

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Why should I choose Religious Studies?

Because we explore the key moral and social issues that divide opinions in society today. You will try to make sense of the many religious and non-religious perspectives that add to these debates. Alongside this, you will study the beliefs and practices of two world faiths and their place in 21st Century Britain.

This makes Religious Studies a good qualification for a wide range of careers; particularly Advertising, Human Resources, Law, Media, Medicine and all professions which involve front-line work with people.

Choosing this GCSE will demonstrate to future tutors and employers that you are interested in other people and their ideas, and that you can see important issues from more than one point of view. You will be a better pupil, and a better employee, if you are able to understand both yourself and society around you.

This is a new, thoroughly up-to-date syllabus which will be completely relevant to your present and future lives.

Do I have to be a believer?

No - some of the best pupils studying Religious Studies have no particular personal faith, but they do have a willingness to understand how other people see the world. The course challenges you to try to understand the attitudes and actions of those who see the world very differently to yourself. You will also develop the skill of presenting your own arguments and justifying your point of view. If, on the other hand, you do have a faith, you will be able to apply your own insights to making sense of how faith inspires others.

What will I study?

The course consists of two components:

- A) The in-depth study of two faith traditions
- B) Key issues and ethical questions in contemporary British society

Part A: Belief and Practice

Key beliefs in Christianity

- The nature of God and the concept of Trinity
- How the existence of suffering is a challenge to faith and responses to this
- Christian beliefs about creation, including the debate over the accounts in the Bible.
- The incarnation and Jesus as the Son of God
- The crucifixion, resurrection and ascension
- Sin and the means of salvation, including law, grace and Spirit
- Beliefs about the afterlife and their importance
- Different views on Heaven and Hell

Christian practices:

- Worship, including debates within Christianity about the form this should take
- Prayer and its significance, including set prayers and informal prayer
- The role and meaning of the sacraments, including conflicting views within Christianity
- The role and importance of pilgrimage and its growing popularity
- The celebration of religious festivals and their place in modern Britain
- The role of the Church in the local community, including food banks and street pastors
- The place of mission, evangelism and Church growth
- The work of the Church on a global scale, including experiences of persecution and responses to poverty

Islamic Beliefs Topics include:

- The nature of Allah
- The paradox of Allah's supreme will and human freedom
- The divide between Sunni and Shia Islam
- The role and importance of Angels

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- The role and importance of the Prophets
- Beliefs about life after death, justice and judgement
- The importance of the Qur'an and other holy books in Islam

Islamic Practice Topics:

- Islamic worship as a way of life
- Faith and the public declaration of faith
- The significance of prayer in Islam
- The importance of fasting
- Islamic festivals and their place in UK Society
- Alms giving and charity work as core expressions of Islamic faith
- The Haji Pilgrimage
- The idea of Jihad and what it really means to Muslims

Part B: Conflicting views in society in response to important contemporary issues.

Relationships and families:

Sex and sexuality, marriage and divorce, families, including discussions about cohabitation, divorce, and same-sex partnerships, gender prejudice and discrimination.

Life: debates about the origins and value of life on earth:

The Big Bang and evolution and why they divide believers. Debates over climate change, the use and abuse of animals, abortion and euthanasia. Ideas about death and the afterlife.

Peace and conflict:

The relationship between religion and terrorism, debates about the continued relevance of traditional Just War and Pacifist ethics in the modern nuclear and terrorist age, and the value of forgiveness and reconciliation in peace-making.

Crime and Punishment:

The causes of crime and the aims of punishment. The effectiveness of UK's prisons and the example

from other countries. The debate over the death penalty and why this divides religious believers. The value of forgiveness and whether some crimes can be forgiven.

Is there any coursework?

No - just a two-paper GCSE examination at the end of Year 11.

Note: Year 9 pupils have already been working on some of these topics and tackling work at a GCSE level, so are already aware of what will be expected. When the examination comes at the end of Year 11, the increased maturity level will be a great advantage.

Mr P Low
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