



The Societas Trust

Philosophy for Children (P4C) Policy

Date of Policy	2025
Reviewed and Agreed by	The Directors' Board
Originally Adopted on	October 2025
Last Review Date	
Next Review Date	Autumn 2027

Why do we need Philosophy for Children?

‘Now more than ever, we need our young people to be equipped to ask questions, to articulate ideas, to formulate powerful arguments, to deepen their sense of identity and belonging, to listen actively and critically, and to be well-steeped in a fundamental principle of a liberal democracy—that is, being able to disagree agreeably.’

Oracy Education Commission 2024

What is Philosophy for Children?

P4C, or Philosophy for Children, is an approach to learning and teaching that explores the big ideas that arise in all areas of education and life experiences. It uses philosophical dialogue and enquiry to help learners to think, speak, to listen, to learn and to live together more effectively. Children are encouraged to think with others and to think for themselves.

Aims

Through P4C, The Societas Trust aims to develop children’s oracy, thinking and communication skills alongside their self-esteem, and academic attainment. We believe that the development of these skills is an essential, foundational building block to support children in their personal development and future lives.

How is Philosophy for Children taught?

Philosophy for Children involves group discussions about ethical or philosophical topics, such as fairness and truth. The discussions are designed to encourage children to ask questions, construct arguments and engage in reasoned debate

The teacher leading the session also focuses on developing P4C 4Cs thinking:

- **Caring** – understanding others and being respectful of different opinions.
- **Collaborative** – finding solutions together.
- **Creative** – making connections and thinking of new ideas.
- **Critical** – understanding what we think and why.

Our aims for P4C are:

- To create a community of enquiry
- To improve questioning and reasoning skills
- To improve pupils’ search for alternative perspectives and connections
- To improve critical thinking so that pupils are open to changing viewpoints
- To improve pupils’ outcomes in reading, maths and writing.

The sequence of enquiry is a set process which can run over several sessions.

Each class has one hour a week dedicated to P4C (this may be divided into two 30min slots). In EYFS, sessions can become shorter and based on impromptu discussions. Sometimes, this may not be a discrete timetabled lesson but could be used as a method in other lessons such as literacy for example when discussing a character's choices in a story.

The subject matter for discussion and the stimulus is usually chosen by the teacher. The stimulus can sometimes however be chosen by the children or led by the children's own learning. In each term there is a session that focuses on the School/British Values for that term. A stimulus can be used over a period of time and does not need to just be changed weekly.

The thinking skills being developed are broken down into four types – The 4Cs:

- Caring thinking– Listening and valuing
- Collaborative thinking– responding and supporting
- Critical thinking - questioning and reasoning
- Creative thinking– connecting and suggesting

In response to a stimulus, the children discuss and develop philosophical question to discuss. For example, the question could be, 'Is it ever okay to lie?' The teacher then facilitates a discussion around this question, explicitly teaching, modelling and practising the following skills:

- Being a good listener
- Communicating clearly
- Making eye-contact
- Justifying opinions
- Defining meanings
- Questioning assumptions
- Disagreeing without being disagreeable
- Thinking hypothetically
- Finding examples and counter-examples
- Comparing and grouping ideas

Philosophical techniques and approaches are utilised by the teacher, through carefully judged interventions during the session; these help to enable children's progression in thinking and allow individuals to share their developing and refined opinions or positions.

At the end of the session, the teacher and children reflect on the skills that they have been developing throughout the discussion.

Philosophy for Children sessions can also provide an opportunity for the children to discuss their learning in other contexts – for example, a philosophical discussion may centre on a historical artefact or a character in a story's motivations.

We use a consistency of language and a clear progression in skills and knowledge to ensure that there is clear progression in learning.

There are flexibilities to the session(s) however there are elements that are consistent in order to ensure that the children gain maximum impact from the sessions.

