SHINE Trust Report of findings from the SAPERE Thinking for Better Learning Project.

Project Team:
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Introduction:

The SHINE Trust commissioned and funded the Thinking for Better Learning Project from SAPERE in July 2004. Work began in school in September and the project was carried out according to the specifications of the project outline with 30 taught sessions of one hour with each class accompanied by their teacher. Training for all members of staff was undertaken and data was collected throughout the project. Less early video data was collected than anticipated due to illness of one of the project team. Otherwise the project followed exactly to plan. The expectation was that children would improve in reading, speaking and listening and questioning. It was suggested that children would develop socially and emotionally from the project and that we may see improved reasoning skills towards the end of the project once the method had been internalised by the children.

In this report we will review the results of each class according to the criteria specified in the project outline. The analysis section looks at the implications of the spoken work undertaken in the philosophical enquiries, and from the results the project team has made some recommendations for future projects. The conclusions show that the project has had a very significant effect on the progress of reading, speaking and listening, questioning and reasoning for this group of children. As a product of the project, many children have made progress with their social and emotional development, for which there are strong indications in their interactions in class.

Review of Project:

Each of two classes at Falconbrook School in Wandsworth have now had 30 hour long sessions of philosophical enquiry (a special sort of facilitated discussion), facilitated by the project leaders and, mostly, with their class teacher present. The whole staff of Falconbrook School has attended a SAPERE level 1 training ("Introduction to Philosophical Enquiry for Communities"), which enables them to begin to use philosophical enquiry with their classes. Each class is now timetabled to do philosophical enquiry once a week. This is a whole school initiative and will provide the school with on-going benefit from the project. It is very strongly supported by the Head Teacher Lin Philips who is committed to continuing the use of philosophical enquiry as she has seen the benefits of this year's SAPERE / SHINE Thinking for Better Learning Project.
Resources used during the project have been placed in school and labelled as being donated by the SHINE Trust as part of the SAPERE / SHINE philosophical enquiry project. These comprise sets of illustrated books, art cards, a teachers' guide on a photography and

philosophy project and SAPERE manuals for reference. The resources will be used across the school and added to as circumstance allows, in order to continue the work on extending children's thinking.
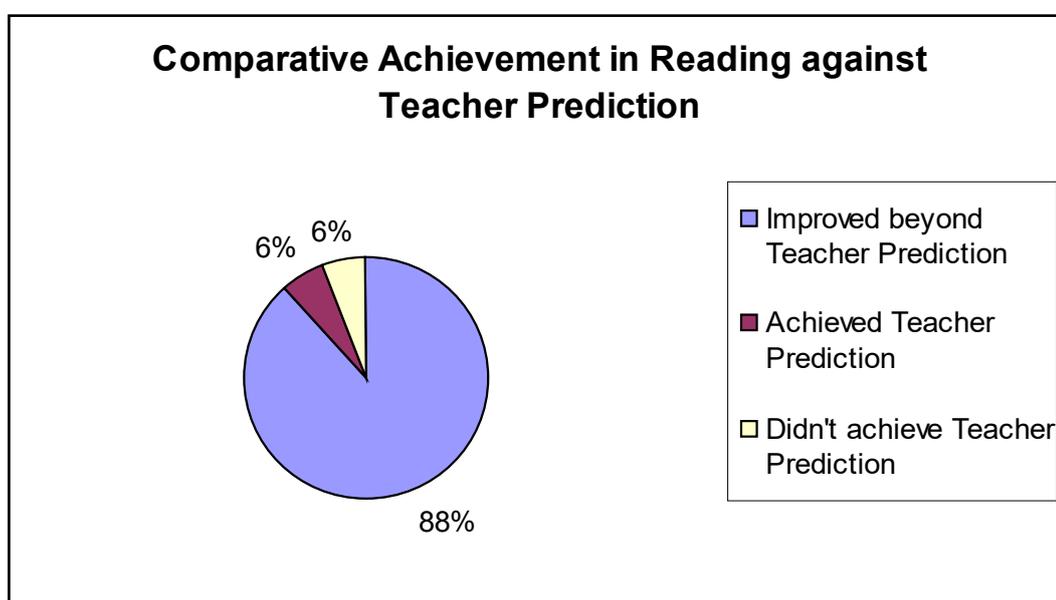
The two teachers from the project focus classes have become co-ordinators for philosophical enquiry across the school and the Headteacher has implemented a mentoring system for them to be observed by other staff to aid their development in facilitation and also to demonstrate the method to new members of staff. This is another example of the school's commitment to philosophical enquiry. Given that philosophical facilitation is a complex skill, usually acquired over a considerable period and requiring regular practice, SAPERE would normally expect a co-ordinator to have SAPERE level 2 ("Developing the Practice of Philosophical Enquiry in Communities") qualification. This would deepen and extend the teacher's understanding of the method and the philosophy that underpins it, and train them to supervise 'in house' philosophy programmes. It is suggested that these members of staff are trained to level 2 as soon as possible to promote and maintain high standards in facilitation needed to continue to enrich the children's experience in class. Also, the school is visited by other schools in the area to see the effects of the SHINE project in action and it is vital that visiting teachers see good evidence of excellent practice so that they can promote better thinking in their schools.

