



Empowering Year 8 'Thinkers': How a Lifeskills 'Thinking Statement' sparks meaningful idea generation.

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Background: This research, conducted with Year 8 students at Penryn College, explored whether introducing a focused 'Thinking Statement' could allow students to generate new ideas that matter.

Research Question: How can a thinking statement in a Lifeskills (PSHE) lesson empower Year 8 students to generate new ideas that matter?

What I did:

- 1. Lifeskills Lesson:** Students were introduced to a 'Thinking Statement' and invited to explore a socially significant issue through any creative medium: posters, drawings, discussions, diagrams, written reflections, or modelling. A key feature was the inclusion of student choice, allowing learners to decide how to express their ideas. This design aimed to cultivate: meaningful idea generation, autonomous creative decision-making and exploration of ethical impact and diverse perspectives. The multimodal structure echoes evidence showing that student autonomy and reflective prompts significantly enhance originality and metacognitive awareness (**EEF, 2025**).
- 2. Pupil Focus Group:** Pupils were invited to a focus group following the Lifeskills Lesson. Questions explored: how the 'Thinking Statement' supported idea generation, why students chose particular issues, the role of autonomy in creativity and how students considered ethical and social perspectives.
- 3. Exit Ticket Reflections:** Students individually reflected on how the 'Thinking Statement' shaped their thinking.

Questions prompted how the students generate new ideas, monitor, evaluate, and refine their ideas.

What I found out: Introducing a Thinking Statement empowered students to 'Generate New Ideas that Matter'.

- 1. Generating New Ideas That Matter:** Students described how the Thinking Statement helped structure their thinking. For example, one pupil explained that it 'help me think of ideas', whilst another noted it helped them 'think further to what is going on in the world'. This demonstrates how the prompts supported idea development beyond surface-level thinking, enabling students to connect personal experiences with wider societal issues, including: disability equality, mental health, online safety and relationships. This aligns with research (**Ivcevic, Hoffmann and McGarry, 2022**), showing that creativity becomes more meaningful when linked to real-world, pro-social contexts, supported by structured reflection.
- 2. Creativity through Autonomy and Choice:** A key finding was that autonomy significantly strengthened creativity and engagement. Students repeatedly highlighted the importance of freedom 'I liked to be able to do it myself...freely' and 'I can put my ideas into it without anyone else... disagreeing'. The ability to choose how to present ideas was particularly powerful. One student contrasted this with traditional lessons, explaining that usually they are 'just writing something down', whereas this task allows multiple creative forms. Students also demonstrated multi-modal expression, using visual communication, 'bright colours and big posters' and symbolism, 'a circle represents equality and inclusion'. Autonomy and choice enabled authentic expression and deeper engagement, supporting metacognitive development (**Marantika, 2021**).
- 3. Innovation With Ethical Awareness:** Students demonstrated strong consideration of consequences and fairness. For example, one student explored misinformation, explaining how 'all younger kids believe everything they see online' and recognising how this can 'cause worse situations' when false information spreads. Another student focused on equality for people with disabilities, stating that 'they should be valued the same as we are... you've just got to respect



them’, whilst visually representing this with a ‘circle...to represent everyone coming together... everyone is different but they should be treated equally.’ The responses show evaluation, empathy and moral reasoning, reflecting how metacognitive approaches can strengthen ethical awareness (EEF, 2025).

4. **Understanding Diverse Values:** Students actively explored multiple viewpoints and demonstrated an awareness of differing perspectives. One student described using ‘advantaged and disadvantages so I could show what is good and...what is bad’, showing balanced evaluation. Importantly, students acknowledged the need to consider others’ perspectives, summarised in the reflection that ‘you’ve got to consider everyone views and rights’. This developing empathy and balanced thinking aligns with research highlighting its importance for meaningful idea generation (Ivcevic, Hoffmann and McGarry, 2022).

What next? The Thinking Statement when combined with autonomy and multimodal creative opportunities, empowers students to ‘Generate New Ideas that Matter’. Students were able to demonstrate ethical awareness and consider multiple perspectives.

