



RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Religious Studies

Religious Studies (RS) plays a vital role in providing students with the knowledge, skills, and values they need to navigate a complex, diverse, and ever-changing world. Through a broad and engaging curriculum, RS enables pupils to explore questions of belief, meaning, identity, morality, and purpose, while also developing the ability to think critically and compassionately.

Our aim is to empower students with a deep understanding of religious and non-religious worldviews, to support personal reflection, and to promote respect for others – all of which are essential for life in modern Britain and beyond.

RS is taught through allocated curriculum time, with flexibility for academies to incorporate additional key learning relevant to their students and local communities. While we are not required to follow the Locally Agreed Syllabus, we draw on its key concepts where appropriate to ensure our provision is rich, inclusive, and locally responsive.

RS fosters a wide range of transferable skills including critical thinking, analysis, empathy, debate, and ethical reasoning. These skills prepare students for success in further education and a wide variety of careers, such as law, healthcare, journalism, public service, and education.

Legislation for Religious Studies in English secondary schools

Religious Studies (RS) is a statutory requirement for all registered pupils in academies, including those without a religious designation, under the terms of the Funding Agreement between academies and the Department for Education. This requirement is rooted in the Education Act 2002 and reinforced by the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998, which together state that RS must be provided for all pupils on the school roll, including those in sixth form, except those withdrawn by their parents under Section 71 of the 1998 Act.

While academies are not required to follow the locally agreed syllabus used by maintained schools, they must provide an RS curriculum that is broad and balanced and reflects that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian, while also taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in the country (in line with Schedule 19 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998).

At Outwood Academy Bishopsgarth our RS curriculum is designed to meet these legal obligations while also fostering critical thinking, interfaith understanding, and personal reflection. Parents retain the legal right to request that their child be withdrawn from RS in whole or in part, and such requests should be made in writing to the Principal.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC)

Religious Studies plays a central role in promoting students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. Through the exploration of a wide range of religious and non-religious worldviews, students are encouraged to reflect on their own beliefs, values, and identity, and to consider how others make sense of the world. Lessons provide space for thoughtful discussion about ethical dilemmas, human purpose, and personal responsibility, fostering moral awareness and empathy. RS also helps students understand the beliefs and practices of diverse cultures, building their cultural capital and enabling them to engage respectfully with people from different backgrounds. The subject provides a vital opportunity for students to explore deep questions about meaning, suffering, justice, and human dignity in a safe and respectful environment.

British Values

Religious Studies actively supports the teaching and promotion of fundamental British Values: democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Through the study of religious and secular philosophies, students learn to evaluate different perspectives and engage in respectful dialogue and debate. RS helps pupils to understand how beliefs shape actions and communities, and to critically reflect on issues of justice, rights, and responsibilities. By exploring themes such as freedom of belief, religious diversity, equality, and human rights, students develop the knowledge and skills to be active, informed citizens in a pluralistic and democratic society.

Curriculum; Key Stage 3 (Years 7–9)

We follow a carefully structured and sequenced RS curriculum that is both academically rigorous and relevant to students' lives. Our curriculum introduces students to a diverse range of beliefs, practices, and worldviews. Topics are designed to build a strong foundation for further study and to encourage curiosity and open-mindedness.

Year 7								
What is religion, belief and a worldview?	What is religion, belief and what is a worldview?	What are the origins of religion?	What are Abrahamic religions and what do they have in common?	What are Dharmic religions and what do they have in common?	What is my worldview and how does it influence my life?	What is the place of religion in society today?	What may religion and worldviews look like in the future?	
What is the nature of God?	One God or many Gods?	What does it mean to describe God as the God of classical theism?	How do believers learn about the nature of God?	Does the appearance of design in the world prove God exists?	Can science disprove God?	Is God the same to all religions?		
What is the value of sources of wisdom and authority?	What do we mean by wisdom and authority?	What is the influence and value of religious texts today?	Abrahamic; What are Jewish sources of wisdom and authority?	Abrahamic; What are Christian sources of wisdom and authority?	Dharmic; What are Hindu Dharma sources of wisdom and authority?	Dharmic; What are Buddhist sources of wisdom and authority?	What is the role of divine inspiration in sacred texts?	Can you have authority without God?
What are the foundational narratives for the Abrahamic faiths?	What is the Pentateuch?	What are the two accounts of creation?	What is the fall?	Why did Cain kill Abel?	What was the flood?	What is the Abrahamic covenant?	What is the legacy of the Pentateuch today?	
What claims are made about Jesus; humanity, divinity and messiahship?	What was the world of Jesus like?	Why don't the gospels all say the same thing?	Was Jesus the Son of God or Son of Man?	What was the New Covenant in Jesus?	What role do Christians believe Jesus will play at the end of time?	Are the teachings of Jesus still relevant today?	What does Jesus mean to Jews and Muslims?	
Has Britain always been a multi faith society?	What are secularisation, pluralism and multi faith?	What is the history of faith in Britain?	What was the Reformation and how did it impact Britain?	What does faith look like today in Britain?	What does faith look like in my local area?	What is the future of faith predicted to be?		

