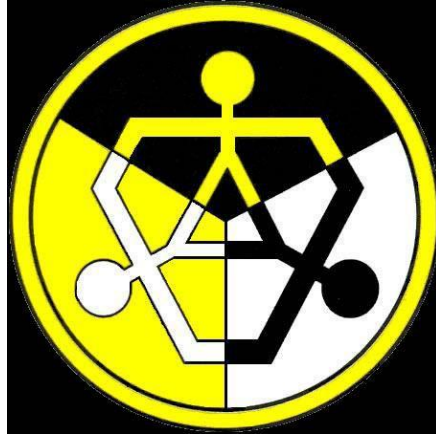


Norlington School and 6th Form



'Learn together, enjoy together and achieve together'

Religious Studies Departmental Handbook

Last updated: July 2020

Norlington: Our Vision

To be recognised as a world class leader in education, ensuring every child is ready to take up the challenges and realise the opportunities of the 21st century.

Our Aims

Our vision is realised through the delivery of five key aims articulated as commitments our local community:

1. To develop outstanding leaders across the school

We are committed to developing outstanding leaders through the establishment of a centre of excellence, ensuring all students have the skills required to develop into young men and women who are ready to take up the challenges and realise the opportunities of the 21st century and impact positively on every aspect of society, whether locally, nationally or internationally.

2. To guide our students to achieve exceptional academic performance across all subjects

We are committed to developing every student's skills and knowledge, ensuring exceptional academic performance for all to enable students to access the most ambitious career paths and gain access to the best universities nationally and internationally

3. To provide an Outstanding Learning Experience for every student.

We are committed to providing each student with a high quality personalised learning experience through exceptional teaching and an outstanding curriculum. 'Every Child, All the Time' drives our belief that every child is able to achieve the extraordinary relative to their own personal abilities.

'Every Child, All the Time' is an approach to student progress where every day, in every lesson, every student will be receiving the best possible learning experiences. It recognises the need to respond to students' emotional needs as well as learning needs throughout their educational journey, appreciating that these needs are different for every child and can change at different stages of this journey.

4. To ensure every student has access to high quality Enrichment activities.

We are committed to ensuring every student has access to exceptional enrichment experiences and activities including high quality coaching so they aspire to participate, compete and succeed at a local, national and international level.

5. To be the School of Choice for the local community.

We are committed to providing a school that:

- meets the needs of every child.
- develops citizens committed to British Values of democracy, tolerance, respect and the rule of law.
- is a safe, happy and caring learning environment where students want to be.

Central to realising our aims is the need to actively engage all students and staff with a culture of achievement.

Religious Studies department: Aims

- To realise the 5 key aims of Norlington School as set out above.
- To provide an outstanding educational experience for all pupils.
- To deliver lessons that are enjoyable, stimulating and challenging for all students.
- To give all students an understanding of different religions, cultures and worldviews.
- To enable students to articulate their own beliefs and points of view, as well as to understand the beliefs and practices of others.

Curriculum Statement

Intent

The proper experience of Religious Studies will enable students to gain a greater understanding of the world and the local community in which they live. As a department our intent is that the subject should be not merely an academic exercise, but an opportunity to develop as an individual and as a member of society.

Central to this is the opportunity to study and understand all six of the major world faiths – Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism. The AQA GCSE syllabus specifies that students should study two religions – we choose Christianity and Islam – and so our curriculum in Key Stage 3 is as broad as possible, giving students the opportunity to gain a good knowledge of other faiths.

Our intent is to encourage students – whether they follow a particular faith, or none – to be able to articulate their own beliefs, and crucially to be able to recognise and articulate other beliefs and points of views, including non-religious beliefs. Students do not study religious beliefs as abstract concept but are taught to apply those beliefs to current issues, and so to gain an understanding of how religious believers respond to world events.

Students should be able to think independently and use evidence to justify their own point of view, as well as differing beliefs. Opportunities to discuss, debate, and evaluate are embedded throughout the curriculum so that all students are confident in these skills. All students have the chance to develop their literacy and oracy so that they can construct a compelling argument.

Lessons should be accessible to all students, and provide sufficient challenge for all abilities. Students are encouraged to recognise key values such as tolerance and equality where they apply to issues on the curriculum, and teachers are expected to cultivate a classroom environment where these values are always demonstrated.

