

Religious Studies Curriculum Summary

Religious Studies provides children with the opportunity to think about the “Big questions” in life and to consider the answers that have been given to these by people of different religious faiths through the centuries. From the earliest years, children are naturally curious about questions concerning life, death and belief and Religious Studies gives them another vocabulary with which to express, discuss and develop their views. Religious Studies at St John’s aims to:

- Develop in children a reflective understanding of values. RS helps children to think critically and to understand the moral values and choices that they make.
- Provoke challenging questions about the meaning of life and give children an opportunity and language with which to explore these questions.
- Help children to understand different viewpoints and to respect each other, showing kindness and interest in the beliefs of others. It helps children to understand religion as an important way of expressing and understanding human experience.
- Enable children to explore their own sense of identity and belonging.
- Help children to understand the world in which we live.
- Foster a range of learning skills, including: philosophical thought, decision making skills, collaboration, independent working skills, the search for compromise and conflict resolutions that work, skills of dialogue, interpretation and analysis in a coherent context.

RS is taught through discussion, role-play, drawing, debate, interviews, visits and the exploration of religious artefacts.

Pre-Prep

In Kindergarten (KG) religious stories and beliefs are taught and discussed through Assemblies, story time, the marking of key festivals in the year across a range of religions and through following the children’s interests and responding to their questions. In Transition 1 (T1) and Transition 2 (T2) the children receive discrete Religious Studies lessons.

Key skills developed across the pre-prep:

- Know and respond to religious stories
- Talk about special objects, places, people and festivals
- Understand some simple religious vocabulary
- Recognize some religious symbols
- Know some key Christian beliefs
- Develop a sense of curiosity and interest in the world
- Develop awareness of right and wrong
- Describe things that are important to them, including relating their experiences to characters in religious stories
- Ask a range of questions about puzzling aspects of life and experience and suggest answers

Topics

The topics are closely related to the E4L syllabus followed by the children and include.

- Awe and wonder
- Belonging
- Harvest and Sukhot
- Friendship
- Christmas

- Beliefs and Practice
- People who have heard God’s call
- Belonging in Christianity
- Learning from stories from different religions
- Fasting and Lent
- Easter

Form 1

Key skills

- Predict outcomes of Biblical stories
- Examine reasons for happenings in religious stories and discuss the emotions of the characters
- Relate religious stories to their own experiences and feelings
- Discuss and describe key religious ideas from stories and some basic religious beliefs, teachings and events
- Describe some religious people using religious words
- Ask questions to which there are no universally agreed answers and suggest possible answers, including religious ones
- Understand that people have different opinions and beliefs and treat all beliefs and opinions with respect
- Identify the effects of actions on others

Topics

Form 1 is spent learning some of the key Old Testament stories in the Bible. The stories covered are:

- Adam and Eve
- Noah’s Ark
- Abraham’s journey
- Jacob and Esau
- Jacob’s dream
- Joseph
- Moses (including birth, burning bush, plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea)

Form 2

Skills

- Examine reasons for happenings in religious stories and discuss the emotions of the characters
- Relate religious stories to their own experiences and feelings
- Discuss and describe key religious ideas from stories and some basic religious beliefs, teachings and events
- Describe some religious people using religious words
- Ask questions to which there are no universally agreed answers and suggest possible answers, including religious ones
- Understand that people have different opinions and beliefs and treat all beliefs and opinions with respect
- Identify the effects of actions on others and understand that personal beliefs and experiences can influence their attitudes and actions

Topics

Form 2 looks at the life of Jesus and covers religious ideas such as The Messiah, vocation, temptation, miracles, “seeing is believing” and sacrifice.

These topics are approached through stories about Jesus’ life:

- Old Testament prophecies
- Jesus’ birth
- Jesus’ baptism
- Jesus in the temple as a child
- Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness

- Jesus' miracles
- The Easter story

Form 3

Skills

- Discuss the significance of some religious beliefs, practices, teachings and events for members of faith communities
- Ask questions and suggest own answers about the significant experiences of others, including religious believers
- Explain their own ideas and beliefs in relation to a range of ultimate questions, explaining what inspires and influences them
- Show respect for the different opinions and beliefs and treat all beliefs and opinions with respect
- Compare and contrast different religious beliefs, practices and opinions

Topics

In Form 3, children learn the beliefs and practices of the three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). One religion is learnt each term and the pupils link the different elements of each religion through the five key topics: Beliefs, Worship, Belonging, Holy Writings, Festivals. Learning is augmented by visits to places of worship.

