

# Teacher overview

## INTRODUCTION TO COMPASSIONATE CLASS

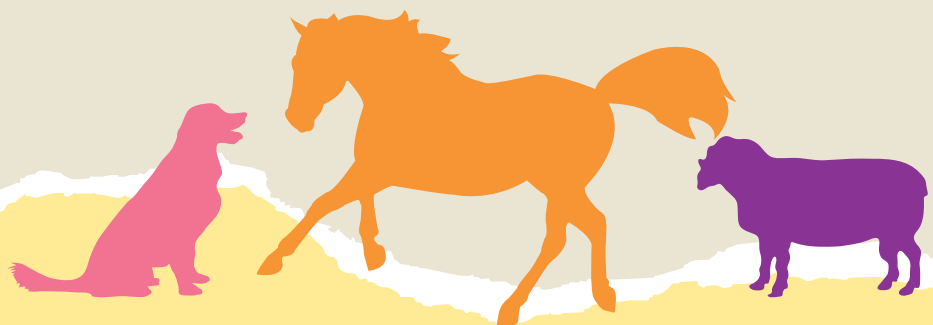
Compassionate Class is an innovative new project from the RSPCA, encouraging children to develop compassion and empathy through the lens of animal welfare.

Through a series of enquiry-led activities, children will consider what it means to be compassionate, understand the needs of different types of animals, and work collaboratively to develop their skills and values.

You can choose from a selection of sessions focusing on pets, wild animals and farm animals, all leading to the creation of an imaginative piece of work such as a film, artwork, photo album or presentation that showcases your journey to becoming a Compassionate Class.

Compassionate Class activities have been developed with educators to provide a way of delivering the PSHE/PSE curriculum and other core subjects, and supporting your school in promoting SMSC. The resource is predominantly aimed at Key Stage 2 pupils. For more detail on how the activities map to the curriculum see page nine.

Compassionate Class is part of the RSPCA's 'GenerationKind' initiative, a set of innovative programmes that aim to nurture and instil the values of kindness and compassion towards animals within children and young people of today. In this way, we can create a future society that is truly kind to animals.



# How Compassionate Class works

## 1 SCENE SETTER

Kick off the project by watching the introductory film, and introduce the concepts of compassion and the needs of animals.



1  
HOUR

## 2 DISCOVERY

Choose two discovery activities from a menu of four, all launched with an exciting stimulus and exploring key questions to encourage discussion and debate.



45  
MINS -  
1 HOUR

Each session comes with suggested extension activities to stretch children and showcase what they have learnt.

### I AM YOUR ROBOT PET



How do the needs of a robot pet compare with a real pet?

### ANIMAL HEROES?



How do animals help humans?  
Can an animal be a hero?

### PLAN(ET) B



Why should we have compassion for wild animals and the planet?

### FARMYARD FREEDOM



How can we meet the needs of farm animals?

# How Compassionate Class works continued...

## 3 ADVOCACY



45  
MINS -  
1 HOUR

To demonstrate and consolidate learning from the discovery sessions, select an advocacy activity that will task pupils with championing animal welfare in a creative and imaginative way. Outputs from your class can be entered into a competition that gives your pupils the opportunity to win some fantastic prizes and be crowned the 'RSPCA's Most Compassionate Class' of the year.

Advocacy activities can be found at the end of the Teacher Notes for each discovery activity in our online resources. For example, following completion of the 'I Am Your Robot Pet' discovery activity we recommend:

- **Robot Companion** – Design a robot companion for your pet
- **Adopt A Human** – What sort of owner would a pet want to live with?

To access all the resources, visit: [rspca.org.uk/ccresources](https://rspca.org.uk/ccresources). To get the most out of the programme, we recommend downloading the resources to a computer so the interactivity works best and your class's work can be saved.

## THE COMPETITION

Designed to be a flexible, stimulating project spread across four to five hours of your lesson time during the Autumn and Spring Terms, Compassionate Class culminates in a creative output from your pupils. Your advocacy activity work can be entered into a nationwide competition to find the RSPCA's Most Compassionate Class. As well as the national award, you'll be entered into a regional category with visits to RSPCA animal centres to be won. Winners will be announced in the Summer Term. To find out more and to read the Terms and Conditions, visit: [rspca.org.uk/cccompetition](https://rspca.org.uk/cccompetition).

