

T&E Curriculum Statement

Although there is a legal requirement for all schools to provide religious education, we have developed a programme of study that is rich in opportunities for individual development and academic progress. Theology and Ethics is taught to all lower school students, all of which are entered in for full course GCSE examinations at the end of the three years of study. We offer the study of Religious Studies as an option for sixth form students. The school has historically always valued the study of religion and ethics, and continues to recognise the positive impact that religious education has on the holistic development of a person. Through the study and exploration of theology students gain a wider understanding of how religion impacts and influences the lives of those who follow one, and can better understand different cultures and how societies have been shaped by religions. Students can better understand contemporary literature through contextualising them with The Bible, and 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 and explanation to name a few. 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. T&E 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 wellbeing.

The main benefits of studying T&E 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, life after death, God, and allows students a safe space to explore sensitive, metaphysical and philosophical questions. The intent of T&E is 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 GCSE 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 alternative that is rich in culture and diversity from eastern philosophy and religion. This develops on the education that students receive in KS3 where they study Hinduism and the basics of Buddhism. It also provides a foundation knowledge for the study of Buddhism 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 4. We have chosen: Religion, Relationships and Families, Religion, Peace and Conflict, Religion Crime and Punishment, and Religion and Life. We do not study Religion, Human Rights and Social Justice and The Existence of God and Revelation. 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 – Christian Beliefs and Teachings, Buddhism Beliefs and Teachings and Religion, Relationships and Families

Year 10 – Religion, Peace and Conflict, Christian Practices, Religion, Crime and Punishment

Year 11 – Buddhist Practices, Religion and Life

We teach in this order as in year 9 we lay the foundations for applying Christian and Buddhist teachings to the thematic studies. We teach the practices in year 10 and 11 to make use of revision opportunities as we revisit beliefs and teachings to explain why Christian and Buddhists carry out certain practices. The themes are taught in this order as the level of maturity required to properly engage with the more complex and sensitive themes i.e. Religion and Life and Crime and Punishment are more suited to later year 10 and year 11 students. These units explore issues such as

Capital Punishment, aims of punishment, abortion and euthanasia. Religion, Relationships and Families is taught summer term year 9 as this corresponds with what they are learning in PSHCE and enables a cross-curricular approach to parts of the unit i.e. contraception, healthy relationships, marriage and divorce.

Enrichment

We further enrich our programme of study with guest speakers from different faiths and organisations. We have run visits to Rome, London, Buddhist centres, Cadbury World, and students have taken part in local Holocaust Memorial events. We do not restrict student learning to the exam board specification but use this as a framework and develop learning and thinking beyond this.