



## Primary Ethics classes

### Helping children develop skills for life

#### About ethics classes

Ethics classes support children to develop a life-long capacity for making well-reasoned decisions about ethical issues. Through the give-and-take of reasoned argument students learn to disagree respectfully, to challenge ideas and to support their arguments with considered evidence rather than according to habit or peer pressure.

Our volunteer ethics teachers use detailed lesson materials which present a range of stories, scenarios and questions to generate discussion. Ethics teachers are trained to impartially facilitate student discussions, helping students develop their critical thinking and collaborative inquiry skills. Ethics teachers support student learning by:

- modelling the inquiry process – by asking questions and encouraging discussion
- showing genuine curiosity and interest in the questions being discussed
- staying neutral – ethics teachers are trained to keep their own views out of the discussion
- creating a positive learning environment – by allowing students time to think, encouraging students to share ideas, give reasons and ensuring respectful discussion.

**If you have any questions or feedback please contact us on 02 8068 7752 or [info@primaryethics.com.au](mailto:info@primaryethics.com.au)**

## Curriculum and lesson materials

Primary Ethics' classes are based on the traditions of philosophical inquiry combined with the findings of cognitive psychology and pedagogical research. We use a community of inquiry learning model supported by teacher-led questioning. This child-centred approach to learning supports students to puzzle over and discover concepts for themselves, in collaboration with their peers.

The curriculum contains 79 topics with over 250 lessons, each reviewed by the NSW Department of Education for age appropriateness. The topics invite students to examine what we ought to do, how we ought to live, the kind of society we should have and what kind of person each of us should strive to be.

The ethical dilemmas presented in the lessons are designed to be challenging, providing students with the opportunity to practice their collaborative inquiry and

critical thinking skills. Several topics touch on issues that some students might find hard to discuss, such as homelessness, the treatment of animals, different beliefs and punishment. The overall aim of ethics classes is for students to develop both the capability and the willingness to discuss ethical issues, no matter how difficult, with those around them in a well-reasoned, productive and respectful way.

Primary Ethics' materials are aligned to the following general capabilities in the Australian curriculum and the NSW syllabus:

- ethical understanding
- critical and creative thinking
- personal and social capability.

Visit [www.primaryethics.com.au](http://www.primaryethics.com.au) to view the topics and learn more about our curriculum and its research base.

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## Supporting Primary Ethics' volunteers in your school

A volunteer ethics coordinator will be your main point of contact.

Please welcome our volunteers into your school and provide:

- the names of students in each ethics class
- the name and location of a teacher who can provide assistance or advice as required
- any information needed to ensure the safety and appropriate management of students, including students with special needs
- an understanding of your school's behaviour management framework
- safety briefings.

Our volunteer ethics teachers welcome the support of a classroom teacher – you can help in the classroom by:

- discussing how to work together with the ethics teacher to manage classroom behaviour
- understanding that ethics classes are discussion based and are sometimes a little noisy – talk to the ethics teacher about what is and isn't an acceptable noise level in your classroom

- explaining which furniture can and cannot be moved to create a circle
- understanding that discussions in ethics classes are peer-to-peer – please observe the class rather than joining in
- asking if the ethics teacher would like to use the smartboard, whiteboard or other resources.

When setting up ethics classes please understand that:

- our classes must be conducted in a circle to aid discussion
- acceptable classes sizes are between 8 and 22 students to enable effective facilitation of discussions
- our curriculum is stage based (Early Stage 1 – Stage 3) and is not possible to have ethics classes that span different stages.

Our volunteers understand the importance of minimising disruption in your classroom spaces and ensuring students are focussed and ready to continue learning in class after ethics. Please help them achieve this by communicating your expectations and supporting them to manage behaviour. We provide coaching and support for our ethics teachers through our Classroom Support Team. Please welcome the Classroom Support Team volunteers into your school to support ethics teachers.

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## Volunteer training and recruitment

Our volunteer ethics teachers undergo a National Criminal History Check and hold Working with Children Checks. They undertake online and face to face training in child protection awareness, facilitation techniques and behaviour management.

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## Starting ethics classes in your school

Provided that parents or carers in your school are interested in having ethics classes for their children we can assist by recruiting, training, authorising and supporting volunteers to deliver the program. Please visit our website or contact us to find out more.