

Religious Studies Department Rationale

Through a broad, in-depth and varied study of religion and worldviews, students will be more informed about important issues and questions in society, and in doing so develop their ability to think critically and become more intellectually autonomous.

AQA Specification A Aims

Courses based on this specification should encourage students to:

- develop their knowledge and understanding of religions and non-religious beliefs, such as atheism and humanism
- develop their knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs, teachings and sources of wisdom and authority, including through their reading of key religious texts, other texts and scriptures of the religions they are studying
- develop their ability to construct well-argued, well-informed, balanced and structured written arguments, demonstrating their depth and breadth of understanding of the subject
- reflect on and develop their own values, belief, meaning, purpose, truth and their influence on human life
- reflect on and develop their own values, beliefs and attitudes in the light of what they have learnt and contribute to their preparation for adult life in a pluralistic society and global community.

Interpretation, Application, Evaluation & Debate are the key skills developed throughout the GCSE course

YEAR 9	Content	Rationale / Link to Specification
Spring Term	Islam: beliefs and teachings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• As indicated in the GCSE specification	<p>The two beliefs and teachings units are taken first as these are fundamental to the rest of the course. The themes units all use religious teachings and show how they are applied to a variety of issues, so before we reach this, we study those beliefs and teachings.</p> <p>Study begins with the concept of Tawhid as the most important concept in Islamic belief, followed by learning about the origins of Islam and role of Tawhid in that, which then moves us to learn about prophethood, placing Muhammad in the prophetic tradition reaching back to Abraham. This then leads us to consider the Qur'an as the written record of the message given to Muhammad, along with another source of authority for Shia Muslims, the Imamate. Having established the fundamentals, we then consider some of the beliefs that have grown from this, namely the nature of God, angels, predestination and afterlife. We finish this unit by studying jihad, which belongs in the 'practices' unit, but is placed here to assist with the role of the unit as something to be built on in later study.</p>
	Christianity: beliefs and teachings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• As indicated in the GCSE specification	<p>Study begins by considering the nature of God, including the distinctly Christian idea of the Trinity alongside the more common idea of monotheism. Next comes a study of teachings about creation which links back to roles of the Trinity, but also includes study of how the creation myths can be variously interpreted. This then sets up the narrative approach to Christian theology – the world was created good (link back to nature of God) but then it went wrong i.e. study of the Fall. This then leads us to consider the problem of evil, which is taken from the Existence of God unit (Paper 2)</p>

Summer Term		but put here to help contextualise Christian theology round a central problematic issue. Having considered this as a philosophical and theological problem, we learn what sin is and the Christian teachings about what God did about the problem of sin i.e. incarnation and atonement, so understanding the role of Christ in salvation. Different views about the precise means of salvation are then considered, along with the influence that belief in salvation has on Christians, before we move to study the outcome of atonement, teachings about judgement and afterlife.
	Influential people	If there is time at the end of term, rather than start a new unit (there are often set changes over the summer, so it is important to ensure that pupils are all at the same point at the start of Y10), we take a side step to study some of the influential people who will be studied in the themes units. This means that students are introduced to these people and have chance to develop a more rounded grasp of who they are and in what context they lived.

