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Acknowledgments

Five, four or even three years ago this document would not have been possible. At the start of 2011, 90 brave volunteers started teaching ethics with very little support or guidance. The insights developed by hundreds of ethics teachers over the years as well as the expertise of Primary Ethics’ trainers and classroom support team members have enabled the creation of this Ethics Teacher Handbook.

We would also like to thank Peter Worley from The Philosophy Foundation. The Anchoring technique and 'Things to avoid' are borrowed from Peter’s article *If it, anchor it, open it up* (see References.) Peter’s concept of Opening Up (a term we use for another purpose) has been adapted and combined with our existing work to develop the Reasons and Expanding components of the facilitation skills section. We gratefully acknowledge Peter for giving us permission to share these ideas.

Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.

—often attributed to Socrates

Welcome

Welcome to Primary Ethics and thank you for volunteering to provide ethics classes to primary school students.

Ethics teaching is challenging. It involves managing student behaviour and facilitating discussions effectively, while at times prompting you to reconsider your perspective on issues.

This Ethics Teacher Handbook (Draft) is designed to help. It contains the facilitation and behaviour management techniques covered in current ethics teacher training, plus useful additional information. For ethics teachers who attended training before 2016, you may find that, while the fundamentals have not changed, the facilitation and behaviour management techniques have been developed considerably over the last few years.

Thank you to the ethics teachers, trainers, classroom support team members and our curriculum author Dr Sue Knight, whose combined expertise is contained within.

We plan to update this Handbook twice a year. Check the Revision Record to see what’s changed since the last update. Please provide feedback here: surveymonkey.com/r/PELHandbook

Ethics teaching can be incredibly rewarding. Teachers tell us it helps hone their own listening and communication skills, which they can apply both with their families, friends, and at work. Plus, there’s a huge sense of achievement in contributing to the community in such a positive way, especially when seeing a class of students develop their skills over time.

We hope this Handbook may enrich your ethics teaching experience.
Introduction

What are we trying to achieve?

As children grow, they develop their own values and principles. These are shaped through interactions with their parents, carers and extended family, school teachers, peers, religion, media and so on.

The aim of ethics classes is not to impose a particular code of moral conduct on students’ development. Instead, classes support children to think about and articulate their own views while considering the views of their peers.

Ethics classes encourage students to consider age-appropriate topics from a range of perspectives. Questions in the lessons also prompt students to:

- consider views different from their own
- empathise with people in different situations
- think about circumstances, intentions, consequences
- consider what contributes to good character.

Children come to develop a deeper understanding of ethical issues, and expand their capacity to make well-reasoned decisions about these issues. Ethical reasoning, collaborative inquiry and critical thinking are the skillsets that students build as they refine this capacity for decision-making.

**Ethical reasoning** includes:
- learning to empathise and consider others’ capacities for suffering and wellbeing
- thinking about circumstances, intentions and the common good
- considering what it means to lead a good life

**Collaborative inquiry** refers to finding things out together and includes:
- listening, taking turns to speak, building on others’ ideas
- respectfully disagreeing and challenging each other’s thinking
- helping each other articulate ideas, values, putting a counter view and asking questions.

**Critical thinking** involves:
- developing and evaluating arguments, using logic and reason
- evaluating evidence, giving reasons, and
- carefully considering views that are different from your own.

These skills develop over time. Younger students learn how to listen to others, give reasons and take turns to speak; older students learn to develop valid arguments, look for flaws in logic, evaluate evidence and develop their ability to work things out together through collaborative inquiry.

The ultimate aim of ethics classes is for children to develop a capacity for ethical reflection, to become inquiring and questioning individuals who are willing to discuss ethical issues and who are able to identify, as well as make, well-reasoned decisions. Many ethics teachers say that observing children developing these skills over time is one of the most rewarding aspects of being an ethics teacher. The overall objectives of our curriculum can be viewed on our website.
How do we achieve this?
Primary Ethics’ program is based on the ages old practice of Western philosophical inquiry. Our program focuses on one branch of philosophy, ethics – the consideration of what is right or wrong, good or bad.

True to its philosophical basis, the lessons in the curriculum aim to alert students to the problematic nature of everyday issues. You might already hold a view about homelessness, punishment or what it is to be greedy, but how carefully have you thought it through? How thoroughly have you researched the facts? Are you confident that hearing someone else’s views on these issues might not result in you changing your own? Perhaps there is more to discover?

The stories and scenarios provided in the lesson materials prompt children to examine the complexities of ethical behaviour. They invite students to consider what we ought to do, how we ought to live, the kind of society we should have and what kind of person each of us should strive to be.

Each topic poses one or more big questions such as:

- Is a fair society possible?
- What counts as being lazy?
- Are there some things that it is not okay to own?

These questions have been deliberately chosen because there are generally no readily agreed upon answers – or even readily agreed means by which to answer them. That makes these questions ideal for practising and developing skills in ethical reasoning, critical thinking and collaborative inquiry. By contrast, questions with straightforward answers do not provide the same opportunity for skill development. While some questions might seem straightforward at first glance, it is often when students start to articulate the reasons for their initial answers that the underlying complexity becomes apparent.

Curiosity and puzzlement are precursors to thinking. Both the lesson materials and the skill of the ethics teacher are central to engendering a sense of puzzlement that in turn fosters thinking and discussion on the ethical questions raised in the lessons.

How do ethics teachers help students learn?
Ethics classes employ a community of inquiry approach to learning, described further in Understanding the Curriculum. This child-centred approach to learning provides students with the opportunity to discover ideas and concepts for themselves.

Educational research indicates that teaching methods which support children to puzzle over and discover concepts themselves, particularly in collaboration with their peers, can have a long lasting impact on learning. Be reassured that by engendering curiosity in the topic, by modelling an inquiry process, managing the discussion and creating an environment in which children can think, you are actually teaching.
This learning approach is quite different from more traditional forms of teaching. It is not unusual for this educational style to leave teachers feeling unsure if they have achieved anything. It can help to understand that the role of teacher in a community of inquiry is one of guiding and uncovering, rather than the more traditional approaches of solving, answering and fixing. Similarly, ethics classes focus on curiosity, puzzlement and discovery, which is very different from a focus on the acquisition of knowledge, topic content and learning outcomes. Remember that students have access to a large amount of information outside of ethics classes; e.g. the internet, their class teacher, their friends and families. If students leave a class thinking that an issue was not as straightforward as they first thought and still wondering, then they are likely to engage in further thinking and learning.

Ethics classes aim to develop students’ skills experientially, gradually helping them to become more willing and able to consider and discuss ethical issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Ethics teacher</th>
<th>Student skill development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides stories and scenarios on a range of topics</td>
<td>Brings the stories and scenarios to life</td>
<td>Ethical reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contains questions for which there are no easy or straightforward answers</td>
<td>Engenders a sense of curiosity about the questions</td>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes a balance of philosophical perspectives</td>
<td>Facilitates discussions</td>
<td>Collaborative inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports teachers to develop their understanding of philosophical ethics</td>
<td>Manages the class to ensure a learning environment</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall curriculum framework and the scenarios, stories and questions in the lesson materials are designed to prompt students to consider the elements of sound ethical decision-making, such as:

- recognise common capacities for suffering and well-being and empathise with others
- consider the interests of others as well as their own
- consider the common good
- consider the source and application of duties, rights and responsibilities
- consider consequences
- take circumstances and intentions into account
- consider the universality of moral principles
- consider what makes for moral character and the nature of virtues and vices
- consider relevant empirical knowledge
Your role as an ethics teacher, in delivering the lesson materials, is to support learning by:

- **Modelling the inquiry process**
  
  When you ask questions, week to week, you are actually modelling the process that we want children to learn. When students encounter an ethical issue in their own lives we hope that they will reflect upon it and consider a range of questions like:
  
  - why do I think that?
  - what are my reasons?
  - what do others think?
  - are my reasons good enough?
  - what could a different point of view be?
  
  These are the questions they will hear from you, week to week, as you facilitate discussion.

- **Showing genuine curiosity and interest**
  
  How you tell a story or ask a question will influence student engagement. If students can see that you are genuinely puzzling over the scenarios, the questions and their answers, then they are much more likely to realise there is something to discover and put some effort into thinking about the topic. If students leave the class still thinking about what their friends said and thinking about the behaviour of the characters in the stories or scenarios, then you will have succeeded in creating a valuable learning experience that may well continue outside the classroom.

- **Managing the discussion**
  
  Many of the moral questions asked in ethics classes are complex and difficult to answer. Students might want to find solutions that work around the issue to remove the moral dilemma, to offer a story from their own lives, to change the topic or to simplify the question to avoid answering the ethical question. Your role as facilitator is to encourage students to return to the question, give relevant answers and develop their arguments. Engagement increases as students are challenged to think more deeply and to listen carefully so they can respond appropriately to their classmates.

- **Staying neutral**
  
  As an adult and a teacher, students will naturally assume that you know the answers to the questions you are asking. The fact is that there are often no obvious or final, single answers to many of the questions in ethics classes. Your challenge is to remain neutral so that students will come to realise that you aren’t looking for a particular view, but rather well-reasoned arguments, a range of perspectives and some progress in thinking about the issue. Once students realise this, they are more likely to give the issues presented considerable, genuine thought, rather than simply trying to guess the ‘correct’ answer.

- **Creating a learning environment**
  
  By allowing thinking time, listening carefully to students’ responses, enforcing the ethics class discussion rules, staying neutral and encouraging a wide range of views, you will be creating an environment in which students are able to think, express their ideas and practice reasoning and discussion.

This Ethics Teacher Handbook contains the tips and strategies developed by ethics teachers over the last 5 years to support you in achieving these outcomes.
Understanding the Curriculum

Learning model used in ethics classes

Primary Ethics’ curriculum is based on a community of inquiry. This is a child-centred approach to learning and is largely discussion-based. It involves two key elements:

1. Socratic questioning
   These is a logically structured, open-ended style of inquiry that gives students ideas to puzzle over using questions to draw attention to particular arguments, counter arguments, relevant facts or the need for facts.

2. Peer to peer dialogue
   Originally based on the work of Russian psychologist, Vygotsky, this well supported idea is that children learn better when they engage in dialogue with peers. ‘Dialogue’ here is not just talking, but talking that is shaped by the rules of logic and by a shared interest in the questions at hand.

Matthew Lipman, founder of the Philosophy for Children program, called this two-pronged teaching strategy the **community of inquiry** method. Primary Ethics’ curriculum has been strongly influenced by Lipman’s work but its one key difference is that our approach is supported by teacher-led questioning. This modified approach is more tightly structured than Lipman’s and doesn’t rely on teachers having a strong grounding in both philosophy and the topic under discussion. The lesson materials provide the questions required to help students get to the bottom of the ethical issue being discussed.

Students puzzle over philosophical questions for which there are no hard and fast answers.

Common to both approaches is the profound learning that occurs when students discover concepts for themselves through thinking and discussion, prompted by puzzlement and curiosity.

School teachers may be more familiar with John Dewey’s approach to community of inquiry, with its strong emphasis on scientific inquiry. Many school and university students undertake a community of inquiry approach to learning, in collaboration with peers, to learn scientific or other concepts through a process of discovery. While related from an educational perspective, a key difference of both the Lipman approach and our own is a basis of genuine inquiry. That is, students puzzle over philosophical questions for which there are no hard and fast answers.

Understanding this learning method is central to understanding why, in ethics classes, we:

- never frame or introduce a topic by defining key concepts, explaining what students will be learning, what they can expect to achieve in the topic or how they will benefit from ethics classes
- don’t always tell students the name of the topic (they discover it for themselves as the lessons progress)
- do not always finish stories (an opportunity to imagine and puzzle over the ending)
- sometimes repeat and revisit concepts through questions or scenarios (to encourage students to develop deeper understandings)
- often invite students to look at a topic from a variety of angles which might, at first, seem unrelated or out of sequence, but which support students in the discovery process.
Foundations of the curriculum

Western moral philosophy
The curriculum is based on the traditions of Western moral philosophy and the findings of research in the fields of developmental psychology and education.

The Primary Ethics’ curriculum is grounded in moral theories which, for over two and a half thousand years have been, and are still being, questioned, tested and modified through a process of rational argument and counter argument. These theories aim to help us answer the questions of what makes an action morally right or morally wrong and what it means to live a morally good life. No single theory is without its flaws and so the curriculum incorporates three broad philosophical approaches:

1. utilitarian or act-oriented ethics (focus on consequences and the greatest good for the greatest number)
2. deontological or duty based ethics (focus on the rightness or wrongness of an act, universal obligations and duties)
3. virtue or character ethics (focus on what makes for a good life or a good person).

There are two approaches to moral justification which Primary Ethics rejects. These are the blind appeal to authority and moral relativism. The problems with these approaches are discussed in the introductory sections of the Stage 3 topics Appeal to Authority, and Are Some Things Just Wrong?

Children’s moral development
Curriculum development has also been informed by research findings which provide insights into moral development and learning. Research demonstrates the importance of explicitly teaching the philosophical processes of ethical reasoning and that these skills are largely learned, rather than spontaneously developed. Topic sequencing in the curriculum is based on research that demonstrates the age at which children can distinguish different ideas – for example, the age at which different aspects of fairness can be grasped or when children understand the notion of stereotyping.

See References for a list of relevant studies as well as a link to additional studies listed on our public website.

Structure of the curriculum
The kindergarten to year 6 curriculum contains 79 topics and more than 250 individual lessons. It has been designed to be both sequential and spiral. Ideas are introduced in simple form in the early years and extended and developed in ever-greater complexity over the following years.

There are a number of topics which explicitly teach reasoning skills. In the early stages these topics aim to build on children’s implicit and partial grasp of logical rules and truth to help them develop these intuitive understandings further. In later stages these topics encourage students to identify a number of logical rules or patterns of reasoning and to make explicit use of them in thinking about ethical issues.

