



Willow Brook Primary School

Philosophy for Children (P4C) Policy

This policy explains our approach to the teaching of Philosophy for Children (P4C) and its contribution to the curriculum at Willow Brook Primary School.

Its purpose is to:

- Assist members of staff in their planning and delivery of Philosophy for Children.
- Provide a reference for parents, governors, visitors to the school, Local Authority representatives and Ofsted Inspectors.
- Enable the Head and Governing body to identify priorities related to the development of Philosophy for Children in the school.

What is P4C?

A working definition of a Community of Enquiry: *A group of people used to thinking together with a view to increasing their understanding and appreciation of the world around them and of each other.*

P4C focuses on thinking skills and communal dialogue ('philosophising'), and aims to build 'communities of enquiry' where participants develop the 4Cs: creative, critical, caring and collaborative thinking skills.

- Caring: listening (concentrating) and valuing (appreciating) (e.g. showing interest in, and sensitivity to, others' experiences and values);
- Collaborative: responding (communicating) and supporting (conciliating) (e.g. building on each other's ideas, shaping common understandings and purposes);
- Critical: questioning (interrogating) and reasoning (evaluating) (e.g. seeking meaning, evidence, reasons, distinctions, and good judgements);
- Creative: connecting (relating) and suggesting (speculating) (e.g. providing comparisons, examples, criteria, alternative explanations or conceptions).

Teachers introduce the approach in a special session and will generally find that it carries over into other lessons, affecting both their own style of teaching and their students' preferred style of learning.

This is because it puts enquiry at the heart of the educational process; teachers begin to ask more open and genuine questions, whilst students become more confident in expressing their puzzlements and in developing their interests.

Developing a community of enquiry requires more than just concentrating on better questioning. It is equally important to listen and develop reasoning and reflection, both public and private. And these bring into play, among other things, emotions and the thoughtful expression of emotions.

In short, the process is multifaceted and profoundly personal. It presents an intellectual challenge to those involved, but also a social and emotional one. It encourages open-mindedness, and creates conditions for change, both for individuals and for communities.

Progression in P4C is not something that can easily be assessed in a summative manner. We believe all children further their thinking skills, understanding of the world and empathy through being involved in the sessions. For many a verbal contribution, or articulation of thought shows progression in thinking. For others a private and personal progression might not be noted by the facilitator from individual responses, but giving each child the opportunity to be as involved as they wish to be, and always having a clear expectation that the children will be reflective, if not contributing verbally themselves, is the progression we would hope for alongside developing lateral thinking as well as more open questioning. Children are given the opportunity to record their thoughts in a P4C thought book where progression might be monitored through their development in thoughts. Assessment for Learning (AfL) techniques can be used to monitor children throughout a lesson. For example; monitoring children who might have changed their thinking since the beginning of an enquiry; or those who have had questions answered/still have questions to ask.

Key Principles of P4C

The key practice that starts and drives the whole thinking process is enquiry (interpreted as going beyond information to seek understanding). The key practice that results in significant changes of thought and action is reflection.

These aims and processes can be made more explicit if the teacher asks appropriate questions. These can range from a general invitation (such as: Can anyone respond to that?) to more specific calls that require a considered response. There are ten key elements the teacher can introduce to elicit a considered response.

1. Questions (What don't we understand here? What questions do we have about this?)
2. Hypotheses (Does anyone have any alternative suggestions or explanations?)
3. Reasons (What reasons are there for doing that? What evidence is there for believing this?)
4. Examples (Can anyone think of an example of this? Can someone think of a counter-example?)
5. Distinctions (Can we make a distinction here? Can anyone give a definition?)

6. Connections (Is anyone able to build on that idea? or Can someone link that with another idea?)
7. Implications (What assumptions lie behind this? What consequences does it lead to?)
8. Intentions (Is that what was really meant? Is that what we're really saying?)
9. Criteria (What makes that an example of X? What are the things that really count here?)
10. Consistency (Does that conclusion follow? Are these principles/beliefs consistent?)

