



# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

A Level Subject Information

**Philosophy**



**Ethics**



**Developments in  
Buddhist Thought**



## WHO IS IT FOR?

Religious Studies is a fascinating subject that will challenge you on an academic and personal level. Lessons involve thought-provoking, open-ended, rational and sometimes infuriating discussion.

RS is for students who value the opportunity to explore in depth real issues concerning human existence. There is no expectation of personal religious belief, only open-mindedness.

You have to be prepared to read widely, grapple with difficult concepts and work independently. This subject is assessed by essays written in the end of course examination. You must therefore be keen to develop your skills of written expression and critical analysis.

A Level RS is compatible with English and Humanities subjects, but the themes covered make it an interesting partner with Arts and Science subjects. For those considering law, journalism, medicine, social sciences, theology or philosophy this is an excellent choice.

## SYLLABUS CONTENT

This is the content based on the OCR Examination Board.

The A Level qualification covers three main strands: Philosophy of religion; Ethics; Development in religious thought (We have chosen Buddhism for this strand, which will complement and extend the GCSE taken by NHGS students. Students from outside NHGS will not be disadvantaged if they haven't studied Buddhism).

**Religious Studies is only offered as a full two year A Level. There will not be a one year AS option.**

### UNIT 1: PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

- Ancient philosophical influences
- Arguments about the existence or non-existence of God
- The nature and impact of religious experience
- The challenge for religious belief of the problem of evil
- The nature of the soul, mind and body
- The possibility of life after death
- Ideas about the nature of God
- Issues in religious language
- Key names include Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, and many more.

## UNIT 2: RELIGION AND ETHICS

- Philosophical and religious theories about morality (how we know right from wrong), including Kantian ethics, natural law, utilitarianism and situation ethics
- Application of ethical theories to contemporary issues of importance: euthanasia, business ethics and sexual ethics
- Ethical language and thought
- Conscience
- Meta-ethical theories
- Key names include Aquinas, Kant, Freud and Dawkins, and many more.

## UNIT 3: DEVELOPMENTS IN BUDDHIST THOUGHT

- Origins and development of Buddhism
- Beliefs and teachings about life, the world and ultimate reality
- Ethics and practice, including meditation
- Later developments in Buddhist thought, including Buddhism in the Far East, the spread of Buddhism in the West.
- Buddhism and social activism
- Buddhism and gender
- A trip to Manchester Buddhist Centre will also run.

## **WHAT NOW?**

The leap from GCSE RS to A Level is significant. You cannot expect an easy ride at A Level, not matter how straightforward you found the GCSE.

Good preparation for A Level RS might involve:

- Asking Mr Crossland, Mr Bowles or Mrs Chadwick for some recommended reading before the summer holiday.
- Watch the news and read a decent newspaper to keep up to date on ethical issues, for instance the recent Commons debate and vote on the 'right to die' bill.
- Research a topic of interest from the syllabus and begin to think about the issues involved.