- We ensure that children are always seated in a circle in order to help children listen carefully and to recognise that the session is requiring deep thinking;
- The displays in the classroom are consistent across the setting to ensure that children are supported to develop their thinking skills across the curriculum throughout the setting. They include the following:
 - A P4C Title
 - A copy of the Sequence of Enquiry
 - Desired Language to aid sessions, e.g. question stems and response stems.
 - Any work that is a stimulus for an ongoing session e.g. questions, photos, stories.
 - Class agreed Ground Rules

Planning

Sessions are planned (Appendix A) using a consistent format based on the sequence of enquiry (Appendix B).

Recording

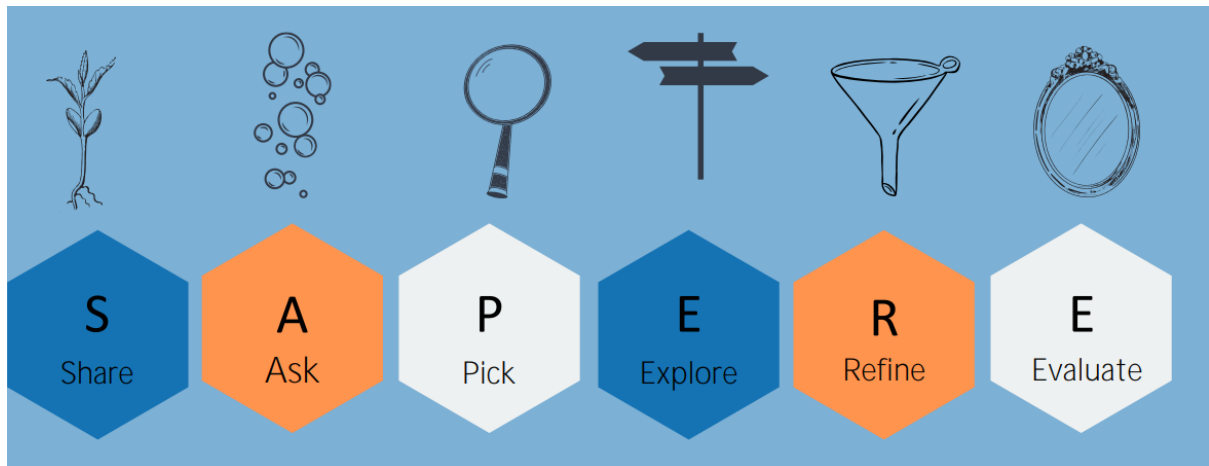
The developing thinking is captured in reflection books or another format as agreed by the academy. This allows the teacher and children to look back on progress made in the skills being developed.

Monitoring

A P4C Governor is identified in each academy/school. Pupil, teacher and school outcomes are measured using the SAPERE Award Scheme Criteria (Appendix C).

Appendix A

P4C Planning Sheet – KS1 and KS2



Other Considerations:

Possible Concepts (What concepts might be encountered as you engage with this stimulus?)

