



As I began to write this, the latest fake news polemic concerned politicians' claims on Facebook, starring Elizabeth Warren, Mark Zuckerberg, Nick Clegg and Donald Trump. The following week, as our election campaign began, prime ministerial candidates were busy assassinating each other's character.

There is a great deal of noise out there. Regardless of your stance on what media platforms should or should not censor, contradictory news and polarised opinions are here for the long run.

In the midst of the clamour, learning to listen with an open yet critical mind, acting according to solid values, and communicating views clearly is more crucial than ever.

According to the World Economic Forum, three quarters of American companies have difficulty recruiting the right people, as they find that problem solving, the ability to deal with complexity, and communication skills are desperately lacking among candidates.

Fostering critical thinking and communication should be the primary role of education. At Emanuel, these skills are honed throughout the curriculum and explicitly through Life Education and the Ethos course for Years 6 and 7.

The Ethos course, launched this academic year, aims to develop independence in our younger pupils, and to enhance their capacity to formulate opinions and ideas cogently. The timetabled weekly lesson introduces ethical and critical thinking, offering opportunities for informed discussion and training pupils in the skills of debating.

The approach is pursued through the Life Education curriculum:

In Year 6, students learn about assertiveness and peer pressure, and focus on delivering presentations to the class in the summer term.

In Year 7 students learn about British values, confident communication, and decision-making.

In Year 8, Life Education lessons include self-esteem, expressing emotions, career ambitions and individual strengths. Students also have a talk on public speaking, featuring practical tips they can start using in their day-to-day communication.

Year 9 students look at resilience and failure, moral dilemmas, the role of community, and includes a talk on individual impact and responsibility. Year 9 also discusses how terrorism is presented by the media and later has a debate on the death penalty.

Year 10 and Year 11 revisit their approach to studying and learning, with a focus on synthesizing what is important, through the talks by Elevate Education. Finally, the Life Education curriculum in Year 10 includes a lesson on groupthink and critical thinking in the third term.

This autumn term, in view of the political landscape, every year group will have a Life Education lesson on the workings of a general election and the implications of the December election in particular. In addition, the Politics department will hold a mock online election among staff and students and will stage hustings, where individual students convey each party's manifesto to their peers.

In the midst of information overload, and the disappearance of restraint among public figures, knowing what to heed and what to ignore, questioning what we hear and how we recycle it, should be key to success and peace of mind.

| Parent talks held this Autumn term | |
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| 9th October | Julie Johnson: "Helping your child deal with stress and anxiety" |
| 20th November | Jayne Constantinis: "Communication skills for life – empowering our children and modelling best practice" |

| Some of the topics pupils have discussed in the past (summer) term include: | |
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| Year 6 | Public speaking and study skills |
| Year 7 | Resilience, mental health, legal and illegal drugs |
| Year 8 | Waste, e-safety, gaming, drugs and alcohol |
| Year 9 | Citizenship, terrorism, gang dynamics, food sources and availability |
| Year 10 | Critical thinking, resilience and first aid |
| Year 11 | Rights and responsibilities of adults in society |
| Lower sixth | Using Unifrog to research Higher Education options |
| Upper sixth | Academic revision |

| In addition to tutor-led Life Education, we have hosted the following speakers: | |
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| Resilience | Jack Galsworthy who, with fellow student Freddie Wright broke the record for the youngest pair to row across an ocean, spoke to Years 7 and 8 |
| Disability and resilience | Robyn Steward spoke to Year 7 about growing up with disabilities |
| Mindfulness | Anna Wille, Year 8 |

| Specialist speakers hosted this autumn term | |
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| Year 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speak out, Stay Safe, NSPCC WWI (Tony Jones) |
| Year 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friendship workshops, ID YOU SRE |
| Year 8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public speaking, Jayne Constantinis |
| Year 9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SRE Anxiety and depression (Emanuel counsellor) |
| Year 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exam anxiety (counsellor) Mindfulness (Anna Wille) Study Skills (Elevate) SRE |
| Year 11 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career skills (Nichole Beauchamp) Study Skills (Elevate) |

Key contacts

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