

Philosophy and Religion policy

This policy applies to the Senior School and is published to parents and staff

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Author: Dr Marc Read



Aims of the Philosophy and Religion programme

Philosophy and Religion (P&R) as a subject at The Royal Grammar School Newcastle (RGS) is designed to work together with the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) programme, to ensure that all RGS students develop an awareness of the beliefs and practices of major world religions, a vocabulary with which to express their own views and opinions, and a critical appreciation of the answers given to existential and moral questions by religious and secular authorities. These are key to students' understanding of the role of foundational beliefs (whether religious or not) in introspective, interpersonal, social, and political aspects of life.

P&R at RGS should:

- Promote students' moral, spiritual, and analytical awareness and development
- Promote critical thinking in the realm of faith and prompt students to consider the relation between reason and belief
- Promote difference and acceptance, reinforcing the benefits of pluralism
- Allow students to discuss controversial topics in a safe environment in which all opinions can be considered, seeing the importance of building tolerance and harmony within the traditions of British Liberalism as articulated by JS Mill
- Work alongside the wider school community to promote a culture in which difficult questions are seen to have no easy answers. In particular, it should promote discussion of ethical issues, helping students to distinguish between right and wrong, understand the necessity of the rule of law, and consider the origin of these concepts
- Help to develop the qualities and attributes needed to be good analytical thinkers in the future
- Encourage all students to contribute and benefit from learning and discussions
- Encourage students to accept responsibility for their own beliefs and actions, understanding how these contribute to wider society both locally and in a larger context
- Help students to consider their own assumptions and beliefs about the world, and to articulate these to others, thereby building self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-confidence
- Help to foster and develop aspirations
- Be available to all students.

Timetable provision

Students in Years 7- 11 receive one P&R lesson per cycle for half a term, each term, in rotation with PSHE. We recognise that students' understandings of their role in larger communities can be viewed from practical, spiritual, and philosophical angles and the contents of both subjects are designed to complement and support one another.

Sessions are an hour long and are supplemented with trips to local places of worship, appropriate to the religion being studied. Students are encouraged to attend an all-ages, weekly, Philosophy Society for further discussion.

Sixth Form students are offered Philosophy A-level, and are also welcome to attend the Philosophy Society.

Topics are also supported via assemblies, form and tutor periods and reflected by the School Ethos as a whole as well as through partnership with parents.

Content

The content of all P&R sessions is developed by the departmental team, according to schemes of work established by the Head of Department. In Years 7-10, students study world religion for two half-terms per year, covering Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Sikhism over this period, and for one half-term they study Philosophy, covering Epistemology, Natural Theology, Ethics, and Logic. In Year 11, students are introduced to Ancient Greek and Early-Modern Western Analytic Philosophy.

Monitoring of the course includes informal discussions with students, department meetings, and anonymous feedback forms at the end of each term. Schemes of work are responsive to student feedback as well as any issues that may arise in the media and wider society at the time of teaching.

Sessions involve a variety of teaching and learning styles; the majority of classroom time is spent in small-group or paired discussions, with feedback to the whole class.

Equal opportunities

RGS is committed to ensuring all P&R provision is relevant to our students and appropriate to ability, social and cultural background, religion, sexual orientation as well as physical and emotional needs. We are aware that some students will feel challenged by an analytical approach to matters of faith. All belief systems (including atheism) will be covered neutrally.

Confidentiality and child protection

As a general rule, a child's confidentiality is maintained by the teacher or member of staff concerned. If this person believes that the child is at risk or in danger, he/she will talk to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in accordance with school policies.

Teaching staff

All staff are entitled to any necessary training and this is reviewed regularly.

Head of Department: Dr MBA Read

Additional Teaching Staff:

Years 7-10: Ms ZC Morrow, Ms L Atkinson

Year 9: Mr AA Bird