

Disciplinary Focus: Philosophy

Enquiry Question: What is philosophy? How do people make moral decisions?
(Christian/Humanist)

Essential Outcomes:

Pupils are able to:

- Talk about the difference between knowing and believing.
- Decide if a reason or argument based on a religion or belief makes sense to them and is expressed clearly, analyse arguments and how they work.
- Recognise that it is difficult to define 'right', 'wrong', 'good' and 'bad'.

Core Knowledge:

- Difference between knowledge, belief and opinion.
- The complex nature of concepts such as truth, reality, happiness, identity, hope, justice.
- The nature of a philosophical question.
- Awareness of variant perspectives about whether some things can be proven.
- The influence on moral decision making of factors such as experience, family, history, culture or community (including religious communities).
- Utilitarianism or Hedonism as a way of making moral decisions.

Key Words:

Humanism
Logical
Moral
Morality
Philosophy

Exemplar Learning Activities:

- Look at the word 'philosophy' and translate it from Greek to English (or other languages spoken in your setting) to see that it means 'love of wisdom'. Discuss the difference between knowledge and wisdom; e.g. 'I know a tomato is a fruit, but I'm wise enough not to put it in a fruit salad'.
- Ask the children questions about where knowledge comes from. How can they be sure it's 'true'? (Extra-Curricular Link: combine this with science lessons on forces)
- Bring out a box with a question mark on it. Ask the children what could be in there and how they might find out. Separate these ways of finding out into two categories empirical (physically observable) and theoretical (not reliant on physical evidence). The children may say they could open the box and see, or weigh the box (empirical) or they may have a theory about what a teacher might put in a box (theoretical). You may want to use the categories 'Knowing' and 'Believing' instead. Can they prove their ideas? Is the concept of 'belief' actually relevant in this instance?
- Using a question like *How do I know how to behave?* Ask the children to write down their ideas. Split these ideas into the two categories. What are the facts when it comes to behaviour? How do they make decisions about how to behave? If they bring up reasons that come from religion put them to one side to discuss later.
- Introduce the idea of a Philosophical Question: *How do I make moral decisions?* Talk about what they have already said and introduce the idea of the new commandment of Jesus from John 13:34-35 'Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another'. What would this mean in practise? Explore this idea as a basis for moral decisions. Does acting with love always lead to a good outcome? You may even want to talk about good intentions versus good outcomes.
- Explore the idea of morality coming from lessons learned in your own life or from history, look at the Humanist approach to morality to explore morality without the presence of a supernatural being. Look at Hedonism and or Utilitarianism and how it might be employed to make moral decisions.
- Explore the class/school rules and trace their origins, within a faith school these may be more overtly religious in origin. Discuss whether these rules would be arrived at with or without religion.