YEAR 10	Content	Rationale / Link to Specification
Autumn Term	Religion, Crime and Punishment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As indicated in the GCSE specification 	This unit builds on knowledge from Paper 1, for example, knowing about beliefs on the origin of evil contributes to learning about the concepts of good and evil and how these relate to crime and punishment, as does knowledge of beliefs about forgiveness. Study begins with types and causes of crime, and a suite of examples of crimes are taught, examples which are then used throughout the unit when discussing the impact of crime and how criminals ought to be punished. Then we study the attitudes to the various aims of punishment and other issues related to our attitude to criminals, notably the issue of forgiveness and victim suffering, before then learning about the different forms of punishment, connecting them to the aims of punishment, and then considering a variety of views.
Spring Term	Religion, Peace and Conflict <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As indicated in the GCSE specification 	This unit begins by raising the issue of violence and the circumstances in which violence is used, which leads us to consider the key issue of when violence is justified. The debate over the justification of violence runs throughout the unit. Next we study Christian and Islamic teachings about the justification of violence, as these then form the basis of discussions over the coming lessons, thus giving chance to recap and reuse these key details. Study then turns to the issue of war. We begin by looking at the Law of Armed Conflict and noting how this governs both reasons for going to war and behaviour in war. A case study of the 2003 War in Iraq is used here, and will again be used in coming lessons. Next we study three Christian attitudes to war, noting their various attitudes to when war can be justified and what they say about how war is to be conducted. The concept of Just War is then related to the Law of Armed Conflict, showing how this idea has developed over centuries and how religion and society have influenced each other in this regard. Then we study Islamic attitudes to war, partly building on the concept of jihad studied in the Beliefs and Teachings section earlier. Following this, we move to consider attitudes to terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, using the same theme of the justification of violence, based on the teachings already studied.
	Christianity: practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As indicated in the GCSE 	Having studied half of the themes units, we return to Paper 1. This is partly so that there is variety in the issues studied, but because of the close link between the beliefs and teachings units and the practices units, it affords the chance to recap some key aspects of the opening units and link them to religious practices, thus

Summer Term	specification	<p>ensuring there is an element of interleaved repetition in the course. This unit is built around the concept of church, so the first lesson involves studying the various meanings of this term, then mapping out the various practices studied in this unit and how they relate to this central concept. This means that all the practices studied are learned as being in relation to this key idea rather than being just a list of practices.</p> <p>The unit then considers firstly what Christians do in the church building (worship, prayer, sacraments), then what they might do outside of the church building (social action, pilgrimage, evangelism), before finally studying how the church building might be used by the wider community.</p>
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YEAR 11	Content	Rationale / Link to Specification
Autumn Term	Islam: practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As indicated in the GCSE specification 	This unit on Islamic practices is constructed in a similar way to the previous unit, with all the practices being hung on two central concepts, that of Islam and Ummah. Starting with these concepts then enables us to study each practice in terms of how it contributes to these two concepts. We first work through the most well-known practices, the Five Pillars, noting diversity of practice within Islam, before moving on to jihad and festivals. The varying levels of participation in these practices across the Islamic community is also considered to understand the range of influences on how Muslims act.
Summer Term	Existence of God <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As indicated in the GCSE specification 	<p>The final two units from Paper 2 are now studied. This unit is the most philosophical of the Themes unit, and this requires in some parts some sophisticated thinking, hence it is done near the end of the course.</p> <p>We start with study of arguments for the existence of God. Each argument is studied, and then critical responses are studied, before repeating the process with other arguments.</p> <p>This means that students are focussed on learning and appraising one argument at a time, and also building skills in the nature of debate.</p> <p>The same process is then used for arguments against the existence of God. In this way, we can help students understand that, for example, a weakness in the design argument is different from saying that God does not exist. The use of the problem of evil as an argument against the existence of God builds directly on work done in Y9 in the Christianity topic.</p> <p>Having studied why people might believe in God, the second section of this unit looks at the beliefs people might have about the nature of that God, as well as studying revelation. The focus here is on understanding the different views on the nature and importance of revelation for Christians and Muslims. This will reinforce work done before about differing interpretations of scripture, and how the idea of creation as a revelation of God might be challenged by science.</p>
	Religion and Life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As indicated in the GCSE specification 	<p>This unit is studied last as the issues addressed require the most amount of maturity i.e. abortion and euthanasia.</p> <p>The unit begins by looking at ideas about the origin and nature of the universe and life, building on work in the previous unit. From this, we can study the debates in which science and religion have a variety of different views about the origins of the world and the origins of life.</p> <p>Following on from this, we can then take these differing views about the nature of 'creation' and apply them to issues in medical ethics such as abortion and euthanasia. The debates are taught in terms of the competing claims in the sanctity of life v quality of life discussion.</p>

