

Nottingham City and County SACRE RE Syllabus: Nonstatutory exemplification TITLE: Why believe in God? YEAR GROUP: 7

About this unit:

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This unit enables pupils to explore reasons why people believe in God and others find it hard to accept.

The focus is on understanding religious beliefs about God's existence and reasons people have for rejecting this. It also explores different views as to the nature of God.

Pupils are encouraged to consider what can be learned from different people's beliefs about God, referring to their own experiences, beliefs and values.

Where this unit fits in

This unit will help teachers to implement the Nottingham City and County Agreed Syllabus for RE by providing them with well worked examples of teaching and learning about the theme of the nature and existence of God. As pupils raise questions and explore different answers they will encounter concepts such as belief, identity, and commitment, as well as examining how such beliefs can have an impact upon lifestyle.

This unit contributes to the continuity and progression of pupils' learning by recognising the complexity of the question and the variety of answers about God, by considering different kinds of truths and understanding how their importance to religious believers can vary.

The unit builds upon the previous learning in KS2 about stories and traditions concerning God from different traditions. The unit anticipates a further study of beliefs concerning God in KS4, where a more thorough theological and philosophical approach may be pursued.

Estimated teaching time for this unit: 7 hours. It is recognised that this unit may provide more teaching ideas than a class will cover in 7 hours. Teachers are invited to plan their own use of some of the learning ideas below, ensuring depth of learning rather than covering everything.

KEY STRANDS ADDRESSED BY THIS UNIT

AT 1: Learning about Religion

- Beliefs, Values and Teaching
- Religious practices and ways of life
- Ways of expressing meaning

AT 2: Learning from Religion

- Questions of Identity, Diversity and Belonging
- Questions of Meaning, Purpose and Truth
- Questions of Values and Commitments

ATTITUDES FOCUS: Pupils will explore attitudes of:

- Self awareness by becoming increasingly able to articulate their own viewpoint.
- Respect for all by developing a willingness to listen to learn from different points of view.
- **Open mindedness** by engaging in positive discussion and debate about the existence and nature of God

The unit will provide these opportunities :

- Pupils have opportunities to consider the concept and nature of God as expressed in different religions.
- Pupils have opportunities to consider a diverse range of views about questions of the existence of God from the study of *Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Humanism.*
- Pupils will be able to think about their own experiences and views in relation to questions of how belief influences ways of life.
- Experiences and opportunities provided by this unit include dialogue, reflection and thinking based upon evidence used in arguing for / against the existence of God.

Vocabulary +	Resources
concepts	
In this unit, pupils will have an	Teachers might use:
	 Teachers might use: Robert Kirkwood <i>Looking for God</i> Longman ISBN 978-0582202559 and <i>Looking for Proof of God</i> Longman ISBN 978-0582203099 <i>Questions about God: Some perspectives</i> Developing Secondary RE series ed. Rosemary Rivett RE Today ISBN 1-904024-48-3 <i>Assessed RE</i> Engaging with Secondary RE series ed Pamela Draycott; RE Today ISBN 1-904024-48-3 <i>Active Resources for Christianity</i> by Phil Grice (Heinemann) ISBN 0 433 30372 4 <i>Thinking through RE</i> Vivienne Baumfield 2003 Chris Kington Publishing Introducing Philosophy of Religion by Dilwyn Hunt, Nelson Thornes, 2005. This is REI Cath Large, Hodder Murray Looking Inwards, Looking Outwards, J. Mackley, RE Today, 1997 Developing Secondary RE: Evil and Goodness, Ed. Rosemary Rivett, RE Today Services, 2003. Steps in RE: Onwards and Upwards, Lesley Beadle, RE Today 2006 provides activities and learning strategies for SEN pupils. A Beginner's Guide to Ideas, Reaper and Smith, Lion Beginning Philosophy, P. Mullen, Hodder Matters of Life and Death: Suffering, C. Wright and S. Haines, Lion. One World, Many Voices, ed Bernard Williams Thinking about God (Harrison and Kippax) Religion in Focus: Christianity in Today's World, (Second edition, 2005) Orchard, Wright, Clinton, Lynch and Weston (Pub. John Murray) One World Many Voices, ed Bernard Williams
	 Key Christian Beliefs, Chris Wright, Pub: Lion Questions about God Developing Secondary RE Series RE Today
	Video and DVDBelief file: Christianity
	BBC RE Curriculum Bites: Series 1 (2003) Hotline to heaven? Prayer in contemporary Christian life.
	 by RE Today + Activities pack available. Why Atheism? DVD and resource pack Tackling Tough Questions DVD by Prof Russell Stannard, from RE Today (for higher
	 achieving pupils) <i>Taking Issues</i> Videos "Does God Exist?" BBC

