



## SHIRLEY HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMING ARTS COLLEGE

*Our Vision:*

*To develop aspirational learners who strive for excellence academically, creatively and culturally, benefitting from a wide range of opportunities led by inspirational educators.*

### RELIGIOUS STUDIES

#### **Intent:**

The overall objective of the Religious Studies curriculum aspires to encourage pupils to tackle the misconceptions and misunderstandings people have about others in society and the world. The subject aims to challenge students to develop their critical thinking by introducing a variety of ethical issues that they may not otherwise discuss in their private or social circles. In Religious Studies, we want to build an awareness of the impact people's beliefs have on their lives, but also on society. We want the students to understand that we live in a diverse world, and that we should respect others, learn about the similarities that unite us, but also understand the differences we have and celebrate them.

In Y7, students look at the major religions, thus ensuring they get insight into the lives and beliefs of people from other religions and ways of life. In doing this, we allow pupils to understand the multi-faith and multi-cultural society that the UK is. This encourages the universal value and the School Golden Rule, "respect for all." In Year 8 and then 9, looking at certain ethical issues and themes, encourages students to look at how different communities have differing opinions and views. In Religious Studies, we try to encourage differing views, but ensure our high expectations are not compromised, by challenging anything that may be seen as disrespectful.

The WJEC/Eduqas GCSE specification we cover allows us to continue to promote British Values through a range of topics that are relevant to British Society and relate them to Christian and Muslim teachings. This builds on the students' understanding of these religions from KS3 and further encourages the sharing of carefully thought out, well evidenced opinions.

The WJEC/Eduqas A level specification we teach is a continuation on many of the themes and topics that are covered in the GCSE specification. The course builds on what is introduced in KS3, and studied in more detail in KS4. The demand at A level however is that students are required to take a deeper look at the topics, and analyse the philosophical, theological and ethical issues that arise in their research and studies.

There is both a Christian and Muslim union at Shirley High School, where attendees learn more about their faith, and where people of all backgrounds are also welcomed to satisfy their curiosity about the two faiths. Talks and prayers are offered, and so is the chance to discuss matters that are on the minds of pupils. It is a safe and welcoming environment for all.

#### **What underpins what you do from key stage 3 to 5?**

The structure of the curriculum is a gradual move from the study of religions in Y7, to the study of Religion and Ethics. The foundations of the 6 major religions the students gain in year 7, aim to challenge many of the misconceptions pupils may have. This is something that continues in the concepts we cover in Y8, 9, 10 and 11. In year 8, and even more so in 9, we start to discuss some ethical matters, and try to encourage students to start thinking critically. In Y10 and 11, critical thinking skills are further developed and the skills needed to be successful in the GCSE are also incorporated.

#### **Implementation:**

**In Year 7**, pupils are taught about the 6 major religions. This refreshes what they have learnt at KS2, and builds on that knowledge to give them a firm basis of the 6 major religions.



## SHIRLEY HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMING ARTS COLLEGE

*Our Vision:*

*To develop aspirational learners who strive for excellence academically, creatively and culturally, benefitting from a wide range of opportunities led by inspirational educators.*

**In Year 8**, we take what has been taught and apply it to everyday circumstances. We look at what religions say about the importance of family, what makes decisions right or wrong, what is humankind's purpose, and what religions say about justice. The aim of Y8 is very much to begin to develop the pupils' ability to compare and contrast differing views, and to be able to explain some of the similarities and differences that they learn. These are important skills to be able to introduce to pupils because, it will encourage a pupils personal growth. This is because pupils will be able to look at differing viewpoints on certain matters, which will aid them in developing more rounded views of their own.

**In Year 9** we look at social justice and religion, and look at the life of Malala, Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X, discussing the contributions they have made to ensure justice in their society, and their importance in history. We look at how religion influenced them in their activism. Students then look at "morality" and where evil comes from. In Year 9, there will be a real emphasis on encouraging pupils to engage in discussions, formulate their opinions, and use their knowledge of the similarities and differences between religious viewpoints to write an informed explanation about the topic being studied. The content in Y9 lends itself very well to supporting the pupils to practise and develop these skills.

At the start of KS3, we look at a range of different religions, cultures and traditions, which mean that the pupils are introduced to language that they may not be familiar with. The religious terminology is introduced at a basic level initially where sheets are differentiated enough to allow all pupils to access the key terms. Then over the course of the topic, the key terms will be retrieved during various differentiated activities which try to embed the language into the students vocabulary. As the students get older, they are introduced to more ethical keywords that they begin initially to look at in Year 8, but at a deeper level in Year 9.

**Year 10 – GCSE** - We look at the themes "Relationships" and "Life and Death." Due to the mature nature of some of the topics in these units, as a department we believe that it is best for the pupils to be slightly older in order to fully appreciate the sensitive nature of these units.

**Year 11 – GCSE** – We look at Christianity and Islam, and the beliefs and teachings, as well as practices of both religions. Due to the level of depth and complex beliefs and practices within Christianity and Islam, it was decided that the pupils will have, by this stage, developed the necessary skills to be able to analyse the Christian and Muslim religions to a good standard.

