

# Example report

The report on the research into the FPQ, HPQ, and EPQ will look a little bit like the report below. This gives you an idea about how you might be quoted, and how what you say might be represented.

Philosophy is dialogical (2124), partly because it involves the discussion of the views, opinions and beliefs of pupils themselves (1089). *'Philosophy is discussing questions, thoughts and beliefs'* (Emily, Q641). Discussions are exploratory in nature (73). *'We can explore [a topic], going down many different pathways'* (Ellice, Q67–Q68). Exploration is vast, sprawling and perhaps unbounded in scope (22): pupils can explore as many things as they can talk about. Philosophy *'is like a tree of answers'* with *'loads of different branches'* (Katie, F398–F399); *'it makes everything possible'* (Holly, Q431) and *'you could just go on and on'* (Sonibel, G566). The exploratory nature of discussion explains why discussions are nomadic, i.e. often digress (12). *'We always slightly go off topic with every single question; we always seem to manage to get somewhere else and then we come back'* (Sarah, A661–A663). Exploration effectuates new discovery and learning (16); hence, some participants resented un insightful contributions to discussion that do not further exploration (7). *'It annoys me when people repeat themselves'* (Ellice, A613).

Discussion is also open in nature (217). Discussions cover an uncertain subject matter (127). This means that pupils have (21) or are able to have (31) their own views on the subject matter in hand. *'Everyone can have their own opinion about philosophy questions'* (Catriona, C267–C268). Thus, discussion is spread with difference and disagreement (47). Difference is the fuel of discussion: disagreement *'gets the discussion really going'* (Katie, G505–G506). Occasionally, disagreement can evoke ill feeling or conflict (8), especially from the intransigent. *'If they were really stubborn...and they had a really definite opinion and...no one was going to change what they thought, then [disagreement] could cause arguments'* (Yasmeen, B469–B472). However, disagreement was generally conceived as fruitful (15), usually because it creates new possibilities, even if it distances truth. *'Constructive criticism helps you because...when someone disagrees with you, it opens a lot more doors to how you feel'* (Rebecca, B504–508); *'your views are going to change or expand, and you're just going to keep going further and further away from the answer'* (G459–G461, Eleanor). This goes some way to explain why many participants felt that philosophy is intellectually challenging (11). Philosophy *'can be very hard to get your head round, because there isn't an answer'* (Rebecca, Q259–Q260).

Discussion, despite involving disagreement, is relaxed and energising (18) because it centralises speaking and listening, rather than either writing (4) or rote learning (4). *'In discussions you can be a bit more relaxed'* (Rebecca, B136–B137); *'it's not all this pressure of making sure you have the right answer'* (Rebecca, B322–B323) and *'it's...a change from writing'* (Holly, B311). Furthermore, some participants judged that the circular seating arrangements kindle a richer thinking environment (10). *'If you sit in a circle, it enhances the discussion and you feel much more free and open'* (Agnes, A559–A560).

Discussion is a social activity (24). Pupils are expected to take it in turns to speak and listen carefully to others. Pupils do not *'talk over the top of each other'*, and *'never interrupt*

someone's point', but do 'always listen to a certain point' (Katie, G87–G88). Discussions are carried out in a spirit of respect (32). 'It just makes you a lot more openminded and accept other people's opinions' (Sarah, H456–H457). Philosophy renders pupils more socially adept and agreeable to others (24), since it fosters thoughtfulness, i.e. respectfulness and free-mindedness. 'It makes you a more interesting person to get along with' (Chloe, G44).

Discussion is often of personal relevance to pupils (77). 'We talk about things that happen in everyday life...school, for instance, or things we've done' (Mollie, D127–D129). This is presumably why it can spill out of the lesson into other aspects of a pupil's life (11). Discussion 'makes me think about the question in my own free time' (Chloe, Q340). However, discussion does not always attain personal relevance, for various reasons (9). Isabelle said: 'sometimes, I do have other things on my mind' (Q624–Q625). Even when discussion does attain personal relevance, it can cover sensitive issues, upon which, for some, it trespasses as an unwelcome guest. 'If you are going through tough times at home, philosophy could make you sad, because you might be talking about a topic which you don't really want to be talking about' (Isabelle, D109–D111). Nonetheless, participants felt that it is easier for pupils to talk about things of which they have first-hand experience (10). 'If we reflect on things that affect us like school...it would be easy to reflect on them and think about them' (Mollie, D483–D485). This is because, in discussion, pupils draw from their pre-existent knowledge (20) 'It's a chance also to incorporate knowledge that you might already have into discussions and debates' (Yasmeen, B17–B18). Indeed, the impetus for discussion is the desire to eliminate personal ignorance (13). For Chloe, the impulse to question comes from 'us not knowing [the answers] ourselves and wanting to know the answers, and trying to find out things that are new to us and we don't really know about' (G347–G350).

Discussions can be dyadic (14), small group (3) or communal (8). Participants disagreed over the value of dyadic discussion: some held that it improves confidence, inclusion or participation (5), whereas others held that it reduces the overall pool of ideas and does not necessarily help the diffident overcome reticence (6). Contrast Rebecca's comment: 'the shy people get to say [their views], even if it's just to one person, which is more confident for them' (B228–B230), with Chloe's: 'if I'm sat with someone who doesn't really want to talk a lot, they still won't talk, even [though] it's to one person' (B243–B244). Communal discussion, however, is more focused and organic (5). 'When you're in a group [i.e. communal] discussion, it is more spontaneous' (Yasmeen, B247–B248). However, other participants suggested that discussion in philosophy can be a little contrived; it is better when discussion arises extemporaneously in the course of a lesson (5). 'If [discussion] comes up by accident, then it's easier to think about because you are not really under any pressure to come up with something' (Emily, D488–D490).