Topics that explicitly teach reasoning skills include:

- Examples and counter examples S1 even*
- Good reasons S1 odd
- Coming to grips with deductive reasoning S1 even
- Coming to grips with inductive inference S1 odd
- Inferring or figuring things out S2 even
- Puzzles, clues and what follows S2 odd
- Generalising inductive reasoning S2 odd
- Jumping to conclusions S3 odd
- Structure of arguments S3 odd.

*S1 even is short for Stage 1, even year topic. See What to teach when (up next) for an explanation of Stages and the odd and even year topic structure.
What to teach when

Our topics are written to align with Department of Education school stages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department of Education</th>
<th>Students are in school year</th>
<th>Approximate student ages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Stage 1 (ES1)</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>4, 5 or 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1 (S1)</td>
<td>Years 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>5 – 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 (S2)</td>
<td>Years 3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>7 – 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3 (S3)</td>
<td>Years 5 &amp; 6</td>
<td>9 – 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Odd and even year topics

As students spend seven years in primary school, our curriculum includes seven years’ worth of lesson materials, so students never repeat a lesson:

- One year for Early Stage 1 (as students are in ES1 for only one year)
- Two years of lessons for each of the other three stages (as students spend two years in each of these stages).

These lessons are broken into two sets of topics; one to be taught in even years (e.g. 2016, 2018) and the other to be taught in odd years (e.g. 2017, 2019).

Although it doesn’t matter whether students are exposed to the odd year topics or even year topics first, it is important to teach every topic in order within the year, as stories and skills build from topic to topic. Don’t worry though if you are find you are running a topic or more ‘behind’ other teachers teaching your same stage (at the same school or at other schools). Classes start at different weeks throughout the year, and students often skip ethics for a week or more for a variety of reasons such as a sports carnival or an excursion. At any point in time, classes across the state will be working through different topics.

Introductory lesson

All the stages, except for Early Stage 1, contain a stand-alone introductory lesson. This lesson gives you and the students a chance to get to know each other and introduces what will happen in ethics classes. If you are starting a new class, start with the introductory lesson (Topic 1 serves as an introductory topic for Early Stage 1). Then, regardless of what time of year it is, go on with the Topic 1 (or Topic 2 for Early Stage 1). If you are taking over an existing class, go on with whichever topic the students are up to, once you have introduced yourselves to one another and refreshed the rules for ethics class (as well as introducing any other rules or procedures you might now use in your class).

End of year lesson

This is an optional lesson that can be used for the last class of a year, and is suitable for all age groups. Teachers may pick and choose the bits they want to use, and to vary the timeframes accordingly.
The first segment asks students to reflect on what they enjoyed about ethics classes this year. In the past, some students have talked about particular topics or stories, and others have mentioned that they enjoyed giving their own opinion and hearing what others thought.

In follow-up questions, they are asked to reflect on the process.

This is followed by a game that gives students an opportunity to practice the skills they have been developing.

Teachers may like to post some of their students’ comments onto the Ethics Teachers General Discussion forum (being careful not to include names or other identifying features) to share with other teachers and help us improve our product.

Using the lesson materials

Each topic contains an introductory section. This is essential reading as it is designed to provide knowledge and understanding of the contents of the topic and the lessons. The introductory section includes:

- **Topic objectives**: outlines the overall purpose of the topic.
- **Background for teachers**: explains the philosophical thinking on the subject and may also include relevant research into children’s capabilities.
- **Topic structure and resources**: gives an overview of each lesson, so teachers understand how each lesson contributes to the overall aim. This section also lists which resources are required for each lesson.
- **References and further information**: lists citation for images used, and sources of stories that have been adapted for our purposes. If there is factual information that relates to a particular lesson that is useful for teachers to know it will be included here.

Lessons often contain supporting resources, such as pictures and handouts to print and distribute to students (for example, for small group discussions or a role play). Thumbnails of any images used are provided in the lesson to help quickly identify when an image needs to be used. Images and handouts for students are provided as separate files. Very occasionally there is a need to bring something from home, such as a balloon or an example of a book.

The lessons contain stimulus material and questions. The stimulus material is there to support students to discuss the questions.

The stimulus materials are usually stories and scenarios. These serve two purposes: to generate curiosity and interest and to provide students with enough information to support discussion. They are not intended to be sources of comprehensive learning about the topic. Complex ideas are often simplified in the stimulus materials to give just enough information to discuss the questions that follow.

Interspersed with the stories and scenarios are lots of questions. These questions fall into three main types.

1. **Substantive questions**
   
   These are questions that raise ethical issues, eg:

   - Was Jack being greedy?
   - Is it ever okay to cheat?
   - Is that a good reason to break a promise?
Substantive questions are numbered in the lesson materials and will be the questions that generate the most discussion

2. **Other questions**
   There are a number of questions in the lesson materials which help students engage with the stimulus or encourage engagement with the topic content. These questions might be there to encourage comprehension about the story, to cultivate curiosity, to share pre-existing knowledge or for general engagement. These ‘other’ questions are indicated with a hand icon, which signifies that facilitated discussion is not required – teachers only need to take a few responses and then move on. For example,


Why it’s important to deliver the lesson as written

Teachers need to use lesson materials exactly as they are written. Slight changes in wording in a story or question can change the meaning and potentially reduce opportunities for student learning.

Lessons are designed to generate curiosity and provide opportunities for discovery. A simple change may reduce opportunities for students to discover ideas themselves. For example, when the question ‘Was it unfair that Ian Thorpe used a performance-enhancing suit when most other swimmers didn’t?’ is changed to ‘couldn’t’, a more limited discussion occurs. To elaborate:

1. The questions and scenarios raise a range of philosophical perspectives and, while some might seem repetitive, there are often subtle differences which reflect the complexity of concepts and topics and which support broad discussion when carefully facilitated.

2. Some stories build from topic to topic – if you leave something out, it may have an impact down the line. Read stories to the class rather than try and retell them in your own words.

3. Using the approved materials reduces the possibility of inadvertently introducing something that could be regarded as offensive or inappropriate. Be assured that the lessons have been reviewed from a number of perspectives and the result is carefully worded materials which take into account potential sensitivities and age appropriateness.

4. Using approved materials protects you against complaints. All our materials have been approved by Primary Ethics and reviewed by the Department of Education. Parents need to be confident that ethics classes follow approved materials.
Note: Although you must follow the lesson materials to deliver your lesson, you’ll need to also draw on approved classroom and behaviour management strategies as required. See ice breakers, circuit breakers and optional activities.

Guide to formatting

Lesson materials are formatted to make it easier to see how each part should be presented.

Text
Black text indicates what you should say

Teal italics indicates what you should do

[in brackets it indicates the answer to a factual question]

Types of questions:

皤 a hand icon indicates questions that help students engage with the stimulus, check comprehension or share experiences. These questions do not require much discussion, take a few responses only.

1. Substantive questions are numbered – these are the parts of the lesson to which you will apply your facilitation skills, particularly procedural questioning, to generate discussion.

   Often … is used between two questions to indicate that you should pause after each question to take responses

   Optional follow up questions are provided to encourage and broaden discussion if needed. Use them only once students have had some time to think carefully about the question

   – if students have already raised a number of perspectives there is no need to ask these questions as there won’t be time.

☐ The questions with a check box should be asked only if the students don’t raise that particular issue.

Other symbols used:

확 A book icon indicates that a story follows and you should use your story-telling voice.

endirjan - This symbol indicates that a Think, Pair, Share activity will be used.

Timing

Indicative timing is provided for each lesson segment, assuming a 30 minute class. If you cannot complete your lesson in your allocated timeslot, continue it in your next lesson, from where you left off.
Giving feedback

Primary Ethics welcomes teacher feedback on the curriculum and lesson materials. To ensure the feedback can be linked to the topic you are commenting on please use the tab labelled **Curriculum Feedback** along the top of your home page in the Learning Centre. Please be as specific as possible. Feedback that is provided by this method can be grouped according to topic and will be taken into account during the review process.

You are also welcome to place feedback on the Ethics Teacher Discussion forum in the Learning Centre. The forum is more suited to general discussion about your classroom experience or feedback or comments from students in response to curriculum topics. Some teachers do include suggestions for improvements of curriculum or lesson materials here too, although these won’t usually be addressed during review.

When a topic is due to be reviewed, all feedback relating to the topic will be collated and considered by the curriculum author and instructional designer, and suggested updates will be made and fed to the curriculum review process. The process includes review by the Curriculum Review Committee as well as review for age appropriateness by the NSW Department of Education. While typos and similar minor changes can be made immediately, the review process means that significant changes do take time.

Once the changes have been incorporated, the new version will be uploaded to the Learning Centre, with the date of the change in the file name and footer of each page. A Revision Record, describing the changes, will also be uploaded to the Learning Centre listing the changes. If you have a hard copy of an older version, you can use the Revision Record to identify changes and perhaps eliminate the need to reprint it.

Image: Inuit summer housing

Resource for Topic 7: Understanding diversity
Teaching ethics classes

There has been much discussion about whether ethics teachers should be called teachers or facilitators. Ethics teachers facilitate discussions while also taking responsibility for the learning environment. They teach important skills through their facilitation practice. Ultimately, the ethics teacher is responsible for the behaviour of the students and for managing discussions. It could readily be argued that either term or both terms apply.

Ethics teachers use three broad skill sets in class:

- Listening and facilitation
- Engaging students
- Classroom and behaviour management

You will bring any number of these skills with you when you commence teaching ethics. You will also, most likely, develop and refine these skills as you teach. The most important skill of all is the ability to reflect on your capabilities in each of the above areas and to find ways to improve those abilities over time.

Many experienced ethics teachers find that after six to twelve months in the classroom these skills become almost automatic. The first six months ‘on-the-job’ are very much a learning experience, building on your practice at training. We encourage teachers to seek assistance as often as is needed while developing these skills.

Reflection

One of the most important skills is the ability to reflect on your class each week and improve.

As with the practice sessions in the training workshop, many teachers find the following prompts assist in the process of critical self-reflection:

- What did I do that worked well?
- What do I need to remember to keep doing?
- What did I forget to do that I need to start doing?
- What did I do that didn’t work well or that I need to stop doing?

Setting a goal

Many ethics teachers find that setting themselves just one goal for each week is helpful.

For example:

- using more procedural questions
- stopping the class to address behaviour issues earlier
- allowing thinking time
- revisiting the rules
- setting expectations for behaviour.
Listening skills and facilitation techniques

As the ethics teacher, you are in charge of the discussions that occur in class. The decisions you make about how long to let a discussion run and how to use questions to shape it, will have a strong impact on student engagement and learning.

Each lesson contains a number of components including stimulus materials (e.g. stories and scenarios), questions to help students engage with the stimulus materials and, most importantly, several moral questions, known as substantive questions (as set out in Using the Lesson Materials). In the early years (kindergarten and Stage 1) there are only a few substantive questions in each lesson. In the later stages there are significantly more.

While your facilitation skills will be important throughout the lesson, you will primarily use them when students are discussing the substantive moral questions in the lessons (which are numbered). Many teachers highlight the substantive questions while preparing their lessons and write some procedural questions that they think will work well with their group.

What are we trying to achieve when facilitating a discussion of a substantive moral question? In a highly effective discussion of an ethical issue, students will employ their thinking and discussion skills to explore ideas that progress their moral reasoning on the issue.

In practice that might mean that students who are unsure of what they think about the issue can hear others’ views, start to articulate their own views and come away with a more considered perspective upon which to form their own opinion.

In classes where strong and opposing views are either posed in the lesson materials or expressed by students, an effective discussion would explore the basis of those differing views – are there differences of values or beliefs or perhaps differences based on disagreements about facts or evidence? A discussion that explores the differing views and identifies commonalities and differences will enable students to develop a more profound understanding of the issue.

Remember these discussions occur within the context of the community of inquiry. The learning occurs when students discover these ideas for themselves, through discussion with their peers and aided by teacher questioning. This is why questions like:

- why is that reason important?
- how is that different from the earlier example?
- why does it depend on that?
- can you say more about how your view differs from Sam’s?

are so important.

As an ethics teacher you strive to create the sense of curiosity and puzzlement which drives these discussions. This works particularly well when you yourself experience that same sense of curiosity and puzzlement – something the students will pick up on very quickly.

Teachers might wonder whether this kind of discussion is really feasible in a 30 minute lesson, and the answer is that it depends. In some ethics classes students have become so capable of answering the questions, giving relevant reasons and developing sound arguments for others to consider and
comment on, that the group becomes adept at getting to the heart of the ethical issue being discussed. In other classes, success might amount to better listening, that one person spoke at a time and that most answers given actually related to the questions being asked.

Understanding the overall aim of discussions in ethics classes, as set out above, means that when the opportunity arises you’re ready to achieve a thoughtful discussion that progresses students’ moral reasoning. The opportunity won’t always arise – in some lessons the focus will need to be on behaviour, or following the discussion rules – but when the opportunity does arise you need to be ready to support it with questions that will enable the class to explore the issue effectively. This is when student engagement is typically highest.

Listening skills are very important in determining if students are answering the question, providing relevant reasons and responding to each other’s ideas. The ability to listen carefully, evaluate what you’ve heard and formulate the next question develops over time.

The way an ethics class is facilitated can drive student engagement and the quality of the discussion. Students are typically more engaged when they:

- believe that you aren’t looking for a particular answer
- are surprised or challenged by other students’ ideas or the way others justify or explain their thinking
- hear ideas from their classmates that really make them think
- believe that you are genuinely curious about both the questions you ask and the answers they give.

When students believe there is a particular answer they are more likely to sit back and wait, knowing the teacher will eventually provide it. Once students realise this will not happen, they are more likely to engage in the hard work of thinking for themselves about issues.

Facilitation skills take time to develop and can only be used effectively when student behaviour is appropriate (see the Classroom Management and Behaviour Management sections to follow).

**Procedural questioning**

The curriculum contains substantive questions: questions that relate to the moral issue that is being discussed. Often substantive questions will ask whether something was okay or not okay, right or wrong, good or bad, should or shouldn’t have been done. Substantive questions are specific to the topic and often quite difficult to answer simply. Often in the lessons there will be a series of substantive questions, starting with some that are more straightforward and building to more challenging questions.