The results of the Thinking for Better Learning Project are excellent. It is very encouraging to see that the children have made progress that exceeds the teacher's expectations for reading at KS2 SATs. The whole set of results, in all subjects, show significant improvement compared to last year's. This indicates that philosophical enquiry alongside good teaching is a very powerful combination for children's success. It is interesting that the improvement, as indicated by the test data, is less obvious in the Y4 class results, but their work on oracy, social and emotional development as well as reasoning and questioning skills all improved significantly as the transcribed and analysed dialogues confirm. This is to be expected at this stage, as many of the children are working in a second language and their development until age 10 is usually not immediately visible in terms of test results, taking longer to show up in test data. Bearing this in mind, the project team is satisfied and excited that the children have made such obvious visible improvement in their spoken work as it is usual for the reading and writing test result improvement to follow from this. SAPERE would be interested in collecting data from this class next year to see the comparative effect of the focus class results against the parallel class at the end of this academic year. These results would be complicated by the fact that all classes now have philosophical enquiry once a week, however, the children in the focus class will have had 2 years' intervention, by which time we would expect to see a positive change in their test results.

SAT test results

Year 6 Reading results Falconbrook

The comparison between the children's predicted achievement levels for SAT and their actual achievement levels form the basis of this section. Before the project began the class teacher predicted what she expected the children to achieve in their English SAT test, based on her knowledge of the children and that of their class teacher for the previous year. Her expectation was taking into account her ordinary teaching of the class, without any extra intervention.

Comparative Achievement in Reading against Teacher Prediction

6%   6%

- ■ Improved beyond Teacher Prediction
- ■ Achieved Teacher Prediction
- □ Didn't achieve Teacher Prediction

88%

The children show significant improvement beyond their teacher's expectation for their reading attainment. The graph shows that 88% of the children exceed the expectations of their teacher for reading with 94% of the children achieving or exceeding the end of year target levels predicted by their teacher for reading at KS2.

Graph to show actual achievement in Reading at KS2

KS2 SAT Reading Achievement

5%

26%

69%

Level 5
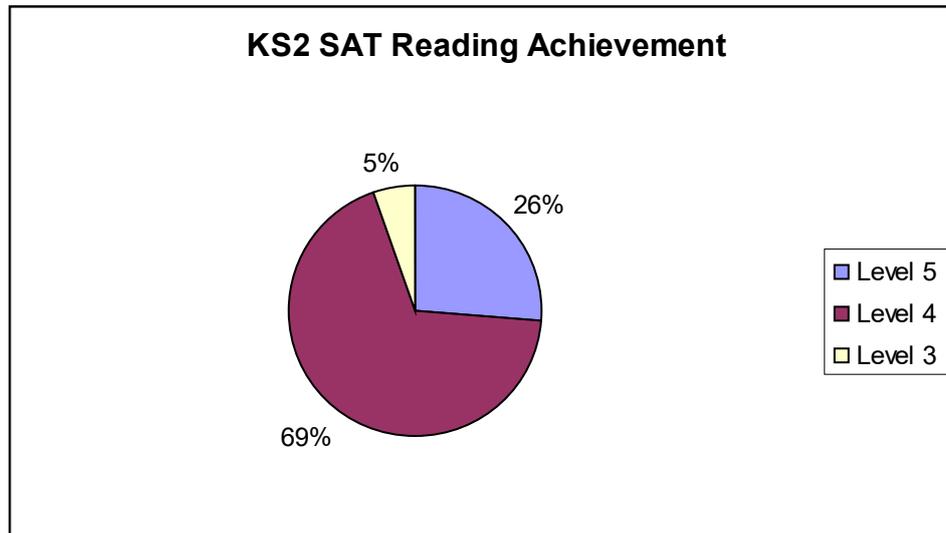
Level 4

Level 3

The reading results show that 26% of the project children achieved level 5, 69% of children achieved level 4 and 5% of children achieved level 3. This is a significant improvement on last year's achievement.

Five children achieved level 5 in reading: a quite exceptional achievement for this school. It is interesting that for four of these five children English is an additional language, the home languages being Somali, Urdu, Urhobo, and French Creole.

2 children in the class did not reach their teacher prediction. One of these, child 6206 only attended parts of some of the P4C sessions as he was attending the Hornsby centre for Dyslexia at the session times. Therefore child 6206 could not be considered part of the focus group enrichment activity and his scores cannot be seen as relevant to the project analysis, so we have excluded 6206 from the calculations. The other child who did not make her prediction grade is 6115, who also did not make her prediction grade in Maths. Knowing the child, it is likely that her poor results are attributable in part to exam nerves.

There were 3 children with no pre-intervention scores for comparison. One of these children scored a reading level 5. As there is not a single level 5 prediction for the rest of the class, and this child, 6105 was not identified as a 'good reader' at the beginning of the project, we can suggest that 6105's reading test result is an improvement on any expectation the child's teacher may have had.

SAT levels for Writing at KS2 Falconbrook

The comparative writing levels for this group are very much in line with the teacher predictions, suggesting that the visible changes in writing as a result of doing philosophical enquiry are less evident after the 30 week project, compared to the reading scores. This is consistent with expectations, as writing improvements usually follow the visible oracy and reading development.

It is interesting to note that in interview the Head Teacher expressed her disappointment with the KS2 SAT writing task this year. The children had to write a play-script which included a reasoned argument for a child staying up later than his/her usual bedtime. The Headteacher felt that combining persuasive writing with writing within the play-script conventions is a particularly difficult task for those children who were working in a second language. She felt that the children did not have a chance to show their skills to the full, and felt that the results did not give an accurate account of the children's actual progress. She had expected much higher results because of the children's consistently improved class written work over the year.

