

CASE STUDY: RIGHT AND WRONG

PRIMARY KEY STAGE 1 & 2



CONTEXT

Earlsfield Primary School in South West London, a large mixed community primary school contacted British Humanist Association to ask if a volunteer might help them to plan and deliver some religious education sessions that involved a discussion of Humanism. The teacher who made contact had recently been appointed RE co-ordinator and wanted to involve outside agencies in this aspect of learning.

OBJECTIVES

The school wanted to ensure that the session would enable:

- All children to understand that Humanism is a non-religious world view.
- All children to listen to other people's points of view and suggest reasons for similar and different beliefs.
- A few children to be able to ask important questions about life and meaning.

They also wanted the session to be interactive; including opportunities to ask questions.

PLANNING

The BHA volunteer and the teacher had an initial conversation where they discussed which classes of children they would work with and how they would plan for this. The teacher requested volunteers to work with two classes of Year 2 pupils and two classes of Year 4 pupils (up to 70 pupils in each session). They also agreed that the teacher would do some preparatory work with the pupils before the sessions so that the pupils could focus on questions they might like to ask. It was agreed that the teacher would look at any materials prepared by the speakers in advance to make sure they were age-appropriate and in line with the school's plans.

It was agreed that the Year 2 children would be focussing on 'what makes us special' and the Year 4 children on ceremonies. It was decided to invite two volunteers to work with the pupils. The class teachers and Teaching Assistants (TAs) helped to facilitate the session.

ACTIVITIES

1. First the pupils were invited to take part in an 'Opinions' activity. The pupils had to move to different parts of the room depending on whether they agreed and disagreed (or didn't know) with a statement. Statements included 'everyone celebrates Christmas', 'everyone is special', 'some people should be treated better than others', and 'it is always wrong to steal'. Children were then asked to justify their position, and then asked if they wanted to change their opinion based on what they had heard.
2. Following this there was a short presentation on what Humanism is. For the Year 2 children more emphasis was on 'what makes us special', and for the Year 4 children on ceremonies.
3. The session ended with a Q&A where children asked the volunteers questions based on what they had seen and heard during the day and some of the thinking they had been doing with their teachers in advance.

TEACHER/VOLUNTEER REFLECTION

The teacher was pleased with pupil response. They had clearly enjoyed interacting with visitors to the classroom. They engaged well with the 'Opinions' activity and reported that they had gained a lot from it. It was thought provoking and active and all the children were involved.

A number of the staff also approached the volunteers to say how interesting it was and how much they had learned too!

PUPIL REFLECTION

Here are some of the pupil reflections which illustrate their engagement and also the need for teachers and volunteers to consider the range of approaches they might adopt to engage pupils.

I liked the game because I liked choosing which place to go to – Boy Year 2.

I liked asking questions because we got to find out more about Humanism and what some of the things mean- Boy Year 2.

I wish we could have thought of some of our own statements – Boy Year 2.

I wish there were some different activities, maybe some writing ones – Girl Year 2.

I wish you could have brought in some objects or some things for us to look at and touch – Girl Year 2.

