



Religion, Philosophy and Ethics at NHGS



About RPE: An overview

In RPE Students will learn from and about religions and worldviews in their local, national and global communities. Reflecting the Trivium model, students will be equipped with systematic, in depth knowledge of a range of religions, worldviews, ethical dilemmas and philosophies, and they will be encouraged to reflect, discuss, critique and compare this knowledge to their own values and identities. Students will develop skills in critical thinking, analysis, evaluation, and academic expression through this model.

Statutory Curriculum Requirements:

Religious Education (RE) is a statutory subject and NHGS complies with statutory guidance on content and delivery. Delivery of 'RE' forms part of the NHGS Academy funding agreement. The Locally Agreed Syllabus (LAS) for West Yorkshire is used as a guide for aims and content but schemes of learning are bespoke and written by the school specialists to suit our cohort of students. RPE is compulsory at KS3 for all students with option GCSE for KS4. Compulsory KS4 content is embedded into the yr 11 C&C curriculum.

Disciplinary knowledge – How we learn

At NHGS we aim to introduce students to the multi-disciplinary nature of Religion, Philosophy and Ethics (RPE). RPE is about developing religious literacy and promoting an understanding of religion and worldviews within the context of enquiring minds.

A multi-disciplinary approach provides a balanced diet ensuring that students are seeing religion and worldviews through different lenses, and places RPE within a strong and well-established academic tradition. This supports the NHGS whole school priority of **scholarship**.

| Religion (and worldviews) | Philosophy | Ethics |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diverse world religions Diverse non-religious worldviews How people practice and express religion in every day life Special ceremonies and festivals Ideas about God/divine (theology) Sources of authority (e.g books / leaders) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploring what and how we think Big questions about life and death How do we know what is real? Questioning the questions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we live a good life? How do we decide what is 'right' or 'wrong'? Difficult and conflicting moral views |

Scholarship in RPE



As we study these different areas we will be encouraged to think and learn in different ways;

- **Human/Social scientist** (using data and observation from societies and lived experiences and behaviours)
- **Philosopher / ethicist** (exploring ultimate questions and sources of meaning, purpose and value)
- **Theologian** (using religious sources and ideas about God/divine)

RPE at NHGS is not a single discipline; instead it is rooted in a range of different disciplines or disciplinary fields. These 'ways of knowing' will often overlap and enhance – for example thinking like a theologian may also include philosophical skills of enquiry and epistemology. These disciplines are common throughout the pathways identified in the Calderdale Locally Agreed Syllabus 2024 (LAS) :

Theology – (Pathways 1,4, 5, 6 Calderdale LAS) thinking through believing.

Asking questions that believers would ask. Requires students to think like theologians or look at concepts through a theological lens. Students will explore questions and answers that arise from inside religions and worldviews.

Philosophy – (Pathways 3, 6) Thinking through thinking. Asking questions and thinking like philosophers – looking at concepts through a philosophical lens. Students will explore questions and answers raised through considering the nature of knowledge, existence and morality.

Human/Social sciences – (Pathways 1,2,3,4,5) thinking through living. Asking questions that people who study lived reality or phenomena would ask. It requires students to think like human and social scientists or to look at concepts through a human/social science lens. Students will explore questions and answers raised in relation to the impact of religions and worldviews on people and their lives. (E.g. history, geography, politics)

RPE at NHGS will incorporate and balance elements of these disciplines within the curriculum as required to meet the learning objectives, as well as introducing sub-disciplinary fields as appropriate (e.g. hermeneutics as a branch of theology when approaching written sources of authority and scripture). Our aim is to help students become well-informed and hold balanced views because they will have had the opportunity to gain a real breadth and depth of understanding and use a range of methods to validate knowledge across the disciplines. Students will be encouraged to recognise these different ‘ways of knowing’ and understand that their knowledge in RPE is not acquired from one source of authority or monolithic disciplines. They will be encouraged to enquire about the different approaches to learning and ways of knowing as well as the content of knowledge they are learning about.

As well as having clear academic rigour, we recognise the unique role RPE has in developing skills like empathy, reflecting on one’s own beliefs and ethical commitments, and other phenomenological and non-assessable qualities in students. RPE helps to develop the spiritual and moral identity of the individual.

“The subject at school level is however not just a preparation for studying religion at university level, but an educational endeavour which aims to enhance the abilities of pupils to navigate the complex world in which they live, and to enable them to develop the knowledge and skills transferable to their lives beyond school, with the hope that they can apply this to building a better future for themselves and the planet.”

