



## Year 8 Philosophy and Religious Education

### The Curriculum Overview for Year 8

#### **Unit 1: What does it mean to be me?**

In this unit pupils reflect on who they are and what makes them who they are. They will also come across ideas about how different religious groups and practices affect the lives of their adherents. Finally, they will consider whether other people recognise the person that they think they are showing to the world.

This work is assessed with a 'little book' that explains who the student is. Teachers will be particularly looking for a mature and reflective approach.

A student reflecting on how belonging to different groups has shaped their personality:

"It is important for me to belong to different groups at school and socially. Interacting with different groups such as Guides , sport and music has helped shape my identity and boosted my confidence. Meeting like-minded people, working together in groups and socialising in new situations is fun and good experience."

A student reflecting on how she thinks that she is seen by others:

"How does a shy girl like me stand out and make myself look like the person I really am?"

To support this unit at home students could:

- Ask an adult about experiences in their life that have helped shape who they are.

#### **Unit 2: Should the death penalty for murder be reintroduced?**

In this unit pupils will learn about, and reflect upon, different reasons for punishment and forgiveness across religions and over time. They will come to conclusion about the rights and wrongs of capital punishment.

This work is assessed with an essay and teachers will be particularly looking for a sound understanding of the different reasons for punishment and forgiveness and a clear point of view that is well-explained and justified.

In an essay, a student reflects on the role forgiveness should play in punishment:

“Some people argue that we should forgive everyone and learn to love our enemies. I also think that this isn’t the right attitude to have because if you always forgive people, do they learn from their mistakes?”

To support this unit at home students could:

- Discuss ideas of punishment and forgiveness with an adult.

### **Unit 3: How did the experiences of Muhammad and his followers shape Muslim beliefs and practices?**

In this unit pupils will learn about the life of the prophet Muhammad in his historical context. They will also examine the 5 Pillars of Islam and ask what effect the experiences of Muhammad might have had on shaping Muslim beliefs and practices. The more able will also examine the idea of predestination in Islam and explore how this might affect a devout Muslim’s approach to the same question.

This work is assessed with an essay and teachers will be particularly looking for a sound understanding of the 5 Pillars of Islam, the main events in the life of the prophet and an ability to draw links between the two.

#### How Did The Experiences of Muhammad and His Followers Shape Muslim Beliefs and Practices?

After no indication that the little boy born during the early 7<sup>th</sup> century to an ordinary family would grow up to face struggles and difficulties that would not only shape him as a person, but the religious history of the world; through Allah's eyes, Muhammad must have seemed the perfect messenger- who would understand and support the unheard of religion based on loyalty and trust which would be challenged and rejected mercilessly.

To understand how a committed Muslim would respond to this question is simple, 'Because it is the way and will of Allah', but to delve deeper into this answer would lead to the phrase, 'insha'Allah', meaning "If it is God's will", so Allah, being both omniscient and omnipotent, can not only see clearly the events that have happened, are happening, and will happen, it is also up to Him to decide what will be allowed to happen. But this then begs the question: why does He let, and has let, some of the horrific things happen in this world; perhaps it is because He can see into infinity's future and knows what will eventually shape human nature and the nature of the planet for better and the greater good. Surely if Allah is all powerful but people also have free will, the two conflict with each other? However, looking to the humble way of life Muslims believe they should as they know that they are always in the eyes of Allah, when they say after a sentence 'insha'Allah' they are saying that it will happen only if Allah permits it to take place, but saying for example, "I am going to become an actress" is saying that I have the power to make it happen when in fact it is completely up to Allah, so again, believers are reminded that compared to Him, they are humble beings who have experiences shown not for them. But this goes against all of the phrases we are now surrounded by, that state you can be whoever you want to be as long as you believe you can do it.

The third pillar is called Zakah, which is giving to charity. This could be linked to the experiences of Muhammad, because when he was young he needed a lot of charity, his father died before he was born, his mother died when he was six, his grandfather died shortly afterwards, so he was taken in by his uncle, Abu Talib and then shortly after he started teaching what he thought in the cause of Allah, his wife, Khadijah, died. It was also difficult for him and his first followers because the people in Mecca disliked and disagreed with what they believed in, they needed charity then because the only people that had went each other, so that could why charity is one of the five pillars.

To support this unit at home students could:

- Research the historical context of other religious leaders (i.e. the Buddha, Guru Nanak) and think about how their philosophies and teaching may have been influenced by the times and places they came from.

### **Unit 4: Do miracles happen?**

In this unit pupils will come up with, and test, a definition of a miracle by looking at the work of thinkers like David Hume. They will also ask about the relative importance of miracles to religious faith.

This work is assessed informally in class by the teacher who will be particularly looking for a thoughtful approach, the ability to listen to, and respond to, the thoughts of others.

To support this unit at home students could:

- Research miracles said to have been performed by different religious figures i.e. Moses, Jesus or Krishna.