We chose the WJEC specification, as we believe that the level of misinformation about religion in modern society, particularly with regards to Islam, mean we have a duty to ensure that pupils leave Shirley High School as informed and accepting of differences as possible. This specification allows us to do just that. With the rise of far right groups in Britain and Europe, and in particular in Croydon, taking the opportunity to address the misconceptions that exist about Islam and Muslims ensures that our students leave school informed, and able to challenge any misinformation they may hear about particular religious groups.

**Years 12-13** – At A-level, we look at Philosophy, Religion and Ethics and Islam. The specification we have chosen was chosen as it follows on naturally from the GCSE we teach in KS4. Like the GCSE, this specification allows us to promote British Values, reinforce the importance of diversity and equality and challenge misinformation with regards to religions, Islam in particular. This A-level course builds on students' critical thinking skills and requires them to create complex, careful constructed arguments about sensitive topics. Again, this specification allows us to fulfil our duty to ensure students leave Shirley High School as informed as possible, and confident enough to address any misinformation they may hear.

The keywords and religious terminology that the pupils are expected to know at KS4 and 5, are presented to the pupils in a range of ways. Through comprehension sheets, keyword quizzes, keyword tests, and



## SHIRLEY HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMING ARTS COLLEGE

*Our Vision:*

*To develop aspirational learners who strive for excellence academically, creatively and culturally, benefitting from a wide range of opportunities led by inspirational educators.*

mindmaps that they build on over the course of their respective years. Pupils are often reminded during verbal and written feedback, that the use of key terminology is encouraged in all their work.

In KS4 and KS5, there is a careers page in the pupils exercise book, which is referred to when each topic is introduced to the pupils. This is to ensure that pupils are aware of the significance that Religious Studies has on a variety of different careers and professions.

Pupils in all key stages are set homework in accordance with school policy. It is at the discretion of the teacher as to what the homework is that is set. A range of homework is offered and include activities that involve research, revision, comprehension tasks, extended writing opportunities, worksheets to be used as starter activities in the next lesson, retrieval tasks and much more. The emphasis in the homework that is set focuses on enhancing pupil knowledge with specific activities which will help with learner progression.

### **Cultural Capital:**

At different points in the curriculum, there will be chances for teachers to springboard away from the mapped content, and teach a particular topic in more depth, as the topic may have significant relevance at the time. For example elections or the 'Black Lives Matter' movement. These topics and lessons are agreed within the department and collaboratively planned in advance. Addressing relevant current issues and events is an important part of the Religious Studies curriculum and supports students to make cross-curricular links with Personal Development and develop their cultural capital.

There are numerous opportunities to 'think, pair share' and work in groups or pairs, especially when pupils are asked to present a topic to a class, or there are class based discussions on a particular theme. Debates and discussions form the very heart of what the aim of Religious Studies is. It is through discussion that pupils will have the chance to learn about others, learn similar views to their own, and opposing views to their own. This also supports the development of cultural capital.

Through independent learning, pupils will also have the ability to reflect on their learning, and it will be a chance of personal growth, as for the more spiritually inclined pupils, the exposure to religious texts, will help them grow on a personal level. Even the atheists among the pupils will have the ability to grow as people, and learn other views that they may not subscribe to, but will respect and may even consolidate their own personal views on people and the world. Again, this supports the development of cultural capital.

### **Impact:**

In each year group, the assessments that students complete test different skills. In Y7, the primary focus of assessments is retrieval. Y8 assessments assess retrieval and making connections between people's beliefs. Y9 assessments test students' ability to retrieve, make connections, and also form their own opinions on ethical matters. Y10 assessment tests retrieval, making connections, forming and justifying opinions. Finally, Y11 assessments examine students' ability to consolidate the skills that they have learnt over the two key stages, and additionally test their analysis skills. The assessments and the pupils proficiency in them, will highlight the progress that the pupil has made over time; with the aim that pupils demonstrate the skills that have been learnt throughout the year groups.

### **A Level**

Students will finish studying Religious Studies with a more rounded view on ethical and worldly matters. The critical thinking that will have been nurtured across the different key stages, will be a vital skill for pupils to



## SHIRLEY HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMING ARTS COLLEGE

*Our Vision:*

*To develop aspirational learners who strive for excellence academically, creatively and culturally, benefitting from a wide range of opportunities led by inspirational educators.*

have, when moving onto further education, training and careers. The increased understanding of the diverseness of society that students will have acquired as a result of our curriculum, will highlight to them that as members of the community, respect for all is essential. The impact of the Religious Studies curriculum will be evidenced through how well rounded and compassionate students are when they leave Shirley High School. We firmly believe that the content covered over the three key stages will help the school to develop individuals who are respectful, empathetic and aspirational.

**Head of Department:** Mr H Gafar – [gafar@shirley.croydon.sch.uk](mailto:gafar@shirley.croydon.sch.uk)

We want all at SHS to believe in and maintain the values of our school:

