

## NHGS – RPSE - Curriculum Intent, Implementation and Impact

### **Intent (Aims and purpose)**

We aim to create the very best theologians, philosophers, ethicists, thinkers and autonomous individuals who are capable of recognising and building healthy relationships with others and taking care of themselves.

We challenge students to think, act and speak like those working in the field would. Our curriculum supports us to do this by allowing students the opportunities to learn about and evaluate a wide variety of beliefs (both religious and non-religious) in the world today and the impact of these beliefs on individuals and communities. We aim for our students to be able to confidently discuss different beliefs in a sensitive and articulate manner. We encourage students to reflect on issues in society and become responsible individuals with regards to their own safety, well-being, and when building and maintaining relationships with others, whether they share common belief systems or not. We aim for our students to develop their 'religious literacy' within their everyday lives and to recognise the important role of belief systems in cultural heritage, history and current affairs.

Our curriculum at NHGS goes far beyond what is taught in lessons, for whilst we want students to achieve the very best examination results possible, we believe our curriculum goes beyond what is examinable. As a department we encourage students to explore the impact of religion and belief in the wider world through encouraging and directing students to wider reading and sources of further information. We offer students opportunities to leave the classroom on educational visits to places of worship where students can interact with members of the faith community directly. However, we also recognise that members of the faith community are also present in our classrooms and, as such, aim to empower those students to share their own experiences of religion and belief with others as the source of knowledge and experience. In RPSE learning *from* others is often as important as learning *about* others. In PSHE we provide opportunities for guest speakers and share information from external agencies that can support students when dealing with health, personal, emotional and social issues.

Our curriculum in RPSE forms a backbone to our ethos statement. Examples of how our curriculum supports the ethos statement are evident in the schemes of learning that encourage students to work collaboratively on projects showing awareness of mindful and mannerly behaviours. We aim for students to think with an enquiring mind about some of life's ultimate questions and about the meaning and purpose provided by belief systems. Enthusiasm is modelled by our staff and praised in our students who are engaged and motivated to succeed.

As a knowledge engaged curriculum we believe that knowledge underpins and enables the application of skills; both are entwined. As a department we define the powerful knowledge our students need and help them recall it by embedding subject specific vocabulary from the outset to allow students to discuss and access challenging primary texts and religious teachings. We include a wide range of thinkers and beliefs in Religious Studies to allow students to see the divergent views within and between religion to illustrate that religious beliefs and lifestyles are dynamic and have varied influences on communities and individuals. In the philosophy elements of the curriculum we encourage students to critique and discuss theories in an objective and academic way as well as allowing opportunities for personal reflection. Our schemes of learning aim for progression in both skills and knowledge and are clearly identified in lesson objectives. We are creating bespoke knowledge organisers to accompany units of learning. Students have access to the content

they need through department-based resources and are informed about other resources they can access.

We build the Cultural Capital of our students by covering a wide range of cultural, historical and social issues. We teach in context and making links within and between subject areas. For example; introducing philosophical questions about the existence of God is done in the context of holocaust studies that students have covered in the English curriculum (which itself follows an introduction to Judaism delivered earlier in the RPSE curriculum).

Further rationale behind our curriculum design includes preparing students for the diverse communities they live in beyond the school environment as well as building on their academic learning from KS2. We aim to challenge students, not just in their knowledge but in their thinking. Our PSE content aims to introduce students to sensitive matters in an age appropriate manner, allowing them to make informed choices and decisions about their own health and well-being. Inclusion of topics like SRE, mental health, self-esteem and body image have been chosen to help protect all students including vulnerable and potentially vulnerable groups as well as meeting our statutory duties. Our 'drop down' days for citizenship and diversity week also aim to empower and celebrate all our students. Our GCSE and A Level curriculum choices have been chosen to reflect the interests of the students based on student voice.

## **Implementation**

Collaborative curriculum planning lies at the heart of what we do in the department. We are committed to a three-year plan of developing our schemes of work. In 2019/2020 we are working on KS4 schemes of work. These are focussed on embedding challenge, metacognition, memory techniques and literacy into our departmental curriculum

Alongside our schemes of work, we are developing knowledge organisers at KS3. This is enabling us to define the core knowledge our students need to master.

In RPSE our curriculum is delivered through a wide variety of classroom experiences and learning materials. In addition to traditional lessons, students have opportunities outside the classroom in educational visits as well as welcoming guest speakers from external agencies who deliver learning experiences for life, such as first aid. As appropriate, collaborative projects are used alongside reflective activities and regular discussion within the class room. As a literacy based subject we encourage the use of challenging textual sources in RS lessons, often from primary sources of religious teaching or key philosophers and ethicists. Contemporary sources and contexts are used in addition to historical ones. Students are supported in discursive essay writing with the aim of becoming confident and articulate writers. Emphasis on knowledge recall, curriculum links and low stakes quizzing helps students reinforce the knowledge to help them express themselves and create convincing arguments formulated with accurate and relevant knowledge. High expectations and standards of learning behaviours are modelled consistently by teaching staff.

## **Impact**

We know our curriculum is working in the RPSE department through the engagement of students as well as the academic successes. RS GCSE is a successful core examination subject and A Level RS continues to be a popular choice. Grades 7-9 at GCSE has been consistently high over recent years with the highest number of grade 9s across the school achieved in 2019. Student voice suggests that students feel safe and healthy in school and know where to seek further support about their personal, social and emotional well-being.