

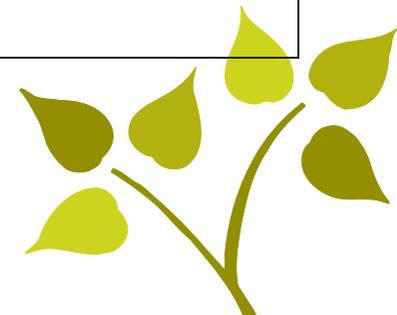
The Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in Northamptonshire

Support Materials



A Beginner's Guide to the Religions of the Agreed Syllabus

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Religion - BUDDHISM

Beliefs	Holy Books / Scriptures	Place of Worship	Festivals and Celebrations	Family Life
<p>Buddhism is based on the teachings of The Buddha – “Enlightened One”. Buddha was born Siddattha Gautama, a Hindu, in India about 563 BCE. He died aged 80. He travelled around India seeking enlightenment. He realised pain and suffering are part of life but believed a way to find release was to follow The Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path. Buddha called this The Middle Way.</p> <p>Central teachings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anicca (the impermanence of things); - Dukkha (suffering of life); - Anatta (no such thing as “I”, “the self”). <p>The Buddha did not believe in a god or in the human soul. He said man could not know if the universe is regulated by a spiritual force, a god or an ultimate reality. For this reason Buddhism is often called a way of life rather than a religion.</p> <p>All Buddhists seek enlightenment. Self discipline, contemplation and living according to the teachings of the Buddha can help to achieve this. Meditation (Samadhi) is important. It is a time for contemplation on ultimate questions, working out a way to live a positive and good life. Gautama attracted disciples who he formed into a band of monks (Bhikkhus). He instructed them in the way of enlightenment (Dhamma). Bhikkhus still belong to a monastery and have 10 rules to follow (Das Sila). Some young boys spend a short time in a monastery, adopting the life of a monk, as part of their education.</p> <p>Buddhists must follow Dhamma if they wish to be freed from the cycle of rebirth (samsara) and obtain Nibbana (Nirvana).</p> <p>Two main traditions of Buddhism in the world today: Theravada (teachings of the elders which are still practised today and mainly monastic. Found mainly in Thailand and Sri Lanka). Mahayana (lay people play a greater part. Possible for many to achieve enlightenment. Found mainly in Japan, Korea, Nepal, Indonesia, Vietnam etc).</p>	<p>Tipitaka – first Buddhist scriptures. Means “Three Baskets” which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vinaya (contains rules for living); - Sutta (teachings of The Buddha); - Abhidhamma (attempt to explain beliefs and ideas of Buddha). <p>For many Buddhists most important scriptures are found in Sutta Pitaka, such as Dhammapada (very important collection of sayings) and Jataka tales (life of early Buddha, giving guidance on the sort of life Buddhists should live).</p>	<p>Buddhists visit Temples and Shrines to worship. This may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - offering fruit and flowers; - chanting mantras; - meditating; - walking clockwise around stupas; - burning incense or joss sticks; - prostrating themselves in front of a shrine; - using a prayer wheel; - banging cymbals when making offerings; - sitting in silence. <p>Pagodas, Natural Features and Shrines in the home are important places for worship too.</p>	<p>Wesak – May or June at time of full moon. Celebrates the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha. Processions take place.</p> <p>Rainy Season Retreat – Autumn. Remembers the time in India when the monks had to stay in their monastery because of bad weather. Lay people make offerings to the monks, including new robes etc.</p> <p>No special ceremonies for birth, marriage and death.</p>	<p>Buddhists are required to celebrate all that is good and pure. They are also required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - follow the first 5 rules for monks (avoid sexual misconduct, not kill, not steal, not tell lies, not use alcohol or drugs); - support monasteries with gifts of food and robes; - give to the poor; - develop tranquillity and insight; - earn good kamma to try and break free from cycle of samsara. <p>Buddhists are expected to find a thoughtful and balanced way to live, giving up greed and selfishness and not causing suffering to themselves or others.</p>