	 Web: The city and county of Nottingham supports this unit with some resources at <u>www.rsresources.org.uk</u> Loans of artefacts and resources are easily arranged. The National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE) has two excellent web starting points for these issues: <u>www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts</u> enables pupils to view and judge numerous works of pupil art on key Biblical stories and spiritual ideas from young people. Online searchable sacred texts from different religions at: <u>www.ishwar.com</u> Try <u>www.reonline.org.uk</u> for a good general gateway to RE materials. www.humanismforschools.org.uk/ Big Questions explored at <u>www.abc.net.au/science/bigquestions</u> (Paul Davies) 	
 Contributions to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils Opportunities for spiritual development come from raising ultimate questions that might cau pupils to pause and reflect on their place in the universe Opportunities for moral development come from identifying how our beliefs have an impact upon our behaviour, and consideration of how we respond to others with different beliefs. Opportunities for cultural development come from peer appreciation of religious background and upbringing. 		

ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS

A formal assessment of each pupils is neither required nor desirable for every RE unit. Continuing use of assessment for learning methods is best.

Teachers can assess this work by setting a learning task towards the end of the unit. The task aims to elicit engaged and reflective responses to the material studied throughout the unit across the ability range. (This box should summarise what appears for assessment in the teaching and learning section below)

a) Schools have OFSTED inspections. Imagine that there is a God and that God is going to do an OFGOD inspection of your local area next week. What would need to be done to get ready? What changes would have to be made? How would people behave up to and during the inspection? (Front page – local, national and international news in OFGOD Preparation Times)

b) Compare this to how believers' lives are affected by their belief in God, whom they believe to know all their actions and thoughts. (Leader column comment)

c) Imagine that there is no God. With no OFGOD inspections ever, what difference does that make? Would humans have to make their own OFHUMAN inspectorate? What would your reaction be to each scenario? ("God is dead!" Shock! Now what?)

See *Questions about God: Some perspectives* Developing Secondary RE series ed. Rosemary Rivett RE Today ISBN 1-904024-48-3 pages 7-8 for detailed version of this task.

Key questions	LEARNING OBJECTIVES	TEACHING AND LEARNING	LEARNING OUTCOMES	Points to note
What do you believe is true? How can you prove it?	To identify important personal beliefs Consider evidence to support these beliefs.	 Starter (individual activity) Which one of these is true? 7 Stimulus statements for pupils to consider to be true - then discuss as a pair. Stimulus for starter statements (or pictures) could include: The world is round - There is a God - Iceland is cold - Smoking is bad for you 12th March follows 11th March - It's raining today - Custard is horrible (at least 1 fact, opinion, belief) They could also rank them in importance and offer evidence to support whether they are important Development Pupils to be asked if they could find words (give first letter clue) that fit the statements. "Something we can prove is true" "something we know or trust is true" "a view we hold" Paired pupils given a further 7 statements and this time are given 'O', 'F' and 'B' cards to hold. Again the teacher asks pupils to explore why they have chosen a particular card for each statement Introduce the idea of interpretation. How we interpret apparently neutral "facts" can affect how we view them. For example, the intricate nature of the universe according to the findings of science may be seen as a fact. However, different people interpret these facts in different ways e.g. Richard Dawkins and Francis Collins (Human Genome Project) see the same information but interpret the significance of them in different ways. Pupils then to record their findings and provide 1 fact, 1 belief and 1 opinion statement of their own. How might someone else interpret their statements? Plenary Pupils to share their examples	Pupils will have established a definition of fact, belief and opinion. Also developed reasons to support points of view Fact = something provable Belief = something held to be true Opinion = a view we hold They will begin to recognise the importance of interpretation in these definitions.	Hodder Education Publication: Connections A

