

BACK TO THE '4' RS - READING, (W)RITING, (A)RITHMETIC AND REASONING

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Tuesday, 21 April 2009

London, 21 April 2009: All the immense Government investment in the National Curriculum is a waste at the most basic level – we're not teaching our kids the most basic human skill of all: how to think.

This is the charge by special educational service provider The Philosophy Shop (<http://www.thephilosophyshop.co.uk>), which worries that all talk about reforming primary school education will fail unless our kids get taught the four, not three, Rs: Reading, (W)riting, (A)rithmetic AND Reasoning.

The group, which has been very successfully pioneering the introduction of Philosophy as a way to stimulate primary schoolers, says this is the only way to truly improve a testing-obsessed educational regime which discourages children from doing anything but rote-learn to the exclusion of the wider intellectual picture.

Ways to develop such critical thinking skills are expected to form part of Sir Jim Rose's set of suggestions for revamping the National Curriculum due later this month, with some expecting a potentially much bigger, formal place for Philosophy in the nation's classrooms.

"We need to make reasoning a feature of the school curriculum," urges the group's founder and Director, Peter Worley. "Socrates said that right answers need to be tethered by reasons. Teachers and other education professionals should always prefer a wrong answer with good reasoning to a right answer with faulty or no reasoning: at the moment, the current educational system favours the reverse situation."

The Four Rs campaign is backed by a number of thinkers such as British philosopher AC Grayling. "As a society we need more Philosophy at all levels of education, not just at university and postgraduate level, so that all our young people can benefit," says Grayling.

The Philosophy Shop's lessons develop critical thinking skills through exposure to the challenges of Western philosophical thought to children in primary school from Year 1 through to Year 6 (ages 5 -11).

The Philosophy Shop is behind the 'Philosophy in Primary Schools' programme which has been bringing philosophy to schools in South-East London for the last six years. It now has consultants working nationally to deliver the critical benefits of philosophy to more British primary school pupils.

"We think Rose's report is the critical time to make real, long-term positive changes to the British primary school and adding a fourth R through things like Philosophy for youngsters could be crucial," adds Worley.

Philosopher Anthony Grayling and The Philosophy Shop founder and Director Peter Worley are available for interview on the subject of the Four Rs, the Rose report and Philosophy at primary level – please contact Amanda Jane PR:

Notes for Editors:

* A major review of the curriculum for England's primary schools is being conducted by Sir Jim Rose. Interim findings published in December 2008 suggest that Pupils should have the "personal, social and emotional qualities essential to their health, well-being and life as a responsible citizen in the 21st Century". The final report of the Review is due this month.

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/primarycurriculumreview/> (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/primarycurriculumreview/>)

* Michael Hand and Carrie Winstanley's 'Philosophy in Schools', published last year, has several academics and education experts calling for philosophy to be taught in schools.

<http://www.continuumbooks.com/Books/detail.aspx?ReturnURL=/Search/default.aspx&CountryID=1&ImprintID=2&BookID=13>
(<http://www.continuumbooks.com/Books/detail.aspx?ReturnURL=/Search/default.aspx&CountryID=1&ImprintID=2&BookID=13>)

* Last year UNESCO published a study looking at the benefits of teaching philosophy at pre-school and primary levels, concluding, "We] consider the teaching of philosophy to be necessary and something to be reckoned with." [http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-URL_ID=11575&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html]
(http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-URL_ID=11575&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

* Meanwhile, a 2007 study by Dundee University (2007) suggested that confronting core philosophical debates as the nature of existence, ethics and knowledge can raise children's IQ by up to 6.5 points and improve emotional intelligence. The research also found that philosophy in schools promotes certain speaking and listening skills, as well as sustained reasoning skills over time.

<http://www.clacksweb.org.uk/site/documents/psychologicalservice/evaluationofclackmannanshirethinkingskillsinitiative/>
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* The Philosophy Shop promotes the practical application of philosophy in the community. It supports and promotes the teaching of philosophy in primary school children, as well as philosophy summer schools, philosophy groups and philosophical counselling. The Philosophy Shop is committed to the fact that through the rational investigation of existence, ethics and knowledge children are able to realise lots of benefits, including raised IQ, raised self-confidence and improved emotional intelligence. The company provides training for qualified philosophers on how to practically employ philosophical methods in a classroom situation. The programme brings philosophy to bear on the national curriculum and teaches classes of primary school children to think critically and ethically about themes raised there. The Philosophy Shop also offers teachers training in how to enhance their teaching methods through philosophical techniques. <http://www.thephilosophyshop.co.uk> (<http://www.thephilosophyshop.co.uk>)