teachings such as turn the other cheek. The idea of deterrence when relating to weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Do not kill-10 Commandments. Elements of Aquinas’ Just War Theory such as just cause, last resort and proportionality. The fact that Holy War used to be part of Christianity (Crusades) but isn’t today. Jihad in Islam/Extreme Islam. Key bible quotes on Pacifism such as “Blessed are the peacemakers”. Responses to victims of war especially the Golden Rule-Love your neighbour as yourself.

Key understanding

Explain two different views about whether conflict should be used. Explain two different views about the use of violent protest. Explain two reasons why countries go to war. Explain two different views about WMDs. Explain two views about whether a country should ever go to war (Pacifism vs. Just War theory). Explain two religious views about the use of Holy War. Explain two ways in which religious people respond to victims of war.

Key evaluation/discussion

“It is never right to use violence to solve our problems”

Key concepts

Peace. Conflict. Violence Protest. Terrorism. Just War. Holy War. Pacifism.

Religion, human rights and social justice

Key knowledge

Rights equal entitlements. Responsibilities equal duties. Justice equals fairness. Society includes all of us. Social justice is fairness for everyone. Basic human rights such as life, liberty and education. Prejudice is judging someone before you know them based on something about them. Discrimination is acting on a prejudice. Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 and Human

Rights Act 1998. Quotes from St. Paul such as “There is no Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female. We are all one in Christ Jesus” and “Women should remain silent in church”. Christian and Buddhist views about religious freedom. Christians believe Christianity is the only way to God. Buddhists rarely try to persuade others to become Buddhists. Positive Discrimination. Laws on racism and sexism. Martin Luther King’s “I have a dream” speech. Rosa Parks and Bus Boycott. Bible quotes such as “You cannot serve both God and money”. Meaning of the word exploitation. What aid tends to be short term and what aid tends to be long term.

Key understanding

Explain two different views about the importance of human rights. Explain two different views about prejudice and discrimination. Explain two different views about the issue of sexuality. Explain two religious views about sexism. Explain two religious views about the issue of religious freedom. Explain two religious views about prejudice and discrimination on the basis of disability. Explain two religious views about racism. Explain two different religious views about whether someone should be wealthy. Explain two religious views about why poverty exists. Explain two religious views about the exploitation of the poor. Explain two religious views about giving money to the poor.

Key evaluation/discussion

“Discrimination is always wrong”

Key concepts

Human rights. Social justice. Prejudice. Discrimination. Gender. Sexuality. Religious freedom. Disability. Racism. Wealth and poverty. Exploitation.

Buddhism beliefs

Key knowledge

How Siddhattha’s early life was luxurious. The Four Sights. Ascetic. Meditation. Enlightenment. Middle Way. Dhamma. Three refuges. Dependent arising. Samsara. Nirvana (nibbana). Dukkha. Anicca. Kisa Gotami. Anatta. Five aggregates and the chariot. Four Noble Truths. Suffering is universal. Tanha-craving. 3 poisons. Eightfold Path is same as Fourth Noble Truth. Right action, right speech and right concentration. Theravada Buddhism. Mahayana Buddhism. Sunyata and the laptop. Buddha-nature and Buddha-hood. Arhat. Bodhisattva. Pure Land Buddhism. Amitabha Buddha.

Key understanding

Explain two views about why the Buddha concluded that we should live a middle way in life. Explain two views about how a Buddhist can achieve Enlightenment. Explain two views about why the Dhamma is so important to Buddhists. Explain two views about what Buddhists believe happens to us after we die. Explain two aspects of the belief in dependent arising. Explain two views about the importance of the three Marks of Existence (Signs of Being or Universal Truths). Explain two views about the concept of the five aggregates. Explain two views about the importance of the Four Noble Truths. Explain two views about the importance of the Eightfold Path. Explain two differences between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhists. Explain two differences between an Arhat and a Bodhisattva. Explain two views about how Pure Land Buddhists believe you can reach Enlightenment.

Key evaluation/discussion

“Greed and selfishness can be defeated.” Evaluate (discuss) this statement.