Religion - CHRISTIANITY

Beliefs	Holy Books / Scriptures	Place of Worship	Festivals and Celebrations	Family Life
<p>Largest of the world's religions. Founded on belief in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, a Jew who lived about 2000 years ago in Israel. Believe Jesus, God incarnate, was born a human being, but of a virgin birth. That he was crucified but resurrected (rose from the dead). Jesus viewed as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - risen Lord (gives hope of heavenly life after death); - Son of God (God in human form); - Unveiler of truth (shared what God was like through own life – forgiving, compassionate); - Teacher (love God with all heart and neighbour as self). <p>Belief there is One God, Creator and ruler of universe, infinite, eternal, all-powerful, all knowing but compassionate, forgiving and personal. One God in three persons, 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit'. This is the Trinity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Father (Creator, power behind world); - Son (Title for Jesus, incarnation of God); - Holy Spirit (presence of God in world. Works through people and situations to encourage qualities as seen in Jesus). <p>Other beliefs vary according to denomination but generally believe come to know God through Jesus.</p>	<p>Bible – divided into 2 major parts – Old and New Testaments. The Christian 'Old Testament' is the 'Jewish Bible' – shared scripture. Describes how God acts and why. Apocrypha – 6 extra books regarded as scripture by Catholic Church. Gospels ("Good News") – included in New Testament are written accounts of what Jesus did, taught and achieved. These four books proclaim the good news that Jesus was the Son of God. Credos – Lists of most important Christian beliefs.</p>	<p>"Church" – actually means a community of people who meet together to worship. Different denominations have different styles of building (cathedral, church, chapel, citadel etc.) and different leaders (priest, vicar, reverend. 'Minister' is a useful general word). Orthodox Churches are found mainly in Eastern Europe, North Africa. The Anglican Church is made up of churches in various countries worldwide. It includes the Church of England. Free Churches (non-conformists) are distinguished mainly as rejecting the authority of Pope and Bishops. There are many different types of worship. General features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sunday as Holy Day; - Worship offered to God through Jesus; - Listening to readings from the Bible; - A sermon, applying the teaching of the Bible for living today; - Prayer and praise; - Many participate in the Eucharist, Holy Communion, Mass; - Often candles, water, cross/crucifix, liturgical colours are symbolic. <p>Common furniture includes seats, font, altar / table, lectern, pulpit, Bible and musical instruments.</p>	<p>Advent – 1st – 24th December begins the Christian Year. Celebrates coming of Jesus. Christmas – marks Jesus' birth, 25th December, Lent – period of 40 days of reflection and penitence leading up to Easter. Holy Week – week prior to Easter, includes Palm Sunday and Good Friday. Easter Day – celebrates resurrection of Jesus. Ascension – celebrated 40 days after Easter, commemorating Jesus being taken into heaven. Pentecost (Whitsun) – celebrates occasion when Holy Spirit came among apostles and Christian Church born. Baptism – important for many Christians to dedicate self to God's work. Pilgrimage is not compulsory in Christianity but Christians often try to visit places associated with the story of Jesus and the Saints.</p>	<p>Christians seek to live in a way that brings them closer to God. They try to follow Jesus' example and teachings. Active involvement with the world is important – striving for peace, upholding morality, working to help poor, showing compassion to suffering and needy.</p> <p>Examples to study might include Christian Aid (global development); the Salvation Army (caring for the homeless) and the Society of Friends – called Quakers - (peace work).</p>

