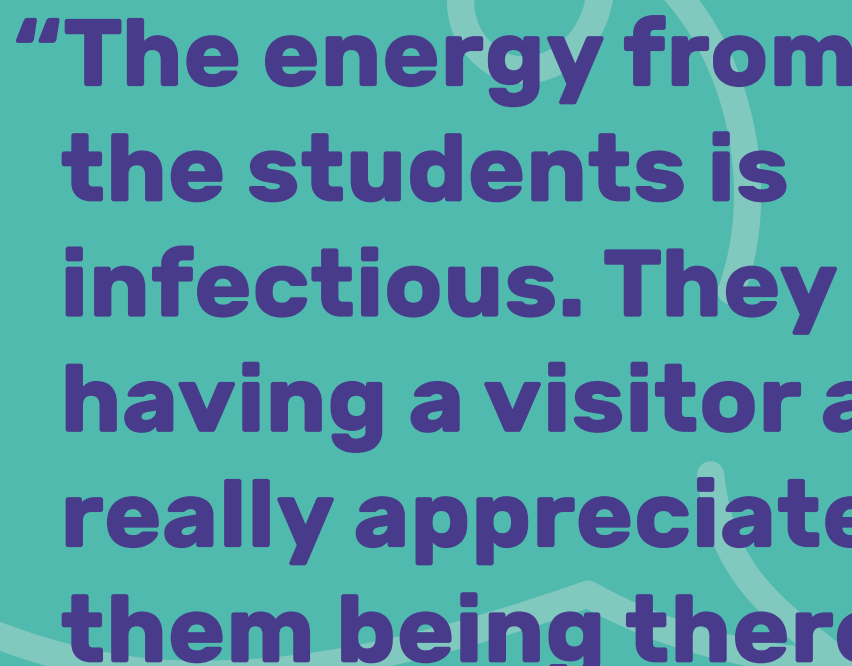




HUMANISTS UK SCHOOL SPEAKER TRAINING

APPLICATION PACK





“The energy from the students is infectious. They love having a visitor and really appreciate them being there - it’s hard not to just be bouncing away afterwards.”

Lottie Holmes
School speaker

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Humanists UK school speaker!

Our school speakers visit classrooms and assembly halls around the country to help raise young people's awareness and understanding of humanism. Since 2016 we've visited thousands of schools in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and spoken to over 200,000 students! It's an amazing way to make a really positive difference to young people's lives and their understanding of the world around them. We also get fantastic feedback from teachers – last year they gave our speakers an average rating of 4.9 out of 5!

Personally, I find that speaking to children is one of the most enjoyable things I get to do. They ask fantastic questions and it forces me to really think about what my humanism means to me. Other speakers tell similar stories describing the buzz they get from being in the classroom, and from doing something that is both personally fulfilling and of positive value to society.

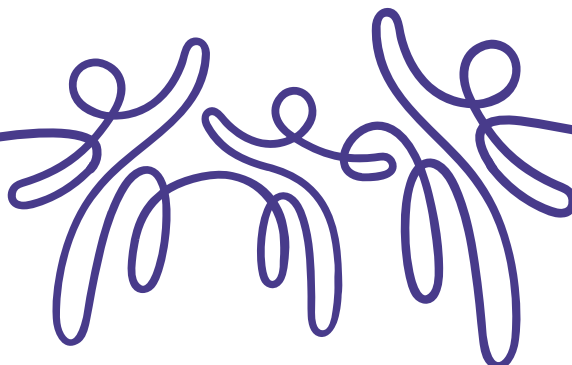
We hope this pack provides you with all you need to know to decide whether you would like to apply to be a school speaker, and what to do next. If you need this information or the application form in a different format, please let us know. If you have any questions, please contact us via schools.training@humanists.uk.



I hope when you've read through you'll feel excited about the opportunity to join our network. I look forward to hearing from you.

Luke Donnellan

Director of Understanding Humanism
September 2022



education

Humanists UK's education work

Humanists UK's education work supports the charity's aim that humanism is widely understood as an ethical and fulfilling non-religious approach to life.

Through our education resources, teacher training, and the school speaker service, we work to ensure that every young person has an opportunity to learn about humanism. Our goal is to raise students' awareness that many people in the UK and around the world do not follow a religion, yet still live ethical, happy lives full of meaning and purpose.

Humanists UK is proud to provide a free, high-quality speaker service to schools in **England, Wales, and Northern Ireland** via visits from trained volunteers. We are committed to training Humanists UK members to help teachers increase students' understanding of humanism and what it means to have a humanist approach to life. By becoming a school speaker, you can support young people's intellectual and personal development in a practical, meaningful, and rewarding way.