Future work will continue embedding a ‘Thinking Statement’ across Lifeskills to strengthen metacognition, creativity, and ethical reasoning. This approach supports students in becoming creative, reflective and socially aware thinkers.

Links: Metacognition, Thinking Prompts & Deep Thinking.

- Metacognition Teaching and Learning Activities (Dyjur, 2025). [Paper](#)
- Metacognition: A Key to Unlocking Learning (NSW, 2020). [Paper](#)
- EEF Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning Guidance Report (EEF, 2025). [Guidance Report](#) [Practioner Tool](#)

Creativity, Idea Generation & Autonomy.

- Scaffolding Positive Creativity in Secondary School Students (Ivcevic, Hoffmann and McGarry, 2022). [Paper](#)
- The Impact of Metacognitive Instruction on Creative Problem Solving (Hargrove, 2015). [Paper](#)
- Metacognitive Ability and Autonomous Learning Strategy (Marantika, 2021). [Paper](#)



Appendices

Appendix 1: Thinking Statement: 'People with a Disability can't or don't get the help that they need.'

People with disabilities can't or don't get the help that they need

Solution:

pay family members to look after disabled family members so they don't have to worry about money/work

brain people up to help/care for people with disabilities


Government give funding for them to get the help that they need.

↓

-Disadvantages-

- there wouldn't be enough people to help/Not enough people with the qualifications needed.
- People won't be able to get the proper help they need because they aren't getting a diagnosis.
- People May argue that it's not fair that there is so much money going towards it.
- they may be less people doing other jobs.

This photo Represents People coming together to help



People helping

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an organisation to help people with disabilities.

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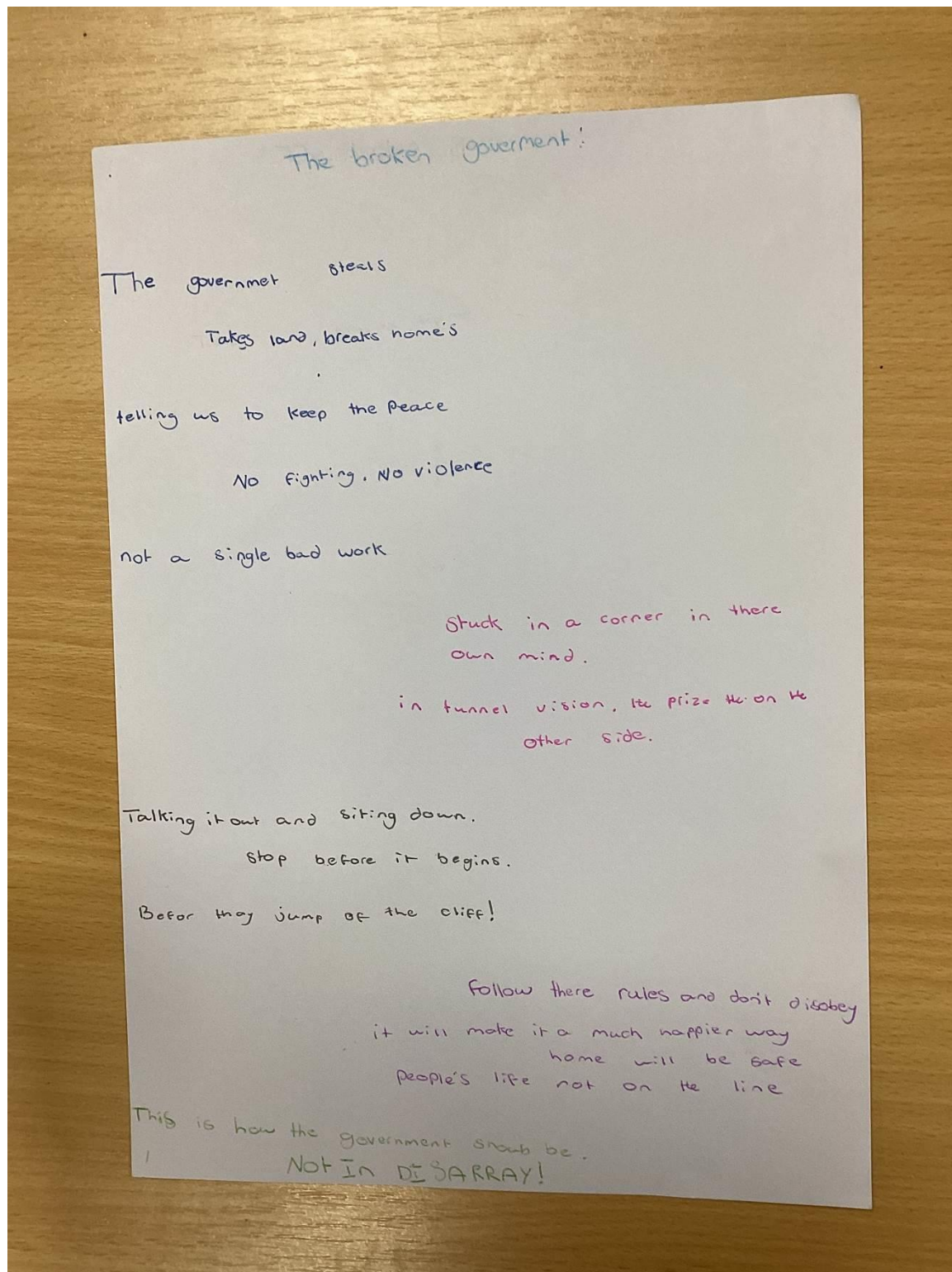
government paying them to do so.

