

## Religious Education and Theology and Ethics at St Osmund's Middle School

This document is designed to give you an overview of RE and T&E at St Osmund's in terms of expectations and routines, the curriculum intent, implementation and impact and guidance on possible questions during a monitoring visit.

### **Clarification**

Students in year 5&6 study Religious Education as would be expected in a primary setting. This then changes in year 7&8 to Theology and Ethics in order for the students to understand that they are now starting to study the subject at KS3 and will be looking at more ethical issues, applied ethics and different world views such as Humanism. All students are made aware that the subject is compulsory at GCSE level in our main feeder school: Thomas Hardy School. It is our job in the middle school to ensure that the students arrive at THS Theologically Literate and with the skills needed for GCSE RE and beyond. The department are aware that in the 2015 report: *Living with Difference* it was noted by Clarke and Woodhead (in 2018) that there was a need for better understanding of the lived reality of religion and the complexity of what it means to be 'religious'. Students are also aware that 'No one stands nowhere' and that all students have different worldviews and perspectives. The Ofsted RE Research Review (2021) outlines three key types of knowledge developed through the RE curriculum: substantive (the content we teach), disciplinary (the 'ways of knowing'; the questions asked of and methods used to engage with the content) and personal (a pupils' growing awareness of their own worldview and the ways in which it impacts on their learning).

### **Expectations and Routines**

#### **During Lessons:**

- ✓ The date (top right), title (learning question) and subtitle 'Starter/DNA' need to be copied into student books and underlined using a ruler.
- ✓ Focus on presentation – handwriting, underlining, drawing in pencil and labelling in pen and exercise book covers always need to be free from doodling. The whole school Presentation Promise will be in each student book.
- ✓ Each new topic has a specialist **vocabulary list** that the students add to each lesson. Each new word must be underlined by a ruler. Each lesson has a Do Now Activity. All students are to record the specialist language included in the lesson's PowerPoint so that they build up an extensive new vocabulary in each topic.
- ✓ Each lesson will include 3 Quick knowledge retrieval and re-cap questions to ensure that students are constantly building on their previous knowledge and understanding. This helps the knowledge to become 'sticky' and more ingrained and thus easier to access and make wider connections from.
- ✓ Purple pens, highlighters and dictionaries need to be accessible to the students each lesson.
- ✓ Students use highlighters to peer edit SPAG.
- ✓ Students use purple pens to self and peer assess, write spellings out three times in the margin and to respond to dialogue.
- ✓ Built in recall time of previously taught units ensures learning is embedded in long term memory

### Assessment:

- ✓ Targeted questioning
- ✓ Use of mini whiteboards
- ✓ Regular routine quizzes, tests and exercises to build memory
- ✓ Live marking and use of a visualiser
- ✓ Peer and self-assessment
- ✓ End of unit summative assessment (there are 3 formal assessments for each year group)
- ✓ Revision lessons, including mind-mapping and evaluative tasks, are used prior to each assessment task and used for students to revise from at home
- ✓ Use of **Knowledge Organisers** for recall and revision
- ✓ SL meetings and learning walks are scheduled to complete book scrutiny and to moderate assessment tasks

### Curriculum Development:

- ✓ The SL has worked since September 2019 to develop the RE curriculum in line with whole school expectations.
- ✓ The SL has developed a lesson for each week for each year group in line with the whole school T&L policy and literacy expectations.
- ✓ Each lesson has a DNA, 3 retrieval of knowledge questions, a clear reason why the students are studying this topic and the context '**we are learning about so that**' and new specialist vocabulary. There is always a minimum of 15 minutes writing per lesson.
- ✓ Whole class and teacher evaluations at the end of 3 units for each year group to effectively review the content and activities.
- ✓ Meetings with the other middle schools will promote the sharing of good practice.
- ✓ Every year group has a Retreat Day linked to the RE curriculum every year.

### Curriculum Intent:

#### Subject design

Pupils build their understanding of world religions across the four-year journey at St Osmund's, whilst also examining, in detail, the central beliefs of the Christian faith and how to live a Christian life. At the centre of teaching RE, is our school's Christian Values: **Respect, Hope love and Community.**

The RE curriculum in KS2 and KS3 is designed to inspire a curiosity and fascination about religious beliefs and practices. All students are encouraged to learn about and reflect on religious beliefs and practices. All students learn about religion and from religion. The RE curriculum offers a high quality sequential RE programme that prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in modern Britain. All students' opinions and worldviews are valued in lessons.