Procedural questions, however, are topic-neutral questions that you can ask to facilitate discussion of the substantive question. Substantive questions are numbered in the lesson materials and often have an instruction advising you to use your procedural questioning skills (sometimes with suggested questions). Ethics teachers can introduce their own procedural (topic neutral) questions but **mustn’t introduce new substantive questions**.

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**Five main facilitation techniques used in ethics classes:**

- procedural questioning
- neutral responses
- thinking time
- sharing speaking time
- redirecting
Procedural questioning techniques can be divided into three broad categories, summarised below and expanded with examples on the following pages:

Requiring more information
1. **Anchoring**
   Students will often give a response that doesn’t answer the question – the response might seem irrelevant (e.g. a personal story), might be aimed at dissolving the problem rather than answering the moral question or there might be a behaviour/attitude issue leading to a silly response. Anchoring enables you to give these students another opportunity to answer the question without implying they have done anything wrong. It is also a way of repeating the questions, as it is easy for students to forget the question they should be answering.

2. **Giving reasons (and reasons for reasons)**
   Giving reasons to support a viewpoint is an important skill and an essential component of collaborative inquiry. In giving reasons students are opening their thought processes up for examination and discussion by others. They learn to think beyond their first response and to be more curious about the reasons that others give for their viewpoints.

3. **Expanding**
   As with asking for reasons, there is sometimes a need to ask students to provide more information to clarify their answer.

Bringing others into the discussion
1. **Opening up**
   Opening up the discussion to the class is essential in building a community of inquiry. It takes the focus off you, as the teacher, and reduces the amount of teacher-student-teacher-student interaction. Ultimately, students may start to ask each other questions and join the discussion without prompting.

2. **Building on others’ ideas**
   This technique is a form of Opening up which specifically requires that the student has listened to and considered another’s view in their response. It takes practice but is an important skill.

3. **Encouraging different views**
   Exploring the underlying reasons why people disagree on an issue is an important part of discussion in ethics classes – and for this to happen, you need different views to have been raised. These questions can help encourage that.

Managing ideas
1. **Highlighting different perspectives**
   As with encouraging different views, these procedural questions are designed to tease out the different ideas, and reasons for them, from the student discussion – including why students might think one scenario is okay and not another.

2. **Managing unknowns**
   Often information that students believe is necessary for resolving the ethical issue is not present in the lesson materials. This is deliberate. Missing information can provide an opportunity for students to discover for themselves what information is needed in order to resolve the issue. It can also be an opportunity to explore different avenues of discussion.

3. **Questioning evidence**
   Evidence based reasoning is central to critical thinking and sound moral reasoning. In ethics classes it is not always possible for students to evaluate the information that others use to
support their viewpoints. These questions help reinforce the importance of considering evidence.

### 1 Anchoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is it?</th>
<th>A respectful way of asking the student to return to the question that was asked. A way of creating an environment in which students feel confident to contribute. A way of reminding the group of the question.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why do it?</td>
<td>To elicit a relevant answer to the substantive question without implying that the student has made a mistake or done the wrong thing. It is also a way of expressing your curiosity about their next response.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### How?
Repeat the original question preceded by ‘so...’ or ‘that’s ok, so...’ or ‘Ok, so...’ ‘Ah, ok, so...’

**Example**

**Teacher:** Would you describe yourself as a fatalist?

**Student:** My aunty is like that, she always says that things were meant to happen so you have to be happy with it.

**Teacher:** *(anchoring)* Ok, so would you describe yourself as a fatalist?

**Student:** Well no, I think you can change things by what you do.

**Tip:** Be sure to use the word ‘so’ before repeating the question (other words, like ‘but’, change the tone significantly).

### Requiring more information from the student answering the question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is it?</th>
<th>A way of encouraging students to justify their thinking to the group. A way of increasing the overall quality of the discussion.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why do it?</td>
<td>To encourage students to express a more considered thought than their first one – this might include the expression of a value, principle or new idea which will add to the overall discussion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### How?
Ask for their reasons. Note: It might not be necessary to do anything - students may spontaneously give reasons – but consider also asking for the reasons for those reasons:

- Why? Why do you say that?
- Ah, ok, so why is that important?
- Tell us more, tell us why.
- Can you explain why you say that?
- ...and why is that?
- What are your reasons?
- Can you say more, can you say why?
- Tell us why ... *[add the idea from the question, e.g Tell us why that makes it greedy]*?
- Would you like to tell us the reasons you have for that?
- Can you say why you’re not sure/ why you don’t know?
- Could you tell us why you think that?

**Example**

**Teacher:** Is Emma being greedy? *(substantive question from the lesson)*
Student: Yes, she is being greedy because she ate the cake.

Teacher: Ok, so why is that important? (asking for reasons)

Student: Because she didn’t think about anyone else.

Tips: It may be enough to prompt with ‘because...’ or ‘go on...’ Use a genuinely curious tone to avoid ‘why’ sounding like a demand.

Be careful not to end up in a one-on-one discussion with a student. Asking for reasons once or twice is often best followed by opening up or building on others ideas, to encourage others to contribute.

3 Expanding

**What is it?** A way of asking for more information in order to add to the discussion.

**Why do it?** To encourage a student to think more deeply about and explain the initial response.

**How?**

- Tell us more
- Can you say more about how your view differs from Jane’s?
- Can you tell us what you mean by that?
- Can you say more about that?

Or, more specifically, if a student answers:

- ‘Both’ ………………………… Ask: ‘Can you say how it can be both?’
- ‘It depends’ …………………. Ask: ‘Can you say what it would depend on?’
- ‘Neither / yes and no’ …. Ask: ‘Can you say more about that?’

Bringing others into the discussion

1 Opening up

**What is it?** An invitation for other students to comment on what they have heard or share new ideas.

**Why do it?** To get the class talking, to bring new ideas or questions into the discussion.

**How?**

- What do others think?
- Would someone who agrees with this like to add something? (or Who agrees?)
- Would someone who disagrees with this like to add something? (or Who disagrees?)
- Does anyone have anything else to say about this?
- Does anyone have a question for [name] about that idea/reason?
- Can anyone help [name] with this idea?
- Can anyone summarise what we’ve heard so far before adding a new idea?
- Can anyone think of another way of saying this?”
Example

Teacher: Is Emma being greedy? *(substantive question from the lesson)*

Student: Yes, she is being greedy because she ate the cake.

Teacher: Why is that important? *(asking for reasons)*

Student: Because she didn’t think about anyone else.

Teacher: What do others think? *(opening up)*

*Tip:* In the earlier example (repeated above), opening up after the student gives the second reason will lead to a more productive discussion than opening up after the first student response.

2 Building on others ideas

**What is it?** A way of encouraging students to focus on and develop an important idea.  

**Why do it?** To further develop a particular idea that has been expressed by a student. To help focus the discussion on the substantive question being asked.

**How?**

- Who can build on this idea? / add to this idea / comment on this idea?
- What else can we say about this?
- Can anyone say more about what Lisa has just said?’

Building on others’ idea might happen without your prompting, listen out and offer praise:

- I like the way you picked up on what Alice said and developed her idea, great listening.

3 Encouraging different views

**What is it?** A way of bringing different perspectives to the discussion, even if they need to be imagined. An opportunity for students who have a different view to feel comfortable expressing it.

**Why do it?** To encourage wider thinking if all students are agreeing.

**How?**

Similar to Opening Up, ask: ‘Who disagrees?’ ‘Who has a different idea/thought?’ ‘Does anyone disagree with what has been said?’

Separate the idea from the student by asking:

- If there was someone who had a different view, what might their reasons be?
- What other ideas could help us think about this?
- What might a different perspective be?
- Can anyone bring a different perspective?
- What if someone thought the opposite / thought it was okay / right / wrong. What might they say? / What reasons would they give?
• Imagine there was a person who thought the opposite? (rephrase only as needed)

**Example**

*Teacher:* Do you think that Osmo could have avoided his fate? *(procedural question from the lesson)*

*Student:* No, because he was always going to die.

*Other students say similar things.*

*Teacher:* What if someone thought the opposite – that Osmo could have avoided his fate? What would they say? *(Encouraging different views)*

**Tips:** This technique may never be needed but can be helpful in broadening discussion if students are all agreeing on an issue or giving similar reasons.

It is not necessary to seek a wide range of opposing viewpoints in response to every single question, especially when time is short, or when you’re considering a straightforward question (where opposing views might be so implausible as to be silly). More complex questions are a better source for divergent views.

**Managing ideas**

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**1 Highlighting different perspectives**

**What is it?** A way of prompting further discussion by highlighting different views either between students or from the same students when discussing different scenarios.

**Why do it?** To prompt students to listen for different views and explore the basis of those differences.

**How?**

• Ah, so that is a new way of looking at it that is different to what was said before. Can you say more about it?

• I’ve heard two different ideas so far… [repeat only if necessary but be careful not to paraphrase or add new ideas] Does anyone want to comment on that?

• Can someone who has been listening carefully summarise the different points of view we’ve heard so far?

• I heard someone say that it was okay in the last scenario but in this one I’m hearing that it is not ok. What is the difference? Why does that matter?

**Example**

*Teacher:* Is Alice boasting when she says: “I’m so happy. I studied so hard for that test - and I got my first ‘A’ ever!”?

*Student:* No, she’s just happy. It’s okay for her to feel proud because she worked hard for it.

*After further discussion Teacher:* What about Kate when she says: “Well, I got full marks! And that means I came top! No-one can do better than that!”?
Student: Yes, that is boasting. It’s boasting because she is just telling everyone how good she is.

Teacher: So how is this different from what Alice said?

2 Managing unknowns

**Why do it?** It is an opportunity to explore why a particular piece of information is important in deciding on the moral issue. It returns students to the moral question, rather than allowing them to be caught up debating facts that cannot be known.

**What is it?** A way of dealing with students wanting to know particular information about the scenarios or stories in the lesson.

**How?**

- Ok, why is that important? / Can you tell us why that is important?
- Can you tell us how knowing that would make a difference?
- Let’s just say it is ……. (*repeat the substantive question*)?
- Ok, now let’s say it isn’t…….. (*repeat the substantive question*)?

**Examples**

Teacher: Did Maggie do anything wrong? *(question from the lesson)*

Student 1: How old is she?

Teacher: Can you tell us why that is important? *(managing unknowns rather than trying to answer the question)*

Student 1: Because if she is older she shouldn’t have done that.

Teacher: Why does that make a difference? *(asking for reasons)*

Student 1: Well it makes a difference because if she is older she should know better.

Teacher: Who can add to this idea? *(building on others ideas)*

Teacher: Do you think the Outsider children should be given the same opportunities as the people in the city? *(question from the lesson)*

Student 1: It depends on why they are out there. Why are they out there?

Student 2: They are criminals.

Student 1: No, that’s just what the kid in the story said, the story said they were banished. What if they were banished because they were sick?

Teacher: Let’s say for a moment that they were banished because they are criminals, do you think the Outsider children should be given the same opportunities as the people in the city? *(managing unknowns angle 1)*
**Student discussion...**

**Teacher:** Ok, now let’s say that the Outsiders were banished because of sickness. Do you think the Outsider children should be given the same opportunities as the people in the city? *(managing unknowns angle 2)*

**Tip:** Avoid the tendency to answer the question – be ready to respond with a question.

Be careful not to introduce new ideas or substantive questions. This technique relies on the ideas that the students have already raised.

### 3 Questioning evidence

**What is it?** A way of dealing with disagreements about factual matters that can’t be resolved in class.

**Why do it?** To reinforce the importance of sound evidence and to put aside what can’t be resolved to return to the ethical question being discussed.

Or either redirect the discussion or use managing unknowns:

- It looks like we can’t know that for sure now, you can find out more when you get home, let’s move on to the next question.
- It looks like we can’t know that for sure now, let’s just say that [fact is true]...*(repeat the substantive question from the lesson)* – as above.

**Tip:** The aim here is not to find out the factual truth but to encourage students to think about evidence and what they do and do not know.

These techniques work best in combination as shown in the example below. Again, anchoring, asking for reasons and opening up will be the most commonly used questions.

### Example of procedural questioning techniques in practice

This example dialogue is based on the Stage 1 odd year Topic 1 – Being greedy

**Teacher (substantive question from the lesson):** Was Emma being greedy?

**Student 1:** That’s just like my sister. She always wants the last piece of cake.

**Teacher (anchoring):** Ok, so, in our scenario, was Emma being greedy?

**Student 1:** Well no, not really.

**Teacher (asks for reasons):** Can you tell us why not?

**Student 1:** Because at least she asked if she could have it.

**Teacher (asks for reasons):** OK. Can you say why that makes a difference?
Student 1: Well, she asked permission. And it’s not greedy if no-one else wants it.

Teacher (opening up): Does anyone want to agree or disagree with [student 1]?

Student 2: I agree. She asked permission. She didn’t just grab it.

Student 3: I agree too. She didn’t just grab it and stuff it in her mouth.

Teacher: (asking for reasons) Can you say why that makes a difference?

Student 2: Well asking for permission, so that was thoughtful of her, not just grabbing it means she was thinking about whether she should.

Student 3: So it wasn’t selfish.

Teacher (opening up): What do others think about this?

Student 4: I think she was being greedy, because one piece of cake should be enough. Just because no-one else asked, doesn’t mean no-one wanted it. They could have saved it for her dad.

Student 5: Or the birthday girl could have it the next day.

Teacher: (echoing – see neutral responses to follow): Hmm... Ok. So I heard Kate say it was being greedy because one piece of cake should be enough. (building on) Can anyone build on this idea?

Student 6: Can I ask a question? How much food was there?

Teacher (abandoning building on the previous idea, now dealing with unknowns): Hmm, the story doesn’t tell us that. Tell us why that is important.

Student 6: Well, if there was no other food, maybe Emma was really hungry.

Teacher (dealing with unknowns angle 1): So tell us more, was she being greedy if that was the case?

Student 7: No, because she might be starving. It’s not being greedy if you are eating to stay alive.