Possible Questions for Enquiry

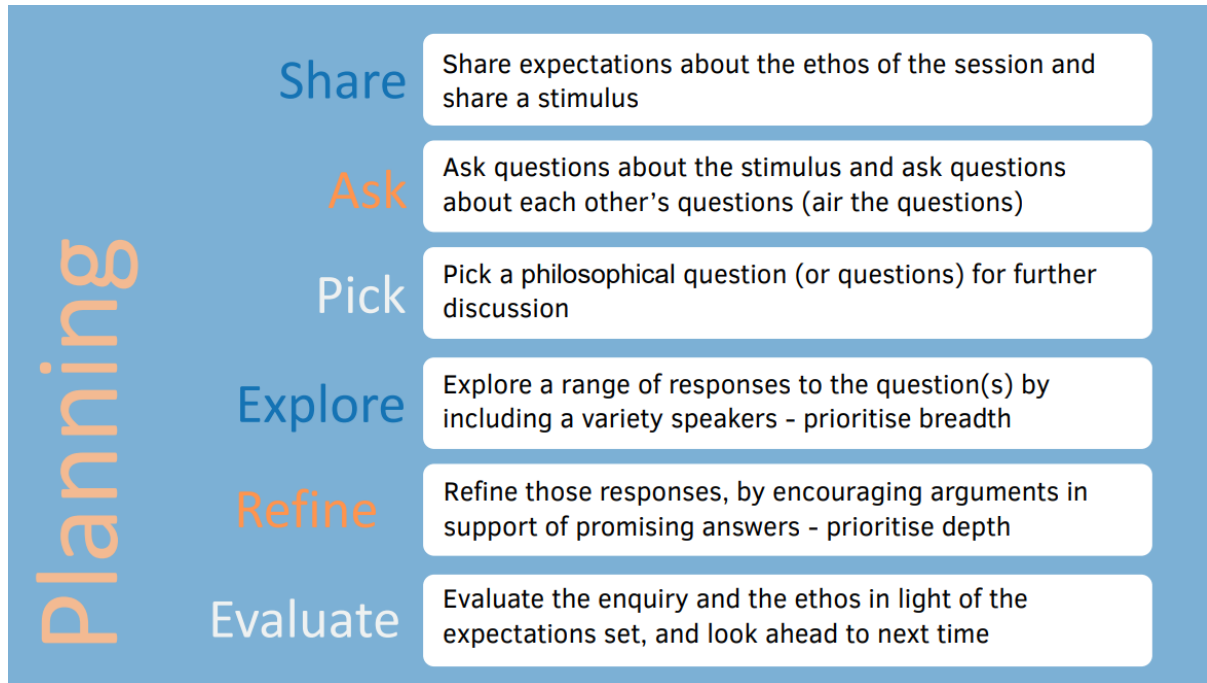
Problematising Questions (If the concepts listed above do come up, what questions could you ask to develop the children's understanding of them?)

Possible Initial Responses (What statements might the children make as a quick response during the enquiry, possibly seeking to undermine the enquiry?)

EYFS P4C Planning Sheet

Stage	Title	Details including language use	Time
1. Ready (Creating Ideas) stimulus and thinking time			
2. Set (Creating Questions) Question Making			
3. Go (Creating dialogue) Enquiry and review			

Appendix B: Sequence of Enquiry



Appendix C: SAPERE Award Scheme Criteria


SAPERE PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN (P4C) SCHOOL AWARD CRITERIA
Criteria for measuring pupil, teacher and school outcomes