Central to RE in Church schools is the study of Christianity as a living and diverse faith, focused on the teaching of Jesus and the Church. There is a clear expectation that as an inclusive Church

School we provide sequenced learning, about a range of religions and worldviews, and respect is fostered by all students for all people. In RE, it is important to nurture students' inquisitive thinking and questioning skills to help them interpret the world around them.

St Osmund's aim is for the children and young people to be religiously literate in order to navigate the complex world in which we live. We want our students to have the ability to hold balanced and well-informed conversations about religion and world views. RE and T&E at St Osmund's is about enabling pupils to become free thinking, critical participants of public discourse, who can make academically informed judgements about important matters of religion and belief which shape the global landscape. RE at St Osmund's invites all students to think deeply and critically about ultimate questions whilst also learning tolerance and respect towards religion and other aspects of our society.

The curriculum is scaffolded and knowledge rich to enable students to make progress through the concepts of beliefs and practices. Students can expect the use of high quality and contemporary resources (these have all been updated in line with the new school **Teaching and Learning policy**). It is imperative that students recognise that RE is an academically rigorous subject as well as an opportunity within a busy school curriculum to engage and reflect. St Osmund's uses the **Understanding Christianity** resource, which ensures that students engage with Biblical texts and theological ideas. The SL is ensuring that all students are aware of the Text Impact Connection idea which runs throughout the Understanding Christianity. Lessons are active, engaging, motivating and students should have a sense of where and how religion and world views fit into modern life. Students have the opportunity to understand the roles of foundational texts, beliefs, rituals and practices and how they help form identity. Lessons are active and religious artefacts, clips, music, photos and art are all used to engage and motivate learners.

### **Reflecting our school values**

RE at St Osmund's should inspire our pupils with a curiosity and fascination about the world and its people that will remain with them for the rest of their lives. Pupils should have a safe space to explore their own religious, spiritual and /or philosophical ways of seeing, living thinking, believing and belonging. Students should have opportunities to engage in meaningful and informed dialogue with those of all religions and worldviews. The SL is working on bringing in a number of outside speakers from different faith communities to broaden the students' perspective about the diversity and richness of beliefs and traditions both locally and globally.

The RE Department at St. Osmund's recognises and welcomes diversity in all forms and encourages all students to express their faith and world views. The subject area recognises the importance of Non-Eurocentric faiths. In line with a request from THS we have included the teaching of Hinduism in Year 5 from 2020 as well as Islam in Year 6, Humanism in Year 7 and Buddhism in Year 8 in line with the Dorset SACRE Agreed syllabus.

We recognise RE has an important role in preparing pupils for adult life, employment and lifelong learning as it enables them to develop respect, empathy and sensitivity to others, in particular those whose faiths and beliefs are different from their own. RE at St Osmund's promotes

discernment and enables pupils to challenge prejudice, negative discrimination and racism. The RE department use NATRE's Anti-Racist RE resources with Year 6 in summer term to give our students the chance to reflect on and challenge racism and work towards social justice in the world today. In 2023 the school are trialled resources based on Christianity as a global faith.

### **Progression through the curriculum**

The curriculum is being adapted through the use of new resources to ensure that it is rigorous in all areas. The whole curriculum has been reviewed to ensure greater depth in knowledge and understanding and theological literacy. The KS3 units include the challenge of working towards GCSE standard work. All of the year 8 assessments are designed to meet the new specification GCSE standards and encourage stretch and challenge. Students are taught new evaluation and reflection skills which will be needed at KS4. Students are introduced to the idea of balanced arguments and from summer 2022 the SL will make students aware of the Trade C module which is now being used at THS. These initiatives will ensure our students can access their GCSE from the moment they arrive at their upper school.

The curriculum includes regular opportunities to assess student progress. It is designed to build skills and knowledge and to recall previous knowledge to maintain progress in all aspects of RE. Students are consistently reminded of ***The Big Story of the Bible*** both by reminding them of the 8 core concepts and referring to the big frieze, by revisiting and re-calling the key ideas. Through active and collaborative learning, these concepts will become ingrained in the students' memories.

Success is a class who question the world and recognise the complexity of religious and ethical beliefs, a class who recognise that there are no easy answers, who have gained and developed their thinking skills and are becoming confident Theologians and Philosophers. Their books should demonstrate this progress. Moderation in Wessex MAT and subject meetings considering prior attainment should demonstrate that students at St Osmund's are in *line or exceeding expectations of progress*.