Compassionate Class is not a fundraising initiative, however if you are looking for fundraising ideas for your school please visit: [rspca.org.uk/ccfundraise](https://rspca.org.uk/ccfundraise).

# Enquiry-led learning

## WHAT IS ENQUIRY-LED LEARNING?

The Compassionate Class activities have been designed to encourage enquiry-led learning. This differs from more traditional lesson plans by asking children to formulate questions based on a stimulus that then guide philosophical exploration of a topic. Pupils will build skills such as listening, problem solving, collaboration and critical thinking.

## GUIDING CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS

Children can respond to a stimulus or question by posing another question or offering an opinion or suggestion. There isn't always a right or a wrong answer so encourage debate using open questions like those below to draw out further responses.

- What would change this?
- What do you mean by...?
- What evidence do you have to support your idea?
- Does that always happen?
- Does that change your opinion?
- Can anyone give an example that proves/disproves that?
- How do you know that's true?
- Are there times when it is less/more...?
- Is there a difference between these two things?
- Is there such a thing as...?
- Does that convince you? Why/why not?
- Can you see any problems with that idea?

# Creating a safe learning environment

## WHAT IS A SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT?

Talking about animal welfare can be a sensitive topic for young people. They may be worried because of their personal, cultural or religious choices e.g. being vegetarian, abstaining from certain meats, or have lost a pet or witnessed cruelty to an animal. To reduce the likelihood of young people experiencing stress, upset or anxiety, it is important to establish a safe learning environment, whilst being aware of any particularly vulnerable individuals in your Compassionate Class sessions. The below guidance can be used to help ensure that safe boundaries are set when using the Compassionate Class resources.

### ESTABLISHING GROUND RULES:

- Ensure you establish ground rules that reflect the school's wider policies on safeguarding and that you are always working within these guidelines
- Be clear that, for safeguarding reasons, there are some things you can't keep confidential and remind children of the safeguarding protocols that operate in school

#### Examples of ground rules include:

- ✓ **Non-judgmental approach** – make children aware that whilst they may disagree with another pupil's opinion, no-one will judge or make fun of anybody in the class
- ✓ **Right to pass** – whilst contribution is important, make it clear that children don't have to answer a question or participate in an activity if they don't want to
- ✓ **Make no assumptions** – explain that no assumptions will be made about people's beliefs, behaviours, experiences or feelings; children should listen to and respect each other
- ✓ **Appropriate language** – use language that won't offend or upset other children

## ESTABLISHING GROUND RULES: CONTINUED...

- ✓ **Keep the conversation in the room** – ensure children understand that what is discussed stays within the classroom and that we won't share our own or our friends' personal experiences
- ✓ **Openness** – encourage children to feel able to talk openly and honestly, but ensure they understand that the session will not draw directly on their private lives or put them on the spot

### **Research by the PSHE Association shows that ground rules work best in schools when:**

- ✓ Written in children's own words
- ✓ Displayed in the classroom
- ✓ Monitored by children themselves
- ✓ Upheld consistently by the teacher as well as the children, without exception

## TIPS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN DURING LESSONS:

In order to establish a safe learning environment, it's recommended good practice to:

- Link PSHE and emotional health and wellbeing education into the whole-school approach to support pupil welfare and build a positive, respectful ethos in school
- Provide opportunities for children to ask questions anonymously, by using a Question Box or 'Ask it Basket', for example. This enables children to ask questions that concern them without having to do so in front of their peers
- Offer opportunities for pupils to discuss issues in small groups or 1:1 as well as sharing views with the class; this can help some children to feel more confident
- Provide balanced information including a variety of views to help pupils clarify their own opinions (whilst being clear that behaviours such as discrimination and bullying are never acceptable in any form)



## TIPS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN DURING LESSONS: CONTINUED...

- Be aware of and sensitive to the needs and experiences of individual children who may have direct experience of some of the issues being discussed
- Depersonalise discussions by using distancing techniques, such as stories, role-play, scenarios of real situations but with fictional characters and storylines etc. to avoid children talking about their own experiences

## VULNERABLE CHILDREN:

- Ensure you have identified particular personal issues that children may have before starting a session
- Make sure you are aware of any experiences of individual children that may make them sensitive or vulnerable in the context of particular topics
- Familiarise yourself with your school's safeguarding policy beforehand and share details of the lesson in advance with relevant pastoral or wellbeing staff
- Consider any changes in seating plans/group work/pair work which may need to be made to enable vulnerable children to engage more effectively
- Remind children of pastoral support within school
- Make it clear that you are available at the end of the lesson for anyone who wishes to talk further