	Emerging practice	Bronze Level	Silver Level	Gold Level
PUPILS - How well are they doing P4C?				
Building a Community of Philosophical Enquiry	P4C ground rules have been discussed Pupils have experienced some steps of the model enquiry Pupils have experienced some P4C thinking skills activities Some collaborative behaviours have been explained and are being practised Pupils are encouraged to listen to each other and take turns to speak	Pupils are supported in developing, agreeing and applying simple 4C ground rules about listening, thinking and talking together Pupils are familiar with the 10-step philosophical enquiry model (as appropriate to their age and experience) Pupils demonstrate emerging language of philosophical enquiry, for example: I agree/disagree... I think because... This connects to...because...	Pupils are familiar with the 4C thinking model, contributing to and reviewing class ground rules regularly Pupils understand the 10-step philosophical enquiry process (as appropriate to their age and experience) and engage in activities to develop P4C skills Pupils increasingly recognise or use the language of philosophical enquiry Pupils increasingly recognise and/or model caring and collaborative behaviour	Pupils can set and revise their own 4C focus for development Pupils can demonstrate and/or exemplify behaviours, skills and attitudes related to the 4Cs Pupils use the language of philosophical enquiry and caring and collaborative behaviour within and beyond P4C sessions Pupils demonstrate respectful agreement and disagreement
Questioning and commenting	Pupils can respond to a stimulus Pupils can ask questions about the stimulus Pupils can frame open questions or make appropriate statements which, with help, can lead to open questions	Pupils can ask open questions with philosophical potential or can make appropriate statements which, with help, can turn into a more philosophical question and lead to the discussion of key concepts	Pupils are increasingly confident in identifying and asking open philosophical questions where concepts are becoming more evident Pupils are engaging and exploring their understanding of concepts	Pupils are increasingly confident in formulating coherent philosophical questions (common, central, contestable and connecting) Pupils are involved in the discussion of concepts and questions relevant to real life, using the language of philosophical enquiry
Development of philosophical thinking	Pupils can recognise that reasons are important Pupils can recognise a simple connection Pupils have been introduced to big ideas/concepts	Pupils are able to give reasons Pupils can make simple connections and relate points raised to their own experience Pupils can make simple distinctions Pupils recognise that examples can help with understanding Pupils are beginning to build on each other's ideas Pupils can recognise and have started to talk about big ideas/concepts in their discussions	Pupils are able to give reasons to support a view Pupils can connect their own ideas and experiences with those of others Pupils are able to use an example or evidence to support or challenge a view Pupils can identify concepts and linking concepts in their discussions Pupils are able to recognise different perspectives in an argument There is some evidence of pupils being able to transfer their P4C skills in other areas of their learning	Most pupils can use strong reasons in relevant and meaningful ways Most pupils can reflect philosophically about their own experiences Some pupils can identify assumptions Some pupils can respectfully challenge the reasons given by others Pupils are able to develop their understanding of concepts in the Community of Enquiry and in other areas of their learning Pupils recognise the distinction between having a confrontational argument and constructing an argument for discussion in a reasonable way Pupils' reason-giving, reasoning and meaning-making are visible in other areas of learning
Review and evaluation	Pupils have been introduced to the idea of self-evaluation, for example, they can say how well they or the class have listened or contributed	Pupils review the class enquiry and their own participation against simple 4C ground rules	Pupils can increasingly reflect upon and evaluate progress of the community and themselves as individuals against more developed 4Cs thinking criteria, as appropriate to their age and experience	Pupils are able to reflect and evaluate, as individuals and as a whole group, on the progress of their thinking and the process of enquiry against the behaviour, skills and attitudes of the 4Cs. Where appropriate, they select their own choice of review strategy

SAPER PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN (P4C) SCHOOL AWARD CRITERIA

Criteria for measuring pupil, teacher and school outcomes

	Emerging practice	BRONZE LEVEL	SILVER LEVEL	GOLD LEVEL
TEACHERS - How well are they developing their P4C skills?				
Classroom practice	A minimum of one teaching professional has tried out some philosophical thinking skills activities or part of an enquiry	A minimum of 20% of school staff have facilitated a minimum of six P4C sessions over an academic year Classroom displays show evidence of P4C	Consistent P4C sessions are planned into the timetable across a key stage or subject area The P4C methodology and approach is becoming evident in teaching and learning across other areas of the curriculum	Most P4C practitioners show sustained and embedded P4C practice through consistent planning of P4C sessions The P4C methodology and enquiry approach is explicitly used in teaching and learning in subject areas
Facilitation skills	A minimum of one teaching professional has started to adopt a facilitative style through philosophical enquiry activities Teaching professionals encourage and support pupils to develop caring and collaborative behaviours, including talking to other pupils in a respectful and considerate way Pupils are introduced to open questioning	A minimum of 20% of school staff and the P4C leader have the confidence to facilitate P4C sessions P4C practitioners ask open procedural (Socratic) questions to guide the process of enquiry P4C practitioners model and encourage pupils to work in a caring and collaborative way P4C practitioners' facilitation encourages pupils to agree and disagree, give reasons and examples, and build on each other's ideas P4C practitioners support pupils to recognise these practices as part of the process of enquiry	P4C practitioners are consistently facilitating P4C enquiries, either in discrete sessions or within their subject specialism P4C practitioners elicit connections, distinctions, reasons and examples from pupils in P4C sessions P4C practitioners support and encourage pupils in challenging each other's opinions using reasons P4C practitioners demonstrate a higher level of facilitator questioning to push for understanding of issues and concepts arising P4C practitioners help pupils identify 4Cs thinking within a philosophical enquiry	Most P4C practitioners' facilitation encourages pupils to follow group-initiated lines of enquiry and their chosen conceptual questions Most P4C practitioners use questioning and other strategies to support and challenge pupils' thinking, explore philosophical concepts and deepen thinking skills Most P4C practitioners use a range of strategies to develop pupils' understanding of the 4Cs thinking model The P4C leader and P4C facilitators consistently support pupils to challenge opinions and assumptions, and to request reasons, evidence or examples from each other The P4C leader and P4C facilitators trained to Level 2A and 2B are able to explore questions around a range of philosophical concepts, such as fairness, equality, social justice, democracy, as appropriate to pupils' age and experience
Planning	Some planning of P4C activities or sessions is evident	P4C practitioners (minimum 20% of school staff) record evidence of using a range of starting points for enquiry within simple P4C session planning, appropriate to the age range	P4C practitioners plan a series or cycle of P4C enquiries, which include a P4C skills development exercise, for example a concept stretcher, questioning or reasoning skills exercise Planning reflects teacher's review and evaluation of the enquiry to inform future facilitation and planning of sessions	Supported by the P4C leader, P4C facilitators plan a series or cycle of P4C enquiries consistently, either as a distinct P4C session or as part of a curriculum area where philosophical concepts are evident P4C is identified in medium term planning, within relevant subject areas The P4C leader and P4C facilitators plan for a broad range of philosophical enquiries, exercises and reviews

