



HOW “THE BIG THINK” SUPPORTS SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

The Big Think (TBT) is a practical, coherent, forward-looking, values-themed programme for the holistic development of children aged from 5 to 11. It progressively increases individuals’ understanding of themselves (whether as a teacher, child, parent or any other member of the school’s community) and nurtures an awareness of how all participants can use positive values to develop themselves and others accompanying them on the journey of life.

TBT activities provide opportunities to improve all aspects of daily life

Learning is a life-long process and takes time - and the beauty of TBT is that it:

- ❖ **creates a happy, caring learning environment**
- ❖ **develops core social and emotional skills**
- ❖ **enriches relationships**
- ❖ **nurtures character strengths**
- ❖ **enhances mental health and wellbeing**
- ❖ **motivates good and altruistic behaviour**
- ❖ **raises aspirations and attainment**
- ❖ **engages the entire school community.**

Through regular engagement with TBT, teachers gain a greater understanding of the significance of being a role model and how to enhance aspects of their own lives and the school’s culture, and how to actively foster a cohesive, whole-school approach to the rounded development of all the children, with positive impacts on everyone’s wellbeing and performance.

Over time, there are noticeable benefits, with boosts to teachers’ professional learning, facilitation skills and teamwork along with staff and young people’s capacity for self-assessment and reflection. Trust builds throughout the entire school community. Improvements take place in communication between staff, children and parents, and there is lasting progress in the development of everyone’s emotional and values literacy.



The programme contributes to a vision for the school, giving teachers insights into where they can advance their own learning commensurate with changes in the education landscape and the fact that ‘values literacy’ is becoming ever more mainstream. The structure of TBT, including its introductory values dialogues, enables teachers to appreciate where they need to be heading and the time-saving, ready-to-teach learning kits, designed to equip children with essential skills for life, provide adaptable pathways to get there.

Our fast-paced, ever-changing world means that schools are also places of constant change in order to remain fit for purpose and provide continual improvements in the preparation of all their young citizens for life now and as the future unfolds.

During the past decade or so, the expected standards for learners at each key stages of their schooling have been raised considerably. These revised levels call for ‘thinking schools’ in which teachers’ mindsets are flexible and open to expanding learning capacity throughout the school community and ongoing individual and collective growth.

With values being central to a healthy, thinking school, a culture of trust takes shape, enabling staff to focus on their personal and collaborative contributions to the advancement and effectiveness of the education the school provides. Relations between teachers, children and parents become increasingly purposeful and strong and solutions emerge that are right for the school in its context and the individuals making up its diverse community.

Learning in a thinking school

The Big Think’s 120 fully resourced, carefully structured assembly and lesson kits are like fun skills-for-life workshops offering an abundance of experiential learning opportunities as children explore a broad range of relevant topics and are constantly prompted to consider what they would like to see happen in school, at home, in their own lives and in their various communities.



The interactive sessions incrementally empower young citizens with attitudes, skills and knowledge and the capacity to learn from experiences, share ideas and apply a wide spectrum of carefully considered, life-enriching values within different contexts to bring about desired outcomes.

In safe, supportive school settings, the culture that develops from embedding The Big Think into the school's curriculum opens the way for children to learn to manage their feelings and emotions, consciously and respectfully listen to one another. They ask thought-provoking questions, challenge the status quo, adopt creativity in their approaches to problem-solving, reflect on situations and take responsibility for their choices and actions. The process strengthens community cohesion and gradually empowers all participants, deepening their understanding of themselves, others and what's happening globally.

In thinking schools, driven by the desire for improvements, teachers feel valued, listened to and are supported so that they question, reconsider, invest in themselves and gain skills that mean they can similarly demonstrably guide their pupils so that they, individually and collectively, can unleash their true potential and come up with fresh and innovative suggestions and solutions for the myriad of problems and issues they are constantly observing and experiencing.

Relationships in a thinking school

In today's cosmopolitan society, everyone benefits from having the ability to understand themselves well, accept and appreciate others for who they are and take on board different points of view and perspectives so that all can effectively interact with and develop constructive relationships that in turn are likely to lead to positive results.

Shared values unite whereas contrasting values can create tensions. When values are ignored, relationships can be strained and difficult to manage.



As role models, it's important that teachers are clear about their own values, how values generally affect our thinking, choices and actions and have strategies for managing any differences or situations in which their personal values are out of alignment with those of colleagues or with any the school promotes. This awareness can help to minimise time and energy being spent on dealing with conflict and tensions and increase the focus on maximising the possibilities for achieving the school's goals and intentions for its children.

Few teachers have the opportunity during their initial training and their continuing professional development to learn about the significance of 'values literacy' and how to foster it but one of the many advantages of schools using The Big Think is that its practical approach can help to fill this gap. The school assembly and classroom work creates many openings for everyone – teachers, non-teaching staff, children and parents – to increase their social awareness and develop skills that could help them to deal with interpersonal and behavioural challenges they encounter, and devise strategies to help them manage and maximise their own relationships in all contexts. In so doing, they increase the likelihood of improving performance in all dimensions of their lives, while also paving the way for their pupils to reach their full potential.

As staff understanding of the dynamics of relationships grows, they feel more confident about choosing and using positive values both in their personal lives and as role models for the children, thereby improving the conditions and prospect of everyone achieving good, resilient relationships.

Thus, thinking schools generate a supportive culture in which all members of staff are constantly facilitating engaging roadmaps to enable everyone to do and be their very best, drawing on their own and others' character strengths, recognising the worth of individuals and incrementally mastering competencies that are conducive to everyone feeling uplifted and upskilled. The outcome is increasingly productive relationships in all facets of life.