Implementation

At Key Stage 4 all Norlington students currently follow the AQA Religious Studies GCSE. This course requires students to study 2 religions, and the department currently chooses Christianity and Islam as these are the two most widely practised faiths within the cohort. As mentioned above, in order to provide as broad a curriculum as possible, all six major world faiths are studied by all students in Key Stage 3.

In Key Stage 3 the curriculum is organised thematically – students complete a cycle of lessons on a particular topic and within this they will have the opportunity to learn about beliefs from a number of different faiths. Some cycles look at key concepts (such as worship) whilst others might focus on a particular issue (such as equality). The curriculum is sequenced in such a way that later topics build upon previous lessons. For example, students learn different beliefs about God before studying how religious people practise worship.

In Key Stage 4 the curriculum is sequenced to allow students to establish a foundation of religious knowledge and then apply this to the different themes which are studied at GCSE. Religious beliefs in Islam and Christianity are taught first so that when students approach different issues they can apply religious teachings within the wider context of the faith as a whole and not in isolation. Lessons in year ten encourage students to draw connections between beliefs and practices – for example a single lesson might recap knowledge about the incarnation and then link this to the celebration of Christmas. There is also a greater focus on evaluation – a key skill needed to be successful at GCSE. With a knowledge of the issues and religious beliefs already in place more time can be given to debate and discussion. Students are encouraged to develop confidence in giving their own point of view, and also explaining and justifying different opinions.

Students are given regular opportunities to develop successful exam techniques during lessons. Clear structures are in place to help construct answers to each of the different types of exam questions and by the time students sit their exam they are well drilled in these practices. Currently all students sit their Religious Studies GCSE in year 10 and so the department plays a key role in preparing students for their exams, with a number of mock exams and additional drop down sessions in years 9 and 10.

Key to successful implementation is the high level of subject knowledge within the department. There are currently two full time members who are both specialists in religious studies. Where lessons are taught by teachers from other departments support is available to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge. (This can be a particular concern for non-specialists teaching Islam to students who are practising Muslims).

Impact

In keeping with the intent set out above, the Religious Studies department at Norlington measures its impact not just in academic results but also in the development of students as young people with an understanding of the community and the world in which they live.

Where feedback is provided to students it is vital that it has the maximum impact. Key pieces of work are marked and feedback should be in the form of clear advice on how to improve on the answers given. At the end of each cycle students are given an opportunity to reflect on their own learning and to identify their own areas for improvement. Students are aware of their targets in each subject and are given regular opportunities to reflect on their progress towards them.

End of cycle assessments and the completion of cycle sheets by students also give teachers the ability to identify any areas of misunderstanding, or areas of weakness to be recapped in future lessons. The sequencing of lessons enables topics to be returned to and built upon where any gaps are identified.

Teachers within the department enter assessment data onto a shared spreadsheet so that comparisons can be made across entire year groups, and to identify students who may need additional support.

GCSE results over the past three academic years have demonstrated the impact that the department has delivered, with the Value Added measure consistently well above the national average. The Value Added measure for Religious Studies also compares favourably with other subjects studied at Norlington, even notwithstanding that students sit the GCSE in Year 10.

The other impact – the development of young people with a strong sense of their place in the world and an understanding of other beliefs and cultures – is more difficult to place a measure on but, we believe, equally important. It can be evidenced in students' work, but also in their day to day interactions with teachers and peers as they progress through the school.

Lesson allocations

In 2020-21 years 7, 8, 9 and 10 will have RS on their timetable. All students take the GCSE and this is currently sat in year 10. There is no RS allocated in year 11. In effect this results in a 2 year Key Stage 3 and a 2 year Key Stage 4.

In years 7 and 8 students are taught in their form groups of mixed ability.

In years 9 and 10 students are taught in mixed ability classes in order to fit with their other options.

Religious Studies was taught to Key Stage 5 for the first time in 2019-20, with a group of 3 year 12 students.

| Year Group | Lesson allocation over 2 week timetable |
|------------|---|
| Year 7 | 2 lessons |
| Year 8 | 2 lessons |
| Year 9 | 4 lessons |
| Year 10 | 5 lessons |
| Year 12 | 9 lessons |
| Year 13 | 9 lessons |