

Philosophical Enquiry



February 2002



SCHOOL → Kirkcaldy West Primary School, Fife

FOCUS → Thinking skills

What initiatives are in place to encourage active pupil participation in decision-making?

A pilot study took place in 1997 with Primary 4's over a ten week period and looked specifically at the development of self-esteem and thinking. By 1998 the approach was spreading in school and research extended to Primary 1/3 & 7. Whole school involvement is now in place for all 9 classes from Primary 1 – 7. A working party has been instrumental in this by heading up year groups and through buddying (mentoring) new staff members etc.

How are these initiatives being monitored and evaluated?

In the research phase progress was tracked as detailed above. Qualitative aspects of discussion were also measured, with sessions transcribed to maintain accuracy.

Now teachers use a framework for assessment of inquiry, reasoning & conceptual skills and interaction patterns. Teachers also keep logs of significant contributions made by children. The approach was praised by HMI as a good example of education for citizenship and of raising achievement

CONTACT INFORMATION

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What are some of the biggest challenges faced by teachers and young people in implementing these initiatives?

Initial problems were encountered because of the restricted availability of resources. This difficulty was solved by using popular fairy stories supported by questions which were devised by the original research group in primary 4.

What worked well?

- Children love Philosophical Enquiry. The problem is getting them to stop!
- Children have greater confidence in offering opinions, asking relevant questions, considering alternatives and standing up for what they believe in.
- The community provides a safe, secure learning environment, where teachers can learn so much about their children and realise their true potential.
- Confidential 'Think' books have proved valuable, providing a space for personal, reflective thought and children value this.

Future plans?

- To continue involvement in Philosophical Enquiry.
- To inspire others to try Philosophical Enquiry.
- Would like to support individuals/schools in implementing Philosophical Enquiry through establishing support networks, working directly with children and through in-service training

Any materials the school is willing to share?

School based record keeping system available on request