SAPERE PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN (P4C) SCHOOL AWARD CRITERIA

Criteria for measuring pupil, teacher and school outcomes

	Emerging practice	BRONZE LEVEL	SILVER LEVEL	GOLD LEVEL
TEACHERS - How well are they developing their P4C skills? (cont'd)				
P4C leadership role	A P4C leader has been identified	One teaching professional is appointed to the role of P4C leader and starts to plan for school implementation The P4C leader regularly leads P4C sessions in their own classroom	The P4C leader and a minimum of one P4C practitioner have completed the Level 2A, including coursework The P4C leader monitors and reviews P4C across the school The P4C leader and P4C facilitator(s) model or support philosophical enquiry sessions with other P4C practitioners The P4C leader leads twilight sessions to maintain the profile of P4C and share good practice The P4C leader coordinates medium-term planning for a cycle of P4C enquiries, which includes P4C skills development exercises and allows for teacher review of enquiries	The P4C leader and a minimum of one P4C practitioner has completed the Level 2B including course report The P4C leader and P4C facilitator(s) support colleagues in planning P4C sessions and developing their philosophical facilitation skills The P4C leader monitors and reviews the peer observation process and feeds back to HT/SLT P4C is identified in the performance management of the P4C leader(s)
Review and evaluation	A minimum of one teacher is considering how to progress with P4C in their class or as a whole school approach	P4C practitioners (minimum 20% of staff) review and reflect upon their P4C sessions in order to inform planning of future sessions	P4C leader and P4C facilitator(s) support the P4C practitioners in reviewing and reflecting upon their own P4C practice to inform subsequent sessions P4C practitioners encourage pupils to review and evaluate P4C together against the 4Cs P4C practitioners share good practice through peer observation and feedback, coordinated by the P4C leader	The P4C leader and facilitators continue to develop their own understanding of philosophical concepts The P4C leader and facilitators show an understanding of P4C pedagogy and make connections between P4C principles and general teaching The P4C leader and P4C facilitators are able to accurately analyse some pupils' dialogue using the 4Cs as criteria and support other P4C practitioners to be able to do similarly P4C practitioners and pupils review P4C together using a range of strategies Peer observation is planned for, and informs, future planning for staff progression

Notes:

*Criteria highlighted in yellow has been met

*Criteria highlighted in green requires further evidence

P4C practitioner is any teaching professional who has completed the SAPERE Level 1 P4C Foundation course and has completed a minimum of six P4C sessions with a class or group of children. Most will have completed the whole school 'Tools for Thinking' together course by the appropriate level.