# Supporting children with SEND

## SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

In addition to the 'Safe Learning Environment' guidance outlined above; the following suggestions may further support children with SEND:

- Be positive throughout activities, helping to build self-esteem while being introduced to a new topic
- Praise small strides and be specific with your praise, "I really like the way you..."
- Address a pupil personally by name – they may not realise that 'everyone' includes them
- Use visual prompts and instructions and provide opportunities for hands on, practical activities whenever possible
- Encourage time for children to explore and consolidate what they are learning through role play
- Keep 'teacher talk time' to a minimum and bring the subject alive by relating to their experiences where possible
- Provide support one on one or with a smaller ratio, if and where possible
- Reduce the amount of options for children - offering two activities is a good way for children to still have a choice without feeling overwhelmed. For some children, presenting them with only one task may be the best strategy
- Vary the length of time spent on a task and the pace of the sessions from those suggested. You may want to break the lesson down into short sections to aid concentration
- Use checklists for pupils to work from to build independence and provide them with key words or phrases that they can they add into their work



## ADAPTED ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

The advocacy activities have been flexibly designed and can be completed in whichever way you feel would best suit the needs of your pupils. You may wish to pre-select the advocacy activity for pupils with SEND, so that activities and support can guide towards this.

Creativity is highly encouraged with these activities to really engage and motivate your pupils and you are open to use whichever medium they feel confident using.

Further ideas more specifically tailored for pupils with SEND include:

- Pupils can use computers or tablets to create images, diagrams, presentations, moving images, music etc.
- Make an audio recording of pupils - this can be added to images they have created or turned into text to accompany a collage, painting, sculpture, drawing etc.
- Design comic strips to help pupils structure their work without the need for excessive text
- Pupils can make a visual recording in the style of a news report or documentary (for example: a reporter 'in the studio' or 'undercover', chat show host etc.)
- Use instruments to make sounds or music relating to what they have learned
- Take photos of the pupils investigating and role playing using real items in the class (for example: being an RSPCA inspector, a farmer or pet owner). Add speech bubbles of the things they say as they explore to show context and understanding

## WHERE TO FIND FURTHER RESOURCES

Knowing the strengths and abilities of the pupils in your class, you may decide that some of the activities require further differentiation.

For each session in this project, alternative resources for pupils with SEND are included. These can be found after the extension activities in the Teacher Notes of each discovery activity.

# About the RSPCA

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) is a charity operating in England and Wales that promotes animal welfare. Founded in 1824, it is the oldest and largest animal welfare organisation in the world. The RSPCA's vision is to live in a world where all animals are respected and treated with compassion.

Throughout this Teacher Pack, we have included links to useful information to provide you and your pupils with the knowledge of animal welfare to complete the activities. For more information, visit: [rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare](https://rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare).

RSPCA Education offers a wealth of free online resources, including lesson plans linked to the English and Welsh curricula, interactive resources and a newsletter to keep you up to date with new content. For all of this and more, visit: [education.rspca.org.uk/education](https://education.rspca.org.uk/education).



# How Compassionate Class supports the curriculum

## ENGLAND: LINKS TO THE PSHE ASSOCIATION PROGRAMME OF STUDY FOR PSHE EDUCATION

**Core Theme 3** - Living in the Wider World:

• **Pupils should have the opportunity to learn...**

- ✓ **KS1:** L2. how people and other living things have different needs; about the responsibilities of caring for them
- ✓ **KS2:** L4. the importance of having compassion towards others; shared responsibilities we all have for caring for other people and living things; how to show care and concern for others
- ✓ **KS2:** L5. ways of carrying out shared responsibilities for protecting the environment in school and at home; how everyday choices can affect the environment (e.g. reducing, reusing, recycling; food choices)

## WALES: LINKS TO THE PSE EDUCATION PROGRAMME OF STUDY

**Theme** - Health and Emotional Wellbeing:

• **Learners should be given opportunities to...**

- ✓ **KS2:** Be sensitive towards the feelings of others and to understand the range of their own and others' feelings and emotions

**Theme** - Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship

• **Learners should be given opportunities to...**

- ✓ **KS2:** Understand how the environment can be affected by the decisions we make individually and collectively