Bristol Philosophy Exchange

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Co-ordinator and co-founder
Motivation

The "project is motivated by the importance of boosting student employability and entrepreneurialism, widening participation, knowledge transfer and partnership with local communities"
Inspiration

The project is modelled on and inspired by its parent project in Leeds.
Aims

- For all parties to benefit from the collaboration in the classroom
- For students to have an opportunity to put their knowledge to practical use, improve their philosophical thinking, and boost their employability
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• To raise awareness of philosophy as a subject and to raise aspirations to continue with philosophical study
• To raise awareness of the University in the city and raise aspirations of going to University
First year 2013-14

The project worked at Sefton Park School across three Year 5 classes
Each class participated in 12 weeks of philosophical enquiry
First year: students

Each team consisted of the class teacher and three students.
The project recruited exclusively postgraduates.

Postgraduates thinking about metaphors for facilitation
Positive feedback

“I feel that it has been beneficial for the children in a number of different ways: it provides further speaking and listening opportunities; it makes children have to justify their responses with reasons; it encourages deeper thinking; it leads them to question themes of morality and other issues. I have seen benefits across other subjects and I have noticed that reserved and shy children are now feeling more confident to speak.”

Dan Simson, Head of Year and Year 5 Class teacher, Sefton Park
"Seeing [Grace] facilitate a discussion with my class was also invaluable, seeing her react to exactly the kinds of things that training without children present can’t prepare you for."

Postgraduate Student
Students in the classroom: challenges

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On one occasion a class teacher was absent, and the students were unable to take charge of the class, with low level disruption compromising the enquiry.
**Students in the classroom: challenges**

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Being a teacher and facilitator isn’t easy!
Second year 2014-15

• The project expanded to work with Hannah More School, an inner city school with a high proportion of EAL pupils.
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- The project expanded to work with Hannah More School, an inner city school with a high proportion of EAL pupils
- The project worked in Year 2, Year 4 and Year 5 at Hannah More.

Warm up game for Year 2 (thanks to Grace Robinson)
Second year 2014-15

The project also continued to work at Sefton Park in Year 5 and I worked with ‘Gifted and Talented’ Year 6 pupils to allow them to build on their previous year’s philosophy.

How Many Apples? Philosophy with Year 6 using Thinking Space resources
Second year: students

- The project worked with undergraduates
- Teams consisted of two undergraduates and a class teacher
Second year: some improvements

• More time was focused on classroom management and teaching skills
• Students spent longer meeting their class before commencing sessions
• Training was split so that by the second training day teachers and students had had some practical experience
• Improved mechanisms for teachers and students to communicate and reflect on sessions
Positive feedback

“It was useful to be introduced to teaching philosophy being so well supported, as otherwise I would have felt very unsure about what I was teaching. Working with the knowledgeable students gave me more confidence. I have learned a great deal from the training and students about philosophy and how to teach it.”

Ani Garcia, Year 2 class teacher, Hannah More
Positive Feedback

“Firstly the project allowed me to experience first hand teaching in an non-stressful environment so that I could come to a reasoned decision about whether I want to teach. And the course was so amazing, that I definitely do!

More than this the course allowed me to get into the mind of a teacher, plan lessons, gain confidence while teaching (which is a surprisingly different form of public speaking than most) and it allowed me to improve my skills with children. At first finding the balance between being friendly and authoritative was a little confusing, but after the course I am sure that I will be able to move into teaching much more smoothly than I would have done otherwise.”

*Philosophy Undergraduate*
Second year: challenges

- Finding sufficient time for reflection and planning with class teachers and students
- In some classes, the collaboration and communication was excellent. In others, it did not work so well.
Future

- Teachers are going to lead some of the modelling sessions
- Some students are going to do it for a second year, becoming mentors to other students
- In September 2016 we are hoping to introduce the project as undergraduate module (as at Leeds).

- Both Sefton Park and Hannah More are working towards embedding philosophy in their schools
Exchange

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Outside of the classroom, what each party brings to the exchange is made explicit.

In the classroom, roles are divided differently, into that of facilitator and co-facilitator.