P4C leader is the teacher who leads/coordinates P4C in the school. They will have completed the Level 2A and 2B courses and associated coursework and report by the appropriate level.

A P4C facilitator has also completed at least SAPERE's Level 2A Advanced course and associated coursework. Some will have completed the 2B course and course report.

TFTT is the whole school 'Tools for Thinking Together' one-day course which follows on from the Level 1 course.

SAPERE | Culham Innovation Centre | D5 Culham Science Park | Abingdon | OX14 3DB

Registered charity 1144595; registered company number 7821030 www.sapere.org.uk

© SAPERE 2018

SAPERE PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN (P4C) SCHOOL AWARD CRITERIA

Criteria for measuring pupil, teacher and school outcomes

	Emerging practice	BRONZE LEVEL	SILVER LEVEL	GOLD LEVEL
SCHOOL - How well is P4C supported across the school?				
Headteacher & SLT commitment	HT understands the commitment required to implement sustainable P4C	HT and SLT show commitment to the SAPERE training pathway HT and SLT ensure at least 20% of teaching staff within a subject area or key stage are trained to Level 1, complete six enquiries, and apply for Level 1 certification	Evidence that P4C is identified as part of the school's strategic vision and development plan P4C is supported by a member of the SLT who has done at least Level 1 training HT and SLT ensure sufficient Level 1 training across whole school or subject area/ key stage	P4C is part of the long-term strategy and vision for the school
Level of whole school training	One or two teaching professionals have trained to Level 1	Team of teaching professionals (minimum 20% of school staff) have trained to Level 1	The school has had whole school Level 1 training across the relevant key stages or subject area (secondary) or sufficient staff are trained to ensure consistency and continuity of P4C practice, depending upon size of school A minimum of two teaching professionals including the P4C leader have completed Level 2A	The school has had whole-school TFFT training across the relevant key stages or subject areas (secondary) A minimum of two teaching professionals, including the P4C leader(s), are trained at Level 2A and 2B and have completed the 2A coursework and 2B course report. (Larger schools or units, for example those with 3-form entry+ or secondary will require four staff trained to L2A) Ongoing yearly plan for Level 1 training is in place for new teaching staff Programme in place for whole staff continuous professional development in P4C
Involving the whole school	P4C has been raised as a topic at a staff meeting	P4C team share their P4C practice with other colleagues P4C leader attends network group (if available) A P4C report is sent to governors meetings at least annually	P4C sessions are observed by teachers from other schools Parents are made aware that the school uses P4C Governors are introduced to P4C and P4C is allocated as a responsibility for governor scrutiny Some subject leaders identify philosophical concepts and P4C opportunities within their curriculum subjects	P4C practice is communicated to parents and/or the wider community Whole school policy and vision for P4C in place and supported by governors School advocates P4C to other schools and offers opportunities to observe P4C practice in the classroom Subject leaders are regularly reviewing and updating how P4C can be incorporated within their subject areas School shows high profile of P4C through various media
Review and evaluation	The Head and SLT have considered how P4C might fit within the school strategy and understand the need for evaluation	The P4C leader identifies areas for development in P4C with HT and SLT and identifies next steps Simple process in place to monitor impact of P4C on learning and/or behaviour	P4C Leader and HT or SLT monitor and review progress in P4C facilitation across the school and identify next steps Agreed process in place to further monitor impact of P4C on learning and/or behaviour, for example the progression of 4Cs skills	Consistent process of monitoring and evaluation of whole school P4C progress in place Consistent process in place to monitor impact of P4C on learning and whole school culture/ethos, for example end of KS attainment, behaviour policies

Appendix 4: What to stick tight to

Tight	Loose
• Time allocation – 1 hr per week • Seated in a circle • Led by trained staff • Baseline using Salford Reading Test and 4Cs observation • Agreed language progression • Planning format using ten steps • Display in classrooms • Use of floor books to include planning, evidence and evaluation of 4Cs.	• Can be in 30min slots either timetabled or built in when appropriate each week • Could be linked to curriculum theme but must teach in a progressive way