Thinking skills and philosophical enquiry

Thinking skills, especially those relevant to creative and critical thinking, are seen as a good thing, because without them there is a danger of not applying one's critical faculties to the whole idea.

Another critical point is that skills of any sort are worthless if one has neither the inclination nor the good sense to use them. We need above all to help children develop the general disposition to think better.

What does P4C look like at Willow Brook Primary School?

Elements of P4C:

- Warm up;
- Introduction to stimulus; • Creating the questions;
- Voting for a question;
- Re-cap of rules;
- Enquiry (Discuss the question);
- Summing up & final thoughts.

Warm up examples:

- Guess what I'm thinking: Choose a child to think of an activity they are doing; children take it in turns to say what they think the child is doing e.g. cooking dinner; child says what they were thinking about e.g. feeding a lion; other children must justify their answers e.g. I was right because you were cooking dinner so you could feed it to a lion;
- Crazy answers: Write a question on one piece of paper and a noun on another; put the pieces of paper into the correct box then pick a piece of paper from each box and make the link.

Stimuli:

- Stories;
- Pictures;
- Music;
- Video clips;
- Statements;
- Objects;
- Poems.

Ask a question:

- To which you know the answer;
- To which no-one knows the answer;
- To which there may be more than one answer;
- Which you could find the answer by looking in a book/on the internet; • Which you can answer without really thinking;
- Which you couldn't answer without really thinking.

Ask children to justify their choices.

Vote for a question

Once the children have come up with some different questions they vote for their favourite question. The different methods are:

1. Omnivote – children have unlimited votes and put their hand up to vote for the Question they like the sound of. The question with the most votes is discussed;
2. Monovote – children have one vote each;
3. Blind vote – children vote for their favourite with their eyes closed.
4. Move vote – children write question on paper. Questions are placed on the floor. The children move to their chosen question.

Summing up:

- When the allotted time is up, or the session has come to a natural end, the children get the opportunity to share their final thought about what they think the answer to the question is;
- The children may pass an object around the circle. The children who do not want to say anything should feel free to pass the object on without saying anything;
- This is often a time when children who have not said anything during the discussion share their thoughts;
- Write down any final thoughts into a book – often giving children that are shy the opportunity to express how they are feeling.

Feedback:

- At this point you can either finish the philosophy session or use this time as a chance for children to give positive feedback to others who, they feel have made a valuable contribution to the discussion.

Role of the Facilitator:

- Questioning: Asking good questions to provide a focus for the enquiry;
- Reasoning: Requesting reasons or evidence to support arguments and judgements;
- Defining: Clarifying concepts through making connections, distinctions and comparisons;
- Speculating: Generating ideas and alternative viewpoints through imaginative thinking;
- Testing for truth: Gathering information, evaluating evidence, examples and counter examples;

- Expanding ideas: Sustaining and extending lines of thought and argument;
- Summarising: Abstracting key points or general rules from a number of ideas or instances.

Planning

Planning for the subject is the responsibility of the class teacher or may be done by a Year Group if the session is linked to another subject. P4C sessions should take place each week in class from Nursery to Year 6. The length of the session depends on the age of the children and the topic being discussed. However, at KS1 and KS2 the session should typically be a minimum of 40 minutes. In addition to this, P4C activities may be integrated into the core subjects for shorter periods of time.

Evidence

Due to the complex nature of P4C, the usual process of evidence recording does not apply. Instead the following should be used as a guidance:

- LI's and SCs are not appropriate as you are leading children to a 'right answer.' The purpose of a philosophical enquiry is to explore a question not to arrive at a correct response. The range of skills used in an enquiry are so wide and varied it is extremely difficult to produce an SC for unless you are doing a skills focused session, for example on questioning, that does not follow the normal 10-step Enquiry structure.
- Any written work generated from an enquiry should not be the focus of the lesson. The focus of every session should be the process of the enquiry and the related skills (refer to 4C's of P4C as outlined above).
- Appropriate evidence for topic books would be photographic recordings of an enquiry taking place, copies of the stimulus used (if a picture), or a typed summary of an enquiry (no longer than 3 lines).