Knowledge Organisers and ***Key Skills sheets*** are a valuable tool for regular class learning which are based on recall.

### **Curriculum Implementation**

#### **Equality of opportunity:**

The curriculum has been carefully designed in line with ***SIAMS*** expectations and ***The Church of England Statement of Entitlement***, and can be accessed by all learners. SEN students are supported with literacy, where necessary, to ensure that they meet the same curricular goals confidently and successfully. ***Knowledge Organisers*** have proven to be a useful tool to help all students. The SL continues to work to ensure that all of our assessments are accessible to all students.

Our curriculum helps to offer equal access as it includes different religious beliefs and practices and also different world views, such as: Atheism, Agnosticism and Humanism. The RE and T&E curriculum challenges the following: racism, stereotypes and inequality and looks seriously at some of the important issues in the world today, such as social justice and extremism.

To ensure excellent implementation we endeavour to keep all our teaching materials up to date, diverse and relevant, for example in year 7 when we were looking at radical positive role models like Malala and Marcus Rashford. Students also make us aware of examples that they may have come across on social media, such as Xiuhtezcatl Martinez, a young environmental activist, who has challenged world leaders about their environmental policies at the UN. Also, Carlo Acutis the Roman Catholic first Millennial Saint. By listening to the student voice, the curriculum that we implement will be engaging and relevant.

Our '**spiralled**' curriculum develops the theological skills and knowledge through the 4 years. The **Dorset Agreed syllabus** has informed the curriculum for key stage 2 and 3 and is in line with the other 2 local middle schools to ensure consistency. It has also been developed considering the RE taught at our main first school feeders and the year 9 curriculum and GCSE syllabus taught at Thomas Hardy School.

### Curriculum Impact:

- **Ensuring student progression**

Threshold concepts are integral to RE teaching and learning. These range from understanding the **Big Story of the Bible** to some of the philosophical and ethical implications which can be taught from this, for example where does evil come from? Are human beings free? What does it mean to put faith into action? It is important that students recognise their **Understanding Christianity modules through the Text Impact and Connection model** and that they can make wider theological and world views connections through this way of teaching.

The curriculum is continually revised to challenge misconceptions and to ensure that concepts which are complex and challenging such as **The Fall, and The Ethics of War** are taught with contemporary evidence and examples which are constantly updated. Topics are revisited and built on through the four years in a scaffold approach to learning. In order to know and remember more, the department recognise that it is imperative that ideas are linked together and constantly re-visited to ensure a deep knowledge is achieved.

Underperforming students are identified in each class. Subject teachers offer support, which is mainly in class along with peer support which is evident in seating plans.

- **Additional opportunities to learn**

The SL has organised for an outside speaker to come in and '**Walk through the Bible**' with the Year 5 students. This has meant the students learning Old Testament stories and actions that go with them. This has been added to in Summer 2022 when our Year 6's complete the New Testament WTTB programme. The SL is also looking for opportunities to invite in other guest speakers and will work towards organising a trip to a place of worship, for example a mosque in Bournemouth. Students also attend one Church service in each year, which enables time for reflection and invitational worship. The SL has worked closely with the School Chaplain Lydia Topp to run Retreat Days for all Year groups to further their understanding of the RE curriculum in a unique and innovative way. There have been a variety of speakers for example Linda who represented Living Faiths- Judaism, I sing Pop, The Dorchester Islamic centre, Youth for Christ, Kushti Bok who represent the Dorchester traveller community.

The SL is keen to keep T&L in RE constantly up to date and in the spring term 2025 will re-start a debate club on a Monday lunchtime where contemporary moral and social issues are looked at. For example, what are the ethics of driverless cars? Are zoos morally permissible? Is there any proof for the existence of God? Is Jediism a religion? The debate club looks at issues which are student led and the students come up with the topics.

### **Possible Questions:**

#### **1. How does your department plan for progression?**

The RE Department demonstrates '*cumulative sufficiency*' this means that our curriculum is built with an awareness of what has been covered in KS1 and is building upon this. (There are organised meetings with feeder schools to discuss what has been covered in the first school curriculum. The concepts and the skills are taught through the *Big Story of the Bible* and the *big frieze* so that students are able to contextualise and sequence the Old Testament and the New Testament through 8 key biblical concepts. Thinking skills are taught in our spiralled curriculum where students are encouraged to ask why religions follow certain beliefs and traditions and also to think about questions from different perspectives such as 'Is it ever right to fight?')