Teacher (dealing with unknowns angle 2): And what if there was other food there?

Student 6: If there was other food, even healthier food than cake then I think it was greedy of her to eat that because it isn’t healthy.

Teacher (decides to move the discussion along, asks next substantive question): Ok, so has Emma done anything wrong? Who hasn’t answered yet and would like to?
Procedural questioning is not...

It can be tempting to extend what students are saying to better develop their ideas or to lead the discussion in a particular direction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Techniques not conducive to building a community of inquiry</th>
<th>Replace with…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrasing or interpretation</td>
<td>Echo (key) words only (sounding curious)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• So, are you saying ...</td>
<td>• Is there anything else we need to consider?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• So, what you mean is ...</td>
<td>• Would anyone like to ask a question about that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross examination</td>
<td>• Who agrees and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ah, but what about ...</td>
<td>• Who disagrees, and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have you ever thought about ...</td>
<td>• What ideas came up in this group?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting</td>
<td>• I’ve heard some people say …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking consensus</td>
<td>• Who can remember what we talked about last week?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What did this group decide?</td>
<td>• Who can remember what we decided last week?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sounds like you all/most people think/agree...</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who can remember what we decided last week?</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The techniques and responses described in the first column above are not suited for use by the facilitator in an ethics class because they typically disempower students from entering the discussion in an exploratory manner and can lead to student disengagement. These responses can also, often inadvertently, give the impression that the teacher is after a particular answer, which takes away from the sense of students driving the inquiry process. If, however, students ask these questions of each other, it can add to the inquiry process, provided it is done respectfully.
Neutral responses

Neutral responses are a powerful way of keeping the discussion going without limiting it. Sometimes a positive response from the teacher can often inadvertently have the effect of discouraging students who had a completely different idea from contributing. This can be very subtle and the teacher may not even be aware of it. Instead, neutral responses provide a way of indicating that you have heard the response while leaving the idea open for further comment. They are also an opportunity to create a sense of curiosity.

Instead of responding with: ‘that’s right’, ‘okay great’, ‘yes’, ‘great answer, excellent’ or nodding enthusiastically, try these

(often in combination with opening up, asking for reasons, building on others ideas and expanding):

- You’ve brought a new idea to the discussion
- Okay, there’s a different idea
- Hmm, I see, tell us more
- Ok, I hear you, go on
- Hmmm ... (as if thinking about it)
- That’s a different thought
- Hmm, ok, I wonder if there is more to think about here
- There are a lot of ideas here, well done
- Ok, thank you / Thank you [name]
- Well done, you put those ideas together and expressed this very clearly
- That’s a new perspective
- Thanks for that idea – it broadens the discussion
- There are lots of issues to consider, aren’t there?
- It seems like this isn’t a clear cut issue. Are there any ideas or questions that would help us think about this?
- I think there might be a number of ways of answering this question – can anyone think of one way?
- I’m not looking for any particular answer here – what other ways can we think about this?
- What other ways can we look at this?

If students don’t have anything to add to a particular question just say ‘that’s ok, let’s see what’s next.’

Echoing is another type of neutral response. It involves repeating a word or phrase that the student said (see the example dialogue at the end of the procedural questioning section). It is important not to paraphrase – just repeat the words in a way that indicates you are curious. You can follow with ‘... can you tell us more?’ or ‘... who can build on that?’ For example, ‘ah, okay, so you said ...... can you tell us more about that?’

Overall, when facilitating an ethics class you are aiming for an approach of ‘Hmm, that’s interesting, I wonder what else we can find out’ as opposed to ‘yes, that’s right, well done’.
Ideas that you might highlight through echoing could include a value or principle that the student is trying to express, or an underlying reason that might help develop discussion on the ethical issue.

Echoing can help separate an ethical issue that was raised from irrelevant answers students may give subsequently.

For example: ‘I heard someone say ‘intentions’ earlier, can anyone build on that?’ or ‘Hmm, you said ‘permission’, tell us more’

You might choose to highlight a key idea by echoing what was said some time before in the discussion. Making a note of the idea can help, provided you are careful not to paraphrase.

The Behaviour Management section contains examples of how you can extend neutral responses into praise to reinforce the behaviours that you want to encourage.

**Thinking time**

Sometimes students can’t come up with an answer to a question; at other times the enthusiasm to answer the previous question can lead to so much competition to speak that the energy in the group is still very high. In addition, children think at different rates so allowing thinking time enables more students to come up with a response.

Tell students that you are going to ask a question but that you are not going to take responses straight away because you want students to think about it first. Allow around 10-20 seconds of silence and then ask for responses. This can seem like a long time at first but can result in much more considered discussion.

If needed, you can strengthen this approach by asking students to speak to the person next to them about the question before coming into the whole group discussion. Allow 30-60 seconds for the pairs discussion and then facilitate a whole group discussion. Sometimes this think, pair, share activity is built into the lessons. You can use the think, share and think, pair, share options described here at any time to aid whole group discussion and provide opportunities for more students to contribute. Be conscious of not becoming over-reliant on any one method; the ultimate aim is for students to be capable of participating in productive, collaborative whole group discussions.

**Sharing speaking time**

Some ethics classes are dominated by one or a few very confident speakers. While there is benefit in students hearing other students state their arguments, dominant speakers can block other contributions. Ethics teachers need to find a way to balance this.

One method is to listen carefully, to think about whether the dominant student is actually answering the question. Use the anchoring technique and asking for reasons regularly with dominant speakers – often confident speakers are off topic and simply sharing their wide knowledge. It is easy to superficially answer the question, but requiring them to think more deeply about it may slow down future responses.

If a student is speaking for a long time, find a break and redirect, for example ‘Ok, thank you very much, now I have another question/now I have more of the story to read/etc.’ If you feel the student may have something constructive to add, try anchoring e.g. ‘Okay, thank you, so could Osmo have avoided his fate?’
Alternatively you may need to say ‘Thank you [name] I am going to stop you there because we have some other questions to get through / I would like to hear from someone else’ and be ready with the next question.

Ethics teachers have found that some classes are quite good at self-regulating who speaks when, whereas other classes may be dominated by a small number of students. Rather than request a particular child to answer a question, ask more generally for students who have not yet spoken or who have not spoken very much, as follows:

- If you haven’t had a turn to speak yet and you would like to, put up your hand.
- If there are no hands; ‘Ok, how about if you’ve only spoken once today?’
- Still no hands – open the question to everyone.

This technique gives students who have something to say, but are not sure how to get a chance, an opening. Quiet students often gain a great deal from ethics classes, so don’t feel you need to make them speak, just provide the occasional opening in case they have something to say.

Allowing thinking time and then providing an opportunity for those who haven’t spoken to speak can enable quieter students to share their thoughts. Providing thinking time as well as an opening to speak allows these students an opportunity to contribute which might not be possible in a fast moving discussion.

Some ethics teachers like to use a speaking ball, speaking sticks or similar object to control who speaks. If you do decide to give this a try, ensure you monitor who has had a turn to speak to ensure students are not just handing the ball to their friends. Also check that the movement of the ball is not interrupting the flow of the discussion. You are still in charge of managing the discussion, not the students. Use the ball as a tool but do not let it distract from the discussion.

Redirecting

As the facilitator, the direction the discussion takes is up to you and is your responsibility.

You might choose to redirect a discussion because it:

- has already been quite productive and, even though students might have more to say, you need to manage time and move onto the next part of the lesson (remember that if students leave class wanting to discuss an issue further then they are likely to progress their thinking long after the class has ended)
- has gone off topic and is not contributing to the overall aims of the lesson
- is moving into an area that could become personal, offensive or sensitive.

Redirect by making a statement about stopping the discussion and explaining what will happen next. You do not need to give a reason.
Here are some examples:

‘Ok, I’m going to stop this discussion here – this is a discussion you can continue later. I have another question/story/scenario for you to think about now. Is everyone listening?’

‘Let’s stop this discussion here – I have another question/story/scenario for you to think about now.’

To keep the discussion going but return to the question, use anchoring: ‘I’m going to stop you there, let’s think some more about the question we are discussing (repeat the questions)’ or ‘Ok, I’ll ask you all to put your hands down now, the question we are discussing is (repeat the question). A little earlier I heard Sam say … (echo exactly)…..who can build on this idea?’

‘It looks like we can’t know that for sure now, you can find out more when you get home, let’s move on to the next question.’

This technique can work well in conjunction with the refocussing strategies discussed in the Behaviour Management section.

It is your choice when to stop or redirect a discussion. Students might want to keep talking about an issue, but it is okay, and often necessary, to stop the discussion and move on. If students are very keen to say more, they will most likely do so with each other after class.

Engaging students

Clarity - instructions

Sometimes issues with behaviour, including student disengagement, stem from students being unsure about what they are supposed to be doing or what question they should be discussing. Ensure your instructions are clear, that you repeat the question under discussion as often as necessary and that you take the time to observe all students in the group to see if they are aware of what they should be doing.

‘So here’s the question we are all going to discuss together …’

‘In a moment I’m going to ask you to break into groups …’

‘So, the question we were discussing is …’ (when discussion strays or there are behaviour issues it can be very easy for students to forget the question they ought to be discussing)

If in doubt, repeat the question, story, scenario or instructions. Ensure students are quiet before doing so. The Classroom Management section contains tips on managing small group activities and using circuit breaker techniques to stop the class and ensure quiet.

Repetition of instructions, questions or scenarios is often necessary to ensure all students have heard and understand what is required.

Curiosity - questions

How you ask a question is very important. When asking a question, show that you are genuinely interested in it, and are puzzling over it too, in order to generate curiosity. Your tone and overall manner is as important as the question you ask.

How you respond to students’ answers is also important in engendering a sense of curiosity. The Neutral Responses section provides a number of examples of responses you can use. Practise these with a genuinely curious tone.
Overall, when facilitating an ethics class you are aiming for an approach of ‘Hmm, that’s interesting, I wonder what else we can find out’ as opposed to ‘yes, that’s right, well done’.

Captivation - story reading
Use these tips to bring the stories and scenarios in the lessons to life. It makes a big difference to students of any age, even year 6.

Tips to hold students’ attention:

- ask for students’ attention before starting. Remind them to listen
- make sure your voice is audible, and varied (loud and soft, gentle and harsh, high and low)
  Vary your voice to represent different characters
- vary the pace – fast and slow
- pause – for dramatic effect and to build suspense. Let the students guess what is coming next
- make frequent eye contact. You’ll need to be very familiar with the story so you can look up and around when reading, but do remember to read the story exactly as written
- use gestures
- vary your facial expressions
- get students involved – invite them to provide sound effects etc

Sometimes the instructions tell you to invite students to read the story, or to read parts in a role play. Unless students read audibly and well, other students may have trouble following. You may want to provide extra copies (1 between 2) so others can follow along, or, if necessary, you can simply repeat the story.
Classroom management

How you prepare for lessons and manage the classroom has a significant impact on student engagement and behaviour.

Ethics classes support children to develop both thinking and discussion (collaborative inquiry) skills, but students won’t necessarily know how to sit together and discuss issues well; particularly at the beginning. This is part of what you are teaching.

The role of the ethics teacher is to establish and maintain a learning environment in the classroom where both the overall environment and student behaviour are conducive to learning. The tips in this section and the Behaviour Management section to follow will help you sustain a space where children can comfortably practise and develop their thinking and discussion skills.

Relationship with classroom teacher
If there is a classroom teacher in the room, make the most of it. Remember that it is their room, and respect their space. Ask if you can move furniture, or use a portion of their whiteboard. Be alert to where they draw the line on student behaviour and noise volume, and use that as your benchmark.

Ask their advice. Explain you are developing your behaviour management skills and would appreciate their support in managing the class. If the classroom teacher interrupts the lesson to address student behaviour and you would prefer to manage this yourself we suggest that you discuss this with the classroom teacher and negotiate the roles.

Also be aware that they have not been trained to use our materials, and in trying to offer well-meaning advice, may make suggestions that are not in keeping with our approach. We suggest you provide them with a copy of our School Teachers’ Guide to Ethics Classes, which is designed to help them understand our approach. (You’ll find this in the Learning Centre, in the Promoting Primary Ethics tile.)

If you don’t have a classroom teacher in the room, it is important to know where you will find the nearest one, and how you should seek assistance.

Use our checklist ‘Before your first class’ to make sure you have all the information you need.

Managing a family relationship
We understand that many ethics teachers may wish to have their own child or grandchild in the class. We support ethics teachers wherever possible to do this, although some schools do have guidelines that restrict it and ultimately it is at the school’s discretion.

When it does occur though, it’s important to establish early on that even though you may be well known as a student’s parent/carer/ grandparent etc., for the half hour of ethics class each week you are an ethics teacher and it is distinct from your other roles inside or outside the school.

For example you could say to the class: ‘In ethics class, I’m your teacher and so the rules are different to when you know me as Sam’s mum. So in ethics classes we don’t hug because I’m your teacher and we’re here to practise thinking and discussing.’

If your own child is in the class, we recommend that you speak to them beforehand to let them know what to expect. For instance, impartiality is essential. Your own children can’t get special treatment – nor should they be ignored! Address them and engage with the same as any other child
in the class. Make sure too that they understand that you have the ability to ensure there are consequences for poor behavior.

**Learning students’ names**
Some of the more popular ways our teachers learn their students’ names include:

**Name tags** – ask if you can get a copy of the roll so that you can write up name badges before the class. If you use stick on labels, make sure you tell the students where to stick them, and that they are to leave them there throughout the lesson. Some teachers prefer re-usable lanyards that students hang around their necks.

**Name cards** – again you can write them up before class, but rather than attaching them to students, you can sit them on the floor under each chair. One advantage of using a card is that you can use bigger writing, so easier to see from a distance. You may like to lay them out before students enter the room, directing the students where to sit. Expect to have to remind students not to stand on them or kick them about.

**Sit students in a particular order** – e.g. alphabetically

**Create a seating map** – sketch a plan on a piece of paper as students answer the roll call, marking where each student is sitting.