Key concepts

Middle Way. Enlightenment. Dhamma. Dependent arising. Samsara. Dukkha. Anicca. Anatta. Following the Eightfold Path can defeat greed and selfishness. 3 poisons. Tanha. Theravada = Orthodox and Traditional/personal Enlightenment. Mahayana = help others to Enlightenment. Pure Land.

Year 11

Buddhism practices

Key knowledge

Parts of a temple (main hall, meditation hall, study hall, shrine and stupa (pagoda). Monasteries. Puja. Chanting. Mantras. Samatha meditation. Kasinas. Vipassana meditation. Walking meditation. Visualisation. Thangkas. Mandalas. Sky burial. Wesak. Paranirvana Day. Karma. Rebirth (reincarnation). Karuna (compassion). Metta (loving kindness). Five Moral Precepts. Six perfections.

Key understanding

Explain two reasons a temple has different rooms and sections. Explain two reasons why Buddhists use chanting in worship. Explain two reasons for Samatha meditation. Explain two reasons for Vipassana meditation. Explain two reasons why Buddhists use visualisation in worship. Explain two different aspects of a Buddhist funeral. Explain two reasons why Theravada Buddhists celebrate Wesak. Explain two reasons why Mahayana Buddhists celebrate Paranirvana Day. Explain two reasons why Karma is important to Buddhists. Explain two reasons why Karuna is such an important concept to Buddhists. Explain two reasons why Metta is such an important concept for Buddhists. Explain two of the five moral precepts. Explain two of the six perfections.

Key evaluation/discussion

“Meditation is the most important aspect of Buddhist worship.”

Key concepts

Chanting and mantras. Meditation. Visualisation. Festivals. Karma and rebirth. Compassion and loving kindness. Principles (Five moral precepts). Qualities and virtues (Six perfections).

Christianity beliefs

Key knowledge

Catholic. Protestant. Church of England. Methodist. Denominations. Omnipotent. Omnipresent. Omnibenevolent. The problem of evil. Literalist. The Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). Ascension. Life after death. Day of judgement. Heaven. Hell. Purgatory. Sin. Salvation. Atonement.

Key understanding

Explain two reasons why there are splits within Christianity. Explain two Christian beliefs about the nature of God (what God is like). Explain two different Christian beliefs about the Trinity. Explain two different Christian beliefs about how the world began. Explain two Christian beliefs about the

incarnation. Explain two reasons why the crucifixion is so important to Christians. Explain two reasons why the resurrection is so important to Christians. Explain two different Christian beliefs about life after death. Explain two different Christian beliefs about salvation.

Key evaluation/discussion

“Belief in the resurrection is the most important one for Christians.”

Key concepts

Omnipotence. Omnibenevolence. Trinity. Literalism. Incarnation. Crucifixion. Resurrection. Ascension. Life after death. Salvation.

Christianity practices

Key knowledge

Liturgical and non-liturgical worship. Informal/charismatic worship. Prayer. The Lord’s Prayer. Baptism (Christening). Holy Communion/Eucharist/Mass. Pilgrimage (Lourdes vs. Iona). Festivals (Christmas and Easter). Food banks. Trussell Trust. Street Pastors. Mission. Evangelism. Conversion. Reconciliation between the churches. Ecumenism. Christian persecution. Church response to poverty. Christian Aid.

Key understanding

Explain the logic behind two different forms of Christian worship. Explain two reasons why Christians pray. Explain two different forms of Christian Baptism. Explain two reasons why Holy Communion is so important to Christians. Explain two different beliefs about Holy Communion. Explain two reasons why Christians would go on a pilgrimage. Explain two reasons why Christmas is so important to Christians. Explain two reasons why Easter is so important to Christians. Explain two reasons why Christians should support their local community. Explain two different Christian beliefs about evangelism. Explain two reasons why Christians should work together. Explain two reasons why Christians are persecuted around the world. Explain two Christian responses to the issue of poverty.

Key evaluations/discussions

“Christmas is the most important festival for Christians” “Worship should always take set forms”
“Helping the local community is the most important action for Christians”

Key concepts

Liturgy. Prayer. Sacraments. Holy Communion/Eucharist/Mass. Pilgrimage. Festivals and their meaning. Good Samaritan. Love your neighbour. Mission. Evangelism. Ecumenism. Persecution. Charity.

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