Religion - HINDUISM

Beliefs	Holy Books / Scriptures	Place of Worship	Festivals and Celebrations	Family Life
<p>Ancient Indian religion. Originated in Indus Valley. No creed or known founder. The Supreme Being – Brahman – is the origin and sustainer of Life. Hindus worship many deities (gods and goddesses), each representing one particular aspect of Brahman. Three (The Trimurti) are worshipped more than others – Brahma, Vishnu (Rama, Krishna are avatars of Vishnu) and Shiva. These three together express the idea that Brahman creates, sustains, and destroys.</p> <p>Atman – part of Brahman which is in everybody – soul. Hindus believe in reincarnation. Aim to leave world of Samsara and liberate atman (Moksha) to be with Brahman by fulfilling dharma (duties).</p> <p>Actions: Belief in Karma – (actions) is important – influences rebirth. Ahimsa is respect for all living things. Four stages of life called ashramas. Each stage is defined by particular duties.</p>	<p>Numerous sacred texts in Hindu tradition, the oldest collection known as the Vedas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Rig Veda – hymns. • The Brahmanas – rites and ceremonies. • The Upanishads – Brahman, reincarnation, law of karma, creation. • Aranyakas – forest meditations and shastras. • Laws of Manu – law books. • The Puranas – myths. • Epics – collection of poems, most important being Ramayana Mahabharata. • All written in Sanskrit. <p>Hindu traditions are very practical, and perhaps less oriented towards authoritative literature than some other faiths.</p>	<p>The Temple, called a Mandir, is Hindu place of worship. Temples may be dedicated to any Hindu deities. An image of the deity, called a murti, is placed in shrine with tall tower above. Shoes must be removed in the Mandir.</p> <p>Hindu homes often have a shrine for worship containing statues (murtis) or images of deities.</p> <p>Puja is the ritual carried out by women every morning at the shrine in homes. Ritual washing of deities, offerings and prayers.</p> <p>The Arti ceremony performed twice daily – morning and evening.</p> <p>The Priest's roles in temple:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to look after deities; - conduct worship (Puja and Arti). <p>The Mandir or Temple has a strong community function.</p>	<p>Celebrate events and stories in the life of deities and mark the changing seasons. Specially prepared food and sweets are eaten.</p> <p>Varsha Pratipada (Ugadi) – New Year. Ram Navami – Rama's birthday. Janmashtami – Krishna's birthday. Diwali – the Festival of Light. Raksha Bandhan – renews ties of affection between brothers and sisters. Dassehra remembers the story of Rama. Navaratri – nine lights (stick dances). Holi – Spring festival (bonfires, colour celebrations). Durga Puja – on eighth day of Navaratri. Celebrates the mother goddess. Ganesha Chaturthi – celebrates the life of Ganesha, the popular elephant headed god, remover of obstacles.</p>	<p>Hinduism – a way of life with family at the centre. Family duties must be carried out. Grandparents often live with family – well respected, strong sense of responsibility. Community is important, seen as a family. Rituals and practices taught and learnt at home (Puja). Most Hindus are vegetarian – the cow is sacred. Life is seen as a cyclical journey – series of stages each having own duty which provides structure for right living. Samskaras mark stages of life (e.g. birth, marriage) – there are up to 16 different ones in total – four stages of life. Dharma (duty) is important. Four varnas – in society – basis of the idea of caste (take care not to stereotype here). Varnashrama Dharma – duty according to caste system.</p>