#### **2. Does the department consider the 'curriculum as the progression model'? (Progress through 'knowing more and remembering more')**

In RE we constantly check the students have understood the curriculum throughout the 4 years. We aim to make the knowledge '*sticky*' by inter-weaving concepts and interlinking concepts through the curriculum, for example when we look at the concept of Messiah in Year 6, in order to consider Jewish ideas about messianic status, we can draw on what students recall about the Romans and how people who lived under them were treated.

In the RE classroom, we have the 8 parts of the *Big Story of The Bible* and before we start an *Understanding Christianity* we look back at the context of the lessons and draw out links and connections. The department are working on making learning in RE '*relational*' and ensuring that students are aware of the transferability of key concepts, such as empiricism and the metaphysical realm. Gained knowledge is checked up on weekly with recall questions stretching all the way over their 4 year journey. The students should have appropriate understanding and remember prior content relevant for the current learning. Teachers must reflect on and be aware of what knowledge is necessary for students to understand new lesson content.

#### **3. How do you ensure students are challenged?**

Challenge is where students achieve curricular goals which are cumulatively sufficient, that they can be '*masters*' in theological thinking. For example, being able to compare and contrast different religious ideas about going to war and recognising the vast diversity of opinions within different denominations of Christians. The challenge is felt when students recognise the nuanced thinking

contained within religious thinking. For example, RC tradition accepts and teaches the *Just War* tradition and yet *Pax Christi 'The Peace of Christ'* is a Catholic group preaching non-violence. The mastery of the subject comes when students can grapple with seemingly contradictory ideas and recognise the validity of both.

The challenge of learning should be judged over time (not by what goes on in an individual lesson) by considering the curricular goals. The SL is very keen to develop all students' theological literacy and to ensure that the students enter KS4 with outstanding vocabulary and thinking skills. The students are also constantly challenged in their thinking by looking at complex ethical dilemmas, such as animal rights and the validity of war. It can be very demanding for students to recognise that there is such a diversity of opinions and it is an academic skill to be able to recognise and understand others opinions even when they are completely different to the students own opinion.

#### **4. What is the rationale for the RE topics or specific content chosen?**

Our strong RE curriculum which has been worked on as part of Wessex MAT ensures a consistency of topics are being taught by the 3 middle schools in the local area. The subject leaders meet up and discuss how the curriculum is planned and make changes where appropriate. For example, at the start of March 2019 at a DASP meeting THS requested that the students complete a systematic study of Hinduism which will then lead onto a better understanding of Buddhism. I have now built Hinduism into our year 5 curriculum. We identify the most useful knowledge chosen for its '*cumulative sufficiency*'. We refer to the programme of study where skills and knowledge are spiralled up from year 5 to year 8. As a former GCSE and A Level teacher and examiner the SL is aware of what is expected in the GCSE and A Level specifications. The students are empowered and recognise the validity of the subject when they feel that they are making progress and are well prepared for the GCSE course that will be starting straight away when they go to upper school.

#### **5. What rationale does your department have for the order in which content is being taught?**

The order of teaching is based on ensuring the most coherent acquisition of knowledge. For example; year 5 ensures students have a secure understanding of The Big story of the Bible and skills which will be applied and built on throughout the programme of study. The SL is also looking to see how we can teach ideas cumulatively across the school for example In English in Year 8 Term 1 the students are studying Refugee Boy by Benjamin Zephaniah and are looking at the issue of the refugee crisis. At the same time in T&E we are looking at the religious and humanist response to the refugee crisis ensuring that students recognise the ethical, moral and social issues here as well as considering religious groups responses.

#### **6. How does the department develop students' written work?**

There are regular opportunities for writing outlined in SOLs and are evident in student books. The new SL is insistent that all students note down new specialist vocabulary for each topic and that a minimum of 15 minutes writing is expected in all lessons. The demands of writing are spiralled through the PoS. For example, in KS3 the Year 8 students answer the evaluative 12 mark GCSE questions which prepares and empowers them for the rigours of the T&E GCSE.