All children except two achieved the grade predicted for them in writing, and one child improved on his predicted score.
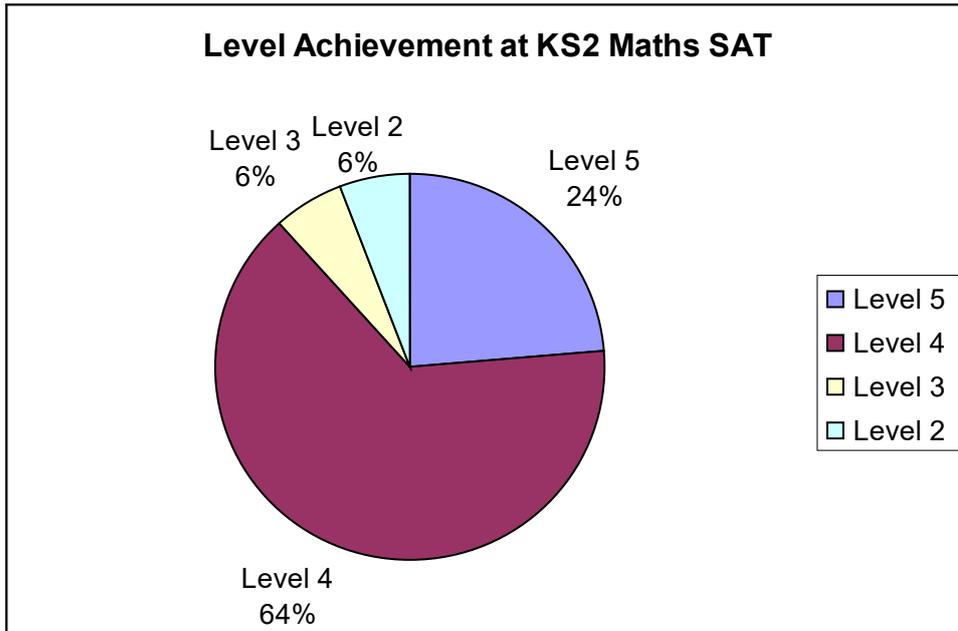
Maths SAT results compared with Teacher Prediction

KS2 Maths SAT Results

- Exceeded teacher prediction
- Achieved teacher prediction
- Didn't achieve prediction

6.25

31.25

62.5
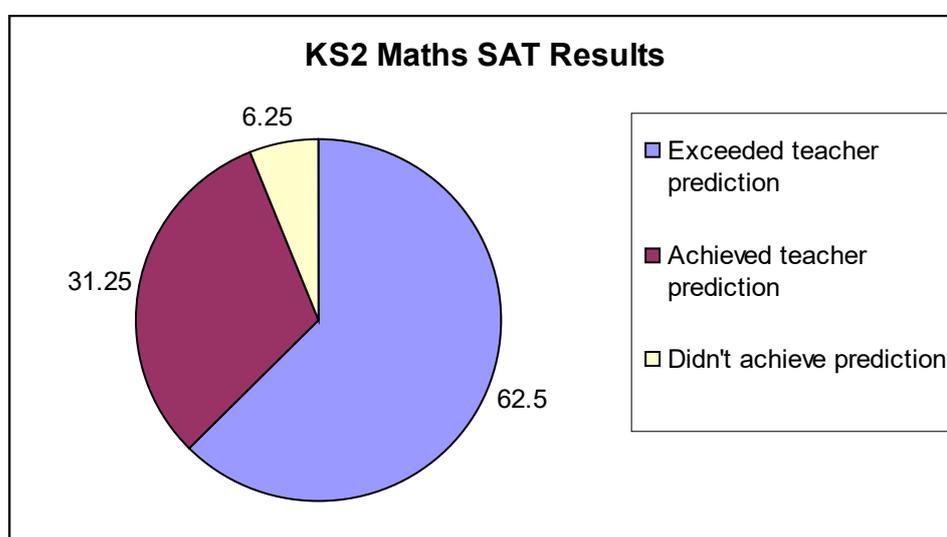
- **We see 62.5% of children exceeding the teacher's prediction for achievement at Maths SAT.**
- **31.25% of children achieved the prediction made for them**
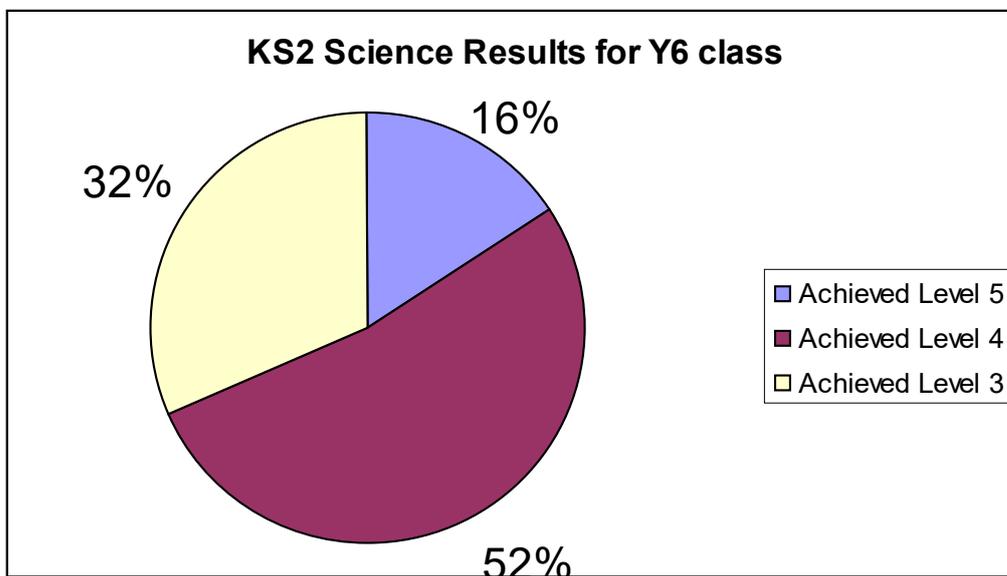- **and 6.25% (one child) not achieving her predicted grade.**

These comparative scores show the improvement over and above the teacher's expectations for the individual children according to what she expected to see as a result of her own class teaching.