Religion - ISLAM

Beliefs	Holy Books / Scriptures	Place of Worship	Festivals and Celebrations	Family Life
<p>One God - Allah -Tawid - Creator - requires obedience. Guidance of Allah given to humanity by messengers (Prophets). Muhammad (PBUH) was the last Prophet, exemplary in complete loyalty to Allah.</p> <p>5 Pillars of Islam: regulate a Muslim's relationship with Allah and guide life.</p> <p>1) Shahadah - statement of belief.</p> <p>2) Salah - prayer five times a day (constant reminder of Allah). Special prayer positions - rak'ahs.</p> <p>3) Zakah - almsgiving 2.5% of wealth annually.</p> <p>4) Sawm - fasting (Ramadan - self control).</p> <p>5) Hajj - pilgrimage to Makkah - once in life.</p> <p>Islam means submission. Muslims submit to Allah. Belief in the Day of Judgement, when angels judge everyone. Life after death - akhu'ah, in Paradise.</p>	<p>Qur'an is the Holy Book - contains words of Allah given to Muhammad (PBUH) by Angel Jibril - written in Arabic. Highly respected - kept wrapped in high place in room.</p> <p>Read on a stand (a Kursi). Contains 114 surahs (chapters). Each surah is shorter than the one before. All begin with "In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful."</p> <p>Includes teaching and events and stories of prophets, e.g. Isa, Musa (PBUT). The Qur'an is the basis of Islam. Teaches how to live and get ready for Day of Judgement.</p> <p>Hadith – sayings and stories of Muhammad (PBUH) - advice on how to act - used by Muslims when faced with problems.</p>	<p>Mosque (Masjid) – "place of prostration". Minaret - tower for call to prayer by Muezzin. Inside: washing rooms for wudu. No seats. Shoes removed. Mihrab - in one wall shows direction of Makkah and Ka'bah (for prayer). Imam leads worship. Minbar – pulpit for sermon. Men and women separate. No pictures or statues. Mosques open all day for five prayer times. Friday - midday prayer very important - sermon and Qur'an reciting. Mosque can also be a social and educational centre. Rooms for washing and preparing the dead for burial (no cremation). Madrasah School for children to learn about Islam and study Qur'an.</p>	<p>Id-ul-Fitr - marks the end of Ramadan - sighting of new moon.</p> <p>Id-ul-Adha - festival of Sacrifice during time of annual pilgrimage.</p> <p>Day of Hijra - first day of New Year - remembers Muhammad's (PBUH) migration from Makkah to Madinah in 622CE.</p> <p>Muhammad's (PBUH) Birthday</p> <p>Night of Power - celebrated on 27th of Ramadan when Muhammad received Qur'an.</p> <p>The Night Journey of Muhammad who went from Makkah to Madinah.</p> <p>Other celebrations - these relate to family to mark stages in life, e.g. marriage, birth.</p>	<p>Very important in Islam. Father provides for family. Family is context for teaching children duties - how to pray and reading Qur'an. Each home has Qur'an. Definite rules about moral behaviour. Sense of Ummah (being in the global Muslim community). Halal - strict food laws. Halal = allowed, Haram = forbidden. Alcohol is forbidden. Family teaches children dress and behaviour codes.</p> <p>Celebrations: Birth - adhan - call to prayer and aqiqah. Bismillah - at four - start of religious instruction. Women's role to look after family. Marriage - some arranged - dowry - contract. The Prophet improved the dignity and rights of women in his time.</p>

