

St Mary's CE High School

Religious Studies Policy

Date of Review: Summer 2025

Date of Next Review: Summer 2028

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Ratified by Governors	Autumn 2025
Date of Next Review	Summer 2028
Author	RS Lead



"Our vision, as a school with a Christian ethos, is founded on The Parable of the Sower, where

Through God's love, we are the rich soil where seeds flourish and roots grow, based on the Parable of the Sower, Mark 4: 3-9

This underpins our motto, **We believe everyone is equal, everyone deserves the best**, and is key to what we do. We believe that we are all equal, irrespective of our background and beliefs. We provide a safe, nurturing environment in which we can all flourish. We have the very highest aspirations for our students, their families, our local community, and ourselves, and want nothing but the best. We challenge students by having a rich and exciting curriculum provision and by making learning practical, engaging and enjoyable. We enable students to succeed by providing the best possible personalised support."

Richard Vaughan – Headteacher



WE BELIEVE EVERYONE IS EQUAL: EVERYONE DESERVES THE BEST
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'Students are proud of their school; it prepares them well for adult life' OFSTED 2023
'An exceptionally inclusive and caring community' SIAMS Inspection 2020

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SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

The Governors of St Mary's have made safeguarding a fundamental priority and are committed to ensuring that safeguarding of children and young people remains at the core of their work. For this reason, the principles of excellent safeguarding practice are integral to the culture of St Mary's and every aspect of the school's work. This policy supports this commitment to safeguarding and should be read in conjunction with other school policies as appropriate.

It is every person's responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, and it remains a paramount concern of all who work in and who are part of the St Mary's community.

Background to Religious Studies at St Mary's CE High School

Religious Studies (RS) is not a National Curriculum subject, but it is a legal requirement that RS is provided for all registered students in state-funded schools in England including those in the Sixth form, unless withdrawn by their parents/carers. It is a necessary part of a broad and balanced curriculum (*note 1*).

As RS is not nationally determined, a locally agreed syllabus of RS is prepared by a local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) and adopted by a local authority. It is this Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus of Religious Education 2023-2028, which we have used to support our planning and delivery of RS (*note 2*).

Many families who send their children to this school identify as being from a Christian background. In addition, there are children who are from religions other than Christianity and some from non-religious backgrounds. Our school is committed to valuing the opinions, beliefs and practices of all and to showing sensitivity to minority groups.

Purpose of Aims and Study

Aims

We believe at this school that RS both supports and strengthens what we aim to do in every aspect of school life. Our caring ethos and the value which we place on the development of the whole child, spiritually, morally, socially, culturally and intellectually, is reflected in the RS curriculum. Therefore, RS aims:

To reflect the Christian Ethos and Vision of the School and ensure that RS reflects the Church of England's vision for education.

To provoke challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God, the self and the nature of reality, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human. It challenges students to reflect on, consider, analyse, interpret and evaluate issues of truth, belief, faith and ethics and to communicate their responses.

To contribute to the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development of students because it fosters spiritual growth through reflection on questions of identity, belief, and values as well as promote moral responsibility, empathy, justice, and compassion. Through the study of RS, students are encouraged to active participation in community and cultural life, grounded in a Christian ethos.

To prepare students for Life in Modern Britain and the promotion of British values such as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect for different faiths and beliefs. Equip students for living in a pluralistic, globalised society.

To encourage Personal Autonomy and Intellectual Curiosity by stimulating independent thinking, personal reflection, and informed decision-making, and encouraging open-minded exploration of life's big questions. RS also supports the development of a coherent and well-reasoned worldview

To nurture students' sense of dignity and purpose, helping them to flourish as individuals and as members of society.

Study

At St Mary's CE High School, we aim to provide high-quality RS for all students from KS3-5. RS teaching provides students with a systematic knowledge and understanding about Christianity, principal religions and worldviews (*note 3*) which give life value. Through the study of world RS, we aim to enable students to become religiously and theologically literate (*note 4*) so they can engage in life in an increasingly diverse society. RS is not about telling students what religious views they should have, but rather assists them in gaining shared human understanding, developing personal identity and searching for meaning in the context of evaluating different viewpoints.

The study of RS also seeks to promotes social and moral Responsibility; deepens the understanding of moral responsibility, justice, and the role of religion in public life. RS also engages students in current ethical issues such as bioethics, human rights, and environmental concerns from multi-faith and philosophical perspectives.

