Humanist ethics: overview (age 5+)

Big question: How can I know what is good?
Key vocab: happiness, consequences, empathy, the Golden Rule

Knowledge outcomes:
Students should know about the following common features of a humanist approach to ethics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trying to be kind to other people, animals, and the planet</th>
<th>Thinking carefully about how other people might feel</th>
<th>Treating other people the way we would like to be treated</th>
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<td>• Recognising that we all want to be happy – none of us wants to be harmed</td>
<td>• Understanding that rules can be helpful, but believing that we also need to think about the consequences of our actions</td>
<td>• The Golden Rule as a way to think about how we should treat other people</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Being kind as a way to make the world a better place to live</td>
<td>• Trying to support happiness and reduce suffering</td>
<td>• Recognising that being good can sometimes persuade other people to be good too – everyone benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The belief that being good can make us happy</td>
<td>• Empathy as the capacity to imagine how other people might feel</td>
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<td>• Recognising that most people are good to each other most of the time</td>
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Introduction
- Begin with the ‘A humanist approach to life: a summary’ slide to introduce/recap the core features of a humanist approach to life.
- Explain that you are going to explore why humanists believe we should try to be good and how they decide how to act.

Being good
- Carry out the Being good activity to explore why humanists think we should be good to each other and how they believe empathy and thinking about our shared needs and feelings can help us to decide how to act.

The Golden Rule
- Read Aesop’s fable called The Fox and the Stork or show a video of the story (youtube.com/watch?v=7n538d6rHhE) then discuss the information and questions on the The Fox and the Stork activity to explore the Golden Rule.
- Digging deeper: Carry out the Moral dilemmas activity to explore how humanists might approach different situations.

Are human beings good?
- Read Most People by Michael Leannah or show a video of the story (youtube.com/watch?v=XlWno5pY7ig). Discuss the information on the Most people activity to explore the humanist belief that being good often comes naturally to us (although this does not mean we are always good).

Summary and assessment
- Review the knowledge outcomes above.
- Ask the students what questions they would like to ask a humanist.