**Speaking in Schools: Top Tips**

**Planning:**

* Try to arrange to meet or talk to the teacher in advance and find out what they want. Do they want a more general introduction to humanist beliefs and values or are they interested in something more specific so that the children can compare particular humanist beliefs and values to those of religions?
* Get key information such as the age of the children, how many of them, length of session.
* The more you've planned, the better it goes. If you can talk about your plans with the teacher beforehand then that is also always really helpful. Practice.
* You can find resources on <http://understandinghumanism.org.uk/>.
* The BHA’s 'That's Humanism' videos (<https://humanism.org.uk/thatshumanism/>) might appeal to older children. Take the opportunity to pause at various points and ask and answer questions. Or show them and then go through the content in more detail.

**Speaking:**

* It is the teacher's responsibility to manage behaviour in the class but it is always good to start with a few ground rules such as listening to each other, respecting each other's views, and keeping contributions confidential after the lesson.
* Be clear at the start that you are there to give your beliefs, not to impose your views on others or criticise anyone else’s beliefs. It is fine to say what you believe, but be careful not to criticise any children's beliefs directly.
* It's important to make sure you are clear that you are giving your personal opinion; you are not speaking for all humanists.
* Be personal. Tell your story about why you are a humanist. Your personal experience is what will allow students to see connections with their own lives.
* Try to focus wherever possible on talking about what positive things made you a humanist, rather than the negative, anti-religious reasons.
* A good golden rule is to ask: ’If a member of another religion or belief visited my child’s school and contributed in the same way, would I as a parent, be happy?’
* Ask students for their opinions and beliefs about key issues before introducing humanist beliefs and then allow them time to compare.
* Don’t talk too much. Any opportunity to get the children sharing their ideas or discussing a topic with partners or groups is good (the teacher may be able to help with ideas).
* Leave plenty of time for questions.
* Remember, you only need to speak about what you are comfortable speaking about. Be prepared for tricky questions. Don’t assume any awkward questions are a personal attack; assume good intent and curiosity rather than hostility and don't be afraid to say, 'I don't know,' or, 'It depends.'

**Follow up:**

* After the visit offer further support if you can and point the teacher in the direction of other resources on the BHA’s education website: <http://understandinghumanism.org.uk/>.
* Take some time to review the experience and reflect on what happened
* Finally, if you would be interested in taking one of our training courses to become a BHA school speaker, then please register your interest at <https://humanism.org.uk/education/schoolvolunteers/train-as-a-school-volunteer/>.