

EMMANUEL COLLEGE
THE RELIGIOUS STUDIES DEPARTMENT
Philosophical Statement



Underpinning our ethos at Emmanuel is an understanding that God has created everyone infinitely precious, morally responsible and gifted for a purpose, and that this understanding is reflected in how we should treat each other through our College's core virtues of love, wisdom, fairness, self-control, courage, humility and integrity. We see these virtues inspired by the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, as told in the Bible, and an understanding that someone's value is not in what they do or their status, background or beliefs, but because they are all made "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:26-27).

We therefore want students to understand more deeply the Bible and person of Jesus Christ, which inspires so much of College life and beliefs. Students will understand the relevance of Biblical principles to contemporary society. They will be taught and consider the claims of Christianity and look at these claims in the light of the beliefs and customs of other major religions such as Judaism, Islam, Buddhism as well as atheistic worldviews. Students need to be encouraged to think for themselves, to question and to respectfully listen to the views of others as they formulate their own viewpoints, as they and their views receive the same treatment.

The two other major Abrahamic faiths (Judaism and Islam) are taught as part of the examination of Scripture and their differences and similarities to Christianity are carefully noted. These two faiths are heavily represented in the North East, with the Gateshead Jewish community at one time being the most concentrated population in Europe. Furthermore, both these religions are often subject to prejudice and discrimination, as are Christians, and it is important that students have an accurate understanding of them, rather than just a stereotype or caricature.

In order to be fully educated citizens, it is also essential that students appreciate that the Christian faith has had a profound influence on our history, national heritage, literature, art, architecture, constitution, social welfare systems, judicial system and institutions. It is also important to demonstrate how British Values (democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different worldviews) have developed from a Christian heritage and can be supported by that belief system today.

It is accepted that there is a spiritual dimension to our lives and students are to be encouraged to consider this dimension to their existence which goes beyond the material. Religious Education is just one of many areas of the curriculum in which the key issues of life can be properly explored, including consideration of such ultimate questions as "Who am I?" "Where did we come from?" "Why am I here?" "What is the meaning of life?" "Is there right and wrong?" "Where did we go wrong?" "Is there a remedy?" and "What is truth?" Students need to be challenged to consider how their own worldview affects their beliefs and behaviour and are to be helped in their own quest for answers to life's ultimate questions.

Students will develop many skills and perspectives that are vital for 21st Century Britain and particularly for employment, not least the ability to discern truth, understand, critique and justify positions and communicate clearly and confidently. That being said, we believe that a greater focus should be placed on character. Character is an end in itself, and we desire students to develop into humble, secure adults who value all people as equally precious, and who use their gifts to love and serve others. Essential for this is to understand the value of all people made "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:26-27). Knowing that everyone is equally precious and seeing the loving example of Jesus teaches us to love and serve others.