This exceeded the expectations of the Headteacher as last year 25% of Y6 were not graded in Maths, 50% achieved level 3 and 25% achieved level 4. Mathematics has however been the focus for a new initiative within the school and some of the extra achievement will be due to the innovative programme devised by the Headteacher in order to teach Maths in a manner more understandable to her particular children. It is not possible to say how much of the achievement is due to the Thinking for Better Learning Project, but we can suggest that the reasoning practised consistently within the enquiry sessions is likely to have boosted the Maths achievement.

Level Achievement at KS2 Maths SAT

Level 3
6%

Level 2
6%

Level 5
24%

Level 4
64%

Legend:
- Level 5
- Level 4
- Level 3
- Level 2

The focus group achieved 24% at level 5, 64% at level 4, 6% at level 3 and 6% at level 2
The focus class has exceeded the National Average score for level 4 attainment as nationally
43% of children achieve a level 4 at Maths and in this class it is 64%

SAT Science Results

KS2 Science Results for Y6 class

16%

32%

52%

Legend:
- Achieved Level 5
- Achieved Level 4
- Achieved Level 3

In Science the children achieved a higher than national average score at level 4, the national
average being 43%)
We did not collect teacher predictions for Science achievement so we can only present the
achievements of the children. It is not possible to say how much of the achievement is due to
the Thinking for Better Learning Project, but, again, we wish to point at the regular and focused
practice of reasoning and oracy skills as a likely contributor to the focus group's KS2 SATs

results, which have shown improvement compared to the previous year's in all three tested subjects.

Standard Reading Test Scores for children at Y4

The children in the year 4 class made significant progress with their Oracy, which is evident from the transcribed enquiry sessions. Interestingly, this was not reflected in their comparative reading scores. It is the opinion of the project team that the improvement in their Oracy will have a significant effect on their reading attainment, but that is yet to be available as visible evidence due to the complexity of transferring verbal progress into visible test results at this age, with children who are mostly working in a second language.

Analysis of speaking and thinking

Year 4 class

In the analysis of the video recordings, the project team was looking for evidence of development in:

1. **Children's active listening**, by which they mean attentive listening to ideas put forward by other children, involving consideration and evaluation of what has been heard, making connections with the listener's previous knowledge and experience which then informs their further speaking.
2. **Considered speaking,** showing evidence of active listening and thinking to inform what is said.
3. **Quality and appropriateness of children's questions** –the emergence of increasingly open questions of a philosophical nature, which focus children's thinking on meaning-making and are relevant to the stimulus materials and the enquiry process.
4. **Reasoning skills,** where children use reasons to justify their opinions, and support their disagreements in a reasonable manner.

These were the original observation criteria identified in the project proposal.

A number of other factors were involved in the project team's assessment of progress, which include:

Reading for meaning – becoming able to go beyond the surface of the text by proposing different interpretations; being sensitive to the 'message' of the text.
Generating and interpreting ideas – see year 6 analysis
Using examples to illustrate an opinion
These are all important skills which are necessary in the practice of philosophical enquiry.

The video recording of the children reveals their progress in **speaking and listening**, **questioning**, **reasoning** and, altogether, **thinking** in the course of the Thinking for Better Learning project. Evidence of this is shown below. Alongside this development, and inextricably linked to the process of philosophical enquiry, is the development of their social and emotional behaviour, indicated by their increased attention to and caring for each other's ideas, as well as their evolving skills of intellectual collaboration. These cognitive and affective developments have strongly influenced the children's thinking and learning and have been instrumental in developing their **reading** through better (deeper, more thorough and more subtle)

understanding and through connecting their observations with prior knowledge to construct meaning for themselves.

The methodology the researchers used was critical evaluation to interpret the children's development against the above criteria, through their utterances. The interpretation conforms to the conventions of the philosophical enquiry learning environment which posit large numbers of sophisticated criteria for indicating progress (e.g. Splitter & Sharp,1995 Fisher,1998 Hall 2000). To conform to good standards of ethical practice the project team has used aliases to protect the identity of the children. The project team: Alison Hall and Dr Sara Liptai arrive at their interpretations through a complex process of comparing the children's utterances with the progress criteria, bearing in mind their professional experience and knowledge of the children. The following commentary gives examples of significant progress from some of the sessions.

Learning to ask open questions

Unlike in much conventional teaching, in philosophical enquiry the questions are devised by the children; they select the ideas that interest them and formulate questions that become the starting points for their discussions (SAPERE 2004). Questions to be used for discussion need to be open questions that offer many possible answers, rather than one single 'correct' solution. Therefore they encourage deeper, more significant reflection because opinions need to be accompanied by justification. The process of formulating questions often requires the children to check details from the story or stimulus, re-reading passages to ascertain detail and/or their understanding of it. Therefore *the practice of philosophical enquiry involves children in reading for meaning, rather than reading mechanically (Lipman 1988 p. 101). Children go beyond the de-coding of text by relating different elements of the story to each other, by contextualising ideas, questioning and analysing the text and forming opinions about it. The project team regards this profound involvement with the stimulus materials as a major factor in triggering improvement in children's reading ability.*
 In the following example the children had taken time to formulate a question about the story they had read (**In the Attic** by S Kitamura). They are reading their questions from their 'Thinking Books' (journals for recording thinking work related to philosophical enquiries), they consider the questions together in their small group and decide which one to offer to the whole class as their best question. The children are taking responsibility for deciding which question will take them beyond the surface of the story and may explore ideas or concepts that intrigue them. By this stage, all the children's questions are appropriate to the stimulus and are open questions.