**Play a name game in the first lesson** – e.g. say the name of a food/animal etc. that starts with the same letter as your name. I’m Karen Kangaroo...

**Repeat their names** - until you learn their names, ask them to say their names before they answer a question.

Note: Do not take photographs of students to help you remember their names. You are not allowed to take photos without school and parental permission.

**Managing seating and seating arrangements**
Seating students and yourself in a circle is critical to developing a community of inquiry and practicing collaborative inquiry. It is also an effective behaviour management strategy, allowing you to see and hear all the students.

You can let students decide for themselves who to sit next to, or you can direct them where to sit. If students are continually chatting to, or being distracted by, the person next to them, the easiest solution is simply to separate them. You could ask a student to come and sit next to you, or to swap places with another student.

You may wish to intervene proactively at the beginning of a class by playing this seat swapping game. Have one less chair than people in the group and someone in the middle says: ‘the sun shines on... people with shoelaces or people wearing sneakers or people with brown eyes’ etc. Those students that fit the criteria then need to find another seat. The person left in the middle says the next ‘the sun shines on...’ Stop the game when you are happy with the configuration.

**Ethics class rules**
Primary Ethics rules set expectations of behaviour for participating in discussion. While they are also useful for behaviour management, it is important to remember that for many students, learning these rules is an important part of learning the skills of collaborative inquiry. As these rules are
foundational in establishing a community of inquiry, spend as much time as necessary revising and reinforcing these rules over the course of the year.

The Introductory Lesson at the beginning of each year introduces the 6 ground rules. Early Stage 1 has a reduced set of rules which are introduced in the Introductory Topic.

1. Only one person speaks at a time
2. Pay attention to the person who is speaking
3. Speak to other students, not just to the teacher
4. Give other people a chance to speak
5. Build on other people’s ideas
6. No put downs

Remind students of these rules frequently. Just repeating the rules won’t be enough - the students need to develop their own ability to recognise what the rule looks like when it is happening well. Ask students what is meant by each rule, and why it is important.

For example, you could ask younger students to show you how they look when they are paying attention to the person who is speaking – which way are they facing? How are they sitting? What are they doing with their hands? With their mouths?

Teachers will need to give constant feedback about the application of the rules. Praise students when they follow the rules. For example:

‘Tony, I like the way you just built on Tanya’s idea - you used her name and repeated the reasons she had given then explained why you disagreed’; ‘That was great how Peta and Sam just spoke to each other when they were giving their reasons - I could see how they were looking at each other and waiting for the other person to finish before they spoke again.’

Specifically draw attention to rules when they are broken. ‘Lily, could you remind us about Rule #6’; ‘Which rule did we just break?’

Some teachers like to focus on a different rule each week or ask a particular student to monitor one rule that week. ‘This week, let’s try to remember to speak to other students, not just the teacher.’ – then praise them when they do it, or stop and remind them when they don’t.

**Time management**

The lessons are designed for 30 minutes’ class duration and have indicative timing for each lesson segment. Some ethics classes have considerably less effective time than 30 minutes and some have more. There are many reasons why, in a school environment, it won’t be possible to get through an entire lesson each week: classes may start late, time will be spent addressing behaviour management issues, half the group may arrive late and the other half may leave early, stopping the class for school announcements etc.

When planning your lessons, identify the substantive questions where most discussion facilitation will be centred. There is no need to facilitate discussion of the information or comprehension questions, indicated with a 🙋 hand symbol. These are primarily there to engage the students in the lesson stimulus. Take a few responses and move on (see Redirecting).

Lessons are designed to be delivered in one session but can continue on to the next week. This is a balancing act – if you move too quickly, the discussion of the substantive questions won’t be
interesting enough to engage the students in the complexity of the moral issue being discussed. However, consistently taking more than a week with each lesson can become boring.

While it is okay for a lesson to run over into the next week, if it is happening very often you may need to consider whether there are opportunities to redirect or end discussions earlier. It is more important to have a productive discussion that covers a range of points than to ensure that every child who wishes to speak does so every week. Starting the first question of a lesson with 'who missed out on speaking last week and would like to answer this question?' helps students understand that not everyone will necessarily have a turn every week.

It's also a good idea to have the following lesson prepared each week, in case you move faster than expected, and especially if you have a longer timeslot at your school. However, keep in mind that if you get through the lessons too quickly, you will run out of topics before the end of the year. If this looks likely, slow down and allow more time for discussions.

Managing small groups

Lessons often include instructions to allow students to talk to each other in pairs or small groups before feeding back to the whole group. This not only gives more students an opportunity to speak, and provides a less threatening environment for shyer students to speak up, it also allows students to practice managing their own discussions.

But it is likely that many students will not have the skills to self-manage getting into groups. Teaching these skills is part of the ethics teacher’s role. Initially, students will need a great deal of direction. Teachers need to give clear instructions on:

- Who will be in each group
- What they are expected to do in their group? Should they take turns to speak? Who speaks first? How do they know when to contribute? Is it important that everyone gets a turn to speak? Should someone write down their ideas? Should they nominate someone to report back to the whole group?
- Where they need to sit. Do they stay in their seats and shuffle around, or pick up chairs and move? Do they sit in a small circle facing each other? How much space between groups?
- How loudly they should speak?
- What should they do when they finish? Put their hands on their heads? Sit there quietly? Come back to the big circle?
- How will they know when it is time for them to come back to the main circle?

It is important to decide exactly how you want the group activity to occur and give students clear instructions before, during and after. Explaining why this matters can also help students understand and comply with your instructions; 'We need to speak with whispers so that everyone can hear the members of their own group without anyone needing to shout, and the room stays calm.'

When the group activity is underway, monitor the groups by walking around and listening in. If you notice that some are not speaking to each other, remind students of the question/activity. You may need to bring some groups back on track.
Reconvene the whole group using your pre-arranged signal. It may be a word or phrase, a gesture like putting your arm in the air, a special sound like a clap or a bell.

When asking groups what ideas they came up with, make it clear that students are not expected to have come to a consensus in their groups. After one student has spoken for the group, you might ask; ‘What about the others in this group – did you agree with that, or did you see it differently?’ You may even instruct groups at the beginning by saying: one person should speak first, and then the other person should say if they agree or disagree, and why.

You may like to nominate roles within each group, such as someone to monitor the noise level; someone to check that everyone has had a turn to speak if they want to; someone to check that the group is answering the question asked or doing the activity as requested.

Ice breakers
Most ethics classes are made up of students from at least two different classes, and it may take a while for students to feel comfortable with each other, let alone with you. If you feel it will help to break the ice, you may like to use one of the following ice-breakers at the beginning of the lesson for the first few weeks. Keep in mind that the ice-breaker should be short – no more than a few minutes.

Here are some ideas (the first two activities will also help you remember students’ names and how to pronounce them).

1. Ask students to talk to the person next to them, and find out what their name is and what their favourite colour/animal/book/game is. Then go around the circle and ask each student to tell the class their partner’s name and favourite ...

2. Play a memory game using names of students in the class. Start by saying ‘I went to the park and I saw ...[one of the student’s names, e.g. Tom]. The next student then says: ‘I went to the park and I saw Tom and [another student]’. Keep building the number of students at the park until someone forgets, then start again with only one student to remember.

3. Students work together to tell a story. The first student says a word (or a sentence), and then each student around the circle adds a word (or a sentence) to progress the story.
Note: If you have your own idea for an ice-breaker, please seek approval from Primary Ethics first, so that we can help you avoid activities that may trigger the school’s child protection processes. (For example, asking students to do something that may be unsafe; or asking them to share information that they may find distressing or intrusive.)

Circuit breakers

Sometimes you might notice that the class is losing attention and energy, without necessarily breaking into disruptive behaviour. Whenever this is the case you can use a ‘circuit breaker’ – an activity that interrupts the energy in the room and refocuses students. It may be necessary to do this several times in a lesson.

A short burst of physical activity can reinvigorate the energy of the entire class and allow children with attention challenges a necessary break to refocus. It is best actioned when you feel a dip in concentration levels but also when there is a logical pause in the lesson. It’s a good idea to be alert to the body language of your students, and when you notice they are becoming tired or restless, use a circuit breaker sooner rather than later. It’s important not to imply that the circuit breaker is a game or reward for lagging energy. It is just a quick activity to get refocussed.

These activities should only take a minute and be completed with a very clear cue from you that you are ready to continue the lesson. Typically, schools will have a particular school-wide activity you can use – ask your classroom teacher.

Here are some ideas:

- Ask them to shake their hands, legs, body.
- Ask them to take deep breathes.
- Ask them to stretch their hands into the air, or touch their toes, or put their hands on their hips and twist from side to side etc.
- Ask them to copy your movements - hands on heads, shoulders, knees. If you like, you can then repeat it at a faster pace.
- As above but ask the students to do what you say, not what you do – e.g. say put your hands on your heads but put your hands on your knees.
- Mexican Wave: Ask students (individually or in groups) to stand up and wave their hands up and down once in a wave raising / falling motion. As they complete the motion, the next student or group repeats the motion. Repeat a few times ensuring every student is included.
- Rhythm Round: clap out a rhythm, ask students to repeat, allow two or three students to choose the next rhythm.

Children with special needs

The Department of Education’s Special Education in Ethics Implementation Procedure states that ethics teachers should be given ‘any special information, such as disability or special needs, which might affect the health, behaviour or performance of particular students’.

Your class may consist of students with a range of cognitive, physical, emotional and behavioural abilities. If you have one or more students with special needs in your class, seek advice from relevant Department teachers (which may not be the supervising teacher).

Ask your school coordinator to help identify students requiring a tailored approach from you. Please do not expect to be told specific details of the child’s abilities but rather strategies regarding what you can do to facilitate an appropriate environment to support the student in participating, feel engaged and valued.
An example of such students could be a child with vision or dyslexia issues. Your role in accommodating such students could be being mindful of your requests to have them read out loud, or to provide large-format font texts where available. Other children may exhibit attention challenges, inability to grasp concepts or respond as quickly as others, or show inability to follow instructions. Knowing how to respond appropriately will ensure your class time is productive and enjoyable and reduce the potential for behaviour issues.

Discuss the best approach with a Department teacher or principal, some basic strategies for keeping students with behavioural control challenges engaged might include:

- Allow children to fidget with a school-approved prop (e.g. stress ball).
- Seat children who may have attention challenges close to you. This can enable discreet, non-physical, interaction between you and the child and help keep the child on task.
- Develop a non-verbal visual cue as an inconspicuous signal to child for when attention or behaviour slips.
- Allow the child to be your regular helper (e.g. when handing out paper, showing an image to the class).
- In group work, try to place children with challenges with sympathetic diligent students.
- When asking questions and providing feedback to the student, be very clear and concise, and be prepared to repeat yourself. Do not push for input.
- Students facing challenges can feel quite self-critical, lack confidence and be quite sensitive emotionally. Try to avoid singling out or disparaging any student in front of peers.
- If discipline is required, involve the classroom teacher.
- Positive reinforcement and building rapport works very well in encouraging diverse learners to do their best in meeting core objectives of ethics classes.

It may be beneficial to have a relevant member of school staff meet with ethics teachers at the start of each year where school policy and tips on working with diverse students can be passed on.

**Children with English as a second language**

Ethics classes are discussion based and it can be challenging for children who are still developing their English language skills to participate.

All students in your class will benefit from you speaking clearly, repeating questions and scenarios as needed, using gestures and facial expression and tone of voice to convey meaning and allowing thinking time. Providing the opportunity for students to participate in discussion, rather than requiring a particular student to answer a question, is also an important technique for students who are still acquiring English.

Listening to a discussion and hearing unfamiliar words are all part of learning a new language. Ethics classes are an opportunity for students learning English to listen to how their peers express ideas through the give and take of discussion.
Behaviour management

Ethics students consistently tell us that the thing they least like about ethics classes is students behaving badly or the class being too noisy. In fact, if poor behaviour is allowed to continue, we find that sometimes the students who really wanted to engage are the ones who drop out. In addition, it is stressful teaching a class that is difficult to manage. Ethics teachers need to consider not only their students’ wellbeing but their own, and seek behaviour management assistance early and as often as is needed.

Student engagement is highest when students:
- can hear
- have quiet time to think
- know what they are supposed to be doing
- can see that misbehaviour is being appropriately addressed.

Well facilitated, meaningful discussions can only occur when student behaviour is under control and the class is focussed.

Ethics teachers also need to be mindful that the students’ classroom teacher will need the students to be ready to learn after ethics class.

Behaviour management is the ethics teacher’s responsibility. Having a Department of Education teacher in classroom is beneficial; their presence alone can have a settling effect on the students. The teacher is also an excellent resource should there be a health, emotional or safety issue arising. However, while the classroom teacher can support you, his or her role is not to manage behaviour – it is important that students see you as being in charge.

There may be some lessons where a significant amount of time is spent revising the rules and communicating your expectations about behaviour. Setting yourself up to succeed with behaviour management is not only important for an effective ethics class, it is essential in ensuring that behaviour does not become so poor that there could be the potential for safety issues to arise or for the school’s child protection policy to be triggered (for example, through raised voice, expressing anger, loss of control or other inappropriate behaviour management approaches).

Use the techniques set out below to give yourself the best chance of success. The section to follow sets out how to seek help if these techniques are not working. Remember to seek assistance early rather than allow behaviour issues to develop.

These four steps to managing behaviour are detailed below:

1. Ensure the students see you as a teacher
2. Tell students how you expect them to behave
3. Let students know when they are doing it right
4. Let students know when they are not doing it right

1. **Ensure the students see you as a teacher** – it is important students understand that you are an ethics teacher rather than a parent/carer. Use the tips below to help the students understand that you have the ability to ensure there are consequences for poor behavior:
• Look and sound like a school teacher – think about how school teachers dress, how they speak to the children, both what they say and how they say it.
• Use the language used at the school to manage behaviour – find out if there are warnings, ways of describing behaviour (e.g. green, orange, red) and the extent to which you are able to refer to or use those systems.
• Make a decision about what students will call you during ethics classes – either your first name or Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms [Name] – some schools require you to use a title, and many ethics teachers use a title to ensure students understand that in ethics class they are a teacher.
• Learn student names as soon as possible – if you are able to use a student’s name when correcting behaviour it has much greater impact. The student will realise that you are in a position to provide feedback on their behaviour to the classroom teacher, should that be required.
• Exude confidence and own the classroom space – even if you don’t feel confident it is important to try to appear confident.