Why do some people believe in God ? Why is it hard to believe in God?	To identify terms and some reasons why people do or don't believe in God. To decide what their view of God is. To share and debate this ideas with others.	 Starter (paired activity) Sorting exercise of keyword and definitions Pupils are shown 3 people with different views about God. To match three definitions (atheist, theist and agnostic) to the particular belief. Introduction Class 'thought shower' some reasons why people do or don't believe in God (do: upbringing, argument, experience. Don't: science, suffering etc.) Development Human bar chart: pupils to write on a piece of paper where they stand on a continuum from 1 (Certain God exists) to 10 (Certain God does not exist). Teacher collects in numbers and redistributes randomly. Pupils stand along edge of classroom to indicate number on their piece of paper. This gives an indication of the spread of views in the class whilst allowing them space to think for themselves. Agnostic, atheist, theist 'stations' set up around room. Information from representatives of each view available, including, if possible, one pupil (perhaps from higher up in the school) who is prepared to explain their belief and reasons for believing. Pupils explore the information and ask questions. They should be prepared to listen to what others say and why Then to record on prepared sheet: what they believe about God and why another reason someone of the same persuasion gave for their belief reasons others gave for believing differently what they felt was most convincing argument (for and against) Plenary Pupils to feedback. Repeat human bar chart activity. Was there any change? If anyone is prepared to explain a change of mind, they might like to say now. 	 Pupils will have Understood key terms Identified their own stance Collected a range of reasons for this stance Outlined reasons why a particular view is convincing Appreciated reasons for an alternative viewpoint 	This is a 'moving about' lesson. 'Stations' in class should be accessible and clearly labelled. Resources might be needed to help with thought shower.
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Is there a designer behind the world ?	To consider how the design of: 1) ourselves 2) other creatures 3) what William Paley says might support a belief in God. To know that believers have developed <u>arguments</u> to prove that God exists.	 Starter Pupils to be given a 'word' (or picture) each and to say how well designed it is to help us function (e.g. nose, eye, ear, flower, picture of animal, or other natural process). Include a picture of a watch mechanism and other human artefacts alongside things from the world of nature. Pupils to feedback answers. Introduction Pupils to read about how theists believe God reveals himself through design in the world. Pupils to look at examples of plants/animals that are designed for the job they do e.g. cactus, pelican, polar bear. Pupils given a scorecard to record a) 2 animals and plants already identified and 4 more of pupils' choice (favourites are spider, rabbit, snakes, dogs etc.) b) their good design features c) a score from 0 to 5 (0: poorly designed for purpose, 5: perfectly designed for purpose). Pupils share records with each other. Development Pupils could record their opinion. Is William 's ideas about his watch and God. Pupils could record their opinion. Is William 'ght? Why? Is he 'out of date'? Present some criticisms of the design argument – such as the leap from saying things must be designed to concluding that there is a God; such as the way that evolution suggests that we and other creatures are <i>adapted</i> to our environments rather than <i>designed</i> for them. Plenary and homework Recall the importance of interpretation of facts. Descriptions of nature may be neutral but interpreted differently. If Paley already believes in God, that explains his interpreted differently. If Paley already believes in God, that explains his interpreted differently. If Paley already believes in God, that explains his interpreted differently. If Paley already believes in God, that explains his interpreted differently. If Paley already believes in God, that explains his interpreted differently. If Paley already believes in God, that explains his interpreted of the appearances	 Pupils will have Identified examples of good design in humans, animals and plants Consider the nature of design in our world Evaluated the relevance of Paley's design argument Outlined the challenges of any design process 	Could bring a live animal / pet to consider its design features. Connexions A – where do we look for God – can God be seen in nature Text on William Paley
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Why do	To consider what	Starter		
Why do some people believe they 'know' God personally in their lives?	To consider what different types of 'experience' people have of God. To 'step inside' one of these experiences and understand how it can affect someone	 Small group looking at a stimulus experiences of people who have met God introduces vision, conversion experience, meditation, healing, being close to God Introduction Pupils to look at some brief 'profiles' of people who have felt God's presence in their lives through visions, guidance, conversion, meditation, holy place, prayer. Such as Paul on the Damascus Road, Prophet of Islam in the cave, Bernadette of Lourdes, Buddha, call of Abraham / sacrifice of Isaac Pupils to: Share what they have gained from the profile above a) comment on whether they or someone they know has ever had such experiences b) say which experience could convince them that God exists. c) to identify what a non-believer may say has caused this experience Development To focus on a particular religious experience and to see why it happened and what affect it had on the person. E.g. a video from the BBC's 'Issues of Belief' series 'Does God exist?' is about Billy McCurry who has a powerful life-changing conversion experience (duration of video:15 minutes) Pupils to write an account of Billy's story from his perspective. On his journey Billy experiences anger, elation, indignation, guilt, shame, redemption, from disbelief to belief. This exercise could be a possible homework. 	Pupils will have: - shared, where appropriate, an experience (of their own or someone else) that they can attribute to God. - Looked at a range of religious experiences and: a) said how persuasive they find them b) identified alternative causes c) Empathised with a particular religious experience and its effects on the person involved.	Stimulus material for small groups to read. Video / DVD clip to show someone whose life has been changed by God
		Pupils to feedback their thoughts on Billy's (or other profile) experience.		