-Advantages-

- lots of people with disabilities get ignored or put down so with extra help they would be able to do this confidently.
- Family who look after people may be able to get paid for it, so they won't have to worry about money/missing days of work.
- If there is any young carers looking after people with disabilities they will be able to do things more because carers would come in.



Appendix 2: Thinking Statement: 'The Role of the Government.'





Appendix 3: Thinking Statements: 'A world with no war'

By Kitty Parks

One word Without WAR

a world without war is one with less hate

Disagree Agree what is the point of these debates

a world without war is one with more light

Violence longlasting The end out of sight

Governments tell us no disturbance

No one needs the disorder but there they are smashing stuck in their corner completely and utterly Blind

Maybe the solution is to look around help the people in the background take a seat talk it out give it a beat think about your doubts

Maybe now the world could be a place with less harm hate

make it your aim to change a bit of a day and

then slowly a problem will solve

Problem:
children are frequently bullied and it makes them feel lonely.

Solution:
Have selected anti-bullying people who get paid to help others feel included

cont:
if people be hard to make anyone include

Phil Bob Phil is a bully and Bob is lonely	Keith Phil Bob Keith tells Phil that he is wrong...
Keith Bob Keith says he will be Bob's friend	Keith Phil Bob Keith was an anti-bullying ambassador and he helped Bob



Appendix 4: Thinking Statement Slide: Examples

What could the future hold?

Can we predict the future? Not really. But we can imagine what is likely and take action to take change.

Read the Game Cards.

- 1) Research the Current situation- What is happening now? Why is this issue important?
- 2) Imagine the future- What would you positive and negatives of this be?

Present your answers in any way: Write Text, Poem, Drawing, Poster, Presentation

Ensure all children are happy and healthy.	Ensure a dying species is rescued from extinction.
Create a zero-carbon community e.g. school, home and shops.	Ensure no one uses more water than they need.
Create a world in which there are no wars.	Create conditions under which there is no longer any money and people trade in skills and goods.



Appendix 5: Exit Ticket

“Young people have the power to shape the future.”

Quick baseline survey after this lesson (5 questions) Rate yourself on 1-5 1= Low 5= High

- I feel confident generating new ideas that could make a positive difference. 1 2 3 4 5
- I can think creatively about solutions to real-world issues. 1 2 3 4 5
- I understand why it's important to consider the impact of ideas on different people and groups. 1 2 3 4 5
- I feel able to judge whether a new idea is fair, ethical, and responsible. 1 2 3 4 5
- I enjoy imagining innovative solutions to problems in my school, community, or the wider world. 1 2 3 4 5

Exit ticket

- What is one new thing you realised today?

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- What action do you feel motivated to take after this lesson?

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- How has your confidence changed?

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- What will you do next? (One small step)

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