2. Tell students how you expect them to behave

It is important to set expectations from the very first class.

Primary Ethics rules are rules for effective discussion and they apply to every ethics class in addition to the school rules. Remind students of the rules as often as needed. You can highlight a particular rule and say you’ll be looking for that behaviour in that lesson.

You can set your own rules in relation to classroom management. For example:

- do you need the students to wait at the entrance to the classroom before coming in?
- do you need them to assist with setting up the circle or putting chairs away at the end?
- do you need them to place items they have brought with them (e.g. lunch boxes, pencil cases) under the chair before class starts or on a table?
- do you need them to stay seated even after the bell goes and wait to be dismissed?

When setting up small groups or any other class activity take the time to explain it clearly, when all students are listening, so that it is clear what is required. Often poor student behaviour is related to being unsure about what is required. Ensure students know what is expected of them in every part of the lesson (see Managing small groups).

Make sure all instructions you give are explicit and clear. For example, say ‘Sit on your bottom with your feet on the floor’ rather than ‘Do you think it is a good idea to swing on your chair like that?’

You might need to remind students of your expectations every lesson, do so in a calm and friendly manner.

3. Let students know when they are doing it right

Highlighting or praising the behaviour that you are wanting to see is a very important aspect of behaviour management. You can name individuals or groups of students to praise, or if you don’t want to single people out, or can’t remember who did it, or felt like it was almost everyone, you can
say ‘if you were one of those people who ‘asked someone else a question’, then you should be very proud of yourself.

- Thank the student and make it clear why – ‘thank you for putting your hand up / for listening so well / for sitting sensibly / for raising a new idea etc.’
- Gestures (a smile, a nod, thumbs up) when a student does the right thing (e.g. raises their hand to talk, is listening to another student etc.) – this is particularly effective if you indicate at the start of the lesson the behaviour you will be looking for. For example, ‘this week I’m going to be listening to hear if anyone is building on others’ ideas’. This is a great way to acknowledge good behaviour without interrupting the flow of the discussion.
- If there is a part of the lesson that a student can assist with, such as holding up a picture, or being in a role play, you can use this as a reward. Make it clear you are selecting a student due to their behaviour – ‘I’m choosing Ryan because he is sitting properly in his chair / has been listening carefully / gave a very thoughtful answer today.

Note: Primary Ethics does not permit the use of lollies, stickers, cakes, presents etc. as rewards.

You might choose to praise behaviours that are to do with sitting still, listening, speaking in turn and so on. You could also consider praising behaviours that are related to both thinking and discussion. These examples are similar to the Neutral responses.

- Ok, here’s another new idea – thank you.
- I can tell you’ve been listening Rebecca, you’ve built on Jamie’s idea.
- Well done, you put those ideas together and expressed this very clearly.
- Thank you for bringing a new perspective to this discussion.
- Thanks for that idea – it broadens the discussion.
- Thank you for expressing that so well – you’ve explained why it is you disagree with the earlier ideas.
- That’s a new idea for others to think about.

You can take this further by stopping the class to emphasise any of the above points:

- I’d like to stop the discussion for a moment – Jamie has just raised a new idea that really broadens the discussion. Can you say more about it, Jamie?
- I’d like to stop the discussion for a moment – Rebecca, I like the way you gave reasons that show how your view is different to the earlier ideas we discussed. Can you say more about that?

Note: It is very important that the praise is genuine. Unless the whole class has been consistently demonstrating a behaviour you want to acknowledge, avoid making whole class statements such as: ‘You have all done an amazing job today’. If the whole class gets this praise but there were one or two who were disturbing the group, then this praise is baseless, and insulting to those that were behaving.
4: Let students know when they are not doing it right

Tolerating poor behaviour is likely to lead to an increase in that behaviour. Speaking while others are speaking, not listening to the person speaking, not sitting in the circle are all behaviours that can escalate to create an unmanageable class.

When you see behaviour that needs correcting you have three choices:

- **Ignore it** – if the behaviour is not dangerous and isn’t affecting the learning of others then ignore it (an example might be tapping a pen on a chair or fiddling with shoelaces). There may be times when a child is starting to behave in a way to draw attention to themselves but has not yet been disruptive to the class – you can try praising the students who are doing the right thing rather than draw attention to the poor behaviour.

- **Redirect it** – don’t mention the specific behaviour, but ask the student the next question. For example, let’s say a child is trying to put his arms through the neck hole of his jumper, ignore the behaviour and give the child something to do ‘Joey, would you like to tell us what you think about this question?’ or ‘Joey, could you hand out these sheets to each group’.

- **Stop it** – speak specifically to the student/s or to the whole group as needed.
  - Ensure your instructions are specific and clear.
  - Direct the student or students to behave appropriately – tell, rather than ask and be clear in your instructions. For example: ‘Jess, I need you to put all four legs of the chair on the floor,’ ‘Ben, I need to see that you are listening to James while he speaks,’ ‘Cate, sit back in your chair now please.’
  - Sometimes just saying a student’s name or giving them a stern look is enough.
  - Separate two students that are chatting.
  - Request that a student who is consistently misbehaving comes and sits next to you.
  - Get up and stand near or behind the student/s who are misbehaving.
  - Stop the class to revise the ethics class rules, ask which rule is not being followed.

Your tone of voice is important. Use a firm, stern (but not angry voice): ‘Belle, sit on your bottom with your feet on the floor,’ ‘Hamish, keep your hands and feet to yourself.’ You can be stern and friendly at the same time. Ensure your body language and tone of voice reflect the seriousness of your requests.

Stop the class as often as needed. Examples of techniques for stopping the class are included in Circuit Breakers or simply stop talking and say ‘I’m waiting until everyone is quiet before we continue.’ If you need to stop the class while a student is speaking use the Redirecting technique, for example ‘Sorry Jane, I need to stop you there, there is too much talking.’ Come back to that student when you start again.

Do not shout, appear angry, be sarcastic, humiliate a child, or make any kind of physical contact (not even softly).

If you need to remove an item from a child, place your hand in front of them and ask them to give it to you – do not remove the object from the child or make physical contact for any reason. If you do remove an object from a child, make sure you return it at the end of the lesson.
BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Escalating your response to poor behaviour

Consistent use of the techniques described above, particularly praising the behaviours that you wish to see, will usually ensure that the required behaviours for an ethics class to function are established and maintained. There may be situations when the techniques set out above do not resolve behaviour issues.

It is essential that you have a clear plan for how you will escalate your response before you start. If you warn a student that there will be consequences for their behaviour you must be able to follow through. Being consistent and being able to follow through on warnings are important in establishing your credibility in the classroom.

Understand the options that are available to you:

¬ Is there a safe place in the classroom that is in your line of vision, where you could send a disruptive child? If so the you can warn ‘Isabel, I’d like you to … If you keep on … I’m going to ask you to leave the circle and sit … until you can be sensible and return to the discussion.’ Remember to invite the student to return or tell them to do so when they feel they can contribute sensibly. If there is a classroom teacher you can ask the student to sit with the teacher. Note that this must not be used as a form of punishment or exclusion. Be sure to praise the student once they are behaving well and ensure you invite them to return to the group.

¬ Have you set up an agreement with the classroom teacher to assist when called upon? ‘Aiden, I’m going to stop you there because the class is too noisy. Mrs White, would you mind explaining to the class why it is important to listen in ethics?’ Similarly, if the class has been difficult you may be able to request that a teacher or the principal speak to the class about expectations of behaviour for the following week.

¬ Has the school given you permission to use their behaviour management system? If so: ‘Clare, this is your last warning, if you do that again I will be giving you a (e.g. red token).’

¬ Send two children to the office or to the teacher who has been allocated to assist you and ask that a teacher visit the room and assist with behaviour. ‘This class has become too disruptive / Sarah, your behaviour has not been acceptable this lesson. Will and Sam, I would like you to go to the office and ask Mrs White to visit our class.’

Attachment 1 of this Handbook contains a simple log sheet that you can use to record issues with student behaviour each week. It can be helpful to write down the behaviours in the classroom that were problematic as well as what you tried to resolve the issue. This log can be used for your own reflection, can be discussed with a classroom support team member or a member of the school teaching staff. Attachment 2 contains an incident report form – use this form to notify the Primary Ethics office of any safety issues or serious student behaviour incidents. You should report safety incidents to the school through their reporting system and are welcome to use the school’s form to notify Primary Ethics to avoid duplication.

Help with behaviour management

Many ethics teachers advise that the best thing they did to make teaching ethics more enjoyable was to seek help with behaviour management. Unless you are already experienced at managing student behaviour it can take time to develop the skills needed. The best way to do that is to ask for
help before the classroom environment becomes difficult and the behaviour becomes too entrenched.

You can:

- Call Primary Ethics office and ask for assistance on managing behaviour (phone 02 8068 7752).
- Request a classroom support visit – one of the team of volunteers will observe your class and help you formulate strategies to improve the situation. To request a visit, email karen.lee@primaryethics.com.au and include your name, school, day and time of class, and a brief explanation of the reason for the request.
- Let the school know and let your coordinator know – the school may be able to provide a classroom teacher to sit in on your class to support you with behaviour management.
- If you do have a classroom teacher, ensure you know when you can ask for their assistance and speak to them after class to ask for suggestions for addressing particular issues.

Seek assistance before behaviour gets out of hand. Do not be embarrassed that the school might think you cannot cope or aren’t capable. Being a volunteer in a school who is only there once a week for 30 minutes is a difficult ask even for experienced teachers. The school principal has a duty of care to ensure that the class functions well. Request the school’s assistance as needed.

**For your own wellbeing and for the safety of the children it is essential that you seek support as soon as possible if the behaviour management strategies you are trying are not having the desired effect.**

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**Child Protection and Safety – Summary**

There are four important ways that ethics teachers need to contribute to child protection and safety:

1. Inform a school teacher or the principal, in their roles as mandatory reporters, if you have any reason to suspect abuse (as set out in the Child Protection Awareness Training module) – explain what you have observed to the mandatory reporter and then keep the details confidential.

2. Ensure you are following the behaviour management advice provided by Primary Ethics and seeking support whenever needed to ensure that you are able to manage classroom behaviour in a way that is professional and appropriate and that ensures the emotional wellbeing and safety of all students.

3. Report any safety concerns you have (including incidents and near misses) to the school and to the Primary Ethics office.

4. Keep your Working with Children Check up to date.

**Revisit the Child Protection Awareness Training Module in the Learning Centre for further information.**
Preparation

Before your first class

When you have successfully completed your two day face-to-face workshop, the next step is to complete your Volunteer Engagement Form for Ethics Teachers online. You will receive an email from the Primary Ethics office with full instructions to guide you through the process. It also includes a link to a short video to demonstrate the steps involved.

Once you have completed the Engagement Form, you will be able to produce your Authorisation Certificate. This certificate must be presented to the school as evidence that you have been authorised by Primary Ethics. Check with your coordinator as it may be more convenient for the school if certificates for all teachers are presented as one batch, in which case you will hand it to your coordinator rather than directly to your school.

Then click on Browse Learning in the Learning Centre and enrol yourself in the lesson materials you require to start teaching. There is a separate tile for each educational stage and year cycle (odd or even).

Before you start teaching: Speak to your Ethics Coordinator to confirm:

- Your school’s rules, or expectations
- Your school’s discipline/behaviour guidelines and processes, and whether you are allowed to participate in the school’s reward system, such as giving out school reward tokens
- Whether there will be a school teacher in your room and if not, and what procedure you should follow to request assistance if needed
- Whom you should speak to at the school if there is a significant behaviour management incident or ongoing issue
- The school’s policy on allowing students to go to the toilet during class time; e.g. many schools require children to travel in pairs.
- The school’s policy on caring for children who feel unwell in class; e.g. you may be required to send two children to the office with the sick child
- The school’s Emergency Evacuation and Lock Down Procedures
- Where to sign in
- Which classroom you’ll be in and how to get there
- Whether you will have access to resources such as a whiteboard or smart board
- Whether you need to take a roll each week and if so, where to pick it up and drop it off
- Whether it is appropriate for you to be introduced to the Principal or the school’s SRE Coordinator
- Whether there are any students in your class with special needs (behavioural, medical or disabilities), and if so, what you need to do to ensure the safety and wellbeing of that child.

Preparing for your first class:

- Decide what you want the students to call you, after first checking if your school has a policy on names; e.g. some schools like volunteers to be known as Mr/Ms/Miss/Mrs, rather than simply their first name.
• Organise a name badge for yourself. The badge provided to you in training has a spare slip of paper at the back with Primary Ethics logo on it. Write your chosen name on this slip.
• Plan how you will remember the names of your students (see the Classroom Management section for suggestions).
• Decide how you will display the rules and prepare a copy accordingly.
• Have a look at the classroom/space you’ll be in and decide how to arrange the circle. You can choose whether to sit the children in chairs or on the floor. If you need to move furniture, speak to your classroom teacher and let them know why it is important for students to see and hear each other. If you need assistance moving furniture safely speak to your coordinator to organise assistance. Always remember to leave the classroom as you found it. If you move furniture, put it back at the end of the lesson. You can ask the children to help you with this.
• If your own child will be in your class, discuss what your expectations will be beforehand.
• If possible, ask the school classroom teacher how he/she calls the class to order (e.g. a clapping routine or a bell)?
• If you have a teacher in your class, provide them with a copy of the School Teacher’s Guide to Ethics Classes (available to download from Promoting Primary Ethics in the Learning Centre).

After your first class
After your first class for the year, add your class details to the class database. This helps Primary Ethics know how many students attend ethics classes.