Religion - JUDAISM

Beliefs	Holy Books / Scriptures	Place of Worship	Festivals and Celebrations	Family Life
<p>One God – the Creator, the Eternal, the Almighty. Unity of God, judgement and repentance, Jews follow the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, law giver, leader from slavery.</p> <p>At heart of Judaism is the Covenant (special agreement) with Abraham more than 4000 years ago. Jews live as God's chosen people to obey the divine Mitzvot (laws) including the 10 Commandments. All life is sacred. Jews live to serve and worship God in every area of life. The Messiah will come as God's redeemer in the future. Belief in life after death.</p>	<p>Hebrew name for the 39 books of the Jewish Bible is the Tenakh. It consists of 3 parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim; Core of Judaism, written by different authors over a thousand years. - Torah (1st five books of Tenakh) contain laws of Judaism and early history of Jewish people. Written on scrolls, read in synagogue weekly. Whole of Torah read in a year. - Nevi'im (prophets) comprises 3 major and 12 minor Prophets. Remind of responsibilities towards Covenant. - Ketuvim (writings) are a collection of 11 books. Some such as Psalms and Proverbs are commonly used in worship. - The Talmud ("teaching") is Judaism's most cherished book, after the Torah. It contains guidance for following a Jewish way of life. - Zohor – Ancient writings are attributed to Rabbi Simeon Bar Yochai, a second century teacher from Palestine. These have become the holy book of Kabbalah, a mystic group within Judaism. 	<p>Synagogue (home of learning, gathering together) – centre of worship and community life. Prayer, worship, study and special family occasions take place here.</p> <p>Rabbi ("teacher") is the religious community leader and source of authority. Leads prayers and ceremonies.</p> <p>Minister – where no Rabbi in a community.</p> <p>Cantor – leads singing/chanting.</p> <p>Place of study where children receive religious education and learn Hebrew.</p> <p>The Ark is central focus where Torah Scrolls kept. Men/women are separate in Orthodox synagogues.</p> <p>Bimah – raised platform where Torah is read.</p> <p>Menorah – 7 branched candlestick.</p> <p>Magen David – Star of David, a symbol of Judaism</p> <p>Men and boys wear tallit, kippah and Tefillin for prayer.</p>	<p>Jews follow a lunar calendar.</p> <p>Shabbat - Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, commemorates God's rest on seventh day of Creation. Keeping Sabbath is central commandment of Judaism.</p> <p>Rosh Hashanah – New Year. Jews remember their 'Creator' and reflect on his judgement by repenting their sins. Solemn time. Sept/Oct.</p> <p>Yom Kippur Day of Atonement – the holiest of Jewish festivals. Fast for 24 hours to show self-discipline, dedication. Time for reconciliation with the Eternal.</p> <p>Pesach – Passover. Celebrates the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt when they were led to freedom by Moses. Lasts 8 days and begins with Seder meal which helps Jews identify with the suffering and joy of their ancestors.</p> <p>Shavuot – Feast of Weeks. Celebrates revelation of the Torah to Moses at Sinai (May/June)</p> <p>Sukkot – Feast of Tabernacles. Nine days harvest festival. Celebrates the care received whilst Jewish people wandered in wilderness for 40 years (Sep/Oct).</p> <p>Purim – Feast of Lots. Early Spring, marks the victory of Esther over persecution. Carnival processions (Feb/Mar).</p> <p>Hanukkah – Eight day festival of light. Recalls miracle when oil lasted in temple for 8 days when there was only enough oil for 1 day (Nov/Dec).</p> <p>Pilgrimage – Jerusalem is very important, especially Western Wall, but there is no obligation to make a pilgrimage there.</p>	<p>The home is the centre of Jewish religious life – even more than synagogue. Verses from Torah (usually the Shema) written on tiny scroll and sealed into narrow containers called Mezuzahs are fixed to doorposts and touched by Jews.</p> <p>Mother plays key role in faith at home and is central to Shabbat. Only Kosher foods can be eaten. Kashrut (food laws) are found in the Torah. No shellfish or meat from pig. Milk/meat may be eaten together. Kitchens reflect this. Children receive religious education in preparation for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Groups within Judaism include various groupings of Orthodox Jews, who keep the Torah in traditional ways and Reform and Liberal Jews whose practice is more influenced by modernity</p> <p>Life Rituals include Brit Milah and girls' naming ceremony. Bar and Bat Mitzvah/Bat Chayil, marriage, funerals, mourning and remembrance.</p>