> *Latifa: How can.. how can he play with all those toys at once?*
> *Francis: Why is he sad?*
> *Raoul: Why was he bored and he had a million toys?*
> *Jordan: How did he go into the attic?*
> *Rachel: How did he get the ladder so long?*

Each question could be discussed and many reasons sought to support varying interpretations. (They are unlike the sort of questions children might ask in literacy lessons, which are often closed questions with a single correct answer.) Before the project began, most children did not have a forum for their open questions, if they were able to formulate them.

The children decided that '**Why was he bored and he had a million toys?**' was the most interesting question of this selection and it was offered to the class for discussion. They begin

to discuss its possibilities in their small group, before the dialogue involving the whole class begins. The question, (from listening to their initial small group discussion) implies the children think that it would be difficult to be bored with a million toys. The question includes a puzzlement and it is this that has captured the children's interest. They find it hard to comprehend a child with that many toys being bored. The following extract shows the children trying to work out how it might be possible for a child to have a million toys. After they establish their answer to this, they move on to thinking about how he could then be bored.

Reasoning, justifying and interpreting

Disagreeing with others

In this enquiry, which is no.10 out of 30, and is based on the book **In the Attic**, we see how speaking and listening skills are used, with children agreeing and disagreeing with each other, justified by reasoning, to form a coherent argument. The children are interpreting the story to formulate their arguments, illustrating the complex combination of cognitive and affective skills necessary in philosophical enquiry. Thomas is searching for a way in which the ordinary child from the story could have acquired a million toys and suggests:

> *Thomas: I agree with Latifa because I think he must have bought a whole shop, his Mum and Dad must have bought a whole shop, that they were selling toys in.*

> *Latifa: I disagree with Thomas because umm if,..if his Mum went shopping and she buyed the whole shop, how could she buy the whole shop? A whole shop would cost one thousand pounds, but she didn't, but as Heena said she didn't look like a millionaire so she couldn't buy a whole shop.*

Here Latifa is performing a fairly sophisticated logical operation: She pits Thomas's suggestion against Heena's earlier reasoning and discovers antagonism between the two. She chooses to agree with Heena and justifies her position by recalling Heena's argument. She has taken the enquiry forward by ruling out one previous argument and supporting another. She has acted creatively even if she did not propose a new idea but worked with ideas put forward by others. Interpreting the situation like this has taken her beyond the surface of the story and has engaged her reasoning and interpretation skills. She may not have full mastery of irregular verbs, but her reasoning has taken a leap forward.

The extract also illustrates children's growing confidence in disagreeing with their peers by giving a reason to support their view. This is a substantial achievement for this class: they have found an appropriate tool for disagreement that allows them to separate differences of view or opinion from competitive one-upmanship, and disagree amicably, without fear of (physical or verbal) repercussions. This development has improved their behaviour and the general atmosphere in their classroom.

Complex reasoning

Reasoning develops with practice and challenge, with complex reasoning being a more sophisticated form of reasoning that emerges during challenging dialogues. At the end of the early enquiry we see an example of complex reasoning when Raoul uses emerging formal logic to explain his agreement. This is cognitively the most advanced example of this section. It also has significant emotional and social aspects because Raoul is an intellectually quite able but

emotionally volatile, and often aggressive child, who has often put forward excellent ideas but has shown impatience with other children's ideas. For him to be agreeing with another child and building on the other child's suggestion like this shows his increasing social maturity. He has moved beyond his self-centredness, accepted another child's good idea and is building on it to achieve an outcome, i.e. a new idea, that he could not have achieved alone. He is stumbling over his words as he thinks and explains at the same time:

> *Raoul: I, I agree with,um with Rafael because if, ..if, ..if he was rich then he, then he, then he could say, … then he could say to his Mum: Mum, can I go to the shop and buy some brand new toys, 'cos he would be rich.*

Raoul has offered hypothetical reasoning, an element of Aristotelian logic: if the child were rich he could go and buy lots of toys. We know he is not rich, therefore he cannot possibly have a million toys. Or, in formal language: if A then B. Not A, therefore not B.

Supporting other children's thinking

Once the process of philosophical enquiry is familiar to the children, they begin to take on more responsibility for supporting and challenging each other's ideas. Progress is evident when the children take on the facilitative role and support each other to think and then articulate thoughts that they could not manage to think through by themselves. It is interesting that it is not always the very able children who support the less able but often the other way around. Towards the end of the project a number of children were able to 'scaffold' the thinking of their peers, as shown below. In this excerpt the children are questioning the anomaly of a gorilla character having the shadow of a wolf. Their enquiry follows from their reading of the Anthony Browne book **Voices in the Park**.

> *Hari: I don't think er, it's the shadow of a wolf either because I think it's just to entertain us.*

When asked to explain how this entertains, Hari is unable to give a response, but Rene does an excellent job of interpreting what he believes Hari means, and supports Hari to be able to then substantiate this interpretation.