"Thank you for coming in to talk to us. I found it very interesting to learn about because I had never heard of humanism before. The lesson was different to our normal ethics lessons and I liked being able to ask questions and hear your opinion..."

Alice
Year 7 student



who

Who are Humanists UK school speakers?

Are you committed to a humanist approach to life? A good communicator? Enthusiastic about using your knowledge and personal experience to help young people learn about humanism? If the answer is yes, then you could be a Humanists UK school speaker!

Humanists UK school speakers are trained volunteers, whose professional approach to visits and supporting students' learning is appreciated by teachers around the country.

School speakers come from a wide range of backgrounds and life stages, and we aim to build a network of speakers as diverse as the school audiences we serve.

A speaker must be a member of Humanists UK (or be prepared to join), and be located in **England, Wales, or Northern Ireland**.

"You don't need experience working with children, or to be a public speaker. All schools are usually looking for is someone to explain the lived experience of being a humanist and that doesn't have to be complicated at all."

Kathy Riddick
School speaker

what

What do school speakers do?

The role is very varied! As a speaker, your host teacher may ask you to work with a small group, a class, or a whole year group. You might give a classroom talk, lead an assembly, or contribute to a panel discussion. Your input could range from just talking about humanism and living a humanist life, to discussing humanist perspectives on particular issues, or using a range of activities to help students to learn more.

You're there to support the teacher in the classroom. There's no need to worry about being left in charge of 30 students all on your own!



how

Being a school speaker

School speakers are supported by the Understanding Humanism team, which matches speakers with teachers' requests.

Demand for school visits can vary over time and in different parts of the country. School speakers are volunteers and have other demands on their time - we don't expect them to take on every request we send them. We aim to give plenty of advance notice about a request to visit. We also recognise that speakers might be more comfortable talking to some age groups rather than others, or prefer certain types of request (e.g. classroom talks rather than assemblies).

However, to maintain the quality and reliability of the service, we do ask that speakers commit to a minimum of **three school visits per year** (in-person or online). School visits take place on weekdays in term time (during school hours or sometimes after school) and speakers often fit them alongside other work or family commitments. This is an unpaid voluntary role, but many schools do offer travel expenses.

We also ask that speakers are willing to participate in CPD (continuing professional development), to update and refresh their training from time to time. We offer a range of enjoyable CPD sessions (such as online webinars) across the year to help speakers enhance their own knowledge about humanism and polish their presentation skills.

“You gave the children a fantastic insight into the practices and philosophy behind humanism. The children were captivated from start to finish and were delighted that you could answer their questions. Thank you for speaking so confidently and eloquently.”

Tom Anstiss
KS2 teacher

rewarding

Is it for me?

You don't need to be an expert on everything to do with humanism to speak in schools! But it is important that speakers are confident and clear about what humanism is, and about the values that underpin it.

So we are looking for volunteers who can communicate to children in an engaging way about their personal experience, and how their humanist beliefs and values influence their daily life. Please read the school speaker profile on page 13 before applying.

Speakers tell us they find school visits rewarding and enjoyable! You'll receive training, resources, and support to help you feel well-equipped and confident about speaking in schools. You'll gain the satisfaction of helping to raise students' awareness and understanding of humanism, and of contributing to a service that is valued highly by teachers. You'll also have the opportunity to build relationships with members of the local community, to develop your own

communication skills, and to become part of a growing network of humanists who are passionate about supporting young people's education.

We welcome applications from candidates of all backgrounds, particularly those currently under-represented in education and in our network. We are also interested to hear from applicants able to deliver talks in Welsh.

Humanists UK aim to ensure their training is open to all. All venues for in-person training are physically accessible, and we will make reasonable adjustments to course content and materials where necessary.

"If you are passionate about children's education then school speaking is an interesting and rewarding way to contribute your skills."

Isabelle King
School speaker

“The break out sessions were a useful part of the training day - sharing thoughts and experiences. Having feedback on my presentation was the most useful part by far.”

Rebecca David-Knight
School speaker



become

Applying to become a school speaker

To become a school speaker, you need to take Humanists UK's free one-day school speaker training and assessment course.

Please fill in a **training application form** and return it to schools.training@humanists.uk by the deadline for the course you wish to attend.