#### **7. How do you ensure that key content is remembered over time?**

The department have planned enough systematic repetition of the most crucial content for example; *The Big Story of the Bible*, learning about *Islam and Sikhism* and then learning from Islam and Sikhism. We are also mindful of teaching students about *Humanism* and other world views. With each lesson we refer to the previous week(s), terms, years learning so that children are constantly retrieving knowledge in T&E. Staff should always be mindful of making connections with what has previously been studied. The SL also recognises the need for '*sticky knowledge*' and consistently makes connections with what we have studied previously. We compare and contrast ideas in class and always try to make connections with case studies of individuals or quotes from sacred texts. For example, there are key ideas that students need to know about Christian social justice and these can be made '*sticky*' in a variety of ways e.g. *Matthew Ch25 The final Judgement* can be taught through a shared microphone approach. The teacher says 'I was hungry' and the class respond 'and you fed me' teacher 'I was thirsty' class 'and you gave me a drink'. By repeating this over a variety of years and topics students learn key Biblical texts which will enable them to succeed at KS4.

#### **8. What is your rationale for the activities chosen in lessons?**

Explain that the activities chosen have been made based on the curricular intent. The department are creating new resources to give the students a variety of learning experiences for example in Year 7 at the start of the topic on evil and Suffering the students play a board game in groups which encourages discussion and debate and the students have to justify their ideas and opinions to one another. All RE lessons allow time for discussion and debate and all students are given the opportunity to be heard. Challenge has been considered in terms of curricular goals. The activities are designed for students to acquire, consolidate or deploy knowledge.

#### **9. How does the department revise with the students?**

The SL has completed new skills and vocabulary lists to be used alongside *Knowledge Organisers* to consolidate knowledge and ensure that it is sticky. The department share with the children especially in year 7 & 8 model answers and we ask students to annotate and look at where they are gaining marks. We ask the students to look out for what the examiner wants to see, for example specialist vocabulary, evidence and examples, key scripture quotes. We ensure that students know what an exemplary answer looks like by using a visualiser.

#### **10. What is the rationale for your assessment approach?**

Upon joining the school the SL cut down to three summative assessments per year 2 based on UC modules and 1 on an ethical debate or another religious tradition. The curriculum uses the progression model and assessment checks so that the curriculum content is remembered long term. Assessment covers the taught curriculum and identifies the security to which previously assessed material is remembered. Summative assessments (one each term) are developed to ensure that they cover the taught curriculum and progression through the 4 years and through the bands within each year to enable students to maximise their progress.

Assessment as learning includes the following: use of regular routine quizzes, tests and exercises to build memory of facts, concepts and processes. Questioning, feedback on mini whiteboards or examining students' work provides finer grained analysis of student progress.

### **11. How does your department ensure there are high expectations for students?**

The department have very high expectations for all students and this is shared with all students at the start of the year in our classroom expectations and the students are consistently reminded of this throughout the year. Students are shown exemplary work from previous years. The subject area works very hard to develop excellent relationships with all the students giving the students the opportunity to express their opinions and ideas. If a student hands in a low standard of work, they will be encouraged to write more and shown how to reach a higher standard in their feedback. The RE curriculum is designed to be accessed by students of all abilities and through further questioning the challenge rises. Additional *Thunks* and philosophical questions will be given to the most able.

### **12. What are the processes of curriculum construction in your subject?**

The KS2 and KS3 curriculum has been completely revised this year by the new SL and in consultation with changing local and national priorities and the other middle school SLs. All units are '*living documents*' that are reflected on and reviewed regularly. The SL is always happy to bring in current ethical issues or things that the children may have seen which they are interested in. Subject meetings will be a productive forum to evaluate SOLs.

### **13. In what ways is the quality of the curriculum assured?**

Individual feedback after learning walks and book scrutiny highlight good practice and generate individual targets. Subject area meetings are used to discuss pedagogy and to share good practice. Careful moderating of assessment tasks, using baseline data, will help to identify any inequalities in reaching curricular goals.

### **14. How do you support inexperienced and non-specialist staff?**

The schemes of learning have been fully resourced by specialist teachers and they are continually reviewed. They are detailed and are in the school shared area. The subject leader is very happy to be sent in other ideas and materials and is constantly looking for new ideas to incorporate into the POS, for example *RE Today* has published an idea about using *A Respectometer* when talking about religious and ethical issues which can be used with the year 7 Term 1 scheme of work. New resources are incorporated into the appropriate lesson for others to use. Staff are encouraged to email or arrange to meet the SL to discuss a lesson or sequence of lessons that they need support with; advice and additional resources are given where necessary. Subject area meetings are used primarily to discuss the curriculum.