> *Rene: errh .. I think Hari is trying to say like you said, w when you're like in, in year three er or in year four an you just flick through the pages, an' you see that, it's gonna engage you to read it.*

Hari is then able to continue:

> *Hari: Because it is , it's trying to say that like if somebody, like a kid knew that was a gorilla-mother, an' that there was a wolf shadow they try to understand that gorillas look different, unusual to wolves.*

Rene (a low achiever) has explained why the picture of a gorilla with a shadow of a wolf is puzzling and therefore will catch a child's imagination and make them want to find out more, so they will become engaged and want to read the book. Hari is then able to explain that he does not expect to see a wolf-shaped shadow in the place he would expect to find a gorilla-shaped shadow because wolves and gorillas are different. They have used their understanding of what

it is to be a child, how children might view new books, and they apply this to interpreting the intention of the author: to entertain. **It is this kind of exchange that encourages the children to want to re-read sections of text to verify their assertions and/or find new ideas or interpretations.**

Rene would not normally have performed this role in regular classroom discussions as he would have been likely to conform to his 'ability role' where he would usually be supported by Hari. This alteration of regular classroom hierarchy, frequently seen in philosophical enquiry, offers all children the chance to learn from each other, regardless of their present attainment level. It also boosts the self-confidence of the conventionally low-achieving children, which in many cases leads to more active engagement with learning and ultimately, improved attainment.

Offering examples

As children become more able to speak and listen actively in philosophical enquiry, they begin to use examples to illustrate their ideas and make them more explicit for other children to understand. They let go of the assumption that everyone understands them and realise that examples help to support or extend their audience's understanding.

Leo offers an example to illustrate his idea that the shapes of shadows do not always conform to one's expectations. Dr. Liptai asks Leo to clarify what he is suggesting:

> *SL: Right, so it is simply that you look different when you're in a shadow, yes? Or your shadow looks different from how you really are? Was that the point that you agree with?*
> *Leo: Yes, because it made me think of of, if you was, if if you was in a dark place, an' you was um an' you was in a tent, an' you used a torch yeah, to put um um off the wall of the tent, you could just make, you could just make a rabbit, you could just make a rabbit and that's what made me think that, that's what made me think that it's something out of some kind of animal.*

Leo is spontaneously offering an example which shows him engaging with the problem of the discrepancies between an object and its shadow. He is seeking an example that shows what he means about shadows, i.e. that being able to deliberately create a shadow that looks quite different from the reflected object proves the existence of such discrepancies.

Summary

The children are engaged in thinking, speaking and listening work within a well structured, supportive social setting. They show evidence of having scrutinised the text and pictures of the books they have read together. They use higher order thinking strategies to investigate and make progress on answering open questions that interest them in connection with the text and the meaning of the book. They offer opinions which are substantiated by reasons; they relate these to ideas from their peers and practise their reasoning skills in a reasonable manner. They are involved in actively constructing meaning for themselves which has shifted their learning from a superficial to deep level. The evidence for this, as gleaned from their utterances, is their internalisation of some of the processes of philosophical enquiry: active listening, creative thinking, supporting and building on each other's ideas.

The many positive outcomes of the process that this group of children has undergone include:
- better communication, including more effective listening and speaking and more caring (verbal and non-verbal) behaviour towards each other (criteria 1 and 2)
- the ability to ask appropriate open questions (criterion 3)
- the ability to think 'out of the box' (4C thinking – ref. SAPERE)
- the development of the mental habit of justifying their opinions and therefore becoming more thoughtful about expressing an opinion (criteria 2 and 4)
- the ability to engage with text well beyond its literal meaning (cognitive and affective influence leading to meaning–making. (Splitter & Sharp, Fisher, Hall))
- the ability to disagree with another child without involving conflict (criterion 4)

It is suggested that the process of philosophical enquiry involves children in offering and evaluating reasons and that this helps children to use their language and listening skills more effectively by dint of its complexity. They read and re-read the stimulus materials as an adjunct to the reasoning and discussion, rather than as the primary focus of the learning activity.

Analysis of speaking and thinking Y6

In the analysis of the year 6 class video-recorded philosophical enquiry sessions the project team was looking for evidence of development in the same four criteria:
1. Children's active listening
2. Considered speaking
3. Quality and appropriateness of children's questions
4. Reasoning skills.

We see the children's speaking and listening development (criteria 1 and 2) emerging during the philosophical enquiries as part of a complex process which simultaneously involves these basic skills and some more cognitively challenging tasks such as generating and interpreting ideas, developing reasons and using examples. These mental operations are generally necessary in Communities of Enquiry for creating the material for reasoning (criterion 4) in the discussion and for demonstrating the participants' ability (or lack of ability) to go beyond the surface of the stimulus, to the meaning or 'message'. This process of interpretation and meaning-making was identified by the project team as vital to the effectiveness of the project, but was not explicitly identified as a success criterion because it is an integral part of the process of philosophical enquiry.

The recorded material is organised here into two sections, so that it is possible to see the progress the children make between the early and late sessions. The analysis of speaking and listening and questioning work focuses on a session where the children are generating ideas and making interpretations of a challenging piece of pop art. At this point in the project, the children are struggling with articulating their thoughts and ideas which can be seen from the halting speech and frequent use of words such as 'like', and repetition of phrases which offer the children some extra time to think whilst holding the attention of their peers. Their interaction is still tentative in many cases, reflecting their varying levels of confidence whilst articulating their opinions.

Early stage: Generating and interpreting ideas

The stimulus is a picture by Keith Haring of a human-looking figure being pulled in 4 directions from its hands and feet by 4 large hands.

The children discuss whether the figure is a toy or a person; whether it is a particular stretchy toy – a Stretchy Armstrong (with limbs of rubber that elongate when pulled); whether it is being stretched or pinched; whether it is being hurt, possibly electrocuted, and whether the red X-shape in the middle of the body is significant:

> **Leeroy:** *Its, I think it's something to do with like his heart or something like that, how he's feeling an like how he's feeling right now and he's feeling bad because, he's got, because he's got a cross in the middle of him so it might (be) like he's got a bad heart, bad feeling or something like that.*

This appears to reflect low level metaphorical thinking: the suggestion that the red X signifies either a (physically) bad heart or an unhappy heart ('bad feeling') seems to be on a par with everyday metaphors like 'table leg' or 'the heart of the matter.'