Content and Approach

Throughout their time at this school from Years 7 to Sixth Form all students must:

- follow a coherent and systematic study of the principal religion of Christianity across each key stage and
- be introduced to the other five principal religions represented in Great Britain in greater depth by the end of Key Stage 4

At St Mary's we undertake an in-depth study of the six principal religions in Key Stage 3 whilst including aspects of other religions and worldviews as the overview suggests:

Years 7, 8 and 9	Philosophy and Theology Students will explore philosophical, theological and ethical questions concerning the ultimate nature of reality. They will analyse the text and doctrine created by a variety of faiths and create their own justification for the purpose, usefulness and relevance of the teachings today. They will analyse arguments for the existence of God, study core Christian values found within the Gospels, explore principle within Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Sikhism.
Years 10 and 11	Christianity and at least one other religion to be studied over two years. All students follow an accredited GCSE RS qualification based on the Study of Religion (Christianity and one other) and a thematic application of religious views. This is a compulsory subject at St Mary's CE High School.
Sixth Form RS for all	Religions and worldviews will be selected as appropriate. For all students 16-19 there will be provision for RS that represents a progression in attainment from

14-16. Students must address at least two topics from a selection that cover a minimum of 20 hours by the end of the key stage.

Teaching the programmes of study contributes to developing religious and theological literacy through religions and worldviews. We explore a range of philosophical and religious areas of learning through Years 7, 8 and 9 to meet the aims of our curriculum (in no particular order). Please see the Long-Term Plans on the website: [LINK](#)

An example of the topic's students study include:

Year 7: *What is Religion? Ultimate Questions, Judaism, Hinduism.*

Year 8: *Ethics, Can Faith Lead a Change? Christianity, Buddhism.*

Year 9: *Islam, Sikhism, Christianity in the World, Does God Exist?*

The teaching of RS will involve some direct teaching and whole class, group, paired or individual activities. Through a range of strategies, such as enquiry, exploration of academic text, extended writing, critical thinking, discussion, asking and answering questions, artefacts, visits and visitors of faith and belief, students are actively engaged in learning. RS follows the same pedagogical principles as the whole school.

TIME ALLOCATION FOR RS

In line with the requirements of the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus of Religious Education 2023-2028:

Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4	Key Stage 5
36 hours in Year 7 and 8. 72 hours in Year 9.	RS is taught • five hours over a fortnight (starting 08/25). • four hours over a fortnight (ending in 06/26)	RS is • taught as an optional A-Level (OCR). • Delivered over 10 hours per year for all students (As per Herts Agreed Syllabus 2023-2028).

These minimum time requirements include visits and RS enrichment days but not school productions related to festivals, assembly or collective worship time. (See Worship policy).

Withdrawal

Parent/Carers

At this school it is our practice to talk to parents/carers to ensure that they understand the aims and value of the RS curriculum before complying with the right of withdrawal from RS (note 6). In the UK, parents still have the right to withdraw their children from RE on the grounds that they wish to provide their own RS education. This provision will be the parents' responsibility. (note 6) This right of withdrawal exists for all pupils in all types of school, including schools with and without a religious designation. Students aged 18 or over have the right to withdraw themselves from RS. Parent/carers also have the

right to withdraw their child from part of RS and can do so without giving any explanation. Again, it will be the responsibility of parent/carers to provide their own RS education.

Teachers

Teachers have the right to withdraw from the teaching of RE. However, this does not apply to teachers who have been specifically employed to teach or lead RE. If a teacher wishes to withdraw from the teaching of RE, a letter requesting this must be submitted to the head of the school and its chair of governors.

Assessment, Monitoring and Reporting

Assessment

The RS department compiles with the School's assessment, monitoring and reporting policy. Assessment in RS is seen in its broadest sense and is not limited to measurement and testing:

KS3

In Years 7 and 8 students will be assessed at the end of each of the four topics they undertake, plus two mid-topic tests in the Autumn and Spring terms. In Year 9 students are assessed five times and once after the May half-term.

The Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2023-2028 sets out a structure for recognising student achievements and each student can work progressively towards achieving the expected end of key stage learning outcomes as a requirement outlined in the syllabus. In addition to the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus, in KS3, 4 and 5, we use a range of assessment and monitoring models that reflect the GCSE and A-Level courses.

KS4

All students study G.C.S.E. Religious Studies during Year 10 and Year 11 in line with our status as a Church School. St Marys CE High School follows the AQA 8062 specification for R. S.

Students engage in retrieval tasks, practice exam questions and deliberate practice

Deliberate practice is planned for in lessons, enabling teachers to focus on areas of misconceptions and provide not only individual feedback, but also whole class feedback.

Staff use deliberate practice tasks, end of unit tests and diagnostic questions to assess progress and predict outcomes. All data is recorded on a centrally held mark-book which identifies areas needed to be revised/retaught and question skills that need to be developed. The recorded grades are used for the Data Grabs set by St Marys CE High School.

