



Newport Girls' High School Curriculum Summary

Faculty: Humanities	Subject: Religion, Philosophy and Ethics
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Our Vision

Faculty Vision

The humanities faculty at NGHS consists of the history, geography, religious studies, psychology, politics and economics departments. Our overriding vision for the faculty is to produce learners who have an excellent understanding of all aspects of the world we live in. Our range of subjects allows students to glean an understanding of global cultures and world views, whilst also enabling them to learn from the past and apply their learning to the relevance of today's society. We endeavour to encourage learners to make links between society, people and the physical environment, and work to make well-rounded, intellectually curious young people with excellent thinking skills, and with empathy and respect for the views of others. We strive to keep our curriculum relevant and up to date, incorporating contemporary issues such as climate change and conflict alongside historical comparisons in all of the humanities subjects. By the end of key stage 5, we expect students to be leaving us with an excellent understanding of global issues and challenges and to be literate in the use of specialist subject terminology.

Subject Vision

Through the religious studies curriculum we hope to inspire pupils' curiosity about and understanding of the world and their place and responsibilities within it. We want our pupils to ask questions, to engage with ideas and issues in an open-minded, independent, thoughtful and creative way. Pupils are challenged to develop their own ideas about and responses to fundamental questions about existence and morality. They are encouraged to listen to and value the views of others and to respond to and challenge those views in a reasoned and respectful way. In their lessons pupils will have the opportunity to explore a range of religious, moral and social questions. They will develop an understanding of the beliefs and practices of the major world religions and of the impact of religion on the individual and society. Pupils are encouraged to take risks with their thinking. They will be challenged to think independently and creatively when considering religious, philosophical and ethical questions. Through exploring existential and ethical questions we hope to inspire in pupils a love of learning and help them to emerge as creative, reflective, independent and resilient learners.

Curriculum Intent

The Key Stage 3 curriculum lays the foundations for GCSE and A Level enquiry by exploring questions, themes and concepts that are central to developing a thorough understanding of the nature of religious belief and practise. At the end of the key stage, pupils will have developed the skills and understanding necessary for a rigorous, questioning, critical and analytic approach to religious, philosophical and ethical enquiry. No one religion is studied in all its aspects, instead a thematic approach is adopted; themes or questions are selected which are then explored from the perspective of different religions or worldviews. This allows learners to understand the variety of responses to shared human experience, existential and ethical questions and highlights similarity and difference in belief and practise.

In Key Stage 4 pupils have one hour a week in years 9 and 10 to prepare for the Eduqas GCSE short course examination in religious studies. Pupils continue to explore challenging religious, philosophical and ethical questions through the perspectives of Christianity, Buddhism, Humanism and atheism. Familiar ideas are applied to new contexts; a new layer of understanding is added to many of the ideas introduced at key stage 3 and pupils continue to master the skills they began to develop in key stage 3. The study of Buddhism as a contrast to Christianity allows pupils to explore the differences between western and eastern ideas concerning the nature of existence.

At key stage 5, those students who continue to be curious about existential and ethical questions can opt to take the AQA Religious Studies A level qualification. The course covers a wide range of philosophical and ethical questions and perspectives and provides a stimulating, engaging, challenging and academically rigorous foundation for further study. During the course students will develop independent, critical and evaluative thinking skills and the ability to construct well-reasoned and structured written arguments.

Curriculum Sequencing Rationale & Implementation

In year 7 pupils begin **key stage 3** by exploring the question “What matters?” In this unit pupils will explore questions about the purpose of life and the ways in which these can influence an individual’s choices and behaviour – an understanding of how belief is demonstrated through and influences actions and practise is central to understanding religious identity and expression across all key stages. Following on from this, pupils consider Hindu and Muslim beliefs about the purpose of life and how these influence the way in which individuals live. In Hinduism, pupils explore beliefs about Samsara and Brahman; in Islam, pupils explore the Five Pillars and Akhirah. By considering the similarities and differences between Hindu and Muslim beliefs about life after death, pupils begin to engage in the comparative study of religion – a skill which is central at GCSE. Throughout year 7 pupils develop the skill of reading and interpreting religious scripture and develop an understanding of how scripture is a source of wisdom and authority for religious believers. Pupils also begin to develop their written work, moving beyond description and instead examining religious beliefs and practises in greater depth. The skill of discussion is also developed throughout the year to ensure pupils are confident to engage in debate and can do so in a reasoned way. In year 8 pupils continue to develop the skills of detailed examination, extended writing and reasoned debate. In addition, the topics explored facilitate the development of critical analysis and evaluation. There is a focus on more philosophical and ethical topics. The year begins with the design argument for the existence of God; this encourages pupils to think critically about evidence, to evaluate the effectiveness of a philosophical argument and to develop the skill of presenting a reasoned and supported conclusion - providing a foundation for the skills required at GCSE. Pupils also begin to consider the relationship between religion and science and to develop an understanding of the nature of religious and scientific truths. The relationship between religion and science is further explored in the following topic, “What is a human being?” In this unit Christian, Hindu and Humanist views are studied, compared, analysed and evaluated. The ideas explored here provide an important grounding for their GCSE work on the nature and value of human life. Having considered a variety of beliefs about the purpose of life (year 7) and the value of human life (year 8) pupils explore approaches to ethical decision making; different approaches are studied and applied to contemporary moral issues – issues that are current are the focus here.

Pupils begin their **GCSE short course** in year 9 and continue to explore religious, philosophical and ethical questions. Using their understanding of religious and scientific truth they explore beliefs about the origins of the universe. Ideas concerning the nature and value of human life explored in year 8 provide the basis for a more detailed examination of Christian and Buddhist beliefs. Pupils consider the ethical issues of abortion and euthanasia and how belief in the sanctity of life might influence Christians attitudes towards these issues; this requires pupils to apply ethical principles to moral issues – a skill which they began to develop towards the end of year 8. Key Christian and Buddhist beliefs are examined in detail and pupils consider how these beliefs influence the life of believers. Throughout the course pupils continue in the comparative study of religion and continue to develop their skills of analysis, evaluation and reasoned argument.

Having completed the GCSE course students are skilled in independent and critical thinking and have begun to develop the academic skills required for the rigorous study of A level Religious Studies. Throughout the A level course students have the opportunity to apply and further develop their philosophical and ethical thinking skills and they continue to explore the influence that belief has on behaviour and practise. Whilst some of the religious and philosophical concepts explored at GCSE are explored in greater depth and with a greater emphasis on critical analysis most of the philosophical and ethical issues explored are new and provide an excellent grounding in philosophical and ethical method and concepts. The topics explored are challenging and allow students to really think for themselves and to develop an appreciation of the philosophical and ethical landscape. Many of the topics are interlinked and as such students are encouraged to think in a systematic way.

For specific information relating to the content of the curriculum in each year group, opportunities for wider personal development and enrichment and ways for parents to support their daughter in her learning within this subject, please see the Learning Overviews on our website.