Beliefs - RE and PSHE

Aim:

To understand different ways of understanding the world around us

Activity description

Using techniques and examples from philosophy, pupils will explore different ways of knowing and learning more about the world around us.

Starter activity:

Ask students to explain how they know the table they are sitting at is real – what information do they have that tells them it is there and not an illusion? (e.g. their senses, previous experience, information from figures of authority, such as teachers, etc.)

Ask students to explain how they know that beauty is real – can they use the same evidence to show that beauty has existence and isn't an illusion?

Provide a series of optical illusions – ask students if they can always trust their senses

You could introduce Plato's Allegory of the Cave to explore this further; note that the key feature of this story is that it is the job of the philosopher to make the effort to try and see things differently; to test different ways of understanding and knowing about the world.

Main activity:

Introduce the idea that one of the key truth claims made by religious people is that God exists. Ask students to mind-map words, images and ideas that they associate with the word 'God'. You could show students this clip from National Geographic that explores diverse views on the idea of God.

Explain that there is a long tradition of people thinking about God, using both reason and experience to try to gain knowledge of God.

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Introduce a statement of belief from a religious tradition (e.g. the Shahadah from Islam, the Shema from Judaism or the Apostles' Creed and the Nicean Creed from Christianity). Ask students to analyse this creed as they might a historical source or a literary text: what does it say? When was it written? By whom? For whom? What does it tell us about key beliefs from that religious tradition?

Extension activity:

Ask students to complete the following sentence, showing their process of reasoning:

"Everyone believes something. It is important to explore what different people believe because…"

Time required:

60 minutes

Materials required:

Paper, pens, access to the internet.

Additional resources:

BBC Bitesize KS3 Religious Studies

Lincoln Diocesan Board of Education RE Concept Maps

National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE)

RE:Online

RE:quest (Christianity only)

TrueTube

Understanding Humanism

Using Hermeneutics (Textual Analysis of Sacred Texts) in the Classroom