

Humanists UK School Speaker Application Pack

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Humanists UK School Speaker. This application pack provides you with all you need to know to decide whether you would like to continue with the application

Overview

Have you ever thought about how you could use your knowledge and your life experience to help young people learn about humanism?

If so, then you could make a successful school speaker as part of Humanists UK's School Speakers Programme. Humanists UK provides a high-quality, professional support service to schools via visits from trained volunteers. We are training Humanists UK members to work with teachers to raise student's understanding of humanism and have a meaningful impact on the intellectual development of young people.

About Humanists UK and our work in education

Humanists UK's education work supports its strategic aim to arrive at a situation where humanism is understood as an ethical and fulfilling, non-religious approach to life. In November 2015, the [High Court ruled](#) that the school curriculum must treat non-religious worldviews with equal respect to religions. Through our provision of education resources, teacher training, and school speakers, we aim to ensure that every young person has an opportunity to learn about humanism.

We support a broad and balanced education for all young people and recognise the value of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of students. It is vital that young people have the opportunity to explore the full range of beliefs and values present in the UK and to be made aware that many people do not follow a religion yet still live ethical, happy, and meaningful lives.

Is it for me?

Demand for school visits can vary significantly in different parts of the country. We do not expect school speakers to take on every request we send them. We acknowledge that school speakers are acting in a volunteer capacity and will have other commitments on their time. However, we need to be sure that those who apply and subsequently join the network are committed to visiting schools at least **three** times a year. Often school speaking can work around your other commitments and you'll be given advanced notice of any requests to visit a school.

As well as the obvious benefits of raising young people's awareness and understanding of humanism, you'll have the opportunity to build new partnerships with members of the local community, to develop your own communication skills through working with teachers and children, and to become part of a growing community of humanists who are keen to support the education of young people.

Humanists UK aim to ensure their training courses are open to all. We ensure that all training venues are accessible. We will make reasonable adjustments to any course materials if necessary.

Volunteer role description

Role title	School Speaker
Reporting to	The Director of Understanding Humanism
Role context	Humanists UK is building a network of school speakers to visit schools and raise the awareness and understanding of humanism amongst children and young people.
Main purpose	School speakers will work alongside teachers to find engaging and effective ways to educate children and young people about humanist beliefs and values.
Key activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visiting school during the school day or after-school to deliver talks and sessions about humanism. This could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking about humanism in classroom or assembly • Sharing personal stories and providing accounts about how humanism affects your daily life • Offering a humanist perspective on contemporary ethical debates • Contributing more fully to classroom activities • Taking part in an ‘multi-belief’ panel • Taking part in a specialist day (‘collapsed’ or ‘off timetable’ day) • Working directly with the teacher to provide specialist information or material • Following school’s policies and procedures • Working with other local speakers to promote the school speakers programme • Promoting Humanists UK’s education resources • Operating within the terms of the School Speakers Handbook and Code of Practice • Following the key school speaker processes • Being prepared to undertake continuing professional development (CPD), which might include future training and peer-observation • Reviewing and reflecting on one’s practice • Seeking support from, and offering support and guidance to, other school speakers, through dialogue and sharing resources • Contributing to the development of the school speakers network and training programme by participating in dialogue with Humanists UK and fellow school speakers
Tenure	This is an open-ended role, but is subject to periodic review to ensure that both Humanists UK and the school speaker are happy with the work being done.
Remuneration	This is a volunteer role and no remuneration is expected. If required, it is reasonable to ask the school to reimburse travel expenses, but this should be agreed with the school in advance.

Person Specification

VOLUNTEER ROLE TITLE	School Speaker	
CHARACTERISTICS:	ESSENTIAL	USEFUL
QUALIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership of Humanists UK • No other qualifications required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any qualification in education: e.g. qualified teacher status (QTS)
EXPERIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific experience is essential, although relevant experience may make it easier for school speakers to become effective more quickly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in an education environment or knowledge of the education system: e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, university lecturer, school governor • Volunteering experience • Inter-faith / dialogue work as a humanist
KNOWLEDGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of Humanism and Humanists UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of education and schools • Knowledge of how to work with children and young people
SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent communication and inter-personal skills • Timekeeping • Patience and flexibility • Ability to be reflective • Understanding of appropriate boundaries and ability to work within them • Ability to recognise one's own limitations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching skills • Handling potentially hostile questioning
PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES (All essential)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An interest in raising awareness and understanding of humanism • Willingness to work with a diverse range of people and the ability to respect views different to one's own • The ability to be non-judgemental, empathetic, and compassionate in dealings with people • Willingness to accept advice and criticism • Willingness to follow school policies and meet the requirements of teachers • Willingness to work under the general guidance of Humanists UK and abide by their code of practice • Willingness to undertake regular reflective practice and to seek opportunities for development of skills and knowledge such as CPD • Willingness to support the development of the school speakers network • Ability to travel 	

How do I become a school speaker?

