

Religious Studies – Year 8

Curriculum Intent

In Year 8, Religious Studies builds on the foundations established in Year 7 by deepening students' understanding of religious identity, authority and diversity. Students explore how beliefs are expressed through community, scripture and action, while examining how and why conflict can arise both within and between religions. The curriculum develops more analytical thinking, encouraging students to consider historical context, interpretation and the impact of belief in the modern world.

What Students Will Study Across the Year

Autumn Term – Sikhism and Religious Identity

Students begin by studying Sikhism in greater depth, building directly on their Year 7 introduction to Dharmic traditions. They explore the origins of Sikhism, the teachings of Guru Nanak and the development of the Khalsa under Guru Gobind Singh. Key concepts such as the Mool Mantar, the Guru Granth Sahib and the 5Ks are examined to understand how belief shapes identity and daily life. Students also consider the significance of the Gurdwara and the Harmandir Sahib, exploring how worship, community and equality are expressed in practice. Throughout the unit, students compare Sikh beliefs with other Dharmic traditions, strengthening their ability to analyse similarity and difference.

Spring Term – Conflict Within and Between Religions

In the Spring term, students investigate why conflict can arise between religions and within religious traditions themselves. They examine the historical and religious significance of places such as Jerusalem and consider case studies including Afghanistan and Northern Ireland. Students explore concepts such as denomination, schism and reformation, developing understanding of how interpretation, politics and power can shape religious divisions. This unit encourages students to think critically about the relationship between religion, culture and conflict, while recognising the complexity of historical and contemporary events.

Summer Term – Faith in Action: Wealth, Charity and Community

Students explore how religious belief influences action, focusing on themes of wealth, charity and service. They examine teachings within Christianity, Sikhism and other traditions, including practices such as zakah, sewa and tzedakah, and consider how faith motivates charitable work and community engagement. Philosophical perspectives, including humanist responses, are also introduced to broaden understanding. This unit enables students to evaluate how beliefs about wealth and responsibility shape individual choices and social action, consolidating their ability to compare religious and non-religious worldviews.

Assessment and Progression

Students are assessed through knowledge retrieval, structured written responses and extended answers to enquiry questions. Assessment focuses on accurate use of religious terminology, explanation of belief and evaluation of different perspectives. By the end of Year 8, students can analyse how beliefs influence identity, action and conflict, and are prepared to engage with more complex ethical and philosophical questions in Year 9.