Later Tina offers a suggestion: **It might be a button** and on prompting she adds **and you could press it and make him talk.**

She seems to be returning to a more mechanical / literal view of the figure: a toy with a button to push.

Just when it looks as though they have missed the opportunity to interpret the image in ways that are more sophisticated than the previous two examples, Aisha suggests:

> **Aisha***: The hands, they all want it, for something, like how I said like he might be a person and they might want him for…like, one might have a party and one might go to a concert or something like that but then, but then the person, but then the person in the middle would have stuff to do yeah? Like you know how some people fight over people and they pull each other and they pull that person in the middle. So that the person could have things to do and … and they might not want to do that thing but then loads of people are asking them to do something else, but the person ………. is feeling bad about it.*

Aisha's explanation suggests a more sophisticated interpretation than the previous two, on two counts: her metaphor – the figure as a person, rather than a toy, is a higher level metaphor than the previous ones because she has moved her focus away from the image to human behaviour and human dilemmas. Secondly, her interpretation takes into account all the elements of the picture: the shape and size of the central figure and its red X as well as the size, position and possible 'intention' of the hands that hold the figure. Such 'total' interpretation is a sign of development as children usually start with allocating meaning to only some parts of the image they are presented with. (Liptai 2004) The stimulus may be too challenging for many of this class at this early stage, so they may be moving away from the challenge to be safe (a technique they have used before when interpreting images from the Ta(l)king Pictures pack in an earlier session.) Or they may not be sufficiently confident in their enquiry environment yet to take on the risk of enquiring beyond the surface of the image for fear of possible ridicule. It may be that they do not see the image as problematic, as they have not had sufficient practise at

this type of investigation yet. Nevertheless, in Aisha's contribution we are seeing the beginnings of a child's readiness to move from the 'literal' surface of the image to a more sophisticated interpretation.

The project team deliberately interspersed the use of images with text, for two reasons: firstly, for children with high visual intelligence, as well as for unconfident readers, the pictures provided an easier introduction to negotiated interpretations and meaning-making than text might have done; secondly, once the mental operations requiring such interpretations were familiar to the children, they had developed an experience base from which they could draw, to apply these interpretation and idea generating skills to other types of stimulus, including text as the next section will show.

Later stage: developing questions reasons and examples

In session 22 the children are beginning to engage much more fully with the stimulus and the questions are more meaningful and significant to them. Their enhanced listening and thinking skills (criteria 1 and 2) are evident in the way they agree with and build on each other's ideas. The question posed by Leeroy also indicates greater ownership of the enquiry process as it was spontaneously self-generated, and moves Adam to make his response.
 Giving reasons to justify opinion (criterion 4) is one of the clearest indicators of the success of the project. Children's readiness to give reasons spontaneously for the views they hold has been seen as a high level thinking skill that readily transfers to other areas of learning and social interaction (Thinking Together – ANTIDOTE & SAPERE video 2003, Fisher 1998.)
 Offering examples is an indicator both of children's evolving thinking skills (Splitter & Sharp 1995 p. 9) and of their social awareness: examples allow the listeners insight into the thought processes of the speaker and aid them in assimilating the speaker's idea(s).

Their discussion, from the poem **I'm Nobody** by Emily Dickinson, shows the children engaging with the way in which 'nobody' can mean different things in different contexts:

> *Mustafa: You see, what Salima says, it's that someone could be someone because she's related to me yeah? But she might be someone else to someone else. She's somebody to me because she's my sister, but they ahh, but the other person, they say she's nobody to me, I don't know her, and I don't know anything about her, yeah? And I agree because if, if the person dies, then they're still somebody to them because, you see, if you get a family lineage or whatever it is called, yeah, you see, when someone has died, yeah, you don't cross their name out do you? So they're still somebody.*

This is a significant piece of progress for Mustafa for a number of reasons:
- He is **agreeing with** and **building on what he has heard** from Salima, offering an example to support his point: you don't cross out a name on a family tree because someone dies, therefore they exist in name and in memory, therefore they are 'somebody'.
- We know from interactions in the class that Mustafa and Salima have a difficult relationship: they are often unkind to each other, yet here Mustafa has recognised the strength of Salima's argument, puts aside his feelings about Salima and **focuses on the content** of what she said and agrees with it, building in his own example to

strengthen what they agree about. It is hard to imagine this happening without the conventions of philosophical enquiry and shows a significant shift in Mustafa's emotional literacy development.

Leeroy continues: *I am not saying that Salima wrong, but what happens if the stranger is like living on the street? And all his family are dead, even cousins and everything? What happens then?*

Leeroy has listened to Salima and Mustafa but still has a problem – so he **poses a very well structured question,** eliminating the factors that have been crucial to Salima's and Mustafa's argument: being loved and cared for makes one a 'somebody'. If the love and care are taken away, does it follow that the 'personhood' of a person is gone? By **problematising** the last response, Leeroy has pushed the argument onto a new plane of (possible) generalisation. At the same time he is implying that it might be possible to define the criteria for 'personhood' or, in their discourse, for 'being somebody as opposed to being nobody'. These children are clearly involved in philosophical discussion.

Adam: Say that someone was on the street, yeah? And like what Leeroy said, yeah, he had no friends or no cousins and his family was dead yeah, you would feel sorry for him yeah, you would feel like he was a somebody when he dies.

