

Subject Self Evaluation Form

Subject: Philosophy

School Context

- The socio-economic circumstances of the pupils are better than the average nationally although lower than the other schools in our local cluster.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is slightly below average (although in Year 6 last year we had 30 per cent of children eligible for PPG which is above national average). In addition, many families are on low incomes.
- The majority of parents are supportive but a significant minority have low aspirations and this has an impact on their support for their children's academic progress and on the extent to which they become involved in their children's learning. As a result of this, some of the pupil premium supports these families financially through clubs and educational visits.
- We have identified that 25% of our pupils have home lives that may negatively affect their school life and sometimes their ability to thrive (adverse childhood experiences). Significant work is completed to support these children through learning mentors and our school listening service as well as more recently employing a family engagement champion, who works with our most vulnerable children on improving attendance.
- A significant minority of our families live in the flats surrounding schools in overcrowded accommodation without access to a garden. We regularly support these families with food and clothes bank referrals as well as working with the local council to provide furniture or apply for more suitable housing.
- Unfortunately, we have had a high number of parents within our school community who have died or have been diagnosed with a life limiting condition. Within the last three years, we have had eleven children who have had a parent who has died. We have received support from charities like Winston's wish and our school educational psychologist.
- The largest ethnic groups are White British (75.98%) and any other white background (16%). Mixed White & Asian (1.44%), Mixed White & Black Caribbean (1.15%). Mixed White & Black African (0.92%), Mixed any other mixed background (2.07%). The percentage of children who are not white British has increased by 6.2% since last year. This school has 12 out of 17 possible ethnic groups. The average number of groups for this phase of education is identified as 9 so we like to celebrate our cultural diversity.
- We are an inclusive school. In 2018, the school was in the top 20% of all schools for the proportion of SEN with EHC/statement (3.2%).
- Staff retention is very high. This means the shared vision and ethos is well-developed as staff have built this vision with staff team. Monitoring, evaluation and review has happened in a cycle where each subject has a deep dive on a rolling programme which has happened for the past 12 years so experienced subject leaders know their subject's strengths and areas for development well.
- School is part of a number of excellent partnerships including being a founder member of SAT so we benefit from excellent links to secondary education which has supported the development of our curriculum e.g. internship programme.

Baseline

Listening 72% EXS+ Listening 29% GDS

Speaking 67% EXS+ Speaking 17% GDS

Understanding 74% EXS+ Understanding 25% GDS

School vision

School Values

Our curriculum cannot be separated from our school's core values: be kind, be confident, be curious, be positive, be respectful and be resilient. These permeate all aspects of school life and underpin our school curriculum. Although these are directly taught within our curriculum they are also 'lived' throughout our school and effectively create the culture that allows our curriculum to be successful.

Curriculum Aims

Alongside our school values we have a set of aims for our school curriculum. These are the key threads that underpin and link our children's curriculum experiences together. We want children to: question; challenge themselves and each other; investigate the world around them; experience the world first hand; communicate effectively; and seek to develop their understanding of themselves, each other and the world around them. These aims were developed by and for the school community; parents, teachers, staff and governors collaborated to create our INSPIRE curriculum aims.



Intent

At Katherine Semar, P4C gives children a unique space to develop their speaking, listening and thinking skills. We use our philosophy lessons to teach oracy which is our ability to **communicate effectively using spoken language**. This means having the ability to

- express yourself effectively and with confidence
- speak eloquently, articulate ideas and thoughts
- influence through talking and to listen/respond to others

- have the vocabulary to say what you want to say
- structure your thoughts so that they make sense to others

These are all skills that we teach explicitly and practise in P4C.

Approaching the National Curriculum in a philosophical way means looking beneath the surface, beyond the facts, to the questions and concepts that interest children, young people and teachers. Philosophy calls on imagination and reasoning and puts these capacities to work exploring values, assumptions and vital concepts like justice, truth, knowledge and beauty. A philosophical community of enquiry provides a forum where adults and children can search for meaning together. Children become reasonable in both senses of the word — they are adept at reasoning and they are open to the reasoning of others. “The unexamined life is not worth living” – Socrates (470-399 BCE).

Implementation

During sessions, the class will develop and select their own philosophically rich questions for discussion. Enquiries focus on key concepts, which link to termly topics. The format stresses the importance of speaking in full, considered sentences and of listening respectfully. As the subject matter is not chosen by the teacher but created by the class, speakers have the experience of being an authority on whatever they are speaking about. Being carefully listened to by other children and teachers bolsters children’s confidence. Extended discussion and debate makes children more articulate and helps them to think through their own ideas and any associated implications. These benefits are often pronounced in SEND and disadvantaged children, who find themselves with an opportunity to talk at length and to be listened to by their peers. One particularly positive outcome is that children are given exposure to reasoned debate and cordial disagreement, of which they might not have had extended prior experience.

