

Religious Studies – Years 10–11 (Core)

Curriculum Intent

In Key Stage 4 Core Religious Studies, students engage with philosophical and ethical questions in greater depth, building on the theological and ethical foundations established in Key Stage 3. The curriculum encourages rigorous reasoning, respectful debate and independent evaluation as students consider complex issues such as the existence of God, justice, punishment and war. Through sustained discussion and structured argument, students develop confidence in analysing contrasting viewpoints and forming well-justified conclusions.

What Students Will Study Across the Two Years

Year 10 – Philosophy and Ethics

In Year 10, students begin by exploring the philosophical question of whether God exists. They examine arguments for and against the existence of God, including the cosmological and teleological arguments, alongside scientific perspectives such as evolution and the Big Bang. The problem of evil and suffering is studied in depth, with students evaluating different theodicies and responses to questions about free will and moral responsibility. This unit strengthens analytical thinking and develops the ability to evaluate competing explanations.

In the second half of the year, students turn to ethical theory and the justice system. They are introduced to approaches such as utilitarianism and situation ethics before applying these frameworks to questions about punishment, prisons, the age of criminal responsibility and the death penalty. Comparative case studies, including international prison systems, encourage students to consider how societies balance accountability, deterrence and reform. Discussion and debate are central, supporting the development of reasoned moral judgement.

Year 11 – War, Conflict and Moral Responsibility

In Year 11, students examine the ethical and religious dimensions of war and conflict. They explore why wars occur, the impact of conflict on individuals and societies, and the principles of Just War Theory, including *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. Case studies such as the Crusades and conflict in Ireland enable students to consider the relationship between religion, politics and violence.

Students also evaluate the moral status of nuclear weapons and deterrence, and examine pacifism and conscientious objection as alternative responses to conflict. Through engagement with historical examples and war poetry, students reflect on the human cost of war and the ethical tensions involved in political decision-making. This unit consolidates their ability to analyse complex moral issues from multiple perspectives.

Assessment and Progression

Core RS at Key Stage 4 is assessed primarily through structured discussion, retrieval activities and extended evaluative writing. Assessment focuses on clarity of reasoning, accurate use of philosophical and ethical terminology, and the ability to weigh contrasting arguments. By the end of Year 11, students are able to engage thoughtfully with philosophical and moral debate, demonstrating independence, respect for differing viewpoints and confidence in articulating informed conclusions.