Application

When a training course is being set up, those who have registered their interest in becoming a school speaker will receive an application form to complete. The role description and person specification should give you key information about what we are looking for. The application form should be returned to schools.training@humanism.org.uk. If the date or location of the course is not convenient for you, then you will remain on our list of potential school speakers to be informed about future courses.

Your application form will be reviewed, and you will be informed about whether you have been offered a place on the training course. Please note, following your application, you may be asked to undertake a short telephone interview. In prioritising applications, Humanists UK will apply its equal opportunities policy to all volunteers.

Training course

The objectives of the training are to:

- Model good practice and provide you with methods and resources to provide stimulating and engaging opportunities for children to learn
- Provide information about good practice and guidelines for keeping safe in schools
- Raise your confidence to work with teachers and children
- Help you market yourself, coordinate promotion with other local volunteers, and build and maintain relationships with teachers and schools
- Answer your questions

You will also receive a copy of Humanists UK's school speakers handbook which will provide additional information and resources to help you in the role.

Before the course you will be asked to prepare a short presentation task. On the afternoon of the training day, you will be required to present your presentation to enable the trainers to assess your suitability for the role.

Accreditation

To be accredited as a Humanists UK School Speaker, the trainee needs to be a member of Humanists UK and to have completed the following to the satisfaction of the Director of Understanding Humanism and Humanists UK's school speakers training team:

- 1) Humanists UK school speakers training course
- 2) Signing of the school speakers code of practice and agreed school speaker processes
- 3) Three pieces of positive feedback from different schools, or a visit observed and assessed by a Humanists UK school speaker trainer

Once the above have been satisfactorily completed, you will receive a certificate of accreditation.

Speakers can visit schools once they have completed items 1-2 above, however, accreditation is not complete until a speaker has received three pieces of positive feedback from different schools he or

she has visited or has been observed by a Humanists UK school speaker trainer. Humanists UK aims to match up new speakers with more experienced speakers (mentors) who can support them, and to offer CPD to all school speakers.

Trainees will be assessed on a range of core competencies across four main strands:

- Subject knowledge
- Presentation and communication
- Understanding of appropriate conduct when working with students and teachers
- Capacity for reflection on their practice

If we feel that you have not demonstrated the key skills at any stage of the application or training, then you will not be accredited.

If you are not accepted onto training or do not successfully complete training, and would like further explanation or to appeal the decision, you can send a request by email to schools.training@humanism.org.uk. You will receive an acknowledgement within one week and may be asked for further information. The Director of Understanding Humanism will gather all relevant details and provide a response (or, as the case may be, a decision) within a further three weeks.

The accreditation of volunteers ensures that they have been accepted as having appropriate characteristics to work under the banner of Humanists UK and have achieved the minimum standard of knowledge and skills to be endorsed by Humanists UK as a school speaker. It allows schools and other stakeholders to be confident we are providing a high-quality service.

When a volunteer receives accreditation, they are entitled to describe themselves as an accredited Humanists UK school speaker when seeking opportunities to work in schools. Once accredited, you will be a member of the Humanists UK school speakers network. The network aims to be a supportive community of practice, whose members commit to support each other and provide high quality learning opportunities in schools.

Good practice

It is essential that all school speakers follow the Humanists UK's Code of Practice (see below) when visiting schools. School speakers must treat staff and students with courtesy and respect. School speakers are invited into schools to support teachers to help young people to 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.

Humanists UK Code of Practice

The purpose of the Code of Practice

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 provides reassurance to schools about the professionalism of the service by confirming that all our school speakers have been appropriately trained through Humanists UK training for school speakers.

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 as a basis for judging the legitimacy of the complaint.

The Code of Practice

1. I will treat all staff and students with courtesy and respect.
2. I will respect the guidance we receive from the school on its aims, ethos, and policies.
3. I will plan our involvement to fit with the area of study which the students are learning about and am happy to discuss all details of the visit with teachers in advance.
4. I seek to use engaging, cooperative, and active teaching methods where possible and I will communicate at appropriate levels for the age group(s) concerned.
5. I will make clear to students who I am and who I represent.
6. I believe that children and young people should be informed about all significant religions and beliefs, including non-religious approaches to life.
7. I am willing to share my own experiences, beliefs, and insights, but will not try to impose them on others. I respect the rights of students and adults in the school to hold beliefs and values which may be different from my own, and I will not seek to undermine those in any way.
8. The purpose of my involvement with schools is to provide information about the humanist philosophy and approach to morality, and to support teachers to enable children and young people to ask questions and discuss these matters.
9. I am happy to work together with people of all religions and beliefs, and will be pleased to participate in joint approaches to 'Religious Education', or any other appropriate setting or subject.

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.