

Subject overview for: RE & Citizenship

1. Subject overview

The principal aim of Religious Education and Citizenship at JMHS is to prepare students for life in modern, diverse Britain. RE and Citizenship are taught during within discrete curriculum modules, but throughout their study, students are encouraged to make links between the two, towards that unifying principal aim. At JMHS, we recognise that all schools have a unique demographic and so each unique school will require unique RE and Citizenship provision. RE at JMHS is never coercive and does not endorse any single belief or worldview over another, or religious belief over non-belief. We recognise the rich contributions made by Christianity to our local context, as well as introducing other worldviews and develop our understanding of what it means to be human.

In RE, we explore what people believe and what difference this makes to how they live, so that pupils can gain the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to handle questions raised by diverse worldviews, whilst reflecting on their own ideas and ways of living. RE at JMHS follows the Herefordshire Locally Agreed Syllabus 2020, which asserts the importance and value of religious education (RE) for all pupils, with on-going benefits for an open, articulate and understanding society.

The curriculum for RE aims to ensure that all pupils:

- a. Make sense of a range of religious and non-religious beliefs, so that they can:
 - identify, describe, explain and analyse beliefs and concepts in the context of living religions, using appropriate vocabulary
 - explain how and why these beliefs are understood in different ways, by individuals and within communities
 - recognise how and why sources of authority (e.g. texts, teachings, traditions, leaders) are used, expressed and interpreted in different ways, developing skills of interpretation
- b. Understand the impact and significance of religious and non-religious beliefs, so that they can:
 - examine and explain how and why people express their beliefs in diverse ways
 - recognise and account for ways in which people put their beliefs into action in diverse ways, in their everyday lives, within their communities and in the wider world
 - appreciate and appraise the significance of different ways of life and ways of expressing meaning
- c. Make connections between religious and non-religious beliefs, concepts, practices and ideas studied, so that they can:
 - evaluate, reflect on and enquire into key concepts and questions studied, responding thoughtfully and creatively, giving good reasons for their responses
 - challenge the ideas studied, and allow the ideas studied to challenge their own thinking, articulating beliefs, values and commitments clearly in response
 - discern possible connections between the ideas studied and their own ways of understanding the world, expressing their critical responses and personal reflections with increasing clarity and understanding

In Citizenship, our aim is to enable students to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for the public institutions and services in Britain, as well as those who shape the democratic process. Citizenship encourages students to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and to understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality of the school and to society more widely. Together with RE, our work in Citizenship aims to promote further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling students to acquire an appreciation for and respect for their own and other cultures and to encourage respect for other people.

In our study of RE and Citizenship at JMHS, we aim to develop three key areas of knowledge. These are:

- a. Substantive knowledge – this is broadly the ‘content’ and concepts within RE and Citizenship. This can be anything from what worship means in different contexts, to what democracy is and the ways in which our government works.
- b. Disciplinary knowledge – RE and Citizenship make use of many academic disciplines and ways of knowing. These include sociological, anthropological, philosophical and theological approaches, excellent preparation for further study.
- c. Personal knowledge – enabling students to debate and better articulate their personal worldviews. RE & Citizenship provides a unique opportunity to build confidence and self-esteem in a safe and supportive environment, where everyone is valued.

2. Key Stage Three summary (Years 7, 8 and 9)

In RE and Citizenship, we cover five modules of learning each academic year, leaving room for consolidation of key knowledge and assessment with meaningful feedback at the end of each topic.

Year 7

In Year 7, students begin with a term-long unit that serves as an introduction to the study of religion and worldviews. They look at the reasons for studying RE, key terminology such as atheism, agnosticism and theism and then move on to look at a brief overview of the six major world religions. Students will consider what they share, the diversity between and even within these worldviews and assess what it might mean to be a religious believer both in local and global contexts. We also consider non-religious worldviews and look in particular at Humanism as a growing movement in the UK. The goal is to move from the generalised understanding of religion, building vocabulary and familiarity with concepts and move to an increasingly complex understanding of the way religion is lived today.

The next two units are a systemic look at Sikhism and Buddhism, two religions not commonly taught by Primary schools at KS1 or 2. We explore the Locally Agreed Syllabus enquiry questions ‘*How are Sikh teachings on equality and service put into practice today?*’ and ‘*The Buddha: how and why do his experiences and teachings have meaning for people today?*’.

Following these systemic units, we approach the final module of learning with a more thematic approach, allowing students to draw together their learning, as well as offering planned opportunities for retrieval and recall. Our final module concerns the enquiry question ‘*How can people express the spiritual through the arts?*’, by looking at art, architecture, music and the rich symbolism to be found in religion and how they have shaped Britain and the world. To support this, (COVID restrictions allowing) we aim to visit places of worship both in churches locally and also further afield, such as a trip to a gurdwara and mosque in Birmingham.

Year 8

In Year 8, we look at three key thematic RE enquiry questions:

1. In ‘*Good, Bad; Right, Wrong: How do I Decide?*’ We consider relative and absolutist approaches to morality and discuss ideas such as the sanctity of life for both religious believers and those without faith.
2. Our second unit of learning considers ‘*How far does it make a difference if you believe in life after death?*’ where we will look at the idea of Judgement in the Abrahamic faiths, karma and rebirth in the Dharmic faiths and how we might determine our own purpose and meaning in non-religious worldviews such as Humanism.
3. Our third unit of study is concerned with environmental ethics and asks ‘*Should Christians be greener than everyone else?*’

We then complete two Citizenship modules, covering British values, communities and identities and government and democracy.

Year 9

In Year 9, our first Citizenship topic is Laws & the Justice System, looking at the role of the police, as well as youth and adult justice systems.

Our two RE modules are designed to combat some of the most troubling issues facing people from religious and culturally religious backgrounds: Islamophobia and Antisemitism. We use information from credible sources to undermine prejudiced ideas and combat ignorance with facts. We will explore challenging topics, such as Islam's treatment of women and how Jewish people have responded to the Holocaust.

We then develop the knowledge gained in Year 8 on our Government and Democracy unit by studying developments in UK government such as devolution, as well as debates about the role of the monarchy and the age at which we should be able to vote.

We finish the year by looking at using money responsibly, both online and offline, developing skills in budgeting, consumer rights as well as awareness of financial risk taking and staying safe from fraud.

3. Contribution to preparing for life in modern Britain/equalities

RE and Citizenship makes a substantial contribution to preparing students for life in modern Britain, and this is made explicit to students as the purpose of its study throughout.

At JMHS we follow the National Curriculum for Citizenship at Key Stage 3 and its aims summarise the considerable role RE and Citizenship play in preparing students for life in modern Britain. To:

- enable students to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence
- enable students to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of Britain
- encourage students to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and to understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality of the school and to society more widely
- further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling students to acquire an appreciation for and respect for their own and other cultures
- encourage respect for other people
- encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic processes, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in Britain
- encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.

4. Contribution to careers provision

RE and Citizenship as a subject is intellectually challenging and personally enriching. Qualifications in this area are widely accepted by employers as evidence that the student is able to analyse, critically assess and empathise with varied and complex worldviews. A good grounding in RE & Citizenship is invaluable in any career where you will encounter other people (so any career at all!), though it is particularly useful for anyone hoping to go into social work, teaching, law, medicine, hospitality and travel or the charitable sector. It is also worth noting that many politicians (and Prime Ministers) have studied PPE (Politics, Philosophy and Economics), so the disciplinary knowledge developed in the study of RE is highly transferrable.