Go to https://primaryethics.knack.com/nsw-schools#classdata/

Scroll down to the section titled: ‘Please add your class details’ and complete the text boxes as prompted. If you are taking over an existing class or a split class then please add your details and also email volunteering@primaryethics.com.au to explain the situation. This is to ensure we do not have duplicate classes in the system.

Before each class
• Read the topic introductory section and the lesson you will be delivering, and identify the substantive questions, which is where you will want to spend most of the discussion time. Plan appropriate procedural questions.
• Consider how you will manage the images and handouts (electronically, printed, how many do you need of each).
• Practice reading the stories and scenarios aloud.
• Consider how to present the stories. Depending on the length and complexity of the story and the age of the students you can choose to:
  – Read out the story yourself
  – Select a student to read the story
  – Ask several students to read parts of the story

The most important thing is to ensure that every student can hear and understand the story. Only ask students to read the story if you are confident that they are capable of doing so. Many teachers choose to give all students a copy of the story or scenario to read along as it is being
read out, to ensure everyone can understand the story. This is particularly helpful if a student is keen to read but is quiet or has difficulty reading.

- If you have access to a smartboard, copy images onto a USB.

Classroom tips

If using a whiteboard
- keep writing to a minimum
- avoid speaking to the class with your back turned
- use sentence case – not all caps, so that students find it easier to read
- use 'printing' or plain writing rather than 'cursive'.
- If using a SmartBoard
  - ask for permission. You may need a password
  - only use the SmartBoard to display images
  - don’t put stories or scenarios in a PowerPoint display, as it is quite hard to read long passages of text. PowerPoint displays can also encourage everyone to focus on the screen, rather than each other – great if you are demonstrating a new product or managing a work meeting; not good for a discussion based lesson
  - NEVER write on a smartboard with a marker pen – it won’t wipe off!

If your class finishes the lesson before your time is up
- start the next lesson, or
- use one of the optional activities below.

If you didn’t complete the lesson, just pick up where you left off last time.

If this happens often, reflect on whether you are spending too much time on non-substantive questions. Remember there is no need to give everyone an opportunity to have their say on every question. Although students like to have a turn to share their knowledge or their story, others can become disengaged if too much time is spent on the non-substantive questions.

If you need help when preparing your lessons, please call 02 8068 7752 or email helpdesk@primaryethics.com.au.
Optional activities

Sometimes ethics classes start with a trickle of students, sometimes a class finishes early and it makes no sense to start the next topic. There might also be opportunities, when the class is established and behaviour is under control, to try some skill development activities.

This section provides some optional activities for use in ethics classes. It is important to remember that ethics classes are designed to teach children how to think and discuss ethical ideas together. This can be quite challenging for many students. These activities are provided to fill a time gap or to focus on a particular skill, not to avoid the challenge of developing thinking and discussion skills.

Use these activities as directed below, rather than as a reward for getting through the lesson quickly, or for being ‘good’.

End of lesson or slow start

If you only have a few minutes of lesson time left, and you don’t want to start the next lesson or segment as it will be interrupted by the bell, you can use one of the following activities. You may also wish to use one of these activities as a starter if you have students arriving at different times and don’t want those that arrive early to have to sit doing nothing while the others wander in.

- Ask students to think of one thing that they’re going to work on this lesson - like ‘building on someone else’s idea’ etc.
- How did we go with the rules today? Why was that? (what worked, didn’t work) – what should we focus on next week to improve our discussions?
- Ask students how well they thought they went with the rules that week/last week.
- Select one of the rules and ask students to explain why it is important to have in the class.
- Can they think of an example of someone building on someone else’s idea from this lesson/last lesson?
- Ask students if anyone changed their mind about any of the questions, and why. Did anyone say anything in class today that really made you think? Why?
- Ask students to take 60 seconds to reflect on what they thought about in the lesson and ask them to share their thoughts.
- Ask students to think of something they know now about ethics, ethical thinking, or ‘topic name’ that they didn’t know before.
- Say ‘if you could ask your family one question that might help them think about ‘topic’ what would it be?’

If you find that you often finish lessons early, reflect on the lesson. Are you allowing enough time for thinking, and fostering discussions using procedural questions? What facilitation techniques could you use to extend discussions?
OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Community of Inquiry and thinking activities

These activities are designed to increase students’ awareness of the discussion process. Use them occasionally to help build specific community of inquiry skills, but not too often as students should develop the ability to participate in a productive and respectful whole group discussion without too much ongoing assistance. As a guide, aim to only use each activity no more than once or twice a term.

Note: These activities work well in a class that is well managed and where students are already comfortable doing things that are out of routine, e.g., working in groups and sharing their thoughts with others. Avoid them while you are still establishing your authority or setting group expectations.

Inquiry practice

*Why:* To give students the opportunity to identify, for themselves, the ethical issues that might arise from a story or scenario.

*When:* Whenever the lesson materials include a story or a scenario that is followed by substantive questions.

*Stage:* Stages 1, 2 and 3

*How:* After reading a story or scenario ask the students to take a moment to think about any questions they’d like to discuss as a result of the story/scenario. Allow 20-30 seconds of thinking time. Next, ask students to speak to the person next to them (you may need to assign the students into pairs or groups of three) about what questions they can think up about the story or scenario. Allow 1-2 minutes of discussion. If necessary, re-read the story or scenario and then ask students what questions might be important.

Ask: ‘What questions did you come up with?’ or ‘What questions could we discuss to help us think more about the story/scenario?’

Remember to thank students who come up with a question and to ask if anyone else can think of a question. Once a few students have contributed questions say ‘Ok, thank you for that, now let’s see what questions we have here’ and ask the next question from the lesson.

You can modify this by removing the pair discussion, but ensure you start with thinking time.

Do not be concerned if students are not able to come up with ethical questions or questions that are in any way related to the questions in the lesson materials. This is a skill that takes time and practice. This activity provides an opportunity for students to think about the scenario in an open-ended way before asking the questions from the lesson materials.

Recapping exercise

*Why:* To encourage students to listen to each other carefully.

*When:* When discussing a substantive question from the lesson.

*Stage:* This will work best with Stage 2 and 3 students. It can be tried with Stage 1 students very briefly and with prompting.

*How:* Tell the students you will be having a slightly different discussion. Each student who wants to contribute an idea to the discussion will first have to explain what the person before them said. For example, when it is your turn to speak you will need to say ‘James said he thought it wasn’t greedy because Emma asked permission which was polite. I disagree, I think she had already had enough to eat so she was greedy.’ Older students should be able to manage this without prompting but may need to be reminded. Younger students might need prompting with ‘Now tell me what Jane said, OK, and what is your idea?’ Use your procedural questions as usual to facilitate the discussion.

*Duration:* Under 5 minutes.
**Four second pause approach**

**Why:** To encourage students to think before speaking and provide an opportunity for those who take more time to form their views to contribute.

**When:** When discussing a substantive question from the lesson.

**Stage:** This will work best with Stage 2 and 3 students.

**How:** Explain to students that you have a question for them, but that this discussion will be slightly different. After each student speaks they will need to count to four silently but using their fingers so everyone can see (teacher can demonstrate). Once they have counted to four slowly other students may put up their hands to speak. You may need to tell students to sit on their hands so they remember not to put them up until after four (or a number you choose). So a student might say ‘I think it is wrong because someone can get hurt. And then use their fingers to count slowly to four. Students may forget the question, so be ready to repeat it. Having these pauses can seem strange at first and may cause some giggles but you might also find that students give more considered responses as the discussion progresses.

**Duration:** Under 5 minutes at a time.

**Note:** If running this with a kindy class, you’ll need to be more directive. You could say something like: ‘When Phoebe finishes her comment, I want everyone to put their hands on their head.’ While hands are on their heads, teacher chooses someone to repeat what Phoebe said. Keeping hands on heads, teacher asks and models thinking time; ‘Hmm...let’s think about what Phoebe said. Now think ‘do I have something different or similar to say to Phoebe about ....?’ If you have something different to say - keep your hands on your heads. If you have something similar, put your hands in your lap.’ Choose someone with hands on heads to say next thing.

**Modified fish bowl approach**

**Why:** To increase students’ awareness of the discussion process.

**When:** During a discussion of a substantive question from the lesson.

**Stage:** This will work best with Stage 2 and 3 students.

**How:** Ask several students (between 2 and 5 depending on the size of the class) to be observers of the discussion and not participants. They will each have something to observe during the discussion and will need to report back on it at the end of the discussion. It is best to write the task on a piece of paper but read it out as you give it to the student so the rest of the class can hear. Use a few of the following at a time (one per student):

- When did someone build on someone else's idea?
- When did someone disagree respectfully?
- When did someone give reasons for their opinion?
- When did someone change their mind?
- When did a student ask another student a question?
- When did someone provide a new idea to the discussion?
- How well did we follow the 'only one person speaks at a time' rule?
- How well did we follow the 'listen to the person speaking' rule?
- How well did we follow the 'speak to each other not the teacher’ rule?

To help students remember that they are observers you can suggest they put their hands under their legs or push their chairs a few inches back so they are slightly outside the circle (if space permits). Facilitate the discussion using procedural questions as needed. Once the discussion is over, ask the observers to report back. You can also ask them if they have anything to contribute to the issue being discussed.
This activity could be modified for Stage 1 or Early Stage 1 by selecting a student to focus on a rule and make observations about how the class was using that particular rule (last three dot points above).

Improving your skills

Just like in the training practice sessions, it can be very helpful to reflect on each class and think about what you did well and what you would like to change for next time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stop: Things that I'll avoid doing next time</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Start: Things I meant to do but forgot or that would have worked well this lesson</th>
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<tr>
<th>Continue: Things that worked well</th>
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<tr>
<th>Goal for next class: One thing to focus on for next week</th>
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Reflection questions:

- Did I praise/acknowledge good behaviour?
- Was anyone else speaking while I was speaking (giving instructions, reading a story etc.)?
- Were students listening to each other?
- Did students answer the question being asked and give relevant reasons?
- Are there any facilitation techniques I could try to improve the discussions?
FAQs on school matters

Can I give the students stickers, stamps, lollies or other rewards?

No, unless these items are part of a broader reward system used by the school, and the school has requested that you participate (such as tokens or stamps that are part of a whole school system). Keep in mind that the giving of gifts to students can be viewed unfavourably from a child protection perspective.

If the school has given you permission to hand out tokens or stamps as a reward for good behaviour, always be clear as to why you are selecting the student(s). And remember that rewards should be used to highlight good behaviour, not ‘good’ answers.

What if a child feels sick or asks to go to the toilet?

Primary Ethics requires that if a student needs to leave the classroom then they should be accompanied by another child. Find out before your first class how to manage these, and similar, requests. Their policy may vary for different age groups.

What if the class teacher interferes in the lesson?

For example, the teacher:

- starts answering the questions
- joins in the class
- advises students on the answers
- stops the discussion
- distracts students with tasks like taking a message to the office etc.

Developing a relationship with your classroom teacher is an important part of teaching ethics. Sometimes teachers misunderstand the purpose and format of ethics classes.

Our website www.primaryethics.com.au has an Information for Schools page with a downloadable pdf guide designed to explain our program to school teachers. You may find it helpful to provide teachers with a link to this page.

If you feel able, it is advisable to indicate to the classroom teacher what your expectations are—that as the classes are based on peer-to-peer learning it is important that teachers (including you) do not participate. You may wish to invite the teacher to help you with behaviour. Your ethics coordinator can assist you to develop an approach to resolve unhelpful interference.

If you feel disrespected, belittled or in any way poorly treated by the classroom teacher, please contact the Primary Ethics office to discuss how we can assist you.
**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**What if the classroom teacher belittles or is disrespectful towards me?**

It is not acceptable for anyone in the school community to behave disrespectfully towards you. Keep a note of what is occurring, discuss it with your ethics coordinator and contact the Primary Ethics office to seek support to resolve the matter.

**A student’s parents ask me what their child says in ethics classes**

In ethics classes, students might give very strong views on a topic, expose an incorrect understanding of factual information or share a story about when they have done something wrong. It is helpful for teachers to disassociate the individual responses from the students who gave them and provide more general responses to a parent who asks. For example: ‘Kate is a great participator’, ‘Sam doesn’t say much but seems thoughtful’, ‘Ruby doesn’t seem to enjoy ethics classes’, ‘Jimmie often gives very thoughtful responses and adds new ideas to the discussion’.

You can suggest to parents that they could ask their children the following questions about ethics classes:

- Did you hear any ideas in ethics class today that you’d not heard before?
- Did anyone say something that made you think differently?
- Did you hear any convincing arguments?

You can also let interested parents know the name of the topic and types of scenarios students are considering that week so that they can discuss these ideas with their students.

**FAQs on lesson materials**

**What do I say if the children ask what is ethics?**

Just say ethics is about discussing together what is right or wrong, good or bad. We don’t explain ‘ethics’ to students in great detail because they are practicing it, rather than learning about it. That is, they are learning by doing. Students with a strong interest about what ethics really is can easily find out more by doing their own research. Consistent with a community of inquiry approach students do discover, in time, that ethics is about asking questions, thinking and reasoning to understand more about moral issues.

**What do I do if the lesson materials contain information that I think is not factually correct?**

You may find that the stimulus material in a topic might not be completely correct, or you may feel that students really need to know more about it to be able to discuss it properly. It can help to remember that the stimulus material is only there to serve the purpose of generating curiosity and providing students with enough information to discuss the ethical issue. The aim of the class is for students to practice their critical thinking and collaborative inquiry skills, rather than to learn topic content.
Depending on the age group, this often means that the stimulus materials are, by necessity, quite brief and will not provide a comprehensive account of the topic.

Please provide your feedback and suggestion in the curriculum feedback form, accessible in the Learning Centre, and it will be taken into account when the topic is next reviewed.

