# Religious Studies Curriculum Intent

Religious Studies at Bridgewater High School is a rigorous academic subject delivered to all students in the school. Religious Studies and our Religious Studies provision at the school enables students to respond to personal, spiritual and moral questions that face us all as human beings. The department aims to engender mutual tolerance, understanding, openness and an appreciation of diversity. Religious Studies deals with the deeper issues of life and helps students to become more adept at independent thinking and encourages them to think critically, creatively and with sensitivity.

Teaching and learning in Religious Studies aims to deepen students’ knowledge and understanding of religion and world views and to explore challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God, the self and the nature of reality and moral issues. By exploring issues within and across faiths, students learn to understand different religions, beliefs, values and traditions and their influence on individuals, societies, communities and cultures.

To enable this to happen our curriculum in planned around the following **6 Bridgewater dimensions**:

1. Clarity around the sequence of learning over 5 years.
2. Clarity around the knowledge and the application of knowledge.
3. Vocab and literacy
4. Subject content which is Aspiring, Inspiring and ‘Real World Learning'
5. Memory and Cognition.
6. Assessment. Clarity around the end points and the assessment of what students know and can do.

**Six Dimensions of the BWH Curriculum**

1. **Clarity around the sequence of learning over 5 years**

**Knowing and understanding more at each stage of the curriculum.**

Key Stage 3 has a detailed programme of study designed to prepare students for the topics and skills required in Key Stage 4. At Bridgewater High School, students follow the Lancashire Agreed syllabus for religious education. The aim of this syllabus at Key Stage 3 is “to support students’ personal search for meaning by engaging enquiry into the question ‘What does it mean to be human?’”. Each unit across Key Stage 3 will have a key enquiry question to inform knowledge and lesson sequencing. To design out barriers to success at Key Stage 4, some subjects will be embedded within Key Stage 3 to ensure there is contextual understanding and familiarity.

At Key Stage 4 Religious Studies is a compulsory subject and is currently split into Option and Core Religious Studies. Students who opt for GCSE Religious Studies follow AQA Specification A with specific study of the religions of Christianity and Islam. Those following the Core allocation continue in their study of religious beliefs and values relating to religion and the world around them.

1. **Clarity around the knowledge and the application of knowledge**

**Explicit teaching of subject knowledge and relevant background knowledge that can be applied to problem solving and is transferable between contexts and subjects.**

At both Key Stage 3 and 4 in Religious Studies, the scheme of work contains specified knowledge for clarity. This is knowledge that all students must be taught and which will be the focus areas for assessments. This is complimented by the key vocabulary which must also be taught to aid student understanding. To help students with the expectations around knowledge retrieval, knowledge organisers will be produced for all Key Stage 3 and 4 units. Staff will actively use these within the unit of work and for homework tasks. There is also the expectation that staff will ensure at least 1 starter per 3 lessons is about knowledge retrieval. There will also be common pieces of work that are completed across the department for each unit which assess student understanding of the overall enquiry question (knowledge) and the skills which has been developed.

1. **Vocab and Literacy**

**Vocabulary: Explicit teaching of vocabulary at all stages of a subject.**

For each topic, the scheme of work explicitly states key vocabulary to be taught, to ensure that pupils’ vocabulary is not a barrier to their progress in Religious Studies. Key vocabulary consists of a combination of key subject terminology and command words to improve cognition. Key vocabulary is included in knowledge organisers. There will be an expectation that students in Religious Studies know the meaning of key vocabulary and can apply them in both their oral and written work. The key vocabulary and command words for each section will be used in lesson enquiry titles and in the prescribed pieces of work or QMAs at the end of the unit. At a whole school level, the use of Lexonics is used to enable students to employ and transfer meaning across subjects.

1. **Subject content which is Aspiring, Inspiring and ‘Real World Learning'**

The Religious Studies curriculum has been designed with opportunities for the delivery of philosophical ideas, especially within Year 9 and the Core allocation at Key Stage 4. Philosophy is integral to the study of Religious Studies as it allows students to consider different arguments and the way in which people show that their case is more convincing than someone else’s. Philosophical study also stimulates the imagination, requiring students to think laterally about a variety of issues, giving them the opportunity to think for themselves.

In Religious Studies students are challenged to use the knowledge that they have gained in lessons out in the ‘real world’ and this is done by examining the portrayal of religion and religious belief in the media and challenging student perceptions.

1. **Memory and Cognition**

In Religious Studies, the curriculum is coherently planned to ensure that students are re-visiting and therefore developing and consolidating their knowledge and skills. At Key Stage 3 this is done through an enquiry approach. At Key Stage 4 this is being done by chunking the course. Low stakes knowledge retrieval activities form the basis of most GCSE starters and will be present in at least 1 out of every 3 lessons at Key Stage 3. Knowledge organisers will be used in every unit and there are specific points in each unit when learning skills will be addressed e.g. how to revise, making flashcards and the Cornell system of note making etc. Such learning skills will be an embedded part of the lesson. The exam experience for Years 7 – 9 will be based on knowledge retrieval and the learning that surrounds such.

1. **Assessment: Desired outcomes and how they are measured.**

In Religious Studies assessment will be both formative and summative. In lessons, assessment will be done via a variety of strategies, for example, targeted questioning and low stakes testing. All such methods are used to gain an understanding of pupil progress, to address any misconceptions and to inform lesson planning. At Key Stage 3, students will be assessed on each unit by a prescribed piece of work, which all students will do, which will reflect on the knowledge and skill being developed that unit. This will ensure marking can be specific to the objectives of that unit. At Key Stage 4, students will again have prescribed examination questions for each unit, which all classes will answer. Both of the above offer a way in which the department can track the development of knowledge and skills as well as offering clear opportunities for work to be standardised across the department. There will also be more formal assessment opportunities at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 (QMAs / examination papers) which will fully assess students’ ability to apply their knowledge and skills.