

Ethics & Philosophy



Whole school curriculum principles

1. The core, foundation knowledge in each discipline				
2. Opportunities for reading and development of Tier 2/3 vocabulary, writing styles and text types				
3 The numerical concepts used within each discipline.	4 The practical and cognitive skills inherent to each discipline.	5 The key timelines, theories and figures within each discipline	6 Exposure to and consideration of diverse perspectives	7 Knowledge of how each discipline has impact on the modern and future world.
8. learning to be responsible for ourselves and our future		9. learning to be responsible for our community		10. Learning to consider our global and environmental responsibilities

Key Stage 3 (years 7-9)

Rationale:

Ethics and Philosophy is multidisciplinary in nature, and our challenge is to design a curriculum that appropriately reflects this. The Key Stage 3 course therefore blends the study of Ethics (moral decision-making), Philosophy (questions about existence and the nature of reality) and Theology (where beliefs come from and how they are applied in different contexts). This blend ensures our students gain a breadth of knowledge that reflects the multi-faceted nature of this subject and prepares them for life in a multi-cultural and multi-faith society. Although there is no National Curriculum for Ethics/RE, content is informed by: locally agreed syllabus; legal documentation and where appropriate local, national, and global news and changes. The subject is taught alongside PSHE with the same specialist team to ensure that challenging and sometimes controversial topics are explored in an age appropriate way.

Gordano students are not a homogenous group where religion is concerned and come from a range of religious and non-religious backgrounds. Studying religion through ethical and philosophical issues has been hugely successful in recent years and has enabled students to enjoy and find the subject both interesting and accessible. For example, we might study capital punishment as an ethical issue, and then explore how different religions would respond, before considering students' personal responses and reflections. This allows students to learn 'substantive' knowledge about various religious and non-religious worldviews and traditions. Pupils learn 'how to know' about these various traditions and from it can develop their own 'personal knowledge' or opinions.

KS3:

In year 7 students gain lots of foundational knowledge relating to world beliefs; what might inform these beliefs and their application in everyday life and to ethical issues such as 'how should we treat each other?' and 'how should we treat the environment?' As part of the PSHE programme students learn about values and responsibilities. This is then developed further in the Ethics unit 'values in action' which explores a range of both traditional and non-traditional figures such as Martin Luther King and the footballer Marcus Rashford. In year 8, students explore some of the main world religions in greater depth including why Muslims might fast during the month of Ramadan or how Buddhists try to escape suffering and pain. There is also a unit which explores stories from the Bible and whether they can be applied to modern people. This unit encourages pupils to explore storytelling and develop their creativity and literacy.

When students enter year 9 PSHE and Ethics become more inextricably linked as we explore topics such as 'Relationships' and 'Community' and 'Belief'. We feel that teaching the subjects alongside each other benefits development of pupil's sense of self and understanding of the world. For example, we look at issues relevant to each pupil; such as healthy and abusive relationships and how these might be expressed in different cultures and traditions. We also explore issues that are relevant locally and globally, such as immigration rights and different world views about how we should treat others.

Ethics and Philosophy

Key Stage 4 (years 10-11)

GCSE students study the Eduqas GCSE in Religious Studies, which covers a compulsory Ethics unit, a compulsory Christianity unit and an optional world faith unit, where we have opted for Buddhism. We chose to study Buddhism over other alternative world faiths as we felt it provided an excellent contrast to their study of Christianity and it gave the students of leafy Portishead a chance to study an Eastern, non-monotheistic, 'different' faith. Expertise within the department also supported this choice, which enhances our ability to teach this religion with enthusiasm and rigour.

Our unexamined Ethics curriculum, which is inextricably linked to the PSHE curriculum, has been carefully constructed with consideration for student voice and important legislation and educational reviews of RE/Ethics and PSHE. Students have an opportunity to discuss issues such as 'body image', 'violence' and 'euthanasia' in a safe and age-appropriate manner. Although not an exam subject it provides students with invaluable knowledge and skills to take forward into their other GCSE subjects but also onto their next steps after leaving school.

Key Stage 5 (years 12-13)

A Level students take the OCR course 'Religious Studies'. This course involves two compulsory modules, one on the Philosophy of Religion and the other an in depth study of ethics theories and applied ethics. The final module involves the study of a world faith that schools can select to best reflect their cohort, and we have selected Buddhism. We have selected Buddhism because it sequences well with the GCSE course, and because it offers students an opportunity to engage with a wide range of issues in both religious studies and philosophy. Engaging with these issues from the perspective of Buddhism allows students to approach these issues in a way that contrasts with perspectives that they may be more familiar with.

The course helps students to develop their critical reasoning, both verbally and in written form. It provides students with an opportunity to engage with a wide range of philosophical issues from a variety of cultural background, including; the existence of God, the role of the government in policing social issues, the nature and function of language when articulating truth, and role of suffering within the world. The course is rewarding, challenging, and deeply relevant to the lives of students.