We will review your application, and let you know within seven days of the deadline whether we are offering you a place. At this stage you may be invited to have a short telephone conversation with one of our team. Our courses are sometimes oversubscribed and we may not be able to offer a place to everyone who applies. We may add you to a waiting list or offer a place on a future course. In selecting applicants, Humanists UK applies its equal opportunities policy.¹

1 - Humanists UK's equalities policy is that in all matters relating to volunteering no individual will be discriminated against on the basis of their sex, transgender status, sexual orientation, race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, disability, marital status, caring or parental responsibilities, age, religion or belief, or any other grounds that are irrelevant to their ability to meet the requirements of a role.

training

Our school speaker training course

The training course is designed to prepare you for the role and answer your questions. It will:

- Demonstrate good practice, and equip you with methods and resources to provide stimulating and engaging opportunities for children to learn about humanism.
- Provide information about appropriate conduct and guidelines for keeping safe in schools.
- Raise your confidence to work with teachers and children.
- Help explain how visit requests work and how you can build and maintain relationships with teachers, schools, and other speakers in your area.
- Help us assess your suitability to deliver educational content about humanism to young people in schools.

Handbook

Before the course you will receive a copy of Humanists UK's **School Speakers Handbook** which contains more information and resources to help you in the role. It also forms the basis of the **pre-course activity** which needs to be completed before the training day. This exercise introduces the material you'll be covering in the course and is designed to help you get ready. It will take approximately two hours, and should be submitted by the time and date given in the pre-course information email that you receive when you are accepted onto a course.

Presentation

On the training day, trainees will be asked to make a short (five minute) **presentation on humanism** to a small group of fellow trainees, as though delivering a session to a group of students. This helps you to practise how you would prepare and give a talk, and enables the trainers to assess your suitability for the role and provide helpful feedback. Many trainees describe this as the most useful part of the day. The presentation should be prepared in advance of the course – there won't be time on the day. We recommend that you prepare your presentation after you've completed the pre-course activity and that you take a look at the resources on **understandinghumanism.org.uk** to help you.

The trainers are looking at how trainees perform in four main areas:

- Knowledge of humanism
- Presenting and communicating
- Understanding of appropriate conduct when working with students and teachers
- Ability to reflect on their practice

Most of our trainees pass the assessment and become part of the Humanists UK's school speakers network. However, not everyone does. Those who do not will be offered feedback and are welcome to apply again in future.²

2 – If you are not accepted for training, or do not pass the course, and would like further explanation or to appeal the decision, email schools.training@humanists.uk. We will acknowledge your request within one week and may ask you for further information. The Director of Understanding Humanism will consider all relevant details and reply within a further three weeks.

next

What happens next?

To become a Humanists UK school speaker, and start to visit schools, a volunteer needs to:

1. Be a current member of Humanists UK,
2. Pass the school speaker training course, and
3. Sign the School Speaker Code of Practice (page 14) and agreed school speaker processes.

To gain full 'accredited' speaker status, an active speaker must receive three pieces of positive feedback from different schools that they have visited (sometimes this can take a while).

Our training, assessment, and accreditation of volunteers ensures that they have the right attributes to act as ambassadors for humanism and Humanists UK, and have achieved the necessary standard of knowledge and skills. This allows schools and other stakeholders to be confident in the high-quality service we provide.

In line with our current policy, and to safeguard speakers, teachers, and students, our volunteers are asked to complete a DBS check before visiting schools. This is a free, simple process which Humanists UK will arrange.

"I wish a humanist speaker had come to my school all those years ago! I enjoy speaking to young people. Usually it's about things they've never thought about before."

Anthony Phillips
School speaker

support

Our support to you

As a Humanists UK school speaker, you will be part of a **friendly and supportive network**, where you can share experiences and tips via the School Speakers Facebook group and at regular online webinars. To help you with subject knowledge and preparing talks, you will find a **wealth of resources** about humanism via the Understanding Humanism and Humanist Heritage websites. You can also visit the **School Speaker Area** of our website to access key documents, guidance, and CPD materials, and to book your place on CPD sessions. Our school speakers **e-news** is mailed out twice per term, to help keep you up to date with what's happening in the network and education team.

“Understanding Humanism has outstanding materials which are a mouse click away to help you for nearly any school speaking situation.”

Boyd Sleator
School speaker



practice

Good practice

It is essential that all school speakers follow the School Speaker Code of Practice when visiting schools. School speakers must treat staff and students with courtesy and respect, and are entitled to expect the same.

School speakers are invited into schools to support teachers in helping young people learn about humanism and what it means to live one's life as a humanist. School speakers are not in schools to criticise religions, nor to criticise the beliefs of the students.