What do you	To explore	Starter (in pairs)		Alternative starter
think God is	commonly held	Pupils to answer question: "When people talk about 'God', what do you think	Pupils will have an	1. RE Today
like?	views of God and	they mean?"	understanding of the	Children's ideas
	to know and	Teacher to provide 5 statements (or pictures) of popular ideas:	Christian idea of God	of God -
What do	understand the	a) God as magical rescuer	as Trinity.	2 create a data
Christians	Christian belief of	b) God as policeman in the sky	ÿ	bank of the
think God is	God as Trinity.	c) God as benevolent old man in sky	Pupils will have an	ideas of God
like?	,	d) God as a powerful force	appreciation of their	from the class.
	To appreciate how	e) God as a judge	own roles in their	
	pupils themselves	Do pupils find any of these images helpful/real? Are these views the way	lives.	
	fulfil their own	Christians actually understand God? This lesson will try and answer that		
	'trinity' (or more!)	question.	Pupils will have	
	in their		identified what	
	relationships	Introduction	qualities are	
	-	Pupils to be asked what they know already of what Christians think God is like?	necessary for each	
		Pupils to be shown '3-in-1' items., e.g. H_20 (ice, steam, water), a young person	divine part of the	
		(son, student, friend). How are the 3 components in each picture the	trinity.	
		same/different?		
		Development		
		Pupils to identify how they fulfil different roles in their own lives and what		
		challenge and joys come from each. They are to identify 3 roles as the same.		
		Christians believe that God is Father (Creator), son (redeemer) and Holy Spirit		
		(enabler). What makes a good Father, son and supportive 'other'?		
		Biblical passages to outline idea of God:		
		Father – Genesis 1:2-4, Son – John 1:1-14, Holy Spirit – Acts 2:1-4 or Mark 1:10-		
		11. What attributes do these passages reveal about a Christian understanding of		
		God?		
		Plenary		
		How far do the popular images of God from the starter activity match the beliefs		
		and teachings of Christianity about God? (e.g. God as Spirit rather than physical		
		being "in the sky"; God as creator and sustainer; God as personal, immanent		
		and transcendent; God as Trinity.)		

