

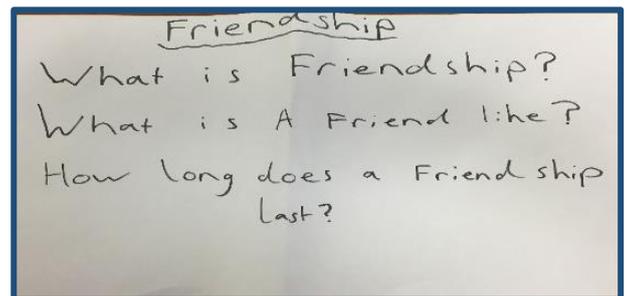
Philosophy with Children

Towards the end of the 2016 Trinity Term a number of staff attended a workshop on Philosophy with Children (P4C) presented by the well-known 'guru' in this field, Prof. Karin Murriss from the University of Cape Town. This concept is not new to St Peter's and powerful, thought-provoking questions have always been advocated as best practice in our teaching. The focus of the workshop was to explore how reasoning can be taught to children. The pioneer of P4C, Matthew Lipman said, 'Philosophy begins when we can discuss the language we use to discuss the world.' Prof. Murriss modelled a number of lessons in which the attendees were invited to grapple with abstract concepts and unpack the meaning of these in a safe and affirming environment. She highlighted the need for teachers and students to pose questions which are open-ended and require argument and discussion (in other words they cannot be 'Googled').

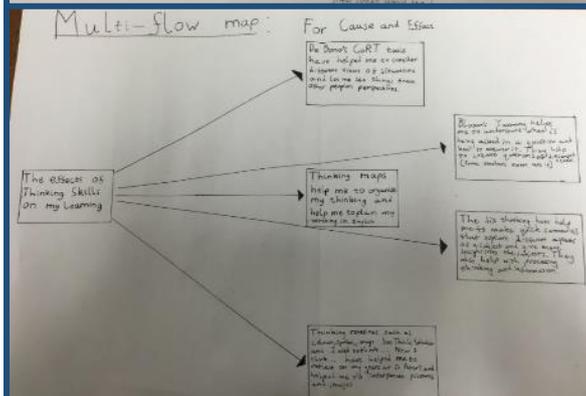
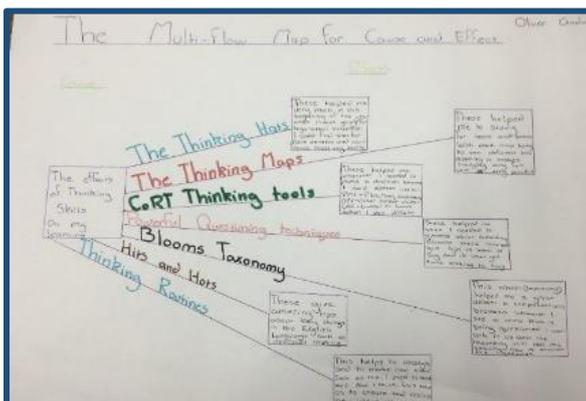
A lesson based on the philosophy with children took the following form:

Grade 7 boys were asked to think about the themes in their English class reader, 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas.' As a class they then voted for one of the themes (they chose friendship) and, in groups of three, they were asked to come up with three open-ended questions based on this theme. We then chose three of these questions to discuss as a class.

The boys thought about three questions around the concept of 'Friendship'.



How the Thinking Skills Programme Impacts our Students' Learning



The aim of our Thinking Skills Programme is to elicit higher-order thinking from our students. The real test for us, as teachers, is to assess whether the programme is achieving the outcomes we have envisaged. Based on Grade 7 reflections, we are confident that we are heading in the right direction.

Luke Wannell reflected, 'Thinking maps have helped me to organise my thinking and plan my writing in English. The Six Thinking Hats have helped me to make quick summaries that explore different aspects of a subject and give me more insight into the subjects. The Thinking Routines have helped me to reflect on my years at St Peter's and to interpret pictures and images.'

Oliver Godwin added, 'The CoRT tools have helped me whenever I needed to make a decision because I could either use a: PMI – Plus, Minus, Interesting, OPV – Other People's Views or a CAF – Consider all Factors. The Thinking Maps helped me to study for tests and exams. With each map having its own definition and meaning, it makes studying fun and powerful.'

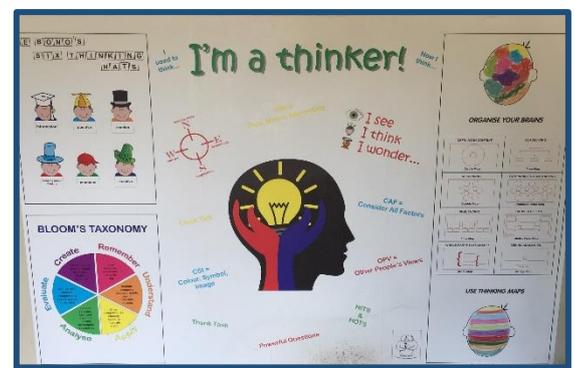
The students captured their reflections using Multi-Flow Maps.

Making Thinking and Learning Visible: Reflections of Classroom Visits

In October 2016, Heather Kissack and Kenda Melvill-Smith attended a conference on *The Responsive Classroom* in Washington, DC. They were fortunate to visit *Project Zero*, where David Perkins discussed the effects of **Making Thinking and Learning Visible** within the school community.

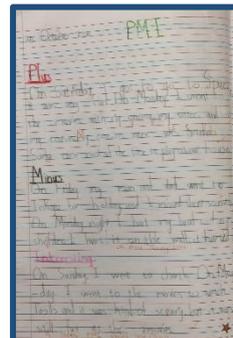
Visible Thinking and Learning leads to:

- Positive change in the school culture
- Enhanced student learning
- Classroom activities that are process-orientated rather than product-orientated
- Children taking ownership and becoming active participants in the learning process
- Increased awareness of thinking and learning strategies
- Understanding of learning expectations and accurate assessment



As a Thinking Skills Drive Team, we reflected on some of the ideas and concepts observed around the schools in Washington DC and have used these to set goals for our School going forward:

- To make the process of learning visible through: goal setting, displays, photos and process descriptions, whilst documenting student thinking and learning.
- To use a 'Thinking Toolbox' of: Thinking Maps, Thinking Hats, Thinking Routines, Revised Bloom's Taxonomy and CoRT Tools to develop a common 'thinking' language and encourage questioning techniques across the schools.
- To make the curriculum visible on walls and in halls.
- To document learning through student journals and portfolios in which goal setting and reflection occur and use Morning Meetings, Closing Circles, and student-led conferences to communicate thinking and learning.



THE THINKING KEYS

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Making thinking and learning visible creates and sustains a powerful learning culture across the school that nurtures individual and group learning. By learning collaboratively and displaying the learning process, we also learn about the cultures and values of others. This unique perspective allows us to gain a greater understanding of what we learn and how it impacts us.

**"Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think."
Albert Einstein**