**"It's a really rewarding role -
I'd recommend it to anyone who
feels it's something they could do."**

Tim Purches
School speaker



profile

School speaker profile

Essential:

- Membership of Humanists UK.
- An interest in raising awareness and understanding of humanism.
- Willingness to work with a diverse range of people and respect views different from one's own.

Experience:

No specific experience is necessary, though experience of public speaking, or presenting to a group or in meetings, is beneficial.

Familiarity with an education environment or experience of the education system (e.g. as a teacher, teaching assistant, school governor, lecturer) is useful but not essential.

Knowledge:

- Personal knowledge of humanism and Humanists UK is essential.
- An understanding of how to work with children and young people is useful.

Skills:

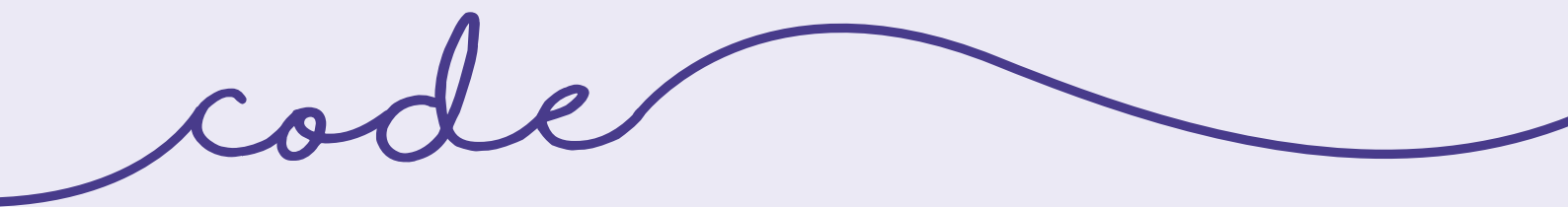
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills.
- Good organisation and timekeeping.
- Patience and flexibility.
- Ability to handle potentially hostile questions calmly and courteously.

- Understanding of appropriate boundaries and ability to work within them.
- Ability to recognise one's own limitations.
- IT literacy is desirable: communication is often via email and speakers will need to access their personal online dashboard to record completed visits (guidance on this is given.)

Personal attributes:

- Ability to be non-judgemental, empathetic, and compassionate.
- Willingness to follow school policies and meet teachers' requirements.
- Willingness to accept advice and constructive feedback.
- Willingness to reflect on own practice and seek opportunities, such as CPD, to develop skills and knowledge.
- Ability to travel to visit schools in person and/or to give talks online.





Humanists UK School Speaker Code of Practice

Purpose:

This code is a statement of the ethical values and principles that underpin good volunteering in schools and provides guidance about what is expected of Humanists UK school speakers. The code therefore sets out the basis for safe, effective, and compassionate work in schools. It gives schools confidence about the professionalism of the service by confirming that all our school speakers have been appropriately trained through Humanists UK.

As a volunteer you are not considered a member of Humanists UK staff as defined in most kinds of employment legislation. However, you are representing the organisation, and that requires certain commitments from you. It is important that school speakers recognise that conversations about beliefs, values, and moral dilemmas can be sensitive and carry the potential for causing offence. It is therefore essential that school speakers follow the Code of Practice to avoid accusations of misconduct.

Any complaint made against a school speaker will be assessed using the Code of Practice, and the procedure set out in the School Speakers Handbook.