Adam refers back to Salima's and Mustafa's earlier arguments about the care of others rendering a person 'a somebody', and extends this (by reflecting on Leeroy's question) to caring behaviour by strangers (and possibly, by implication, society). He has answered Leeroy's challenging question: caring behaviour by *anyone* makes a person 'a somebody', even if only after their death.

Adam has contributed a **broad and constructive generalisation**, building on several previous ideas. This is particular progress for Adam because in the early sessions he was often destructive in his comments. These interactions suggest that he has **shifted out of avoidance and into engagement** here, offering his opinion constructively and with confidence.

Summary

From these excerpts we can see that the children have made progress in all four original criteria:
1. Active listening
2. Considered speaking
3. Quality and appropriateness of questions
4. Reasoning skills

In addition to this, as explained above, the children are involving these skills in generating and interpreting ideas and meaning-making. We see evidence of the children moving their thinking from literal towards more metaphorical thinking and using examples to illustrate their meaning. We see Leeroy problematising a response and by doing so, encouraging the class to think further. We also see Adam offering a broad generalisation, which is philosophically significant in conceptual understanding. **These processes show complex application of the project criteria in action and the project team considers it most likely that the increased reading progress is a product of this complex thinking work**.

Conclusions

This project has been highly successful in achieving its aims of improving oracy and literacy, through teaching children to use reasoning and higher order thinking and supporting the whole school approach to fostering independent thinking and motivating children to learn effectively.

The SAT test scores show a marked improvement in attainment for the year 6 children, with exceptional progress in reading: 88% of children exceeding their predicted score and 95% achieving level 4 or above. Four of the five children to achieve level 5 in reading were working in English as an additional language. In Maths, 62.5% exceeded their teacher prediction, with 88% achieving level 4 or above which is again a significant improvement, although it is recognised that a proportion of this improvement will be due to another intervention. In Science 68% of children achieved a level 4 or above, which again is a very significant result, where they exceed the national average for level 4 achievement.

The analysis of the children's spoken work in enquiry sessions shows evidence of progress in all four of the identified areas: the quality and appropriateness of children's questions, significantly improved active listening, and the development of considered speaking with a high proportion of children able to justify their ideas using appropriate valid reasons. The great majority of the children is able to ask good, open questions and many children are able to offer examples to support their ideas. In addition, some of the children were able to support the thinking and learning of other children through their shared interpretation and collaborative meaning making. This improvement has transferred from the specific philosophical enquiry sessions into regular classroom activity with the Headteacher reporting that:

> **'The pilot has had a significant impact on the development of 'question posing' in the school. For example, during a visit to Hyde Park on a habitats expedition, Year 4 pupils were able to pose questions and make deductions using knowledge gained during the day. More able pupils in the group were able to link their knowledge about weather shade and warmth and consider why some mini beasts were easier to find than others. During a literacy observation of the Year 6 pilot class, higher attaining pupils were able to link events beyond the story under discussion. These skills were not in evidence earlier in the year.'**

Most children have made progress with their social and emotional interaction, with some children making significant progress, particularly some rather aggressive Year 4 boys, and as the Headteacher reports:

> **Three of the girls in Year 6 who have in the past engaged in violent disagreements have begun to master the 'language of disagreement' and are more rational when discussing incidents.**

The complex model of cognitive challenge within a social setting has shown children constructing meaning and deepening the level at which they engage with the process of reading and de-coding text, pictures and music. The school has been exemplary in its support of the project and the Headteacher has incorporated philosophical enquiry into the regular weekly classroom curriculum. The project team looks forward to monitoring the future progress of this school and its pupils.

Recommendations

SAPERE would like to use the findings of this very successful pilot study to inform a more substantial future project in collaboration with the SHINE Trust.

From this study we have identified a number of factors that are important in the establishing of sustainable projects:

1. Staff training is essential to sustainability, but additional co-taught and supervised lessons would greatly improve the specialist skills necessary for staff to feel confident and competent at conducting effective philosophical enquiries. This was borne out by the HMI report which praised the project team's observed session, but found some weakness in the session led by one of the teachers of the school. The project team considered that this was due only to the teacher's limited experience in conducting enquiries and could have been resolved with some mentoring.
2. Any future projects should build on the experience of the children and staff of this project and the findings of this report and should provide a combination of work with the children and with their teachers to ensure adequate training and supervision that will ensure that the project is sustainable throughout the schools involved.
3. A staff handbook of resources and guidance would be useful for each key stage, and, in KS2, ideally for each year group, to complement the resources purchased by the project.
4. Some staff, especially in the Early Years department, which did not receive direct input from the project team beyond the staff training, would benefit from specific training and co-taught sessions as the practice is particularly specialised at this stage, yet is essential in laying the foundations for effective learning in key stages 1 and 2.
5. SAPERE Level 2 training is necessary for the lead teachers and at least two members of the Senior Management Team for in-house staff development and mentoring purposes. This would also provide a sustainable model for supervision of new members of staff.
6. If two members of staff were trained to SAPERE Level 3, they would then be qualified to train other staff, including staff in other schools, to level 1, alongside a senior trainer. This could then provide a mechanism for networks of schools to share in the expertise of Falconbrook Primary School across the borough of Wandsworth. This would build on the SHINE project's investment to date and would support the school in achieving the excellent standard necessary to become a SHINE/SAPERE Flagship school, which other schools can visit to observe high quality philosophical enquiry in action.
7. The project team would be pleased to devise a sustainability model for replicating results across a group of schools in the area, which would build on the strengths of this very successful pilot project.

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