D Cush, 2022. Religion and Worldviews in English schools, Study of Religions, and disciplinary knowledge. Journal of the British Association of the Study of Religions

Diversity and Inclusion in RPE:

We aim for our students to be able to confidently discuss different beliefs and challenging content in a sensitive and articulate manner. We aim for our students to develop their ‘religious literacy’ within their everyday lives and to recognise the important role of belief systems in behaviours, cultural heritage, history and current affairs. Inclusivity of language and content is embedded in our curriculum and students will learn how to celebrate diversity as well as challenging stereotypes or misconceptions about individuals or communities. 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. We recognise that ‘lived religion’ can differ from aspects of ‘taught religion’ and take opportunities to illustrate this diversity both within and between religious and non-religious world views. In religious studies lessons learning *from* others is often as important

essay writing with the aim of becoming confident and articulate writers. Emphasis on knowledge recall and wider curriculum links helps students reinforce the knowledge to help them express themselves and create convincing arguments formulated with accurate and relevant knowledge.

Curriculum Sequencing

We teach in context and make sequential links within and between subject areas. For example; introducing philosophical questions about the existence of God is introduced in year 7 as a vehicle for introducing philosophical thinking and reasoning. It is then built upon in the context of evil and suffering/holocaust studies that students have covered in the history curriculum (which itself follows sequentially from an introduction to Judaism delivered earlier in the curriculum to prepare for a study of the origins of Christianity).

Students at NHGS come from a wide range of primary feeder schools including different local authorities (and LAS). Student experience of RPE is, therefore varied. Whilst we expect a general level of religious literacy from students entering year 7 we are keen to establish disciplinary expectations of systematic studies of religions and world views. Our introduction scheme of learning in year 7 introduces students to key aspects of disciplinary knowledge such as the importance of worldview lenses, sources of authority, beliefs, influences, diversity within and between groups of people; sources of authority and the use of sacred texts.

These concepts are built upon through a systematic study of individual religions in year 7 and 8 with the year 9 being predominantly thematic with a focus on philosophy and ethics that allows students to apply their foundational knowledge of diverse worldviews. Chronology plays a part in the sequencing of topics, for example Judaism is studied in term 1 to be followed by the origins of Christianity to show the continuity of the messianic message and links between the Hebrew Bible (OT/Torah/Abrahamic and Mosaic law) and the New Testament. This in turn helps to provide solid foundations for students moving on to the GCSE specification for Christianity and concepts such as atonement and salvation.

NHGS has representation from many faith communities and we seek to reflect that in our curriculum. Islam is selected as a unit of study in year 7 as this faith is significantly represented within our school community but is not always covered at KS2 and we feel that it is important for this representation to occur early in KS3 to help address any misconceptions and embed a sense of belonging and shared understanding for our growing Muslim population .

The choice of Buddhism as our detailed second religious tradition reflects the diversity between an Abrahamic, theistic faith and a Dharmic philosophy. Students have a deep and reflective study of all aspects of the tradition, including beliefs and teachings, and practices. GCSE content also allows for progression to Advanced Level studies and introduces students to non-theistic, philosophical views about life and death. Our students enjoy the contrast of Buddhism and student voice confirms this is the best choice for our students.

At A level the course is usually divided between two specialist teachers. The OCR specification was chosen for content but also assessment into three distinct exams to reflect the three strands of ethics, philosophy and development in Buddhist thought

Assessment:

In line with the academic nature of RPE, formal assessments take place twice a year in lessons. Skills and knowledge are assessed in written pieces of work, including extended evaluative writing. Ongoing formative assessment informs all teaching and learning at NHGS. At KS3 students progress is reported as a single RPE grade. Attainment grades should follow the whole school descriptors and should be a holistic review of student progress in assessments, classwork and homework.

Collaborative planning:

The department encourages collaborative planning and sharing of good practice. NHGS Teaching and learning strategies are embedded. Documents and lesson materials are available on the school shared drive (P:\religious studies) and are reviewed and adapted frequently. Whilst there is a common shared objective in lessons and key foundational knowledge components, teachers are encouraged to adapt their lessons as required. Schemes of learning are viewed as working documents and staff and student feedback is sought to reflect and evaluate the impact of the lessons.

Staffing:

The department is staffed with subject specialists (RS)

- 1 x FT HoD
- 1 X FT (YGL/teacher of drama)
- 1 x 0.8 FTE

2025-2026; Currently we have 1 member of staff with other specialisms delivering 2 hours of curriculum

- 1 year 7 RPE class

These members of staff are supported by designated subject specialists.

The team meet regularly for calendared departmental meetings as well as frequent communications and updates as required for both curriculum matters and well being. The team prides itself on being open to reflection, ideas and collaborative decision making. Minutes of all formal meetings are available in the shared drive (P:\religious studies\ADMIN\RPE MEETINGS)

Departmental resources:

- The majority of RPE lessons are taught in specialist classrooms in the Humanities Centre (Hu2, Hu3, Hu4).
- Each classroom has access to laptops/chrome books (Shared humanities centre) which can be booked in advance and used in lessons to support learning.
- Text books (RS) are available in classrooms for all students studying at KS4 and KS5.
- Grammar Sheets / Knowledge organisers have been developed to reflect the key knowledge components and key vocabulary required for each unit of study. Students are encouraged to use these regularly as part of independent learning as well as to support whole school memory strategies within the classroom.