Judaism

- One God
- Covenant relationship with God
- Jewish heritage and history
- The Exodus
- Revelation through Moses; Ten Commandments
- Bar/Bat Mitzvah
- The Synagogue
- The Torah
- Kosher and Shabbat Laws
- Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Hanukkah
- The Holocaust

Christianity

- Creation, The Fall and Salvation
- The Trinity
- Incarnation
- Nicene Creed
- Different Christian denominations; their places and style of worship
- The Eucharist
- Baptism
- The Bible
- Pilgrimage

Islam

- Tawhid – the Oneness of God
- 5 pillars of Islam
- Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
- The Qur'an
- The Mosque

Form 4

Skills

- Develop understanding and tolerance of the beliefs and opinions of others

- Ask questions and suggest own answers about the significant experiences of others, including religious believers
- Explain their own ideas and beliefs in relation to a range of ultimate questions and explain why there are differences between their own and other people's ideas
- Express their own and respond to other people's values and commitments in the light of their learning
- Discuss what is involved in belonging to a faith community in terms of practices and lifestyles

Topics

In Form 4 children are introduced to the other five major world religions:

- Hinduism
- Judaism
- Buddhism
- Sikhism
- Islam

In each religion, the following aspects are explored:

- Religious buildings
- Holy writings
- Rites of passage
- Festivals
- Lives of the founders
- Symbols
- Customs of food and clothing
- Rules

As part of their study of each religion, the pupils visit the local place of worship and meet members of the faith.

Form 5 - 6

Skills

- Relate the content of passages to contemporary issues
- Express opinions about religious stories, beliefs and practices
- Use religious texts to help to answer ultimate questions
- Consider and discuss the influence of religious beliefs, values and traditions
- Discuss and consider religious and other responses to moral questions
- Use specialist religious vocabulary in discussion and argument
- Describe, analyse and explain the relevance and application of religious ideas and practices, and issues arising from the study of religion and foundational texts;
- Be able to give a written argument that reflects an understanding of different opinions and leads to a conclusion
- Give reasons and examples, including religious ones, for opinions expressed

Topics

Form 5 begins the Common Entrance syllabus and it is finished in Form 6. Stories prescribed by the CE board are studied in depth from the Bible (NIV):

- The creation – man's responsibility in the world
- The nature of man and the fall – timeless characteristics of mankind
- Cain and Abel - jealousy
- The near sacrifice of Isaac – the nature of sacrifice today and sacrificial lives e.g. Mother Theresa, Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- Moses – the nature of God as portrayed in the burning bush
- The Exodus and Passover – the role of this story today in Christianity and Judaism
- The Ten Commandments – rules in different communities
- David and Bathsheba – morality amongst those in the public eye
- Solomon's wisdom – the nature of wisdom
- The stories of Elijah – false gods followed today e.g. wealth, power
- The Birth of Jesus – and the fulfillment of prophecies

- The Temptations of Jesus – and today’s temptations
- Zacchaeus – and outcasts today
- Miracles: the Paralysed Man and the Calming of the Storm – miracles claimed today, places such as Lourdes
- The Call of the Disciples – and followers of Jesus today
- The rich young man – rich and poor
- The woman and Simon the Pharisee - forgiveness
- Parables: the Good Samaritan, the Lost Son, the Sower
- Who was Jesus? Peter’s declaration and the Transfiguration
- The sentence, crucifixion and burial of Jesus
- Extended project on Judaism

Contribution to Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education

RS develops SMSC in a wide variety of ways, including:

- Understanding and exploration of a range of religious beliefs and practices
- Giving children a vocabulary with which to explore beliefs and values
- Teaching children about inspirational figures from around the world and how they have affected others
- Exploring moral questions from religious and other points of view
- Working collaboratively
- Listening to one another and respecting the opinions and beliefs of others
- Understanding how religious belief has shaped different communities