P4C sessions begin with a thought-provoking stimulus. These can be drawn from a curriculum subject or another source. P4C can therefore deepen children’s thought about what they are studying in class or can be used to address another important issue, such as bullying or self-esteem. Teachers evaluate their plans and sessions using the ‘four Cs’; collaborative, creative, critical and caring thinking. This ensures that discussion is not simply an airing of pre-conceptions, but has momentum heading towards more rigorous and developed thinking.

Books and stories are often used as stimuli and this involves group reading. Children are encouraged to define interesting concepts and so explore the meaning of words and expand their vocabulary. Examples from recent enquiries include: ‘justice’ ‘equality’ and ‘immortality’.

Impact

As can be seen from the baseline, the students at Katherine Semar have high academic attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. In P4C children articulate their ideas and think through abstract concepts logically. The former supports children’s oracy and the latter their thinking skills, which bolsters their mathematical reasoning. As a recent efficacy trial by the Education Endowment Fund found, the improvement P4C brought to maths, reading and writing is pronounced in children receiving free school meals.

A recent specialist in philosophy suggested that our children were around four years above their peers nationwide (including the private schools) that he regularly work with.

Significant developments in the subject

Since its introduction in 2016, P4C has grown and developed in our school. Supported by many training sessions, both external and internal, every class now carries out at least one child-led enquiry every half-term. Outside class, there has been a well-attended P4C club and a ‘question

of the week' display that any child can contribute ideas to. We have appointed a P4C governor and in the spring of 2018, the school was awarded a Bronze Award by SAPERE in recognition of its promotion of P4C, and in 2020 successfully applied for a SAPERE Silver Award.

Strengths

- Children are engaged with P4C, following 'the four Cs' to create fruitful enquiries. They are polite and show consideration to each other's contributions, which encourages children to share their ideas. They often build on what each other say to think collaboratively but are also not afraid to challenge ideas when appropriate. Disagreements take place in an atmosphere of mutual respect and are celebrated as a natural result of thoughtful discussion.
- P4C is becoming more central to Katherine Semar's approach to speaking and listening. Internal observations and observations made by Jason Buckley (primary philosophy specialist) show that children's speaking and listening skills; critical thinking and questioning; and collaboration skills are well above the expected standard for the children's age.
- This was especially the case among children in Key Stage 1 who have been participating in enquiries throughout their time at the school, allowing the skills of P4C to become embedded within those year groups.
- Supported by internal and external training from SAPERE and Jason Buckley (primary philosophy specialist), every class teacher carries out at least one child-led enquiry every half term. Enquiries focus on key concepts, which strongly link to topics.
- Internal observations and observations made by Jason Buckley (primary philosophy specialist) show that children's speaking and listening skills; critical thinking and questioning; and collaboration skills are well above the expected standard for the children's age.
- The school applied successfully achieved the silver SAPERE award for P4C (Summer 2020) and is working towards the gold SAPERE award.

Areas for development

- P4C is implemented well across the school, and the main challenge is one of time and curriculum space. As identified in the SAPERE silver award criteria, it is important that teachers continue to identify chances for enquiry and discussion within the wider curriculum. To this end, the school is increasingly using different approaches to philosophical thinking, such as 'The Philosophy Circles', in addition to the 10-step SAPERE model. With more practice and support, teachers should become more adept at creating and seizing on opportunities for discussion. This will ensure more P4C and raise its profile across the school.
- To work towards achieving the SAPERE Gold award.

Monitoring and evaluation systems

Teachers upload their enquiry planning to a shared server where it can be viewed by other teachers, including the P4C lead. On our planning pro-forma, there is a section for teachers to self-evaluate the enquiry, including areas of development and ideas for use next time. As part of our SAPERE silver award application, we are creating a database of enquiry planning across the school. This includes photographic evidence of children's thinking, e.g. last thoughts written on a post-it note or a mind-map scribed during the session.

The P4C lead, along with a member of the SLT team, has observed every teacher carrying out a class enquiry. Notes were taken and feedback was given afterwards. These observations also informed a staff meeting in which wider findings were presented to the staff.

SMSC

Spiritual

- Reflect on goals and values e.g. whether the pursuit of fame, wealth or possessions brings fulfilment and happiness.

Moral

- Debate philosophical moral issues and the difference between right and wrong.

Social

- Show 4 Cs – caring thinking, collaborative thinking, critical thinking and creative thinking.

Cultural

- Debate and challenge stereotypes.

Training

Periodical after-school meetings are delivered by the P4C lead to share resources, ideas for facilitation and best practice. These are delivered to all teachers. In addition, the P4C lead and other teachers have attended training courses run by SAPERE. The school has signed up to SAPERE's 'Going for Gold' programme, as part of which we had several visits from a SAPERE trainer who has delivered enquiries observed by staff and has conducted workshops after school. We have also arranged for a training visit by Jason Buckley, 'The Philosophy Man', who held enquiries, delivered an INSET session and shared resources. In addition, the P4C lead has carried out training with TAs across the school in how to support and take a more active role in classroom enquiries.