



## Philosophy and Ethics (Religious Education) Policy July 2018

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### 1. Introduction and rationale

Religion and beliefs inform our values and are reflected in what we say and how we behave. RE is an important subject in itself, developing an individual's knowledge and understanding of the religions and beliefs which form part of contemporary society.

Religious Education (*usually referred to as 'Philosophy and Ethics' at LGS*) provokes challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about God, the self and the nature of reality, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human. It can develop students' knowledge and understanding of Christianity, of other principal religions, other religious traditions and worldviews that offer answers to questions such as these.

RE also contributes to students' personal development and well-being and to community cohesion by promoting mutual respect and tolerance in a diverse society. It offers opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual development, deepening the understanding of the significance of religion in the lives of others – individually, communally and cross-culturally.

RE makes an important contribution to the school's duty to promote community cohesion. It provides a key context to develop young people's understanding and appreciation of diversity, to promote shared values and to challenge racism and discrimination. RE subject matter gives particular opportunities to promote an ethos of respect for others, challenge stereotypes and build understanding of other cultures and beliefs. This contributes to promoting a positive and inclusive school ethos that champions democratic values and human rights.

***[adapted from Religious Education in English schools: non-statutory DfE guidance 2010]***

### 2. Aims

Philosophy & Ethics contributes to spiritual, moral, cultural, social and intellectual development of students through the two strands of learning about religion and learning from religion.

Philosophy and Ethics aims to:

- **Provoke challenging questions** about the meaning and purpose of life, beliefs, the self, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human.
- **Encourage students to explore their own beliefs** (whether they are religious or non-religious), in as they examine issues of religious belief and faith and how these impact on personal, institutional and social ethics.
- **Enable students to build their sense of identity and belonging**, which helps them flourish within their communities and as citizens in a diverse society
- **Teach students to develop respect for others**, including people with different faiths and beliefs, and helps to challenge prejudice
- **Prompt students to consider their responsibilities** to themselves and to others, and to explore how they might contribute to their communities and to wider society

The Philosophy & Ethics curriculum does this through the study of the main world religions and by making this study relevant to the students' own experiences.

### 3. Legal Requirements

As required by legislation and the school's Funding Agreement as an academy trust, Religious Education is provided for all students in accordance with Slough Agreed Syllabus (2018-2023). The School's Philosophy & Ethics curriculum is based on the advice and guidance contained in the Agreed Syllabus.

### 4. Content and approach

- **In Years 7- 9**, Christianity, Sikhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and secular views, are all studied. Teaching is aligned with the Slough Agreed Syllabus.
- **In Years 10-11**, all students study religious and secular attitudes from the 6 main world religions through a variety of modern ethical dilemmas e.g. euthanasia. Students may also opt to follow the GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies course (referred to as Religious Studies to distinguish it from the non-GCSE curriculum) which will earn them a qualification at the end of Year 11. This specification focusses on Christianity and Islam.
- In ***the Sixth Form***, a General Philosophy & Ethics program is in place, where students cover the required 12 hours of study over the two years via whole year group activities including debates and visiting speakers. An A Level in Religious Studies is also available in years 12 and 13 for those who opt for it.

The curriculum time available for Philosophy & Ethics is broadly shared evenly across the 6 main world religions, with each one being given a half term of the curriculum time across years 7-9. The remaining time is taught thematically, e.g. beliefs about the afterlife, so at least 4 of the 6 main religions will be studied with reference to the theme. By the time students reach the Sixth Form all the principal religions represented in Great Britain will have been studied. For each religion studied, the areas and concepts studied include symbolism, worship and celebration, authority, values and lifestyles, questions of meaning.

Two key skills will be developed at all stages. These are ***reflection***, which includes reflecting on feelings, relationships, experiences, beliefs and practices and ***empathy***, which includes consideration of others and their beliefs, feelings, thoughts, attitudes and values; development of the power of imagination in identifying feelings such as love, wonder, forgiveness and sorrow, and seeing the world through the eyes of others.

#### e) Teachers' Rights

The Governing Board and Headteacher appreciate that teachers have the right to withdraw from the teaching of Philosophy & Ethics and Religious Studies, apart from those appointed specifically to teach the subject. However, it is hoped that teachers will feel able to contribute to the teaching of the subject whatever their personal beliefs and commitments.

#### f) Parents' Rights

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from Philosophy & Ethics lessons. Parents are encouraged to discuss this with the Headteacher and Subject Leader for Philosophy & Ethics before making a final decision.

**Reviewed by Student, Staff and Community Committee**

**June 2018**

**Approved by the Headteacher:**

**July 2018**

**Date of Review:**

**June 2020**