

## Introductory Ethics Class for Stage 3

by Dr Sue Knight

### Topic objectives

The aim of the first Primary Ethics class of the year is for:

- students and teachers to start get to know each other,
- students to get an understanding about how ethics classes will run – and how different they are from other classes,
- students to understand what behaviour is expected of him/her in ethics class,
- the Ethics Teacher to establish him/herself as the person in charge of the class in a firm but friendly manner.

### Background to the topic for teachers Introductory Ethics Class for Stage 3

The first ethics class is an opportunity to discuss the rules, to encourage students to think about the nature of ethical questions and to highlight the skills that are needed for reasoning and thinking together.

This lesson should be used at the start of each year. It is also the first lesson for any new ethics class, no matter what time of year the class starts.

If you have a new group of students joining students who have already been in an ethics class you may like to run all or part of this lesson again.

### Resources

- Printout of 'Questions about questions' (or write them on the whiteboard before the class)
- Printout of the 'Ethical Question' (or access to a whiteboard to write it up)
- Primary Ethics Rules
- Roll
- Name Tags, such as a sticky label, if that is how you'd like to start remembering names

## Introductory Lesson

*For this lesson you will need*

- *Printout of 'Questions about questions' (or write them on the whiteboard before the class)*
- *Printout of the 'Ethical Question' (or access to a whiteboard to write it up)*
- *Primary Ethics Rules*
- *Roll and name tags*

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### Icebreaker and introductions

**5 minutes**

Good morning/afternoon everyone. My name is Mr/Mrs\_\_\_\_\_ and I am your Ethics Teacher. Today we are going to start by introducing ourselves. I am going to ask you to tell us your name and

*... choose one of the following: your dream job, favourite hobby, favourite animal ...*

I will start, and then we will go around the circle. If you can't think of something to say, that's ok – we can come back to you at the end. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and my favourite \_\_\_\_\_ is\_\_\_\_\_.

*Go around the circle with each student saying their name and answering the chosen question. Come back to any people who have missed their turn, but don't force them to contribute if they don't want to.*

*Simply say:* That's ok – there will be lots of opportunities to share your ideas in the rest of the lesson.

*If you have pre-prepared name tags, you can read each name out loud as you hand them out. Some teachers find that saying each student's name again as you hand the tag over helps them learn the names. Make sure you give clear and explicit instructions that the name tag is to go on their chest and stay there until the end of the class. If a name tag is not claimed, you'll know that child is absent and can mark them 'absent' on the roll.*

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### Introducing questions

**8 minutes**

We're going to start the class by thinking about questions. In ethics classes we'll be asking lots of questions, and we'll be trying to answer them. Let's start with this question.

Think about your day before you came to ethics class. Did anyone – a teacher, parent or friend – ask you a question?

Take a minute to think about this, because I'm going to ask you:

- what the question was;
- whether you could answer it, and if so;
- how you worked out the answer, and how long this took/ how hard it was.

*Show the class the print out of Questions about Questions and place it where all can see.*

*Ensure students have at least 30 seconds to think about a question.*

What questions have you thought of?

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For each student question that shares a question, ask the Questions about Questions.

As students give their questions, make a mental or written note (see table to follow) of one or two questions that are easy to answer and one or more that can only be answered by means of a more involved process. For example:

- These questions are quickly and easily answered: Are you out of bed yet? What do you want for breakfast? Have you done your homework? Is everyone ready?
- This question requires some thinking but doesn't take long: What is  $\frac{3}{4} + \frac{1}{2}$ ?
- You can find the answers to these questions by looking them up or by asking someone who knows: When was Federation? Why is it important to exercise? How does smoking affect our lungs? What is photosynthesis? Why is it that Rhinos are becoming extinct?

Note: It's important that at least some of the questions require more involved processes to answer, in order to show the range of possible questions. If the first several students are all offering easy questions from their everyday life, prompt the other students to think more broadly about questions their teacher might have asked them either today or even earlier.

If necessary: These are all good questions I'm getting. Now what I'd like from the rest of the group is to think about some questions that your teacher has asked you in class – maybe today or even yesterday, or the day before. Has anyone been asked a question that was hard to answer?

Easy to answer quickly or requires only a little thought	
Needs more information but can be found out	
Other	

Using your notes above or from memory, summarise the discussion.

Thank you for your questions and for giving them so much thought. I noticed that some of the questions, for example..... were easy and quick to answer and there were also a few that you needed more information for but that could be answered, for example ....

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### How are ethical questions different? Think pair share



10 Minutes

Show the students the Ethical Question printout and place it where all can see.

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Take a moment to think about this question: Is lying always wrong? Turn to the person next to you and discuss it. Decide whether you want to answer 'Yes', 'No' or 'Don't know'. It is ok to disagree with your partner. You'll need to give reasons for your answer.

*Give students around 2 minutes to discuss this in pairs. Walk around to make sure each group is on task. Bring the whole group back.*

Who would like to share their answer? *For each response ask:* What are your reasons for that? or Why do you say that?

*Continue to take responses from volunteers asking for their reasons.*

Was this question as easy to answer as the questions we discussed earlier? *Give some examples of the earlier questions.* Why?

*Follow-up questions. If these important points have not been raised, ask the following.*

- Did you need to think more about this question to reach an answer?
- Did hearing other people's opinions make a difference to your thinking?

In ethics classes we'll be looking at ethical questions every week. These questions are about what we should and shouldn't do, about right and wrong, and what's OK and what isn't, and we'll be trying to work out how to answer them. We'll be looking at what we believe about these ethical questions, the reasons we give to back up our answers and we'll try to work out whether our reasons are any good.

We're going to be working together on these questions, because then we can help each other work things out.

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#### How ethics classes will work

7 Minutes

Can you see from our discussion about lying that ethics classes will be different to other classes?

Here are some things you need to know about ethics classes:

- we will almost always sit in a circle so everyone can hear each other speak
- we will need particular rules
- we will discuss different ideas and topics that prompt us to think about what is right and wrong.

Some of our topics will include:

- *If it is an even year:* what makes a fair society; whether we should always respect the views of others; what human rights are and whether we should extend human rights to animals; and whether or not our futures are determined by fate,
- *If it is an odd year:* voting, being vain, stealing and killing animals for food.
- our classes will work best when we (that's me the teacher and you) work together to explore these different issues.

In ethics classes there are certain things that I will be expecting from you and that I will be watching for. I'll be looking to see how well you:

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- listen to each other and build on each other's ideas,
- use your thinking skills to consider the different issues that come up in class,
- respect each others' ideas, and
- explain the reasons behind your own ideas.

Who can remember some of the things I'll be looking for? *Take a couple of responses.* Great, thank you for listening.

I mentioned that we will need particular rules in ethics classes. I understand that at this school there is a system ..... *explain what you know about the school behaviour management system.*

The school rules still apply in ethics class, but we also have additional rules.

Place a copy of the rules where everyone can see them.

Who can read out the first rule and tell us why it is important? *Continue until all rules are read out.*

- Only one person speaks at a time,
- Pay attention to the person who is speaking,
- Speak to other students rather than to the teacher,
- Give other people a chance to speak,
- Build upon other people's ideas,
- No put-downs

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### End the lesson

Thank you for thinking about the rules. In our next class we'll put into practice the ideas we talked about today.

~~~END OF TOPIC~~~

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