



New Hall School

Theology flourishes at New Hall

Theology continues to flourish at New Hall School, an independent boarding and day school for girls and boys aged 3-18 years, despite a drop in national trends. The number of students taking Religious Studies at A level in England and Wales has fallen by 22.8 per cent in the past year¹, yet the subject continues to grow at New Hall.

Within the school, The Theology Department has an outstanding reputation as one of the highest-performing academic departments. Theology remains a rigorous academic discipline which studies the major world religions, including Christianity. Studying Theology allows New Hall's students to explore how religious beliefs and practices shape and influence the world we live in. Theology students gain a wide range of skills and disciplines, historical, linguistic, sociological, literary-critical and philosophical.

In a recent report² published by The Commission on Religious Education, the Very Rev John Hall, the Dean of Westminster, who chaired the commission, said: "All students need a thorough understanding of religious and non-religious worldviews, regardless of their own personal views, as a vital preparation for life and employment in modern Britain."

Paul Bray, Director of Learning & Teaching and Head of Theology at New Hall, said: "Recent structural changes in education have unintentionally undermined the teaching of Theology in the school curriculum. Despite this, Theology at New Hall is very popular with our students and helps them to develop investigative, analytical and critical evaluation skills."

Cyril, a former New Hall student, said: "Learning Theology ignited my interest in Philosophy, Ethics and Sociology. The ethics modules have helped me to deal with so much

¹ <https://www.premierchristianradio.com/News/UK/Huge-drop-in-number-of-pupils-studying-A-level-Religious-Studies>

² <https://www.commissiononre.org.uk/religious-education-for-all-commission-interim-report/>

in life." Izzy, also a recent leaver, added: "Learning Theology has inspired me and given me some life changing experiences, including a recent trip to India."

The Theology Department was judged as "outstanding" in the school's most recent Section 48 inspection. In 2018, at A Level, 69% of students achieved the top grades A*-B. At GCSE, the Theology Department has achieved consistently excellent results over a number of years, resulting in the 2015 Good Schools Guide Award for being the highest performing department in the country. In 2018, 48% of students achieved grades 8-9 (equivalent to A*) and 96% achieved grades 5-9 (equivalent to A*-B) with 49% of all Year 11 students at New Hall achieving their highest grade in our subject.

A growing number of students have chosen to read Theology, Philosophy or a related subject at Oxbridge and other Russell Group universities over recent years. With many Theology graduates going on to secure wide-ranging positions as authors, writers, newspaper and periodical editors, academics and teachers.



Photo: Many students at New Hall choose to engage in discussion and debate at weekly Theology Society meetings