The Code of Practice

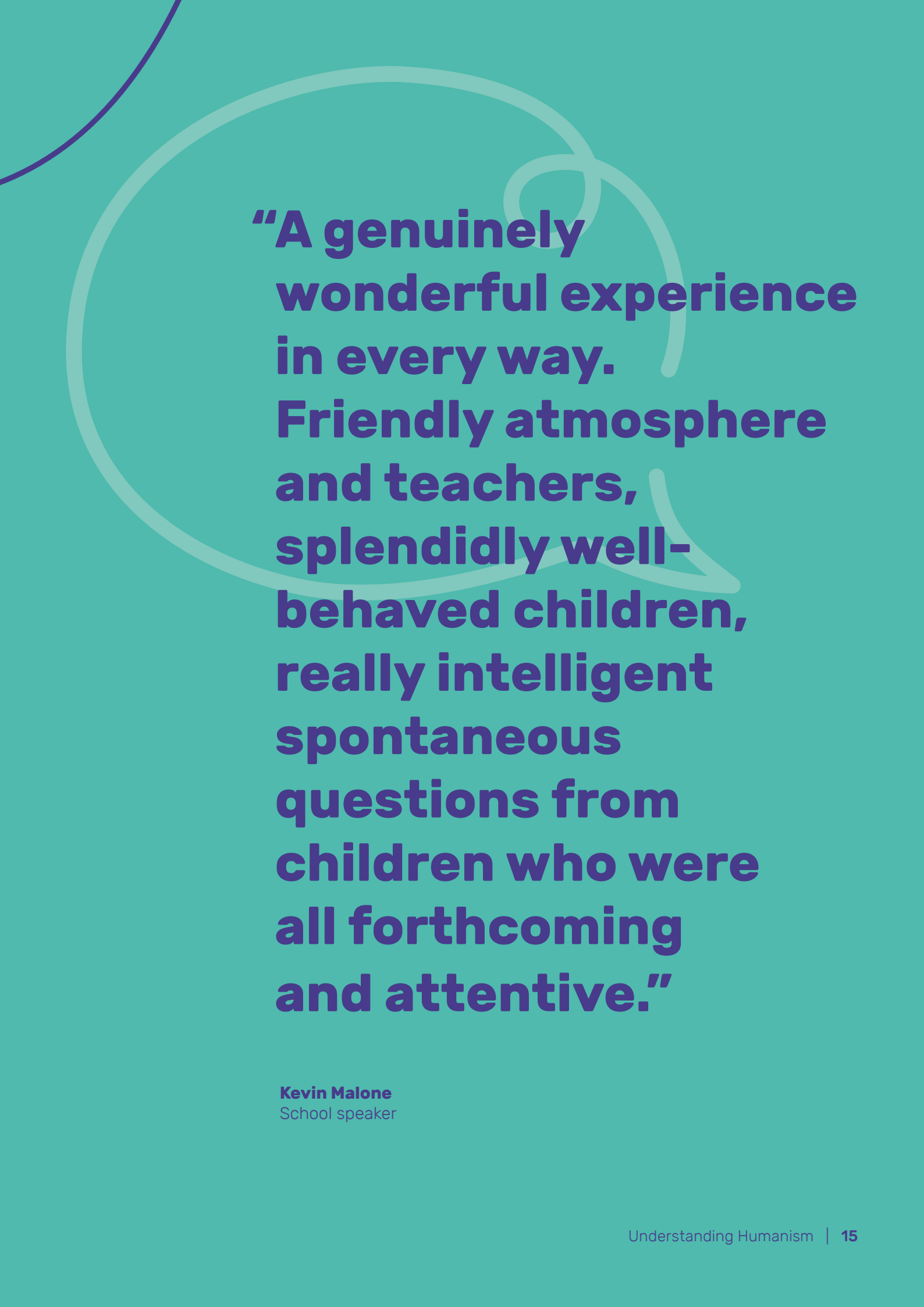
1. We will treat all staff and students with courtesy and respect.
2. We will respect the guidance we receive from the school on its aims, ethos, and policies.
3. We will plan our involvement to fit with the area of study which the students are learning about and are happy to discuss all details of the visit with teachers in advance.

4. We will seek to communicate in a way that engages and informs and is at an appropriate level for the age group(s) concerned.
5. We will be clear to students who we are and who we represent.
6. The purpose of our involvement with schools is to provide information about the humanist approach to life, answer students' questions, and support discussion.
7. We are willing to share our own experiences, beliefs, and values, but will not try to impose them on others. We respect the rights of students and adults in the school to hold beliefs which may be different from our own, and we will not seek to undermine those.
8. We believe that humanism should be part of an education about religion and worldviews that includes all significant religions and beliefs.
9. We are happy to work together with people of other religions and beliefs.
10. We have been appropriately trained through Humanists UK's school speaker training course.

Humanists UK Values:

In all our diverse work, we strive to embody our values by:

- Engaging in dialogue and debate rationally, intelligently, and with attention to evidence;
- Recognising the dignity of individuals and treating them with fairness and respect;
- Respecting and promoting freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law;
- Cooperating with others for the common good, including with those of different beliefs;
- Celebrating human achievement, progress and potential.



“A genuinely wonderful experience in every way. Friendly atmosphere and teachers, splendidly well-behaved children, really intelligent spontaneous questions from children who were all forthcoming and attentive.”

Kevin Malone
School speaker

DISCOVER MORE  @HumanismEdu | education@humanists.uk

understandinghumanism.org.uk

Humanists UK, 39 Moreland Street, London, EC1V 8BB.
Registered charity no. 285987. Limited company no. 228781 in England and Wales.

© September 2022. Copyright and all intellectual property rights belong to Humanists UK.