Year 8

How can we study religion academically?	What does it mean to study religion academically?	What can anthropology tell us about religion?	What can we learn about religion through history?	What can religion teach us about politics and the law?	What can we learn about religion through sociology?	What is theology and what can it tell us about religion?	What can psychology tell us about religion?	
How did Hinduism emerge and grow?	What are the origins of Hindu traditions?	Who are the early teachers and what are the sacred stories in Hindu traditions?	What are the key texts and teachings in Hindu traditions?	How have Hindu traditions spread beyond its point of origin?	What are the key rituals in Hindu traditions, how have these developed and where do they happen?	What are the sources of division and diversity in Hindu traditions?	What do Hindu traditions look like today?	
How does the concept of Dharma shape Buddhist traditions?	What are the call/foundational narratives of Buddhist traditions?	How do Buddhist traditions view the divine?	How are the Tripitaka foundational for Buddhist traditions?	What are the key moral principles of Buddhist traditions?	What is the history of Buddhist traditions?	What do Buddhist traditions believe about the nature of the afterlife?	What does it mean to follow a Buddhist tradition in the world today?	
What does it mean to be Jewish?	How diverse is Judaism?	What is the Jewish diaspora?	What is the Jewish identity?	What are the Jewish marks of faith?	What is antisemitism and how is it seen throughout history?	What does Judaism look like in the UK today?	How do Jewish people mark events in their life?	
Why don't all Christians express their religious tradition in the same way?	How diverse is Christianity in the USA?	What are the largest Christian groups in the USA?	What is the history and development of Mormonism?	What is the history and development of the Amish?	Why is the Prosperity Gospel controversial?	What do Fundamental Christians believe about Creation?	How are religion and politics connected in the USA?	
What might it mean to be a	What is the history of Islam in Britain?	What are the key differences between Shia and	What does it mean to grow up Muslim and British?	What is the role of the Mosque in the community?	Is Islamophobia an issue in Britain?	Does Islam align with British Values?	What does the future hold for British Muslims?	

British Muslim today?		Sunni Muslims?						
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Year 9

Are there questions that have no answer?	Do we need rules?	Is morality from God?	Is pleasure the goal?	Is love really all around us?	Should we be building good habits?	Can technology have morals?	Are some lives more valuable than others?	
What makes an action morally right or wrong?	Are there some questions we will never be able to answer?	Can we ever have proof God exists?	What is the purpose of life?	Is morality the same for everyone?	What happens when we die?	Can we trust those who claim to have had a religious experience?	Is militant atheism a religion?	
Is there a purpose to evil and suffering?	What is evil and suffering and why is it a problem?	Why is evil and suffering a problem?	What if we all go to heaven?	Is free will worth the price?	What does religion do to respond to evil?	How does Liberation theology respond to evil and suffering?	Are pandemics a test of faith or evidence against a loving God?	Can theology help solve the environmental crisis?
How did the Holocaust happen — and why must we never forget?	Who are the Jewish people and what is the history of antisemitism?	What was life like in Europe before 1933?	Who were the victims of Nazi persecution?	What was the Final Solution?	What were the responses to the Holocaust?	How have people rebuilt and remembered?	Why does antisemitism still exist?	Why is there genocide today?
How has philosophical thought evolved across time and culture?	How did Ancient Greece give birth to philosophy?	How did medieval philosophers shape the relationship between philosophy and religion?	What can Eastern philosophy teach us about life and society?	Is religion a force for good or a tool of oppression?	Can we ever truly know what words mean?	How did de Beauvoir challenge ideas about gender and existence?	Is pacifism the most powerful tool of resistance?	
Have women been forgotten	Who are the women in the	How does the Bible portray	How have women led the movement	Should men and women have	How does the role of women in	How have women shaped Hindu	Why are Khivi, Bhago and the	What is the role of women in

in the history of religion?	Bible?	women?	towards equality in Christianity?	different roles in Christianity?	Christianity vary across the global Church?	traditions?	Rehat Maryada important in Sikhi traditions?	Buddhism today?
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KS4

At Key Stage 4, pupils will continue to study religion through the Personal Development and Growth programme.

Year 10								
What does religion have to do with politics?	What is freedom of religion and freedom of expression?	What are the differences between religious and secular governance?	What was colonisation and the Commonwealth?	How much religious freedom is there in France?	How much religious freedom is there in the USA?	How far is the law of lex talionis justified today?	How far is the assisted dying bill supported by religious traditions?	
Has science killed religion?	Are there any gaps left for God?	Are the BBT and evolution compatible with religious accounts of creation?	Does Richard Dawkins oversimplify faith?	Does neuroscience disprove the existence of a soul?	What will the future hold?			

Year 11								
How does psychology explain organised religion?	What does psychology say about religion?	What do Freud and Jung say about religion?	Are religious experiences credible?	Is religion social control?	Where does the conscience come from?			
Is there an afterlife?	What are the views of the body and soul relationship?	What makes an afterlife?	How reliable is the evidence for the afterlife?	What do religious traditions believe about the afterlife?	Is technology the answer?			

If you would like to discuss Religious Studies please contact the academy at s.creighton@bishopsgarth.outwood.com