

SAPERE P4C in SEND Schools

Hazel Oak School: P4C in an outstanding special school



Hazel Oak is an Ofsted-outstanding all-age special school in Solihull for children with moderate learning difficulties. It supports a wide range of learners with diverse communication and emotional challenges, including autism, ADHD, Down's syndrome, attachment disorder and social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Classes are grouped according to cognition and learning styles.

From a single staff member being trained four years ago to whole-school P4C and a SAPERE P4C Bronze Award in November 2018, Hazel Oak has truly embraced philosophical thinking and is becoming a beacon of P4C practice in SEND. Every class from EYFS to Year 13 has one dedicated P4C lesson each week and P4C approaches and language are used across the curriculum.

'Our pupils who struggle to process and voice their views enjoy the structure, gentle pace and guidance of a P4C session. I have seen a massive improvement in confidence.'

Key Stage 5 Teaching Assistant

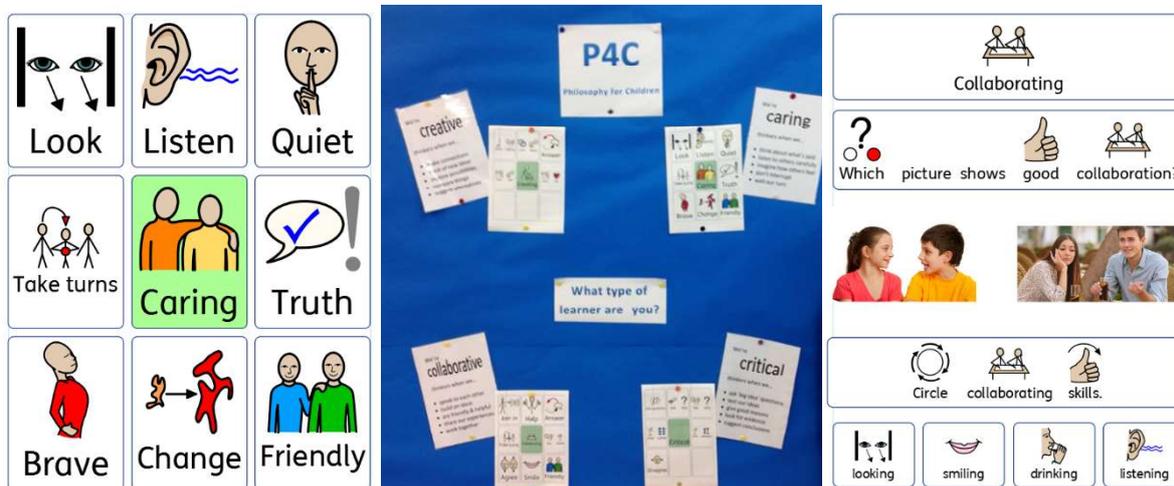
Using P4C in SEND

Hazel Oak has developed a tailored approach to ensure that students with SEND benefit fully from P4C.

Rather than expecting that all students are able to discuss big philosophical questions and concepts, the emphasis in P4C at Hazel Oak is on students **making choices** and, where they are able to do so, **explaining their decisions**.

The 10-step philosophical enquiry model used in P4C suits Hazel Oak's pupils, who are comfortable with its structured and familiar approach. Alongside this, SAPERE trainer Nick Chandley and teachers at the school have worked to adapt and develop the tools, concepts and strategies used in P4C in mainstream settings to suit Hazel Oak's needs. This includes:

- **Using games to practise the skills used in P4C.** Pass the parcel helps with sitting patiently; games in which students close their eyes, listen to someone speak then identify the speaker and repeat their words help with listening and remembering
- **Using games to support students to make and discuss choices**, for example 'True or false', 'Would You Rather' and 'Swap Places If...'
- **Choosing appropriate stimuli.** Selecting stimuli that are accessible to pupils with SEND can make all the difference. Using stories with which students are already familiar, such as Red Riding Hood or the Three Billy Goats Gruff, helps students feel comfortable with the stimulus, while using real objects, rather than images of those objects, can help ASD pupils who may otherwise interpret images too literally.
- **Using P4C prompt scripts** to help students structure their responses. Scripts include prompts such as 'I think that...', 'This is because...' and 'Therefore I conclude...'
- Supporting students in **learning the language of questioning**. Questions are at the heart of P4C but many pupils at Hazel Oak struggle to form any type of question, let alone big philosophical ones. So students need lots of practice and support to learn the language of questioning. At Hazel Oak, one of the tools used to develop questioning skills is a question starter word wall.
- **Giving students time to think** away from the P4C Circle helps them to gather their thoughts. A question quadrant with prompts can also help.
- **Creating simple resources** to support and guide students as they begin to take part in P4C



Staff create displays to help children understand the 4Cs of P4C – critical, creative, caring and collaborative thinking

- **Praising contributions.** For some students with SEND, making a contribution, however limited, in a P4C enquiry is a huge accomplishment. Hazel Oak students are frequently praised for taking this step, with some classes using a 'Contribution Tower' where students are given a cube to stack for each contribution made.

P4C successes at Hazel Oak

- Students are **more focused and able to listen to others' views** in a respectful way.
- P4C has **helped pupils to regulate their emotions** as they discover their own feelings on particular issues.
- Pupils who have previously struggled to voice their opinions and share their thinking **feel able to contribute** due to the collaborative and caring nature of sessions
- An **atmosphere of calm mutual respect** has spread to other areas of the curriculum and around school. P4C language is heard throughout the school.
- P4C has contributed to Hazel Oak's restorative justice approach to **behaviour management**.
- The modelling of language used during P4C sessions has helped those pupils who need a starter or prompt to **process and express themselves**.
- A group of students took part in a local Philosophical Society, where they **collaborated with mainstream pupils** in enquiries.
- Teachers have used P4C to engage students with thinking about **social skills strategies**, discussing questions like 'What is a friend?' and 'Do we have to be friends with everyone?'

'I think P4C is the way forward, it is very empowering for the children. I have seen a massive improvement in Speaking and Listening skills and the 4Cs of Thinking ensure pupils are equipped with real life skills.' Key Stage 4 Teacher

Find out more and book your training today

SAPERE P4C is the UK's national charity supporting Philosophy for Children. We provide high-quality P4C training and support and have over 25 years' experience in bringing P4C into a range of schools and educational settings. Our flagship programme *Going for Gold* is a three-year programme of training and support. We also offer whole school INSET training, open courses, resources, support and membership.

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