

General School Syllabus

Outline:

The topic of the syllabus is *clean speech*.

This means being able to choose positive speech over negative speech.

The syllabus is not limited to *informing*, it is about *providing tools* to engage with clean speech. Telling someone that 'negative speech can harm others' may not necessarily have any lasting impact. But giving them the tools to *realise, examine and identify areas of possible change*, can have an impact.

The syllabus is split into four sections:

- 1. Choice** – *helping* students understand that they can make choices in life
(in our clean speech case, this will later translate into choosing the way we speak)
- 2. Impact** – *defining* impact and spotting ways in which we impact others' lives
- 3. Identity** – *examining* seeing ourselves as part of a wider society or group
- 4. Words** – *identifying* that the words we use are a function of choice, can be impactful and are the product of our self-identities.

These can be spread over 1-3 lessons, depending on age, maturity and ability to engage in class discussion.



Section 1: Choice

Goal: *helping* students understand that they can make choices in life.

We are not 'victims' of society – we can make conscious choices about how we live our lives.

Here are some short trigger videos about choice you may want to show:

I. The Choices We Make (short animated film)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQ1C1ifTlyM>

II. THE CHOICE (Short Animated Movie)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEnohs6yYw>

Three case studies to outline:

- (i) Gaby was born into a poor single-parent family. Whilst her class-friends were not worried about much in life, Gaby decided that she would maximise her time and efforts. When she was able to, she enrolled in a part-time job but also made sure to work hard in school. She eventually enrolled in university and set up a very successful company. Gaby is self-sufficient and has money to help her family too. She is setting up a fund to help poor families succeed in the education system.
- (ii) Jacob was known as a bully in school. He would push kids around and always get his way. Jacob realised that the kids in school were not really his friend – they were afraid of him. He slowly and surely decided to drop his bully persona and change. He now has many real friends.
- (iii) Lateesha was born to privileged family. She always had everything she wanted in life – it was always bought for her. But Lateesha realised that she was becoming ungrateful and never happy: she was always chasing the next item. And deep down she wasn't happy. It took her a while, but Lateesha decided to tone down her obsession with always having *the latest and most expensive*. But she is a happier person now.

- Compare and contrast these three choices that Gaby, Jacob and Lateesha made. Which do you think was the most difficult? Which was the most impactful? Why?
- Questions for discussion (depending on level of maturity and intellect):
 - Is everyone born equal in society?
 - If not, what kind of things can I decide to change about my life and are there any decisions that are beyond me? (Examples to examine: finances, friends, school marks, future career prospects, others' perception of me, what I like doing, my level of confidence, my physical appearance.
 - Take a look back at what society was like in the years 1940, 1960, 1980 and 2000. Did people have more of a choice about life than we have today?

Project work:

- Write down ten common choices we are faced with every week
- Film yourself speaking (or acting out) a dilemma you faced and the different decisions options you had. Now say or show which choice you made and why?



Section 2: Impact

Goal: *defining* impact and spotting ways in which we impact others' lives.

When people speak about *impact* they normally think big.

They think about impacting many people on grand scales. We aren't normally able to do this.

Can we identify 'normal' or 'everyday' cases where we impact others?

Class activity:

Write down ways in which we regularly impact the following groups of people through our words or actions:

- Family members
(Example: 'when I get up in the morning my actions impact how my siblings will start their day')
- Teachers
- Students in my class
- Friends
- Wider society – from the bus driver to the shop-owners...

Case Study:

Impact without realising

Daniel went into the shop, when he saw an older person about to come inside.

Daniel decided to hold the door open for the man. This brightened up the man's day, who commented 'I wasn't having an easy day, but your small act of kindness has cheered me up.'

- Do we impact others without realising? Can you give some examples?

Here is a video that illustrates the impact we make on others:

Self-esteem *poker chips* video:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= BuP5XuMZGA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BuP5XuMZGA)



Section 3: Identity

Goal: to *examine* seeing ourselves as part of a wider society or group

Class activity 1:

Draw a circle in the middle of a sheet of paper. In this circle write the word 'me.'

Then coming out of that circle draw lines. At the end of each line write a different 'support system' you need to function smoothly in your life (friends, family, doctors, etc). How many can you name?

How many people do we rely on in an average year?

Now do the same as above but this time write down all the support systems of others that you are part of – how you are part of their lives, whether as friends, team-mates, classmates, etc.

Class activity 2:

Write a list of all the identities you have and what they give you
e.g. your nationality, your ethnicity, your location, etc.

The goal of these exercises is to see ourselves as part of something bigger. We are part of community, society and so much more. And we all rely on each part of this bigger picture for our functionality. We need shops. Shops need customers. We need friends, we need belonging, and we need each other. When we see ourselves as part of others' lives we are more likely to be kinder towards others and make sure we don't cause harm via our actions or words.



Section 4: Words

Goal: *Identifying* that the words we use are a function of choice, can be impactful and are the product of our self-identities.

So far we have learned about choice, impact and identity.

When we study how we use words, we can see that we have the choice to make a positive impact or a negative impact on others.

Studies and resources:

Here are some examples of items in the news or cases/videos about the impact of choice of words, choose a few to show and comment on:

I. Speech in the news

- Rachel Riley wins £10,000 damages over Nazi tweet
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-59731932>
- Pen Farthing: 'I was called disgusting over Kabul animal rescue'
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-59652240>

II. How words impact us

- Israel's 'Think Good' campaign
<https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/318206>
and <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/think-good-time-to-transform-the-online-discourse-in-israel/>
- Opposing political candidates making a peace-filled joint ad with each other
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oR8tNvgBcQ>
- Gerald Ratner's 1billion pound jewellery business was ruined in 10 seconds when he made fun of the quality of his jewellery in a public speech
<https://thehustle.co/gerald-ratners-billion-dollar-speech/>
- The October 2021 petrol rush was caused by rumours spreading of lack of petrol supply.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2021_United_Kingdom_fuel_supply_crisis
- Facebook insider releases cache of internal documents to the public, alleging that Facebook put profit before user safety.

Was the Facebook whistle-blower case (Oct 2021) good or bad?

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-59046002>

- Pepsi ad that was banned because it put down Coca Cola
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyY15Jkkg2A>
- A Harvard Business School study that analysed instances of CEO misbehaviour between 200 and 2015 found that the average comment (or action) resulted in 250 negative news stories (some of which were cited up to 5 years later), and a 3.1% decline in company stock price.
<https://hbr.org/2016/06/we-studied-38-incidents-of-ceo-bad-behavior-and-measured-their-consequences>

III. The choice of words we use is revealing and impactful

- Study regarding using 'I' versus 'we' in relationships :
<https://www.newsweek.com/relationships-choice-revealing-psychology-study-1442824>
- Are You Living an Insta Lie? Social Media Vs. Reality
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?fbclid=IwAR0356lkHMYCq1s4cau5AKsPPM9dT0tDUJefnRhJ-oWjfKm4PAEvIh51PZg&v=0EFHbruKEmw&feature=youtu.be>

Key questions to discuss:

- We encounter words in everyday life – speaking, social media, press, etc.
Do we see more negative use of words or more positive?
What about the words I say: how much of my words have a positive impact or a negative one?
- Can you create three scenarios where your choice of words can really impact someone:
for example your friend's football team has lost and they feel down, you can either make fun of them or say something to make them feel better...
- How can I choose that my words make a positive impact on others?