	To understand that	Starter		Introduction
Why do	Christians believe	Pupils given 5 images (war, bombing, greed, starvation, global warming) showing	Pupils will understand	Christians feel that
Christians	that Jesus came to	the nature of a broken/'sinful 'world.	the words Emmanuel,	Jesus was God
feel God had	earth to provide a	- What is happening in each picture?	incarnation	showing us the
to take	way to improve the	 Is this the world God wanted? 		high standards at
human form	world by <u>saving</u> us	 How could God put things right? 	Will understand why	which people
as the son?	from our sins		God became a	should live. They
	(wrong-doings that	Birth Story of Jesus showing how Jesus was born of Mary but was from God –	human being	should show
How could	cause distress and	Luke's Gospel. What situation is Jesus born into – poverty		universal love,
we improve	disharmony in	Why was Jesus born in this way? Incarnation Emmanuel	Can articulate ways	altruism and
the world?	our/God's world)	Text with questions for knowledge and understanding	of improving the	forgiveness (the
			world	parable of the
		Development (small groups)		good Samaritan,
		Pupils to look at 5 poster messages that may help to improve the world we live in		the parable of the
		today. 'Equal Shares' 'Five Steps to World Peace' 'Rules for Living' 'How to Love		sheep and the
		your neighbour' 'Food for All' 'Keep the Earth Intact'.		goats, the 2 great
		1) Messages ranked according to importance. Reasons given as to why.		commandments).
		2) Pupils to imagine they are working for a company called 'World Improvements'		Question: would
		at an international trade fair. They are to design an advertising poster to show		these activities
		(using stimulus messages, Jesus' messages and own ideas) how they would		improve our
		make the world a better place. Homework task		relationships
		Plenary (small groups)		around the world?
		Plenary (small groups) Present posters to rest of the class. Class vote on best poster and why.		
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What is God	To understand	Starter (groups – of mixed faith if possible)		Key ideas for each
like for non-	who God is from	Pupils to allot faiths between themselves in preparation for research (choice:	Pupils will have:	faith:
Christians?	the beliefs of at	Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism). Groups of 4: some faiths will have two		- Islam – Allah, 99
	least one other	research groups	1) undertaken	names, his
	faith other than	Introduction	research about God	prophets, his book,
	Christianity.	By using a possible combination of library, departmental and ICT resources,	in chosen faith	his angels, his will,
		pupils to become 'group expert' in allotted faith. Following questions to be		patterns
	To appreciate a	addressed:	2) presented	- Hinduism –
	range of ideas of	- What is God like?	research to their	Brahman
	God.	- How is God revealed ?	class and contributed	(Upanishads),
		- How do followers present their ideas of God?	to group presentation	Atman, gods and
	To consider how	- How should a follower live to have a good relationship with God?		goddess
	follows of a			(personalities of
	particular faith will	NB Prohibition on images of God in Judaism and Islam – ensure that focus is not		Brahman),
	respond to his/her	on visual presentations in these faiths.		symbols of
	views of God			Brahman (lotus
		Development		flower, Aum),
	To develop inter	Pupils share expertise with original group.		statues
	personal and	God in		- Judaism – God's
	enquiry skills	Contribute to produce a group presentation (oral or written (brochure, poster))		law (10
		Peer evaluation ?		commandments),
				Messiah, the
		What are the similarities and differences between beliefs?		Shema
		Plenary		- Sikhism – Mul
		Class to consider which faith's views of God they find helpful, surprising, daunting		Mantra, God's
		etc.		name, Guru
				Granth
How well		a) Schools have OFSTED inspections. Imagine that there is a God and that God		
have I		is going to do an OFGOD inspection of your local area next week. What would		
understood		need to be done to get ready? What changes would have to be made? How		
these ideas		would people behave up to and during the inspection? Apply different beliefs in		
of God?		God from a range of faiths.		
		(Front page – local, national and international news in OFGOD Times)		
		b) Compare this to how believers' lives are affected by their belief in God, whom		
		they believe to know all their actions and thoughts. (Leader column comment)		
		c) Imagine that there is no God. With no OFGOD inspections ever, what		
		difference does that make? Would humans have to make their own OFHUMAN		
		inspectorate? What would your reaction be to each scenario? ("God is dead!"		
		Shock! Now what?)		