**Students are struggling with group discussion and the classroom teacher has suggested they would be more engaged with activity sheets or colouring in.**

One of the aims of ethics classes is for students to learn to discuss ethical issues together. This is not something that most children can do straight away (nor many adults for that matter) but it is a very worthwhile skill to develop and one that you are actually teaching by enforcing the rules and encouraging students to answer the questions asked. The curriculum has been designed to build these skills over time – in kindergarten there are more stories compared to Stage 3 where there is more emphasis on discussion.

Diverting students with colouring in, activity sheets, videos or games does not teach them listening, discussion or thinking skills. Students may well find those activities more engaging because they are much easier than participating well in an ethics class.

Our website www.primaryethics.com.au has an Information for Schools page with a downloadable pdf guide designed to explain our program to school teachers. You may find it helpful to provide teachers with a link to this page.

There are many factors that can reduce student engagement, work through the following list to identify a possible cause:

- Are the students in your class normally in the same class at school or has this class been formed just for ethics? If the latter, it can take some time for students, particularly from different school years, to feel comfortable in the group and it may take longer for students to join in discussions – use some icebreakers and use the thinking time and sharing speaking time techniques.

- Check the Engagement Section – are you sure that students have heard and understood the stories and the questions? Do they know what the question is that they are supposed to answer? Ensure instructions are clear, re-read the story or scenario and repeat the question using the Anchoring technique.

- Are students attempting to answer the substantive questions in the lesson or are they focussing on the stimulus material (e.g. the stories and scenarios)? Often students can become disengaged if they are not challenged. Many of the stories and scenarios can seem quite simple on the surface. Making a judgement on the ethical issue involved by answering the substantive question and then actually giving reasons that are relevant is much more difficult. Demonstrating your own curiosity about the question and using Anchoring and Reasons to keep students on track makes the class much more challenging.

- Do the students think you are looking for a particular answer? Often if students think there is a particular answer that you are looking for they will hold back and wait as in most educational settings the answer will be given eventually. Maintain your sense of curiosity.
about the questions and if the answers don’t come from the group move on e.g. ‘Hmm, ok, let’s move on’.

– Are YOU interested in the topic and what they have to say? If you don’t show that you are interested they will follow suit and disengage themselves.

**Can I introduce drama, art or other activities that are related to the topic? / Can I bring in colouring in or other activities?**

The curriculum and lesson materials have been carefully designed to support students to practice thinking and discussion skills so that they can become capable of reasoned ethical reflection. For many students this is a challenging learning exercise. Students have an opportunity to participate in more creative learning activities, such as art and drama, in their normal school classes. Ethics classes are a unique, weekly opportunity for students to genuinely inquire together about questions that have no hard and fast answers. Students rarely have an opportunity to explore ideas, practice their reasoning and engage in respectful discussion of this style of question, without being required to achieve a particular outcome.

For this reason introducing other activities is not okay; it takes away time from the practice of genuine inquiry that makes ethics classes unique.

**Can I introduce thinking and discussion activities that are consistent with the overall objectives of the program?**

The curriculum has been through a multi-level process of review and approval, including approval by the NSW Department of Education for age appropriateness. Parents and carers of students attending ethics classes need to be assured that only approved materials will be introduced in ethics classes.

We would welcome your ideas on any activities that would improve thinking and discussion in ethics classes. We will apply the review and approval process to those activities and if they are deemed suitable we will include them in this Ethics Teacher Handbook, or appropriate lesson.

Please provide feedback here (https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PELHandbook) for inclusion in the next version of this Handbook.

**Can I show a video or bring in extra material related to the topic (e.g. recent news articles)?**

No, ethics teachers aren’t to add any materials to the classes. The curriculum has been through a multi-level process of review and approval, including approval by the NSW Department of Education for age appropriateness. Parents and carers of students attending ethics classes need to be assured that only approved materials will be introduced in ethics classes.

Keep in mind that we are not trying to teach the content. Providing more stimulus material takes time away from the practice of genuine inquiry that makes ethics classes unique.
Can I adapt the stories and the questions to better suit my students?

No, ethics teachers shouldn't make adaptations to stories and questions. As explained above, the curriculum has been through a multi-level process of review and approval, including approval by the NSW Department of Education for age appropriateness. Parents and carers of students attending ethics classes need to be assured that only approved materials will be introduced in ethics classes.

The questions, stories and scenarios in the lessons have been chosen, and often very carefully worded, to ensure a range of philosophical perspectives is explored.

Can I bring in props?

Our experience of props in ethics classes is that they detract attention from the stories and questions and can lead to conflict and behaviour management issues (and occasionally safety issues). Learning and practicing listening, thinking and discussion skills is the main aim of ethics classes. Some lessons do require you to bring in props. If these are not specified then please do not bring any.

FAQs on facilitation of classes

The same students dominate the discussion every week.

Check if the students who are speaking each week are actually answering the question (use anchoring) and giving reasons that are relevant (use reasons). Also, be mindful that some students think quickly and are ready with a response while others might take longer. Fast paced discussions can be difficult to join if you are not a quick thinker. By allowing thinking time and using the techniques in sharing speaking time you can provide openings for other students to join the conversation. This could well result in much more thoughtful and considered responses.

It is very difficult to get any of the students talking, they don’t seem interested in the stimulus or the questions and won’t respond.

There are many factors that can reduce student engagement. Work through the following list to identify a possible cause:

- Are the students in your class normally in the same class at school or has this class been formed just for ethics? If the latter, it can take some time for students, particularly from different school years, to feel comfortable in the group and it may take longer for students to join in discussions – use some icebreakers and use the thinking time and sharing speaking time techniques.
- Check the Engagement Section – are you sure that students have heard and understood the stories and the questions? Do they know what the question is that they are supposed to answer? Ensure instructions are clear, re-read the story or scenario and repeat the question using the Anchoring technique.
FREQUEINTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- Are students attempting to answer the substantive questions in the lesson or are they focusing on the stimulus material (e.g. the stories and scenarios)? Often students can become disengaged if they are not challenged. Many of the stories and scenarios can seem quite simple on the surface. Making a judgement on the ethical issue involved by answering the substantive question and then actually giving reasons that are relevant is much more difficult. Demonstrating your own curiosity about the question and using Anchoring and Reasons to keep students on track makes the class much more challenging.

- Do the students think you are looking for a particular answer? Often if students think there is a particular answer that you are looking for they will hold back and wait as in most educational settings the answer will be given eventually. Maintain your sense of curiosity about the questions and if the answers don’t come from the group move on e.g. ‘Hmm, ok, let’s move on’.

- Are YOU interested in the topic and what they have to say? If you don’t show that you are interested they will follow suit and disengage themselves.

- Student disengagement can be due to behaviour issues. Students tell us that the thing they like least about ethics classes is when it is too noisy to think and when students misbehave.

What if the students in my class come up with an answer that is clearly wrong?

It is not necessarily true that there are no right or wrong answers in ethics classes. Quite often there are a large number of right answers and also some wrong answers.

If an incorrect answer is given to a comprehension question, based on a story or scenario from the lesson, then re-read the story and ask the question again. If an incorrect answer is given to a factual question (e.g. potatoes grow on trees), re-read the relevant part of the lesson or ask other students if they know.

The question of how to deal with a ‘morally wrong’ answer is more complex. Students will vary in their views on the rightness or wrongness of a particular issue. This is informed by their life experience to date or, it may be that they are still forming their view and this is their first chance to really think about it. This is why we do not seek to build consensus and come to a class decision, but encourage individual expression of, and justification for, a particular stance.

As always, it’s important to focus on students’ reasoning, rather than the answers themselves. Roughly, we can say that a line of moral reasoning is inadequate/faulty if it fails to acknowledge the suffering or wellbeing of others, evidence, relevant circumstances, fairness, the importance of treating others with respect, or other such matters which make for a considered view of the issue. Often, just asking someone to spell out the reasoning that has led to their answer will do the trick—they will note the flaw themselves. Otherwise, these sequences of questions may assist:

- Tell us why you say that. Why are those reasons important? If someone had the opposite view to you, what reasons would they give? Can anyone build on this idea? (anchor back to the original question)
- Hmm, ok, so if there was someone who had the opposite view to this, what would they say? Why would they say that? What reasons would they give? What do others think of this? Can anyone build on this idea? (anchor back to the original question)
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- So why do you say that? How can you know? What do others think? What evidence supports this? How could you find out more? (anchor back to the original question)

So we ask that you avoid stating “there are no right or wrong answers in ethics classes” as it is not true, sometimes there are wrong answers. An alternative way of encouraging students to contribute to the discussion is to say “I think some different ideas will help us understand this better, what is another way of looking at this?” or “I’m not looking for a particular answer to this, I’m keen to find out what you think so we can work on this together.”

**Student volunteers to read but can’t actually read all that well**

In Stages 2 and 3 you might invite students to read parts of a story or scenario or to read out questions (particularly after group work). It is essential that all students understand what has been said. If a student reads something out in a way that is not clear or audible you can read it out again yourself straight afterwards. If students are reading a role play or a story then having enough copies for one between two allows other students to read along.

Repeating the question for discussion, either by anchoring or by saying ‘ok, let me ask the question again’ is a way to ensure that students know what they are discussing.

**I’m getting through more than one lesson a week**

Some schools allow up to one hour a week for ethics classes. If that is the case at your school please contact the Primary Ethics office to discuss how to manage the longer time slot. If you have a 30 minute lesson allocation and find that you are working through the lesson materials quickly, consider whether there is enough discussion of the substantive questions. Refer to the section on What are we trying to achieve? to refresh the objectives of discussions and try using some more procedural questioning techniques. These techniques help ensure the children are doing the majority of the talking during class.

**We rarely make it all the way through a lesson so the topics are stretching out over many more weeks than intended.**

It is okay to continue each lesson where you left off the week before. If this is happening consistently then it might be time to consider a few of the following:

- Am I taking too many responses for the questions? There is no need to facilitate discussions for these questions – take a few responses and move on. If a number of students want to answer say ‘there will be more questions soon’
- Am I asking all of the follow-up questions? The questions shown in teal are optional – you only need to ask them if students are struggling to answer the substantive (numbered) question above.
- Is the discussion drifting off track? Use Anchoring and Reasons to keep students on track when discussing the substantive (numbered) questions. Don’t be afraid to redirect and move on. Also see Time management section.
What do I do if the children ask me what I think about the issue?

Remember that this is a peer-to-peer learning experience. Just by being the adult in the room and also the ‘teacher’ your opinion could hold much more sway that a student’s. If you express your opinion (even inadvertently) then students who had very different ideas may no longer be willing to express their ideas. Or quiet students, who rarely express their ideas anyway, may feel that they had the wrong idea if the idea they were considering is different to yours. Here are some answers you can use when a student asks what you think about the question being discussed: ‘I’m here to help you work out what you think about this, not to tell you what I think,’ ‘I think it is an interesting question and I’d like to hear more ideas to help us work it out,’ or (if it is true) ‘To be honest, hearing your different ideas and the reasons you’re giving has made me realise that I need to think more about this before I make up my mind.’

FAQs on behaviour management skills

Behaviour is getting progressively worse each week

If you want ongoing behaviour to change, you need to change the way you deal with it. You may need to increase the sternness of the way you give your message, the tone or pitch of your voice or be more explicit in your message. The students need to see, and be in no doubt, that you are in control of the group. This means making the boundaries/expectations explicitly clear, continuously. It also means pulling up students who cross the boundaries and praising the students who stay within the boundaries.

Some teachers make the mistake of treating the students like adults, thinking this is a respectful approach. Others are worried that students may not like them if they enforce discipline. This leaves the students feeling directionless, and they end up filling the gaps of authority that the teacher has left. This can lead to an unsafe room where many students are unable to learn. You can’t assume the students know what is expected of them and can do that without any feedback or guidance. Students below the age of 13-15 have a developmental need for strong boundaries, clear authority figures and consistent fair treatment.

If poor behaviour is ignored, or even if consequences are threatened but there is no follow-through, students are likely to test you to see what they can get away with, and behaviour will get progressively worse each week.

If this is happening, you could have a talk to your students at the beginning of the next class. Explain that you didn’t see a lot of learning taking place last week, and you’ll need to make some changes. Ask for their input, e.g. ‘What do you think we need to do so that everyone gets a chance to contribute and be heard?’ Chances are they will suggest sticking to the class rules.

Use that as your mandate to enforce the rules. Most students actually want you to take control. They don’t enjoy the class when others play up (even if they are encouraging it). The next time someone disregards a rule – stop the class. Draw attention back to the rule.

Further tips are included in the Behaviour Management section including how to get help and how to escalate your response to poor behaviour.
Students will not listen to me or each other

This behaviour should not be tolerated. Revise the information in the Behaviour Management section, in particular how to get help and how to escalate behaviour management responses.

FAQs on child protection issues

Student reveals something personal about themselves, their family or someone else or raises an inappropriate or sensitive topic.

Remember that you are responsible for the direction that the discussion takes. Redirect the discussion. It is okay to say ‘Jen, I’m going to stop you there. The question we are discussing is … / and go on with the story.’

If you are in any way concerned from a child protection perspective then talk to the classroom teacher or school principal afterwards, making it clear that you heard something in ethics class that raised child protection concerns.

Child gets upset (because of the topic or ideas being discussed, missing a chance to speak, missing a part in a role play or for a reason unrelated to ethics classes)

Ask the student if they would like to select someone to go with them to get a drink from the bubblers or splash some cold water on their face. This gives them time to calm down.

If the student is very upset, send two other students to go and fetch and classroom teacher, or take a message to the office.

Do not attempt to physically comfort the child.

Ensure you advise the classroom teacher or school office of what occurred.
References

List of references and relevant studies:


Additional studies are listed on the Primary Ethics public website at: https://primaryethics.com.au/references/#Ref1
### Attachment 1: Record of behaviour management issues

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Student behaviour</th>
<th>Ethics Teacher response</th>
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**Attachment 2: Incident Report Form**

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<th>Signature of person completing this form:</th>
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**Incident**

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<th>Witnesses (include contact details):</th>
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**Reporting of the incident to Primary Ethics**

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<th>How (this form, in person, email, phone):</th>
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**Follow Up Action**

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<th>Description of actions to be taken:</th>
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