KS5

Religious Studies is optional for A-Level; students who opt for the A-Level (OCR) will study three subject areas, *Philosophy*, *Ethics*, and *Developments in Christian Thought*. Students will complete a range of assessment strategies, for example but not exhaustive: past papers for practice of exam technique; regular knowledge tests to ensure an understanding of key information and source analysis.

The marking and assessment criteria is in line with the OCR H573 specification.

Students who do not opt for RS A-Level will receive provision for RS that is progressive and rigorous from Key Stage 4.

Planning

In order to ensure that our aims are met and the Programme of Study is covered at Key Stage 3, students are taught through a thematic and systematic approach so that they have a good foundation of the six largest world faiths, which will enable them to make links between these religions. We base our learning on the *Principles of Religion* so that every religion studied will be looked at through seven specific areas. When studying religion in KS3 students will gain an understanding of an individual religion but also develop their ability to compare and contrast with other religions. Each unit explores the understanding how people practice their faith and how people identify within a particular group. In addition, the way the curriculum has been designed allows students to understand how people develop as humans and as spiritual beings, for example there is a mix of purely philosophical topics and theological topics. Our schemes of work ensure that pupils have encountered and explored the six principal religions by the end of Year 9, whilst having discussed worldviews too.

Long-Term and Medium-Term Plans are in development to show continuation of learning and support all members of the Department in what students need to know by the end of a lesson/topic and key skills students need to have been developing. These also show continuation and links between other lessons from other years and how the information can be used in future learning. Short term planning of individual lessons is discussed regularly during departmental meetings. The Head of RS and KS4 Co-ordinator facilitates the planning of the curriculum and encourages the department to contribute to the sequencing, planning and adaption of lesson, in accordance with their class's needs.

All resources are held centrally, reviewed regularly so that teachers are able to adapt lessons to their individual class needs.

Cross Curricular Approaches

There are many occasions through the study of Religion that there will be cross over with other subjects, such as History, Geography, and Science among others. The following are examples;

History

- In Year 9, while looking at 'Christianity in the World', we will cover the Protestant Reformation, the Great Schism, Conquistadors as well as events in the contemporary world. In Year 8 we will look at Martin Luther King and Malcolm X.

Science and Geography

- In KS3 and KS4 we will discuss the concepts of Stewardship and Dominion in relation to environmentalism. Equally we expect students to know the location of key cities/countries within religions being studied.

Personal Development

- RS presents the scope to explore multicultural and equal opportunities issues and for consideration of the environment. Moral questions will be raised, and pupils will develop a sense of citizenship through many aspects of the explicit RS curriculum.

Cross Curricular skills

- RS Teaching & Learning will be the means to many wider cross-curricular themes and dimensions. Student's skills in oracy and literacy will be enhanced. Problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking and interpersonal skills will be developed.
- The RS curriculum makes a significant contribution to students' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development knowledge and awareness of Prevent, British values, keeping children safe and the diversity, equality and cohesion agendas; these are all essential contributing factors in providing outstanding RS teaching and learning for all pupils.

Leadership and Management

The Head of Religious Studies manages this area of the curriculum in line with our job description for subject leaders.

This policy is reviewed on a three yearly cycle to ensure it still represents the values and practice of the school.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

1. *Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998, Schedule 19: Education Act 2002, Section 80. See also section 78 of the 2002 Education Act, which applies to all maintained schools. Academies are also required to offer a broad and balanced curriculum in accordance with Section 1 of the 2010 Academies Act.*
2. *The locally agreed syllabus is statutory for maintained schools without a religious character and Voluntary Controlled schools. Voluntary Aided schools are not obliged to use the locally agreed syllabus. They must, however, teach RE in accordance with their trust deed. Faith and non-faith academies and free schools may use their locally agreed syllabus, or a different locally agreed syllabus (with permission of the SACRE concerned), or devise their own curriculum.*
3. *The principal religious traditions taught are, in accordance with guidance from the DfE, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. Humanism and Atheism are worldviews which are appropriate to include as part of the RE curriculum. Where we have students who are members of other world faiths (e.g. Baha'i or Jain) then in line with our inclusion policy and valuing of the individual, we include aspects of that religion in RE.*
4. *'Religious literacy' focuses on the human experience of religion and belief and the development of skills for expressing these experiences. 'Theological literacy' focuses on the big concepts upon which religions are founded, such as God, creation and the afterlife and the development of skills for expressing these concepts. These big concepts are explored through the non-statutory additional guidance document.*
5. *Sources of wisdom include sacred texts, psalms, hymns, prayers, poems, letters, paintings, icons, artefacts and people.*

(DfES Circular 1/94 para 44-49).