

Philosophy For Children (P4C): Pedagogy

What is P4C?

Philosophy for Children (P4C) is a structured approach that allows children to formulate and discuss engaging and philosophical questions (SAPERE 2021). It provides children with a framework to develop their *critical* and *creative* thinking, to *collaborate*, and supporting each other in a *caring* way (the 4Cs).

P4C is a proven enquiry-based pedagogy; where teachers enable pupils to take the lead in a **community of enquiry** together, building their ability to express more complex ideas as they progress through school. The P4C curriculum is split between **cycles of enquiry** that allow children to explore current topics in the curriculum in more depth; and those that explore key philosophical concepts such as equality, which are returned to on a two year cycle to encourage progression in thinking around these ideas over time. As children move through school using the approach, they show significant improvements in their reasoning and spoken language. Evidence suggests that there are wider cognitive and non-cognitive benefits to P4C, including trust, critical thinking and civic-mindedness (Siddiqui et al 2017)

The P4C Teaching Sequence

Each P4C lesson begins with a warm up game to develop children's confidence. Children are then given a **stimulus** such as a story, video clip or picture to talk about. They are supported to use this stimulus to generate open questions with no one "correct" answer, using techniques such as concept quadrants and question quadrants.

They then choose a question posed by somebody in the group and participate in a structured discussion. The aim of this discussion is to develop their ability to express and explain their own ideas to others respectfully, using reasoning and relevant examples. This is the **community of enquiry** – the group of peers with whom they undertake this discussion.

Children may continue one discussion over several sessions, if the discussion is rich, or they may discuss a few questions to gain depth by approaching the concept from several different angles. During this sequence, teachers may prompt children to develop their thinking with collaborative tasks such as diamond nine ranking, or sorting ideas using a Venn diagram. This is a **cycle of enquiry**.

Children then evaluate their discussion against their use of the **4Cs – critical, creative, collaborative and caring thinking**. They identify next steps to improve their skills in the following cycle of enquiry and reflect on what they have learnt about the concept they discussed.

For more information, please read:

SAPERE 2021 *What is P4C?* <https://www.sapere.org.uk/about-us.aspx> Accessed 11.05.2021

Siddiqui N et al 2017 Can programmes like Philosophy for Children help schools to look beyond academic attainment? *Educational Review* Vol. 71, No. 2 pp. 146-65