Religion - SIKHISM

Beliefs	Holy Books / Scriptures	Place of Worship	Festivals and Celebrations	Family Life
<p>One God-creator of all things. Mool Mantra – Sikh prayer describes God and beliefs about God – gender free. God’s name is most important “Nam”.</p> <p>Nam Japa (prayer) repeating name of God.</p> <p>Nam Simran – meditating on name of God. Guidance by Will of God for Sikhs through Guru Granth Sahib. Belief in rebirth. Aim to break away from it (‘mukti’) by becoming ‘God filled’ (through meditation and worship). Earning by honest means, sharing and service to all human beings (sewa) are important values. Acceptance of God’s will (hukam) - as revealed in Guru Granth Sahib. Equality of gender, all functions shared by men and women. Equality of race, creed, class- oneness of humanity.</p>	<p>Teaching of Sikhism based on 10 Gurus. Guru Nanak (a Hindu) - founded Sikhism in Punjab. Taught that God is neither Hindu nor Muslim – all people equal before God. He established langar (free kitchen). Followed by 9 other Gurus to 1708 CE. Guru Arjan compiled Adi Granth- Sikh scriptures (teaching and humans of first four Gurus). Guru Gobind Singh – last of Gurus founded Khalsa with Panj Pyares (five beloved ones). He stated that scriptures – the Guru Granth Sahib - would be new Guru and replace human Gurus. Holy book written in Gurmukhi script – copies are exactly same as original. Includes set prayers and hymns. Great respect shown to book, which is treated as a human Guru, but not worshipped. Read continuously in festivals (Akhand Path). Position of honour. Dasam Granth (10th collection) – not as important as Guru Granth Sahib. Writings of Gobind Singh.</p>	<p>Gurdwara – contains scriptures. All have saffron flag (Nishan Sahib) with Khanda on (symbol of Khalsa). In worship hall, takht (raised platform) with canopy-Guru Granth Sahib on cushions on it. Chauri (hair fan) waved over scriptures. Granthi reads from Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Granth Sahib put to bed in separate room. Pictures of Gurus on walls. Worship (diwan) no set day, but most in the UK meet on Sunday. Worshipper’s feet must point away from Holy book. Worship includes Kirtan-singing hymns from Guru Granth Sahib, also meditation on Name of God and listening to the Gurbani (teachings of Gurus). Prayers at end of service. Karah Parshad shared at end of service by all. Langar free kitchen in Gurdwaras – shared meal at end of diwan – all eat same food together – all equal. The Golden Temple at Amritsar – place of sacred journeying. Also five other places of spiritual authority in India.</p>	<p>Festivals celebrated with Akhand Path – 48 hours continuous reading of Guru Granth Sahib followed by procession.</p> <p>Gurpurbs – remembering Gurus – Birthdays of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. Deaths of Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur.</p> <p>Baisakhi originally Hindu festival 13th April remembers birth of Khalsa. Nishan Sahib is replaced. Time when many young Sikhs baptised into khalsa.</p> <p>Diwali also Hindu festival – festival of lights. Don’t have story of Ramayana. Celebrates freedom (release of Guru Hargovind from prison).</p> <p>Hola Mahalla – Spring festival – mainly in Punjab – not usually in UK.</p>	<p>Set prayers Nit-Nem-set prayers (daily role) am & p.m. Gurmukhi script is learnt to read the scriptures. Home helps Sikhs learn faith—especially equality and serving others (give charity).</p> <p>Many Sikhs are vegetarian but some eat non - ritual meat. Alcohol should not be drunk. Modest dress—women—shalwar kameez. Khalsa Sikhs wear 5Ks. Turban—has religious importance. Birth name chosen from Guru Granth Sahib in Gurdwara (opened at random), name to start with first letter at top of left hand page.</p> <p>Amrit ceremony - Initiation ‘Amrit Pahul’ most important ceremony of commitment to faith—member of Khalsa for 16+. Includes baptism – by drinking amrit (remembers Panj Pyares) 5Ks worn by Amrit Sikhs. Kesh – uncut hair, kangha - comb, kara – steel band (right wrist) eternity of God & unity, kirpan – sword - freedom, duty to defend faith, kachera –shorts.</p> <p>Marriage (Anand Karaj) may be arranged, takes place at home or in Gurdwara. Must be in presence of Guru Granth Sahib.</p> <p>Funerals - body washed, clean clothes, cremation, up to 10 days mourning. Ends with Karah Parshad.</p>

